

Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon
Excavation Season, June 6- July 16, 2011



2011 Report to the Leon Levy Foundation
February 10, 2012

LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON

GRID 38 FINAL REPORT 2011

Joshua Walton



In 2011 the Leon Levy expedition to Ashkelon continued work in Grid 38 under the direction of Lawrence Stager and Daniel Master. This year's excavation built on the work from 1985-2004, and more directly progressed from the work done between 2007-2010 which uncovered large portions of the earliest Iron I levels. Although Grid 38 covers a very large area, this season concentrated in the south-east and eastern areas, squares 38.85 and 38.76. This season's goals included excavating the southern extents of the Iron I Philistine structures on the east side of the street, building on the work done in 38.75 from 2007-2009; completing our understanding of the Iron II levels, the 8th and 10th c. in 38.85, based on the excavations from 2010; creating a stepped terrace on the eastern side of grid 38.76 to protect against erosion of the steep eastern section; uncovering the eastern extent of the Iron I buildings excavated in 38.75. Though much work of 2011 was necessarily linked to previous excavation, this report will focus primarily on this season, referring to previously excavated material only when necessary for interpretation of this year's data. Grid 38 reports from previous seasons, primarily 2007 and 2008 by Adam Aja and 2010 by Joshua Walton provide a more complete analysis and serve as a foundation for the interpretations of material excavated in the present season.

As always, successful excavation is dependent on experienced, knowledgeable staff and motivated, hard-working volunteers. Special thanks is due to the field staff and Jonathan Wylie, Deland Wing and Ben Felker, as well as to assistant staff member Cathleen Chopra-McGowan. Additional thanks goes to Ben Felker and Deland Wing for producing all of our top plans and survey work, to Alethia Williams for her excellent photography, and to Daniel Master and Adam Aja for their helpful assistance in stratigraphic analysis.

The following is a summary of the major architectural features, use and space, and special finds from the 2011 season as well as their preliminary phasing and dating as understood at the end of this season, from the earliest occupation to the latest. As such, especially regarding the earliest phases, the interpretations are subject to revision pending further, more complete excavation in following seasons.

It is important to note some key rephasing since last year's report. According to that report, as well as the terminology employed this year and in the square report, phase 14 was the 604 BCE destruction, phase 15 was earlier 7th c., phase 16 was 8th c. and phase 17 was 11th, or 10/11th c. transitional. Based on the complete excavation of the later phases this chronology has been reworked. Phase 14 still represents the 604 BCE destruction; however, as presented in *Ashkelon III*, it contains a remodeling or renovation phase in addition to the initial construction phase (*Ashkelon III*, 13ff), the latter previously phased as 15 in square 85. Now both the construction and the renovation are recognized as part of the phase 14 winery. Park divides phase 14 into a construction

phase, a use phase, and a destruction phase (Park, 57-9), still maintaining the idea and possibility of subphasing. Phase 15 thus becomes the 8th c. The discovery of 10th c. occupation in limited amounts is attributed to phase 16, while 17A is the 10th/11th c. transition and phase 17 is late 11th c. This follows along with the Iron II phasing as outlined in Seong Park's thesis on the ceramics of the Iron II at Ashkelon.

I will briefly outline how the major features and architecture from 2007 and 2010 fit within this new framework. Regarding walls 85.U164, U165, U169, U172 in the western half of the square, stone rebuilds on mudbrick walls of earlier phases are now understood as phase 14, probably the first half, before the renovation phase. Therefore phase 15 includes walls 85.U185, U191, U174, U173, as well as floor and occ deb layers 85.U177, U178, U200, and U204. This rephrasing does not include any major changes to our understanding of the square, as these had previously been and continue to be understood as 8th c.; only the labeling has changed. This season 85.U192 and 85.U226 have been moved to phase 14, as has wall stub 85.U199, with 85.U193 remaining in phase 15. Also, 85.U215 is understood as a terminal event in phase 14, post-destruction robbing. These changes are all reflected on the phase plans figs. 1-3 at the end of this report.

Phase 18 (Mid-11th c): Phase 18 has not been extensively excavated this year, although some layers and features have been uncovered for further exploration next season. It is important to note that in 38.75 much of the architecture remained largely consistent from phase 18-20 and that phases 18-19 were not easily distinguished. This appears to be the case in 38.85 as well, so everything phased currently as 18 may also be part of the phase 19 or 20 plan. Similarly, no subphasing will be finalized until further excavation. In the north-western corner of 38.85, beneath the 17 courtyard surface, a number of mudbricks began to appear, 3 running east (85.U275) from the street, and one running south (85.U276), connecting with the phase 18-20 street wall in 38.75, (75.U341). In the interior of the western half of 38.85 an E-W mudbrick wall (85.U270) was discovered beneath floor 85.U240, which should be dated to phase 18. Similarly almost immediately beneath floor 85.U240 another surface 85.U260, was discovered, diving heavily to the south and running beneath wall 85.U185, suggesting that this surface predates the wall and should be associated with phase 18 (see photo ID IMG 5166). All of these features appeared only at the end of the season and must await further excavation for more complete understanding.

Phase 17 B (11th c): The majority of phase 17 B/C architecture was uncovered in 38.85 this season, leaving a relatively complete understanding of the structure and use of the space in relation to the northern building excavated in 2000 and 2007 in 38.75, as well as in relation to other buildings across the street in 38.84 and 38.74. The main building of 38.85, building 240, is bordered on the

north by mudbrick wall 85.U174 with 2 courses of stone foundation preserved underneath 5 courses of grey mudbrick (photoID A11_19091). This wall was constructed for use with floor 85.U240, but continued in use through the 8th c. use of the building, where it served as the northern wall for rooms 200 and 204. After the 8th c. This wall is remodeled with stone (85.U167) for use in phase 15, following the same line. This continuity of use, as well as the lack of an identifiable doorway or threshold, suggest that this is the dividing wall between the northern building and a southern building (building 240) on the east side of the street. The southern wall of building 240 is beyond the extent of this year's excavation, but the western street wall (85.U185) can be traced in the eastern section of 38.84 an additional 3 meters south of the excavated area, perhaps marking the southern edge of building 240. Two rooms of this building are clearly preserved in the western half of 38.85, rooms 240 and 250, separated by pier wall U207, constructed of yellow mudbrick (7 courses) on stone foundations (2 courses, see photoID A11_19093, 19053), which extends west from wall 85.U230 ending approximately one meter east of street wall 85.U185, leaving a doorway connecting rooms 240 and 250. An entrance from the street is not preserved in the exposed area of the building, nor is an exit to the east through 85.U230, although these may be found further south, outside the bounds of the excavation area. The eastern and western walls of building are of massive stone and mudbrick construction, 85.U185 in the west and 85.U230 in the east. The street wall consists of 4 courses of stone, topped by mudbrick superstructure exceeding 7 courses as seen in the eastern section of 38.84 (cf. photo ID A11_18954). The eastern wall, 85.U230, was mostly robbed out by phase 14 robber trench 85.U215 but still preserves 4 rows of cobble and at least courses of mudbrick superstructure in the south (photoID A11_19058-9). This wall extends farther north than 85.U185 and 85. U174, and seems to have extended into 38.75. Because of the massive size of 85.U230 it was not properly identified as a wall during the 2000 and 2007 excavation seasons. Instead it was identified as a stone installation or platform (75.U237 = U334), cornering with 75.F138 in 17A and likely 75.F292 in 17B/C. These walls dwarf previously excavated walls of a similar period. The amount of stone and the dimensions of the walls are uncharacteristic of the other 11th c. Philistine houses, and suggest a more significant structure, one certainly designed to accommodate at least a second story, which may be responsible for the meter deep collapse consisting of brick detritus (85.U211, 85.U212) excavated in this building. Walls 85.U185 and 85.U230 measure approximately 1m and 2m in width respectively, compared with an average width of ½ meter for other contemporary walls. For comparison the city wall at Ekron in the 11th c. is approx. 3 meters wide. 85.U185 is clearly trenched into the street (photoID A11_18957-8), and its size may have something to do with the accumulation of street material and a terracing process, as no trench was identified on the eastern face of the wall. Rather, floor 85.U240 was confirmed to

run up to this wall (IMG 5166).

Only room 240 in this building is fully preserved with dimensions of 4m (E-W) x 2m (N-S). Room 250 is also 4m E-W, but the southern closing wall is outside of the excavation area. The brick fill above the floors of these rooms was particularly poor, preserving very little pottery, and almost no other small finds. The floors themselves were thin and beaten earth containing high amounts of crushed charcoal and many restorable vessels. In the northeast corner of the room a cache of 5 vessels was discovered, 3 bowls (RP 11855-7) stacked (uncovered upside down, presumably where they had fallen off a shelf of some kind), a chalice (RP 11858) and a lamp (RP 11860, see photo ID A11_18916-9). Other restorable, but broken bowls were found scattered across the center of the room (RP 11954-5, 11967, 11930). The floor itself was beaten earth, containing some phitoliths, and appears at one point to have been at least partially plastered. A plaster facing was discovered along the eastern edge of wall 85.U174 which sloped down all the way to connect with floor 85.U240 (cf. Photo ID A11_19055, IMG 5160-61).

In room 250 the floor has not yet been reached this season, and current excavation sits in the occupational debris less than 10 cm above it. In this room a large storage vessel of poorly fired clay (originally thought to be a tabun, due to the fabric quality) was discovered next to the entrance way between room 240 and 250. Additionally a cooking jug and a bowl (RP 11957) were found on the western edge against wall 85.U185. Other pieces of potentially restorable bowls and cooking wares were excavated from the occ deb. of this room.

In the eastern half of the square the picture is less clear. It is not apparent that the 11th c. space is related to building U240, although there are issues of intrusive foundation trenches (85.U248, U231), and later material that has not yet been excavated (85.U262, U203, U271), which complicate the picture until further excavation next season. The main features of the eastern use of phase 17 are two floors, 85.U251 in the north and 85.U258 in the south. Both of these floors clearly associate with wall 85.U230 in the west, but otherwise lack clear architectural associations.

85.U251 = U263 appears to continue into 38.75, excavated in 2007 as 75.U328. A set of features exist in the middle of the eastern half of 38.85, which may be related to these floors, these features include a mudbrick platform (85.U203), which clearly postdates 85.U258 (photoID A11_19099).

Cut into this is 38.U262, which is clearly intrusive from phase 16 or later (photoID A11_19060, 19097). However the platform seems to be built up against more mudbrick, which may be associated with some stones (85.U272). This may be an E-W wall abutting 85.U230, dividing the eastern half into a northern room (251) and a southern room (258), although this must await further excavation next year. Similarly the eastern boundary of the space is poorly defined due to the eastern balk. A later mudbrick feature 85.U271, exposed along this line and has not yet been

excavated, but it may follow an early wall line that closes the space to the east. 85.U251 was not a particularly rich floor, with no whole vessels and very little pottery in general associated with it. A very nice spear point, however, (MC 64701) as well as a smaller copper blade (MC 64745) were recovered from this surface. The final piece of phase 17 B/C is more a part of the material excavated in 2000 and 2007 than RI this year's material. North of 85.U174 a section of phase 17 courtyard was excavated (85.U261), which is the southern continuation of 75.U232. This courtyard is bounded on the south by 85.U174, on the east by 85.U230 and a bench built up on top of the courtyard surface

85.U255 of mudbrick construction on a stone foundation. To the north 85.U230=75.U237=75.U334 is abutted by 75.U138, and then continues north as a much narrower separate wall 75.U273, which continues to serve as the eastern closing wall for courtyard 85.U261 = 75.U232. In the west the courtyard is bounded by street curbing 85.U254, which is a continuation of 75.U117/194. In the western half of this room in 38.85, the south-west corner of the courtyard, a stone industrial platform (85.U243) was excavated, which seems to have continued into 38.75 as 75.U136 (photoID18946-8), originally misidentified as a wall stub. This installation is similar to a stone working platform excavated in 38.74 and 38.84 (74.U1012 = 84.U826, 84.958) from phase 19. Its location in a closed courtyard makes the context similar to the phase 19 example, termed by Adam Aja as a multi-purpose room in his analysis of the phase 19 architecture (Aja 2010, 100ff). In the eastern half of 85.U261 beneath the floor were a number of flagstones (IMG 5181) which have not yet been completely exposed, perhaps similar to 38.84.U595 in phase 18.

Phase 17 A: Phase 17A follows the same basic plan as 17B/C in 38.85, with a few small architectural additions. Ceramically the 17A phase is marked by an increase in red wash and RSB pottery indicative of the end of the 11th century BCE. The basic structure of rooms 240 and 250 remains the same and continues to be used in 17A, however mudbrick wall 85.U184 is constructed in the northeast corner of room 240, perhaps as a buttress against 85.U185 against the terracing step down from the raised street level. Floor 85.U240 clearly runs underneath 85.U184 (IMG 5166). No clear floor was found in association with the 17A use of room 240, although in room 250, in the south balk a line was identified marking the material change from brick debris to accumulation fill sloping up to walls 85.U185 and 85.U230. This material change likely corresponds to an unidentified thin beaten earth surface (given the number 85.U224), which would be associated with 17A due to the limited ceramics found in the fill (see 85.South

section drawing). Alternatively it was suggested that the line and division in the brick debris may be the collapse of a roof or second story, from the 17 B/C use. This option must be considered as a realistic alternative.

More intensive additions are found in the eastern portion of 38.85. In the north an E-W wall 85.U235 appears to be constructed in 17A. This wall abuts 85.U230 in the west and continues into the eastern section, its upper courses were extensively robbed by FT 85.U231. Floor U251 = U263 clearly goes underneath this wall (photoID A11_19104), but still associates with 85.U230 in the west. For this reason we believe that this floor is contemporary with 17B floors 85.U240, U261, and U258, rather than a phase 18 feature, pushing the construction of 85.U235 to 17A. No floor was found associated with the wall in the south, but in the north a small strip of fill was excavated (85.U236) down to floor (85.U239), which was the continuation of 75.U299 and 75.U223. On this small patch of surface 5 large round unbaked clay loomweights of the donut variety were found in a row (MC 64345-7, 64357, and 64542). This type is less common in the early Iron I contexts at Ashkelon and has better parallels among Iron II type loomweights around the country, indicating the transitional nature, along with the RSB ceramics of phase 17A. These loomweights also fit nicely with a cache of four loomweights (MC 56989, 57029-31) excavated in 2007 in 75.U291 (=85.U236), which should likely be associated with this floor as well.

Additionally it seems that a mudbrick feature (85.U203) was constructed in the south- eastern corner of the square, perhaps related to wall 85.U272, above 17 B/C floor 85.U258. This feature, and its relationship to other mudbrick features next to it is still unclear, however, and a fuller understanding must wait until next season when it will be dismantled. It is also possible that N-S mudbrick wall 85.U271 is a 17A construction, but again this awaits further excavation.

In the north-west part of 38.85 a 17A surface 85.U233, bounded by 85.U174 in the south,

85.U229 in the east belongs to phase 17A, as part of the most complete floor sequence representing phases 15-17 including 10th c. surface 85.U218, 11^{th/10th} surface U233, and 11th c. surface U261. Pier wall 85.U229 was also constructed in phase 17A, dividing the northern room into two sections, 85.U233 in the west and 85.U241 in the east. The eastern segment was plastered in phase 16 to create a bin, or other type of installation.

Phase 16 (10th c.): Very little remains were identified as belonging to the 10th c. in 38.85. In many ways this is consistent with past excavation seasons, where the Iron II has been notoriously poorly represented. Unlike previous years a few good contexts were excavated in the 2011 season. The 10th c. occupation does not appear to differ much architecturally from the end of the 11th c. The architectural plans remain the same as in 17A, with no major changes. One good floor was identified in the north-west corner of the square, 85.U218, and its occ deb 85.U217. This floor includes very deep occ deb accumulations including whole vessels (small juglets), similar to 75. L207, excavated in the 1999-2000 excavation seasons. That floor similarly ran above the 17A walls 75.W138 and 75.W105. Accompanying these floors an installation was plastered in the north-east corner of the room, identified as a bin (85.U221), and containing whole bowls and lamps (RP 11838, 11843-4). In the south-east another floor was identified with 10th c. occupation, identified in section, a very thin beaten earth surface 85.U247, sloping up to 85.U253, the mudbrick superstructure of 85.U230. Unfortunately this floor is cut by FT 85.U248 and further associations are unclear. Its height, however, make it possible that it could be associated with platform 85.U203. This feature has been preliminarily phased as 17A, but could be in re-use, and excavation of the feature may push back its associations. It is also possible that this surface could be pushed into 17A, although the ceramics suggest that a slightly later phasing may be preferable.

Phase 15 (Iron II, 8th c.): The majority of the 8th c. occupation of 38.85 was excavated in 2010 in the western half of 38.85, consisting primarily of walls 85.U191, U185, U174 and floor and occupational debris layers 38.85.U177, 178, 200, and 204. These floors ran directly over mudbrick walls 38.85.U207, U208, and U185. There were little or no remains of the 8th c. occupation in the eastern half of 38.85 due to the deep foundation trenches 85.U231 and U248 as well as robber trench 85.U215. All of these cut through the Iron II levels and into the 11th c. phases, obscuring the architectural structures in the east, and robbing out floors. The one piece of architecture that seems associated with the 8th c. occupation is wall 85.U262. This wall runs north south along the eastern edge of the 38.85, and is cut into mudbrick features 85.U271 and U203, both of which have been phased to the 10th or 11th c. BCE. 85.U262 is rebuilt by 85.U193 and re-used in phase 14. Any possible cornering walls were robbed out by 85.U231 and U248, making it difficult to reconstruct the architectural plan of this phase in the eastern half of 38.85.

One floor segment 85.U228 was identified in the south east corner. The floor had most architectural connections severed by foundation trench 85.U248 and robber trench 85.U215, although in section it goes with stones thought to be part of wall 85.U193, although this feature is also cut by the same foundation trench. The floor is phased according to the 8th c. ceramics. As well as its elevation.

Phase 14 (Iron IIB, 7th c.): Small pieces of architecture from phase 14 were excavated in 38.85 this season, mainly wall 38.85.U192 (FT 38.85.U231), 38.85.U226, and robber trench 38.85.U215, all of which were problematic. At the end of the 2010 excavation season these features along with 38.85.U193 were understood as phase 16, although no floors were associated with them, due to their height. This season, however, with the excavation and removal of these walls they were determined to belong to phase 14. Walls 38.85.U192 and 38.85.U226 were only preserved in their foundation trenches with no associated floors due to the disturbances left by the Byzantine and Roman sewage and drainage systems, which severely disturbed all material in the eastern half of square 38.85. The foundations for these walls were remarkable in their scale as well as construction. 38.85.U192 was preserved as four courses of stone cobble, bedded on a sand layer on top of 3 courses of mudbrick with sand as mortar (38.85.U231). A similar construction technique was identified for 38.85.U226 (FT 38.85.U248), featuring 3 courses of stone cobble on top of 3 courses of mudbrick with sand mortar. Both walls cut 38.85.U193, although it is possible that this wall contains a rebuild that integrates its superstructure with U231 and U192. The mudbrick and sand foundation material was already identified as characteristic of phase 14 construction (Lass 1993 Grid 38 report, 4, 16), particularly 38.74.U476 had the mudbrick and sand foundation (no stone; cf. photo 95_6976) while wall 38.74.U457 and 38.74.U458 featured multiple courses (4 and 2 respectively) of cobble. None of these walls, however, had both brick with sand mortar and stone in the foundation trenches. While the 1993 grid report suggests that the use of brick and sand mortar was common in the walls of the phase 14 building this information is lacking in the fieldbooks. The use of sand and mudbrick for foundation material is not unique to Ashkelon and seems to be a characteristic construction pattern in the south-west Levant during the Iron IIB, with other notable examples coming from Tel Jemmeh and Tel Sera' (cf. Van Beek 1992, 117, 498). The Tel Jemmeh parallel is particularly close regarding the construction technique (compare Van Beek 1992, Fig. 14.28-30 with Photo ID A11_182927-9, 18967-8). The use of a sand and mudbrick foundation has been suggested as a development to give flexibility and protect against earthquake damage (Van Beek 1992, 491 ff).

Architecturally these walls appear to be part of the phase 14 winery, part of the eastern

building, building 7, making up part of a south eastern room, bounded by 38.85.U226 on the south, 38.85.U192 on the north, perhaps a rebuild of 38.85.U193 on the east, and a wall robbed by RT 38.85.U215 in the west. Unfortunately none of the floors of this room remain and thus no finds are associated with it, although 7th c. BCE pottery was found both in the foundation trenches of U226 (U248) and U192 (U231). The main problem with the association of these walls with phase 14 is the depth of the foundation trenches. U231 has a lower level of 18.21 and U248 has a lower elevation of 17.73. Both of these cut well into the Iron I levels, and even accounting for terracing to the north and east of the building to account for the slope of the tel, and the elevation of the street, these are much lower than the foundations of other phase 14 walls, which average a lower height between 19.30 and 19.60. 38.85.U215 cuts both walls U192 and U226, but all of the material in the trench dated to the 7th c. or earlier. Thus the robbing activity, as well as the robbed wall, seems to be phase 14. This fits with other robber trenches in grid 38 which were dug at the very end of the 7th c. in a post-destruction sub-phase (for parallels cf. Ashkelon 3, 13-14 and Park 2009, 57-8).

Phase 9/10 (Persian/Hellenistic Transition; photoID A11_19067): This phase of occupation in grid 38 was excavated exclusively in square 76, as were all the earlier periods to be discussed. 38.76 was opened with the purpose of exposing more of grid 38 to the east, while also stabilizing the eastern section, which had become badly eroded over recent years, by excavating steps down to the current lowest excavation point, creating terraces to prevent dangerous collapses. This is a multi-season project, and this season's work concluded with exposure of a surface covering the majority of the northern portion of square 76.U37. This surface was dated to the transition between Hellenistic and Persian periods based on the ceramics, thus should line up with grid 38 phase 9 or 10. Too small an area was excavated this season to definitively distinguish which of the two. Along with this floor there is limited architecture. A single wall 76.U39 and a plastered stone installation (76.U42, U43) are the only associated features, and the wall is small and fragmented running along the eastern balk, but not connecting with any other architecture. The surface deposit itself was a thick ashy layer, including multiple surface laminations and much broken pottery. This matrix, along with the presence of an installation, apparently industrial in nature suggests that this might be part of a courtyard or outdoor working area. Due to their height and construction technique walls 76.U20 and U21 in the south may also belong to this phase, but all connecting floors and other architecture has been severed from them by byzantine pit 76.U6/7.

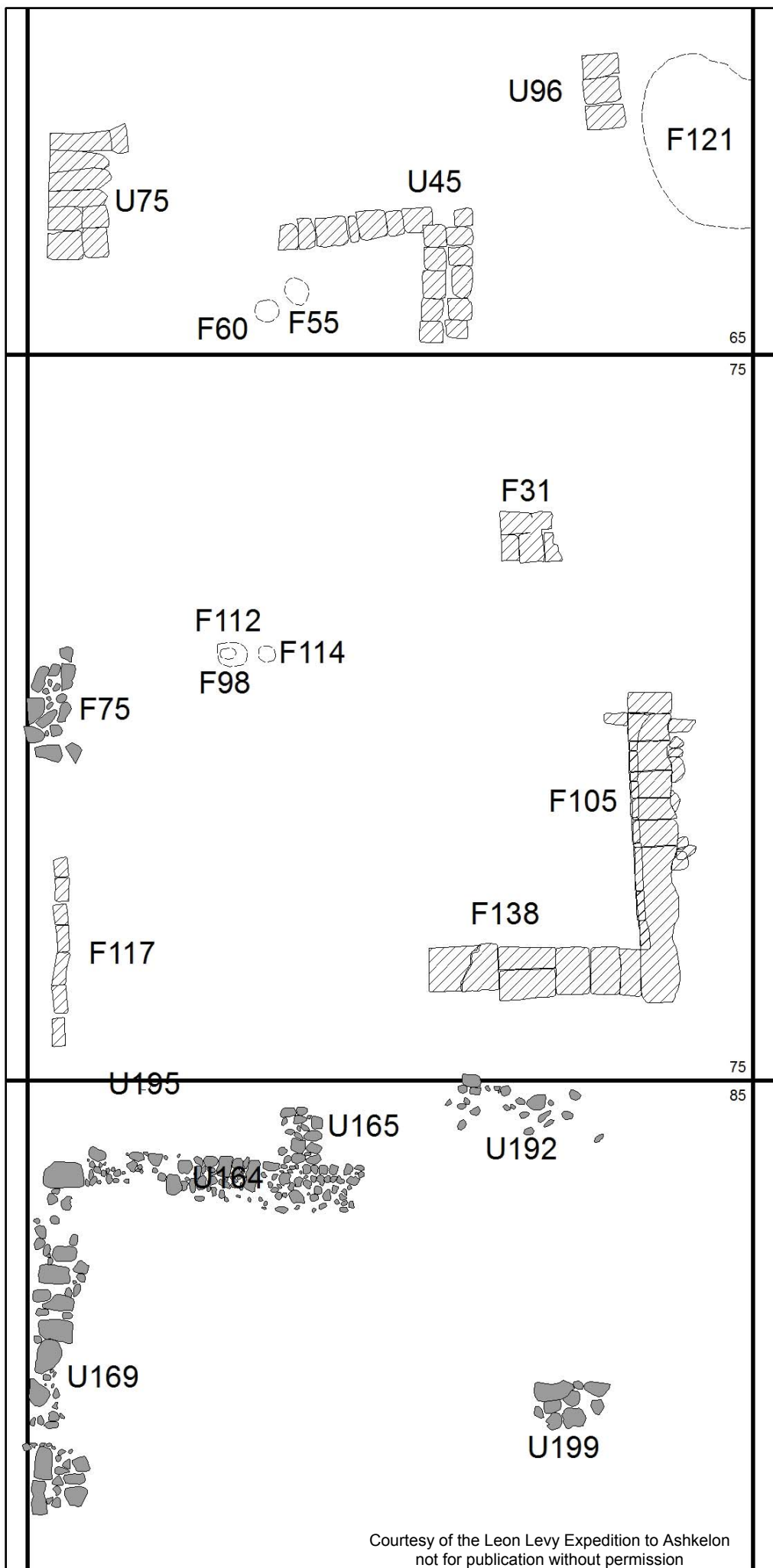
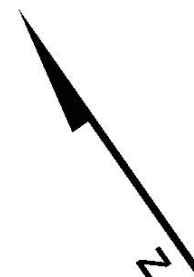
Phase 8 (Early Hellenistic): Like phase 9/10 phase 8 was only excavated in the northern part of 38.76 due the disturbance of Islamic and byzantine pitting activities in the south, which again restrict the picture available for this period. Nevertheless a few key architectural features and surfaces were excavated. The key architectural features are E-W wall 76.U41, eroded off slope in the west and any affiliation to the east is cut by 76.U5, attributed to phase 6. Wall 76.U41 corners with and is abutted by north-south wall 76.U34 which extends north until it is cut by roman well 76.U32/33. Thus the full extents and nature of this building are unclear, due to the small excavation area and the heavy disturbances. Floors were found running up to these walls, 76.U24, bounded by U41 on the south and U34 to the east, and extending to the northern balk, and 76.U29 in the east, bounded on the west by U34, cut in the south by 76.U5, and running into the balk in the east and north. The ceramics on the floors were mixed, but seem to date to the middle/late Hellenistic. On floor 76.U24 two copper earrings were excavated (MC 64079, 64145).

Phase 6 (Roman): The phase 6 remains in 38.76 were all architectural, mostly sub-surface trenched walls, with the floors and superstructure robbed out by later building and pitting activities. These walls give a partial reconstruction of the plan, but again this is limited by the size of the excavated area, and the fact that all contemporary material to the west in 38.75 was removed via bulldozer. Walls preserved include 76.U5, U8, U40 in the north as well as well 76.U32/33. And 76.U16, 17 in the south, preserved at the bottom of the massive Byzantine pit 76.U6/7. One of these walls, 76.U40 appears to be the bottom part of an arch, built up against 76.U5, possibly originally connecting with 76.U17. All of these walls are only preserved in very deep foundations, however, and are not well understood due to their isolation.

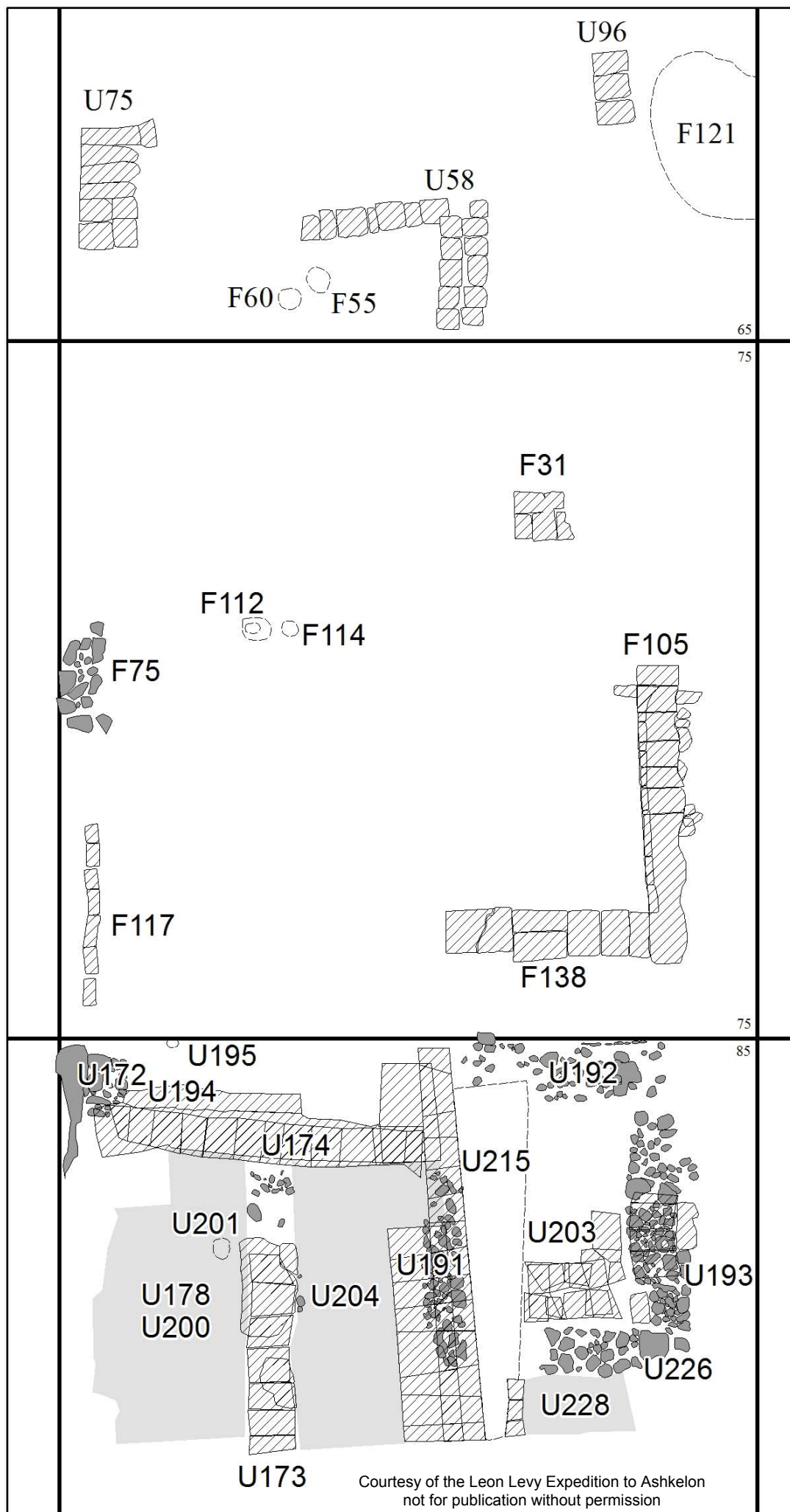
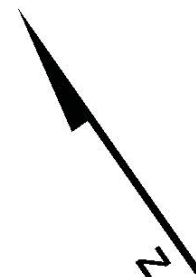
Phase 4/5: (Byzantine): This phase is represented by a series of pitting and robbing activities, the largest and most significant of which was 76.U6/7, which covered the majority of the southern half of the excavated area, and has yet to be finished (The season ended with 38.76 leveled to the first terrace, and in cleaning the pit line was still visible at this point) The pit did not destroy many of the large Roman foundations, primarily walls 76.U16 and U17, and some earlier walls, 76.U20, U21, which cannot be securely phased, but whose height suggests an earlier affiliation, perhaps Hellenistic or Persian. Other activities include a bricky debris fill 76.U3. Other fills are thought to be Byzantine, but have no associated architecture (76.U10, U4).

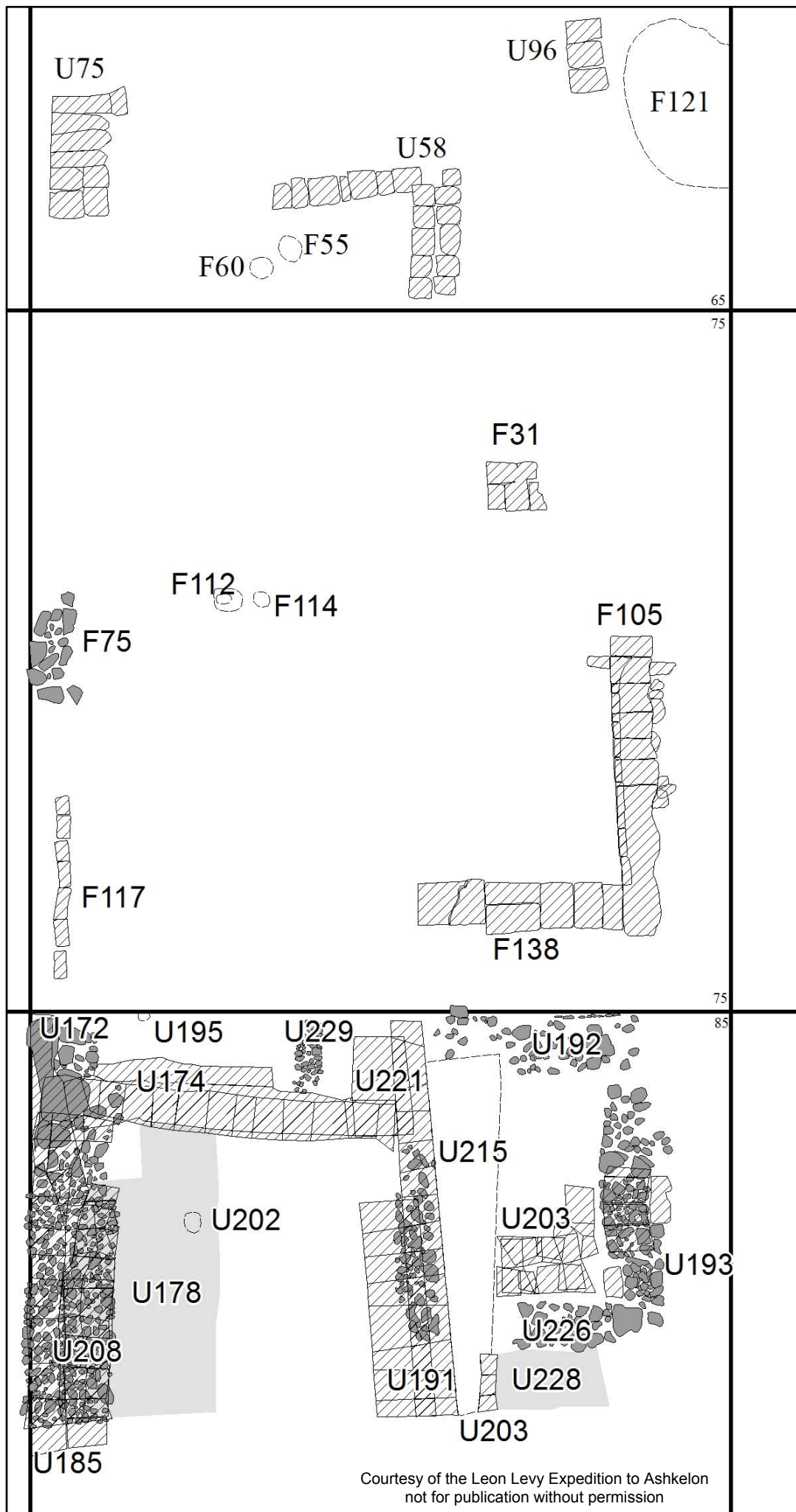
Phase I (Islamic): The Islamic occupation excavated this season consisted of a number of pits, generally with a very loose, crumbly grey matrix which were at first very difficult to distinguish from the debris left behind by the bulldozer. These pits include 76.U11/12, U13/14, and U18/19. Pits 76.U22/23 and U27/28 were both identified in section. Pit 76.U22/23 cuts 76.U6/7 but was missed because the matrix of the pit fills were so similar. Still, this can be seen in the 38.76 eastern section drawing. No substantial architecture or surfaces were associated with this phase.

Ashkelon 13/11
 Grid 38
 Squares 65,75,85
 Phase 15
 06 July 2011
 Supervisor: JW



Ashkelon 13/11
 Grid 38
 Squares 65,75,85
 Phase 16a
 06 July 2011
 Supervisor: JW





Ashkelon 13/11

Grid 38

Squares 65,75,85

Phase 16b

06 July 2011

Supervisor: JW

LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON

GRID 47 FINAL REPORT

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Introduction

The 2011 field season marked the fourth season of excavation in Grid 47 where we continued to uncover a series of monumental buildings in the civic center of the Hellenistic and Roman period cities. After the 2010 season, which was very productive and greatly furthered our research goals, we were still left with some unanswered questions. First, the exact dimensions of the odeon remained unclear. Second, its layout was not fully established. We were, for instance, unable to locate the entrance(s) and were uncertain how the audience would reach the seats. Third, we uncovered but did not investigate walls of the earlier Roman basilica as well as a Hellenistic period wall we uncovered late in the season. Finally, excavation in the eastern third of the grid, beyond the limits of Garstang's earlier excavation, exposed significant Byzantine and Islamic period re-occupation which clearly warranted further investigation.

We determined that further expansion would be required in 2011 to fully investigate those questions as we continued to work towards preparing the area for preservation. As a result, prior to the start of the 2011 season we brought in mechanical equipment to complete the necessary expansion. In the process, we added sections of Squares 62, 63, 64, and 65 on the south side of the grid. To the east we added sections of Squares 26, 36, 46, 56 and 66. At its greatest extent, Grid 47 now measures 35x45 meters.

We started the 2011 seasons with a lengthy list of goals:

1. Expose more fully the third wall of the odeon's cavea, presumed to be the closing wall of the building, to the south and east
2. Identify the entrance(s) to the odeon
3. Establish the date of the odeon's construction and identify any material associated with its construction
4. Establish when the odeon went out of use and identify the processes that marked that event
5. Investigate the relationship of the odeon to the earlier Roman and Hellenistic period structures
6. Expose and interpret the Byzantine period reuse and/or repurposing of the odeon
7. Investigate the later Islamic period use of odeon walls
8. Continue preparing the area for the eventual restoration of the odeon

We were able to accomplish many of our goals as the season unfolded and we uncovered a complex occupational sequence. In every phase, we added significantly to what we already knew from previous seasons of excavation. In Phase 7, the Hellenistic period, we uncovered the walls of a monumental building of undetermined function. Its presence in Square 34, under the later Phase 6 and 5 Roman period buildings suggests that the transformation of this area into the civic or public center of Ashkelon may have started even earlier than previously thought. In Phase 6 we added more features to the Roman basilica and bouletarian plan previously identified. Our work this season also showed that the Hellenistic building was still standing, in what state of preservation is unclear, at the time the basilica was constructed. The basilica's builders took advantage of that and actually incorporated several walls of the Hellenistic building into the basilica itself. The Phase 5 odeon came into much sharper focus this season after the expansion of the grid which revealed a large segment of the third and closing wall of the cavea. Other important details of the structure, such as the entrances, were also identified. This season, for the first time, the ephemeral Phase 4 Byzantine period solidified into a series of processes which started with the thorough and systematic robbing of the odeon, the conversion of much of the structure into a stone quarry and the inauguration of a new building program, centered around Wall 2 of the cavea which served as the core structure for several later rebuilds, that converted the area from one of monumental public architecture into one of residential occupation.

After a hiatus in the Early Islamic period, the Umayyad period more specifically, the Byzantine period building was reoccupied in Phase 3, the Abbasid period. Many of the existing spaces within that building were maintained, walls and floors were reutilized particular east and north of Wall 2, while several new features, largely for water and waste management, were added. The addition of a well, several stone-lined pits which were either sumps or cesspits, strongly suggest domestic occupation in this period. The pattern intensified in the later Fatimid-Crusader period, Phase 2, when the earlier walls, including Wall 2, served as the foundations for new walls that raised the floor level, thereby covering some of the earlier Abbasid period features, in what is probably two different buildings. Again, the area to the east of Wall 2 was the focal point of activity. More water related features were added in this phase including a water cistern and several plastered basins that probably functioned as settling tanks. And then, in the late 12th century the structures were put out of use deliberately as large cut blocks were dumped into the well and cistern, as the settling tanks were dismantled and huge fills dumped into the abandoned rooms. Grid 47 offered excavators a fascinating glimpse into the changing urban plan of Ashkelon from the Hellenistic to Crusader periods this season and the report below will summarize some of our most important discoveries.

It was due to the hard work of a dedicated group of volunteers and professional staff that we were able to achieve many of the goals laid out at the start of the season. In particular, I'd like to thank Robyn LeBlanc, Ryan Boehm, Jon Busby, Patricia Kim and Shimi Ehrlich for all their hard work this summer. As always, our survey team was excellent. This year Ben Felker and Deland Wing split the duties. And a big "thank you" to Alethia who always came through for us whenever we needed a photo. This season, as in previous seasons, Grid 47 continued to be an exciting area, rich not only in architecture but also material culture. In each phase investigated this season, it was possible to see the wealth of Ashkelon displayed not just in the monumental civic architecture itself but also in the supporting infrastructure. The material culture record only added to the impression of wealth. Even as the heart of the classical period city underwent significant changes, odeon replacing basilica and bouleterian, and then domestic structures replacing odeon, it was clear that the city center remained a vibrant, important part of Ashkelon throughout the city's history.

Phasing

The phases in Grid 47 remained unchanged from last year, although some units have been rephased, and are as follows:

Phase/Period

Phase Seven: Hellenistic
 Phase Six: Roman, 1st century CE
 Phase Five: Roman, late 2nd/early 3rd c. CE
 Phase Four: Byzantine
 Phase Three: Abbasid/Tulunid (9th/10th c. CE)
 Phase Two: Fatimid/Crusader (11th/12th c. CE)
 Phase One: Garstang/Modern

Material Remains

Monumental building
 Peristyle/basilica & bouleterian
 Odeon
 End of odeon, new building program
 Domestic use
 Domestic use
 Excavation, Park use

Recording Methods

A few notes on recording. First, as was the case last year, it should be noted that Square 34 includes Squares 32, 33, 34 and 35. Several other squares were formed into single excavation areas this summer

to simplify the recording process. Thus, Square 64 includes Squares 63, 64 and 65. And this year, the two meters of Square 46 exposed during the expansion of the grid were recorded as Square 45. To summarize:

Square 34 = Squares 32, 33, 34 and 35

Square 64 = Squares 63, 64 and 65

Square 45 = Squares 45 and 46

This information was included on all appropriate square and grid plans and was clearly indicated in the OCHRE data as necessary.

This season, Square 54 was not actively excavated. As a result, during excavation in Square 64 between the second and third walls all units were recorded in the Square 64 notebooks.

One other note, Grid 47 does a true Harris Matrix and not an Ashkelon matrix. Individual square matrices are linked together by highlighting features that cross square lines in red on the matrix.

Phase 7: Hellenistic Period

This season we uncovered a large Hellenistic period building, of which three walls were exposed, built on an orientation quite distinct from that of the later Roman period buildings. All the Hellenistic walls in Square 34 are the same in every respect; block size, plaster and construction pattern. The quality of construction is impressive and suggests the building was of some importance. As noted previously, the location of the building indicates that this area located southeast of the intersection of the *cardo* and *decumanus* was the site of monumental public architecture even before it became the civic center of Roman Ashkelon.

We first uncovered a portion of this building in the 2010 when wall **34.30** (Photo ID 18570) was excavated during the digging of a probe. Not only did it have a different orientation than the later Roman basilica and odeon, the latter of which was built over the wall, but also it had a very different construction. **34.30** was made of large stones, measuring approximately .23 x .60 centimeters, placed in a distinctive pattern. In one course the stones were laid horizontally, in the next course vertically, in the third course horizontally again and so on. In between each course and row there was a smooth, white plaster easily distinguished from the plaster and cement used in the later Roman period buildings. (The Roman period plaster and cement has many more inclusions, shell in particular, and are grayer in color. In addition, the plaster in the Hellenistic walls was carefully placed in between the rows and courses of stone whereas in the Roman constructions cement is poured over the stones.) Wall **34.30** started north of the pier on the east end of the odeon's stage and then ran under it towards the south. This season, in addition to the wall itself we excavated the foundation trench for wall **34.30**, **34.62/115/118**. It contained Hellenistic period pottery (dated to the 3rd c. CE) which confirmed the Hellenistic date of the wall.

We uncovered two other walls associated with this building during the 2011 season. First, **34.102** was an east-west oriented wall that, before being robbed, probably cornered with wall **34.30** at the northern end of the latter wall. Wall **34.117**, was a second wall built on the same orientation and in-line with **34.102**. It stands at a much higher elevation than walls **34.30** and **34.102** and is, perhaps, best understood as a pier or some such structure for the Hellenistic building. Walls **34.117** and **34.102** are very tightly bonded and, perhaps, even the same wall. (**34.117** was severely impacted by later Islamic

period activity when a pit was cut right through the center of the wall thus giving us an invaluable glimpse into its construction.)

Another Hellenistic period wall was uncovered in Square 64 during the excavation of fill layers laid down in between Walls 2 and 3 of the odeon's cavea. **64.22**, which extends southeast from under the second wall of the cavea, has a construction and orientation similar to that of the walls found in Square 34. The exact relationship of wall **64.22** to the walls in Square 34, **34.30**, **34.102** and **34.117**, is unclear and will need to be further investigated next season before we can draw any firm conclusions about these building(s).

Phase 6: Roman, 1st c. CE

The Phase 6 Roman basilica first uncovered by Garstang remains a central feature in the grid, albeit one that is very fragmentary, often with only foundation courses preserved.. Last season we uncovered heavily robbed foundation courses for three of the basilica's long north-south oriented walls, **34.64**, **34.24** (on the west side of the building), **34.26** (on the east side) and one east-west cross wall, **34.27**. This season we uncovered the exterior wall of the basilica, **34.101** on the building's eastern side. Wall **34.101** (Photo ID 18936) was built over the earlier Hellenistic wall, **34.102** and cut through wall **34.117**, the large Hellenistic pier which was then incorporated into the construction of the east side of the basilica. (Later, the builders of the odeon reused wall **34.101** as the surface on which theatre -goers entered the odeon on the building's east side.)

As mentioned previously, the walls of the basilica have a very different construction from that of the preceding Hellenistic period building. For the basilica, trenches were dug, stones placed inside and then cement poured over them. This process not only obscures the stones, the cement can make it difficult to distinguish individual stones and even the courses, but also makes it nearly, if not completely, impossible to identify foundation trenches. The use of the building method makes it unlikely that we will find and date foundation deposits for the basilica.

Phase 5: Roman, late 2nd/early 3rd c. CE

The pre-season expansion of the grid to the east and south was instrumental in allowing us to answer some important questions about the layout of the odeon. We exposed an extensive section of the third and final wall of the cavea, identified the odeon's entrances and found one of the piers that joined the third wall to the stage structure. In addition, for the first time we were able to clearly see the demolition of the building as it ceased to be used as an odeon and became simultaneously the foundation for new buildings as well as a stone. If, as we theorize, the odeon was built in part due to the demands of a growing population, one that had the means and need to construct the city's second theatre, it is reasonable to ask whether or not a more extensive building program was associated with the construction of the odeon. This season we uncovered a large sewer (a "stand up" sewer large enough for someone to walk through it to clean it) built at the same time as the odeon and even bonded with Wall 3 of the cavea. It is clear evidence the city's infrastructure was increased at the same time the odeon was constructed indicated it was part of a large scale building program which significantly changed the public areas of Roman Ashkelon.

In Square 64 we exposed a large segment the third wall of the cavea, **64.5 (= 55.4, 34.51)**. This, we believe, is the closing wall for the odeon. It is a massive construction measuring at least two meters wide and more than three meters tall. In all other ways, its construction is similar to the first and second cavea walls with cut ashlar in poured cement. **64.5** aligns perfectly with the lower, unstepped section of the outer wall for Garstang's Open Air Museum.

The third wall of the cavea is much less well preserved on the eastern side of the odeon where it is heavily robbed and even completely disrupted by the construction of a Phase 2 cistern. We have identified **45.55** as a fragment of Wall 3 but it is very fragmentary, incorporated into the foundations of the later Islamic period cistern, **45.12**, and so the identification will need to be confirmed by excavation next season. The only other segment of Wall 3 is found at its northern terminus, **34.51**, in Square 34. Wall **34.51**, the end of Wall 3 was joined to the stage by **34.52**, a large pier that linked the third wall of the cavea with the scaenae frons. **34.52** was added to the earlier Phase 7 wall, **34.117**, which then served as the core of the corner structure, pier, where the third wall of the cavea joined with the scaenae frons. The density of architecture in the northeast corner of Square 64 demonstrates not only that some of the earlier must have still be standing at the time of new building projects but also that they provided good foundational material and were, therefore, readily reused in new construction projects.

This season we were finally able to identify an important feature of the odeon, the entrances, that had previously gone unrecognized. Since reopening John Garstang's excavation area we have questioned how accurate his plans of the architecture he uncovered were. Many of those questions revolved around the Open Air Museum, an area where we could see walls that were never put on any of Garstang's plans. As the second cavea wall runs north through the Open Air Museum it terminate before reaching the west pier of the scaenae frons. We have debated whether or not this was part of the Roman odeon, i.e. part of the building's architectural plan, or a later Garstang cut since we know he often reworked the architecture he found. While excavating in Square 34 we uncovered the same construction on the east side of the odeon. **34.67, (=45.7=55.14=55.4=53.9=54.16)** and **34.83**, are separated by a break that parallels the break in the second cavea wall visible in Garstang's Open Air Museum. Here then, we have the main entrances into the odeon. Theatre-goers would pass through the second and third walls of the cavea at the northern end of the odeon before turning to enter the orchestra directly in front of the stage. Then, the seats were accessed from the orchestra. While it is probable that sub-vaulting would have created a passage between the second and third walls of the cavea, there is no indication of an entrance into the odeon through the third wall.

In addition to **34.83**, we uncovered another wall of the stage's east pier in Square 34. **34.83** corners and is bonded with **34.104**, the front (east-west) wall of the east pier. It was later robbed by **34.93/119**, a Phase 2 robber trench, so we don't see the connection between **34.104** and the other walls forming the pier.

The area between the second and third wall of the cavea, exposed-during the preseason expansion of the grid, revealed an unexpected aspect of the odeon's construction. **64.15** is a large drain which runs straight (not following the curve of the odeon walls) between the walls on an east-west orientation. It is entirely subterranean and largely intact. Using the total station, we have determined that the drain continues at least 10 meters in each direction from **64.3** (Photo ID 18763), a later Byzantine period shaft built to facilitate the reuse of the drain. The drain is constructed of large ashlar and an arched roof made of small cobbles, 1-2 courses thick. At one time the drain had nice stones facing the roof and a small remnant is preserved, **64.21**. The drain is a substantial structure, measuring approximately 1.5 meters wide and over a meter tall, that would have allowed people to walk through to clean it. We do not have the floor level for the drain in the Roman period, existing fills inside the shaft date

Byzantine and Islamic. As of yet, we have not excavated inside the drain channels themselves and so have some unanswered questions. For instance, we do not know yet which way the drain is running as we have not been able to ascertain its incline.

What is more certain is that the drain was built at the same time as the odeon. **64.21**, the nice facing stones of the drain's roof, is bonded with **64.18**, bedding for the floor level in between the second and third apsidal walls of the cavea. The bedding is constructed of cobbles, with some cut stone included, under plaster. **64.21** is bonded with **64.18** which in turn is clearly bonded with the third cavea wall indicating these structures are all contemporary.

We have now answered many of the questions we had about the odeon. We have established the dimensions and determined that the audience entered not through the back of the building, but rather through two side entrances that fed directly into the orchestra. We believe that the odeon put the earlier basilica out of use and that it actually incorporated walls from the basilica (which in turn had reused at least one wall of the earlier Hellenistic building) into its construction. The construction of the odeon marks a major expansion of the civic center of the Roman period city, a process that also included the expansion of the area's infrastructure. Even more dramatic changes were soon to follow.

Phase 4: Byzantine

In the Byzantine period, the center of the Roman city changed significantly and never again would it play the same role in the civic life of the city. The monumental buildings that dominated the city center of the Hellenistic and Roman period cities were replaced by small-scale residential architecture. The process began with the demolition of the odeon in a widespread and systematic robbing that went deep down in between the walls of the cavea. An example of this comes from Square 64, where a Byzantine fill, **64.17**, was dumped back in between the robbed out second and third walls of the cavea. The layer was full of ceramics and contained large chunks of plastered cement from the decorative facade of the theatre. The robbing stripped the walls, the roof of the passageway and even went so far as to take the nice facing stones off the top of **64.15**, the earlier Roman sewer.

It is impossible to know what happened to the odeon in the center or on its western sides, areas excavated by Garstang, but we know that the southern portion of the building was thoroughly robbed in the Byzantine period. We see further evidence for this process on the eastern side of the building. In Square 45 we uncovered, **45.76** (Photo ID 18989) a fill full of debris from the dismantling of the building associated with the demolition of the building. We found large fragments of gypsum (some of which were unreacted), stones, roof tiles and copper tacks. Most importantly, we found many of the stone fragments were faced with scored plaster that was designed, and perhaps painted, to mimic marble. Some of the molded plaster was quite simple, beveled edges for instance, but several pieces had an egg and dart design. All of the pieces recovered were a pale yellow color. This debris was sealed by later Byzantine fills, **45.59=63** and **45.29=67** put down for the construction of a surface which sealed the destruction of the odeon.

After it went out of use, what remained of the odeon served a dual purpose; as foundations for a later, Byzantine period building program localized to the eastern half of the odeon, and as a stone quarry in the central and western sections of the building. Much of the quarrying was done for the construction of a building(s) of unknown function built over the remains of the northeastern corner of the odeon. The Phase 4 material is both significant and yet very fragmentary. There are three floors in this phase

but one of them cannot be associated with any walls and the other two can be associated with only one wall each. There is a substantial wall which has a relief arch in its construction but it too cannot be associated with any floors. Many of these deposits were found directly under very late, even modern fills and there is little good material with which to interpret them. Much of this building phase remains under later Islamic period reuse in the area and it is to be hoped that next season's excavation will provide us with a better understanding of the Phase 4 building program.

The Byzantine construction reused and altered Wall 2 of the cavea, used the east pier of the stage and built a number of walls off of Wall 2 in the construction of one or more buildings. The substantial alteration of Wall 2, **45.7=34.67=34.83**, in the eastern part of the odeon began with the addition of a cut ashlar wall, **45.92**, to the east face of the existing odeon wall. **45.92** reused stones robbed from the odeon but they were neither plastered nor particularly well laid. Wall **45.92** is, however, substantial and stands 8 courses high. On top of Wall 2 and slightly off-line from **45.92** is a second rebuild, **45.40=34.9**. This new addition basically straightened the line of Wall 2, the unused portion of which (**45.7=34.67**) curved to the west. As is the case with wall **45.92**, **45.40=34.9** is constructed out of stones stolen from the odeon. This wall is made of cut ashlars, tightly fitted providing a nice face on the walls east side as well as on its north end. The north end appears to be one side of an entrance between two rooms of this building. The west face of the wall is very different, constructed out of uncut fieldstone and is probably the exterior face. Indicating that west of **45.10=34.9** we are outside of the building.

45.92 abuts another substantial wall oriented east-west, **45.75** which stands 9 courses high. It too is made of cut ashlars, which lie in alternating header-stretcher courses, that came from the odeon. The wall has a relief arch providing additional support. Towards the bottom of **45.75**, as it is currently exposed, there is an opening filled with some collapsed stone. As of yet, we don't really understand this construction, one idea is that it might be one wall of a subterranean chamber, but it does demonstrate the substantive nature of the Byzantine occupation. Just south of **45.75** lies **45.90**, a small fragment of a stone and cement wall exposed, but not excavated, at the end of the season. **45.75** forms the north boundary of a room on the east side of Wall 2, the south boundary of which is formed by **45.10** (Photo ID 18816, it is the lower wall) and its foundation, **45.26** which abuts Wall 2 (**45.7**). **45.10** has a header-stretcher construction similar to that of **45.75**. Unfortunately, we have not yet exposed any floors associated with these walls. Just south of **45.10** in a north-south oriented wall, **56.1** (Photo ID 18816), and a second east-west wall, **56.4** that belong in this phase but which cannot be directly associated with the architecture north of **45.10**.

The space bounded by Wall 2 on the west also appears to be an outdoor or service area. This is where **45.76**, debris from the dismantling of the odeon, was sealed by bedding for **45.44**, a surface constructed alongside Wall 2. While primarily made of plaster the floor did also hold several marble flagstones in its southern extent. It is a poorly constructed surface not of the quality of the mosaic floors further to the north. It does, however, seem to be of the same construction phase. **45.44** (Photo ID 18796) has a sequence of floor bedding similar to **34.2** with layers of plaster, cobbles and clay like material all present. Last season, the section of **45.44** that we exposed did not reach the second wall of the cavea. The northern portion to **45.44**, the surface is cut by the later well **45.27**, excavated this season did run up to **45.7**, Wall 2. This is clear evidence that at least one existing odeon wall was reused in the Byzantine period. All of the other walls for the room holding **45.44** were robbed out in the Islamic period or so we believe. We don't see the robber trenches due to later leveling fills and other activity. It is not clear whether **45.44** and its reuse of the odeon wall is best understood as belonging to a building separate and distinct from the one that lies further to the north or if it is simply a service or outdoor space associated with that building.

The room represented by **45.44** is separated from more substantial Byzantine floors to the north by a large Islamic period robber trench **34.93/119**. We first uncovered **34.2** (Photo ID 18737), a floor constructed of large industrial white mosaic tessera, last season. Roughly square, it lies within the bounds of the east pier of the odeon's stage and until this season we were uncertain whether it was part of the Phase 5 odeon, or a later construction. Excavation of the floor's bedding this season, **34.44**, **34.107**, **34.109**, **34.110**, showed that it was in fact Byzantine and post-dates the theatre. It is contemporary with a second floor of similar construction to the east, **34.96** (Photo ID 18827), from which it is separated by a later robber trench, **34.46**. **34.96** is similarly constructed of large white industrial mosaic tiles which run up to the face of **34.52**, part of the earlier odeon pier. While we can characterize the industrial white mosaic tile floors as belonging to service areas or rooms expecting high traffic flow there is little more we can say since they were preserved with such little stratigraphic context.

There are two other features of the Byzantine period in this area that need to be mentioned. First, **64.20** is a horseshoe shaped cut dug through the third wall of the cavea. There are handholds and clearly visible chisel marks showing that it was purposefully built. The fills inside the cut, **64.8=11** and **64.14=17=12**, were Byzantine in date and contained stone and plaster debris from the process of digging through the wall. Unfortunately, we have not been able to determine why the cut was dug and its ultimate purpose.

Finally, **64.3** is a square shaft built in the Byzantine period to provide access to the early Phase 5 sewer, **64.15**. The shaft was partially built over Wall 3 of the cavea and its stones were placed in a thick shell, laden plaster. One surface, **64.23**, can be associated with the Byzantine period use of the sewer. The addition of the shaft to the sewer prolonged its use, also visible in the thick coating of phosphates and organic residue on the stones, well into the Islamic period.

Phase 3: Abbasid/Tulunid

The building was unoccupied in the Umayyad period but it was subsequently reoccupied in the Abbasid period. The basic organization of the northern portion of the building was largely maintained and the floors reused while in to the east of Wall 2, still an integral part of the building, there were more significant modifications highlighted by changes in the organization of the space and the addition of water and waste collection and storage features.

34.100 is a robber trench that suggests inhabitants were mining the area around the building for stone to use in their new projects. In this phase, the most significant alterations to the reused Byzantine period building were east of Wall 2. The project started with the construction of a new wall, **45.93**, on top of the earlier Byzantine wall, **45.40**. This happened simultaneously with the construction of a well, **34.27** which had a square superstructure founded on **45.10** and incorporated into the rebuild, **45.93**. These adjustments appear to have been made to make the well more accessible to the rooms on the east side of Wall 2. The well was constructed of cut, cemented ashlar. Square cut hand and footholds extend far down into the depths of the well and would have afforded people using it, an opportunity to affect repairs quite easily. A layer of gypsum plaster, **34.9**, was built up around the exterior of the well to provide additional stability when, in the construction process, the builders broke through the earlier Byzantine surface, **34.44**, and the voids created by the odeon rubble underneath it. In addition to the well, a sump, **45.30/36=34.79/80** constructed of small, uncut fieldstones, was dug a little further to the

northwest but still south of mosaic floor **34.2**.

On the eastern side of **45.93**, a parallel north-south wall made of small, cut ashlar, **45.58**, was added. It blocked off the space bounded by **45.7**, the portion of odeon Wall Two still in use, and the rebuild **45.40** on top of it on the west, **45.75** on the north and **45.26** on the south. This space was then filled in and another stone-lined sump, **45.61/1** (Photo ID 18201), constructed that was reachable by a wall (or possibly threshold), **45.41**. **45.58** abuted **45.10** which continued in use. In the space northeast of walls **45.58** and **45.10** we uncovered **45.64**, a stone-lined drain with a cobble roof, **45.66**. While it is possible the cobbles were a purpose built roof, common to a number of features in this space, it is also possible they are the bedding for later Phase 2 plaster services which put many of these Phase 3 features out of use and are otherwise poorly preserved. The Phase 3 features later put out of use include **45.69**, an oval shaped, stone-lined pit built up against the north face of **45.10**, the earlier Phase 4 wall. The fill inside, **45.62**, produced Abbasid-Tulunid period Cream wares. **45.70** is another possible drain running from **45.69** towards the north.

The changes seen in the southeastern portion of the building, which is now courtyard or some other outdoor space, are entirely absent in the northern half of the building where we believe the mosaic floors continued to be used with little to no modification. There are simply no significant structural changes in this portion of the building. In general, the reuse of this building is most visible in the reorganization of its southern extent and the addition of the well and the sumps. The evidence indicates much of the existing building met the needs of the new occupants who did add some features to better accommodate domestic use. Much of the Phase 3 material was only exposed, not excavated, this season and our understanding of this material will become more clear next year when we excavate it.

The only other Phase 3 material uncovered this season comes from Square 64. It appears that the Phase 5 Roman sewer, **64.15**, continued to be used during this period. **64.10** is a fill inside the shaft leading to the drain. During the excavation of this fill we found numerous restorable Abbasid Cream Ware jugs and juglets, coins, bead and at least three decorated spindle whirles. While **64.10** proved to be a veritable treasure trove, it also indicates the sewer was being cleaned less regularly, if at all, and that it was starting to silt up.

Phase 2: Fatimid/Crusader

Occupation of this area in the 11th and 12th century continued to center around the building(s) in Squares 45 and 34. There is an intensification of occupation during this period that further modifies both the building and nature of settlement. As was the case in Phase 3, two robber trenches, **34.93/119** and **34.107/106**, indicate inhabitants were mining for stone close to home. Simultaneously with the robbing, a new wall, **45.74** (Photo ID 18816), was built on the top of the earlier Phase 4 wall, **45.10** which served as the foundation courses for this new wall which raised the floor levels in the area, burying and canceling many of the earlier Phase 3 water and waste elements. To the south of this wall a large water cistern, **45.12=55.9=55.36** (Photo ID 18798), was constructed. It has a round, stone-lined opening that gives way to a bell-shaped, plastered interior. This cistern and its foundation courses, **45.49**, cuts through and completely obliterates Wall 3 of the cavea. The cistern is associated with **45.50/51** (Photo ID 18800), a plastered settling basin which would have been connected to the cistern by a ceramic pipe, **45.52**. This basin, **45.50/51** was built up against earlier Phase 4 wall, **56.1**. On the north side of **45.74** there are further changes. The Phase 3 drain, **45.64** and oval pit, **45.62**, go out of use and were covered by plaster surface, **45.77** (Photo ID 18941). Associated with this surface was **45.80** (Photo ID 18915), a small stone wall in which we found an iron stake. **45.77**, which was found

directly under later Phase 2 fills, is separated by a second plaster surface, **45.86** by an east-west robber trench, **45.89** that robbed the wall separating these two spaces. As of yet, it is unclear (although likely) that **45.89** robbed **45.88** and **45.46**, the stone and cement foundations of a Phase 2 wall no longer extant.

45.88 and **45.46** posed some interesting problems this season. They are no more than .30 meters away from the Phase 4 wall **45.75** and were clearly dug in much later. These walls, it has been suggested by Katia Cytryn-Silverman, were constructed by digging a big pit, putting stones inside and then pouring cement over them. It is a construction method that continues to be used through the Crusader period. **45.17** is a deliberate fill we started excavating last year, and continued with this year, which revealed **45.88** and **45.46** but it may in fact be the pit dug for the construction of these two walls. It may also be, as we saw in earlier phases, that moments of construction and destruction are obscured by the late fills in the grid and that **45.17** is just such a fill. **45.17** produced for instance, a join with a Chinese Qingbai bowl fragment found in **34.94**, a fill layer lying to the north of wall **45.75**. Many of these features were only fully exposed at the end of the season and **45.17** and its relationship to **45.46** and **45.88** will need to be investigated more thoroughly next year.

The plaster surface **45.86** ((Photo ID 18984) which lies on the northern edge of Square 45 is associated with a second plaster lined basin. This basin involved the construction of several new walls. Wall **34.36**, constructed of small to medium uncut fieldstones abuts **34.9**, the earlier Phase 4 wall, which was reused as the west wall of the new cistern. **45.8**, utilizing small, cut ashlar, is a later rebuild on Phase 4 wall **45.75**. Together these are the north and south walls of a double basin that utilizes **45.40=34.9** on the west and a newly constructed wall, **45.73** on the east. **45.71=45.72=36.2** (Photo ID 18911) form the upper plaster surface of this basin. Nothing remains of the lower surface bounded by **45.40=34.9**, **45.8** and **34.36**, but there is a fragment of the vertical side of the lower basin, **45.4** (Photo ID 18567). Associated with the construction of the basins and water cistern is a large cesspit, **34.84/88** which cut through **34.2**, the Phase 4 mosaic floor reused in the Phase 3 Abbasid occupation. The construction of this pit, as others in both Phase 2 and 3 is fairly uniform and consists of a hole dug in which uncut, unlined fieldstones were placed. These pits were by no means impermeable and we found extensive leeching of organic matter around **34.84/88** and the other pits as well. The construction of this sump indicates that this portion of the building experienced a major shift in function, perhaps even becoming an exterior space. Certainly, the presence of the cistern, multiple plaster surfaces and at least two settling tanks in distinct spaces suggests that the earlier building has been subdivided or altered significantly enough that it provides space for the outdoor spaces of several residences.

The only other architecture associated with this phase is a single east-west oriented wall, **36.3**. It stands apart from the other architecture of this phase and can not be directly associated with any of it. Further excavation next season should provide context for this wall.

Finally, there was very limited evidence for Phase 2 in Square 64. This involved the reuse of the Phase 4 construction **64.20**. A small fieldstone wall, **64.9** (Photo ID 18754), was built inside the earlier cut, sectioning it in half and utilizing utilizing two sides of the horseshoe cut in the new construction. The purpose of **64.9** is not clear although the soil within it was blacker, with a heavier ash content, and it contained a fair amount of bone and pottery. It was likely a fire pit or possibly a garbage pit.

Some time in the late 12th century, the well, **45.27**, was deliberately put out of use when large cut ashlar were dumped down its shaft. The cistern, **45.12=55.9** was also put out of use when large stones were dumped into its interior. The courtyard and plaster surfaces just to the north of the cistern, **45.77** and **45.86**, were buried under deliberate fills **45.48** and **45.56**, which contained bits of plaster, rubble

and a diverse corpus of pottery.

Phase 1: Garstang and Modern

The only material excavated from Phase 1 was a stone silo, **55.38** exposed but unexcavated in Square 55, and fills designated as topsoil from across the grid, as we cleaned up after the bogger. This season there was nothing that could be associated with Garstang although one of the closing walls for his Open Air Museum missed the sewer shaft, **64.3**, by less than five feet. We were fortunate to find ourselves outside his excavation area and, therefore, in possession of a much more complete occupational sequence than we've had in previous seasons.

Summary

The season must be counted a success as we were able to meet many of our goals. We exposed more of the third wall of the cavea and can more clearly see the limits of the odeon. We were able to identify the odeon's entrances which were found not in the third wall of the cavea but rather near the stage where spectators would enter directly into the orchestra. While excavating levelling fills for a floor bedding in the west pier of the scaenae frons we found 2nd century CE pottery confirming the art historically based date of the odeon. We also found evidence for the demolition of the building in the Byzantine period and for the first time we can clearly see the odeon go out of use. While we did not complete the excavation of the Byzantine and Islamic periods of occupation in the odeon, we did make significant progress in exposing these important phases.

The material remains of Hellenistic, Roman, Late Antique, and Islamic Ashkelon found in Grid 47 continue to provide us with an invaluable window into the occupational sequences of this centrally located area. Lying just to the southeast of the intersection of the cardo and decumanus, a street pattern probably established in the Hellenistic period, this area was a natural focal point for some of Ashkelon's most impressive architecture, the monumental civic buildings that would have dominated public life in the city.

We can see this process starting in the Hellenistic period, Phase 7, as evidenced by a building only partially exposed this season. Walls **34.30**, **34.102** and **34.117**, are well constructed and quite striking with courses laid in an alternating in header and stretcher pattern. The blocks used in the walls are, themselves, quite impressive measuring approximately .23 x .60 meters each. Carefully laid, the stones are placed in a fine white plaster visible between each row and each course. The Hellenistic wall in the southern end of the grid, **64.22**, hints at the scale and number of buildings that may have been present during this period.

The redevelopment of the area continued in the Early Roman period, Phase 6, when a basilica with an attached bouletarian was constructed over, and with a different orientation from, the earlier Hellenistic building. This process represents a major reworking of the city's urban plan but also shows the continued importance of this area within the cityscape. This season we added only one significant feature to this phase. **34.101** is the east closing wall of the basilica and its construction shows that not only was the earlier Hellenistic building still standing when the basilica was built, but also that it was incorporated into the construction of the new monument.

In the later Severan period, the late 2nd/early 3rd centuries, the area underwent another significant building program. In Phase 6, an odeon was built which put the earlier basilica out of use. The odeon marks a major expansion in the public center of Ashkelon and was, perhaps, a response to population growth in the city as well as the growing financial might of the residents. It was built over and reused segments of the Hellenistic building and also used basilica wall **34.101** as the surface in one of the odeon's entrances. This season we uncovered some important aspects of the odeon previously unseen. Wall 3, **64.5=55.4=34.51**, is now more clearly visible. Although it was heavily impacted by later activity, both robbing and then the construction of a large water cistern, it is very much intact and clearly indicates the limits of the building. Wall 2, **55.9=54.15=55.6=45.7=34.67=34.83**, was in use the longest as it continued to serve as foundations for multiple rebuilds in the Byzantine and Islamic periods. Wall 1, the first concentric wall of the cavea, was more fully exposed after the removal of the later Islamic period rebuild, **44.5=54.35**. This season we also identified the entrances into the odeon. Attendees would enter the odeon from the north, in between the second and third walls of the cavea and then turn through an opening in the second wall, in between **34.67** and **34.83** on the east side of the building, and walk directly into the orchestra right in front of the stage. From the orchestra spectators would then precede up to the seats.

Excavation in the stage's west pier through floor bedding and the earlier leveling fills produced a 2nd century date. Thus, for the first time, we have archaeological confirmation of the art historically based date given for the Severan period construction of the odeon. Excavation in the stage's east pier revealed that the odeon's scaenae frons was founded directly on the earlier Hellenistic wall, **34.30**.

And in between the second and third concentric wall supporting the cavea we made a remarkable discovery; a built drain constructed simultaneously with the odeon. Large enough to walk through, so that it could be cleaned easily, the drain further demonstrates the city's response to a growing population and the need to upgrade the city's infrastructure in the area of the odeon. This drain, **64.15**, continued to be used well into the Islamic period, a strong testament to the quality of its construction. This season must be regarded as an unqualified success in answering some of the most important questions about the odeon.

That the odeon went out of use in the Byzantine period, Phase 4, is now clearly visible in the archaeological record. It was during this period, perhaps in the late 5th or 6th centuries, when the building was systematically robbed and stripped of all its decorative features as well as much of its stone. We can see this in the large fills laid down throughout the cavea, particularly in between the second and third walls where at least one fill, **62.17**, contained huge segments of painted plaster thrown back in as the spaces now devoid of good cut stone were back filled. We can see it in **45.76** which contained debris from the dismantling of the building. Sealed by a Byzantine period surface and its bedding, **45.76** contained fragments of rock with carved plaster, numerous roof tiles and copper tacks.

Even as much of the building passed out of use, the northeastern corner of the odeon was incorporated into a new Byzantine period building only partially exposed and, frankly, poorly understood this season. At least two mosaic floors, a plaster surface and several new walls, including **45.10**, **45.92**, **45.75** and **45.40=34.9**, can be associated with the building. The massive size of **45.75** and the relief arch built into its construction suggests this was no small building but we can add little more to that assessment. What the building does tell us, if nothing else, is that the area was transitioning from one housing major monuments of the city to a residential or non-public area. For the first time since the Hellenistic period, the basic function of the area changed as the city's major public architecture shifted to a new location as yet unidentified by excavation.

After a period of abandonment corresponding with the Early Islamic or Umayyad period at Ashkelon the building constructed in the Byzantine period was reoccupied in the Abbasid period. The Phase 3 reuse of the area is represented by the addition of a well, **45.27** and several sumps. The southern portion of the Byzantine period building(s) was significantly changed as walls were constructed, spaces backfilled and a new courtyard area, with a stone-lined drain and an oval shaped settling tank constructed. These activities can all be associated with residential occupation.

It was a neighborhood that saw intensified occupation in the Fatimid period when a large water cistern, **45.12=55.9** was constructed, several new sumps or cess pits dug and several plaster lined basins, **45.50/51** and **45.71/73=45.72 =36.2** added to the exterior courtyard areas located in the eastern halves of Squares 36, 45, 46, 55 and 56. By the end of Phase 2, the Fatimid-Crusader period (the 12th century) the former city center of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the home of the city's monumental public architecture, was long since forgotten, transformed from the Byzantine period onwards into a residential area, more densely occupied with the passing years. Located on the main road leading from the Jerusalem Gate into the city, it is not surprising to see continued occupation in this central location. It is, perhaps, more surprising to see the complete transformation of the area's function. It is a process worth more investigation which will happen next season as we continue our excavation of the occupational sequences in Grid 47.

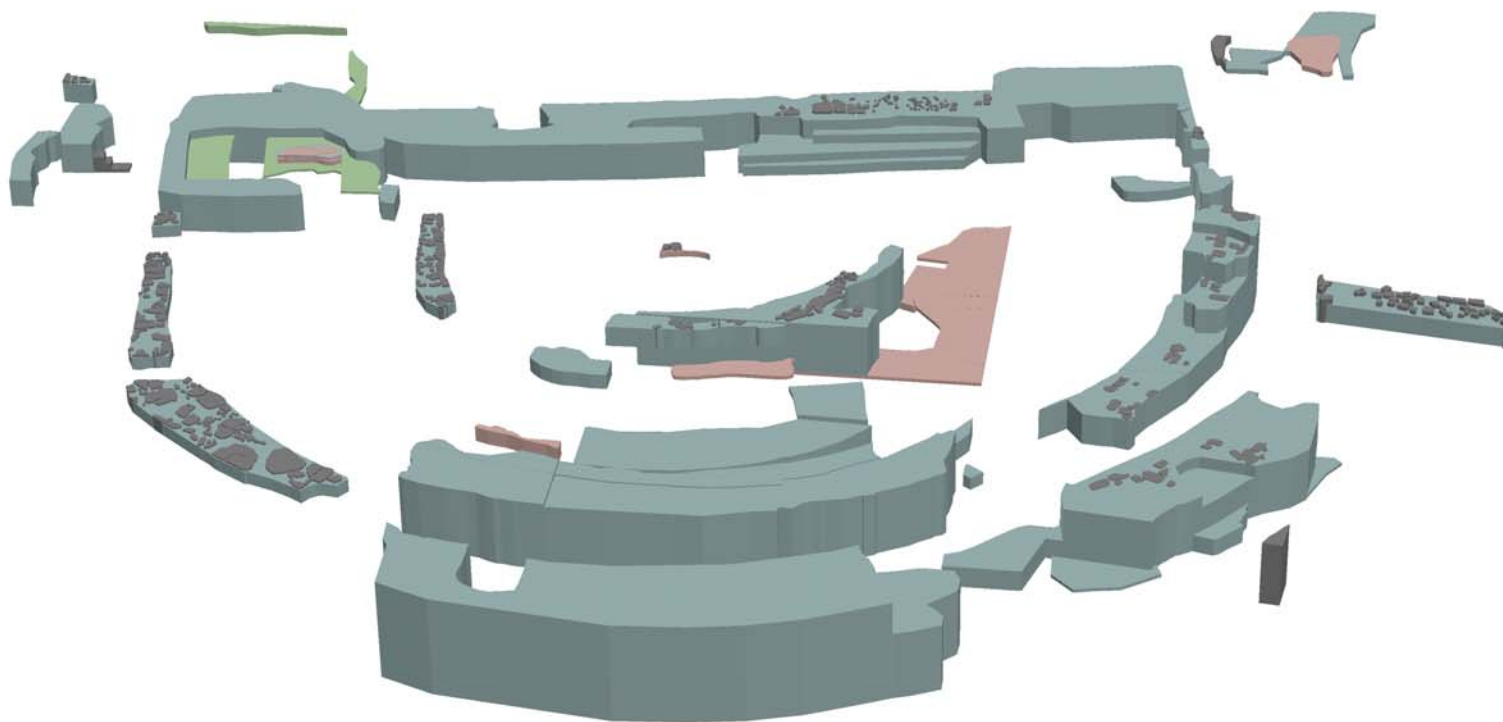
The 2012 Season

Next season is scheduled to be the last season of excavation in Grid 47. It will be a busy summer as we work to successfully conclude our excavation of the Roman odeon. While the odeon is now largely understood as a structure, there is still more to investigate in terms of its construction and relationship to earlier buildings. In particular, we will work behind the third wall of the cavea, an area which offers us the best opportunity to see the odeon in its larger context. Although our excavation area is now the largest one ever opened by The Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon, it is dominated by one building from end to end. Only in the southeast corner of the grid can we hope to get outside the walls of the theatre and have a chance to identify the street level and, possibly, other nearby buildings.

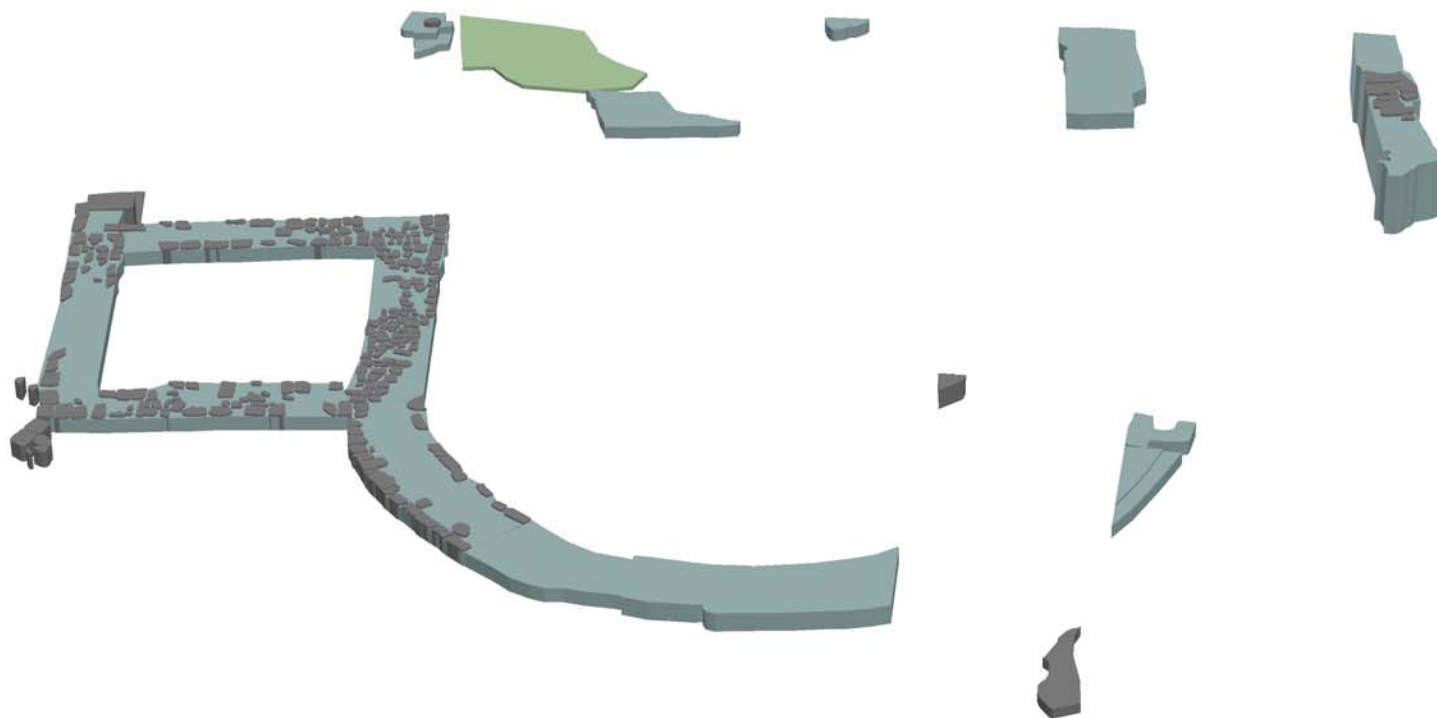
We plan to dig several probes next season which will give us an opportunity to investigate the Hellenistic through Roman, Phases 7, 6 and 5, sequence. We will go down inside the east pier of the scaenae frons which, we believe, will give us access to the interior of the earlier Hellenistic building. We hope to find intact floor levels that might tell us more about the function and date of the building. We will also dig a probe adjacent to either the second or third wall of the cavea in an effort to identify foundation levels or, if the construction methods used for these walls don't allow for such an identification, to get below the walls. We anticipate doing some probes in the former Open Air Museum to clarify the relationships between some of the floors and walls in that area of the grid.

Investigating the Byzantine and Islamic phases will be a major focus of our excavation next season. Deciphering the complex occupational sequence in the eastern part of the grid will offer us an opportunity to investigate some of the best preserved Late Antique and Islamic period material in Ashkelon. It is important to understand the transition from odeon to Byzantine period residential use and, over the intervening years, the intensification of settlement in the area as we try to piece together the evolution of Ashkelon's urban plan in the last centuries of the ancient site's history.

Undoubtedly, new surprises will pop up next season and new questions will need to be answered. I look forward to another fun and challenging season that will cap a successful 5 year excavation of the Roman period city center.



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LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON

GRID 51 FINAL REPORT 2011

K. Birney



Grid 51 Overview at the Conclusion of the 2011 Season (Photo # 19278)

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GRID 51 FINAL REPORT 2011

Season Objectives

2011 saw another fast-paced and intensely productive season of excavation in Grid 51. The upper areas of the Grid – areas which had only seen one prior season of excavation – were the primary focus of excavation, in an effort to bring them closer into phase with the lower Persian period building uncovered in squares 73E and 74W in the preceding years. Omitting only those Fatimid period robber trenches which could not be safely removed to their full depth, we successfully excavated all Islamic, Byzantine and Late Hellenistic-Early Roman period remains, and brought these more recently opened areas into Phase V and IV, the early and middle Hellenistic periods, respectively.

A secondary goal was to ascertain the depth of the 604 B.C. destruction levels in relation to the excavated Phase VII Persian period floors, in order to establish our excavation goals for the next five year sequence at the site. This was accomplished through the opening of a ca. 2 x 3 m probe in the CE room, adjacent to the well **74.F11**, exposing more of a sequence of layers first identified in the section of the well probe **74.F200** in 2008. Both the Hellenistic period and the Iron II objectives were achieved through the tireless efforts of 19 volunteers under the most excellent supervision of Square Supervisors Sara Hoffman (75 and 85), Larry Largent (74) and Laura Wright (83-84) and Assistant Supervisors Hilary Smith-Wikle (74) and Casey Sharp (83-4). I am grateful to each of them for their work ethic, patience and humor.

Phasing and Chronology

With the addition of the Iron Age probe, Grid 51 now has been shown to have occupation in at least nine chronological Phases.

Phase I: Islamic (Fatimid-Crusader, 10th-12th c. A.D., 2 subphases)

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

Phase III: Early Roman (late 2nd B.C. – 1st 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 (ca. 500 B.C – ca. 400 B.C.)

Phase VIII: Iron IIC (7th century)

Phase IX: Pre-7th century

Of these, Phase VIII has been exposed only in the 2 x 3m area of the probe, and Phase IX only in the section of the same. These Phases will not be broadly excavated until the 2014 season.

The 2011 Season results are presented below in chronological order, from earliest to latest. Readers are encouraged to consult the final reports from 2008-2010, which present a complementary picture of the Phase IV-VII rooms not excavated in 2011.

Phase VIII : The Iron Age Probe

Three occupational horizons were observed while removing several courses of the Square 74 well **74.F11** to establish a vertical section for a probe in the CE_E room. Some 40cm below the Phase VII surface **74.U287** appeared what has now been deemed the 604 destruction horizon. Below this, separated by a shallow fill, are two darker horizons: a band of thick grey ash, some 15 cm in depth, and a second area of dense and very dark ash starting at c. 14.33m above sea level and continuing down beyond the current lowest excavated point in the well. Material collected from the uppermost (604) horizon was 7th century, the material from the lower two ash horizons was entirely Iron I, including several Philistine bichrome krater sherds and bell-shaped bowls. There was no Iron II pottery recovered from the intervening levels, suggesting that there may be a gap between the 11th century and the 7th century in Grid 51. Having secured the horizons above (Persian **74.U287**) and below (Iron I) our targeted 604 sequence, we continued to excavate in the eastern portion of the CE_E room.

The 604 Sequence

The earliest surface excavated within the expanded 2 x 3 m probe in the CE_E room was the ashy horizon **74.U322**. **74.U322** lipped up to a NW-SE running wall **74.U301=302** (the midpoint of which had been robbed out by the Islamic well **74.F11**) to its south, and to a stone wall or bench **74.372** in the east. The intensely sandy nature of the laminations which accumulated above this floor (**74.U381, 365, 368, 364**) suggests that it was followed by a horizon of exposure and abandonment, during which silt and sand washed in from areas to the east (as indicated by the gradual tip line in the north section of the probe).

The ephemeral layer **74.U324** was the latest of the Phase VIII surfaces, a thin line of ash and sand set over these fills which lips up to the kurkar-filled stone bin **74.U376** in the west¹, and up to the uppermost course of a stone bench/step in the east **74.318**.² Two intact 7th century cooking juglets (**RP #11822s** and **11931**), the latter having been misfired green, were set on this horizon, along with a fragment of an Assyrian ware plate (**RP#11824**) and a dipper juglet (**RP #11916**). One of the cooking pots sat immediately to the west of a burning pit **73.U367**, around which were several collapsed tabun fragments. On the other side the deposited remains of a meal, fragments of cow and goat, had been deposited.

In the northeast corner, a small patch of charcoal with small chunks of burnt mudbrick in it, approximately 5cm in depth, was set on **74.U324**. This last, and the line of burning noted on the interior (western) face of the bin **74.U376** were the only evidence for any sort of destruction or collapse in association with this horizon. Ceramically, these layers all seem to fit within the late 7th century. A single piece of East Greek Wild Goat II pottery (production dates 625-600 B.C.) was recovered from **74.U364**, the fill below **74.U324**. Above **74.U324**, some 50cm of leveling fill, **74.306**, was set down in preparation

¹ The stone wall/bin **74.U376** was cut into the subfloor fill, and was not associated with the first horizon **74.U322**.

² The architectural function of **74.U318** and **74.U372** is not yet well understood. Perhaps functioning as a wall (**74.U318**) and an adjacent bench (**74.U372**), stepped down some 40cm below the preserved height of **74.318**, both are built with sizeable stones and create a ca. 110 degree angle with the abutting wall **74.301=302**.



Fig. 1 7th century vessels on surface 74.U324 (Photo # 18973, view to SW)

for the construction of the Phase VII Persian building. Unsurprisingly, **U306** contained predominantly Iron Age pottery with a few body sherds of typical Persian fabric.

This ceramic window notwithstanding, it should be noted that there are some difficulties in fully accepting **74.U324** as *The 604 Destruction*, not least of which is the presence of substantial amounts of sandy laminations with seventh century pottery which occur *beneath* it. This would imply that the area was abandoned for a time prior to the construction of the late seventh century building which Nebuchadnezzar was later to destroy. While eighth century horizons at Ashkelon have been notoriously thin or absent, there is no comparable evidence elsewhere at the site for an abandonment in the seventh century, followed by a short-lived late seventh century rebuild immediately prior to the Babylonian destruction.

The sparse evidence for destruction or collapse, the fact that the tabun associated with the surface was neither intact nor complete – which would be expected in a preserved destruction layer – coupled with the sand evidence which points to an occupation and abandonment immediately prior to this phase rather suggest that **74.U324** might well be a reoccupation following the 604 destruction. While the appearance of Wild Goat pottery in the subfloor fill shows that the horizon must postdate 625, it in no way provides a *terminus ante quem* for **74.U324**. It is not inconceivable that some reoccupation at the tel might have occurred shortly following Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the city, if even for a short while. Similar reoccupations were noted in Phase IB at Ekron, for example, or at Tell el-Ful. Nor, given the long lifespan of certain forms is there any specific ceramic evidence which definitively negates this option. It is possible that the destruction layer might belong to a lower horizon – perhaps not yet excavated. A complete storage jar (**Rp# ????**) and cooking jug were recovered from within the fill levels **74.364=368=365**. During the course of excavation it was presumed that they were vessels which were sitting on the lower surface **74.382**. Subsequent excavation showed, however, that the base of the jar is rested below this surface, presumably on a lower – as yet unreached – horizon. Alternately, it is possible that this complete jar and cooking pot were in a pit cut from the higher surface **74.U324**, which was missed, although pit lines were actively sought.

We present these reservations not to necessarily argue in favor of a 6th century reoccupation on the basis of a 2x3m area, but merely to note that the evidence for a 604 destruction in this area is not as clear as might be hoped. The Weizmann Institute has

sampled extensively from the surfaces associated with the Phase VIII-IX horizons for FTIR, phytolith and micromorphological study. It is hoped that their results will help us to better understand the sequence uncovered in this probe. In particular, we hope to learn :

- the nature of the phytoliths in the charcoal area on **74.U324**, and whether they could be indicative of roof collapse (i.e. palms, roofing reeds)
- whether or not the burning in this charcoal area occurred *in situ*
- whether the horizons beneath **U.324** show clear microsigns of abandonment

These answers should be available by the start of the 2012 excavation season.

Phases VII-IV: The Persian – Hellenistic Neighborhood

Grid 51 encompasses nearly all of one Phoenician-style *insula* and the westernmost edge of a second, separated from the first by a broad north-south street. Building 1, the original *insula*, was constructed in the 5th century B.C. and was reused continuously along the same wall lines well into the Early Roman period. While most of the architectural plan is well understood, each season brings a bit more clarity to the layout and syntax of the space. **Fig. 2** below reflects the our current understanding of the plan of Building 1 and the surrounding neighborhood as of this season's end.

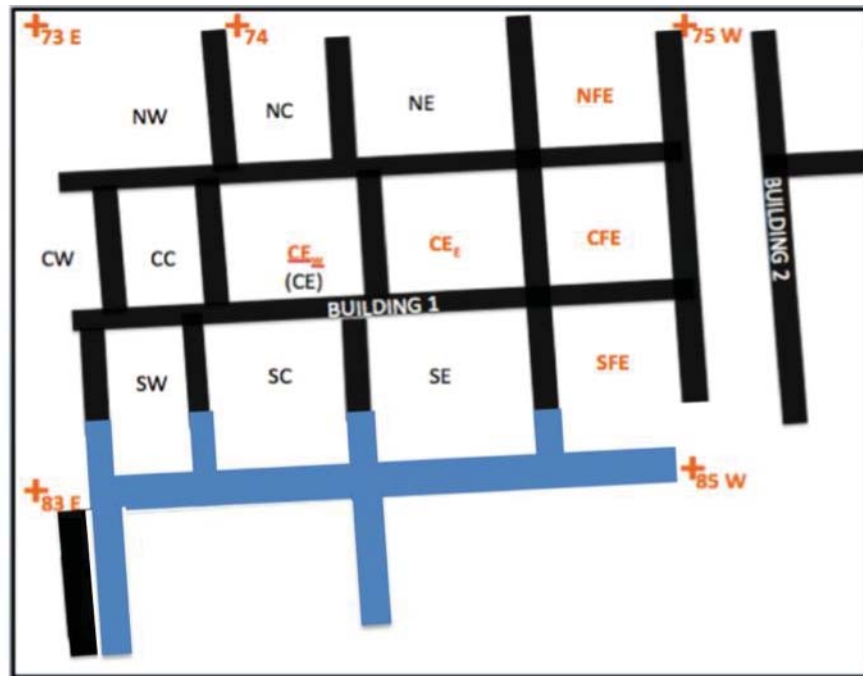


Fig. 2 Grid 51 Persian-Hellenistic Neighborhood plan as currently exposed
(view to N, changes from 2010 indicated in blue)

The basic room layout and wall lines were discussed thoroughly in Grid Reports from 2009 and 2010. 2011 focused upon the eastern (74) and southern rooms (83-84) of Building 1, the western edge of Building 2, and the street dividing them. This season's work confirmed that Building 1 does indeed continue south into Squares 83 and 84, and that the wall **83.2 = 84. U3** (and its predecessors which serve as its foundation) represents the southern closing wall for the rooms seen in Squares 73 and 74 south in most subsequent

phases.³ Moreover, the discovery of a number of doorways, most of which were functional in Phases VI-V, now allows us a better sense of building use patterns. (See “A Note on Doorways” under Phase V, below)

Phase VII Early: Early Persian

Phase VII has been excavated in most of the rooms of Building 1 contained within 73E and 74W during previous seasons. This year, preparation for the Iron Age probe in the CE_E room of 74 Lower revealed the earliest subphase of Phase VII within this space. The Phase VII B floor, **74.U287** had been reached at the end of the 2010 season but thoroughly sandbagged to protect them from winter erosion and minimize contamination. They functioned with the foundation stones (**74.U375**) of the Phases VII-V mudbrick wall **74.U201=211** to the north, but in the south clearly run under the Phase VI closing wall. Later within this Phase, the N-S dividing wall **74.F282** was constructed and included a doorway which connected the eastern and western halves of the CE room. Apart from a glass bead (**MC#63301**), some small bits of metal and slag, there was no material culture to indicate the use of space. We note only that both on this floor and the Phase VII A floor above it (**74.U284**) copious amounts of reddish *hamra* clay were smeared on a number of the floor laminations, presumably as a sealant of some kind. (See below: “A Note on *Hamra*”).

Phase VI:

No Phase VI remains were excavated in 2011.

Phase V (Late Persian-Early Hellenistic):

Phase V spans the transition between the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic periods, and is characterized by the reuse and rebuilding of the original Phase VI mudbrick floor building. It was broadly discussed in both the 2008 and 2009 reports (appearing in the former as Phase “3C”), and a revised understanding of the SW room in Building 1 was presented in the 2010 Final Report.

This season Phase V remains were excavated in the CFE and CE rooms of Square 74. The CFE room was defined in this phase by the substantial stone walls **74.U342** and in the north, **74.U323** in the west, **74.U330** in the south and a substantial ashlar wall **74.U341** which fronted the street in the east. The connecting CE_E room shared the closing wall **74.323** on its eastern edge, and was limited by **74.194=144** in the north and **74.189=73.F153** in the south. CFE and CE rooms were connected by a doorway in wall **74.323** with an ashlar and cobble threshold **74.U348**.

Occupational debris associated with Phase V surfaces has tended to be quite sparse, the only exception being the CC room (discussed in 2009) and the NE room (discussed in 2008), each of which showed some occupational buildup and small cooking hearths. Beyond these rooms, however, Phase V was marked by minimal occupational debris, capped by evidence for abandonment in the form of layers of sand or clay.⁴ This pattern continued in the CE and NFE rooms, where clay and sandy surfaces **74.354** and **74.352** showed only sparse signs of use, yielding only a small sampling of metal bits, a flint scraper (**MC# 64576**) and a hammerstone. (**MC# 64577**). The only material culture of note was a fragment of a terracotta sculptural element recovered just above floor **74.U354**

³ Some uncertainty had remained regarding the southern closing wall of the southernmost row of rooms, it being unclear whether the rooms appearing in Squares 83 and 84 were part of the original Building 1, or represented a new building to the south. (See 2010 Grid Report, **Fig. 2**).

⁴ NC: **74.L171**, NE: **74.L191**, SE: **74.182**, SW: **73.L235**, NW: **73.L100**

(MC#64808). The preserved fragment, showing an eye, eyebrow, and coiled hairline, is typical of Etruscan and Greek *Gorgoneion* antefixes. Such architectural elements were apparently affixed to the eaves of temples or shrines (Stern 2010: 47-51). A complete parallel exists at Dor (Martin, forthcoming), where they are interpreted either as antefixes or masks. Our fragment, in addition to having no eyeholes, is made of rather thick and solid terracotta and as such seems ill-suited for the latter.

A Note on Doorways

A series of doorways functional in Phases VI and V were noted this season, most of which seemed to have been deliberately blocked up at the outset of Phase IV. These included an entrance into the NFE room from the north-south street, and a series of connecting passageways into the center of the building. These doorways tend to be marked by large cut ashlar jambs, regardless of whether the superstructure is mudbrick or stone. In one instance, (83.U?) the ashlar of the doorway are all that remains of the entire wall line, the rest having been robbed out.

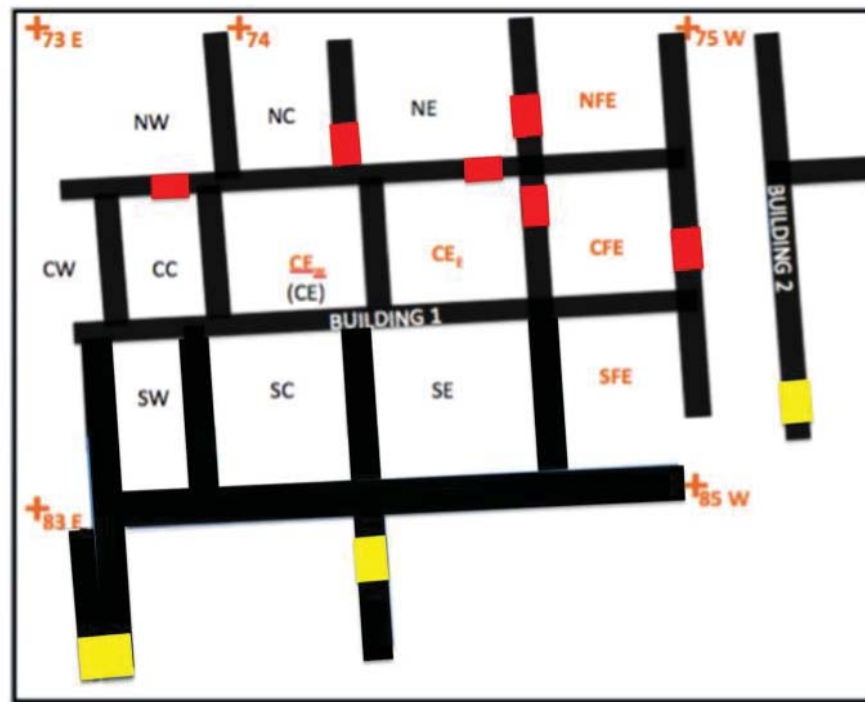


Fig. 3 Phase VI-V Building plan showing doorways.

Doorways in red function in VI-V; doorways in yellow function in IV; earlier use unknown.

The majority of the doorways preserved seem to have an E-W orientation, perhaps facilitating flow from the street into the interior rooms of the space. In the 2010 Final report, we discussed the “duplex” nature of Phoenician *insulae* and noted that sometimes the alignment of doorways could help to reconstruct the original dividing wall of the building. If this methodology holds true, then perhaps the northern/southern division may be accurate, making the wall 74.F201=211 the E-W backbone of the duplex. The differences in material and construction techniques between the eastern and western halves of the building noted last year, however, should still be considered in addressing this question.

Of particular note was a doorway constructed in 74.U323 (Fig. 4b), connecting the CFE with the CE_E room. This doorway had a sizeable jamb of three or four beautifully cut ashlar, into the top of which were two drilled slots set 2 cm back from the eastern wall face

(See Fig. 4), perhaps to support a wooden frame superstructure. On the west side of the door, a rectangular hole had been drilled into one of the stones in the abutting E wall **74.U199=144**, perhaps for a bolt or other locking mechanism (Fig. 4a).



Fig. 4a and b Doorway in Wall 74.323 connecting CFE and CE_E Rooms
Photo #s 18979 (left, view to W) and 18965 (right, view to NE).

Phase IV (Hellenistic): An Industrial Neighborhood

Phase IV surfaces were excavated this year in the NFE, CFE and SFE rooms of 74, in the western half of Square 83, and in northern fragments preserved within Square 85. Phase IV floors were reached but not excavated in the center of 83.

Phase IV was marked by a nearly total rebuild of the original Persian period *insulae*. Deep fills were laid down throughout Building 1, and the Phase V walls - some remaining intact as they fell - were collapsed both on the interior and exterior of the buildings to level the space for new construction. In some cases the building material collapsed inwards included a host of well-cut ashlar (i.e., **74.U357** in the CFE room). That the Phase IV builders chose to ignore such substantial building material is surprising. However it is clear that the while some of the ashlar of **U357** lay close to or on the floor, many others were clearly deposited in and around the fill **74.U249**. The same pattern can be observed in the street, where an identical fill layer (**74.U76=74.U249**) can be seen to have spilled into the street, with ashlar in it. The quality of the fill itself is clean and brown, and lacks the characteristics of either destruction debris or street material. It may be that an earthquake or other event triggered the initial collapse, and that subsequently it became necessary to deliberately collapse the remaining walls. In any event, some very nice building material was abandoned in these leveling fills.

In the east of the Grid, thick laminations of sand (**75.U83**) mark the abandonment horizon at the end of Phase V. Some street debris (**75.U78**) accumulated atop this sand horizon on the eastern edge of the street, and washed around the remaining stub of a standing Phase V doorjamb/wall segment.⁵ Above this, the builders of Phase IV constructed

⁵ The N-S wall **75.U39** consists of two parts: a southern edge with stacked ashlar doorjamb, deeply founded and not yet floated, and a northern edge **75.U39**, founded at a higher elevation on top of street material **75.U78**. Without floating the wall it will not be possible to discern the join and dissociate these two features. It should be noted that the sequence in this area is complicated. The northern part of the wall was robbed out by Byzantine and Islamic robber trenches **75.U31** and **75.U46/7**, respectively said to have been completed in 2010. At the beginning of 2011, the compact nature of the material above the stones of **75.U39** underneath these trenches was felt to be too compact to be robber trench, and were classified as street on the basis of texture. However, it is

a N-S wall **75.U39** integrating it with a pre-existing Phase V door jamb on its southern edge, and rebuilt the southern extension of this wall **75.U61=69**. Within the Building 2, a leveling fill **75.U** was set down and three mudbrick-lined installations **65.U2=75.59=75.51** and **75.55/56=75.U44=75.U23** were set down below the floor .

In the street itself, Phase IV is marked by the construction of a large drain (**75.U16=85.31**) which ran the length of the street and sloped down from N-S. The west side of the street was paved with flat stones (**75.U66=85.U18**) which ran up to a well **85.U23** and its adjacent platform **85.U6**:



Fig. 5 Phase IV Hellenistic well 75.23, well platform, and paved street 75.66=85.18
(Bisected by the 75-85 baulk. Photo 18824, view to W)

Within Building 1, the Phase IV builders erected a new terrace walls **74.U222** and **74.U245** separating the NFE rooms from CFE and NE, respectively, within which the floor **74.U246** was set down. The CFE room is defined by the pier-and-cobble wall **74.260=241=240** (which blocks up the Phase IV doorway out into the street), Walls **74.U255** and **272** form a narrow staircase or storage room adjacent to CFE. The SFE room was defined by walls **74.U330** in the north, **74.U334** in the west, **74.U328** in the east, the southern closing wall having been lost to the E-W Islamic trench **74.U265**.

Phase IV in both Buildings is characterized by industrial activity in the rooms which lined the street **75.75=78**. In Building 1, the floors of both the NFE (**74.U246**) and the CFE room (**74.U253**) and its adjacent storage area (**74.U272**) were thickly lined with a plaster made of hamra clay mixed with shell fragments. While its purpose is unknown, it may have been lined thus to be capable of supporting greater weight, or as a protective coating in the presence of liquids. The presence of a small buttressing wall **74.U254** on the southern edge of **74.U222** may support the former notion. (A similar cobble buttressing wall (**75.U81**) was noted in Building 2, set just inside the doorway abutting the north edge of wall **75.U61**, likewise immediately underneath the Phase IV floor.)

impossible that street at this elevation could have washed through the standing wall associated with the bins at the same elevation on the other side of the wall. It seems more likely that the ca. 5cm of material that remained covering wall **75.U39** should be identified as part of the later trench material. The alternative is that the standing wall **U39** was robbed out at the end of Phase IV, and that Phase III street material (**75.U43**) built up over it.

In the SFE some sort of large installation was constructed though it is impossible to reconstruct its precise function as it was heavily damaged by later pitting activity and the Phase II vat construction. The constituent remaining parts include only a grey mudbrick platform with plastered southern edge **74.U369**, an adjacent pottery-and tabun-fragment-lined surface **74.U373** which sloped up to this platform (possibly plastered over?). The installation was uncovered in the final days of excavation and will have to be further explored next season.

In Building 2, a series of bins **65.U2=75.59=75.51** and **75.55/56=75.U44=75.U23** were constructed. The southern bin was fully excavated in 2010, and the construction of both was described in detail in the 2010 Grid report. The northern bin was excavated this season, and while its *hamra* and plaster lining was identical to its southern brother, this installation preserved a thick layer of burnt shell (**75.U58**) in its interior. The shell within had been heated sufficiently to transform their naturally aragonite into calcite, which is essential for the production of the lime used in mortars and plaster. It is unclear whether the sediments in this installation were burned to a high enough temperature for these shells to be *in situ* evidence of shell lime production. (This answer requires the establishment of a new temperature baseline for the reddish *hamra* soil used to line the installation; see “A Note on Hamra”, below.) For the present, however, it seems reasonable to presume that the shells are *in situ*, an artifact of the installation’s use, rather than a secondary dump of burned shell. If the temperature range is sufficiently high (above 700 degrees) then this may well have been a facility for the production of lime plaster.



Fig 6. Shell lining 75.U58 in installation 75.55=44. (Photo 18961, view to N)

The Phase IV interior rooms of Building 1 excavated in 1999-2000 and 2008 (NE, NC, SW, SE) did not show any clear evidence for industrial use. This appears to also hold true for the southernmost row of rooms in Building 1, in Squares 84 and 84, although these areas are admittedly quite small, consisting only of three patches of floor on the southern edge of the SW and SC rooms, (**83.U50 = 73.152 and 84. U117**) respectively, and the remains of what may be a strip of exterior surface **84.U113**. This creates an interesting picture of the use of space within the neighborhood insulae where, as one might expect, the rooms facing the road would be best suited either as shops or workshops. The ready proximity of water from the nearby well would have been convenient for many of these manufacturing industries.

Phase III

Phasing within Grid 51 in the after the Late Hellenistic period is generally challenging in that the proliferation of Fatimid robber trenches not only robs of us connections between rooms, but even severs connections within rooms, or removes whole rooms in their entirety (*vis.* **84.11=63, 85.U10/11, *inter alia.***) The patchwork remnants have been stitched together but the picture of Phases I-III remains incomplete. Phase III remains particularly fragmented. Indeed, over the past few years there has been some discussion as to whether a clear Phase III – a Roman phase – is attested within Grid 51. Ceramically, this is a difficult horizon to define, being that the ceramic seriation marking the end of the Hellenistic and the beginning of the Roman period is hazy. Those forms which are known elsewhere in Israel to be diagnostic (such as Nabatean wares) do not seem to appear at Ashkelon. Those forms which can be defined as middle Roman seem to appear in Grid 51 only in the later (Byzantine) materials, and cannot be confined to their own phase. What remains is a selection of layers which express this transitional horizon between the late Hellenistic and early Roman, with forms that span the 1st centuries B.C. to the first or early 2nd centuries A.D. With only a few exceptions they lack clear architectural connections. These early Roman assemblages fall in layers – and sometimes floors – which tend to fall third in the progression of floors from the latest Islamic material down to the Later Hellenistic. For this reason, we are preserving an elusive and highly unsatisfying Phase III within the grid, in the hopes that it will be better understood in future seasons.

Disconnected surfaces in Squares 83 and 84 have been assigned to Phase III on the basis of these criteria. Apart from these small hints, it is very difficult to reconstruct a full picture buildings in which they functioned. Sandy courtyard layers **83.F59=105** defined by the wall **84.F46=84.F3** in the north and **83.U5/12** in the west, and probably on the south by the meager remaining stones of wall **83.U9=84.115**. In the SW room, an ephemeral surface **83.272** was noted running up to the wall **83.U39=73.F7** in the east and **73.U44=73.137** in the west. No material was recovered from this floor. The richest occupational debris from this Phase was recovered from interior surface **83.F63**, west of wall **83.U5/12**. A cache of eight unbaked clay loomweights (**MC#s 64631-2, 64685-90**), a cylindrical bone bead, and what appears to be an iron blade or tool (sword?) measuring nearly three quarters of a meter in length were recovered from this floor (**MC#64769**). The pottery from this horizon has ranged from Hellenistic to Early Roman, with the latest material being clearly 1st century A.D.

In Square 84, a ca. 3x2 island (surrounded on all sides by Islamic robber trenches) of floating surfaces **84.F93 and 84.F102** were assigned to Phase III on the basis of ceramic evidence and their sequence. Further the east, exterior surfaces were excavated in the thin (0.50m) strip which remained between the two Islamic robber trenches **84.U11=63** and **74.U265**.

Very little of Phase III was preserved in Square 74. In the NFE room, the northern section preserves a small fraction of what may have been a Phase III surface **74.U238** on the highest step north of wall **74.U222**, the rest having been bulldozed away. Any remnants of Phase III in the CFE room would similarly have disappeared in the jaws of the shufel, with the exception of remaining pits. In the SFE, some patches of the diving surface coated with chalk plaster, **74.U373** might be part of an earlier vestige of industrial activity in the area. Generally, however, the Phase III horizon was heavily disturbed by pitting action in association with the construction of the later Byzantine wine vat and associated facilities.

Phase II: Byzantine Wine Production

The Byzantine “villa” was first described in the 1999 Grid Report. It reused in part the original wall lines of the original 5th century Phoenician *insula*, in particular the Phase IV walls. The only additions noted in 2011 were in the construction of the ashlar walls **74.U251** and **74.U230=75.10**, which defined the northern and eastern limits of the SFE room in both this and the subsequent Phase IB.

Preserved floors of this building were excavated in 1998 between the well-built ashlar walls **74.F5**, **74.F7** of the NE and NC rooms, and yielded an impressive assortment of decorative and prestige objects. These included an array of bone and ivory cosmetic accessories including a bone spoon, two kohl sticks (**MC #s 50652, 50653**), 6 coins, beads and intact glass vessels from floor **74.LF60**. In 2011, small patches of Phase II surfaces came to light almost immediately underneath the shell concrete of the Islamic bathhouse, separated from the above only by shallow layers of brown silty fill. In Square 84 surfaces **84.U84** and **88** in the west and **84.85** in the east, separated by a N-S wall stub **84.U78**, yielded a similarly rich assemblage, including a bronze ring (**MC# 64202**), four coins (**MC #s 64244, 64285, 63682, 64330**), glass beads (**MC #s 64131, 63696**), two bronze pins and a fibula (**MC#s 64144, 64290, 64553**), a Late Period scarab (**MC# 64517**) and a worked bone hairpin (**MC# 63673**). The consistency in both the number and nature (items of personal adornment) of the finds from the 1999 and 2011 seasons support the interpretation of this building as private and relatively wealthy household.

In the SFE room, a beautifully preserved mosaic-tiled wine vat was uncovered (Fig. 7). The vat itself was square, with densely lined plaster sides that were preserved some 20cm high, and lined with limestone tesserae embedded in thick plaster. In the center was a circular settling sump that had a round marble piece as its base.



Fig. 7 Tiled wine vat 74.U264, and southern edge of 74.U308 (ashlars). View to south.

Portions of the shell platform **74.U233**, a Fatimid construction which put the vat out of use, had likely functioned with this vat as an adjacent treading floor (See Fig. 8, next page). With its edges defined by the ashlar pier **74.U308** on the south, and similar ashlar edges on the northern and eastern edges. The rough outline of an ashlar-edged treading

platform is visible in the 2010 overhead photo taken at the season's end (marked in red); the vat was uncovered beneath the area marked in blue:



Fig. 8 Platform 74 U233, reused in a Fatimid building, seen from above (view to N)

When pressing was complete, open-air presses were said to have been washed out using salt and water, then covered over until the next year's pressing season. (Sari Molhem 1997:199). This may explain why the sump and the areas of the vat had been filled up with clean beach sand (shells and all). The rough character of this fill would have served both to scour the spaces between tiles while also being relatively sterile and easy to remove. After the completion of the brief pressing season between June and September, the inhabitants likely cleaned and covered the installation with the intention of reusing it in the following year, but the building went out of use before that time. The layer of leveling fill which separated the vat from the shell concrete platform **U233** constructed over it was set directly on top of this sand. (While this practice is typically documented for uncovered structures, it seems reasonable to assume that it might equally be a practice in a household or state level of production where the space might have served more than one purpose.)⁶

The appearance of this Byzantine wine vat has brought clarity to a room **74.F.25** excavated in 1998-2000 in Square 74 and which has merited much speculation in the intervening years. It was excavated in separate pieces over the course of three separate seasons (1998-2000), and was therefore poorly understood in each of them. Initially dubbed an Islamic lime "kiln" in 1999, **74.25** was discovered upon later inspection of the pottery, to be a Byzantine installation cut down into Hellenistic rooms. In 2010 noted certain features of its construction, including a plastered (industrial) floor and suggested a possible association with the later bathhouse, either as a pool or an area for burning. The reconsideration of both the ceramic and the architectural evidence, particularly in light of

⁶ S. Sari and E. Molhem, "The Technique and Mechanism of the Wine Press at Sa'ad". *Dirastat* 24/1: 196-211. as cited in L. Khalil and F. Mayyada al-Nammari, "Two Large Wine Presses at Khirbet Yajuz, Jordan" *BASOR* 318 (2000): 41-57.

the appearance of the nearby wine vat, and the existence of some parallel constructions at nearby sites has narrowed these possibilities.

In revisiting the excavation notes for each of the three seasons of its excavations, we can reconstruct the installation of **74.F25** as having three functional parts:

(1) An upper area of ca. 1.5 square meters in the east, defined by the ashlar blocks of **74.F225, 226, and 227**. This area was paved with cobbles (**74.F105=74.F224**) and may well have had paved marble flooring above these well, from the single residual piece visible in the 74 lower East Section at this elevation. The lowest elevation of this part of the installation was at 18.85m, although it is clear that we have only the lowest portions of it preserved and its floor may have been even higher.

(2) A lower basin (the original “kiln” room), the base of which was supported with multiple rows of cobbles, paved with marble tile fragments, and then coated with plaster, at an elevation of 18.45m. This was connected to the higher eastern section by a square “spout” of sorts, constructed by placing two rectangular tiles of marble upright between an upper and lower ashlar. The “spout” showed signs of plastering inside. (**Fig. 9**)

(3) A sunken “sump”, similarly tiled with marble fragments and plastered, the base of which sat at just over 18.0m. (**Fig. 10**)



Fig 9. Sunken basin 74.F25 (Photo # 99-12156. view to W)
Note plastered “spout” in foreground, and the drop from the upper area into the basin.



Fig. 10 Marble tiled sump (F119) in sunken basin 74.F.25 (Photo 00-12931, to N). The tile is incised with a decorative pattern, and is therefore clearly in secondary use.

Botanical evidence recovered from both the 1997-2000 and 2011 seasons⁷ suggests olive oil, in that all botanicals recovered were uniformly olive pits. And indeed, household production of wine and olive oil is apparently common in rural Byzantine estates. We lack, however, the large pressing stones or counterweights typical of olive-pressing installations, which may strengthen the case for wine production.

The date of the tiled vat itself is suggested both by stylistic parallels from east of the site, as well as by the appearance of Byzantine pottery within the backfill of the vat itself. The marble flooring of basin room, **74.U98**, was covered by two layers of plaster separated by a shallow layer of fill (presumably indicating a replastering of the space) from which Byzantine pottery was discovered. Note however, that the majority of the pottery associated with this installation falls within the Late Hellenistic to Early Roman horizon, and that the Byzantine pottery recovered from it comes primarily from actions that either reused the facility or put it out of use. As such its original construction may have been earlier. All similarly constructed parallels in the Ashkelon region appear to be Late Byzantine, however.⁸

Wines from the region of Ashkelon and Gaza were famous in the Byzantine period, and were enjoyed as far as Western Europe, renowned for their quality and even their medicinal efficacy. (Johnson 2008). Excavation and surveys to the north and east of the city have uncovered evidence for the industrial scale production of wine and olive oil during this time, and also for the nearby production of the famous Ashkelonian and Gazan store jars in which these vintages crossed the Mediterranean.⁹ Yet despite the association between the city of Ashkelon and its famous wines, no wine presses of the Roman and Byzantine era had been discovered at the site itself. This wine vat is the first evidence we have for wine

⁷ **MC # 53028** (from **74.F98**, marble flooring); **MC#s 52483, 52474, 52475, 52027, 52321** (from **74.L85**, fill above the marble flooring); **MC#s 53716, 53783, 53992, 53867** (from **74.F119**, the marble-tiled sump). The above were recovered in 1999-2000. To these we add **MC # 63659**, olive pits recovered from (**74.U244**, the ashy matrix surrounding the cobbles (**74.F105**) which might have supported a platform. We await the phytolith results from sediment samples **#541** and **#542** (2011) taken from those layers as well.

⁸ Y. Huster, pers. comm..

⁹ See summary of sites in Johnson and Stager (2008):481-2.

production within the city of Ashkelon itself during this era. It is not industrial in scale, however, and it seems more likely that this production facility belonged to a private household or estate. The finds on the associated Phase II floors to the south of this room excavated this season, and the reports of jewelry discussed in the 1998 in the NE rooms dating to this period may confirm the original interpretation of this building as a Byzantine “villa”.

One creative estimate suggests that 2.5 acres of planted vines are required to yield 100 L (26 gallons) of wine, depending upon the quality of the wine.¹⁰ Even in its current state of preservation, **74.U264** was capable of holding up to 2,472 liters (if filled to its currently preserved brim), which by this estimate would require in excess of 60 acres to fill it. It may be significant that in Grid 50, just east and downhill from the villa, Phases I and II were characterized by rows of “tree pits”. Originally identified as a scenic park or windbreak for houses higher up the hill, perhaps this might be better interpreted as the remains of a private olive grove or stakes for viticulture. The villa need not have had to produce all of its own crop, however. In many rural estates, inhabitants of the surrounding countryside would bring their produce to a central/common installation for pressing. Perhaps this wealthy household could have served as a central pressing place for nearby vineyards as well.¹¹

The vat and treading platform were covered over with cobbles and shell concrete during the subsequent use of the space as an Islamic bathhouse in Phase IB. Fill layer **74.U??** was set down over the top, between the sand backfill of the vat and the shell concrete **74.U233** which was set down above it, poured over the cobbles and ashlar **74.U308, 74.U ??? and 74.U???** which functioned with the vat, incorporating them into one large platform. Portions of this platform, and the floor which sat some 30cm lower, were tiled with ceramic tiles, forming a subfloor chamber in this room (documented in the 2010 Grid Report). This clearly marks a change in the use of space, and an end to wine production during the Islamic period.

Phase IA (Early Fatimid-Crusader): The Bathhouse Returns

The bathhouse/tiled building discussed thoroughly in the 2010 Grid report was removed this season. The density of the concrete, both the shell concrete used in the construction of the walls and to line some of the floors, and the non-shell concrete which supported other identical tile floors, required the use of a jackhammer. It was during the removal of one of the chunks concrete platform/bedding for ceramic tiles of the bathhouse (**85.U7**) that the concrete split open to reveal yellow glazed Crusader *scraffiato* pottery and Fatimid purple-glazed cooking pot fragments embedded *within* the concrete itself. While our fundamental understanding of the building and its use has not changed, the late pottery would appear to push the tile-floor building out of the late Byzantine period and into the late Islamic Fatimid-Crusader period of the 10-12th centuries A.D. The reuse of the Phase II plaster-lined basin room **74.F25**, marked by the laying of a shallow fill and resealing of the basin with a new coat of plaster **74.F84** probably also belongs to this phase, marking the reshaping of the earlier installations to suit the new function of the building.

Some uncertainties regarding this attribution should be acknowledged. The disparate remaining portions of the concrete building were not connected, their relationships severed by the dramatic robbing activity which brought this phase to an end (even to the extent of removing whole floors of rooms). As such, we cannot conclusively

¹⁰ Rautman, *Daily Life in the Byzantine Empire* 2006: 181.

¹¹ M. Heltzer, “Olive oil and wine production in Phoenicia and in the Mediterranean trade” in M. Amouretti and J-P. Brun (eds.) *La Production de vin et d l’huile en Méditerranée*. (Athens 1993): 49-54;

connect the shell concrete walls and wall stubs (**83.F5, 73.F9-74.F20, 74.F19**) directly to the patch of concrete in which the Fatimid pottery was found. This process is rendered even more difficult by the fact that many remains of this building, including whole chunks of concrete with tile still attached, had clearly been upended and toppled into the robber trenches as backfill.¹² It is possible that the shell concrete walls and tiling could have functioned as an original use of the building in the late Byzantine/early Umayyad (the latest pottery from other portions of this building being no later than this), and that a rebuild which included the laying of new concrete floor was concluded in the Crusader period. The expansion of Grid 51 an additional 5m to the south should expose more of the remains of this building and perhaps shed light on this question in 2012.

Phase IB: The Pillaging of Grid 51

The tiled building was dramatically robbed shortly afterwards during the subsequent Crusader period, as were many of the walls belonging to the later phases of the *insula*. So significant is the robbing activity that in many respects we know these later phases only in their negative imprint: as floors without walls. Given our new understanding of the Phase IA shell and concrete building, the numerous robber trenches discussed in the 2008-2010 reports should be reassigned to this latest subphase of the Islamic period.

One striking feature of these Phase IA robber trenches was that the vast majority of the Fatimid-Crusader pottery recovered from them was quite fresh. Cooking pots were little, if at all used, and many seemed nearly brand new from their fabric. Glazed wares were not only abundant but their coloration seems to have been unusually well-preserved, perhaps suggesting only a short period of use. In fact, the pottery represented appears to fit quite neatly within the window of ca. 1150-1185 A.D.. This suggests that the robbing may have occurred after a sharp break of some kind – perhaps immediately after the arrival of the Crusaders, or after Salahadin's destruction of the city.

A Note on Hamra Soil

A recurring feature in Grid 51 is the use of a variant of *hamra* soil as a lining, applied/smeared while wet like a plaster onto surfaces or the interior of various insulations. Striations of *hamra* clay of varying thickness are visible among floor laminations throughout the Grid from the Persian period through the Byzantine period. This same clay was used as a lining for the Phase IV mudbrick bin/installations in Building 2 (discussed 2010), and similarly lined the interior of a small Byzantine drain, above a layer of shell concrete.

According to soil specialist M. Toffolo from the Weizmann institute, this variant of *hamra* clay is not local to Ashkelon, being more reddish in coloration than the local brown *hamra* soil, but was likely brought in from Nizanim, some 15 km away. The heavier concentration of clay particles in this type of soil seems to make it less permeable to moisture, making it a good choice for surface treatment – especially when dealing with liquids - or apparently as insulation in heating installations. The reddish color of the *hamra*, however, very much resembles the coloration of mudbrick or regular soil that has

¹² The chain of connection, such as it is, runs as follows: Concrete pier **84.F5** was covered by shell plaster subflooring. Identical subflooring ran underneath the ceramic tile flooring of **84.U??**. Concrete non-shell subflooring was uncovered at an identical elevation slightly further to the east, and the concrete patch from which the Fatimid pottery was recovered lay within a robber trench (at an equivalent elevation), with ceramic tiles identical to **84.U38** attached above it.

been exposed to heat. In 2010, *hamra* soils which had been used to line the bins Building 2 were sampled extensively, and renewed samples were taken in 2011. Visual inspection would suggest that these soils were burnt. However, the first spectra returned on the 2010 samples indicated that they either had *not* been burnt, or that they had only been exposed to temperatures below 350-440 degrees C - they heat produced by an average cooking fire or oven. This season it was determined, given the non-local nature of these soils, that a new baseline should be established specifically for this reddish variant of *hamra* soil, because the divergence in its mineral composition with respect to the local brown *hamra* might cause a different response to heat. We await the results of the new study, and hope to apply the results to better understand industrial and construction techniques throughout the Grid.

2012 Goals

Plans to expand the grid an additional 15 x 5 meters to the south were forestalled in 2011 by a limited number of volunteers, but the new cut will be made immediately prior to the 2012 season. This expansion will allow us to expose the southern edge of Building One, and allow for safer excavation to the depths necessary to reach the promising Iron I material glimpsed in the 74 probe. Next season will focus on bringing the upper areas of the Grid through Phases V and VI, down to the level of the Persian mudbrick-floored building in as many rooms of Building 1 as possible.

Thanks are due to directors Larry Stager and Daniel Master for the continuing opportunity to participate in the new phase of the Ashkelon Expedition.

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Grid 51

Phase 1a

Supervisor: KJB

July 21, 2011

1:100

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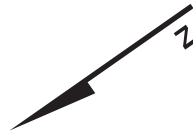


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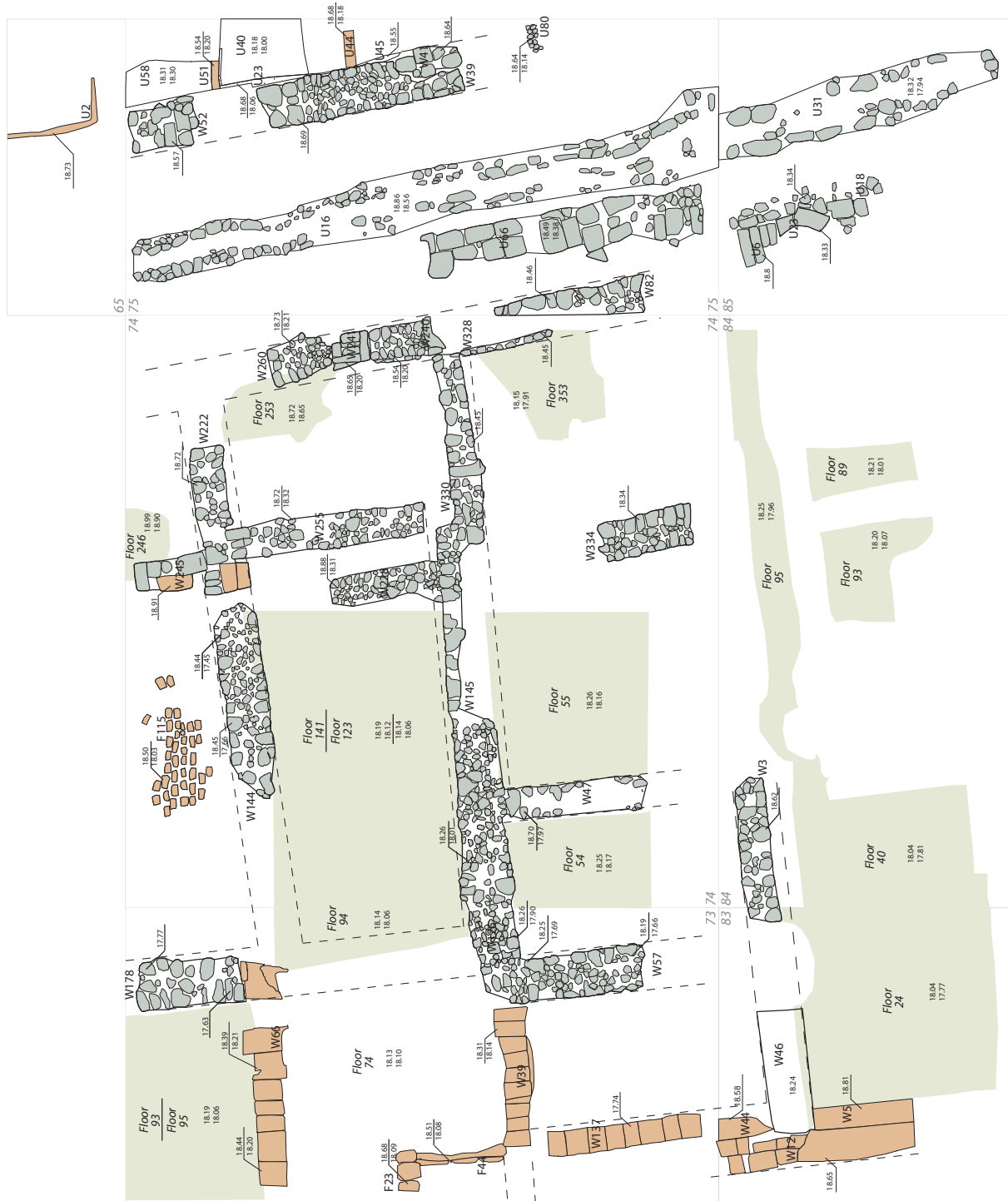
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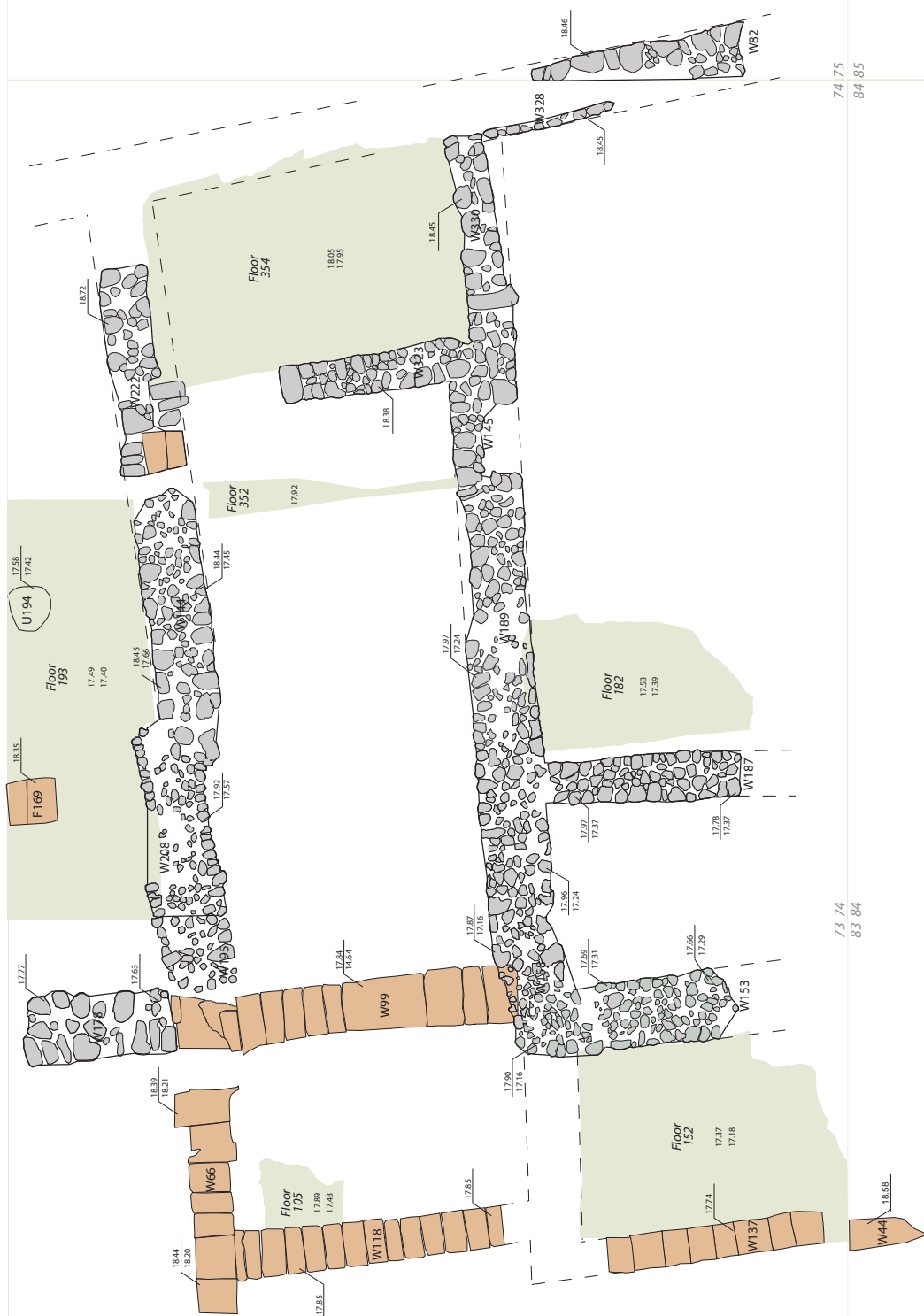
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LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON

GRID 10 FINAL REPORT 2011

Philip Johnston

These are the results of excavations carried out in a 2x20m step trench in Ashkelon's Grid 10, situated on the North Slope directly above and South of the exposed face of the exposed medieval talus. These excavations occurred between July 3 and July 8, 2011, and were intended to shed light on the fortification of Ashkelon's North Slope during the Fatimid and Crusader occupation of the site. The excavation's goals were multiple.

First, our excavation area was designed to clarify the original height of the paved talus, much of which remains exposed, and whose base was already uncovered thanks to excavations in 1993 and 1994 in Grid 9, Squares 98 and 99. In investigating the original extent of this structure, we also hoped to discover sealed contexts that would provide a date for the talus' construction, since the 1993-1994 seasons failed to do so conclusively.

By extending the excavation area some 20m to the current summit of the North Slope, we also hoped to uncover the foundations of the Medieval city wall. We assumed the existence of such a fortification because of the presence of Medieval fortifications along the ridge both to the East and West of our excavation area: A Fatimid wall was found running through the gate in Grid 2, 100m to the West, and an undermined crusader tower lies 30m to the East. In addition, bits of masonry – some possibly in situ – lie scattered about in between these two features.

Joining the top of the talus and the summit of the slope with a 2m-wide trench cutting along the western edge of Squares 9 and 19 was intended to allow us to stratigraphically delineate a fortification sequence for Ashkelon's North Slope in the 11th-13th centuries AD.

Instead of leading to the expected discoveries, however, our efforts led to the exposure of a mudbrick tower and a mudbrick glacis dating to the late Iron I/Early Iron II (late 11th-mid-10th century BC). The tower was cut into remnants of a stepped, kurkar glacis identical to the Middle Bronze IIA glacis that was found under the talus in the moat (Grid 9, Square 98 & 99), and West of the Canaanite Gate (Grid 2). Much to our surprise, the only medieval remains that we encountered were constructional fills at the top of the talus dating to the Fatimid/Crusader period (ca. AD 1050-1247).

The stratigraphy encountered during the 2011 season will now be discussed in detail, following the chronological order of its deposition. Altogether, four occupational phases can be delineated, the numbering for which is borrowed from Ashkelon's Grid 2.

Middle Bronze IIA, c.1750 BC (= Grid 2, Phase 13C)

The earliest remains encountered in Grid 10, Square 19, date to the Middle Bronze Age IIA. These consist of two sloping rampart fills (19.U5=U10, 19.U13) beneath the stepped kurkar glacis mentioned above (19.U4=U6=U9). The earliest of the fills (19.U13) consists of very soft, yellow kurkar sand whose bottom level was not reached this season. The largest exposure of this sandy fill was against the south section of Square 19 at the top of the slope, although it was also encountered 2.5m to the North, where it is visible in the subsidiary section showing the cut of the Philistine tower (19.U8=U12) and foundation trench (19.U11) (Photo#19114). Immediately above this sandy fill in both areas was a

coarser, firm kurkar fill (19.U5=U10), about 20-30cm thick, which was pale yellow upon first exposure but rapidly faded to a darker grayish brown. Set into this kurkar fill were the cobbles of the stepped glacis (19.U4=U6=U9), of which 7 courses, two to three cobbles wide, are well preserved along the East balk to the North of the subsidiary section (19.U9). At the top of the slope, two more rows of this glacis can be discerned (19.U4 and 19.U6), although the glacis' orientation and slope is not so clear in this area, perhaps as a result of disturbance during the construction of tower 19.U8=U12. In 19.U9, the best preserved section of the glacis, the largest cobble measures approximately 30x33x15cm, and the smallest 15x7x12cm (Photo#19114). The glacis is preserved for a width of 56cm (running East-West), and rises 1m over a preserved length (North-South) of just under 2m.

Fleeting evidence for a later phase of Middle Bronze Age rampart consolidation was found farther down the slope in the form of a poorly defined bricky layer which yielded a very small amount of clean Middle Bronze Age pottery (19.U14 and 9.U22). Although we did not have enough time to clearly define this layer, which cannot be clearly distinguished in section from the overlying Iron Age strata (19.U12, 9.U26) or from the bricky layers (19.U2, 9.U19) resulting from the decomposition of the Iron Age tower and glacis, it may be the MBIIC glacis which was missing in Grid 2.

Late Iron I/Early Iron II, c.1050-950 BC (= Grid 2, Phase 9)

The Phase 13C rampart fills (19.U13 and U5=U10) and glacis (19.U4=U6=U9) are cut by a deep foundation trench (19.U11), as is clearly visible in the Subsidiary section (Photo#19114), and North of it (cf. Final Top Plan). This trench was packed with dark gray, sandy fill which is hard to differentiate from the Middle Bronze kurkar fill (19.U10), but its extent is clearly marked to the East by the line earliest MB sandy fill (19.U13) and the edge of the glacis (19.U9), and to the West by the edge of the tower itself (19.U8=U12). The tower was built inside of the foundation trench, and both trench and tower were exposed running together for roughly 6m from 19.U6, towards the northeast, where the northern face of the tower (where it abuts 19.U2) can just be made out in the section of the July 8 probe, as well as on the surface of the excavation area (see Final Top Plan and Photo#19111). The tower continues into the West section of our excavation area, presumably for another 4.5m, since these towers are known to be square (in our case, measuring roughly 6x6m) from the two other examples that were found in Grid 2 to the West. In the part of the tower visible in the subsidiary section (19.U8), and in that exposed on the surface of the excavation area (19.U12), clear brick lines can be made out. The brick lines are less clear in the western half of 19.U12. At its highest preserved height (2.1m), the tower rises 16 courses, and 4 rows of bricks can be made out in the exposed area. The bricks average between 44 and 47 cm in length, 10 to 12 cm in height, and 30 to 33 cm in width (Photo#19115).

Moving down the slope into Square 9, we find another mudbrick architectural feature, which should also be dated to Phase 9 of Grid 2. Where the slope drops off, about midway through the square, a sandy kurkar fill yielding philistine bichrome pottery (9.U20) was laid directly above the bricky layer 9.U22. This sandy layer was apparently a foundational fill for the thin mudbrick glacis preserved above it (9.U26) (Photo#19116). As can be seen in the final photos (#19112), this glacis steps down the slope in 1.0 to 1.5m-wide terraces. It is likely that the terraces were an intentional feature of the glacis, and they probably facilitated its construction. The workers building the glacis probably started at the bottom, laying down kurkar sand 9.U20 behind the brick facade 9.U26 as they worked up the slope, creating terraces at regular intervals from which to build the following section of the glacis.

Byzantine (Phase not present in Grid 2)

Immediately above the mudbrick glacis (9.U26) on the upper half of the slope, a half-meter thick loose

fill containing large amounts of Byzantine pottery (9.U21) was uncovered below topsoil (9.U18). This fill came cleanly off of the face of the brick glacis (9.U26), and was cut by the later Medieval fills at the bottom of the slope (9.U23). The relationship of the Byzantine fill 9.U21 with the brick layer 9.U19 at the top of the slope was unclear upon excavation, unfortunately, and in section the two appear to simply abut each other. Thankfully neither of these two layers is of much stratigraphic import, and should they prove to be, their relationship can be easily clarified through careful expansion of the excavation area to the East or West.

No other remains from this Byzantine Phase were discovered in Grid 10, and since no remains from this period were encountered in excavations in Grid 2 either, it is possible that this fill containing Byzantine pottery was laid down early in Phase 2, before being cut by the fills related more directly to the construction of the Medieval talus, which we now turn to.

Fatimid/Crusader, AD 1050-1247 (= Grid 2, Phase 2)

A sequence of four layers (9.U23, U24, U25, U27) appear to relate directly to the construction of the paved talus, and more specifically to the consolidation of the talus' upper border (Photo#19117). The earliest of these, 9.U27, is a thick layer of concrete which was poured liberally over the back face of the talus, spilling onto the Philistine glacis below it (9.U26) in the process. The negative imprint of several ashlar in this concrete layer raises the possibility that the talus continued to rise from its currently preserved elevation, although how far it would have risen is unclear, and further excavation along the top of the talus is needed in order to conclusively answer the question of the talus' original height. Other than the negative imprint of ashlar in the concrete of 9.U27, there is no evidence that the talus continued to rise.

In fact, the three layers immediately later than the concrete (9.U25, U24 and U23) can be interpreted as features intended to consolidate and seal the upper border of the talus, in particular against the infiltration of water, which would have compromised the talus' structural integrity. Immediately above the concrete (9.U27) we found a soft, off-white silty fill, almost ashy in texture (9.U25). Presumably on contact with water this ashy layer would have hardened considerably. Above this layer was a thin layer of clay holding together a scatter of pebbles and cobbles, which is reminiscent of a similar layer which served as the foundation for the moat paving at the base of the talus, in Grid 9 Squares 98 and 99 (c. the 1994 report and fieldbooks for these squares). Above 9.U24 a second silty fill was laid (9.U23), similar in all respects to 9.U25, although 9.U23 was much thicker than 9.U25, and its upper half was brown in color, rather than off-white.

The fact that no trace of the concrete 9.U27 is found more than a meter from the North balk, and that the Philistine glacis (9.U26) was covered by the three fills 9.U25, U24, and U23 makes it most likely - in my opinion - that the talus was not originally built more than one or two courses beyond its present height.

Post-Medieval developments, AD 1247-2011 (=Grid 2, Phase 1)

The most recent layers in the grid consist of topsoil (19.U1=9.U18) and, immediately beneath topsoil, a brick layer of varying thickness (19.U2=U3=9.U19) that resulted from the deterioration of the mudbrick structures below (19.U8=U12, 19.U14, 9.U22, and 9.U26). This brick erosion layer was not encountered beneath topsoil on the slope in the northern half of square 9, where topsoil was immediately above the byzantine fill 9.U21, and medieval fill 9.U23.

Conclusions

As we began excavations in Grid 10 this season, we expected to encounter a thick overburden of terracing fills dating to the 19th and early 20th centuries, and beneath these, a heavily fortified area connecting the top of the talus with whatever medieval wall or tower we might encounter at the summit of the slope. Instead we found that the Middle Bronze and Iron Age fortifications were remarkably well preserved in this area, and that contrary to our expectations, the 20-meter strip that we excavated showed almost no signs at all of medieval (or modern) activity. The results of the 2011 season in Grid 10 clearly require us to rethink our reconstructions of the Fatimid and Crusader defenses on Ashkelon's North Slope, although that task falls beyond the scope of the present report.

In closing, I would like to thank my assistant John Stevenson for his efforts during this brief but intense season, the Hebrew University students who carried out most of the excavation proper, as well as Denys Pringle, Katia Cytryn-Silverman, Rafi Lewis, and Taufiq Beadle for their patience and counsel.

LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON

GRID 35 FINAL REPORT 2011

Philip Johnston

From July 11 to July 18, 2011, two probes were dug in the area of the Jerusalem Gate, in Ashkelon's Grid 35. The excavation was carried out by a group of fourteen volunteers from the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, with the help of their instructors Katia Cytryn-Silverman and Taufiq Beadle. The work was supervised by myself along with my assistant supervisor, John Stevenson. Dr Denys Pringle provided the research questions for the project, in addition to counsel as our work progressed.

The probes in Grid 35, Squares 23 and 32 had several goals. Both were intended as a first step towards ground-proofing Dr Pringle's reconstruction of the medieval Jerusalem Gate complex. Dr Pringle's reconstruction is based on his own survey of the architectural remains visible above ground, as well as on the report of E.G. Rey, a French archaeologist who visited Ashkelon in the early 19th century, soon after the demolition of the gate's ruins by Ibrahim Pasha (the latter having mined Ashkelon for stone for use in his fortifications at Jaffa). According to Pringle's reconstruction, Ashkelon's Jerusalem gate was actually composed of three successive gates arranged in an indirect approach style – after an entrance in the vicinity of our probe in Square 32, a sharp right turn led to a second gate just North of our probe in Square 23, at which point a 90° left turn brought the traveler through the Jerusalem gate proper – roughly along the modern E-W road into the site. The massive, 20m-tall rubble core of this last gate's southern flanking tower still stands today.

We focused our 2011 probes on the two fragments of *in situ* architecture which were most likely to allow us to verify – or modify – Dr Pringle's reconstruction. The first probe, in Square 32, was centered on the corner of a tower (32.U7) which Dr Pringle suspected was the location of the first gate in the Jerusalem gate complex. The goal in this Square 32 probe was to establish whether we were dealing with a gate, and if so, to determine the gate's dimensions, orientation, and state of preservation. To the North and East of this first probe, a second probe in Square 23 was laid out in order to investigate North-South running wall U2, of which the rubble core visible above ground appeared to line up with the exposed corner in Square 35. In this Square 23 probe, we hoped to reach, on the wall's western side, the surface of the street inside the gate complex.

In addition to clarifying the layout of the medieval Jerusalem Gate, our probes were meant to assess the degree of preservation of the remains. A well-preserved gate complex would be an excellent opportunity to raise public awareness of Ashkelon's important archaeological remains, and to enhance our understanding of the medieval history of the site.

In sum, the 2011 season in Grid 35 was exploratory, with the dual purpose of (1) acquiring new data to supplement our current (hypothetical) understanding of the

Jerusalem Gate's layout, and (2) of assessing the potential of this area for continued archaeological investigation in future seasons. After only 5 days of excavation, I believe we have successfully met the objectives above. A detailed description of the 2011 excavation results follows, by phase (note that the dates for each of these phases represent a preliminary attempt on my part to correlate the remains uncovered in 2011 with the medieval history of Ashkelon).

Phase 5: The First Gate (pre-AD 1153)

One of the greatest surprises of our brief season in Grid 35 was the discovery in Square 23 of two architectural phases in the medieval gate complex. At present, the earliest of these two phases is represented only by half of a segmented arch (23.U8) that was built into the city wall (23.U2), and later filled in and walled off when U2 was enlarged during Phase 4. According to our current understanding of the gate, wall U2 was the outermost wall of the gate complex. Assuming this to be correct makes arch U8 the gate (or a gate) leading into the city at this earliest attested phase in the medieval period. I am inclined to associate the Phase 5 gate with the earliest Fatimid fortification of the site between AD 1050 and 1153, but this is entirely hypothetical given the presently available data.

Arch U8 was only exposed to its spring-point (photo# 19241), where we also identified a ledge just beneath the spring of the arch, without completely exposing it. Extrapolating from its presently exposed dimensions, the arch must have measured approximately 3.7m wide (see sketch DwgID18584). From its spring to its probable apex (now robbed out), the arch rose 1.65m. Unfortunately it is still impossible to say how tall this gateway was, since only the arch was exposed, and not the gate jams beneath it.

The original intrados of the arch is preserved on its eastern side (Photo#19248, 19255), and the original eastern and western faces of the arch are partially preserved. On the east side the robbing of later ashlar from U2 has completely revealed the original face of U2 and U8 -- the face is now covered in mortar left behind after the addition of a new ashlar face in Phase 4, and the subsequent robbing of those ashlar in Phase 2. The western face is only partially exposed beneath the double row of ashlar that was partially robbed out (photo#19256). Wall U2 and arch U8 were 1.2m wide when they were built in Phase 5.

Little more can be said of this earliest phase of the Jerusalem Gate, except that the surfaces or floors related to it must be at least 1.5 to 2m below the present exposed area, since we have only exposed the arch to its spring. Conservatively, this means that the Phase 5 gate superstructure is preserved to a height of at least 5m. This preservation is in part due to architectural renovations that were carried out in Phase 4.

Phase 4: Modifications to the Gate Complex (AD 1153-AD 1247)

As with the earliest phase of the gate, our understanding of the modifications that took place in Phase 4 is only partial. That modifications to the gate's layout occurred in Phase 4 is indubitable in Square 23, where arch U8 was filled in and walled off by two rows of ashlar (U2) on its western side (Photo#19242), which are bonded to a partially exposed

concrete surface, U9 (Photo#19238-9). In Square 32 the picture is less clear. Here we uncovered only the Phase 4 fortifications (tower U7, its faces U4 and U5, as well as 'wall' U6), and we found no evidence of remains that are clearly related to Phase 5.

In Square 23, the ashlar and mortar fill that sealed arch U8 is only partially preserved in the south section of our excavation area. The best explanation for the absence of this masonry filling in the northern, exposed half of the arch is that the filling was robbed out in Phase 2 at the same time as the ashlar facing on the eastern face of wall U2 (Photo#19248). The robbing of the masonry filling re-exposed the original plaster on the inside face of the arch. Supporting this conclusion is the fact that the plaster facing is still preserved in the south section, in a seam between the intrados of the arch and the masonry filling (Photo#19249 – where the ruler sits in the seam).

At the same time as the arch U8 was being filled in, a new face of ashlar was added to the western side of U2, which is bonded with the fill of the arch in the south section (Photo#19242). This ashlar facing continues to the north, where it juts out beyond the spring of the arch, clearly illustrating the chronological sequence of the construction of these two features (Photo#19244). On the East side of the wall U2 a similar facing of ashlar was no doubt added, but this East face was completely robbed out in Phase 2, with the exception of one ashlar, which remains cemented to wall U2 (visible at the bottom of Photos#19248, 51).

While wall U2 was thickened by the addition of these ashlar, a new concrete surface U9 was also poured on its western side – presumably the street inside of the city wall. This concrete surface U9 was only partially exposed in 2011, but it is clearly bonded with the ashlar of wall U2 (Photo#19238-9), and it was partially robbed out along with the rest of the Phase 4 remains in Phase 2 (see bottom of Photo#19239). No Phase 4 remains were encountered on the eastern side of wall U2, with the exception of the lone ashlar block mentioned above.

In Square 32, the Phase 4 tower U7 was partially exposed, and with it a thin wall U6 oriented North-South, which may be part of the Phase 4 gate (Photo#19268). Tower U7, partially exposed when the season began, is made up of a rubble core (designated U7 in the top plans) which is finished on its southern and eastern sides with ashlar facing (U5 and U4, respectively; see DwgID18581). Two corners of the tower were discovered, the southeastern corner from which juts out U6 (Photo#19267) and the southwestern one (consisting of ashlar belonging to face U5; Photo# 19270-1). The northern half of the tower remains unexposed. A single ashlar (not illustrated) was discovered on the western side of the tower during the removal of U1 and U2 on July 18, and is probably a remnant of the tower's western face.

U6 was discovered jutting out to the south from the tower's southeastern corner, and it was initially thought that this might be the northern jam of the gate running south of tower U7. Unfortunately, our efforts to uncover the opposite jam of this putative gate (or even to expose more of U6) on the final day of excavations were unsuccessful, and so the identity of this feature, which is 1.2m wide and consists of ashlar facing on a rubble core, remains uncertain. U6 may yet be the north side of the Phase 4 gate, but it may also be a continuation of the outermost city wall, unrelated to any entrance.

Phase 4 is the most complete phase of the gate fortifications uncovered during the 2011 season. The small glimpse of this phase that we achieved this season unfortunately failed to conclusively verify or refute the hypothetical reconstruction of the gate complex with which we began our excavation. That said, the idea that the Crusader fortifications of the Jerusalem gate included an indirect approach of the type attested at other contemporary sites remains most likely. The walling off of arch U8, at least, demonstrates that before the final destruction of the site, Ashkelon's eastern fortifications were decisively and ambitiously re-imagined. Whether or not tower U7 and feature U6 are part of the new Phase 4 city entrance remains to be determined through further excavation.

Phase 3: Destruction of the Gate (AD 1247 and 1270)

To the southeast of tower U7, and immediately to the east of the wall or gate U6, we articulated a roughly 2x1.5m area of collapsed ashlar and limey rubble (U11). This material was not removed during the 2011 season. However, the location of rubble U11 abutting the lower, well-preserved portions of ashlar U4 and feature U6 suggests that it was deposited when those structures were put out of use (Photo# 19263-4). What is more, this layer (U11) appears to be undisturbed by the later activity attested farther to the west in Square 32 (see Phases 2 and 1, below). Although further excavation is needed to confirm the nature of this rubble layer, it seems very likely that U11 dates to one of the Mameluke destructions of Ashkelon's fortifications in the 13th century. In any case, future removal of U11 is sure to reveal more of the Phase 4 architecture which is sealed by it.

Phase 2: Post-urban activity (AD 1270 and 1840?)

Following the partial destructions of the 13th century and the disuse of the Jerusalem Gate fortifications, post-urban activities of various kinds (sparse settlement; robbing of the medieval masonry) are attested in our probes. These activities can be dated only broadly to the period following Baybar's dismantling of the city fortifications in AD 1270, and preceding the deposition of more modern strata such as U2 in Square 32, which contained machine gun casings dating to the 1960s.

In Square 23, the post-urban activity is primarily related to robbing of the wall U2 and in particular of the wall's Phase 4 ashlar facing. This robbing was carried out after the area had been at least partially buried, as attested by the silty fill U6 that was cut by robber trench U4 to the East of wall U2. It is unclear whether the main area of the gate complex, to the West of U2, was buried before being robbed, since no cuts were found for the massive robbing fills U3=U5=U7.

The robbing fills to the west (U3=U5=U7) and east (U4) of wall U2 were found to be part of one discrete robbing episode: fills U7 and U4 are indistinguishable where they run beneath arch U8. Whereas the robbing fill to the East (U4) was relatively homogeneous, composed of large cobbles and mortar fragments interspersed within a sandy gray matrix, on the West side (U3=5=7) the fills displayed more distinct phases, with finer sand and silt lamina directly beneath topsoil (U3=U5). On this western side the proportion of

cobbles and architectural fragments increased with depth (U7), before yet another lens of finer material (also excavated as U7) directly above the Phase 4 surface U9.

The massive robbing of Square 23 was not attested in Square 32, where post-urban activity had a less intrusive nature. As in Square 23, the architecture in Square 32 was buried following its disuse, with the deposition of fills U10 and U12 above the remains of U6, and against the lower (as yet unexposed) face of U5. Whatever fills covered the Phase 3 collapse layer U11 during Phase 2 seem to have been removed by the sloping cut of U2 (Phase 1, below).

Above the silty fill U12, a rudimentary surface was constructed with pebbles and lime (or chalk). The surface, U9, was later cut by U2, and only a small 1x2m area of U9 was preserved in the southwestern-most part of the probe. Sealing U9 in this corner was a laminated fill (U8) with a high concentration of pottery and bone. U8 was clearly intentional fill, however, and its texture and the orientation of the material within it preclude the possibility that it was occupational debris accumulated above U9.

Phase 1: Modern strata (19th and 20th centuries AD)

The remains which can be confidently dated to the most recent past in Grid 35 are limited to the topsoil layers in each square, in addition to the massive fill U2=U3 in Square 32, which must be dated to the second half of the 20th century on account of the discovery of machine gun casings among the silt and rubble it contains.

The topsoil U1 in Squares 23 and 32 was quite ashy. In Square 23 in particular this characteristic was so pronounced that we were convinced that we were going to encounter a layer of burnt destruction rubble directly beneath topsoil. Instead, of course, we immediately came upon the upper levels of robbing fills U4 and U3. The distinctive ash of the topsoil must result from the burning of weeds and brush in the area, perhaps for agricultural purposes.

In Square 32, following the post-urban occupation that resulted in the deposition of fills U10, U12, and U8, and of surface U9, a large trench was cut (U2), sloping sharply from West to East, which was subsequently filled in by silt and sand mixed with rocks of various sizes (also U2). This fill yielded several machine gun casings, apparently of Belgian manufacture, which are dated to the 1960s. Although U2 showed some internal variation during our excavation, including a darker, somewhat rubbly patch which we initially assigned a different unit number (U3=U2), consultation of the sections does not reveal any sign that we mistakenly excavated several strata under the same name. It seems likely that both the cut of U2 and its fill date to the late 20th century, and are a result of Israeli military exercises (although no one in the park or among our visitors could recall any such military activity occurring at Ashkelon). Another possibility is that the cut of U2 was made earlier, perhaps as early as the 19th century, and that the area was filled in only much later, as a result of military activity or maintenance work in the national park.

Conclusions

We set out in Grid 35 with the simple goal of testing Dr. Pringle's reconstruction of the Jerusalem Gate complex, and of assessing the state of that gate's preservation. While we were unable to locate the outermost gate as we had hoped we might, we did discover a more complex picture than we had anticipated, namely the presence of two apparently well-preserved architectural phases dating to the 11th-13th centuries AD. In this respect the 2011 season in Grid 35 was a success, and the results of our labor beg to be clarified through further investigation. In addition to providing a more complete picture of the medieval history of Ashkelon, continued exposure of the Jerusalem Gate complex in future seasons will help to make that history accessible to a wider public.