

GRID 16 FINAL REPORT

2014

by

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During the 2014 season of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon a new grid was opened on the north tell (16). The purpose of this area was to primarily answer questions regarding both the earliest (EB), and latest occupation (Crusader) at the site. The earliest material excavated thus far at Ashkelon has dated to the EBIII, when settlement apparently moved from sites north along the coast to tell. From this period pottery has been found in multiple excavation grids, including the north slope of the north tell beneath the MB fortification (Grids 2, 3 and 9), as well as in fill layers on the south side of the north tell (grid 23). Unfortunately in all of these contexts no architecture was found, only pottery. None of the excavation areas from the south tell show any signs of EB occupation. From this data we have hypothesized that the EB settlement was restricted to the north tell, and that our previous excavations on the northern and southern slopes were catching only the fringes of this occupation. Thus by moving to a more central location on the north tell we would have the best chance of finding Early Bronze Age architecture linked to the earliest town. The problem with this type of investigation is the depth of accumulation from the later periods, which make reaching the Early Bronze Age a daunting project.

One of the features of tell Ashkelon is a long cut running east-west that cuts the north tell in half, running down to the sea on the west. This cut runs all the way down into bed rock, standing ca. 15-20 meters wide. The cut is clearly man-made, a fact clearly evidenced by the straight cutmarks visible even today in the bed rock.

This cut has assumed to date to the Crusader period, following the suggestion of Denys Pringle, who proposed that the cut was part of a moat dated to the occupation of Richard III, and the fortification of the citadel of Ashkelon, an area that would have been restricted to part of the North tell. The amount of fallen crusader walls found in and around the northern edge of the cut seemed to verify this hypothesis. Thus a second major question for this season focused on dating the cut, and uncovering the remains of the crusader fortifications. The presence of the cut to bedrock also provided the solution to the accumulation problem regarding our investigation of the EB city. With this in mind we opened our new area along the northern slope of the cut. This would bring us closer to the center of the north tell, increasing our chances of finding the Early Bronze Age city, and allow us to look at the southern edges of the crusader fortification of the north tell. We staked out a 5x20 meter area running down the slope. Initially it was our intent to cut a step trench down the slope, however due to the massive pitting from the later periods the steps were soon largely discarded, leaving a single upper and lower square (each 5x10m).

What follows in this report is a phase by phase account of the findings of the 2014 excavation in Grid 16. As always the success of the season was due to the dedicated effort of our volunteers Rebekah Dutton, Jeff Finley, Maddy Holtje, David Miller, Maddie Minke, David Rizk, Silvia Rodriguez, Shannon Sullivan, and Julian Woo. Special thanks also goes to our photographer, Melissa Aja, and our architect Trent Dutton. Lastly I am particularly indebted to the hard work of my square supervisor Sarah Walton, who was responsible for all of our book work and day to day recording. Finally none of our work would have been possible without the generous support of the Leon Levy foundation and Shelby White.

#### Phase 5: Bronze Age

Phase 5 is difficult to describe, because it consists of only a few architectural features, all of which have been significantly disturbed by later activity, mostly the cutting of drains and pitting in the Hellenistic-Crusader periods. As such this material cannot yet be securely dated. There are no floors or fills, only architecture, and this season we were unable to excavate the bricks to find a secure dating. That being said, there is a small amount of EB pottery present in the later fills, and very little from any other period pre-Persian. The mudbrick architecture is also reminiscent

of the fortifications from the Middle Bronze Age excavated in Grid 2. Thus Phase 5 likely dates to the EB or MB, and may in fact include multiple phases that will be separated with further excavation.

The main feature of phase 5 is a mudbrick wall (16.59.U12), which runs E-W across the northern edge of our excavation area. The wall stands at places up to three courses high (ASH14\_26872) and is founded on bedrock (16.59.U35). The wall is badly cut on the south and west, although it can be seen in the northern section running all the way to the western balk.



It is also possible that mudbrick rampart 16.59.U53 also dates to this phase, however it could also be much later. The mudbrick rampart is consistent with the MB fortifications excavated previously in Grid 2, however in certain places it appears to be covered by a stone capping. This could date the entire construction to the Islamic/Crusader period, or it could be part of the continual reuse and modification of the MB fortifications, a practice well-attested in Grid 2. Until we can excavate the rampart itself and see pottery from within the bricks this must remain an open question. In favor of a dating with the U12 is the fact that if one extrapolates the slope of the rampart across the later intrusive drains, it seems that U12 fits well with the hypothetical trajectory of U53.

Phase 4: Roman



Phase 4 consists of a drain, running E-W across the middle of square 16.59. The drain was originally cut through the phase 5 mudbrick wall U12 and into bedrock layer U35, however the lines of the cut have been mostly obscured by later intrusions, most notably phase 3 pit U29/20. The cut is preserved in the sandy foundation trench U51, for drain wall U50. The construction of this drain is not very clear. What we have preserved is a single E-W wall (16.59.U50), made of one course of well-dressed fieldstones, resting on at least 2-3 courses of smaller cobbles. Extending to the north, in what we presume to be the interior of the drain, is a cobble surface (16.59.U52). The surface is patchy and poorly preserved on the eastern and western edges, possibly due to late disturbances. What is troubling about this drain is the lack of a closing wall on the north side of the cobbles, however it is possible that this was robbed out during the digging of pit 16.59.U29/20. This feature is dated preliminarily to the Roman period, based on a quick reading of the ceramic remains.

#### Phase 3: Late Roman/Byzantine

The LR/Byz phase in Grid 16 consisted of multiple deep rubbish pits cut into each other as well as the earlier phases. While there is clear stratigraphic sequence between when some of these pits were used, the material culture found inside them is very similar. Thus we understand phase 3 as consisting of multiple cutting and filling activities over a relatively long period of time. In the north the primary pit, U29/20 cut through U12 and down to the top of U50 and U52. This pit also included fills U24 and U25. The southern edge of this pit is cut by another large pit U46/47. This in turn was cut by a series of smaller pits, U44/45, U37/33. Small patches of material, generally classified as “fills,” U32, U42, U36, U19, and U26 exist in between the cuts of the pits, but are so small and lacking in any association that further identification or analysis is impossible. In the north the final pit, U9/10, was a large pit filled almost completely with broken pot sherds, primarily Gaza jars.

#### Phase 2: Byzantine/Umayyad

Phase 2 consists of two drains, one in 16.59 and one in 16.69. The southernmost drain (16.69.U9/10) runs NW-SE sloping to the SE (photo 26719). This is unexpected, in that one would expect the drain to slope towards the sea, rather than inland back towards the site. The

lack of thick green organic filled sediments inside the drain similarly suggest that it was not used as a sewer, but perhaps as an irrigation pipe, or some other water transportation function. Further west from our excavation area Denys Pringle had previously identified the remains of a crusader fountain, and there are many wells in the general vicinity. The two walls of the drain are preserved the length of the square, and a vaulted ceiling is preserved for about a meter on the NW. The material from inside the drain dates to the Byzantine/Umayyad period. This is essential for the dating of the cut through the north tell. The location at this depth of a sewer pre-dating the crusader period indicates that the cut existed earlier than we had originally thought. If U53 actually belongs to phase 5, then the cut may have been dug as early as the EB or MB, in which case the citadel of Ashkelon has been a distinct feature for much longer than previously thought. A second drain (16.59.U54) was uncovered at the very end of the season. Its construction is similar to 16.69.U9/10, thus leading us to phase the two features together; however we were unable to excavate any of the material within the drain, so this identification is only tentative.

#### Phase 1: Fatimid/Crusader

Phase 1 represents the activity that occurred following the destruction of the crusader rampart. Originally there was a construction phase where the large crusader wall, running along the top of the northern slope of the cut, was built. This is clearly evidenced by a massive robber trench, U15/16, as well as rubble from that wall scattered down slope (in particular fragments U34, U48, U49). As it stands, however, phase 1 shows the period after the destruction of these fortifications and the robbing out of the wall. The main feature from this phase is pit 16.59.U39/40 = 16.69.U12/13. This pit was apparently cut beneath the fortifications to undermine them, and thus the backfill consists of large deposits of rubble from the collapsing wall. It is fortunate that the pit only covers the western half of the square, because it robs out parts the rampart U53 and capping U55 on this side. This suggests that the rampart pre-dates this phase. U39/40 was accompanied by other rubble pits such as U30/31 and U37/33. On the eastern part of the square a large natural fill, U38, containing much late pottery built up over the ramparts, suggesting that the rampart, or at least the capping may belong to the next earlier phase, or the crusader construction phase.

The last events to take place were a series of loose shallow Islamic period pits dug from just below topsoil, including U17/18, U27/28, U13/14, U15/16, and U21/22.

#### Conclusions and future Work:

The most important finding of the season relates to the man-made cut dividing the north tell. While it was previously thought that this feature dated to the Crusader period, the discovery of drain 16.69.U9/10 demonstrates that the cut already existed in the Byzantine/Umayyad period. The fact that 16.59.U12 is built on bed rock suggests that the cut is even earlier and could very well date back to the Bronze Age. This means that the north tell citadel was in place throughout the early period of Ashkelon, and merely refortified in the Crusader period. Next season the most important tasks are to date some of the features uncovered this season. In particular we must get a clean date for 59.U12 as well as for both the rampart (59.53) and its stone capping (59.55). Most of the slope was completely excavated to bed rock, so the next most important task would be to investigate on the top of the slope to the north of the current area, uncovering the northern edge of 59.U12, and hopefully any connected architecture or surfaces.

## Grid 16, Square 59, Final Report

This season, the goal outlined for Grid 16 was the cutting of a step trench into the already-cut Crusader period moat which would provide a side-profile of the occupational history of Ashkelon, presumably from the latest (Crusader) period to the earliest period (Early Bronze Age). While no clearly occupational spaces were excavated in Grid 16 during the 2014 season, a nice section of the Crusader-EB fortification sequence and another drainage system has been identified in 16.59, with 16.69 providing a window into the latter chapters of Ashkelon's fortification and water systems. This new understanding of Grid 16's stratigraphy and the subsequent plan for future expansion within Grid 16 was possible only through the diligent work and resilient personalities of our volunteer roster: Jeffrey Finley, Rebekah Dutton, Shannon Sullivan, David Rizk, David Miller, Madeline Holtje, Madeline Minke, Julian Woo, and Sylvia Rodriguez.

The final report of the 2014 excavation of Grid 16, Square 59 follows, with its phases outlined from earliest to latest.

#### Phase 5—"Early" (Likely Bronze Age)

In this earliest phase, kurkar bedrock U35 and U43 form one contiguous and equivalent bedrock layer throughout the whole of Square 59 on a gradual natural slope. The mudbricks of feature U12 and U53 are directly founded upon this U43=U35 bedrock layer. While we lack clear stratigraphic connections between U12 and U53, the composition of the mudbricks, along with their relationship to the underlying bedrock and the relatively high levels of residual EB pottery in our pottery buckets from this area, leads us to assume at this time an equivalence of U35 to U43 (easily assumed) and a contemporaneity of U12 to U53. However, this relationship between U12 and U53 remains preliminary and tentative, due to the cutting action in the later Phase 4 which completely severs stratigraphic connections between U12 and U53. Based on this assumption, the slope of U53's bricks and its relationship to bedrock strongly support the interpretation of U53 as a rampart, with U12 being preliminarily understood as a northern extent of the U53 rampart, or more likely a mudbrick wall built atop the northern portion of U53's sloping surface.

#### Phase 4—Roman

Phase 4 begins with a cut through the northern extent of mudbrick rampart U12 and corresponding mudbrick U53 and their underlying bedrock layer U43=U35. In this cut, first the lower, medium-sized cobble courses and then the uppermost, well-dressed rectangular stone course of E-W drain channel's southern wall, excavated as U50, are laid, followed by the deposition (to the south) of the silty, sandy U51 foundation trench fill, within which MC 71506, figurine torso fragment, was discovered. Just to the north of U50's stones, U52's small cobbles are deposited as a lining for the U50 channel, with presumably a northern, stone closing wall being laid at this time, as well. However, no stones of the assumed northern closing wall remain, nor is there any evidence of a cut for the U50 drain's installation. We currently understand both the northern closing wall and the initial cut for the sewer to have been entirely robbed out by pitting action in Phase 3. However, this conclusion is very tentative and requires elucidation by future excavation.

#### Phase 3—LR/BYZ

As U50 and the associated U51 cobbles go out of use, the dark brown, very compact fill U41 settles into and covers over the U51 cobbles. Hence U41 functions as a transitional layer between Phases 4 and 3, with the transition to Byzantine pottery readings of U41 from the predominantly Hellenistic/Early Roman pottery readings produced by the material excavated from U51 and U50

clearly marking the point where U50 goes out of use (i.e. Byzantine period). Immediately on top of U41's fill and the uppermost U50 stones, pit U29/U20 is cut, at its deepest point presumably robbing out the northern closing wall of Phase 4 drain U50 and also the cut made for U50's installation, but leaving the cobble lining U52 mostly intact. The U29 fill of the U20 cut also fills in the space between bedrock U43 = U35 and the overlying mudbrick architecture U12 & U53, with pit U29/U20's uppermost level being almost flush with the preserved top of U12. U24 is equivalent to pit U29/U20, merely being the uppermost lamination of U29/U20, with U24 having been excavated separately, before we understood the highly laminated and very deep nature of the U20 pit fill. U25 is also equivalent to the U20 fill of pit U29, merely being a higher lamination than U24. U25's stratigraphic relevance will be discussed under Phase 1. Atop pit U29/U20, the U10 fill of pit U9 was deposited, consisting primarily of discarded potsherds, with RP 13994 (Byzantine Cross with Greek inscribed letter[s]) and MC 70502 (worked bone featuring a woman carrying a basket) being notable inclusions in pit U9/U10. Brown fill layer U26 was then deposited on top of the W edge of pottery pit U9/U10 and brown fill layer U19 was then deposited along the E edge of pit U9/U10.

Pit U46/U47 was then cut into the southern edge of pit U29/U20, removing U29/U20's southern extent, with pit cut U46's bottom being immediately atop the southernmost cobbles associated with U50. The highly striated fill U47 was deposited within the U46 cut. On top of the U46/U47 pit, fill layer U36 was deposited. Shell-lined, shallow pottery pit U44/U45 was then cut into the E edge of fill U36, and pit U37/U33 was cut into the S edge of fill U36, cutting out the southern edge of both fill U36 and the underlying pit U46/U47. Atop fill U36 and pit U44/U45, dense, gravelly fill layer U42 was then deposited. Along U42's W edge, extending into Square 59's W section, possible surface U32 was then deposited. U32 existed only in a very small patch, but due to its traceable, grey, ashy consistency and flat-lying potsherds, we decided "surface" was the best label for U32. U32 also sloped up toward the N (still visible in the W section), possibly used contemporarily with a wall which was robbed out in Phase 1. However, due to heavy pitting in both Phase 3 and Phase 1, we are unable to stratigraphically connect U32's "surface" to any walls or layers aside from underlying U42 and overlying U23. Light brown fill layer U23 was deposited on top of surface-patch U32 and the E extent of U42. Due to the later cut of pit U39/U40 and pit U21/U22, fill U42 and U23's relationships to pit U37/U33 remains unclear.

## Phase 2—Byzantine/Umayyad

The only unit in Square 59 which may be properly placed in Phase 2 is possibly U54. U54 consists of what seems to be the wall of a drain cut into bedrock U43 in the southern portion of 16.59. No datable material was found with U54, and U54's stone masonry was heavily robbed out by the cutting of pit U39/U40. However, based on the appearance of the masonry of the channel, we put forth the tentative hypothesis that U54 may be contemporary with and/or part of the same water system as drain U9/U10 in 16.69.

## Phase 1—Fatimid/Crusader

Phase 1 begins with, potentially, the stone capping of the pre-existing Phase 1 mudbrick rampart U53. This capping was excavated as U55 and consists of cobbles laid immediately on top of U53's mudbricks. This action is immediately followed by the deposition of fill U38 atop the U53 mudbrick rampart. Rubble pit U30/U31 was then cut into the W edge of U38. Pit U39 is cut into the S edge of pit U37/U33 and fill U36 and the E edge of U38's fill, with the intention of undermining the Crusader fortifications which had been constructed in this area earlier in Phase 1 (of which only large stone rubble chunks remain). After these fortifications collapsed, the largest chunks, U34, U48, & U49 were deposited within the U39 cut used to undermine them. The U40 fill, which consisted of loose silt fill and large stone rubble pieces, was then backfilled around these large



masonry fragments. Robber trench U15/U16 then robbed out the remainder of the fortification wall that remained after collapse. In the process of robbing and backfilling, trench U15/U16 disturbed the uppermost level of underlying Phase 3 pit U29/U20, resulting in the creation of a mixed layer of material between "clean" robber trench U15/U16 and "clean" pit U29/U20. This mixed layer was excavated as U25 and was essentially a control unit for overcutting/fully excavating the bottom of U15/U16. U15/U16 also cut away the S edge of fills U19 & U26 and pottery pit U9/U10, along with the N edges of fills U23 and U42, floor U32, and pit U44/U45.

The later depositional events in Square 59 consist of a series of smaller pits. The W and N edges of fill U19 were also cut away by pit U17/U18, with brown fill U26 being cut on its E edge by pit U17/U18. Shallow pit U27/U28 was then cut into U26's N edge. U11's fill (within which complete oil lamps RP 13841 & RP 13839 were excavated) was then deposited upon and sealed pit U27/U28 and fill U26. Pit U13/U14 was then cut into the upper levels of pit U17/U18 with pit U13's U14 fill containing two mostly complete water jugs, RP 13898 & RP 13843. Just to the south of robber trench U15/U16, pit U21/U22 was cut in, removing some of the S edge of robber trench U15/U16's fill, and the entirety of the S edge of fills U23 & U42 and also the upper levels of pit U39/U40. Cobble units U7 and U8 have been equated, and are understood to be the upper levels of the U22 pit fill of pit U21. 59.U7=U8 correspond to 69.U8=U5, which are the S extent of this spray of loose grey silt and cobble rubble down the slope of Grid 16. Coin MC 68390 which features a faint inscription and a depiction of 2 columns within a ring was excavated from this U7=U8=uppermost U21/U22 fill.

U2 through U6 have been equated, and are merely natural topsoil/agricultural accumulation that settled on top of the U11, U19, U15/U16, and U21/U22 layers toward the end of Phase 1. U2-U6 were only created as control units in the arbitrary steps of the step trench and were not significantly distinct from each other in terms of soil composition, ceramics, or other material culture. However, it is worth noting that under B12754, excavated from the northernmost portion of U2's topsoil layer, a partial human mandible was excavated. No additional human remains were noted in this area and more disarticulated human bones may be expected to lie to the north in the case of northward expansion in future seasons. U1 was excavated as the uppermost layer of topsoil which was disturbed after the bulldozer cleared the portion of Grid 16 which was to be excavated this season. Once the visibly disturbed topsoil (U1) was removed and we felt we had reached a clean topsoil layer, we switched to control Units 2-6.

### Suggestions for 2015

Due to the curtailed and harried nature of the 2014 Ashkelon season, many crucial questions remain unanswered in Grid 16, chief among them, those related to the dating, extent, and stratigraphic relationships of mudbrick ramparts U53 and mudbrick wall U12. While both mudbrick constructions U12 and U53 have been initially considered as belonging to the Bronze Age (mostly based on comparisons with the Middle Bronze Age fortifications and residual EB pottery), they could also be part of Crusader fortifications of the area. This later interpretation has value and would edit the current hypothesis presented for the U55 stone capping of U53, which is currently understood as a later modification re-use. The entire U53/U55 rampart was excavated less than minimally in 2014 and requires broader exposure, close analysis of stratigraphic relationships (particularly U53/U55 to U12), and most critically, this mudbrick construction needs to be dated. A date for this mudbrick fortification, either Bronze Age or Crusader, drastically expands our understanding of Ashkelon's fortifications' extents, composition, and style and is necessary for the pursuing of pertinent parallels, etc. This question of the dating of the U53/U55 and U12 mudbricks is the central question for Grid 16 in the 2015 season.

Another very important chronological question which needs to be addressed is the date of the U50 drain channel, which will enrich our understanding of the Late Hellenistic/Early Roman water systems of Ashkelon. Also, future excavation could solve the mystery of U50's missing northern closing wall and the lack of a clear cut for the construction of the U50 drain, which are also important architectural questions, and did not have sufficient time to be fully investigated in 2014. A similar clarification of the date of drain U54 (if possible, due to extensive robbing and contamination of material in the Crusader period) could also prove helpful, although it is currently unclear if such a pursuit related to U54 would be fruitless or not.

## Conclusions

At the end of the 2014 season, Square 59 has given us a tantalizing glimpse into the fortifications of ancient Ashkelon in both its earliest and latest phase(s), along with an exposure of 2 distinct drainage channels, which further informs our understanding of Ashkelon's public drainage and waterworks in its later periods, something which will be useful for understanding and mapping the water system of the entire site. Also, both the fortifications and waterworks need to be thoroughly addressed in future seasons to properly understand their dates and relationships to contemporary architecture.

## Grid 16, Square 69, Final Report

Sarah Vander Vorst

This season, the goal outlined for Grid 16 was the cutting of a step trench into the already-cut Crusader moat which would provide a side-profile of the occupational history of Ashkelon, presumably from the latest (Crusader) period to the earliest period (Early Bronze Age). While no clearly occupational spaces were excavated in Grid 16 during the 2014 season, a nice section of the Crusader-EB fortification sequence has been identified in 16.59, with 16.69 providing a window into the latter chapters of Ashkelon's fortification and water systems. This new understanding of Ashkelon's waterworks and fortifications was possible only through the diligent work and resilient personalities of our volunteer roster: Jeffrey Finley, Rebekah Dutton, Shannon Sullivan, David Rizk, David Miller, Madeline Holtje, Madeline Minke, Julian Woo, and Sylvia Rodriguez.

The final report of the 2014 excavation of Grid 16, Square 69 follows, with its two phases outlined from earliest to latest.

### Phase 2—Byzantine/Umayyad

In this earliest phase, the southern edge of the square becomes home to E-W stone drainage channel U9, which consists of large rectangular sides with a stone bottom, and cylindrical capping (only preserved in the western extent of U9), all of which are cemented together. This U9 channel was cut into bedrock sand layer U11. Based on elevations taken on the bottom of the U9 channel, we see that this channel drains from west to east and also does not line up with other known sewer drains excavated in Ashkelon. Hence, we understand U9 to be a channel for freshwater which is being channeled toward the center of the city and not a sewage channel. This conclusion is further corroborated by the lack of greenish colored sediment/accretions within the U10 fill which accumulated within U9, usually associated with the presence of sewage. The date of the U9 channel is determined by the consistently Byzantine/Umayyad pottery within the fill U10 which marks the latest use of U9, with the exact construction date of the channel being unclear. This has edited our previous understanding of Square 69 being within a moat cut in the Crusader period. A small, likely private freshwater channel would not logically be cut in from above at a great depth, but would more practically be cut into an already-existing depression, a much more convenient constructional location for something so small and thus likely not public. We currently understand the depression or "moat" in this particular area to exist centuries before the Crusaders make any appearance at Ashkelon.

In this way, this year's excavation of the four Phase 2 units in this square helps illuminate not only another aspect of the public/private waterworks of Ashkelon in the Byzantine/Umayyad period, but also helps us to better understand the elevation of this particular area in the pre-Crusader period(s) and the true nature of the Crusader activity in this area.

### Phase 1—Fatimid/Crusader

In this latest phase, the U9/U10 drain channel has long been out of use and has been covered over by U7, which is a natural, erosional accumulation layer which was eroded within and collected in the lowest point of the "moat" area. In the northern portion of the square, the large piece of destroyed, Crusader masonry U6 rolled down the slope from its original place in the fortification which lies to the north, within Square 59, and came to rest upon bedrock sand U11, which, as in Phase 2, still extends to the northern boundary of Square 69. Immediately to the east of where U6 came to rest, pit U12 was cut into bedrock U11 and its very loose, grey, cobble-heavy fill U13 was

deposited. U6 and pit U12/U13 are likely both part of the same depositional event, both related to the collapse and disposal of the Crusader fortification wall original to 16.59.

Immediately after the U6 and pit U12/U13 deposition, U5 and U8, equivalent rubble layers consisting of loose, grey silt and cobbles were spilled down the slope. In the north, some of these cobbles came to rest against the north edge of the top of U6's fortification collapse (labeled as U8), and others settled farther to the south (labeled as U5), covering pit U12/U13, filling in against the east and south edges of U6 and covering the bedrock between U6 and the out-of-use U9/U10 channel. Phase 1 essentially ends with the deposition of U5=U8.

U2, U3, and U4 are equivalent layers which are modern agricultural/topsoil accumulations which were deposited via natural, erosional processes on top of the U5=U8 rubble layer and also intermingle with the upper levels of the U7 erosional layer. U2=U3=U4 were only separated from each other in excavation/records as an arbitrary control measure taken in the early days of the step trench. Their material culture and composition are all analogous and consistent. On top of U2=U3=U4, U1 was deposited. U1 is merely the latest, disturbed, modern topsoil layer remaining after the bulldozer cleared this area before the dig season. After cleaning away U1 (i.e. the topsoil that looked disturbed by machinery), we made a relatively arbitrary shift in unit numbers to U2=U3=U4.

### Suggestions for 2015

The stratigraphy of Square 69 is quite straightforward, with bedrock exposed throughout the majority of the square, leaving few stratigraphic questions to be answered in another season. Currently, the most interesting and potentially productive question raised by 16.69 is that of the U9/U10 drain channel. In future seasons, this channel could be traced to the NW or the SE in order to better understand where it runs/drains.

### Conclusion

Square 69 is at an appropriate stopping point for this season, having raised and answered interesting questions regarding the date and nature of this area's moat, Ashkelon's water system(s) and giving us more reference points as to elevations of bedrock.

# Ashkelon 2014

## Preliminary Square Report – 20.68 (Snake Tower)

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### Season's Objectives

This year marked the first season of excavation in Grid 20, an area covering a sector of the north-eastern walls of Ashkelon. Archaeological work was confined to Square 68 – a section of wall including a tower known colloquially as the Snake Tower lying 140 m north of the Jerusalem Gate. Following an earlier comprehensive survey of the walls of Ashkelon, this site had been identified as an area with high potential for excavation. The remains of the medieval walls of Ashkelon are fragmentary and the Snake Tower is one of the few remaining areas where there appeared to be the possibility of exposing a complete stratigraphic sequence of construction and occupation.

The Snake Tower occupied a position at a corner of the town wall, where after running north from Jerusalem Gate it made a 90° turn to the west for some 15–20 m before continuing again in a northerly direction. Before excavation began, all that was visible were the remains of part of a rounded tower and the wall running south from it, standing at the top of the scarp on the eastern side of the site. Some 10 m west of the wall and parallel to it stand the remains of another wall, c.10 m long, 1.44 m thick and c.5 m high, leaning at an angle of 10° to the west. Other large pieces of fallen masonry from the medieval walls lie down the slope to the north, where the rampart had evidently been undermined. In the 1950s–60s, the site had been levelled for the erection of wooden holiday chalets, but since the abandonment of the holiday camp in the 1980s had become overgrown with thorny vegetation.

The key objective for the 2014 season was to understand the complete stratigraphic sequence of the walls' construction and use. Preliminary analysis of the standing masonry suggested that the tower was essentially Fatimid (10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century), although likely to have been built on Byzantine foundations and reused after the Crusader conquest of 1153. This initial hypothesis was largely borne out by our excavations, although we found no trace of occupation levels associated with the use of the tower, as it turned out that these would have been at a level higher than the current ground level.

Before excavation began the site was cleared of vegetation and overburden by machine, though it was still necessary to spend several days clearing large amounts of plant growth by hand from around the walls and thoroughly clean the exposed masonry. The excavation strategy was shaped by the limited time and manpower available, which meant that the exposure of a large area was impractical. Excavation therefore focused on a few key areas. A long trench (A) was opened between the rounded tower [4] and the leaning wall [8], in order to determine the relationship between the two structures. Another trench (BD) was also opened south of this against the inside face of the town wall [3] and another trench (C) on the outside, to expose the foundations and investigate the constructional sequence. A fourth trench (E), subsequently extended north and south, was also opened to examine the south wall of the early Fatimid building, but a similar one (F) intended to examine the north wall was abandoned when it became clear that that wall no longer existed.

The period of excavation ran from 8 June until 8 July 2014, when hostilities in the nearby Gaza Strip caused a cessation of work. DP and HB returned to the site between 10 and 17 September to complete the recording and drawing of sections. None of the work reported here would have been possible without the dedicated efforts of the summer school students

and volunteers working in Grid 20. Our thanks go to Matt Hewett, Anna Kim, Sarah Ostertag, Stela Martins, Abby VanderHart, Mark Verbruggen, Shane Cavlovic and Rajaa Elidrissi. Surveying was undertaken by Trent Dutton.

## Brief Overview

The structural remains uncovered this season proved to be complex, with a large number of phases appearing within a relatively small area. The historical sources describe numerous episodes of construction and demolition of the walls throughout the medieval period. The stratigraphic sequence of the area has been divided into seven phases, dating from the Hellenistic period in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC through to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century AD. The phases are detailed below:

Phase	Description	Period	Date
<b>I</b>	Wall or tower?	Hellenistic	4 <sup>th</sup> –1 <sup>st</sup> century BC
<b>II</b>	Town wall foundations	Byzantine	5 <sup>th</sup> –6 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>III</b>	Building remains, lenses, and (assumed) repair of town wall	Early Islamic	Late 7 <sup>th</sup> –10 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>IV</b>	Construction of a building inside the town walls	Fatimid	10 <sup>th</sup> –12 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>V</b>	Construction of a new city wall, including rounded tower	Late Fatimid	Early 12 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>VI</b>	Repair and modification of tower with a rectangular base	Crusader (Richard I)?	1192?
<b>VII</b>	Excavation and backfilling of stone-robbing and/or archaeological trenches	Modern	19 <sup>th</sup> – early 20 <sup>th</sup> century

The earliest structure (Phase I) was represented by a wall [44, 49], aligned roughly east–west and assumed by comparison with similar structures elsewhere in Ashkelon to be of Hellenistic date, which had been incorporated into the later Fatimid construction. A similar fragment of walling can be seen elsewhere in Ashkelon’s walls, immediately south of the Jerusalem gate. In both cases it is assumed that the Hellenistic walls formed part of urban defences. The town walls were then rebuilt during the Byzantine period (Phase II) on a different alignment, using the characteristically grey shelly mortar of the period seen elsewhere in Ashkelon’s fortifications.<sup>1</sup>

In the early Islamic period (Phase IV), a building [8, 63] was constructed inside and parallel to the Byzantine town wall, overlying the indeterminate foundations of some earlier buildings (Phase III). Its construction in ashlar-faced rubble concrete laid in courses *c.* 14 cm high using a creamy buff coloured sandy mortar suggests a Fatimid date of the late 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Unusually, its shallow foundation consisted almost entirely of reused antique granite column-drums, laid side by side along the line of the walls rather than transversely across them.

This building was later partly destroyed by the construction of new town walls [3–4,

<sup>1</sup> For more detail see the forthcoming chapter by Denys Pringle in *Ashkelon* 9.

23, 48], which also appear to be Fatimid, perhaps of the early 12<sup>th</sup> century (Phase V). For reasons that remain obscure, the western wall of the earlier building was left standing and does not appear to have been incorporated into the Fatimid town walls, nor was its stone re-used. The new town wall was built just inside (i.e. west of) and up-slope from the Byzantine wall, which would then have been demolished. The deep foundations of the Fatimid wall were dug well below those of the Byzantine wall and incorporated parts of the Hellenistic walls that had survived inside them. Like the Byzantine wall, it followed the contour of the pre-existing earthen rampart and the corner where it turned west to continue following the edge of slope was marked by what would have appeared from outside the town as a rounded tower, of which only the southern part now survives. This was strengthened by at least eight granite through-columns (some of them perhaps robbed from the foundations of the earlier building) laid radially just above a chamfered plinth.

In a subsequent phase (VI), most likely following the slighting or partial destruction of the tower, what remained of its exposed foundation was squared-off externally by the addition of triangular spurs of rubble masonry and (apparently) a thin ashlar facing. This activity appears unfinished and hastily done and may perhaps be attributed to the Crusader period, possibly to 1192, when following Saladin's destruction of the town walls Richard I began to refortify them, only to reach an agreement with Saladin to have them demolished again later the same year.

The next recorded periods of activity (Phase VII) belong to the post-medieval period and appear to have been associated with demolition work, stone-robbing, treasure-hunting and/or archaeology in varying combinations. The first is represented by the excavation of a trench some 6 m wide and over 2 m deep against the inside (west) face of the town wall. This was subsequently filled with earth and rubble, including pieces of masonry, tipped into it from the west. Although we do not know from what level the cut was made, it would have had the effect of destroying any remaining elements of the eastern part of the Early Islamic building. Although this cut was initially interpreted as a construction trench for the Fatimid town wall itself, in trench C, where it was fully excavated (to c.35.00 m ASD), it was clearly associated with the robbing of the inside face of the town wall, which remained intact below this level, while in trench A the wall also had no facing to the depth excavated (35.40 m ASD). While it is possible that such clearance might have been the work of Lady Hester Stanhope, who is known to have excavated the interior of one of the towers of Ashkelon in 1812, there is no direct evidence to link her activities to this one. A likelier explanation is therefore that it represents an episode of demolition and robbing of stone, carried out perhaps by Ibrahim Pasha in 1832–40 or by the inhabitants of the adjacent village of Jura at any time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Photographs taken by John Garstang c.1920 also show that he undertook clearance work on the outside of the rounded tower. Our excavations suggest, however, that he also excavated inside the walls, for the upper layers in trenches A, B/D and E consisted of deposits (0.6–1.3 m thick) of loose rubble mixed with large quantities of predominantly Late Roman and Byzantine pottery – a composition characteristic of Garstang's backfilling activities encountered elsewhere in Ashkelon.

Across all the areas of excavation there were few layers which could firmly be designated as floor surfaces, and those that were uncovered were heavily disrupted. No surfaces associated with the Fatimid-period rounded tower and walls were uncovered, and it is likely that they were at a much higher level than the current ground – possibly even above the height of the re-used columns. The only layers that could be classed as occupation surfaces were those surviving below the floor and threshold of the Fatimid building in Phases III–IV.

## Phasing

### *Phase I – Hellenistic (4<sup>th</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC)*

This phase consists of a wall [44, 49], running east–west. The upper part [44] was characterized by large, well-cut blocks of *kurkar* separated by beds of fine white lime mortar, 1–3 cm thick, but with very fine jointing on the wall faces. This mortar is still relatively soft and appears to be pure lime putty, with little or no added aggregate. The blocks were on average 34 cm high, 42 cm long and 15 cm thick and arranged as headers and stretchers in *emplekton* style. For the most part the wall was built entirely of blocks, though in some places the core consisted of fist-sized lumps of ashlar set in the same white mortar. The wall was 0.86 m thick and was traced for a length of c.3.50 m. It was visible on both the east and west sides of the Phase V (Fatimid) town wall [3–4] and had clearly been enveloped by it, while to the east its partially demolished remains ran under and through the Phase II (Byzantine) town wall [26–27]. At the time when the Fatimid tower and wall were built, the upper part of the Phase I wall [44] must have been standing some 3.20 m high, as is indicated by the gap in the surviving Fatimid wall, where the upper part of the Phase I wall subsequently eroded away.

Below 33.90 m ASD, the wall narrowed by c.10 cm on the south side, though not apparently on the north, and was associated with a return running at right-angles to it to the south below the line of the later Phase II wall, but this could only be observed on its west side. The construction of the lower part of the wall [49] appears to have been otherwise similar to that of the upper part [44].

Both levels of the Phase I wall are tentatively dated to the Hellenistic period on the basis of their style of construction and comparison with another similar fragment of early walling surviving in the town wall south of the Jerusalem Gate.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, owing to constraints of time and the increasing narrowness of the bottoms of trenches B and C, it was not possible to reach any intact layers associated with the wall's construction.

### *Phase II – Byzantine to Early Umayyad (5<sup>th</sup>–7/8<sup>th</sup> century AD)*

In the second phase a massive wall of concrete construction was built on a north–south axis at right-angles to and partly over the top of the Phase I structures [44, 49]. Only the foundation of the wall survived. Since it had evidently been subject to subsidence eastwards down the slope as well as to deliberate robbing, it appeared when first excavated as several distinct pieces [26–28, 76, 90], which were only later revealed to be part of the same feature. At the northern end of trench C the foundation [76] stood 1.3 m above a base point of 33.20 m ASD and was at least 2.8 m thick, while at the southern end [26] it stood only 0.85 m above a base point of 34 m ASD and was at least 1.6 m thick, but in both areas the outer face was missing. The masonry consisted of rubble concrete, laid in courses some 15 cm high. The mortar binding the rubble was light grey and included large amounts of shell as well as some small stones and charcoal. The west (inner) side of [26] was faced with roughly rectangular blocks of *kurkar* covered in mortar, giving the impression that the foundation had been built completely filling the trench in which it was set. This also seems to be confirmed by traces of orange sandy soil that were found in the interstices between the courses; these contrasted with the evidently later fill that excavation revealed running up against the wall face. This type of rubble masonry, with grey shelly mortar containing charcoal, is found elsewhere in the town

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<sup>2</sup> Area 19, wall associated with tower K.



walls of Ashkelon and has been dated by radiocarbon analysis to the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. It is quite distinct from the masonry of the earlier and later phases.

Because of later excavations, including that for the much deeper foundations of the Phase V (Fatimid) wall, which appears to have removed everything from the west side of the Phase II wall and to have been responsible for a partial void below [26], few layers could be directly associated with this wall. At the north end of trench C, what remained of the bottom of the foundation directly overlay a sandy layer [103], into which had been cut an indeterminate feature [104] filled with loose grey ashy material including charcoal and bone fragments. In the middle of the trench another fragment of the foundation [28] overlay a layer of soft dark orange silt [50], containing pottery of Byzantine and early Umayyad date. A layer of dark brown soil [29] running against the east side of [26] and [28] at a higher level, however, most likely post-dates the robbing of the wall, though the pottery from it is datable to the Byzantine period.

Inside the wall to the west, a layer of burnt material containing large amounts of vitrified wasters of Byzantine coarse ware [70] that had been redeposited against the inside face of the later Phase V wall [3] (see below) suggests that there may have been a kiln in this area in the Byzantine period.

### *Phase III – Early Islamic (late 7<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century)*

Although, apart from layer [50], no material evidence for an Early Islamic phase to the town walls was found *in situ*, a photograph taken by John Garstang during his clearance excavations in 1920 shows what appear to be two granite column-drums set transversely through the upper surviving parts of the Phase II wall. It is very likely that these represent through-columns forming part of an Early Islamic rebuilding of the Byzantine wall, such as one finds elsewhere in Ashkelon. One of the columns still exists, though now displaced several metres north of the position in which Garstang photographed it.

Evidence for Early Islamic building activity within the line of the Phase II walls was found in trenches A, E and F. In the southern part of trench E this phase is characterized by an indistinct series of disturbed lenses and areas of masonry uncovered to the south of and directly below the later Phase IV (Fatimid) wall [63]. Although the investigation of these layers was constrained by the small size of the excavated area (1.5 m square), they seem likely to have represented the remains of foundations of structures whose upper parts no longer survived. The rough pieces of lime-mortared walling that were uncovered [53, 73] were aligned north-west to south-east, a quite different orientation to that of the later Phase IV (Fatimid) building. Another area of roughly constructed masonry [92], albeit unmortared, lay south of [73]. No surfaces were found associated with these areas of masonry and the fills between them included lenses of material that were either compacted [67, 97] or soft [78, 82, 93], the latest pottery from them being of the mid 8<sup>th</sup> to mid 10<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the northern part of trench E, north of wall [63], a series of fills and horizontal surfaces predating the construction of the Phase IV building was excavated, though except at the lowest levels excavated they survived only as a narrow strip on the west side of the trench, the remainder having been dug away in Phase VII. Immediately below wall [63] lay remains of another unmortared foundation [108], similar to [92]. This was set in a fill [98, 91] of fairly compact brown-grey soil containing some shell and small stones as well as small fragments of mortar similar to that found in the Phase I (Hellenistic) wall [44, 49]. The pottery from these layers was predominantly Late Roman and Byzantine, but also included sherds of the mid 8<sup>th</sup> to mid 10<sup>th</sup> century. Overlying layer [91] (at 36.6 m ASD) was a discontinuous spread of mortar [109], c.6 cm thick, mixed with shell and beach gravel,

apparently representing an area where mortar had been mixed. This was overlain by another brown layer [87], 25–30 cm thick, similar to those below but containing predominantly pottery of the Islamic period, including filter-necked jug fragments of the mid 11<sup>th</sup> to early 12<sup>th</sup> century. This was covered by a spread of looser brown soil, large stones and lumps of shelly mortar, sealed by a compact yellow-brown clayey surface containing flecks of mortar [84], which also extended over the top of foundation [108]. The surface of [84] was subsequently overlain by an orange ashy tip [66] containing thin lenses coloured orange and white (mortar) respectively and with a hard surface sloping down slightly to the south. Above this was a grey ashy layer [110]. These two ashy layers appear to correspond to two lenses of similar material [112] on the south side of wall [63] which were also cut through by the wall's foundations. Layer [110] was covered by grey-brown soil becoming looser to the north [111]. This in turn was covered by a level plaster surface laid on a bedding of stones and mortar [71]. This had every appearance of being the floor of the building constructed in Phase IV, except that in section it can be seen to have been cut through by the foundation [102] of wall [63]. It therefore seems more likely to have been in origin a construction floor associated with the building work. The floor of the building [61] ran directly over it (see below).

In trench A, a complex sequence of deposits and surfaces was uncovered, cut through on the east by a later trench [106] associated with the robbing of the Phase V (Fatimid) town wall and on the west by the foundations [88] of the leaning wall [8] of the Phase IV building and by a later trench [17] dug against it. The earliest of the layers excavated [105] was hard, compact and light yellow-brown in colour, containing pieces of mortar similar to those encountered in the Phase I wall [44]. This layer appears to be the equivalent of layer [98] in trench E. It was overlain by a lens of loose orange-brown pebbly fill sloping down to the north, which was only visible in the side of the cut for [106]. Above this was a deposit [37], up to 70 cm thick, of light grey-brown soil with ash, mortar and charcoal inclusions. The latest pottery from this layer was datable to the mid 9<sup>th</sup> to mid 10<sup>th</sup> century. Set into it were two blocks of worked kurkar [101], suggesting that the buildings whose foundations were encountered in trench E may also have extended this far north. This was covered by a series of scoops and compact fills, including a darker compact layer [39] above [101], two layers consisting mainly of crushed mortar [13, 38] and an orange sandy layer containing a large amount of pottery [33], including types datable to the Fatimid period (mid 10<sup>th</sup> to early 12<sup>th</sup> century). The composition and compaction of [37, 39] was similar to [66] in trench E.

In trench F, a loose layer [86] containing pottery of the Abbasid period (mid 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century) was overlain by two very compact layers [79, 83] containing similar pottery and types of the mid 9<sup>th</sup> to mid 10<sup>th</sup> century. Layer [83] was similar in composition and compaction to layers [37] and [39] in trench A (with which it was level) and [66] in trench E.

#### *Phase IV – Fatimid (10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century): construction of a building inside the town walls*

Before the excavation started, one medieval feature that was already visible on site was a wall [8] standing some 10 m west of and parallel to the visible remains of the town wall. In published plans of the walls of Ashkelon, including those of E.G. Rey (1871), the Survey of Western Palestine (1881–3) and John Garstang (1921), this wall is interpreted as the west side of a tower forming part of the town walls. Our excavations have shown, however, that the two walls were unrelated and that the Phase IV wall was instead part of an earlier Fatimid building, standing inside the line of the Phase II (Byzantine) town walls, and that it was partially demolished when the town walls were rebuilt in Phase V.

The wall is 10.40 m long, 1.44 m wide and survives to a height of 4.40 m above a 7

cm wide foundation plinth. At present it is leaning at an angle of 10° towards the west. It appears to have been built on a raft of granite columns-drums, laid mostly longitudinally rather than transversely to the line of the wall. The purpose of these was evidently to provide a solid base on what was probably recognized to be unstable ground. However, the laying of the columns longitudinally and so close together may actually have made the wall less stable than would otherwise have been the case and have contributed to its lean. In addition the central part has sunk somewhat, leaving diagonal cracks in the wall and the columns at the ends sticking up at an angle.

Despite its unstable foundation, the wall was well built with two facings of kurkar ashlar enclosing a rubble concrete core, laid *pari passu* with the facing in courses 13–19 cm high (mostly 14–15 cm, averaging 14.65 cm). The mortar used varies from creamy buff to creamy pink in places where it contains a lot of crushed tile or ceramics; it is sandy and somewhat gritty, but with almost no charcoal content. The rubble core also contains occasional lumps of shelly-mortared masonry derived from an earlier construction. The wall's west face, which was evidently the external face, is reasonably well preserved, with its face set back some 3 cm at horizontal intervals of 3, 8 and 13 courses. The east face has lost its facing stones above a height of 1.70 m; and, where excavated in trench A, the lower 1.00 m of the facing had also been robbed out along with one of the columns from the foundation. Traces of a possible foundation trench [88], containing some small stones, which may represent packing, was also discerned in this trench.

The standing wall [8] appears to be the west wall of a building that once extended eastwards towards the Phase II town wall. The position of the building's north wall is indicated by traces of its stub end, at least 0.90 m thick, surviving in the standing masonry at the north end of wall [8], though no trace of its foundations were found by excavation in trench F. At the south end of wall [8], however, not only was the stub end of the south wall more clearly expressed in the standing masonry, but it was also possible to excavate its foundations [63] in trench E.

The south wall was 1.25 m wide and ran 3.60 m to the east, after which all trace of it had been removed by the construction of the foundation [23, 48] for a structure associated with the Phase V town wall. The wall's foundation included three antique granite column-drums set in two parallel rows longitudinally to the line of the wall. The columns extended some 15 cm beyond the wall face. Another shorter column piece was also set transversely through the wall at the point where it met the west wall [8]. Subsidence of the western part of the wall had resulted in the longer of the longitudinally set columns fracturing in the middle. Above the columns were remains of what may have been the threshold of an entrance to the building, represented by a paved and mortared surface [57–58] with the edges of the missing walls still visible in the mortar. The door appears to have been c.1.35 m wide between jambs 0.4 m thick, widening to 2.0 m. on the inside.

Examination of the foundations on the north side of wall [63] was restricted by the presence of a large piece of fallen masonry [9] lying on the ground surface and later disturbance [60], which had effectively removed all trace of any foundation trench to within a few cm of the west side of the excavation trench, as well as undercutting the wall itself. From what was possible to see in the surviving section, however, it appeared that there was virtually no built foundation below the column-drums and beside the wall only a shallowly scooped foundation [102], some 20–30 cm wide, filled with mortared rubble and with a level mortar surface. On the south side of the wall, however, the foundation trench was better preserved. As on the north, its surface was represented by a hard level spread of white mortar, in this case c.50 cm wide, covering a fill of mortared rubble [62]. This lay below a thinner spread of loose degraded mortar [55] and in places covered a looser earth fill [95]. The scooped profile of the trench had cut through the ashy fills [66, 110, 112] of Phase III and

some of the masonry foundations [73, 108] of the same phase, parts of which remained *in situ* set in the mortared fill. As indicated above (Phase III), it also appears to have cut through the level made-up plaster surface [71], which probably eventually came to form the bedding for the floor of the building itself. Part of such a floor [61], some 20 cm thick, survives above the threshold is the south wall of the building, extending over the top of the mortared foundation trench [102] and plaster surface [71] inside. It consists of a mortar bedding covered by a trampled reddish brown clay surface containing some coarse pottery.

The building of which [8] represents the west wall and [63] part of the south wall would have measured 9.52 m. internally from north to south. Some indication of how it was roofed is provided by two shallow though much abraded vertical projections on the east face of [8]. These are 58–59 cm wide and placed at intervals (from the north wall to the south wall) of 2.76, 2.64 and 2.95 m. Although it is possible that these represent the stub ends of walls set at right-angles to wall [8], it seems more likely that they are the remains of pilasters which divided the interior of the building into three bays of roughly equal size. Because of the destruction caused by the construction of the Period V town wall, it is uncertain how far the building would have extended to the east, though there would have been room for three or even four bays of similar width within the line of the Period II town wall. The bays could perhaps have been covered by groin-vaults, separated from one another by transverse arches springing from the pilasters and from free-standing columns or piers within the room; but for this there is no definitive evidence.

#### *Phase V – Fatimid (early 12<sup>th</sup> century): rebuilding of the town walls*

The next structural event to be recorded in this area was the complete rebuilding of the town wall. This entailed the demolition of the earlier Phase II (Byzantine–Umayyad) wall and the partial destruction of the building erected in Phase IV. At this point the medieval town wall, after following the edge of the scarp from the Jerusalem Gate on a course of roughly N20°E, made a dog-leg turn of some 15–20 m to the west before continuing on a course of around N10°W. Although it is likely that already in the Hellenistic and Byzantine periods a tower or bastion would have marked the point at which the wall made its initial turn, we have little evidence to indicate what form such a structure would have taken. In the rebuilt wall of Phase V, however, the exposed right-angled turn was marked by a massive quarter-round tower or bastion, built of a piece with the curtain wall to the south of it. Only the southern part of this tower still survives *in situ* [3–4], the northern part and the wall that would have run west from it having been undermined and destroyed, though several large fragments [5–7] still lie on the downhill slope. The masonry that survives extends some 11.5 m north–south and is some 2.5 m thick. An irregular foundation [23, 48], 1.4 m thick and 3.5 m long, which runs west at right-angles to the southern end of wall [3], albeit separated from it by a gap of some 60 cm to the depth excavated, also appears to belong to the same construction, though it was not fully excavated and its purpose remains unclear.

Although it is likely that the wall and tower would have stood at or near the edge of the east-facing scarp, it is clear that most of what is now visible of them represents a foundation and would originally have been hidden below ground. It is therefore difficult to gain an appreciation of the topography existing at the time when the walls were rebuilt and in use. There has also clearly been considerable undermining and subsidence to the north. Before excavation the difference between the ground levels to the east and west of the wall was 1.55 m at the southern end and 2.56 m in the centre; but it is likely that both ground levels would have been some 2 m higher when the wall was first built and that there was a

level berm in front of the outer face.

Whatever the difference in ground levels inside and outside the walls may have been when they were first built, the builders evidently understood the need to provide them with deep foundations. The curtailment of the 2014 excavation unfortunately meant that it was not possible for us to excavate to the very bottom of the foundations; however, the lowest level recorded in trench C, on the outside of the wall, was 32.42m ASD, or 3.16 m below the present external ground surface and 4.8m below that inside. Such foundations would have required the digging of a massive construction trench. On the inside (west side), however, the cut has been largely removed by the digging of a much larger excavation trench some 6 m wide in Phase VII.

In trench A our excavation did not reach the bottom of this later cut and it was therefore not possible to establish the dimensions or depth of the original construction trench. The western face of wall [4] also had an irregular profile with no proper facing stones, suggesting that it had either been built directly against the side of the foundation trench or that the facing, if there had ever been one, had been robbed when the later cut was made. In trench BD, however, more obvious evidence of stone-robbing was found. Here the wall [3] was found to have a regular vertical facing below 35.52 m ASD; but above that the facing had been robbed and the wall-core scoured out, most likely by the prevailing westernly wind, suggesting that the robber trench had been left open for some considerable time. The robber trench, which narrowed to only 50 cm in width at the very bottom, had been cut through a black gritty deposit [70] sloping down towards the north; this contained quantities of ash and coarse Byzantine pottery, including many vitrified wasters most likely from a kiln. It was overlain by another gritty fill [69], orange-brown in colour and also running down towards the north. But whereas the pottery from [70] was no later than Byzantine, that from [69], though mixed, included types dating from the Fatimid period (mid 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century). Both of these fills appear to have been deposited, or more likely redeposited, against the inner face of the wall after its construction. It appears therefore that here at any rate the wall was built within a construction trench of uncertain width, which was subsequently backfilled with redeposited material.

On the outside (east side), the outer edge of the foundation trench was represented by the west (inside) face of the foundation of the Phase II (Byzantine–Umayyad) wall (part of which [26] was even undermined in the process though remaining *in situ*) and possibly the Phase I wall [49] beneath it (though this was not fully investigated for fear of collapse). In the southern part of trench C, the wall [3] was investigated to a depth of 32.42 m ASD. If we assume that its inside face continued down vertically to the same depth, the wall's thickness at this level would have been 4.6 m. On the outside, however, the lower 2.2 m of the excavated wall-face was built with a slight batter, which turned into a more pronounced chamfered plinth projecting 70 cm, some 50 cm from the bottom. This lower portion of the wall was built of rammed earth (*pisé* or *tapial* construction), consisting of earth, clay, some stones, pottery and mortar fragments. At least two horizontal divisions could be discerned in it, one c.20 cm below the top (at 34.52 m ASD) and another 39 cm below it, each characterized by a spread of pebbles and some pot sherds.

Above the rammed earth construction the wall continued more or less vertically in lime-mortared masonry for five courses, before thickening and overhanging its base for its remaining height. The facing stones at this level, however, have been completely robbed, as have most of those immediately above the rammed earth wall. The construction consists of irregular courses of rubble set in a hard grey-buff sandy mortar containing granules of white lime. The rubble includes at least one lump of grey shelly mortar containing charcoal, most likely derived from the Phase II (Byzantine) wall. For its upper 1.80 m, the wall continues to project forward and its construction changes slightly, with relatively more stone to mortar.

The core consists of horizontal courses of varying height (13–38 cm, some of them probably double courses) containing pieces of *kurkar* set in a hard buff-cream sandy mortar containing no charcoal. Traces of two courses (14–15 cm high) of what may have been an eroded outer face also exist, but they do not relate very convincingly to the coursing of the core material.

The fill [43] of the construction trench between walls [3] and [26] consisted of a very loose mass of stones and other loose material; what little pottery it contained included some sherds of the mid 9<sup>th</sup> to mid 10<sup>th</sup> century.

As mentioned above, the foundations of the Phase V town wall and tower enveloped a portion of the Phase I (Hellenistic) wall [44] running east–west through it to a height of over 3 m. In trench C, the splayed base of the northern part of the foundation [76] also ran against [44] on the south and the foundation of the Phase II (Byzantine) wall [76, 90] on the east. Above this the outer (i.e. east) face of the rounded tower [4] stands 4.5 m proud of the present ground surface, though when built most of its ‘facing’ would have been below ground level. Its mortar is very hard, cream-buff in colour, sandy with small grits (<5 mm) including some shell fragments but very little charcoal. The lower 2.20 m is rounded or sub-polygonal in plan and is faced with irregular ashlar (14–24 cm high) besides two marble columns set transversely into the wall and some other column fragments. During surveying in 2012, a bronze coin was recovered from the mortar bed below the topmost course of this rounded lower section.<sup>3</sup> Above this section are two further courses, each 35 cm high, arranged to a slightly more regular polygonal plan. All the masonry up to this point appears to represent a foundation, rather than an intended wall-face; it would therefore most likely originally have been covered by soil which has since been eroded away. Indeed, a photograph taken by John Garstang in 1920 shows soil extending over it. On this foundation stood the tower itself: first a footing course in rough ashlar, c.14 cm high and set slightly forward; then two plinth courses, also 14 cm high, the upper one with a plain chamfered top. Above this there survive eight courses of ashlar, each c.14 cm high, with a splayed array of granite through-columns set through the wall, 1.02 m. above the base. Three of these columns survive *in situ*, while the mortar impressions of another one may be seen to the north of them and another three or four to the south. The remains of the tower itself stand 1.48 m. above the base course. The floor level of the tower would have been above the height of these columns and well above the present ground level on the west, so has now been lost.

The subsequent eroding away of the upper part of the Phase I wall [44] incorporated into the wall of Phase V resulted in the creation of a gap between the north part [4] and the south part [3] of the Fatimid wall. As the facing of the upper part of [3] has also gone, it is therefore difficult to tell how the rounded face of the ‘tower’ related to the wall-face to the south of it. Even in what survives, however, the curving face of the tower extends behind the projected line of the eroded wall-face, suggesting that there would have been a vertical indentation at this point, to emphasize the change from straight to rounded wall and, in effect, make the rounded portion appear from the outside more like a tower and less like a rounded continuation of the wall. A similar architectural trick is used on one of the rounded towers built in 1169–71 on the walls of Cairo by Saladin (Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn), while acting as wazīr for the Fatimid sultan al-‘Āḍid (1160–71).<sup>4</sup>

As remarked already, the floor levels associated with the tower would have been some 2 m or more above the present ground level and the northern part of the tower has been completely destroyed. Furthermore no part of the wall-face survives on the west side above the foundation level. It is therefore hard to tell whether the back of the tower was open or enclosed, how tall it might have stood, or what provision was made in it for defending it at

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<sup>3</sup> MC66203/ASH0014078.

<sup>4</sup> S. Pradines, ‘Les murailles du Caire de Saladin à Napoléon’, *CRAI* (2012), 1027–63 (at pp. 1042–52).

different levels by embrasures, wall walks or parapets. The only piece of masonry on the inside of the wall that might relate to an associated structure is an irregular foundation [23, 48], 1.4 m wide and 3.5 m in length, which runs east–west from the southern end of wall [3], separated from it by a gap of 0.60 m. Its construction is similar to that of wall [3] and the building of it would have entailed the destruction of the eastern part of the south wall of the Phase IV building [63].

#### *Phase VI – ‘mise en valeur’ of the tower after partial demolition (Crusader? – 1192?)*

It appears that the rounded tower was undermined and slighted while Ashkelon still retained a military significance, for an attempt was subsequently made to refortify it. The main evidence for the attempted rebuilding consists of two triangular masonry ‘spurs’ [64–5] that were added to the south-east and north-east sides of its foundation with the evident intention of producing a rectangular base enclosing the rounded tower. The north end of [4], already perhaps damaged or fallen, was also squared off in line with the northern ‘spur’. In some places an attempt was made to bond the ‘spurs’ into the rough facing of the foundation, but elsewhere – including on the plinth of the rounded tower itself – rubble was simply applied to the earlier facing. The mortar used for the spurs is medium hard, creamy grey and sandy, containing grits (< 3 mm) and finely graded crushed shell; in places it also includes pot sherds, but they seem to have been used more as pinnings than as part of the mortar mix. Some small *kurkar* ashlar still adhering to the lower part of the foundation indicate that the whole squared base would have been faced, though apart from these few survivals all the ashlar have now been robbed out. Given that the northern part of the rounded tower no longer existed, it may be doubted whether much of its superstructure remained standing at all. Indeed, the facing up of the foundation suggests that the external ground level was deliberately lowered in order to present something resembling more a low rectangular bastion than a standing tower. It also seems to have been at this point that a section of blocking [59] was added to bridge the gap in the wall where the remains of the Phase I (Hellenistic) wall [44] had been partly eroded.

#### *Phase VII – Stone-robbing and archaeology (19<sup>th</sup>–early 20<sup>th</sup> century)*

The final major phases of activity in grid 20 consisted of excavations and backfilling apparently associated with demolition work, stone-robbing, treasure-hunting and/or archaeology in varying combinations.

The first is represented by the excavation of a trench some 6 m wide and over 2 m deep against the inside (west) face of the Phase V town wall. This would have resulted in the demolition of whatever still remained of the Phase IV building, which had already been partly destroyed in Phase V. In trench A, although we were unable to excavate it fully, the cut seems to have begun almost vertically on the west and probably sloped down to the east. It was subsequently backfilled with layers of stones and building rubble sloping down from the west. Of these fills, [24] and [52] consisted of a large amount of rubble, including a large chunk of mortared masonry, whereas [42] contained little rubble but a great amount of bone and glass. The pottery from these layers was very mixed and predominantly Byzantine to medieval, but also included some Ottoman-period types. These layers were covered by a more compact weathered pebbly surface [18]. In trench BD the cut extended to a depth of

34.96 m ASD and was clearly associated with the robbing of the facing stones from the Phase V wall [3]. It was filled with discarded rubble and stones in a light brown-grey gritty fill [45]; although the pottery was again predominantly Byzantine and medieval, this also contained some Ottoman-period types. In the northern part of trench E this episode is represented by a cut containing a similar loose stony fill [60], which even extended partly under wall [63]. While it is possible that such clearance might have been the work of Lady Hester Stanhope, who is known to have excavated the interior of one of the towers of Ashkelon in 1812, there is no direct evidence to link her activities to this area. A likelier explanation, supported by the evidence from trench BD, is therefore that it represents an episode of demolition and robbing of stone, carried out perhaps by Ibrahim Pasha in 1832–40 or by the inhabitants of Jura at any time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In view of the wind scouring to which the western side of walls [3] and [4] were subjected, it seems likely that they would have been left exposed to the prevailing westerly gales for some considerable time thereafter before being backfilled.

This backfilling was followed by another episode of backfilling, which in places may have been preceded by further digging activity. These fills mostly consist of very loose fist-size stones associated with large amounts of Late Roman and Byzantine pottery, some medieval and only very occasionally a piece from the Ottoman period [14–16, 19, 21–2, 25, 32, 35–6, 47]. In trench A, fills of this kind [14, 16, 22] overlay the earlier backfill at the eastern end of the trench against wall [4]. To the south of this, in trench BD, similar rubbly fills [15, 19, 21, 25, 32, 35, 36] overlay layer [45] next to the Fatimid town wall [3]. In the gap between [3] and [4], where the Hellenistic wall [44] had eroded away, a dark brown silty layer containing little pottery [10] appears to represent topsoil washed through the gap. These layers lay beneath a surface layer [11] containing some rubble, partly disturbed by the pre-excavation mechanical clearance of the site.

In trench E, a similar rubble fill [47] was found overlying the earlier fill [60] on the north side of wall [63], covered by a sandy buff topsoil with rubble inclusions [46]. To the south of this the remains of wall [63] were covered by an identical sandy buff topsoil [30, 34], overlying a soft brown fill datable to the Ottoman period [54].

At the western end of trench A, adjacent to the early Fatimid wall [8], a cut through the building surfaces filled with loose rubble [17] may be interpreted as a robber trench to remove one of the columns from the base of the wall, the ‘ghost’ of which could be seen in the mortar. However, this robbing might have occurred as early as Phase V, since this feature lay directly below the loose surface soil [1–2].

In trench C on the east side of the rounded tower [4] and town wall [3], the archaeological stratification was also disturbed by later archaeological activity and stone robbing. Layers [85, 94, 96] covering the remains of the Phase II (Byzantine) wall contained Byzantine to Fatimid-period material, while the upper part of the excavated area was marked by buff-coloured sandy layers [20=81, 51] containing pieces of rubble and very mixed pottery (Roman–Fatimid), quite possibly representing fills associated with previous archaeological activity. These layers were below a loose dark brown topsoil [12, 80=72].

The fills consisting of loose rubble comprising fist-sized stones associated with Late Roman and Byzantine pottery seem likely to represent the backfilling following the archaeological activity of John Garstang in the 1920s, as similar fills have been excavated in other areas where Garstang is known to have worked. Other excavations appear more likely to have been associated with the robbing of stone or columns from the abandoned buildings.



## Future Directions

Future excavation in this area could include the investigation a smaller tower<sup>5</sup> lying to the south of the Snake Tower, where there is the potential for examining undisturbed occupation layers inside the tower.

In September 2014 a further 27 samples of carbonized wood were collected from the excavated Byzantine walls in grid 20 and from other parts of the urban enceinte as part of the parallel radiocarbon dating project on the walls being sponsored by the UK's Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). A list of the samples is given in the appendix below.

## Appendix:

### Additional carbon samples collected from the town walls, September 2014

Sample no.	Location	Description	Suggested date	Notes
201	FF, grid 20	Wall [26]	Byz.	
202	FF, grid 20	Wall [26]	Byz.	
203	FF, grid 20	Wall [26]	Byz.	
204	FF, grid 20	Wall [26]	Byz.	
205	FF, grid 20	Wall [26]	Byz.	
206	FF, grid 20	Wall [26]	Byz.	
207	FF, grid 20	Wall [26]	Byz.	
208	FF, grid 20	Wall [26]	Byz.	
209	FF, grid 20	Wall [26]	Byz.	
210	FF, grid 20	Wall [26]	Byz.	
211	FF, grid 20	Wall [28]	Byz.	
212	FF, grid 20	Wall [28]	Byz.	Olive stone?
213	FF, grid 20	Wall [28]	Byz.	
214	FF, grid 20	Wall [28]	Byz.	
215	FF, grid 20	Wall [28]	Byz.	
216	FF, grid 20	Wall [90]	Byz.	
217	FF, grid 20	Wall [90]	Byz.	
218	FF, grid 20	Wall [90]	Byz.	
219	FF, grid 20	Wall [90]	Byz.	
220	FF, grid 20	Wall [90]	Byz.	
221	FF, grid 20	Wall [90]	Byz.	
222	FF, grid 20	Wall [90]	Byz.	
223	K	Phase IV: rounded tower	Fat./Cr.	
224	K	Phase IV: rounded tower	Fat./Cr.	
225	K	Phase IV: rounded tower	Fat./Cr.	
226	K	Phase IV: rounded tower	Fat./Cr.	
227	WW	Phase II: masonry fill of cistern	EI	Context a little uncertain as the sample blew away during collection and had to be retrieved from the ground: we are fairly sure that this is the sample collected and not, e.g., one from Phase I. It has mortar

<sup>5</sup> Tower GG in Area 27.

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				attached, and is therefore evidently from the structure.
<b>228</b>	WW	Phase II: masonry fill of cistern	EI	
<b>229</b>	WW	Phase II: masonry fill of cistern	EI	
<b>230</b>	WW	Phase II: masonry fill of cistern	EI	
<b>231</b>	WW	Phase II: masonry fill of cistern	EI	
<b>232</b>	WW	Phase II: masonry fill of cistern	EI	
<b>233</b>	WW	Phase II: masonry fill of cistern	EI	

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## **32.19 – Interim Report 2014**

### **Simeon David Ehrlich**

#### **Overview; Goals**

Salvage excavation was conducted this summer in grid 32, square 19 at the behest of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. The primary goal of the excavation was to identify a site for the installation of a pump which was to be a crucial component of the upgrade to the sewage infrastructure being conducted at the Ashkelon national park. Installation of the pump was to require a hole of 3.0m in diameter and 3.6m in depth. Despite poor results from ground penetrating radar work undertaken in this area in the past, preliminary work undertaken by the Israel Antiquities Authority in the spring had revealed the presence of architectural features. The Leon Levy Expedition was asked to supervise the salvage excavation in this area as part of its 2014 field season. The Expedition would provide field staff, while a local contract archaeology firm was hired to provide excavators. This project provided the Expedition with an excellent opportunity to investigate the late period (Roman/Byzantine/Islamic/Crusader) use of the site near to the center of town and to study changes in the urban plan during these periods.

Thanks are due to the many staff members, workers, and volunteers who contributed to the excavation of 32.19: to grid supervisor Tracy Hoffmann; to surveyor Benjamin Felker; to photographer Melissa Aja; to Alanna Cook for acting as square registrar; to the workers Uri, Yakov, Ezra, Eliyahu, Yaffa, Yosef, Zevulun, Shachar, Nitai, Shalom, and Nevo and to their supervisor Janet; to Omri, director of the Ashkelon National Park and to his staff for their cooperation; to our many visitors from the Israel Antiquities Authority and the assistance they offered; to Yakov Uster for joining in the last few days of excavation and for lending his expertise in interpretation; to Bo for coming to join our excavations once again this year; to Meghan Gegner, Annikka Bouwsma, Grant Kelley, Trent Dutton, and Deirdre Fulton for coming to help out on their breaks; and to Lucy Master for helping out, provided she could do something “really dangerous”.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the political situation interrupted the field season this summer. As such, this is not a final report, but rather an interim one. After a summary and preliminary interpretation of finds, a plan will be given for the continued excavation of the square, so as to achieve the goals of the salvage excavation when work resumes.

#### **Conventions; Notes**

It should be stated that the grid is oriented closer to the NE than to true N. For simplicity, references to portions of the square will be to the NE/NW/SE/SW quadrants despite the fact that the quadrants do not quite correspond to these ordinal directions. Walls however will be said to run N-S or E-W only if they correspond to the true cardinal directions. Thus, a N-S wall will run roughly from the NW to SE quadrants.

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<sup>1</sup> Don't worry, she didn't.

As excavation was interrupted midseason, much pottery remained unread. Staff returned to the site briefly and did a preliminary speed-read on much of this material. Buckets read in this manner will be indicated by an asterisk (B15xxx\*).

Phasing has been divided into two broad divisions. Phase 2 represents the Classical periods up to and including the Byzantine/Umayyad transition. Phase 1 represents the Islamic periods including Crusader occupation of the site. Where possible, finer chronologies will be given

The state of the square at the interruption of excavation is shown on DwgID23292 (henceforth: the final top plan). Preliminary phase plans are shown on DwgID23293 (Phase 1) and DwgID23294 (Phase 2); the information contained in this report supersedes any depictions of phasing given on these preliminary phase plans. Revised phase plans will have to be made.

## **Phase 2 (Undifferentiated Roman/Late Roman/Byzantine/Umayyad)**

### *The Southeast Probe*

The southeast probe was initially excavated to a lower level (c.1m deeper) than the rest of the square. Probing by the IAA had uncovered architecture in this area and a backhoe was used to remove the backfill and reach the level of the test excavations. Members of the staff of the Leon Levy Expedition then began manual excavations while their volunteers were taking part in a seminar day during the first week of excavation.

Architectural elements were found on the north (**U2, U6**), east (**U47**), and west (**U3, U4, U5, U11, U43, U57**) of this probe; none were present in the center or at the southern end. This architecture was poorly understood for most of the season, as the rest of the square had not yet been excavated down to the same level. At the interruption of fieldwork, the western units were better understood (see subsection below “The Southern Channels”), the northern units poorly understood, and the eastern units were somewhere in between (see subsection below “The Central Channel”).

**U2** is a large ashlar and mortar wall. **U6** may also be a wall of similar construction or it may be a lone stone. These units have been covered by debris from section cleaning, baulk collapse, and the articulation of units above. Consequently, they have not been reshot since top plan #1, nor has their definition been improved in any way. The masonry style calls to mind Hellenistic walls seen elsewhere on site, most notable those in Grid 47, however no excavated material from 32.19 has corroborated this hypothesis. They may also be Roman walls, but likely nothing later, owing to the presence of Byzantine architecture above. These two units are the earliest architectural features excavated in the square at this point.

### *The Southern Channels (photos A14\_26995; rebuilds: A14\_26391, A14\_26392)*

The most prominent architectural feature from phase 2 is a junction of two channels that runs E-W across the S of the square. This construction is built over two earlier features of unknown function: **U38** and **U43**. **U38** is a partial (or partially exposed) ring of roughly hewn stones. These are set within a grey-brown soil which looks to be cut into a medium-brown soil.

(Neither soil patch has been assigned a unit number as of yet.) **U43** is N-S line of roughly squared stones set into mortar. Both features are at the same elevation and the southern channels are built directly above them. As with walls **U2** and **U6**, a Roman-period date of construction is presumed, as the architecture immediately above is Byzantine. That said, the units have not been excavated and, hence, no pottery readings have been made to substantiate this hypothesis.

The southern channel itself is a large construction of roughly squared stones. Its main component is **U12**, a large covered section running pretty much on a true E-W axis. It is entirely possible that the uppermost courses of **U12** currently visible (i.e., the stones at elevation 18.62m on the final top plan) are later rebuilds. In fact, this would accord well with the rebuilds seen on the eastern sections of the channel. Moreover, it appears that at lower elevations the channel was broader (as seen by the protrusion to the N at elevation 17.91m on the final top plan). Continuing to the E, **U4** and **U57** form the N and S walls of the channel, respectively. **U4** is composed of large, squared blocks, while **U57** is composed of smaller stones set in a thick white mortar. Abutting **U12** along its S extent and turning away from it with a gentle curve, such that it diverges altogether near the point where **U12** and **U57** meet, is **U11**. This unit is a wall one row wide composed of roughly squared stones of moderate size, which are more worked on their S faces, while the N sides are more uneven. **U11** serves as the S extent of a spur which either diverges from or converges with the channel formed by **U4** and **U57**; the direction of flow has not been established. **U57** thus serves as the interior dividing wall between the two channels, with **U4** and **U11** serving as the exterior boundaries. Floating above **U57** and offset a bit to the N is **U5**, which may be a stone superstructure to the foundation of **U57**, a rebuild on **U4**, or the covering of this part of the channel.

The fill N of **U11** and S of **U5/U57** is **U32**. The fill N of **U57**, S of **U4**, and beneath **U5** is **U58**. These fills were loose, sandy, and dense with ceramics. **U32** read as Byzantine/Umayyad transition, while **U58** read as Byzantine/Umayyad transition (B15213\*, B15219\*) coming down on Byzantine (B15216\*, B15220\*, B15221\*). The removal of a rebuild on **U4** read LR/Byzantine (B15212\*). **U5** was removed in stages, as it appeared to be a set of various rebuilds. Pottery readings were Byzantine/Umayyad transition coming down on Byzantine, though the last bucket excavated (B15206) remains unread. It seems probable that the channels were constructed in the Byzantine period (or earlier) and remained in use through the Islamic period.

Two features abutting **U4** are poorly understood. The first of these is **U3**, a well-built ashlar wall or pier running N off the E extent of **U4**. The second is **U34**, a large stone and mortar construction of unknown function to the N of **U4** at its W extent.

### *The Central Channel*

There are several possibly related features that align on a N-S axis immediately to the west of the axis of wall **U8** (see subsection below “The Northeastern Channel”). First is **U49**, a strip of orange-brown compact sandy soil with a very well defined W edge that drops vertically for at least 30cm. **U49** runs S from the NW corner of the square (i.e., the northernmost point in

the square). Its E edge is poorly defined and it appears cut into by later deposits. It traces S for several meters, but is lost at the currently excavated elevation at the point where **U24** (Phase 1b basin) stood. The western edge of what is almost certainly **U49** is picked up again in the central probe (see subsection below “The Collapsed Building”), which cuts into it. This cut reveals soil of the same composition as **U49** and on the same axis continuing to a depth of c.90cm below the top elevation of **U49**. As this cut has only revealed this soil in section and as the two patches may yet prove continuous, a new unit was not opened.

Above this possible continuation of **U49** and running on the same axis is **U26**. **U26** fills in against **U8** on its E extent, but its W extent is poorly defined. Its S extent is marked by the cut of the SE probe, but its N extent is poorly defined. The poor definition in these two cases means that pottery readings from these liminal areas may be contaminated by ceramics from neighboring units. The most prominent feature of **U26** was a series of what appeared to be five or so sunken jars set in a row with a cluster of three set together at the N extent of this row. Notably, this row was on the same N-S axis as **U49**. Excavation revealed that these were not sunken jars, but rather cross sections of vessels c.10cm in height. These were set into the shelly mortar matrix of the unit. **U25** represented a pair of vertically-oriented, squared stones that appeared to have some plaster lipping out from their bases. These were situated above the jar sections of **U26**. It now appears that the plaster was merely a striation of **U26** while the stones were either rubble or, perhaps, associated in some way with **U23**.

Regarding the ceramics found in **U26**, the proportion of finewares to plainwares far surpassed that seen elsewhere in the square. The unit featured numerous striations of white plaster, though the state of preservation was poor and these did not trace readily. While its precise function is unknown, the unit likely served as a drainage feature of some sort.

Architectural features were discovered in the N and E sections along the axis of **U26/U49** which may be associated with these units. Firstly, in the E section of the SE probe there is a vaulted construction of squared blocks preserved to over 1m in height. This was opened as **U47** and rendered on a top plan as best as could be managed. As investigation of **U47** would almost certainly have led to a catastrophic collapse of the 2m tall E baulk, this was not undertaken. At the N extent of **U49**, abutting its W face, a stack of stones was found in section which appears to be arching up and over **U49**. This possible section of a vault was designated **U48**. (Some stones thought to be the corresponding E side of the vault were designated **U50**, but these were later found to be floating on a lens of ceramics cut into **U49** and excavated as part of **U33**.)

If all these features are related then there would appear to be a covered channel running on a N-S axis and possibly cornering with the S channels. **U49** is most likely a Byzantine deposit (B15192\*); the presence of Abbasid ceramics (B15193\*) may indicate contamination during excavation from the incomplete removal of the lens of ceramics cut into the eastern portion of the unit. **U26** reads Byzantine (B15143) and LR/Byzantine (B15196\*, B15222\*, B15225\*), with a reading of Byzantine/Umayyad (B 15173) possibly the result of the poor definition of a boundary between **U26** and the Byzantine/Umayyad deliberate fill **U28** to the W. Thus, **U26**,

**U47, U48, U49**, and possibly **U8** may function together as some sort of channel/drainage feature. This, however, is by no means certain.

### *The Northeastern Channel*

The phase 2 architecture in the NE quadrant of the square is prominent though poorly understood. The earliest component is likely **U8**, a N-S wall of large stone blocks and heavy white mortar. (This wall was assigned the designation **U7**, but was not included on a top plan, and was then opened again as **U8** the next day; the error was not caught immediately and the designation **U8** stuck.) Three pieces of what appear to be paving stones are set on the boundary of FG17 and FG27 and are indicated on top plans and phase plans by darker shading. If these stones continued across the extent of **U8** they would likely form a tessellated arrangement of diamonds (aside from those edge pieces which would be cut to match the edges of **U8**).

The S extent of **U8** (the area above **U2**) remains a bit of a mystery and was one of the areas under investigation at the time fieldwork was interrupted. It appears that **U8** terminates and abuts another architectural feature, however this was not established with certainty and no new unit was opened. It is somewhat difficult to discern on the final top plan, but there are six courses of stone, each protruding out westwards from that above and each angled slightly more than that above rather than being perfectly parallel. The most probable interpretations seem a staircase or a wall that has been cut into. In either case it is likely that this is a feature abutting **U8**, rather than a part of **U8**. As well, there is a slim chance that these are upper courses of **U2**.

**U9** is an E-W wall, abutting **U8** at its N terminus. The function of **U9** is poorly understood and the unit remains unexcavated. All the architectural features with which it interacts are phase 2 – as indeed are all the architectural features associated with the northeast channel – and there is no convincing reason at present to phase **U9** otherwise.

Built against the E face of **U8** is a wall or platform (**U10**) with large irregular paving (?) stones in its uppermost course. (At the N extent it appears that there is a further course above this one.) A layer of sherds is set beneath the uppermost course of stones, after which further courses of various types (fieldstones, reused architectural elements, etc.) continue down for at least a meter. There is a gap between **U8** and **U10** at their northern extents. Why this would be the case is undetermined at present. (The gap was not excavated, as this would have hindered access in and out of the square.) Running parallel to **U10** and offset by roughly 1m to the E is another wall (**U35**) at similar elevation. The uppermost course of **U35** is composed of well-hewn blocks, but the numerous lower courses are made of smaller fieldstones bonded with shelly/sandy mortar.

The fill between **U10** and **U35** was excavated as **U18**. This was a loose, highly striated deposit of many sandy soils of different colors. A very high concentration of pottery was noted, much of it flat lying. Thus, **U18** was determined to be sedimentary deposition within a channel. These deposits appear to have accumulated over a number of centuries, with pottery readings getting earlier as excavation proceeded, with those from the deepest points reached (B15117, B15135) reading as Byzantine. (N.B. articulation of the faces of **U10** and **U35** resulted in the partial backfilling of the excavated portion of **U18** to a depth of roughly 0.5m. As this area was

not a viable space for the installation of the sewage pump and much pottery had already been collected, removing the material was not seen as a priority.)

Built against the W face of **U8** and bedded in the plaster of **U26** (see previous subsection “The Central Channel”) is platform **U23**. This platform was composed of a layer of fieldstones and semi-hewn stones, set over several courses of similar materials along with rubble and cobbles. The rubble includes veneer fragments (including what may be a fragment of a chancel screen), fragments of a red mosaic (likely made of ceramic tesserae), and pottery. The W extent of **U23** was poorly defined, but it should be noted that (the preserved portion) did not extend over the row of jar cross sections set in **U26**. Pottery from **U23** read LR/Byzantine (B15208\*; no reading was available for B15197), which means that it is may be contemporary with **U26** beneath.

In sum, **U18** is an accumulation dating to at least the Byzantine period. However, as its full depth has not yet been reached (as evident from the fact that **U10** and **U35** are not yet floating) this may begin even earlier. The architecture against which the deposit fills in, **U10** and **U35**, must therefore be earlier as well. Likewise, **U8**, against which **U10** is built, must be either contemporary or earlier than **U10**. Thus, these features are thought to be Roman, Late Roman, or Byzantine in date.

#### *The Collapsed Building (photo A14\_26993)*

A probe was cut through **U28** in an area that seemed promising for the installation of the sewage pump. The limits of the probe were defined by **U13** to the N, **U16** to the W, **U34** to the S, and **U26** to the E. After the removal of **U13**, the probe was expanded to the N. **U53** was the major architectural discovery within the probe, consisting of large wall sections, fallen yet intact, and oriented at various angles. The walls are of ashlar masonry bonded with mortar and faced with a white plaster that is preserved quite well in places. Among the collapse are two sections of preserved corners each some three courses high. In places, the walls have fallen upon and crashed through travertine paving tiles of c.30cm/side (also assigned to **U53** and indicated on plans with darker shading than wall sections). Smaller tiles (c.10cm/side) of a blue-green imported stone were also found. Two possible arcs of stones (**U46**, **U54**) were found at or immediately beneath the level of the foundations of **U16**. Though thought to be architectural features at first, they are now thought to be part of the rubble of collapse **U53**.

**U28**, the fill above **U53**, was a loose, muddled collection of soils dense with ceramics (mostly storage jar fragments). The inconsistent nature of the fill made it difficult to catch the soil change to **U55**, however this was noted during the expansion of the probe to the N. **U55** features a more consistent orange-brown color than **U28** and a denser consistency. It fills in above and against the collapsed architecture, most notably in the intact plastered corner of **U53**. The most interesting inclusions within **U55** are a series of dark brown masses of mudbrick-like consistency with rectangular cross sections. These are oriented at various angles, but clustered near the plastered corner of **U53** (photo A14\_26992).



**U55** remains unexcavated at present, so no secure pottery readings are available. That said, once it was noted that excavation of **U28** had undercut **U55**, it was possible to identify which buckets most probably corresponded to the soil that would have been part of **U55**, for buckets had been switched as a control against the rapid progress in depth achieved during excavation of the probe. Thus, B15185 and B15190 which read Byzantine can be taken at present as a proxy for the dating of **U55**.

B15127 (Abbasid/Tulunid), B15142/B15147/B15151/B15152 (Abbasid), and B15138/B15145 (Byzantine/Umayyad transition), represent the first buckets excavated from within the unit and are indicative of the fact that the transition from **U14** and **U17** above to **U28** below was undertaken more as a control than in response to a clearly defined soil change.

B15155/B15160\*/B15165\*/B15170\*/B15174\* (all Byzantine or LR/Byzantine) and B15175/B15181/B15182/B15183/B15184/B15186/B15188 (Byzantine/Umayyad transition) can all be taken as secure and uncontaminated evidence for the dating of the unit. B15191\* (Abbasid) is likely a contaminated bucket from the expansion of the probe and the cutting of clean sections through a patch of **U33**.

**U45** (photo A14\_26720) was opened for a jar found on its side and was thought to be a pit cut into **U28**. The jar was neither complete nor intact, nor for that matter were pit lines discerned. Pottery readings were consistent with those of **U28**: B15154\* (Byzantine/Umayyad transition), B15156\*/ B15163\* (Byzantine). It follows that **U45** is likely one of the muddled deposits that constitute **U28**.

The chronology of the collapsed building appears as follows: a building (**U53**; possibly including **U46** and **U54**) with a *terminus ante quem* of the Byzantine period collapses and Byzantine destruction debris (**U55**) settles on the ruins. The ruins are then covered over by **U28**(=**U45**), possibly in stages, but almost certainly terminating during the Byzantine/Umayyad transition.

As to the cause of the destruction and the circumstances whereby the ashlar blocks of **U53** were not removed and reused in later constructions, several theories bear consideration. Firstly, Yakov Uster has suggested that in the case of a church, whether collapsed or destroyed, the ruins may have been left untouched as a sign of respect. This theory was prompted by the discovery of a possible fragment of a chancel screen during the excavation of **U23** nearby. No evidence has yet been found to assign a function to the collapsed structure. It is also possible that the building was destroyed, perhaps during the Muslim conquest of the city in 640 CE. This would accord well with the Byzantine/Umayyad deposit sealing the ruins, though not with the Byzantine destruction debris. It should be noted too that no ash deposits or other indications of burning have been found.

The most plausible explanation at present seems to be that the building collapsed on account of an earthquake. Russell<sup>2</sup> and Amiran *et al.*<sup>3</sup> provide lists of all attested earthquakes in Israel, of which those that best match the proposed chronology are:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Russell, Kenneth W. (1985) "The Earthquake Chronology of Palestine and Northwest Arabia from the 2nd Through the Mid-8th Century A. D." *BASOR* 260:37-59.

- **363** (May 19) – strong earthquake, extensive damage (including at Ashkelon)
- **419** – moderate earthquake; damage reported in Jerusalem and further north
- **502** (Aug 19) – damage along coast from Lebanon down into Negev
- **551** (Jul 9) – extensive damage throughout Levant
- 580 – Palestine
- 631/2 – Palestine (Beit She'an?)
- 637 – Judaea
- 641 – Judaea
- **658/9** – strong
- **659/60** – Jordan Valley
- **672** – Ramle, Ashkelon, Gaza; strong; poorly documented<sup>5</sup>
- c.710 – Jerusalem
- **749** (Jan 18) – extensive (Levant, Arabia); catastrophic
- **756** (Mar 8) – Palestine, strong

It is hoped that continued excavation will provide finely datable material that may be corroborated with one of these incidents.

Russell (1985:50-52) describes the nature of earthquake destruction in the archaeological record and comments on its frequent misidentification. One factor that will be important to pay attention during continued excavation to is whether the collapse tends to have fallen in a single direction, which will point away from the epicenter of the earthquake. Regarding structures that were not rebuilt, Russell (1985:52) writes:

*The complete removal of damaged structures and collapse debris would represent an exceptional capital and energy investment, and would have been largely restricted to instances of imperial financing.*

*Structures that were not subsequently renovated or leveled were allowed to decay as rubble, and often served as quarries for building materials or as convenient refuse dumps.*

The removal or salvage of **U53** may have been deemed too great an investment of time and/or resources. **U28** may be evidence of the area's use as a dump. Russell (1985:52) continues:

*Quite often, water percolation through the loose collapse rubble would suspend and transmit the original construction clays and mortars to the lowest level of the destruction debris, creating secondary deposits under, around, and over the material remains on or near the floor.*

The compact, clayey consistency of **U55** may be evidence of this phenomenon.

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<sup>3</sup> Amiran, D. H. K; Ariei, E.; Turcotte, T. (1994) "Earthquakes in Israel and Adjacent Areas: Macro seismic Observations since 100 B.C.E." *IEJ* 44:260-305.

<sup>4</sup> All dates after Amiran *et al.* (1994:265-7). Dates in bold indicate those earthquakes presented by Russell (1985:39) as well. At times Russell's dates differ from those of Amiran *et al.*

<sup>5</sup> Russell (1985:47) traces this reference back to a publication from 1852 which does not provide an ancient textual source.

### *Large Phase 1 Fills Excavated into Phase 2 Material*

Careful analysis of the pottery readings and the preliminary pottery readings of excavated units has revealed that excavation of large Islamic fills (**U1**, **U14**, **U17**) cut into earlier material at several identifiable locations within the square.

Firstly, the excavation of **U14** in the center of the square appears to have cut into **U26** before the latter unit was well defined, as attested by B15073/B15081/B15085/B15095/B15097/B15099 (Byzantine). B15080/B15090/B15098 (Byzantine/Umayyad transition) are likely an indication of the excavation of **U14** cutting down into **U28**.

Second, excavation of **U17** in the SW quadrant to the N of **U12** by **U37** cuts down into phase 2 deposits. B15078 (Byzantine) cuts down into a deposit that may represent the deliberate fill over the destruction layer equivalent to **U53**, should it prove continuous on the W side of **U16**; B15086 (Roman) likely represents the same, as does B15087 (Byzantine), though the exact provenance of this last bucket from within the unit is unknown.

Finally, a phase 2 deposit excavated as **U1** (and **U17** in one instance) was identified at higher elevations than anticipated along the W section between **U16** and **U22** above the level of the foundations of **U16**. Articulation of **U16/U22** and section trimming took place on several days. Based on the pottery readings it is now evident that while the uppermost buckets read Fatimid (B15199\*) and Abbasid/Tulunid (B15118), those beneath read Byzantine/Umayyad (B15064/B15070/B15137) or Byzantine (B15071/B15076/B15121/B15122/**U17**.B15136/**U17**.B15139/B15204\*). It should be noted that MC71761, a gold *solidus* of Valentinianus I dating to 364-7CE came from B15204\* and was found by the square stone visible in FG31 to the east of the foundation stones of **U16** on DwgID23238, the top plan from the day of its excavation. In addition, the portion of **U33** to the W of **U24**, *i.e.*, the patch of soil directly beside where the *solidus* was found, read as Byzantine (B15126/B15129); the remainder of **U33**, *i.e.*, the areas to the N/S/E of **U24** read as Abbasid (B15133), Fatimid (B15140), or are unread (B15159/B15167/B15168). From the area beneath these three unread buckets came B15169\*/B15171\*/B15179, all of which read Byzantine or LR/Byzantine, possibly indicating that in this area excavation of **U33** cut down into **U28**.

Though it was not opened as such, it now appears that **U42** corresponds roughly to the area beneath the Byzantine deposit excavated as **U1/U17/U33**. This deposit should extend N to **U22** and E to **U16**. No line is visible at present that would distinguish **U42** from its surroundings. **U42** was opened to mark a shift to a more compact soil at the level of the foundation course of **U16**.

### *Construction over the Collapsed Building (photo A14\_26993)*

Two clues – tenuous at present – point to the construction of a wall (**U16**) over the collapsed building as early as the Byzantine/Umayyad transition. Firstly, the recognition that a deposit of Byzantine material (*i.e.*, the deposit mentioned in the previous subsection in which the *solidus* of Valentinianus was found) was filled in against **U16** suggested a contemporary (or earlier) date for the wall itself (though lower strata argue against a pre-Byzantine date).

Secondly, the excavation of a portion of the foundation trench of **U16**, **U44**, yielded a pottery reading of the Byzantine/Umayyad transition (B15153). Thus, in terms of chronology, **U16** is contemporary with **U44**, its foundation trench, and either contemporary with or immediately later than **U28**, the levelling fill above **U53**.

N.B.: the excavated portion of **U44** was a strip of yellow sand, noticeably different from the surrounding soil, that protruded several centimeters W from the foundation stones of **U16** only in the best of cases. Some material was also excavated from between the foundation stones. The yellow sand around the foundation stones also differed from the brown dirt filling in among the upper courses of the wall. A very modest amount of pottery was recovered for **U44**.B15153. After the removal of **U16** it is hoped that a greater amount of diagnostic sherds from **U44** will be found which will confirm or revise the present reading.

**U16** itself is a curious construction. Phase 1 rebuilds were identified (**U37** and **U56**) and **U16** was originally thought to be early phase 1, but, as explained above, late phase 2 now seems most likely.<sup>6</sup> The removal of **U16** at the resumption of excavation will confirm or correct this hypothesis. Removal of the rebuilds revealed a well-faced wall of c.50cm in width sitting on a foundation course of c.1m in width. The wall was not centered on the foundations; rather it was aligned to the W with the foundations protruding to the E. The wall runs N-S and is preserved over a length of c.6m until it disappears into the W section.

Two distinct masonry styles alternate. At the S terminus of the wall (not necessarily the original terminus, but the terminus of the preserved section) the wall is composed of rubble-filled rat-trap bond masonry, that is to say, ashlar oriented as rowlocks and shiners form the frame of the wall and rubble fills the core. (What was originally noted as a bin composed of vertically-oriented stones installed as part of a rebuild on the wall turned out to be simply two rowlocks, one shiner, and their rubble fill from the original construction of the wall.) After c.1m of rat-trap bond masonry, the composition of the wall changes to a boulder-and-chink construction for c2.5m, whereupon the rat-trap bond resumes and continues into the W section. Notably, the two sections function together, in that each course of boulders and its surrounding chinks aligns neatly with each course of rowlocks and shiners.

No surfaces associated with the wall in this phase have been found, nor is the wall's function easily surmised. The fact that the foundation continue for c.1m S of the terminus of the upper courses of the wall may indicate a doorway that was filled in by a later rebuild (**U37**), but this assertion is admittedly tenuous. It is possible, given the size of the wall and the fact that the foundations protrude on one side only, that the wall would section interior from exterior space. In such a scenario, the protruding section of the foundation (an additional row of stones, rather than stones wider than in the upper courses) may have served as a support for the edge of the interior surface; this assertion, however, is also tenuous. Finally, the rat-trap bond sections of the wall may serve as terminal piers. If this is the case, then the rowlocks and shiners serve either as ornamental or as structural quoins stones.

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<sup>6</sup> Though, as will be noted in the conclusions, **U16** may make most sense in a phase 1c.

One final point of interest regarding **U16** is the undulate arrangement of the foundation stones in contrast to the level course expected. The stones rise slightly in several places, accommodating the rubble of **U53** beneath. **U16** itself does not seem to have suffered from these uneven foundations and maintains a regular and stable profile. Whether the foundation stones were intentionally placed in this manner over the rubble beneath or whether the settling of the soil above the rubble has caused the foundations to shift from their original elevations is as yet undetermined.

### **Phase 1b (Abbasid/Tulunid; photo: A14\_26555)**

#### *Reuse of the Southern Channel*

The phase 2 urban infrastructure remains in use throughout phase 1. **U5** abutting **U4** remains the N wall of the channel, while **U11** remains the S wall. The entirety of **U57** having been silted over by **U58**, it does not appear that the N fork of the split channel is in use anymore. **U12**, by necessity, must remain in use in the W half of the square. It was originally thought that the rebuilds on these units were fairly late, however several courses of **U11** are the only ones to have produced such a reading (B15108; Fatimid/Crusader); **U4** and **U5** both read as phase 2; no portion of **U12** has been excavated. It is possible that the removed courses of **U11** were contaminated by material from their surrounding fills.

N of **U11** and S of **U5** was **U19**. This fill read Abbasid/Tulunid at the latest, but the material became progressively earlier as the elevation dropped, coming down on Byzantine/Umayyad material in B15040. The Fatimid reading of B15057 may be indicative of contamination from **U17** as excavation of **U19** expanded westward. B15166 (LR/Byzantine) is from the articulation of the face of **U5**, which **U19** filled in against, and may be more correctly attributed to **U5**.

To the S of **U11** and proceeding to the S section was **U15**. The readings proceeded from latest to earliest as the elevation dropped: B15023 (Fatimid), B15030 (Abbasid/Tulunid), B15051 (Abbasid), B15128 (Byzantine/Umayyad); B15109 (Fatimid/Crusader) appears the exception to this sequence, however this bucket marks an expansion of the unit to the W and proceeds down from a higher elevation than B15023 in the E.

#### *End of Use of the Northeastern Channel*

The channel in the northeast appears to be put out of use in phase 1. The upper few cm of **U18** are a clayey light brown soil with chalky white inclusions that differs markedly from the looser, sandier, striated, variegated, pottery-rich deposits beneath. This upper stratum likely dates Abbasid/Tulunid or Fatimid.

#### *The Cistern and Bin (cistern: photos A14\_26688, A14\_26689; bin: photo A14\_26690)*

In the northwest quadrant of the square several features are constructed in early phase 1. Firstly, a cylindrical cistern (**U22**) c.2m in diameter with a domed top was found in the NW corner running into the W section. The dome is not fully preserved but its partial profile can be

traced in the section. Presumably there would have been an opening c.0.5m in diameter, much as was found on a better preserved early Islamic cistern from Grid 47. The cistern was excavated to a depth of c.1.25m before excavation was halted to avoid a baulk collapse. The cistern likely continues down for several meters more. The dome is made of well-dressed blocks that fit together neatly; the cylindrical portion appears composed of rougher stones. The interior is finished with a white plaster; the exterior appears unfinished, possibly an indication that it was beneath ground level. The soil around the exterior has been a very fine silt almost black in color. Rather than burning, this is more likely the accumulation of plant matter from roots that have grown around the stones of the exterior. No material with the potential to date the cistern has yet been excavated, but its similarity to the cistern in Grid 47 and the phasing of the possibly associated architecture in the square suggests an Abbasid or Abbasid/Tulunid date.

Due south of the cistern at a distance of c.1.5m was a stone bin (**U24**) of about 2.5m in length (E-W) and 1.25m in width (N-S). The base of the bin was plastered (**U40**) but no traces of plastering were found on the walls. The plaster of **U40** was soft and white and multiple striations were noted, though none traced over the full extent of the bin. (The deliberate filling of the bin with the rubble of **U21** likely damaged the plaster.) The walls of **U24** were composed of single rows of small fieldstones up to eight courses high. At each of the E and W ends there was a large horizontally oriented stone of c.50cm in width. At the E end some plaster was discerned several cm beneath the large stone, possibly indicating that this stone served to cap an egress channel for what was contained within the bin. As well, buttresses supported the E end at its N and S extents.

Running due E from beneath the northern buttress are two rows of stones (**U51**). Almost nothing is known about these at present – they may be an earlier wall, they may be contemporary with **U24/U40**. For now **U51** has been phased with **U24/U40** by association, but this may well change with continued excavation.

Around the base of the southern buttress a small patch of white plaster (**U52**) was found. This may be indicative of a surface, but it did not trace over a large expanse. Alternatively, it may simply be debris. It is unknown whether ground level would have been at the base or the top of **U24**. The presence of buttresses seems to suggest the former; the exterior of **U22** at comparable elevations seems to suggest the latter. An E-W wall (**U20**) one row wide and two courses high ran S of **U22** and N of **U24/U40**. The base of **U20** was at about the same elevation as the top of **U24** and the top of **U20** was at about the same elevation as the transition from the cylinder of **U22** to its dome. As well, only the S face of **U20** was finished; the N face was uneven with stones protruding irregularly. **U20** may thus function as a retaining wall, marking the transition between the higher ground level around **U22** and the lower ground level around **U24**.

No architectural feature linking bin **U24/U40** with cistern **U22** has been found, but one theory is that **U24/U40** served as a settling tank for the cistern. Alternatively, it may have served as a trough for watering animals. Though the precise function is unknown, it seems likely that liquid storage of some sort took place here.

The pottery from **U40** read Byzantine (B15158) and Byzantine/Umayyad (B15162\*), but this is likely cutting into the fills beneath. The bin walls (**U24**) read Abbasid/Tulunid (B15195\*).

**U40/U51/U52** have all been phased in line with **U24** by association. **U20** read Abbasid (B15106).

Two fills (**U31**, **U33**) were assigned to the area around the cistern and the bin. Their boundary was set as the course of **U20** which ran E-W between the two features, albeit at higher elevation. The two units were opened more as a control than in response to any discernable difference in soil. As such, both ended up being excavated as **U33**(=**U31**). As mentioned above, the portion of **U33** to the W of **U24** appears to have cut into a phase 2 deposit. The remainder of **U33** yields readings anywhere from Byzantine through Fatimid, with several buckets remaining unread. The area excavated as **U33** included a large patch roughly corresponding to the area above **U49** which contained a thick lens of pottery. Attempts to identify a finer sequence of deposition on the basis of pottery readings have been unsuccessful.

#### *Rebuilds on Wall U16 (photo A14\_26994)*

Three rebuilds on **U16** were undertaken in Phase 1. Firstly, **U37** was built at the S extent of **U16**, above the final meter of the foundations to the S of where the rat-trap bond masonry terminates. **U37** only covered the W half of the foundations and it jutted out somewhat beyond the even line of the W face of **U16**.

**U56** was the rebuild over the E half of the foundations. It began at the S terminus of the foundations of **U16**, continued N to the S terminus of the rat-trap bond masonry, and proceeded as an additional row abutting the E face of **U16**. Given the even face of **U16**, it was easy to peel away the stones of **U56**. S of the terminus of the upper courses of **U16**, however, it may be an excess of caution that lead to the division between **U37** and **U56**; the two may in fact be bonded and, hence, the same rebuild. The stones of the upper course of **U56** from the end of **U16** to the S terminus of **U56** look almost as though they were intended as pavement.

The third rebuild was **U13**, an E-W wall bonded to **U56** at its N terminus, abutting **U16**, and running due E for c.4m. The upper course of **U13** was at the same elevation as the top of **U16** and slightly higher than the S portion of **U56** (thought to be paving). Though the upper course of **U13** featured semi-worked stones to mark its edges, the remainder of the wall (6-8 courses) was composed of cobbles and fieldstones continuing down to the same depth as the foundations of **U16**.

Dating is somewhat problematic at present, owing to one difficult preliminary reading of a bucket. **U13** and **U56**, being bonded, are definitely contemporary and **U37** is likely from the same rebuild. Despite an early read on the first bucket excavated from **U13** (B15105; Byzantine), the wall has been dated with confidence as Abbasid/Tulunid (B15189). This accords well with the preliminary read on **U37** (B15217\*; Abbasid). **U56**, however, appears to be reading as Fatimid (B15207\*; predominant: mixed). Given that no other Fatimid architecture is present in the square, this seems unlikely. Major phases of construction appear to have occurred in the Byzantine/Umayyad and Abbasid/Tulunid periods, but all of the Fatimid/Crusader material found (see section below "Phase 1a") is associated with putting architectural features out of use. A more careful read of the pottery of B15207 may show the original reading to be spurious.

Otherwise, there is a chance that the Fatimid material is the result of the incomplete articulation of the unit prior to its removal or the result of a repair or addition added at a later date.

### *Two Possible Surfaces*

In both the NW and SW quadrants small patches of surfaces were found that are believed to be associated with the phase 1b architecture. (N.B.: **U27**, a patch of white plaster sloping down towards the S face of **U13** and presumed at first to be a surface or feature running beneath the wall, was later determined to be rubble within **U17**.)

First, **U36** in the NW quadrant was a small patch of what appeared to be small cobbles set into compact soil. It abutted the base of wall **U20** and lipped over the N edge of bin **U24**. Though **U36** was only assigned to a small amount of this material, similar material had been noted previously over the expanse bounded by walls **U20** to the N, **U16** to the W, and **U13** to the S. In particular, the edges of **U13** and **U16** and the corner where they met had been particularly poorly defined and it was only through the removal of this very compact, cobble-filled material that their true faces were discerned. The excavated material was thought to be rubble at the time, but in hindsight it seems more consistent with the composition of **U36**.

**U36** was thought at first to be a cobble platform or surface covering the entire expanse bounded by **U13/U16/U20** and putting **U24** out of use, however, two points argued against this hypothesis. Firstly, the fill of **U24** (**U21**) was later than **U36**, which read Abbasid/Tulunid (B15107). Secondly, no material similar in composition was found above **U24/U21**; in fact, **U36** was beneath **U21**. Thus, **U36** appears to have been a surface running from walls **U13**, **U16**, and **U20** to bin **U24**, which would have been countersunk beneath the surface of **U36**, but not covered by it.

The second surface was **U29** in the SW quadrant. This was a patch of off-white plaster that traced somewhat imperfectly over a patch of c.1m<sup>2</sup> beside the W face of the S terminus of **U16**. **U30**, a curve of irregular stones bordering **U29** at its S extent and resting at the same elevation were originally thought to be an architectural feature. More likely is that they were preserved as a result of over-cautious excavation and that they are nothing more than some rubble contained within **U17**.

The difficulty with **U29** arises in the fact that, being so thin a striation, it was excavated in tandem with fill **U39** beneath. As no distinction was noted between the material sealed by **U29** and the unsealed material to the W and S, **U39** was expanded to cover a greater area. It was not until the final days of excavation that an ashy pit (**U59**) was encountered abutting the foundations of **U16** on its W face by the W baulk. The pit fill read as Fatimid/Crusader. No cut lines were visible, but top plans show that the N extent of **U29** is roughly coterminous with the S extent of **U59**, with no overlap noted between the two.

The problem then becomes one of trying to ascertain which buckets excavated from **U39** were entirely from contexts sealed by **U29** and which were disturbed by the later pitting. As **U39** was excavated in broad, shallow passes, most buckets contain material from both the sealed and unsealed contexts and read Fatimid or Fatimid/Crusader. The only bucket that can be assigned



with certainty to the sealed context is B15198\* (Abbasid/Tulunid) from the area immediately in front of the foundations of **U16**, to the S of **U59**, and at c.50cm or more below the level of **U29**. This is admittedly very tenuous evidence, but if it can be trusted it argues in favour of the program of construction in the NW and SW quadrants during the Abbasid/Tulunid period and destruction during the Fatimid/Crusader period.

### **Phase 1a (Fatimid/Crusader)**

#### *Final Occupation/Destruction*

The nature of use in the western half of the square changes in the late Islamic period. No architecture is built in phase 1a (see above note concerning the dating of **U56**) and the fills with definite phase 1a dates are all associated with putting other features out of use. Three such contexts were identified.

First, **U21** is a heavy and loose rubble scatter that fills in bin **U24/U40** (deliberately) and continued over the edge of **U36**. Second, cistern **U22** is filled with rubble (**U41**) as well. The presence of a column base (MC70199) found among the worked architectural blocks and other stones filling the cistern seems to indicate that this filling too was deliberate. Third, an ashy pit was found (**U59**) bordering the W baulk and the foundations on the W face of wall **U16**. The ash pit contained much metal slag and more than twenty metal objects (rings, nails, blades, etc.). As discussed in the previous subsection, this pit likely cut through phase 1b surface **U29**.

Dating for these three fills was as follows: **U21** read as Fatimid (B15035, B15100, B15114); **U41** read as Fatimid/Crusader (B15131); and **U59** also read as Fatimid/Crusader (B15210\*, B15218\*).

#### *Large Unsealed Fills*

The uppermost strata in the square were three large fills (**U1**, **U14**, **U17**) not sealed by any architectural features or by other fills considered secure contexts. **U1** represented the soil beginning immediately below the bulldozer scrape and covering the entire square aside from the SE probe. Once the phase 1b architecture began to resolve, excavation of **U1** ceased and fills **U14** and **U17** were opened as a control in the E and W halves of the square, respectively. Instances in which buckets excavated as part of these three units have been found to contain material from secure contexts have been noted above.

### **Conclusions; Summary**

In sum, the chronology and nature of occupation in 32.19 can be schematized as follows (N.B.: this represents a slight revision on the numbering used above, with phase 2 split into phases 2a, 2b, and 3; some poorly understood features phased only by association are omitted):

#### *Phase 3 (Roman)*

The earliest architectural features are built: **U2**, **U6**, **U38** and **U43**; possibly **U8** and **U10**. Little can be said about the nature of occupation in this period.

### *Phase 2b (Late Roman/Byzantine)*

The southern (**U4, U5, U11, U12, U57**), northeastern (**U8, U9, U10, U35**), and central (**U23, U26, U47, U48, U49**) channels are constructed; **U3** and **U34** may also be built at this time. The central building (**U53, U55**) is destroyed, possibly by an earthquake; the southern channel may also sustain damage. The exact function of these channels and the direction of flow are unknown.

### *Phase 2a (Byzantine/Umayyad transition)*

The southern channel is repaired. **U28** accumulates or is deliberately filled above **U53/U55**. Wall **U16** is then built in foundation trench **U44**. The function of wall **U16** is unknown. Perhaps it is the closing wall of a large building fronting on the *cardo*.

N.B.: given that U16 is the backbone of the phase 1b architecture and given that it has little to do with the earlier phase 2 architecture, this subphase may make more sense as phase 1c.

### *Phase 1b (Abbasid/Tulunid)*

Rebuilds **U37** and **U56** are built against wall **U16**, as is wall **U13** at a perpendicular. Bin **U24/U40** is set into fill **U33** and surrounded by surface **U36**. Retaining wall **U20** supports a small terrace into which cistern **U22** is set. The water features suggest an exterior space associated with domestic occupation or workshop production.

### *Phase 1a (Fatimid/Crusader)*

Phase 1b architecture is put out of use: **U21** fills in bin **U24/U40**; **U41** fills in cistern **U22**; **U59** cuts through surface **U29**.

## **Recommendations**

The first task upon resumption of fieldwork will be the cleaning of the square: clearing accumulated garbage, removing plants that have taken root, scraping off soil that has washed in, etc. Once this is completed a photo will be needed of U16 now that all rebuilds have been removed. The shot should be taken from the E to show how the wall runs above U53 and to show the two masonry styles used. A sandbag staircase was in the process of being constructed in the NW corner. About 70 sandbags were thrown into the square (between U22 and U49) at the end of the last day of excavation, but these were not arranged. They will have settled and plants may have started growing in and among them. They will need to be removed and re-laid with care and replaced as necessary. Any sand that has spilled from these must be removed to avoid contaminating the square, as this soil was brought in from elsewhere on site.

The primary goal in excavating remains achieving the requisite 3.6m of depth over a diameter of 3.0m for the installation of a sewage pump. Excavation of the northeastern and southern channels will not be a priority, as there are diminishing returns in terms of the amount

of labor required to remove these features vs. the likelihood of situating the hole in these areas. Hence, areas to the S of U4/U12 and to the E of U8 will likely remain unexcavated.

U16 will be the first unit removed, with the two masonry styles of the wall excavated as separate buckets for control. Likewise, the foundations should be excavated to a separate bucket. Light to moderate pick passes across the remaining expanses of U28 and U33 (as depicted on the final top plan) should be sufficient to determine whether Byzantine material has been reached. If so, the units should be changed. The pick pass of U28 should help to clarify the boundary of U26/U28 and the pick pass of U33 should reveal if U49 continues to the S. The area of U49 depicted on the final top plan will not be excavated, as it will be beneath the sandbag staircase necessary to enter and exit the square. A pick pass in U39 should be sufficient to determine if any Islamic material remains or if phase 2 has been reached. Removal of U26 can proceed as guided by its visibility in the sections of the SE and central probes.

With U16, U26, U28, U33, and U39 removed, the goal will become tracing and exposing as much of U53/U55 as possible. A photograph will be necessary when full exposure has been reached. If there is a large area where the rubble of U53 is not present or at least not so plentiful, this should become the focus of excavation. U55 will have to be removed and sampled (for floatation and/or microarchaeological analysis) before excavation of U53 can begin. As observed at the deepest point of the central probe, there is a Byzantine fill beneath the paving fragments of U53. Approximately 0.5m of depth must be achieved beyond this point.

**LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON**  
**GRID 51 FINAL REPORT 2014**  
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## Season Objectives

The goal for the 2014 season had been to excavate all of the Persian period occupational levels, clarifying the nature of the earliest Persian neighborhood, and going on to expose and fully excavate an area of the 604 B.C. destruction layer beneath. The existence of the 604 destruction layer was first recognized in 2011 after a probe dug from well 74.F11 demonstrated its depth in relation to the Persian material and offered a foretaste of its nature. The outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Hamas shortly after midseason cut excavation short, and as such we fell far short of these goals. Excavations were left *in medias res*, and as a result there are many areas which remain not fully understood, and many questions to be resolved during the 2015 season. Nonetheless, we did succeed in getting a sense of the earliest Persian levels, and have uncovered a swath of the 604 destruction which holds the promise of exciting and perhaps terrible things to come.

It should also be noted that in accordance with the wishes of the Parks Authority, the eastern edge of the Grid (rooms in Building 2) was not excavated in 2014. The ashlar doorways and partial sidewalk are being considered as part of a conservation plan and as such our excavations from this point forward will be stepped in by 1m, establishing a new balk just on the eastern edge of the street.

## Chronology

There are at present nine known phases within Grid 51, each corresponding to the general chronology below:

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

Phase II: Byzantine (4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.)

Phase III: Early Roman (late 2<sup>nd</sup> B.C. – 1<sup>st</sup> A.D.)

Phase IV: Late Hellenistic (ca. 280 – 150 B.C.)

Phase V: Late Persian - Early Hellenistic (ca. 350- 290/280 B.C.)

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

Phase VII A & B: Early Persian (ca. 500 B.C – ca. 400 B.C.) Phase

VIII: Iron IIC (7<sup>th</sup> century)

Phase IX\*: Pre-7<sup>th</sup> century

The focus of the 2014 season was on Phases VIII and VII, and results are presented below in chronological order, from earliest to latest. As a complement to this final report, readers are particularly encouraged to read through the Grid 51 reports from 2012-2013 for a complete description of the later Phase VII and early Phase VI levels in the eastern half of Building 1 and the western rooms in Building 2,

and to consult the 2011 Grid Report and 2011 51.74 Square report for a discussion of finds from the 604 probe.

### Building Plan

Given the general continuity in building plan throughout the Persian and Hellenistic periods in Grid 51, rooms in the insula are referred to by number, beginning with Room 1 in the northwest and ending with Room 17 in the southeast. While there are points at which minor restructuring recurs – the occasional removal of a wall between rooms (between Rooms 5 and 6 during the Late Hellenistic period, for example, or the construction of a partition wall between Rooms 7-8 in Phase VIIa), the general consistency in the building plan and the continuity of function apparent in certain spaces has rendered this a useful system of designation. For reference, the block plan below (not to scale) represents the basic layout of rooms in Building 1.



Fig. 3 Room Designations in Insula 1 (walls not to scale)

### The 604 Destruction

Even prior to the outbreak of hostilities, it had become necessary to revise our strategy for excavation of the 604 destruction layers in order to ensure (we had hoped) the complete articulation and removal of any areas exposed during the season. As such, we revised our initial plans to expose the full 300 m<sup>2</sup> of the grid and elected instead to open a more conservative window of roughly 5x3.5m within Square 74, in the areas which had previously been defined Rooms 7-9 in Building 1, in the Persian-Hellenistic levels. The boundaries of this 2014 exposure were between the Persian Phase VII E-W walls 74.U551 (to the south), and wall 74.U571 (to the north). The western limit was the dividing baulk between Square 73 and Square 74; the eastern limit was initially intended to be the 5m baulk at the midpoint of square 74 but was later moved 2m to the

east to provide better stratigraphic sections for micromorphological analysis.

In what had been Room 8, the 604 destruction layer had first been reached in a probe excavated in 2011 in Square 74, by expanding the Islamic well 74.U11 by some 1x1 m to the north and east. (The well probe was positioned in Room 8, and therefore our new work this season was in areas immediately surrounding the probe). The 2011 probe uncovered a layer of abandonment **74.U322** with occupational material **74.U324** (marked by sandy striations ) which including a series of whole vessels and a small hearth. Layer **74.U324** sloped up towards the north and to the east, ranging in elevation from 15.6 to 15.8m (see also the probe east subsidiary section drawing 2011). Above this layer had been some 30 – 40cm uninterrupted fill (**74.U306**). It was unclear at the time whether this fill was a leveling fill set down by Persian builders in order to construct the new insula in ca 500 B.C., or whether this fill might in fact contain debris – collapsed materials from a second story or roof fall – that was part of the building destroyed in 604 B.C. This season as we returned to the excavation of 604, we worked in conjunction with a team from the Weizmann institute, to determine whether patterns of collapse indistinguishable to the naked eye might be discernable at the microscopic level. According to their experimental protocols, new areas were excavated in 10cm increments which were then laterally sampled for micromorphological study.

As is so often the case, the pattern suggested by the probe was not broadly applicable. Underneath the Persian period floors in Rooms 8 and 9, rather than encountering 40cm of fill, we encountered very dense stone and hardened mudbricky material (**74.U511**) a mere 10 – 15 cm below the earliest Phase VII floor. Further excavation demonstrated that this mudbricky material was part of a building which had collapsed onto a floor (not yet numbered), and in which two individuals had been trapped (See Title Page, Fig.1). The northern individual (**Burial 219**) was lying face up, torso twisted slightly to the right. His legs and the ends of his arms had been cut through by a series of early Persian pits and foundation trenches (**74.U581**, **74.U545**) but a portion of his femur – preserved in the portion in between the pits – was nearby and was burnt to white ash. His pelvis and ribs were likewise pinkened as a result of exposure to the heat, suggesting that he had been trapped underneath burning material. The density of the bricky collapse of **74.U511** above both individuals was probably also due to the fact that the bricks were burnt or burning as they fell; some of these had orange edges as a result of this. The head of Burial 219 was turned to the right, and there was damage to the left temple (see **Fig. 2.**) which may have been a perimortem injury.

The southern individual (**Burial 212**) was lying face down, legs akimbo, with his head turned to the left. His right arm was wrapped low around his waist suggesting that it was trapped under his body as the building came down. The ribs had been pushed up and forward by the impact of the falling rubble. No damage to the skull was apparent, nor – apart from the baked debris above him – were there signs of fire or heat damage to the body.

During excavation it was noted that the bones of both individuals were encased in gypsum crystals, of greatest density in the areas around the joints and

between the vertebrae. The gypsum appears to have formed as a result of calcium leaching from the bones, coupled with sulfur from the soil or surrounding air – a process which necessitates that the bodies were not buried but rather lay exposed to the elements for some time. At Ashkelon, this phenomenon does not seem to occur on bodies which are properly buried.

Burials **212** and **219** were articulated on the last day of summer fieldwork, but were unable to be removed until September once hostilities had ceased. Although the individuals were covered in the interim, some damage accrued to the skeletons as a result of the prolonged exposure, particularly to Burial 219 which was already fragile due to extreme burning. Despite these challenges, the individuals were safely removed for examination by Marina Faerman of Tel Aviv University. Her preliminary conclusions suggested that both were “effeminate” males, whose jaw shape, femur thickness and size were consistent with masculine measurements, but who exhibited a few feminized traits in addition, notably in the area of the shoulder. Dentition was well preserved and teeth were recovered from both individuals for collagen sampling.

The individuals had fallen onto a beaten earth surface (not yet numbered), which sits at a rough elevation of 16m, and was limited on the west by a wall of small fieldstones **74.U318** (first identified in the 2011 probe) running northwest to southeast. The 604 surface **74.U324** observed in 2011 sloped up from west to east, likely to the west face of this same wall **74.318**.

To the west of the well **74.U11** (beneath the area which had been defined as Room 7 in the Persian period) we encountered a second area of 604 destruction. As in the areas to the east, the 604 horizon was considerably shallower than expected. The absolute limits of the space are not yet fully known, but the rooms are divided by east-west ashlar wall **74.U301** which divides the area into northern and southern halves. A doorway connects the two spaces. The floors **74.U596** (the southern room) and **74.U592** (the northern room) show signs of significant collapse, in the form of ashlar blocks sitting on the floor, and a pile of restorable vessels and substantial portions of disarticulated animal bone). Excavation of these floors was stopped mid-season, and they have been conserved as best as possible with geotech until excavation can be resumed in 2015.



Fig. 3. 604 B.C. floors U596 & U592 (Photo 26989)



## **Phase VII: The Persian Period (500 – 400/350 B.C)**

One of the major goals of the 2014 season had been to come to a full understanding of the nature of the earliest Persian period neighborhood, in the time when Ashkelon was first resettled under Phoenician control, after a hiatus in occupation. While we were unable to achieve this, we were nonetheless able to get a significant look at this earliest phase and to identify significant changes that occur in the neighborhood between Phases VII Early and Late.

### *Phase VII Early: The Foundation*

The builders of Phase VII encountered the ruins of a building burnt in the 604 destruction. Rather than introducing leveling fills, they instead raked the destruction – thick with sherds and debris – just outside of the footprint of the building they planned to build. This trail of debris **74.U591 = 577** is visible rising up to the east underneath the later Persian sidewalk, and sits thickly just against the eastern face of the robber trenches which held the original eastern closing wall of the earliest building (**74.U473** and **74.U594**). To the east of this wall line, what in Phase VIIB became a north-south line of rooms (Rooms 4, 9, and 13) fronting a north-south street was instead open exterior space in Phase VIIA (**74.U541** in the north, **74.U500** in the south). These areas do not appear to have been used for any particular purpose, the industrial needs of the residents apparently being fulfilled in the courtyard to the south of the building, but seem instead to have been generally open space. It is not yet clear whether a street had been founded at this time – sections from later pits cut through street material seem to indicate that there is only a brown fill underneath (**75.U169**); in any case there certainly does not appear to have been a sidewalk or paving at this stage. This will be conclusively determined in 2015.

Apart from the deviation in the east, the remainder of the building plan appears to have followed the building plan familiar from later phases, though there are still some points which will require further clarification in 2015. The character of the western half of this earliest Phase VII building, for example, is less clear. Phase VII early architecture has not yet been clearly defined in Rooms 1, 5 or 6. Surfaces which are presently understood to be Phase VII Early surfaces were exposed but not excavated in Rooms 5–6. These sandy surfaces (**73.289=329**) span Rooms 5 and 6, running under the Phase VII Late wall which later divided these rooms, marking a shift in building plan. The sandy layers **73.289=329** sits over what is probably the Phase VII Early surface: an ashy and debris laden surface, which lipped up to walls **73.U316** on the north and **73.U303** to the west. The southern and western parameters are unclear.

Apart from those observable differences, the remainder of Building 1 appears to have been divided into the familiar spaces that provide the architectural template for the subsequent centuries. It appears to have been constructed as an insula, albeit slightly smaller than its successors. Three major east-west walls **73.U328 = 74.U571** (in the north) and **74.U551** (in the middle) and **84.U192** = a not-yet-named wall below **84.U193** formed the backbone of the building. These were connected by a string of north-south walls with stone foundations, some of which remained standing to be reused (**73.U316**, **73.U296**, **73.U290**, & **74.U512**) and others of which were robbed out prior to the larger reconstruction of the building on Phase VII Late (trenches **74.U575**, **74.U473**, etc.) Despite the fact that they were probably built contemporarily, there does not appear to be uniformity in the style of construction. The walls of many of the Phase VII are solidly

grounded in large fieldstones, but there is no pattern placement in the courses, and still other walls are built simply with small to medium sized fieldstones. While mudbrick superstructure appears to have been the norm in Phase VII Late, there are no clear signs that it was employed in the early insula.

In the southern row of rooms in Building 1, as in later phases, Rooms 15-16 were dedicated exterior space. It is as yet unclear whether this courtyard opened directly onto the exterior space to the east, or whether it was closed off by wall **85.U209**; this will be sussued out next season. The courtyard was subdivided by a short north-south wall **84.U309**, and connected through a doorway to the north with Room 13. The earliest excavated surfaces in this courtyard (**83.U165 = 84.U325**), particularly in the west, were a series of pavings, alternating with cobblestone, pottery, or crushed glycymeris shell, suggesting a significant need for drainage, and may have been associated with an early version of the hamra-lined installation constructed in this area during Phase VII Late. (It is clear that this later installation was recoated several times and these coatings appear to have sloped up towards the drainage surfaces. Perhaps the later construction cut through an earlier avatar.)

As Phase VII Early surfaces have not been fully excavated throughout the building, it is somewhat premature to comment on the character of the occupation. We note only that the presence of small hearths in Rooms 3 and 12 may indicate small kitchen spaces, different in character from the shared courtyard cooking areas of Phases VI and V.

#### *Phase VII Late: The Expansion*

The insula was rebuilt, or at least refurbished, in Phase VII Late. These changes included the widening of at least one of the major spine walls (**73.U301**) by adding an additional course to the width of the foundation, and then building up a mudbrick superstructure above it (**74.U375=73.201**), resulting in a wall some 75cm thick. Phase VII Early walls **73.U316** and **73.303** received the same treatment, widened for the construction of **73.213** (above the former) and **73.237 +225** (above the latter). In addition, buttressing walls were added to the western face of wall **74.U294** in Room 1. On the east, the insula was expanded through the construction of walls (from south to north) **85.U101**, **74.U404=74.U123**, **74.U509**, and a wall robbed by **74.U233**. This created rooms 4, 9, 13, and 17. This expansion occurred together with the construction of a curbed sidewalk (**75.U165 = 74.U535**) and the founding of a street (**75.U166**), through the center of which a new drain channel was cut (not yet named). The widening of the walls itself may suggest the construction of a second story for the first time. Likewise the ashlar curbing, which is surprisingly substantial for a simple walkway, may have supported pillars holding up an overhanging second story. There are some circular wear patterns on the sidewalk ashlar that might support this hypothesis.

The courtyard **83.U137 = 84.U254=84.U248** maintained its industrial function in Phase VII Late, although with a variety of different installations, resulting in a complicated and chaotic accumulation of materials. At least one tabun (**83.U158**) was in use in the center of the courtyard for a time. A substantial stone-lined drainage feature – perhaps associated again with the hamra installatio **83.U144** was – constructed through the center of the space, north of the tabun. Near the end of Phase VII Late, a row of sunken vessel installations (**84.U272**; **84.U233**; **84.U284**; **84.U291**) were set down throughout

the courtyard. Glycimeris shells and fish remains occurred throughout, raising the possibility that garum production or processing of shellfish may have been at the center of these activities.

Within the insula, the objects recovered from the interior rooms reveal little about the specific uses of space. However, the nature of the material recovered from the insulae during Phase VII Late is of a piece with the types of objects recovered in previous seasons, all of which underscore the cosmopolitan and connected nature of the city at this time. Phoenician connections are evident not only in the items of personal adornment and luxury items, such as Greco---Phoenician scarabs (**MC 69442**) and Phoenician plaque of a female figure in Egyptianizing headdress (**MC 74088**). Egyptian trinkets, including a jasper scarab (**MC 68487**), and two *udjat* eyes (**MC 69227** and **69215**) can be added to the frit amulets of Bastet and Taweret excavated in 2013, along with a small collection of *udjat* amulets recovered in 2012---2013. To this international collection we can also add a rich assemblage of Attic ware, including Black Figure (**RP 13995**), Attic Red Figure (RP 13827), stamped Attic black glaze (**RP 14001, 14062, 14135**), and lekythoi (**RP 14074**).

Perhaps most spectacular among the finds – although it is residual – was an eight line ostrakon written in late 6<sup>th</sup> century cursive script, recovered from within the mudbricks of **74.U211**. It presents a list of names, among them *Ahimelek*, a figure who also appears in a name list discovered in the 604 debris in Grid 50 (Ashkelon Inscription 1.13)

#### *Phase VII summary*

Phase VII marks the founding and floruit of Ashkelon as Phoenician marketplace. The depth and density of occupation in Phase VII makes it clear that this phase continued for a significant duration of time. As a gauge, we note that the occupational buildup in the courtyard (Rms 15-17) of Building 1 for this phase was over 60cm deep, and the earliest laminations have not yet been reached. All this is while using the same essential building plan and walls. Phase VII likely represents many generations of occupation, perhaps a century or more, until the neighborhood was fundamentally altered in the early – mid 4<sup>th</sup> century through the construction of the Phase VI mudbrick floored building. In Phase VI, the broad courtyard which spanned nearly the entire visible width of Building 1 was reduced to the space of Rooms 15---16. An alleyway was added, providing direct access from the street to this courtyard, and the exterior space shifted away from industrial production to a residential cooking space. (For full discussion of the courtyard use in Phases VI and V see Grid Report from 2012). Together with the cessation of industry, we see a reduction in the quality and quantity of luxury objects which seems to be paralleled across the south tell.

#### *Summary*

Despite the abbreviated season, we made some significant headway in reconstructing the earliest design of the Phoenician *insula* of Phase VII Early and the changes the neighborhood went – both in construction and in the quality of its contents – in the shift to Phase VII Late. We do not yet have enough data to be able to identify the date of the transition between Phase VII Early and Late. In the absence of coin data, and given the general continuity in plainware forms throughout the early Persian period, it seems likely that we will have to rely upon the Attic imports recovered from these levels

in order to posit a break. There is still much work to be done in refining our understanding of these important transitional levels, and the nature of the city's first reoccupation after the 604 break.

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

Joel Jackson

July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014

## **2014 Grid 51.73 Final Report**

Like the previous seasons, we have noticed that the wall lines of this building has remained nearly the same in 51.73. The last dig season, which was in 2010, removed the majority of the Phase 6 material, exposing Phase 7. This season, with the help of our dedicated volunteers, we were able to remove the remaining Phase 6 material and excavate Phase 7 in 7 of the 8 rooms of Square 73. During this excavation, we were able to remove the walls that separated the Western Center room from the Center Center room in Phase 7A. Unfortunately, due to political tensions rising, we were unable to complete the full 6 week season.

### **Phase 6: Persian Period**

**Late 5<sup>th</sup> – Early 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E.**

The majority of Phase 6 was excavated in the 2010 dig season. The surface Unit 245 was left in 2010 to protect any material below, however, in 2013 this surface was removed and exposed the fill layer Unit 273. All that was left of Phase 6 at the beginning of this season were walls in various rooms, a pit, and a door plug in the South Western Room. These residual walls, however, did better our understanding of this phase and the phases that preceded it.

In the South Western Room only the Phase 6 pit (Unit 252/253) remained with the Phase 6 walls (Unit 137, Unit 260, and Unit 251). All other Phase 6 surfaces and fills have been previously removed. The pit Unit 252/253 is cut from the Phase 6 mud brick surface Unit 247. The pit extends down and cuts in to the surfaces Unit 259 and Unit 305 and into the fill layer Unit 327. The wall Unit 137 was previously thought to be a Phase 7 wall reused in Phase 6. However after cleaning the eastern face of Unit 137, we exposed a door plug (Unit 312). This Phase 7 door way was plugged in Phase 6. Unit 137 was then placed on top of both the door plug (Unit 312) and the Phase 7B mud brick wall (Unit 334).

The wall Unit 260 continues west into the baulk and abuts the mud brick Unit 164 in the east. Unit 260 was removed and exposed the Phase 7 wall Unit 292. The stone wall Unit 251 extends into the southern baulk and abuts the mud brick Unit 164 in the north. The mud brick wall Units 200 and 223 both abut this corner mud brick wall. While removing the small portion of Unit 261, RP 13827, depicting a satyr, was found.

In the Western Center room, the majority of Phase 6 was excavated in the previous season. Left for this dig season, we began excavating the mud brick wall Unit 222. We scraped

down the southern face of this wall in an attempt to expose brick lines, but were unable to find the lines. We were, however, able to expose the foundation stones for this unit – Unit 299. Once we had the foundation stones exposed, we removed the wall Unit 222 and Unit 216. Before the removal of the wall we were able to discern that Unit 222 abuts Unit 216's western face and Unit 223's southern face. Unit 299 was used as a foundation for the mud brick wall Unit 222. Unit 240 was used as the foundation for Unit 216. Unit 299 and Unit 240 were both removed as they were floating. Surface Unit 242 and Unit 263 both functioned with the walls Unit 222 in the north, Unit 216 in the east, and Unit 159 in the south. Unit 159 continues in depth and is a phase 7 curbing reused in Phase 6.

The surface Unit 255 was removed in 2010 exposing the leveling fill Unit 274 in the South Eastern room. The surface Unit 255 and fill Unit 274 were bound by the walls Unit 200 to the north and Unit 251 to the west. The fill of Unit 274 was not completely removed, as the dig season was cut short. However, while excavating unit 274, we were able to reveal that the Phase 6 wall (Unit 200) was floating. This wall was removed and exposed Unit 300, a Phase 7 wall. While deconstructing Unit 200 we were able to confirm that Unit 200 abuts the mud brick corner Unit 164. Unit 164 was used as the corner for wall Units 260, 251, 200, and 223. Unit 251 was removed and exposed the Phase 7B mud brick wall Unit 290.

The Center Center room, as previously mentioned, ended the 2010 season with the surface Unit 245 unexcavated. In 2013 this mud brick floor was removed and exposed the fill layer Unit 273. This fill layer was bound by the mud brick curbing Unit 168 in the east, Unit 167 in the west. The mud brick wall Unit 223 bounded this layer in the north, and the stone wall Unit 260 in the south. After removing the fill layer Unit 273 we exposed the Phase 7 surface Unit 281. While doing so, we found that Unit 168 and Unit 167 both are sitting on top of this surface.

Connecting the Center Center room and the North Western room, we had a threshold (Unit 265) that was used in Phase 6 to connect the surface Unit 245 (Center center room) to the surface Unit 264 (North Western room). This threshold was functioning with walls Unit 237 and Unit 223.

The surface Unit 264 functioned with the walls Unit 121 and Unit 277 in the North Western room. The curbing Unit 186 and Unit 120 were both built on top of this surface. While excavating Unit 264 we found a curved copper alloy shaft (MC 69037) and a small sheet of lead (MC 69718). Unit 121 and Unit 277 both are Phase 6 constructions, as Unit 264 was the last surface to function with them.

In the North Eastern room we began the season in the Phase 6 deliberate fill (Unit 257) beneath the Phase 6 surface Unit 241. This fill is bounded by the walls Unit 244 in the west and Unit 134 in the south. While excavating this unit, we were able to float the wall Unit 134 and remove it, exposing a Phase 7B wall - Unit 301. We also discovered that Unit 244 was built with the door plug Unit 293 on top of a Phase 7B wall (Unit 294) and threshold (Unit 295). The door plug Unit 293 and wall Unit 244 are both Phase 6 constructions built on preexisting Phase 7 walls.

In the Eastern Center room we began the season with the surfaces and fills of Phase 6 removed. The only remaining Phase 6 material were wall Units 134, Unit 200, and Unit 223. Unit 134 was removed and exposed the Phase 7 stone wall Unit 301, Unit 200 was removed to expose Phase 7 stone wall Unit 300 and Unit 223 was removed and exposed a Phase 7 wall Unit 303.

### **Phase 7: Persian Period**

**Early 5<sup>th</sup> – Mid 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.**

The bulk of this year's excavation took place in Phase 7. We have split this phase into two sub Phases: Phase 7B and Phase 7A. We see that these buildings throughout Phase 7 have the same layout as the later periods, with one exception in the Phase 7A center room. The Phase 7B surfaces step up in elevation in the western rooms, by roughly 15 to 20cm. However, the Phase 7A surfaces are all similar in height. The majority of Phase 7 has been excavated this season, however 6 of the 7 rooms still have material from Phase 7A, and three rooms have material from Phase 7B, due to the dig season being cut short.

#### **Phase 7B**

Once we removed the surface Unit 264 in our North Western room, we made our way out of Phase 6 and into Phase 7. We start this phase with the surface Unit 284. Functioning with the walls Unit 294 in the east, Unit 223 in the south and the threshold Unit 295. Unit 121 and Unit 277 both sat on top of this surface. Once these walls (121 and 277) were removed, Unit 284 was exposed with shells on top beneath these curbing. The surface Unit 284 did not trace well and could only be seen in various parts of the unit and in the section of the baulk. We removed the surface and exposed the fill layer Unit 285 beneath. The fill was bound by the same walls as the surface Unit 284. We removed the layer Unit 285, and a number of MCs were found: an evil eye bead (MC 69227), a green jasper scarab (MC 69442), pink coral (MC 69444), and a bone bead (MC 69232).

The North eastern room had a Phase 7B surface, Unit 283 = 74.530. This surface traced fairly well, it was a dark brown material with ashy inclusions. This surface functioned with the stone wall Unit 301 as the south closing wall, and stone wall Unit 294 in the east. This surface also functioned with the threshold unit 295, connecting this surface with the North Western room's surface Unit 284. Below Unit 283, we exposed a fill layer, Unit 291. While excavating this unit, we noticed a pit (Unit 314/315) in the south east corner of the unit that is cut from Unit 283 and extends into the fill layer Unit 291. Within this pit we found faunal remains and worked limestone (MC 70766). While excavating Unit 291 we were able to float both wall Unit 301 and Unit 294. We have removed Unit 301 and exposed a Phase 7A stone wall - Unit 328. Remnants of Unit 294 are still standing as we were unable to fully excavate the unit due to the dig season being cut short.

We began this season with the Phase 7A surface Unit 268 exposed In the Western Center Room. Unit 159 is a mud brick wall that is resting directly on top of Unit 267 and could have

been used in Phase 7B. We were unable to find any surfaces in the section of the baulk as well. The next surface above the surface Unit 267 is Unit 263, a phase 6 mud brick floor.

We started this season with Unit 273 exposed in the Center Center Room. Beneath Unit 273 we were unable to find any surface other than Unit 281, which functions with the Phase 7A walls. While excavating unit 273 we dug the unit in thirds: the southern third, the middle third and the northern third. We did not notice any consistency change, it was all mottled, ruby fill.

In the Eastern Center Room occupational debris Unit 256 was exposed when we began this season. While excavating we exposed the surface Unit 298 = 74.U532. This surface is an ashy dark gray material and is bound by walls: Unit 303 in the east, Unit 301 = 74.571 in the north and Unit 300 = 74.551 in the south. The surface has been fine gridded, however the samples have not been processed.

In the Southern Center Room, the Phase 7B surface Unit 259 was previously excavated in 2010, however the walls that it functioned with and the fill Unit 269, immediately below Unit 259, still remained. Walls Unit 260 in the north, 334 in the west, and 290 in the east all functioned with the surface Unit 259 and fill Unit 269. While excavating Unit 269, we found a number of MCs which include slag (MC 68400), a serrated chert blade (MC 68405) and copper alloy fragments (MC 70383). We also found an RP, possibly Lekythos (RP 13820). After removing the fill Unit 269 we uncovered an exposed surface with natural accumulation build up (Unit 305). We also noticed that all three walls were floating, however only the wall Unit 260 has been removed and exposed the Phase 7A wall Unit 296. A few stones were showing below Unit 290, however we were unable to excavate this any further due to the dig season being cut short.

Due to the season being cut short, only a small portion of the Phase 7B floor Unit 288 = 74.534 was exposed this season in the South Eastern Room. This surface functions with the walls Unit 300 = 74.551 as the northern closing wall and Unit 290 as the eastern closing wall. While removing the fill layer Unit 274, we exposed a wall collapse, Unit 287 = 74.546. These stones ranged from large blocks to smaller cobble stones. This stone collapse fell on top of the Phase 7B surface Unit 288. The majority of the collapse was found in the western side of this unit, directly against the eastern face of the wall Unit 290, and smaller stones taper to the east and continue as 74.U546. The majority of these stone have been removed, however there are still a few stones left and should be removed, along with the fill layer Unit 274.

## **Phase 7A**

Once the fill layer Unit 285 was removed in the North Western Room, we exposed a shelly surface – Unit 297. This surface does not trace well. Unit 297 can only be seen in a small strip just north of the wall Unit 316 and just west of Unit 294, as there is a large pit (Unit 330/331), cut from Unit 297, that encompasses the majority of this room. The surface unit 297 functions with the wall Unit 316 to the south and runs beneath the 7B wall Unit 294 and



threshold Unit 295. This surface works with the threshold Unit 321 to connect to the surface Unit 281 in the Center Center room.

We began excavating the pit Unit 330/331, however we were unable to fully excavate the unit, due to the dig season being cut short. The pit is a gray rubbly material with large mud brick detritus inclusions. We have a smaller ashy pit (Unit 310/311), cut from Unit 297, to the east of the large pit. While excavating this pit, we were able to see another surface (Unit 319) in the pit section. Only a small portion of Unit 319 has been exposed due to the season being cut short, however we do see this surface running beneath the Phase 7B wall Unit 294. We were unable to clarify the southern closing wall, because the threshold U321 cuts into this surface.

In the North Eastern Room we were unable to fully excavate the fill U291 and expose the Phase 7A surface, as the dig season was cut short. We were, however, able to float and remove the Phase 7B wall Unit 301 and expose the Phase 7A stone wall Unit 328. The Phase 7B wall, Unit 294, and threshold, Unit 295, are no longer in use, as they are floating on both the eastern and western sides. We have begun the removal of these units, however we were unable to finish due to the season being cut short.

We began this season with the majority of the surface Unit 268 exposed in the Western Center Room. We began excavating this room by removing the mud brick wall, Unit 159, which sat on top of Unit 267. After removing the wall Unit 159 and exposing the remaining shell surface Unit 267 we could see that this shell surface lip against the wall Unit 296 in the south and to the wall Unit 292 in the east. After establishing that Unit 267 was Phase 7A, we removed Unit 267 and fully exposed the mud bricks of Unit 268. We noticed a small pit cut from Unit 268 – Unit 306/307. We were able to excavate the pit within an hour. The content of this shallow pit was a large concentration of lead (MC 70517).

Once the surface Unit 268 was removed we exposed a fill layer Unit 320. While removing this fill layer, we exposed a natural accumulation layer Unit 289=329. We were also able to float the wall Unit 292 and remove it, after removing the Unit 292, we could see that the natural accumulation layer (Unit 292=329) connects beneath the wall Unit 292.

While excavating the fill layer Unit 273 in the Center Center Room, we were able to uncover and trace a small patch of an ashy surface – Unit 281. This surface was only seen in the middle of the room and lipping against the walls of Unit 292 in the west, Unit 316 in the north, and Unit 303 in the east. We were unable to see a touch for the south closing wall, however we assume that it is Unit 296, as the fill layer Unit 282 is bounded by this wall.

Below the surface Unit 281, we found a leveling fill layer Unit 282. Like the surface Unit 281, this fill layer is contained by the North closing wall, Unit 316, the east closing wall, Unit 303, the west closing wall Unit 292 and the south closing wall Unit 296. Directly below this fill layer, we exposed a natural accumulation layer – Unit 289=329. This layer was a mottled sandy clay material, indicative of a surface that was exposed to the elements. This natural accumulation layer is bounded by the walls Unit 316 in the north, unit 303 in the east, and Unit 296 in the south. Once we exposed the natural accumulation layer, the wall Unit 292 was floating and Unit 289=329 was running beneath the wall. We removed the wall and the leveling fill below it (Unit

326) and exposed the natural accumulation layer. This natural accumulation connects the Center Western room to the Center Center room.

A probe was placed against the wall Unit 316 and showed that there is an ashy surface (Unit 318) directly below the accumulation layer. We traced the surface to the north closing wall Unit 316 and to the east closing wall Unit 303. We have a clear touching point for these two walls. While tracing this surface, we noticed that there is a large pit cut from this surface (Unit 332/333) We were unable to trace the remainder of Unit 318, due to the dig season being cut short.

While removing the fill layer Unit 313 in the Eastern Center Room, surface Unit 324 = 74.532 was found. This surface was ashy with large chunks of coal. This surface is bound within the walls Unit 303 in the west, Unit 328 in the north and Unit 300, in the south. A small portion of this unit still remains in the northern sections of the unit. Beneath Unit 324 = 74.532, we uncovered the fill layer Unit 235. This fill was only exposed, due to the dig season being cut short.

In the Southern Center room, we removed the Phase 7B fill layer Unit 269 and exposed a surface Unit 305 = 83.163. This surface is bound by walls U323 in the west, Unit 296 in the north, and unit 290 in the east. After exposing the surface Unit 305, we noticed a pit cutting from the surface – Unit 308/309. The pit was an ashy material with small rocks throughout. While removing the pit, a small amount of copper slag was found. Once the pit was removed, we fine gridded the surface. While removing this surface, we found a number of MC's in the sift: worked Lapis Lazuli (MC 71317), a worn vitreous figurine (MC 71326) and a Frit juglet rim (MC 71328). Once the surface Unit 305 was removed, we exposed a fill layer that contained Iron Age pottery, we did not excavate any further in this room as we believe this to be Phase 8 material.

This South Eastern Room has not been excavated past Phase 7B, due to the dig season being cut short.

### **Phase 8 – Iron Age**

We believe that only one horizon separates us from the Iron Age in this square. In the Southern Center room, we have ended the season in possible Iron Age material. A probe was placed in the Center Center room and exposed 5 vertical pot sherds at roughly the same level of 51.74's Iron Age.

# Grid 51 Squares 74 and 75 Final Report 2014

Assistant Square Supervisor Emily Shames

Our goals in 51.74 and 75 this season were to finish excavating the Persian period, and to reach the 604 BCE destruction by Nebuchadnezzar II. Meeting these goals provided us with an exciting opportunity to revisit the end of Philistine Ashkelon, and to investigate the succeeding resettlement by Persian period Phoenicians. Despite our season being truncated by unfortunate political circumstances, we were able to add important new data for our understanding of the periods just mentioned. These data are summarized in what follows.

An enormous thanks goes to grid supervisor Dr. Kate Birney and assistant grid supervisor/square supervisor Jonathon Wylie, who are both not only exceptional archaeologists, but are also model leaders and mentors. A thanks also goes out to this year's group of volunteers and the whole grid 51 personnel. With a stampede of eager volunteers and staff, we uncovered a tapestry of units, taking down the supple grid 51 dirt with fine persision and skill, as opposed to in a blunderbuss

## **Phase VIII: Iron Age IIC (604 BCE Destruction)**

In the last week of the season we came down on Nebuchadnezzar II's 604 BCE destruction. We reached the destruction layer in 2 western iron age rooms. The northern room contains floor **U598** with collapse/destruction layer **U592**. Unfortunately, due to the abrupt termination of the dig season caused by rising political tensions, we were unable to expose floor U598. The southern room is defined by floor **U596**. U592 and U596 are separated into northern and southern rooms respectively by Iron Age wall U301. Other than Iron Age wall U301, the boundaries of floors U596 and U598 are currently unknown.

Iron age E-W wall U301, found during excavation of probe U200, was completely exposed in the 2014 dig season. It consists of 2 rows of 3 large cut ashlar also running E-W with an single ashlar running N-S on the western end, possibly functioning as a doorway between floors U598 and U596. E-W wall U301 continues east, connecting and equal to stones U302 of which are directly east of probe U200. Well U11 and probe U200 both cut the area that we believe to have connected these two units, forming one complate E-W Iron Age wall.

We did not yet expose Floor U598 this season. Immediately above and later than this floor is collapse/destruction layer U592. It consists of roughly 10-14cm of large broken vessels, mostly storage amphoras and cooking pots. U592 runs up to wall U301. Because of the abrupt end to the dig season, U592 was not fully excavated. For the 2015 dig season, the rest of the unit should be a restore layer, since most of the pottery is in large chunks with associated pieces immediately surrounding.

The southern room with floor U596 also runs north up to U301. Other than this boundary, the extent of the floor remains unknown. Beaten earth floor U596 is very ashy, compact, and easily traceable with some loose sand resting on this surface. Three stones, two of which are ashlar size, rest on the south half of floor U596, possibly from collapse. Cut from this surface in the southwest corner (fine grid 51) is large circular burning instillation **U597**.

In the eastern third of the square we identified **U591**, an exterior destruction debris/collapse layer. We have only come down on this layer in a probe in fine grid 28. U591 is a thick layer of ash with patches of concentrated burning, and burnt mud brick. We expect U591 to run the extent of U577, the fill layer immediately later than U591. The full extent of U591 is a matter to be explored in the 2015 dig season.

West of U591 is early phase 7 fill U511, partly exposed from the 2013 season. Though U511 is an early phase 7 fill layer, it consists of fill that raked over the earlier 604 BC destruction floor not yet revealed. In the fill, atop a 604 floor (not named), are 2 burials, one complete burial 212 and one partial burial 219. We articulated and exposed the complete skeleton 212 in the southern half of fill U511. The remains are male. He is face down with a rock on his head and a large crack in his skull. His limbs are sprawled and all of the bones are well intact. As we moved north, articulating the lower half of the body, we uncovered a second skeleton. This skeleton in the northern half of U511 is burial 219. The remains are also male but are less preserved than Burial 212. The upper portion of the skeleton is present, however the lower limbs are not. The lower limbs are in the northeast corner of U511, which was later disturbed by pit U581/U582, cobbles U545, and wall U446. The skeleton lies face up with a rock in his mouth, a jar on his pelvis, and with what remains of his left leg burnt black. A burnt human femur was found while excavating the northern part of pit U581/U582 that cuts into burial U219. These two deaths were not part of a pit. Bricky chunks surround them, as if part of collapse. Leonard and Skynard did not enjoy their last moments. Pottery buckets associated to the 2 burials are as follows; B14143, B14176, B14179, B14184, B14193, B14198, and B14200. Due to political tension, we were forced to end the excavation after we articulated the 2 skeletons, but before we could excavate them. We currently hope to return to excavate them before the 2015 season as soon as the area is safe.

## **Phase 7 Early (Early Persian)**

### *Interior Space*

In the northern rooms after the Iron Age the earliest Persians came in and laid down fill **U564**, defined by a yet uncovered wall immediately earlier than 73.U294 in the west, the northern baulk, Robber trench U575 in the east, and an unknown boundary in the south. In this fill, we found copper earring MC 69687 and a yellow on blue glass wave form base MC 71188. Two beaten earth floors, U559 and U558, lie on top of fill U564,. U559 lies directly above the western 2 thirds of fill U564 and U558 lies on top of the eastern third of U564. **U559** is a shell lined beaten earth floor, the extent of which is

the north baulk, floor U558 in the east, wall U571=73.328 in the south, and a 7 early wall not yet uncovered in square 73. The equivalent unit in square 73 has not yet been excavated. Popping out of U559, immediately east of the 73/74 square division is potential mudbrick wall **U560**. U560 consists of 3 N-S mudbricks stretching from wall U571=73.328 to the north baulk. We uncovered only one course of mudbrick and no foundation trench. We currently do not believe that U560 acted as our early phase 7 closing wall, and for that reason, believe that there is a early phase 7 western wall for U559 yet to be excavated in square 73 (possible immediately earlier than late phase 7 wall 73. U294).

**U558** is an ashy beaten earth surface associated with (and probably equal to) U559. We created separate units for the two due to the fact that the shells from U559 did not track all the way east. A hearth, **U563**, rests on the northeast corner of U558. U563 consists of a few stones and a thick build up of ashy and bricky debris. This hearth contributed to the large amount of ash resting on U558. Further, pit **U555/U556** is directly in between U558 and U559, at the northern part of the area where the shell lined floor stops and the ashy floor begins. Shallow circular pit U555/U556, bisected by the Northern baulk, could have held a pillar and divided the floors. The boundaries of U558 are robber trench U575 in the east, U571 in the south, U559 in the west, and the North baulk. Excavation of U558 yielded an iron blade (MC 69653), an ivory spindle whirl (MC 69662), an iron dagger (MC 69671), and worked bone (MC 69908).

After the 604 destruction associated to floor U596 and collapse U592, the earliest Persians laid down the brown silty fill **U589** for the earliest Persian floor **U585**. Wall U571 in the north, wall U586 in the west, U551 in the south, and 73. U303 in the west define floor U585. The equivalent unit for U585 has not yet been excavated in square 73. The southern half of U585 is ashy and contains some pottery. Immediately above and later than floor U585 is subfloor fill **U567** immediately earlier to the second early phase 7 floor **U532**. Fill U567 contained an iron blade (MC 70629). Floor U532 is ashy with chunks of concentrated ash patches. Wall U571 in the north, wall U565 in the east, wall U551 in the south, and wall 73. U303 in the west confines floor U532. 73. U324 is the associated floor to U532 in square 73. Further, 2 pits and a posthole cut U532. Pit **U561/U562**, located along the center of the eastern edge, contained an Iron Age sunken cooking pot (RP 13998). Pit **U568/U569**, located in the northeast corner, contained a number of cow bones/fragments. This pit runs directly under late phase 7 wall U282. For this reason, we believe that the northern third of U282 functioned function as a threshold with wall **U565**. Integrated into the southern part of wall U565 was a large chunk of lead (MC 70461). Posthole **U576** is immediately west of pit U568/U569.

In the southwest of square 74 there are 2 early phase 7 floors. The earliest Persian floor is **U590**, contained by U551 in the north, U512 in the east, unexcavated unit in the south, and 73. U290 in the west. This floor has yet to be excavated in square 73 and, therefore, does not possess a square 73 unit number. U590 contained many different laminas, one ashy, one with white patches, and another that was dirty brown. We started to excavate this floor, but due to political tensions, we were forced to end excavation abruptly, leaving U590 exposed. A priority for the 2015 season is to excavate the

remaining part of this floor.

The second early phase 7 floor is **U534=U557** with subfloor fill **U588** immediately earlier. Floor U534's limits consist of wall U551 in the north, U512 in the east, an unexcavated unit in square 84 to the south, and 73.U290 in the west. Originally we believed that floor U534 was bounded in the east by robber trench U492, so we created floor U557 to account for the floor ranging from U492 in the west to U512 in the east. In fact, U534 traced under late phase 7 robber trench U492 and, thus, U534 =U557. The associated 73 unit for this floor is 73.U288. A large pit, 2 postholes, and stone collapse cuts/rests on floor U534. Pit **U549/U550, roughly 25cm deep**, is located on the southeast corner of the western half of U534.. Posthole **U554** is directly southeast of pit U549/U550. Posthole **U583** is just west of the center of floor U534. A pile of large stones, in disarray, function as wall collapse **U546=73.U287** in the northeast corner of U534.

Excavation last season, identified floor U517 with Occupational Debris U505. U517 was not excavated during the 2013 season. In the 2014 season, we defined their extents as Early phase 7 E-W wall U571 in the north, early phase 7 N-S wall/ late phase 7 robber trench U599/U473 in the east, an unknown boundary in the south, and wall U512 in the west. U517 consists of an ashy matrix with many pits (U538/U542, U521/U522, U543/U544, and U526/U527). Just off the center the eastern edge, sits pit **U526/U527**. The southeast corner contains pit **U543/U544**, bisected by late phase 7 robber trench U473. Pit U521/U522 in the southwest corner, was fully excavated in the 2013 season. Pit **U538/U542** is quite large, taking up the entire northwest 2 fine grids (65, 66), against the corner of wall U551 and U512. The fill was relatively loose and sandy, containing a complete clay loom weight (MC 70736) and a copper earring (MC 70788). The northeastern corner of this pit contains loose beach sand. Floor U517 is fairly ashy, especially along the eastern edge. The contributing factor is hearth **U584** cut into U517 along the center of the eastern edge. A build up of white ash immediately surrounds the 15 cm deep hearth. We started excavating this floor, but due to political tensions, were forced to abruptly end excavation, leaving this floor exposed. This floor should be a priority for the beginning of the 2015 season.

North of U517 is fill U511 partly exposed from the 2013 season. This season we redefined the boundaries of U511. U511 expands north to wall U571, east to U594, south to U551, and west possibly to U586. Though U511 is a fill layer, it consists of fill that raked over the earlier 604 BC destruction floor not yet revealed. We found two burials (212 and 219) sitting in fill U511, atop a 604BCE floor (not named)

Subfloor fill U511 is immediately later than U510. Excavating late phase 7 N-S wall U446 revealed a thin (10cm wide) N-S strip of floor U510. Pit **U581/U582**, cutting U510, extends from wall U571 in the north, late phase 7 robber trench/early phase 7 wall U594/U593 in the east, wall U551 in the south, and the thin remaining strip of U510 immediately earlier than U446 to the west. The fill is loose and junky containing a yellow truncated bead (MC 70960) and a small hoard of pill sized copper pieces. We did not have clear pit lines because of later cuts for wall U446 pits U529/U539 and pit

U502/U503. A very loose junky pile of cobbles **U545** extends north-south along pit U581/U582. These cobbles are not in any order, but do appear to be scattered in such a way that resembles 3 courses. U545 is either a separate installation, or, more likely, part of the junky fill to pit U581/U582.

### *Exterior Space*

After the wake of the Iron Age destruction layer U591 in the east, a raked over fill layer **U577** covers the debris. The boundaries remain unknown and should be addressed during the 2015 season. Currently, it is bounded by the northern baulk, the 74/84 square division in the east, runs under exterior surface U500 in the south, and up to N-S early phase 7 wall/Late phase 7 Robber trench U593/U594 in the west. U577 is seen in the western section of U500 (created by the excavated late phase 7 robber trench U473) running the N-S length immediately earlier than U500.

U577 consists of a loose brown sandy matrix with very little inclusions but an exuberant amount of pottery, the majority being iron age body sherds. Pottery of note is a 7<sup>th</sup> century east Greek Platter (MC 14131). The lower or bottom half of the fill layer contains loose beach sand while the upper half of the unit consists of a more loose silty composition.

Immediately later than fill U577 is exterior surface **U541**. All later occupation of this area is interior. In early phase 7, the architecture shifts westward and steers away from the later insulae architectural plan seen from late phase 7 to phase 5. U541 runs into the north baulk, does not yet have an eastern boundary, runs into corresponding unit U500 in the south, and robber trench U594 in the west. The fill is relatively compact clean brown fill without much pottery. An anthropomorphic figurine (MC 69274) was found in the northeast corner of the known extent of the unit. Further, pits U578/U579 and U573/U574 cut surface U541. Pit **U578/U579** is located immediately earlier than wall U495=U548 in the central north of the unit. The bottom of the pit contains loose beach sand. **U573/U574** is a small circular pit, possibly a posthole, located just east of the center of the unit. It is very shallow, roughly 4cm deep. A flat wide bone sits directly in it.

U500, originally thought of as sub floor fill for late phase 7 floor U498 excavated last season, is now believed to be functioning as exterior surface with and just south of U541. The southern section of U500 created by excavating robber trench U265 does not show any early phase 7 floors. It is defined by U541 in the north, not yet bounded in the west, not yet bounded in the south (but cut by robber trench U265), and late phase 7 robber trench/ early phase 7 wall U473/U599 in the west. U500 contains a loose sandy deep posthole **U566** along the center of the southern edge.

This season we revealed early phase 7 E-W fieldstone wall **U551**. It contains mudbrick curbing U297 along the western half of the northern face, and **U572** and **U528** along the western half of the southern face. The wall is 4 courses and 4 rows, with 2 larger stones on the outer edge and 2 smaller cobbles on the inner edge. Wall U551

separates northern floors U532, U585, and U510 from the southern floors U534, U590, U505, and U517. The wall extends west into square 73 as 73.U300 and extends east up to U541.

N-S cobble Wall U512 separates floors U534 and U590 in the west from floor U517 in the east. It is 1 course and 4 rows with 2 larger stones on the outside and 2 smaller cobbles on the inside. It extends north to wall U551 and south to a not yet excavated area in square 84.

N-S stone wall **U586** with foundation trench **U587** is almost all cut by probe 200 from earlier seasons. We believe the wall would have extended north to meet 2 large stones (currently unnamed) along the southern edge of U571 has it not been cut by probe U200. The wall currently consists of 2 large stones in line with U512 along the northern edge of U551.. U586 defines the eastern edge of floor U585 and possibly the western edge of U510.

E-W fieldstone wall **U571** with foundation trench **U595** is located in the northern half of the square. Its eastern edge is bounded by U541 and it extends into square 73 as 73.328. The wall separates northern floors U552, U559, U558, and U531 from southern floors U534, U585, and U510. The wall consists 3 courses and 4 rows of 2 large stones on the outer edges and 2 smaller cobbles on the inside. In late phase 7, 2 courses of a row of larger stones were added to the southern face of wall U571, creating foundation stones U375.

In the southeast corner of the square is late phase 7 robber trench U473 robbing early phase 7 stones **U599**. It has clear lines showing its eastern and western extents. It's roughly 80cm wide and is bounded by early phase 7 wall U551 in the north, and continues south into a yet unexcavated area in square 84 . U473 separates the western interior floor U517 from the eastern exterior surface U500. The remaining early phase 7 stones U599 are located at the southern third of U473. There is one course remaining with 4 rows, two larger stones on the outside edges and 2 smaller cobbles on the inside. As of current, it looks like, but remains unclear if stones U599 extends south to meet wall U468 (currently believed to be late phase 7). Exploring this connection, if any, is a matter to be addressed early in the 2015 season.

Continuing north along line U473 is late phase 7 robber trench **U594** robbing out early phase 7 stones **U593**. U594 is also roughly 80cm wide and extends up to wall U571 in the north, and U551 in the south. U594 separates the western interior space U510 from the eastern exterior space U541. The remaining stones U593 sit in the bottom of the robber trench in the northern third of U594. The stones abut and form an integrated corner with early phase 7 wall U571. Similar to U599, there was only 1 course left remaining and 4 rows of 2 large stones on the outside edges and 2 smaller cobbles on the inside. We saw the eastern line for robber trench U594 in a probe along its northern edge. The western edge, however, is harder to see due to late phase 7 pits U502/U503 and U529/U539 and late phase 7 wall U442 cutting the space.



In the northeast corner, in line with both U473 and U594 is late phase 7 robber trench **U575** robbing out an early phase 7 wall we have no stones for. It's roughly 80 cm wide and runs north into the baulk from U571. U575 separates interior western space U558 from exterior eastern space U541. The eastern line for robber trench U575 is clear and distinct. Unfortunately, the western line is difficult to see. We found the western extent by tracing floor U558 east.

Our Current understanding of early phase 7 ends in destruction. Though the destruction is not as clear as the end of the Iron Age, we still see markers. All of the early phase 7 floors are ashy with burnt mudbrick in exterior surface U541 and stone collapse U546 on floor U534. The plan for early phase 7 is shifted west, creating an exterior space along the eastern edge of square 74. Ultimately the entire city architectural plan shifts from early phase 7 to late phase 7. Late phase 7 established the insulae pattern seen throughout the rest of the Persian period.

### **Phase 7 Late (Early Persian)**

A thin fill layer separates early phase 7 northern floors U559 and U558 from the floors immediately above and later, namely U530 and U552 respectively. We did not catch this fill layer upon excavation and, therefore, did not assign a unit to it. Late phase 7 floors U530 and U552 put N-S walls U533 and U448 out of use.

In the northwestern corner of square 74 (room 2), immediately later than U559, is the earliest late phase 7 floor U530. **U530** extends into the northern baulk, east to wall U533, south to foundation stones U375, and west to wall 73.U294. U530 continues into square 73 as 73.U283. U530 is an ashy beaten earth surface with lots of fish bone and ashy chunks resting on it. Immediately later is sub floor fill U288, which we completely excavated this season.

**U552** is bounded by the north baulk and extends up to U448 in the east, U571 in the south, and U533 in the west. U552 is an ashy, shelly layer floor, which yielded an attic black figure vessel (RP 13995). The western half of the unit was easier to trace, while the eastern half contained a lot ash and was difficult to trace. This could be caused by debris from hearth U563, if it was still in use. The two halves are not different enough to divide them into two separate floors.

**U531** is a 5-8cm occupational debris layer of ashy striations resting on floor U552. It's enclosed by U448 in the east, U571 in the south, U533 in the west, and the north baulk. The occupational debris contained Black figure RP 13889 of a painted and incised wheel and an Eye of Horus amulet MC 69215. Little to no Occupational debris was found immediately later than the western third of U552. Instead, the western third of U552 was dark gray and contained a lot of ash.

Immediately later than occ deb U531 is fill U289 revealed in previous seasons. This season, we completely excavated fill U289. The baulk in the north, wall U448 in the east, wall U211 in the south, and wall U533 in the west define this fill. The fill itself

contains a few small pieces of metal, along with an alabastron base (RP 13747) and a worked bone game piece (MC 68909).

Immediately later than early phase 7 floor U532 is late phase 7 fill U266 revealed in previous seasons. This season, we completely excavated fill U266. Wall U201 in the north, wall U282 in the east, wall U215 in the south, and wall 73.U225 in the west define this fill.

Immediately later than early phase 7 floor U534, is late phase 7 fill U280 revealed in previous seasons. This season, we completely excavated fill U280.

Immediately later than early phase 7 surface U541 is the late phase 7 fill U501 revealed in the 2013 season. Wall U446 in the west, U495 in the north, U509 in the east, and U442 in the south limit this fill. Fill U501 is a silty brown-orange matrix. It dips in the southwestern corner due to Pit U529/U539 cut from floor U483. Pit **U529/U539** contains loose junky fill with a high amount of shell inclusions and some pottery. Over 30 small pill size bits of metal and 9 larger chunks of metal come from this space. Other finds in this unit include a quartz bead (MC 68394), a small piece of yellow glass (MC 68395), a jasper scarab (MC 68396) (with Egyptian hieroglyphics inscribed on the back), stone cube shaped weight (MC 68487), iron blade (MC 69683), attic ware (RP 14001), and lekythos rim and neck (RP 14074). This industrial space cut under the late phase 7 wall U446 in the west. Loose junky ashy Pit U502/U503 also cuts into the north of late phase 7 floor U483. We revealed its full extent this season, cutting slightly under wall U446 as well. Pit U502/U503 contains 7 larger chunks of metal with over 10 small pill sized unregistered pieces.

Immediately later than early phase 7 surface U541 is late phase 7 subfloor fill **U553** to floors **U537** and **U547**. Floors U537 and U547 function with each other. The north baulk, the northernmost part of U509 (robbed out by earlier robber trench U223) in the east, U495=U548 in the south, and U448 in the west bound these floors. Floor U537 is the western 2 thirds of this space and U547 is the eastern third. The two are separated by a row of 4-5 small cobbles **U536 that run from wall U495 into the north baulk**. U537, a shell-lined floor, runs west of cobbles U536. U547, to the east of cobbles U536, does not contain any shell, but is rather extremely compact. U536 and U547 possibly act as a bin up against the corner of wall U509 and U495=U548, or a step.

We completely excavated all of the late phase 7 walls exposed in previous seasons; E-W mudbrick wall U201=73.U134, E-W mudbrick wall U211, N-S mudbrick wall U169, E-W cobble wall U215, E-W cobble wall U189, E-W cobble wall U442, N-S stone wall U509, and N-S stone wall U404=75.U123.

Wall U509 contains brown shallow foundation trench **U570**. Wall U404=75.U123 contains bricky compact foundation trench **U580=75.U170**. U495 contained a large amount of packing in between its lower courses. For this reason, we thought we had a new wall U548 immediately earlier than late phase 7 wall U495, when, in fact, **U495=U548**. This wall contains foundation trench **U540**. Late phase 7 wall E-W wall

U468 (robbed out by robber trench U265) remains as the only unexcavated late phase 7 wall as it is still in use in square 84. Upon excavation of wall U211, we found a 5<sup>th</sup> century Phoenician ostrakon on a body sherd (MC70500) in B14091. Written on the sherd is 7 lines of a list of names.

Immediately earlier than N-S mud brick wall U169 is N-S cobble wall **U533** discovered and excavated in the 2014 season. U533 functions with and abuts E-W stone foundation U375. It divides late phase 7 floors U530 in the west from occ deb/floor U531/U552.

### **Phase 6 Early (Middle Persian)**

Early phase 6 excavation was limited to subfloor fill U488 exposed in the 2013 season. U488 is located in the northeastern corner of the square, immediately later than late phase 7 floors U537 and U547.

The only remaining early phase 6 material in square 74 is stone construction U411 and stone construction U524=75.U120. We planned to excavate these out of phase units, but due to political tension, were forced to stop beforehand.

### **Islamic period (Phase 1)**

This season, we bottomed out phase 1 robber trench U223. The bottom of the trench, where we found a set of worked bone dice (MC 69782), robs out the northern portion of late phase 7 N-S wall U509.

### **51.75 (Early phase 7)**

The street does not exist in early phase 7. Clean compact dark brown exterior surface **U169=74.U541** extends immediately earlier than later sidewalk U167. We currently do not know the extent of U169 and is a matter for the 2015 season. We hoped to drop the area immediately earlier than late phase 7 street U166, to find out what happens in this space in early phase 7. Unfortunately, due to political tension, excavation stopped abruptly and we were unable to drop a probe. The area below the late phase 7 street should be a priority in the 2015 season.

### **51.75 (Late phase 7)**

Late phase 7 established the Persian period insulae city plan. The earliest street **U166** is compact junky material with lots of shell inclusions and pottery. The unit also contains a high amount of loose dirty sand, especially in the center. The edges of the street are very compact and difficult to excavate. **U165** is the western curbing associated to the late phase 7 street U166 and consists of 4 courses of stones. The western sidewalk **U167=74.U535** extends up to curbing U166 in the east, runs into an unexcavated area of square 85 in the south, lips up to wall 74.U404=U123 and 74.U509 in the west, and extends into the north baulk. The sidewalk is also compact junky fill with shell inclusions

and a high amount of pottery, similar to street U166. Upon excavation, we found light green anthropomorphic amulet (MC 70093). We did not excavate the eastern side of the street in order for the park to preserve the phase 6 ashlar construction.

Late phase 7 wall U123=74.U404 is bounded by U167 in the east, U509 in the north, floor U498 in the west, and robber trench U265 in the south. Immediately earlier is foundation trench U170=74.U580. The foundation trench is brickly and fairly compact.

### **51. 75 (Early phase 6)**

Immediately later than U166 is the early phase 6 street U115 that we finished excavating from the 2013 season. The street continues in square 85 and remains to be excavated in that square. We did not excavate the eastern side of the street in order for the park to preserve the phase 6 ashlar construction. Excavation yielded a copper signet ring (MC 68430), a painted alabastron base (RP 13826), and an incised Persian attic ware base with Paleo-Hebrew or Phoenician inscription (RP 13872). We finished excavating the associated western curbing U132 (southern curbing) and U154 (northern curbing) and western sidewalk U136 all from the 2013 season. The curbing consisted of a number of large stones lasting roughly 1 course in the south and 2 courses in the north. Sidewalk U136 is similar material to street U115, compact and junky with shell inclusions and a high amount of pottery.

We excavated the extent of foundation trench **U164**=85.U85 in the southwestern corner of square 75. The foundation trench was fairly compact and was roughly 10cm deep. The majority of the unit was in square 85.

Located half in the north baulk and half immediately earlier than stone construction U120=74.U524 lies puppy burial **U168**. What remained of the puppy in the square was excavated, leaving half still in the North baulk.

### **Priorities for the 2015 season**

Due to rising political tensions in the area, the excavation determined it unsafe to dig from day 3 of week five through the rest of the season. This meant that excavation stopped suddenly in 51.74 and 51.75, leaving certain areas exposed that originally were to be excavated by the end of the 2014 season. We hope to return to Ashkelon in the coming weeks after tension subsides to excavate and remove Burial 212 and 219. Unfortunately, destruction layers U591, U597, U596, U598, and U592 from the Iron Age remain exposed as well. These areas need to be excavated and sampled. Fill U577 and U511 were both left partly excavated and should be finished. Early phase 7 floors U590 and U517 were also both left partly excavated. Two areas, U411 and U524=75.U120, are still early phase 6 material. They are out of phase and need to be excavated. A miss-measured baulk along the 74/84 square division still remains from the 2013 season. It does not run along the correct baulk line and should be removed. After the above clean up from the 2014 dig season there are a few immediate issues to answer.

- 1) What is happening in the area immediately earlier than late phase 7 street 75.U166
- 2) What is the extent of 75.U169
- 3) Reveal all of U577 and U591 and find their extents
- 4) Find the floor burial 212 and 219 lie on.

## **Grid 51 Squares 83, 84, and 85 2014 Final Report**

*Mark Lester*

Our goals in Squares 83, 84, and 85 coming into the 2014 field season were to expose and excavate the earliest Phase 7 architecture and surfaces, as well as to bring into phase the late material preserved under past sandbag staircases in Squares 84 and 85 with the rest of Squares 83, 84, and 85. During the course of the season we were able to clarify our understanding of the three sub-phases of use and occupation in Phase 7, particularly in the central courtyard during Phase 7. Furthermore, excavation in Square 85 revealed the southern continuation of the eastern closing wall for the Grid 51 Insula 1, and offered a small but helpful window into the connections between this architecture and the Phase 4-7 surfaces excavated in previous seasons.

Thanks is undoubtedly due to my assistant square supervisor, Emily Erickson. Without her stratigraphic insight and organizational savvy we would not have accomplished our goals in Squares 83, 84, and 85. Moreover, I want to thank our patient architect Grant Kelley, and all of our volunteers. Finally, I am thankful for the skill and encouragement of our assistant grid supervisor, Jonathon Wylie, and our grid supervisor Kate Birney who together pushed and supported the work in Squares 83, 84, and 85 every step of the way.

### **Phase 1(a): Later Fatimid/Crusader Period**

We continued the ongoing excavation of late robber trenches including 83.U89, 84.U14, 84.U14, 84.U29, 84.U50 in order to ensure clean ceramic contexts in any surrounding material. We also continued to excavate the Islamic robber trench 85.U10/11 which robbed out the Hellenistic well 85.U23. This season we happily bottomed out the fill 85.U63 (a fill layer within 85.U10/U11), the trench 84.U126/127, and part of the robber trench 84.U62/U57 between walls 84.U192 and 84.U193. We also took down the Islamic well 83.U10/U35/U36 two courses.

### **Phase 4: Hellenistic**

In Phases 5-6(a) our excavations were confined to a small patch of material that had been preserved under previous years sandbag staircase. This material only pertained to the southeastern room (Room 17) of the Grid 51 Insula 1 and a small section of street material.  
*Easternmost Room: (Room 17)*

In Phase 4 the kirkar layer 84.U167=85.U89 is all that remains of the Phase 4 surface. This kirkar layer seems to work with the north-south closing wall 85.U85=U97 (immediately earlier than the segment of the Phase 3 wall 85.U86 and the Phase 1 robber trench 85.U63). 84.U167=84.U89 is, however, cut by the foundation trench 85.U96 for the later wall 85.U86. To the south this surface likely worked with an east-west wall along the line of the robber trench 85.U87. This robber trench was immediately earlier than the Islamic trench 85.U63. Into a technical surface in this layer 84.U167=85.U89 was cut a small pit 85.U98/99 (which was

itself cut by the well 85.U23).

### **Phase 5: Late Persian/Early Hellenistic**

#### *Easternmost Room: (Room 17)*

In the same space immediately earlier, the Phase 5 surface 84.U270=85.U90 was laid over the Phase 5 subfloor fill 84.U271=85.U91. This surface 84.U270=85.U90 appears to have worked with the wall 85.U85=U97, but is cut by the foundation trench for the later wall 85.U86. To the south the surface is cut by the robber trench 85.U87.

East of wall 85.U85=85.U97 was the Phase 5 street, 85.U77 of which we excavated a small sliver which had remained under the sandbag staircase.

### **Phase 6: Persian**

#### **Phase 6(a):**

##### *Easternmost Room: (Room 17)*

In the eastern room the Phase 6(a) floor 84.U273=85.U92 was laid over the subfloor fill 84.U277=85.U93. The ashy and mudbricky surface 84.U273=85.U92 was cut by the foundation trench 85.U96 for the later north-south wall 85.U86, and so appears to have worked with the earlier wall, 85.U85=U97. The subfloor fill 84.U277=85.U93, however, was not cut by this foundation trench and could be seen in the section of the well 85.U23 accumulated against the wall 85.U85=U97. To the south, this surface was cut by the robber trench 85.U87. Cut into the surface 84.U273=85.U92 was a small pit 84.U289/U290.

East of wall 85.U85=U97 was the Phase 6 street, 85.U79, a very small portion of which we excavated this season. This street extends east to where it meets the Phase 6 sidewalk feature 85.U80=75.U152.

#### **Phase 6(c):**

##### *Room 11:*

A small portion of what Laura Wright phased the Phase 6(c) subfloor fill 84.U264=73.U445 was excavated at the beginning of the season north of wall 84.U192. This fill included several large blocks and field stones which inhibited fully excavating the small area of this room between 84.U192 and the northern baulk.

##### *Easternmost room:*

We excavated a small amount of alleyway subsurface 85.U88 (almost certainly corresponding to 84.277=85.93) which accumulated against the small north-south wall stub 85.U85=U97.

### **Phase 7: Early Persian**

As in previous years the density of occupation in the central courtyard has encouraged

us to conceptualize the stratigraphic phasing of Squares 83, 84, and 85 in three parts 7(a), 7(b), and 7(c).

### **Phase 7(a) (late)**

Following the exposure of Phase 7a surfaces and architecture in 2013, this year we continued the excavation of Phase 7 late in the western room, the northwest room, the central courtyard and the eastern room.

#### *Westernmost Room: (Room 14)*

Last year Laura Wright excavated the Phase 7 late beaten earth floor 83.U148 which was bounded to the east by walls 83.U114 and 103. This surface (83.148) was laid over the sub-floor fill 83.U149. Within this sub-floor fill were a pile of cobble sized stones 83.U154 in the south of the room. The cobbles of 83.U154 were built up against the lower courses of the NS stone wall 83.U114. 83.U154 may have functioned as east-west threshold in the south of the westernmost room functioning with the Phase 7 late beaten earth surface 83.U148. This hypothesis is reinforced by the close correspondence between the elevation of the Phase 7 late surface 83.U148 (16.61-16.59) and that of the cobbles of 83.U154 (16.59). Excavation of the Phase 7 late subfloor fill 83.U149 revealed a copper alloy fibula (MC69268) and a blue vitreous glass bead (MC69286).

#### *Northwestern Room: (Room 10)*

In the northwestern room we excavated the Phase 7 late subfloor fill 83.U140 which was immediately beneath the ashy Phase 7 late beaten earth surface 83.U135 excavated last season. While the excavation of this subfloor fill did not shift our stratigraphic understanding of Phase 7(a) in this room, we did find at the beginning of the season a pit 83.U161/162 (=73.U278/279). This pit 83.U161/162 (=73.U278/279) ran parallel to the NS stone wall 73.251, and cut the 7(a) subfloor fill 83.U140=73.U269; it may have been a foundation trench for the NS wall 73.U251. The Phase 7(a) surface 83.U135 sloped up to the lower courses of the east-west stone wall 83.U99. In the process of excavation, it became clear that while it was excavated as one unit, 83.U99 consisted of two rebuilds: a 83.U99 “lower” which worked with the Phase 7(a) surface 83.U135, and a 83.99 “upper” which was operative with the latest Phase 6 mudbrick floor 83.U124.

#### *Central Courtyard: (Rooms 15 and 16)*

The excavation of the central courtyard this season clarified our understanding of this space and its many features in the Phase 7 late period.

The surface of the central courtyard 83.U137=84.U254=84.U248 consisted of heterogeneous lenses of ash, clay, and some shell. In the west 83.U137 sloped up to the north-south wall U114, and the east-west closing wall U99. In square 84, U254=248 worked with walls 84.U192 and 84.U193. On the northern side of 84.U254=248, in the west, 84.U276



served as a mudbrick bench placed against wall U84.192. The surface 84.U254=248 sloped up to this bench. Between walls 84.U192=83.U99 and 84.U193, Laura Wright suggested that the mudbricks of 84.U279 may have served as a threshold into the space of the room to the north. The southern end of the space was likely closed by a wall along the line of the robber trenches 83.U89, 84.U9, U14, U20, and U50; and to the east this surface sloped up to the NS wall 84.U209. The Phase 7(a) courtyard surface 83.U137=84.U254=248 is marked by a number of pits, sunken vessels and installations. In the west a hamra bin 83.144 is cut into the surface 83.U137. This bin is itself cut by a pit U146/147. Immediately to the east of the hamra bin 83.U144 a cut ashlar block 83.U151 was sitting on the thick shell-filled lenses of 83.U137. While the orientation of this ashlar 83.U151 fit the line of the earlier drain 84.U283/297 (discussed below), it was sitting at a much higher elevation on the later courtyard surface 83.U137. Additionally, in the south 83.U137 is a trench 83.U156/157 which runs parallel to the southern baulk line. The line of this trench cut the courtyard laminations of 83.U137, and was filled with a mudbrickly material. It is possible that this is a robber trench or foundation trench for a southern closing wall to the central courtyard in square 83, however, with the limited access to this trench it is difficult to be certain if this pit did not have some other purpose.

In the portion of this phase 7 late surface in square 84, 84.U254=248 a number of pits, installations, and sunken vessels are cut into the courtyard: the four pits that are cut into the courtyard 84.U254=248 are 84.257/258, 84.259/260, 84.303/304, and 84.305/306; there are three postholes including 84.U234, 84.U256, and 84.U266; and there are five sunken vessel installations: 84.U233, 84.U272=84.U286/287, 84.U284/285, 84.U291/292, and 84.U295/296. In the east of the courtyard space is the large cut 84.274/84.U261=U275. According to Laura Wright, this cut resembled the later depression which was above it (84.U220). It also resembles an earlier cut in this area, 84.U301/302. During the Phase 7(a) courtyard 83.U137=84.U254=84.U248 a robber trench 84.U267/U268 was cut into the courtyard and robbed the earlier, Phase 7(b) drain 84.U283.

#### *Eastern Room: (Room 17)*

In the easternmost room the beaten earth floor 84.U278=85.U94 was laid over the subfloor fill 84.U282=85.U95. The beaten earth floor 84.U278=85.U94 consisted of a set of two occupational layers which could be seen in section to lens together as they sloped toward the north-south wall 85.U85=U97 and towards the partially preserved east-west cobblestone wall 85.U100. The surfaces in 84.U278=85.U94 were characterized by small pockets of ash and several patches of a rich red hamra clay. To the north and west any connection with contemporary walls was cut by the Phase 1 robber trench 85.U63. This surface was also cut by the later Phase 4 well 85.U23.

Immediately east of wall 85.U85=U97 is a small stub of a north-south sidewalk feature 85.U84=75.U135.

### **Phase 7(b) (middle)**

The occupation in Phase 7(b) substantially resembles the later courtyard of 7(a) with some architectural changes. On the whole, while there is substantial evidence for heavy use in the central courtyard space, it is not marked by the same level of disturbance as the later 7(a) surface 83.U137=84.U254=248.

#### *Westernmost Room: (Room 14)*

In the westernmost room a Phase 7(b) beaten earth floor 83.U152 sloped up to and worked with a Phase 7(b) cobblestone threshold 83.U152. This cobblestone threshold consisted of one course and two rows of cobblestones along an east-west line just south of the later threshold 83.U154. To the east the 7(b) surface 83.U152 works with the earlier N-S wall 83.U150. This lower wall was constructed offline, just to the west of the 7(a) wall 83.U114. This wall was only revealed on the last day of active excavation in the 2014 season, and the only stones that are clearly visible are three cut ashlar on its western face. On the eastern face of 83.U150 there is one more cut ashlar. The stones (or possibly mudbrick) of this wall were not fully articulated before excavation came to an abrupt end. North of wall 83.U150 walls 83.U103 and U44 are still standing. There was a likely break, in these walls, but it is, at the minute unclear if 83.U152 works with 83.103 or early walls which remain to be excavated beneath them. Finally, it appeared that sitting on the surface of 83.U152 was a large cut ashlar block 83.U160 which showed signs of use as a socket stone (on its upper face), and a hole for a door bolt (on its eastern face).

#### *Northwestern Room: (Room 10)*

In the northwestern room a 7(b) surface 83.U163=73.U305 sloped up to and worked with the southern east-west mudbrick wall 83.U167 and the eastern north-south mudbrick wall U44. This 7(b) surface 83.U163=73.U305 had an ashy and clay filled appearance. It was not possible to fully excavate this surface before the end of the season, and so it is unclear if the northwestern room (room 10) will have two or three horizons during Phase 7. If only two, then 83.U163 may be better understood as a 7(c) floor, but this question will be able to be better answered by next year's excavators.

#### *Central Courtyard: (Rooms 15 and 16)*

The central courtyard consists of a heterogeneous surface 83.U153=84.U298=U299. To the west this surface works with the earlier, offline north-south wall 83.U150, to the northwest the cobbles in 83.U153 were went up to the east-west wall 83.U99. In the north of square 84, 84.U298 sloped up to the east-west wall 84.U192 and 84.U193, as well as to the robbed remnants of 84.U309. To the east, these surfaces clearly sloped up to the north-south wall 84.U209. To the south the central courtyard is closed by the mudbrick wall 84.U288, which is preserved in the eastern half of square 84. This mudbrick wall 84.U288 is preserved in at least two courses, and is constructed in two, or possibly three rows of mudbricks. In the

western half of the central courtyard (west of wall 84.U309) the space was likely closed by a wall running along the line of the trenches 83.U89, 84.U9, U14, U20, and U50.

On the basis of compositional differences in the matrix of the courtyard, the Phase 7(b) surface 83.U153=84.U298=83.U299 can be conceptualized as three distinct horizontal sectors: 1) In the west of the courtyard, the area roughly contained in square 83 (83.U153); 2) in the middle of the courtyard a space that is between the western square line and the eastern edge of the east-west wall 84.U192; and 3) the courtyard space from the eastern edge of wall 84.U193 to the western face of wall 84.U209.

In the west, particularly 83.U153 the 7(b) surface is characterized by striations of dense shell and ash closest to the cut of the well 83.U10, pottery laid surfaces including some shell and ash immediately to the south, and cobbles that span the westernmost edge of 83.U153 stop just shy of the wall 83.U114. In the eastern section it is clear that these striations tip dramatically down toward the north. In the north, just south of the cut of the later hamra bin 83.U144 was a possible burning installation 83.U155 which was cut into the 7(b) surface 83.U153. In the south of the space was a small, poorly preserved taboo 83.U158/164. This taboo was cut into the 7(b) courtyard surface 83.U153 and was itself cut by the later trench 83.U156/157. While the taboo 83.U158/164 was poorly preserved a large number of taboo fragments were found immediately above the semicircular shape of the base of the taboo. The lower portion of the taboo 83.U158/164 was constructed of a basin of hamra clay. There was no clear evidence of ash or burning around this installation.

In the middle of the central courtyard, the material of the courtyard surface 84.U298=299 was characterized by thick lenses of ash and burning which slope up to the walls 84.U192 in the north and to the line of the (robbed) southern closing wall in the south. The ash accumulation in the surface was densest in the south 84.U299 where another taboo 84.U294/U308 was located in the southwestern corner of the square 84. Within the taboo 84.U308 was filled with a thick accumulation of burning and ash, from which several flotation samples were taken for botanical analysis. The taboo 84.U295 itself was constructed with a ring of rubble-sized rocks which were sitting on the surface 84.U298. Encompassing these rocks was a ring of burnt dirt above which were numerous flat-lying taboo fragments. There were no well preserved ring of vertical taboo fragments. North of the taboo 84.U294/308 was a small burning pit 84.U315 filled with dense ash. Finally, on the eastern edge was the cut of the pit 84.U310/U311. This pitting action follows the lines of wall 84.U309 and may be related to the deconstruction and robbing of 84.U309. This pit 84.U310/U311 was pottery rich and contained a variety of interesting pottery and material culture including numerous fragments of lightly used Persian period lamps, two fragments of stamped Attic ware bowls (RP 14062 and RP 14135), a chunk of iron (MC 70602), a pyramid shaped copper alloy weight weighing 186 grams (MC70614) and several fragments of a Phoenician Egyptianizing ceramic plaque of a face including an ear, two eyes, nose, hair, and headdress (MC70488).

The east of the courtyard space 84.U298=299 was characterized by numerous patches of bright orange and red hamra clay, some localized and thick striations of a dark dense clay,

and occasional thinner accumulation of ash. Cut into this surface was a large cut 84.U301/U302 in the center of this space that resembled the later cuts 84.U220 and 84.274/84.U261=U275. 84.301/302 cut the dense mudbrick- and clay- filled surface of 84.U298=U299 and extends from the eastern edge of the drain 84.U283 to the line of wall 84.209. Some of this cut seems to continue past the line of 84.U209 where the wall is either poorly preserved, or non-existent just north of the mudbrick wall 84.U288. In the northern side of this eastern courtyard space 84.U298=U299 a sunken vessel was cut into the Phase 7(b) surface 84.U316 which contained a nice Greek painted jug (RP14234). Finally in the northeastern corner of this space a pile of cobblestones 83.U300 (possible wall-fall from 84.U209) was sitting on the Phase 7(b) surface U298=U299.

In the middle of 84.U298=299 is a drainage feature 84.U283 and its fill (84.U297) which cut across the space of the central courtyard from the southeast to the northwest and the spot of the Hamra bin, 83.U144. Because this drain was subsequently robbed (84.U257/268), it is unclear what direction this drain ran. Where it was best preserved in the east, it appears this drain was constructed with cut kirkar ashlar with flat edges which lined the drain. In the west, most of the stones of the drain were robbed out. There was however, along the line of the edge of the drain in the western portion of square 84 an area of very compact mudbrick fill. It is possible that this very dense brick-like fill was part of the drain, although because of its overall poor preservation in the west, this will remain unknown. While the stratigraphic relationships associated with this drainage feature 84.U283 are complicated, it appears that it functioned during the Phase 7(b) courtyard 83.U153=84.U298=U299. At its eastern end, the drain U283 is cut into the remnants of the Phase 7(c) north-south wall 84.U309. At the end of 7(c) the NS wall 84.U309 was deconstructed and the drain 84.U283 was cut into it and into the earliest lenses of 84.298=299. During the period of the 7(b) and 7(a) courtyards the laminations of 84.U254=248 and 84.U298=U299 built up and over some of the stones of 84.283 and filled in the drain itself (84.U297). Sometime during the Phase 7(a) courtyard the stones of the drain 84.U283 were robbed out by those who dug the trench 84.U267/268. While the preserved ashlar construction of the drain in the east indicates that 84.U283 was a drain of some sort, the interior fill of the drain 84.U297 was unlike the silt and sandy striated build-up that might be expected to accumulate in a drain. The fill, rather, had a loose rubble-like composition which may be the result not of the natural accumulation in the drain, but of later robbing actions.

#### *Eastern Room: (Room 17)*

In the southeastern room the 7(b) floor 84.U307 was laid over the subfloor fill 84.U320. 84.U307 was a thin, and at times ephemeral surface. In the north it seemed to include a small patch of a shell surface which was also partially evident in the eastern section. To the west this surface worked with the north-south wall 84.U209. While the surface was difficult to trace, by elevation this surface 84.U307 works with the southern east-west wall 84.U288. To the north this surface extended into the northern baulk, the space was probably closed to the north by a wall robbed by the trench 74.U265=84.U62/U57. While this surface was only

excavated in square 84, in the section of the Hellenistic well 84.U23 this surface (=84.U307) can be seen sloping up to and working with the north-south wall 85.U101=74.U404=73.U123. 85.U101 is the earlier wall immediately under wall 85.U85=U97 which has not yet been removed. The earlier wall 85.U101 is distinguished from 85.U85=U97 by the presence of a foundation trench. The 7(b) surface 84.U307 was disturbed in three places with pits 84.U313/U314, 84.U318/319, and 84.U323/324.

#### *Southernmost Space:*

Immediately south of wall 84.U288 is a patch of fill 84.U293. It is the fill under the robber trenches 84.U9, U50, and U126/127. While it was not excavated this season it likely represents a 7(b) fill in association with the mudbrick wall 84.U288 though this should be investigated by next years excavators.

#### **Phase 7(c)**

Due to the early termination of the 2014 excavation season, the earliest Phase 7 surfaces [Phase 7(c)] were not fully exposed or excavated throughout squares 83, 84, and 85. The architecture of the earliest Phase 7 insula building in the south is different from its later manifestations. A north-south wall 84.U309 divides the large central courtyard space.

#### *Westernmost Room: (Room 14)*

While nothing of Phase 7(c) was excavated in the westernmost room, a glimpse of a possible earliest Phase 7 surface was seen in the section below the Phase 7(b) threshold 83.U159. Just below the striations of the surface 83.U152 which sloped up to and worked with the threshold 83.U159 were the striations of a lower floor. Like the Phase 7(b) floor 83.U152 the striations of the earlier surface tipped down the further north from 83.U159 it got. This suggests that there is a 7(c) surface that should be excavated next season.

#### *Central Courtyard: (Rooms 15 and 16)*

The Phase 7(c) surfaces in the central courtyard 83.U165=84.U325 and corresponds to 84.U312 were characterized by external use that resulted in a varied appearance throughout this courtyard area. To the west this earliest surface slopes up to a cut ashlar on the eastern face of the 7(c) wall 83.U150. To the north it slopes up to the lower 7(c) mudbrick wall 83.U167, the deeply founded stone wall 84.U192 and an earlier stone wall below 84.U193 which has not yet received a number. This earlier wall included a threshold, through which the striations of the surface 84.U312 can be seen going through the doorway where it corresponds to the Phase 7 early surface 73.U517. Additionally, during the Phase 7(c) period, this large central courtyard appears to have been subdivided by the north-south wall 84.309 (which was later robbed by the construction of the Phase 7(b) drain, 84.U283) which abuts both 84.U192 and 84.U193. While only a small portion of wall 84.U309 is preserved south of 84.U193, in this small area the striations of 84.U312 slope up to the eastern face of 84.U309 suggesting that this 7(c) courtyard surface was subdivided by wall 84.U309. Further to the east, the lowest striations of

the surface 84.U312 seemed continued under the line of the foundation trench 84.U328 for the north-south wall U209. When we removed this wall on the final day of the season we realized that the eastern side of the wall was constructed with much larger roughly cut kirkar blocks. These blocks were significantly larger and more deeply founded than the rough fieldstones used on the eastern side of the wall. If possible next year's excavators should investigate if the surface 84.U312 continued completely through the line of wall 84.U209 or if these large stones on the eastern face of the wall may have been an earlier construction of 84.U209 which may have functioned as an eastern closing wall for the central courtyard in Phase 7(c).

This earlier surface 83.U165=84.U325=84.U312 displayed patterns of use and composition much like the later 7(b) surfaces 83.U153=84.U298=U299. In the west, particularly in 83.U165 the composition of the courtyard appeared almost identical to the later 7(b) 83.U153. This Phase 7(c) surface was composed of very dense shell which traced under 83.U99 and worked up to the earlier mudbrick wall 83.U167. This shell continued from the western end of the central courtyard east through the north-south square 83/84 dividing line into the northern half of 84.U325 where it lensed out gradually. South of the dense shell in 83.U165 was a patch of courtyard dense with pottery laid in a surface of ashy dirt. To the west was another, earlier patch of cobblestones 84.U323 sitting in and on the surface of 83.U165. To the east in square 84, the northern half of 84.U325 included bits of shell, as discussed above and collection of cobblestones which were sitting on the lowest striations of 84.U325. The northern and southern halves of 84.U325 tipped toward the center of the courtyard.

In the south of 84.U325 was a earlier burning installation 84.U321/U326. This installation was located almost immediately under, only slightly off line of, the later taboo 84.U294/U308. Relatively few taboo fragments were found around this installation 84.U321/325 which was constructed of a ring of cobble sized stones sitting on 84.U325, and was filled with dense ash and burning accumulation 84.U321. The bottom of the burning pit may have been cut into the surface 84=U325, the base of which included a similar hamra as was found in the base of the Phase 7(b) taboo 83.U158/U164. The surface of 84.U325 was cut with a pit 84.322/327 roughly 50 cm west of the line of the Phase 7(b) wall 84.U309. Additionally, a small posthole 84.317 was cut into the southeastern corner of the Phase 7(c) courtyard surface 84.U312.

Due to the truncated nature of the 2014 field season we exposed all of these Phase 7(c) surfaces, but only excavated the northern half of 84.U325 and some of 83.U165, revealing the Phase 7(c) subsurface fill 83.U166=84.U329. While not fully exposed (and as of yet not drawn on any top plan), these subsurface fills 83.U166 and 84.U329 are characterized by a dark silt to sandy matrix, which is in places rich with pottery (particularly immediately below the pit 84.U310/U311).

## **Goals for 2015**

Next season, the first goal is the full exposure and excavation of the earliest 7(c) building to more fully understand the founding of the earliest Persian insula. After excavating

and removing these surfaces and architecture, Squares 83, 84, and 85 must venture into the exciting, but less fully understood terrain of the pre-Insula phase in Grid 51.