



### **Southeastern Part of Area B: Squares I–H–G–F/1, 20**

This part of the area was subjected to erosion, as it is on the eastern and southeastern slope of Area B. Due to this slope, the further east and especially south the excavation progressed, the deeper the topsoil and eroded debris. Under this layer of loose gray earth, many stones and mixed, mostly late pottery, was a layer of more hard-packed dark brown earth that signified the Iron Age remains attributed to Stratum B-4.

The segment of a large, 1.6 meter wide northeast-southwest stone wall (6800), found in Square H/1 in 2018, was further clarified and excavation expanded to its north, south and east. The following elements were revealed:



**Squares G–H, 1, 20, looking west (top of photo); two segments of Wall 6800 in center; eastern end of casemate building to the west of Wall 6800 (center top of photo) (drone photo DJI\_0261)**

**1-**The stones of 6800 ran for 3.2 m from northeast to southwest, when a gap was identified; this gap runs for ca. 2 meters to the southwest and contained debris with stones, very little pottery (7862). This southern end of this segment of 6800 is rather irregular with one missing stone in the middle. What appears to be the continuation of the same wall line (same width and mode of construction) began near the southern border of Square H/1. This segment (Wall 7858) ran for 2.5 m (Squares G—H/2) until the southern border of the excavation. It is difficult to determine whether this is the southern end of this segment or whether it continues to the south; further excavation is needed. The gap between the two segments is understood as having been intentional, possibly an entranceway.

Along the eastern face of Wall 6800 is a line of medium and small stones designated 7836; these stones abut the bottom of the course of large stones in Wall 6800 and below them is a course of small stones. Because of 7836, it is not yet certain that Wall 6800 is floating. They are possibly a support, due to the slope, built against 6800.



**Square H/1, looking north at southern end of northern segment of Wall 6800; note a possibly missing stone in the center (ABM19\_B\_171)**



**Square H/1-2, looking north at two segments of Wall 6800 with gap between them (Locus 7862, with meter stick); note southern end(?) of the wall in the lower foreground and stones of 7836 along the eastern face of the northern segment (ABM19\_B\_173)**



**Square H/1, looking west; eastern face of northern segment of Wall 6800, with course of 7836 built against it and small stones below; southern segment of Wall 6800 on the upper left, after gap in the wall (entranceway?); wall(?) 7837 running east from 7836 (ABM19\_B\_195)**

**2-** Excavation in the area to the west of the northern end of 6800, which comprises the eastern end of the casemate structure as presently known, showed that between the sloping layers of the MB glacis that run under the northern wall of the casemate building and the western face of 6800 is a horizontal accumulation of debris. This might represent either a foundation trench cut into the glacis when 6800 was constructed or a fill laid above the glacis when the eastern end of the casemate building and Wall 6800 were built.



**Squares G–H/1, looking north; meter stick against balk under stones in eastern end of northern casemate wall; note sloping layers of rampart behind the stick and horizontal layers to its right (east) (ABM19\_B\_169)**



**Closeup of section in previous photo (northern section of Square H/1); stones on top are either the continuation of the northern wall of the eastern casemate room, or fallen (ABM19\_B\_222)**

Although we entertained several possible interpretations for the relationship between Wall 6800 and the eastern end of the casemate building, we concluded, to date, that they are contemporary. The main reason for this are the orientation and proximity of the elements, as well as the commonly massive nature of the walls. It was seen, especially in the eastern casemate room, that the large walls were built directly on the MBIIB rampart; in some cases, the sloping rampart layers were leveled off when the wall was founded. This picture can be seen, as well, in the area just beyond (east) the northeastern corner of the easternmost casemate room. Since the slope here is more pronounced, the rampart layers slope more acutely down to the east and south, so that a layer of fill was laid above them in order to construct what seems to be the closing wall of the building in the east (Wall 6800). This can be seen in the northern section of Square H/1.

A gap is noted between the northeastern corner of the easternmost casemate room (corner of Walls 6742 and 6756) and Wall 6800, some 1.5 m to its east. Past this corner, to the east, are two large stones that continue the line of Wall 6742, the northern wall of the room; these stones are above the aforementioned sloping rampart layers and fill. Between these stones and Wall 6800 is a gap of almost 1 m. Several explanations are possible: 1) these are fallen stones and the 'real' corner of the room is that of Walls 6742 and 6756; in this case,

4-Along the northern edge of Wall 6800 is a concentration of stones (7791) (Square H/20), ca. 1.5 x 2/5 m; these stones appear to continue to the north beyond the present excavation border. They were closely set and 6800 was floating above them; it seems that they are related to Wall 7836 although this point of contact was hardly exposed. It is not clear whether this is a constructional feature (see above) or whether it is chronological with 7836 and 7791 predating 6800. On stones 7791, a bronze arrowhead was found.

5-Running east from the southern face of Wall 7836 (northern end) is a line of large stones designated Wall 7837. There is a 10 cm gap between the two, although it does not seem that 7836 cut these stones since they end nicely on their western end. It was suggested that they might be capstones of a late burial due to their shape, although the line runs longer than what might be expected in this case. Abutting Walls 7837 and 7836 are debris layers with mixed pottery.

6-On the eastern end of the line of stones Wall 7837 in Square I/1 is a concentration of closely laid stones (7850) although at this point it is not known whether they are built or collapsed. It seems that on their northern end a few larger stones might be part of a wall. These stones seem to continue into Square H/1 as well. They might represent a pavement in a large open area, although not enough was excavated to know. It is also not yet clear whether these stones are related to Wall 6800/7836.

### **Square E/1 (Ilan's Room)**

In 2018, the northern and a small part of the eastern walls of this room were revealed; this season, the entire room was exposed as follows:

The room is a square, measuring ca. 3.3 x 3 m; its northern (6788), eastern (6754) and western (6794) walls make nice corners; these walls are ca. 70 cm wide and are nicely built. The southern wall (7773) is somewhat different; it is more massively built, recalling the walls of the casemate structure (at least 1 meter wide). In the western wall, at its corner with the northern wall is an entranceway with a well-built stone threshold leading to the west. The juncture of the western and southern walls shows, apparently that the former was built first and the western wall abuts it; moreover, the southern wall continues to the west beyond this 'corner'. Above this corner was the cut of a later built grave (7819); some 1 meter to the north was yet another large stone belonging to late activity resting on top of the western wall. The external southeastern corner of the room is damaged; its internal face is better preserved. We surmise that the eastern wall had abutted the southern wall, like the western wall; this suggests that the three walls in the east, north and west were added to the southern wall to form this room at one stage (see below for chronology).

In the room we detected two floor levels: the upper one (7727; 399.40 m) on the level of the threshold, a lower one (7803; 399.25–399.30 m) and, at the lowest level of excavation, we reached a level (7827; 399.90 m) that apparently is not a floor but still abuts the surrounding walls which are not yet floating. The pottery in this room was not abundant and was

concentrated mainly on the lower floor in the eastern part of the room (Locus 7746) The pottery contained red-slipped and hand burnished wares, as well as thin Samaria Ware.

In the center of the room, related to the lower floor (7803) was a horseshoe-shaped installation made of bricks (7821). Notably, this installation is similar to those found in the eastern end of the passageway between this room and the southern casemate wall (described below). In the southeastern corner of the room (where the corner is somewhat disturbed) was a poorly defined concentration of stones and ash (7750) that we define as an installation, possibly used during both floor stages and penetrating down below to the lowest level excavated (399.90 m).

### **Squares E–F–G/1**

To the south of the southern casemate wall 5808 in Square F/1 several phases were uncovered, although they were fragmentary due to erosion and difficult to relate to each other.

The earliest/lowest level reached comprised a layer of dark sediment (7843; 397.90 m - II) that cut into the MB II glacis in the northeastern part of Square F/1; this layer ran underneath the white floor and stones 6804/7732 described below and was cut by a round pit with ashes and bones (7879); both the layer and the pit are earlier than the white floor and the stones 6804/7732 and we assume that they predate the construction of the casemate building, although we hesitate to attribute this layer to Iron I Stratum B-5.

6804/7732 – walls?