

Tel Abel Beth Maacah
Area A Field Report
2018

Fredrika Leow

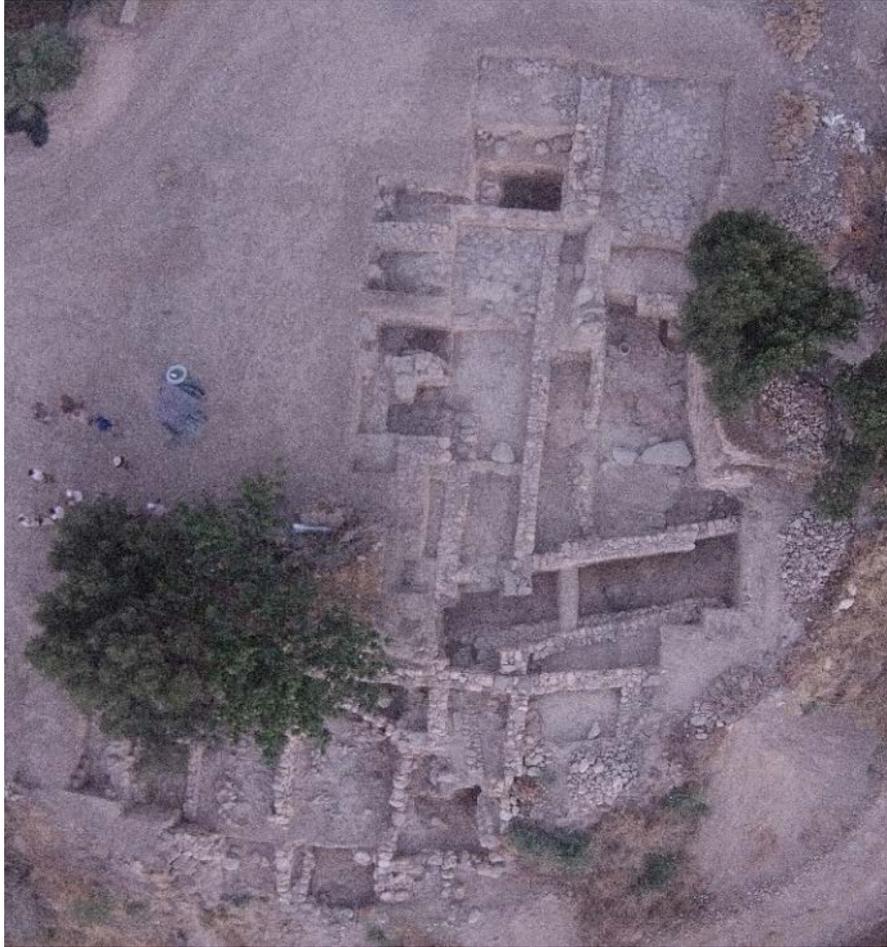
With contributions by Carroll Kobs

The sixth season of excavation in Area A ran from June 26 to July 20, 2018. Fredrika Leow was the area supervisor, assisted by Carroll Kobs, Jeff Kobs, Kenton Williams, Scott Booth, and Karlene Shippelhoute. Kristina Reed and Natasha Debord were the registrars.

Area A is composed of two parts—the eastern portion (“downtown”) and the western portion (“uptown”). Excavation in the eastern section involved expansion to the south in square A/15 and continued excavation in squares A/12, A/13 and B/13, A/14, and B/14. The western section was expanded to the west and to the south with the opening of squares P/11, P/12, Q/13, R/13, and S/13, and continued excavation in Q/11, Q/12, R/11, S/10, S/11, and S/12.

The main goals of this season were: 1) to better understand the relationship between the A-3 and A-4 strata in squares A/14 and A/15; 3) excavate down to the A6 strata and define its relationship with A-5 in squares A/12, A/13, B/13, and B/14; 4) reach the level of pavement 5130 to uncover the A-2a building complex; 5) to expand the A-2b strata to the west and east, particularly the A-2b cultic room in R/11.

**Elevations this season were taken from two new benchmarks. The heights differ from previous seasons; squares P, Q, R, and S are recorded 15 cm lower. Squares T, A, and B are 10 cm lower. All elevations from previous seasons cited in this report were adjusted to reflect the current benchmark elevations.



Area A, End of Season 6-2018

Stratum A-6

The earliest exposed stratum, A-6, was excavated along the eastern tell slope in squares A/12, B/12, and B/13. It is not yet certain, but this stratum is tentatively dated to the Late Bronze Age.

Squares A-B/12

Excavation began this season with the dismantling of the A-5 wall 4105 and accompanying loci (3158, 4109, 4107; note that what was identified as a stone 'threshold' -or possibly a damaged wall – 4109 - ran under the stones of Wall 4105). The western edge of brick wall 4134 was excavated and exposed. The bricks were very clear and traceable, although the western edge suffered from collapse and was more difficult to trace. The northern portion of the wall was cut by installation 6212. This installation was sealed by A-5 wall 4105 and is currently attributed to

the A6 phase. The installation was rectangular and lined with clay and tabun-like material, though it was clearly not a tabun. The installation was clearly seen cutting into wall 4134 in the section. Thus, it seems to be a post-Stratum A6 (and pre-Stratum A5) feature. To the west of Wall 4134 is a layer of very ashy material strewn with small stones (6160), some of which are found on top of the northern part of Wall 4134. It is not clear whether this layer is contemporary with the wall or with installation 6212 that cuts the wall. The exposure here is small and is damaged on the northwest by a large porcupine laire, so it is difficult to understand.

Wall 4134 runs parallel to the A6 wall 3180. The relationship to Wall 3120 on the south is not clear, although it seems that 4134 runs underneath it: top of Wall 4134 is at 374.85, floating of Wall 3120 is at 374.80. Wall 4134 is on line with the mudbrick wall, 6931, in A/B13 to the south. It may continue northwards, but more excavation is needed.



Square A/12, looking west. Wall 4134 cut by installation 6212; note ash and small stones 6160 to the west of the wall (ABM18-A-295)



Square A/12, looking northwest; on the left (south) are the large stones of A5 Wall 3120 (lowest course) (ABM18-A-296)

Squares A-B/13

This season, excavation continued with probe done in season three in square A-B/13. We discovered a ca. 8 course, well-built brick wall, 6931, within the western section. Part of the wall (a large part of the eastern face) had been excavated before we were able to clearly see the mortar lines (locus 6923 would include excavation of part of the wall; it was a very compact, mudbrick-filled soil matrix). The cut into the bricks of the wall can be clearly seen in the northern 'balk', which suggests that the wall had been very thick (at least 1.5 meters and the western face is yet unknown). Wall 6931 runs north-south, in line with wall 4134 in Square A-B/12. On the south, the wall runs underneath A4 Wall 2107 and it seems that A5 Wall 3182 (under Wall 2107) also covered it. Its relationship to stone Wall 3183 on the south is yet unclear. Looking at the western balk (which is, in fact, a cut inside the wall), it seems that the stones of 3183 cut the wall. It was suggested that 3183 is not a wall but rather some structure, possibly a stone-built tomb, since the northern face looks somewhat rounded, with large oval-shaped stones in the bottom. It also seems like 3183 is floating, although this is not certain.

There were few finds within the main locus of this area, 6923, save for a pestle and grinder near the tel slope (probably to the east of the brick wall). This lack of finds is most likely due to the fact that we excavated inside the brick wall in a large part of this area.



Square B/13, looking west; bricks of Wall 6931 visible in the west and northern section; stones of Wall? 3183 on the left (south). Debris above Wall 6931=A5 layer.

Stratum A-5

This season, excavation of Stratum A5 was limited to squares A-T/13 and A-B/14.

Square A-T/13

Square A/T13 was excavated down to the level of the A5 floor 3141 in order to examine the western end of this room and the relationship of the floor to the surrounding A4 walls.

The last vestiges of Bench 2165 were dismantled and flat-lying pottery was collected for restoration (Locus 6206). The three flat-topped stones bases, as well as the ovens 4143 and 4166 and the storage-jar base installation, in the western part of the A4 room were removed. This higher 'step' was excavated down to the level of the A5 surface to its east (area under the ovens and stones, down to the A5 floor: Locus 6207). A very large piece of in-situ charcoal, possibly part of a beam, was found above the A5 floor, and samples were taken (basket 61527). Other finds included pottery (possibly restorable), grinding stone and olive pits. Directly above the level of the A5 floor we found a stone tumble(?) (6907), which abutted the western wall of the room (3154). There was a clear, circular installation/bin (6914), adjoining these stones on the north and was built. A plaster crescent-shaped patch was excavated along the southeastern edge of stones 6907 and above the A5 floor.

In sifting locus 6906 directly above the floor, we found a lead pendant (basket 69039), possibly dating to the Late Bronze Age, with a star-like (Ishtar?) motif. The pendant was found just above the abovementioned plaster patch. It should be noted that an amethyst scarab set in a gold ring and other jewelry pieces were found in this area as well.

Excavating down along the eastern face of A4 Wall 3154 to the A5 floor level showed that the entire western wall, including the unworked stones of 3154, as well as the two "masseboth" incorporated in this wall – the large rectangular monolithic conglomerate and the narrower stone to its south – were floating. Thus it is clear that this wall was built in A4. It seems that the northern wall in A5 was composed of large rectangular stone blocks (seen nicely on the northern face and termed Wall 3120). In A4, when the western wall (with the masseboth) was built, courses of similar unworked smaller stones were added on top of the large worked stones of 3120, creating the rounded 'corner' in the northwest. At the time when 3154 and 2143 were built in A4, a higher floor was laid. The situation in the south is less clear, as the entire northern face of the southern closing wall 2107 looks homogeneous. However, on the eastern end of Wall

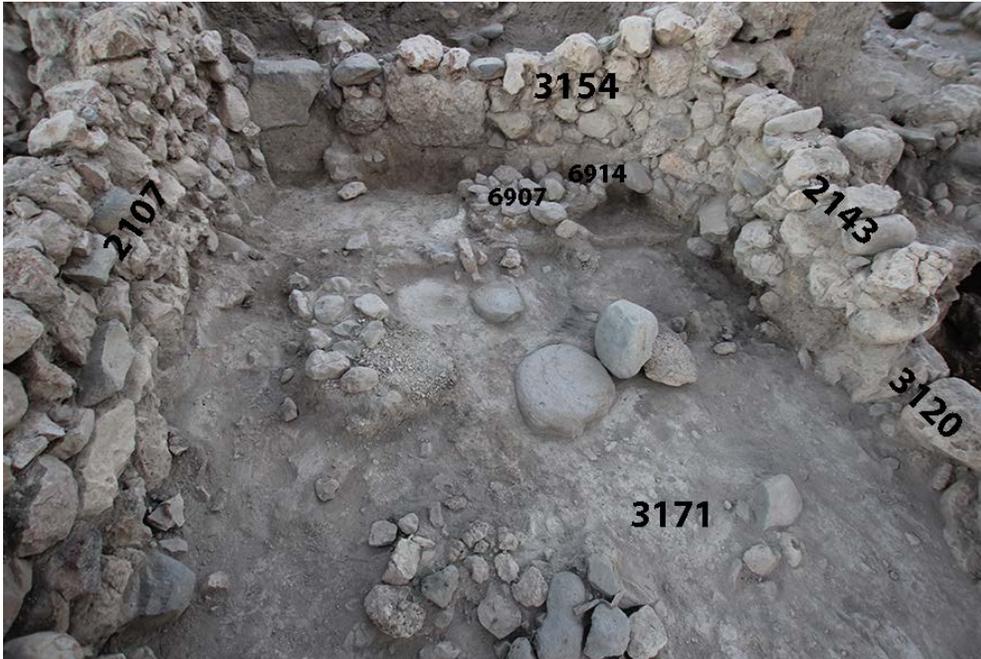
2107 (in Square B/13, east of the entranceway), it is clear that the A4 wall is built on top of large worked stones (Wall 3182), similar to those in Wall 3120. At the end of the season, just on the level of the A5 floor (3171) in the east of the room, the top of one or two large worked stones are emerging at the base of Wall 2107 so it seems that the southern wall was built similar to the northern wall, originally in A5 with large blocks and rebuilt in A4 with unworked stones laid rather haphazardly. This reconstruction leaves us without a western border for the room in Stratum A5. It seems that the closure of the room in the west in A4 is related to the configuration of ovens and storage-jar-base installation, with the three stones. While we reconstruct a cultic function for the A4 room (mostly due to the masseboth and the ovens, etc.), it is not certain that such a function existed in A5 as well, as there are no clear features that would allude to this.

During excavation in this room, the entire northern face of Wall 2107 was articulated and cleaned. It should be noted that the difference between the stones of 2107 and the stones of the A3 wall built on top of it (1158) is not clear and they look like one and the same wall; the situation on the southern face is different, where the line of the A3 wall is clearly different.

Excavation of square A/T13 stopped this season on the A5 floor level.



Square A/13, looking west at floating Wall 3154, on top of A5 surface. (ABM18-B-528)



Same view as previous photo, with central part of room shown; right (north): note unworked stones of A4 Wall 2143 built on top of large worked stones of A5 Wall 3120 (ABM18-A-524)



Square A/13, looking north; large wooden beam to the northeast of installation/bin 6914 (ABM18-A-366)



Square A/13, looking north at Wall 2143; A4 'step' with oven and stones on the left; Locus 6211-pottery just below the A4 level; note traces of burning. On the right: large worked stones of A5 Wall 3120 under the unworked stones of A4 Wall 2143 (stones of 2143 removed from eastern part of wall (ABM28-A-291)



Square A/13, A5 room looking northwest at end of 2018; meter stick against northern wall of the room; note large A5 large worked stones in Wall 3120 and smaller unworked stones of A4 Wall 2143 above. Top background: A2 Wall 1114 (ABM18-A-799)



Square B/14, looking south; A5 Wall 3182 with rebuild of A4 Wall 2107 on top; covering A6 Wall (tomb?) 3183; A6 brick wall 6931 on the right (ABM18-A-1150)

Squares A-B/14

This season we began excavating below the A4 floor on the eastern end of the room, east of installation 3107; the eastern end of this area is eroded due to the slope. Loci excavated: 6922 (soft debris) and 6924 (possibly a surface below 6922); a total of ca. 25 cm was excavated. In 6924 were several stones, including one very nicely worked round one in the southeastern corner (elevation: 374.75), as well as a large round stone in the southern balk and three stones running N-S near the western end of the locus. Some sherds and a juglet fragment were found.



Square B/14, looking north; excavating under A4 floor in Square B/14, down to possible A5 surface 6924 (ABM18-A-985) photo)

Stratum A4

Stratum A4 was excavated in Squares A-T/12, A-T/14, and A/14-15. This entailed completing the excavation of the western part of the southern room in the cultic building and expanding the excavation of this building to the south, beyond stone ‘bench’ 2169. A small probe was also conducted to the north of the western part of the northern wall (2143) of the cultic building.

Square A-T/12

After dismantling the eastern portion of A2 Wall 1120 (that sat on top of A4 Wall 2143), we reached the upper course of A4 wall 2143. These upper courses were dismantled during excavation for safety purposes. The small area we excavated to the north of Wall 2143 was split west-east by a long stone, with several stones around it. The soil in the western portion, locus

6154, was reddish brown, while the eastern section, locus 6153, was black and ashy. As excavation continued, more stones were uncovered on the eastern side.

The material north of 2143 was excavated until we reached a large, active porcupine den, which caused the small area we were excavating to collapse. Because of the presence of the porcupine, the stratigraphy is unclear. Up until the collapse, we excavated the continuation to the west of the burnt destruction debris 2147 (where the two intrusive burials and pithos installation 2171 were). It seems that this layer is part of the A4 destruction (6153-6901-6908-6912-6919).



Square A/12, looking west; Locus 6153: area to the north of A4 Wall 2153, with patches of burn and many stones; note one standing stone (right of the numbers 6153); porcupine lair on the right (ABM18-A-1152)



Excavation north of Wall 2143 down to burnt layer of A4 (6919); note concentration of stones on northern end of the probe and one standing stone in the center (drone photo)

Square A-T/14

The goal this season in square A-T/14 was to lower the western ‘step’ to the level of the A4 floor and find the western closing wall of this room. After the removal of stone slabs 4172 and the two ‘masseboth’ that adjoined them on the east, we began excavating the A4 destruction above the floor, seen clearly in the balk underneath these slabs and masseboth. The locus assigned to the debris below the stone slabs is 6111, concentrated in the southern part of the pavement. In the southwestern part of this locus, an intrusive burial (6137) was revealed; it was much less well preserved than the burial that cut into the stone slab pavement itself (excavated last season); the upper torso and head of the skeleton is still in the western balk. The spot where Burial 6137 was revealed was at the southern end of the slabs in 4172, where the slab stones were missing or of a different nature, so that it is quite clear the burial is later than the pavement, just like the burial found some 2 meters to its north (5132). While the latter was covered by slabs (4159) apparently taken from the pavement itself, the burial 6137 was covered with different kind of stones, placed randomly. The destruction debris around the burial and to its north, is Locus 6139 and Locus 6141 (mainly along the eastern end of the ‘step’ being excavated). Below this level, with the exposure of the many stones concentrated near the floor (see below), the locus was changed to 6183, although it is the same burnt destruction debris.



Square A/14, looking northwest; excavation below stone slabs 4172 into debris 6139, cut by burial 6137 (dark area in left of photo); A3 Walls 4182 and 1158 to the west and north (ABM18-A-012)



Square A/14, looking east; 6139, 6141 – destruction debris (with mortar, pottery) in the western part of room; to the east (top of photo) is the level of the floor of this room, with stone pavement 3104 and the top of stones 6927 emerging (ABM18-A-060)

Excavation in the burnt destruction debris 6183 down to floor level in the western part of the room revealed the western closing wall: 6180. It was built in a similar manner to Wall 2107 with medium sized stones laid rather haphazardly, lacking orderly stone courses. A3 Wall 4182 was built directly on top of it, although it is built some 20 cm to the west so that the eastern face of 6180 protrudes more than that of 4182. The corner of Wall 6180 and 2107 is seen (below the corner of A3 Walls 4182 and 1158). Although difficult to tell, what with all the stones on the floor near this corner, but it might be possible that this was a rounded corner, similar to the northwest corner in the room to the north. In the destruction debris was restorable pottery, although less than what was recovered in the eastern part of the room in previous seasons.

In the destruction debris in this western part of the room were piles of stones (one of these is 6184 in the southwest) that might represent collapse from the surrounding walls, although at a lower level, closer to the floor, some of them seemed to form constructed elements. These include stones 6222m running east from Wall 6180, comprised of small stones laying on and above the floor level, running more or less on an east-west axis. The purpose of these stones is unknown; they are not well-constructed and appear more like tumble, though they could not be from one of the nearby walls and are probably built. Their mode of construction recalls that of

the so-called ‘bamah’ 2172. On their eastern end, running west from ‘bamah’ 2172, is a possible wall, 6927. It is currently one course and at floor level. Alternatively, it is a bench or small platform. It adjoins stone floor 3104 on its south; the stone floor continued west up to Wall 6180, but the cobblestones were spaced further apart as they moved west.



Square A/14, looking west at the completely exposed southern room of the A4 cult structure, north of bench/wall 2169; A3 Walls 4182 and 1158 superimpose the corner of A4 Walls 6180 and 2107; left: to the south of 2169 is burnt destruction debris 6916 (ABM18-A-007)

On the south of this room is east-west stone ‘wall’ 2169 that was defined as a bench or a low screen or partition wall. Excavation in the western part of the room showed that 2169 continued to the west (beyond the location of the trapezoid ‘masebah’ that had stood against what we identified as a brick ‘pillar’ set on the bench) and enters the western balk; it is most likely that it corners with Wall 6180 (the western closing wall of the room) somewhere to the west inside this balk. 2169 was preserved one or two courses (ca. 60 cm) higher on its western end, where it meets the western balk of the square. It is unclear whether this wall, which could also be some type of bench or divider, originally had these higher courses and only those uncovered this season in the western end were preserved. However, the stones in the west were

much larger and less organized, while the rest of 2169 was very neatly laid out and even. No large stones were removed in previous seasons from 2169. One possibility is that these higher courses were added at the same time that the stone slabs 4172 were laid, which belongs to a post-destruction, pre- Stratum A3 phase (see below for additional elements that might be attributed to this phase). Another option is that these higher, less orderly stones represent an intentional element, similar to the brick ‘pillar’ placed on the wall. This is supported by what is seen in the western balk: the burnt debris typical of the room covers the western end of 2169 as well (as it did throughout the course of 2169 to the east). In the southern row of the wall, at the point where the higher courses begin, is a stone with a depression on top that looks like a door socket (though it could be a mortar in secondary use).

To the immediate north of the higher courses in 2169 was what appeared to be a standing stone installation (6199), but was later determined to be collapse from the western end of 2169. The higher courses were removed for safety, and they continue into the western balk. The stones of 6222 did not continue up to 2169.

Excavation in the western portion of the room stopped this season on the A4 floor – 6200 (beaten earth; 3108 was this floor’s number in the eastern part of the room).



Square A/14, looking north; wall/bench 2169 in foreground, with large, higher stones on its western end; note stones of 6199 just to their north (=collapse); photo taken before floor in the western part of the room was reached; top of stones 6222 emerging (ABM18-A-232)



Western end of room, closed by Wall 6180, with stones 6222 against it; note relation of 6222 to the western end of pavement 3104; note corner of Walls 6180 and 2107 (rounded?). A3 Wall 4182 on top of A4 Wall 6180



Western end of 2169, looking southwest; note stone in northern row that might have been a door socket; pithos fragments against the southern face of 2169 (ABM18-A-1055)

Also of note was a clear line of hard white plaster running along the bottom of 2169, seen most clearly in the west, which extended out from the wall in the southwestern portion of the

square. Samples were taken for analysis. It seems that this plaster did not exist under the eastern part of the wall, although it is possible that further exposure of the floor here might reveal it was. A small probe between tones of 6222 and 2169 showed that is floating just below floor level.



Square A/14, looking west on the floor level of the room; note white plaster line under western part of wall/bench 2169(ABM18-A-736)



White plaster under western part of 2169, looking south (ABM18-A-755)



Close up of white plaster under western part of 2169 (ABM18-A-749)

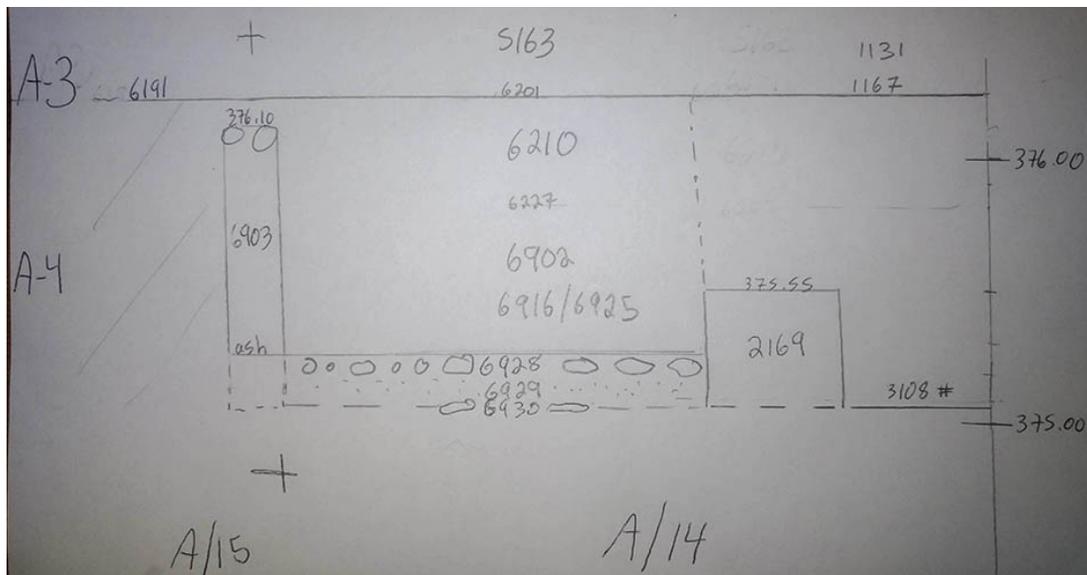
Square A/14-15

South of wall 2169, a confusing stratigraphy emerged. Following is our understanding of it at the end of 2018, but further excavation is needed to the south and to the west to understand this small but complex half-square.

While the majority of square A/15 excavation stopped at the A3 level, the northern strip and southern portion of A/14 was excavated down to the A4 floor level. The goal was to determine the function of 2169 (wall or bench?) and to see if the building continued to the south. It seems that the space to the south of 2169 does belong to this building, and 2169 is possibly a screen/low partition wall or bench separating the room that we call the ‘southern room’ from the newly exposed space on the south. However, the southern border of the “new” southern part of the room of the cult structure remains unclear, as described below.

On the western end of this space, there is activity (see description below) that appears to have been built into and on top of the A4 destruction debris and thus might be tentatively phased together with the stone pavement 4172 and two stone massebot to what we provisionally call “A3b” (post A4 destruction and pre A3 construction).

In the northern part of Square A/15 and to the south of 2169, below elements assigned to A3 (see description below), excavation continued through very dense mudbrick debris, which contained large chunks of mudbrick and some ash, charcoal and restorable vessels. See below for the description of these layers.



Schematic section of A4 layers between 6903 and 2619 (Squares A/14-15), covered by A-3 surface; looking west.

The mudbrick destruction debris (6210 [opened when 6903 appeared], 6227, 6902 [opened when the top of Wall 6911 appeared]) rested on with a layer of black ash (6916, 6925; these two loci might be joined) which contained a nicely made small mortar and more pottery, including a large flask. Beneath this destruction was a layer of stones, 6928, which was denser in the west (close to wall 6911) and sloped down in the east. It is defined as a floor although this is not certain and it might represent some kind of collapse. This stone 'surface' began at a height of 375.30, and the top elevation of wall 2169 in the east was 375.50-40. Beneath these cobbles were more stones mixed with a white chalky material (6929). Samples of this chalky substance were taken for analysis. Finally, larger stones were seen in the western part of the room, resembling a cobble surface (6930). To the east, the stones fade away except for what may be a north-south oriented wall at an elevation of 375.10. Further excavation will reveal if this is part of 6930 or indeed a separate wall/installation.

Installation/wall 6903 and Wall 6911

Bordering these layers on the south (in the balk between A/14-15) is a curious element- a stone and mudbrick installation or wall, 6903, running east-west, parallel to wall/bench 2169 to its north (ca. 1.5 m away). It does not seem to be a wall, although it is constructed. The brick material in 6903 is burnt to black and orange and no clear brick contours can be seen in its eastern part. In its western part, there are clearer bricks, seen in the northern face. 6903 does not appear to reach the eastern balk; it seems to curve towards the south ca. 30 cm before the balk.

Wall 6911 is a north-south wall running in the western part of the room. It is not yet clear whether this wall should be phased to 6911 or to the post-destruction A-3b. It seems that possibly both situations are valid, since the wall is composed of two segments. The southern part is a well-built and preserved 5 courses high; its bottom reaches the A-4 floor 6930. The northern part, preserved ca. 30 cm lower on top, is composed of boulders that might represent a blockage in Phase A-3b (see description below). The preserved top of 6903 seems to have been cut by 6911 but the lower part seems to abut it. It is thus possible that 6903 originally cornered with 6911. It is also possible that this blockage took place during the course of the activity in A-4 and is not to be assigned to the post-destruction phase.

If the southern segment of Wall 6911 is part of the original A-4 room, it would have created a passageway from the eastern part to the west. A possible door socket found on the

northern row of 2169 just to the west of this area might have been related to an entranceway that led from the room to the north into this western space, although this is very tentative. Excavation to the north of 6903 will help to clarify its nature.



Square A/14, looking south at 6903; note burnt orange bricks in east and formed bricks in west; meter stick on stones 6928 (ABM18-A-1052)



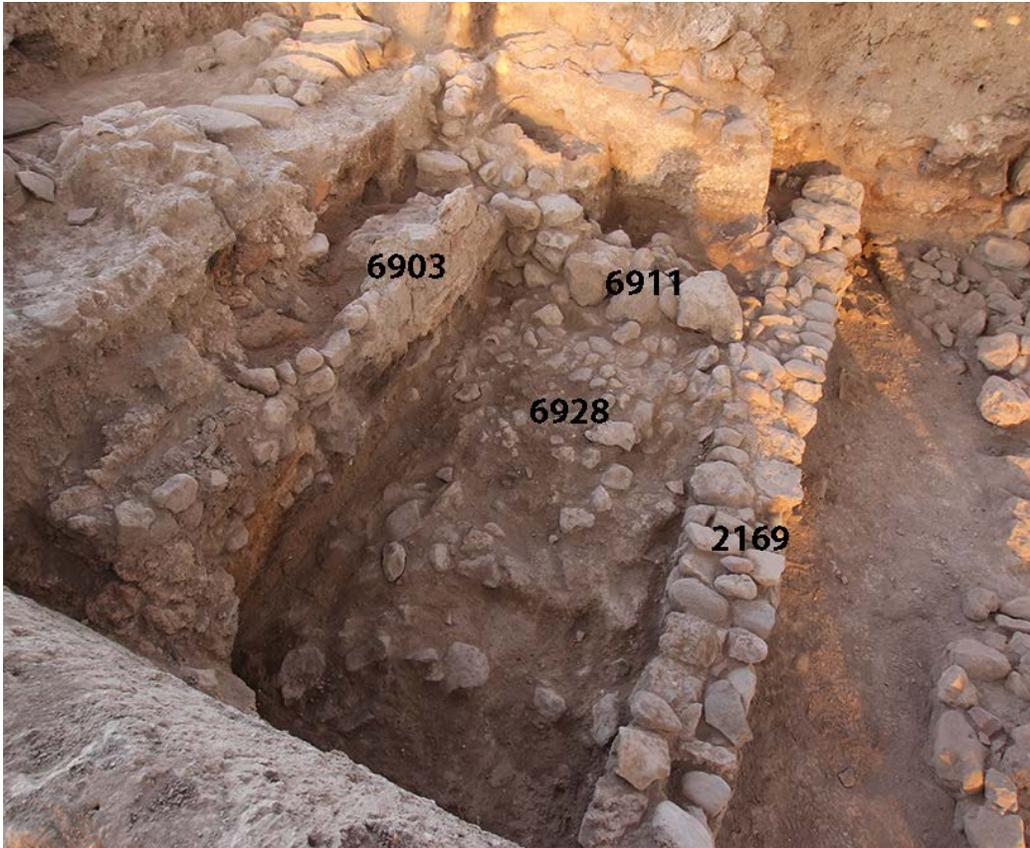
Southwestern part of Square A/14, looking west; note relationship between 6903 on the left (south) and Wall 6911; arrow points to possible 'seam' between the original 6911 and a blockage possibly added later on, either during the course of A-4 or in a post-destruction phase. In the foreground, excavation is on the level of 6930, the lowest level reached in this room. (ABM18-A-1168)



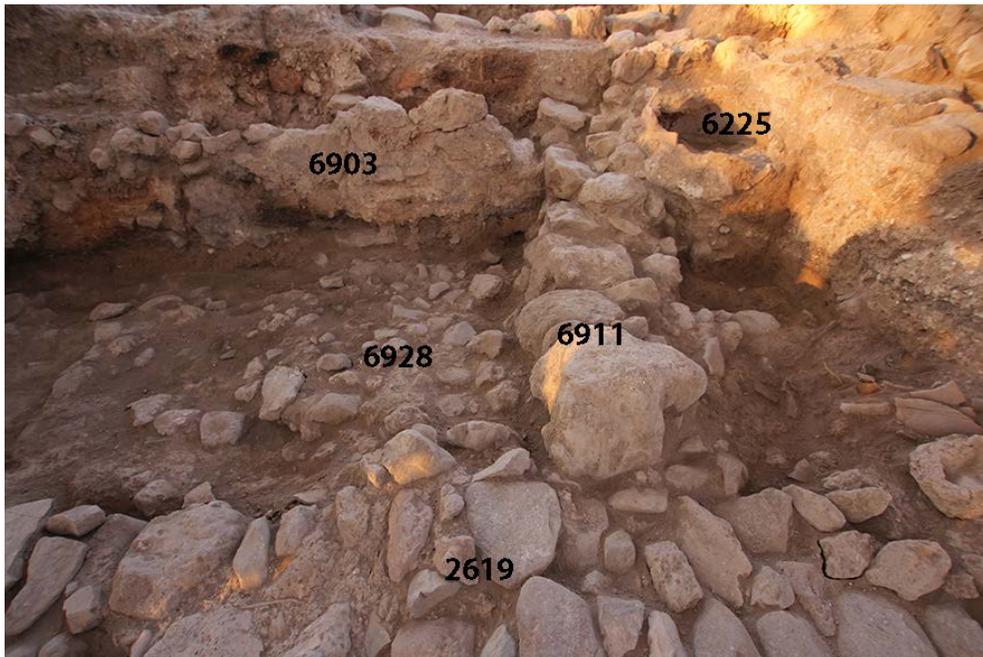
Squares A/14-15, looking southwest; area south of 2169; top of 6903 emerging in the fallen bricks and burnt debris 6210; late burial 6904 cut into this layer on the west; A-3b oven built into this layer on the west (south of burial) (ABM18-A-484)



Squares A/14-15, looking west, during excavation of room south of room 2169, on the level of black ash layer 6916 (6925); note mortar in western part of ash. Top of intrusive A-3b Wall 6911 emerging, just east of A-3b Oven 6225; depression left after removal of skeleton from late burial 6904 in west end of room (ABM18-A-720)



Squares A/14-15, looking west; excavation in room south of 2169 on the level of stones 6928, below the black ash layer 6916/6925 (ABM18-A-1029)



Detail of western end of stone 'floor' 6928, looking south (ABM18-A-1031)



Squares A/14-15, looking south, after exposure of northern face of 6903; level excavated down to stones 6930 in the room south of 2169. Intrusive A-3b Wall 6911 and Oven 6225 on the right (west); note burnt ash line against 6903 (-6916/6925) continuing in eastern balk (left) (ABM18-A-1145)



Same as previous photo, looking west at room south of 2169; end of excavation in 2018; note intrusive A-3b elements Oven 6225 and Wall 6911; arrow marks pithos west of Wall 6911, belonging to the A-4 floor and covered by A-3b brick construction (ABM18-A-1170)

It should be emphasized that the debris excavated to the south of Wall/bench 2169 began on a level higher than the top of the wall. It thus seems that our original understanding when excavating the room in Square A/14 (the “southern room” of the cultic structure) that the burnt debris in the room covered 2169 (see clearly in the southern balk which is what we excavated down this season) – is correct. 2169 was most likely a bench or screen wall in this room, dividing it into two parts (the southern one bordered by 6903 and the northern one bordered by Wall 2107).



**Squares A/14-15,
looking south; note
burnt destruction
debris above 2169 to
the south, indicating
that it was a bench or
screen wall inside the
room
(ABM18-A-243)**

Phase “A-3b”

The activity in the western end of the room to the south of 2169 is phased as post-dating the destruction of this room at the end of Stratum A-4, but before the construction of Stratum A-3. It is termed, tentatively, A-3b (although it might be phase as A-4a instead). The size of the area, its intrusive burial, and many features, make phasing this area difficult. Future excavation to the south, east, and west, will hopefully provide clarification.

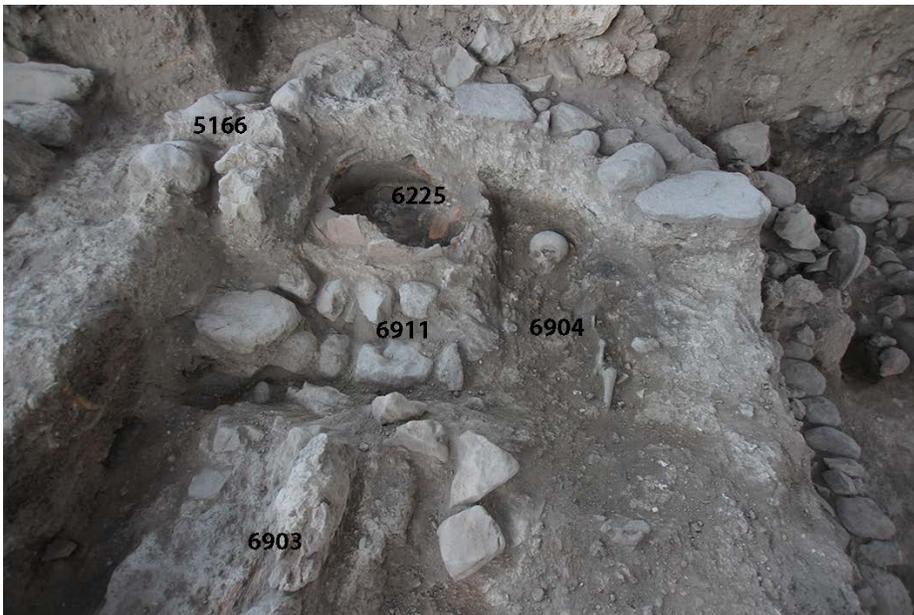
Wall 5166 was revealed last season and phased as an A-3 wall, thought to be contemporary with Wall 5152 and debris 5163. Based on elevations, the level of the A3 surface 6191 abutted it as well. Excavation to its north this season revealed an oven – 6225. The relationship of this oven to Wall 5166 is ambivalent. The upper courses of 5166 were dismantled, leaving only its lowest course. Adjoining this course on the north is a row of stones that do not appear to be an integral part of 5166, as they also seem to continue to curve around the oven on its east. Tabun 6225 is built against these stones and adjoins them with a whitish

clay or plaster. It is tentatively proposed that this row of stones was built together with the tabun (and with the southern part of Wall 6911 –see below) and in the next phase, A-3, stones were added above and to the south, comprising the A-3 Wall 5166.

Tabun 6225, large and quite well-preserved, is about 40 cm above the A4 floor, and one meter below the height of the A3 tabun, 6173 in A/15 to the south. To the east, it is built with Wall 6911, which runs north-south. Wall 6911 is comprised of two parts. On the south, where it adjoins the tabun, it is composed of small and medium field stones and preserved into the southern balk (wall 6911 abuts wall 2129, with two stones on either side of the abutment). Some of the stones of 6911 are curved around the tabun. A few of the upper stones of 5166, likely collapse, may have covered the southern portion of the tabun.



Northwestern corner of Square A/15, looking west; Tabun 6225 adjoining northern face of Wall 5166, note white plaster between them. Photo taken before exposure of Wall 6911 (ABM18-A-436)



Same as previous photo, after exposure of top of southern part of Wall 6911 just east of the oven; note intrusive burial 6904 to its north (ABM18-A-503)

To the west and north of Tabun 6225 is a curious feature that appears to be phased together with the oven: a block built of light gray hard brick material, perhaps with some actual bricks in it. This material adjoins the oven on its west; on its north, it was cut by late burial 6904 and is seen to the north of the cut, continuing into the western balk as well. The northern part of this block ends more or less on line with 2169, although in the western section, additional bricks (brown with dark mortar lines) can be seen above 2169 and might represent a continuation of this element above the latter. It seems that the southernmost slabs related to Floor 4172 were laid just on top of this brick material.

Large pithoi sherds from a restorable vessel were uncovered north of the burial cut and covered by the light gray brick 'block'. It seems clear that they belong to the original A-4 floor here. Some of these sherds were left in-situ, as they run beneath a small section of the few remaining slabs of 4172 to the west, as well as below the brick 'block' found to the north and west of Tabun 6225. This section was left to help understand the stratigraphy.



Squares A/14-15, looking south; note block of light-colored brick material on the right (west); between it and Tabun 6225 is the cut of late burial 6904; stones of 4172 on top; note pithos sherds below (to the south of bench/wall 2169) (ABM18-A-751)



**Square A/14, looking southwest;
western end of 2169; brick
'block' set above pithos
fragments that lay on the A-4
floor (ABM18-A-762)**



*Northwestern part of Square
A/14, looking west; brick 'block'
north of Tabun 6225 after
trimming back its eastern part,
revealing more of the pithos
fragments that lay underneath it
(marked with arrow); note
possible door socket stone to the
right of the arrow (ABM18-A-
1046)*

Wall 6911

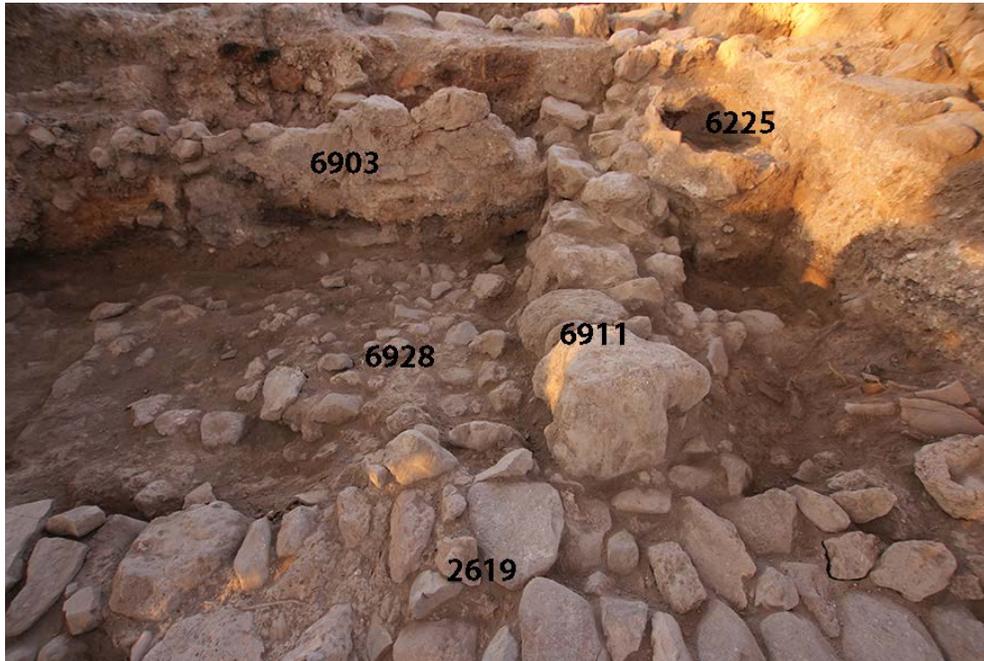
Wall 6911 was described above (A-4), running north-south to the east of Tabun 6255. As described, this wall is composed of two segments – a well-built one in the south that is possibly part of the original A-4 room, and a somewhat lower part in the north composed of three boulders that appear to be a blockage of a passage here. There are three alternatives:

1-Wall 6911 was built in A-3b, both segments together, together with Tabun 6225 (and possibly Wall 5166). In this case, the difference in the northern and southern segments is just technical and does not represent sub-phasing.

2-The southern segment of 6911 was built in A-4 and the northern 'boulder blockage' was added in A-3b, when Oven 6225 was built, perhaps to separate this end of the room from the burnt debris on the floor in the east. Note that the northern end of 6911, as it relates to 2169, is higher than the latter.

3-The southern segment was built in A-4, and the ‘boulder blockage’ was added during the course of A-4.

It seems most likely that No. 2 is the valid scenario, but this needs to be further checked.



Square A/14, looking south; the northern end of Wall 6911 as it abuts 2619 on a higher level (ABM18-A-1031)

To further complicate the interpretation of this small corner, an intrusive burial in a west-east orientation was uncovered to the north of the tabun (burial 6904). The burial was cut into the brick debris of 6902. It apparently is contemporary with the other burials at this elevation and on the same row from north to south.



Intrusive burial 6904, looking west (ABM18-A-661)

Stratum A3

Remains attributed to stratum A3 were revealed in the southeastern area of the excavation this year, and were limited to Square A/15 and minor projects in A/12-13 and A-T/14.

Square A/12-13

The eastern portion of Wall 1120 was dismantled, and locus 6136 was opened as A3 debris to the north, down until the upper course of A-4 Wall 2143. Excavated only ca. 15 cm down to burnt level representing A-4 (6153, 6154). No further A3 material was excavated here.

Square A-T/14

Slabs 4172 were dismantled, other than a few stones in the southeast. The missing portion of slabs in the southwestern portion was an intrusive burial, 6137. Below the slabs was Locus 6111 – the top of the A-4 destruction debris in the western part of the southern room of the cult structure.

The large mudbrick discovered in season five sitting above slabs 4172 was removed (6113), with a portion of it remaining in the western balk. Several stones were found below it.

In the southern portion of the square, excavation continued through the plaster and the square was levelled to the elevation of the northwest probe from season five. Stones continued from beneath mudbrick 6113 to wall 5166, though possibly not built. They seem to continue into the western balk, and further excavation may clarify if they are built or simply tumble from wall 5166. Excavation continued with few finds until the A4 destruction (6210)



Square A/14, looking west; arrow pointing to part of large brick block in balk, on top of several stones and the extant slabs of 4172. A-3b tabun 6225 below (ABM18-A-1047)

Square A/15

Square A/15 presents a clear image of the A3 occupation. A well preserved tabun, 6173, was excavated. It was bonded to the southeastern portion of 5152, which we determined was not a wall but instead a curved bench/installation related to the oven, with clear portions of plaster to the north of it (6201). The northern portion of 5152 was dismantled and excavated to form a clear section across the square as excavation continued down into the A4 stratum in the north.

A line of rectangular stones, 6182, extending from the balk below A2 wall 5128 to A3 Wall 5152, was also uncovered on what may be the floor level. Because of its east-west orientation and construction, we suspect it may be an intrusive burial identical to the early Islamic burials 6137, 5132 and 3177 (note that the latter was C14 dated to the 9th century CE and we assume the other burials might date to this period as well). The elevations of the stones are within 40 cm of each other; 3112, which covered burial 3177, averaged 376.40. 4159, which covered 5132, was measured at 376.03. The average height of 6182 was 376.43. This assumed burial was not excavated this season.

Excavation in the northern portion of square A/15 stopped for the season on the A3 surface, with the tabun intact. Samples for geomagnetic study were taken from this oven.

When wall 5166 appeared to be floating, it was dismantled. However, lower courses were discovered and left in-situ. See above, A-3b, for a description of this wall and its possible relationship to the oven of A-3b just to its north. It does seem that Wall 5166 should remain as attributed to Stratum A-3.



Square A/15, looking east; A-3 level; meter stick on surface 6191 (ABM18-A-114)



Same as previous photo, looking west (ABM18-A-115)



Square A/15, looking east; note two large stones at western end of 5152, possibly part of intrusive burial 3182 (ABM18-A-128)



Square A/14, looking west; A-3 Walls 4128 and 1158 above A-4 walls and below A-3 walls (ABM18-A-584)

Stratum A2

Much of the 2018 excavation season focused on the A2 phase and subphases. This was excavated this season in the upper, western part of Area A, and much less so in the lower, eastern part, where earlier levels are being excavated. A2 is the latest Iron I phase, its destruction C14 dated to the 10th century BCE.

Several elements described in Squares S-T-10/11 appear to belong to A-3 based on elevations and relationships to other A-3 features; however, they are described e32 with the A-2b remains in the present report. e

EASTERN AREA A (“DOWNTOWN”)

Square A-T/13

Excavation of the A2 strata was limited in this area to the dismantling of the eastern portion of Wall 1120.

Square A/15

During the 2018 season, we opened up the southern section of square A/15, which we further sub-balked to excavate the northern half. This northern half contained a small window into the A2 occupation. A NW-SE oriented wall, 6128, continuing into the southern balk, was uncovered and dismantled. It was one course of field stones, two stones wide with some collapse. To the west we uncovered the southern continuation of wall 5128. The wall was not dismantled this season, and continues west and south. The stones are smooth and flat, and may be a surface and not a wall. Further excavation to the west is needed.

WESTERN AREA A (“UPTOWN”)

The western portion of Area A (“uptown”) clearly shows two sub-phases of the A2 stratum in a number of squares. It should be recalled that such a division is seen in the eastern part of Area A until now, although much more sporadically: in the southwestern part of the eastern building and in its north. No such division was excavated in 2018. However, as of now, it is difficult to correlate the two sub-phases in the two parts of Area A and to know if they are contemporary or whether each unit underwent internal changes, such as floor raisings and wall additions, at different times during the course of the A-2 occupation.

Phase A-2b

The entire A2b complex became much clearer this season with the expansion north and west. Squares R/11 and the western portion of S/11 proved particularly valuable to our reconstruction of this area.

Square R/11

Excavation in R/11 continued this season in two locations: below A1 Walls 5106 and 5108, and in the western balk.

In the western balk, below A1 elements described below, a major element belonging to A-2 (both phases) was exposed: Wall 6115. The top of this wall appeared below a small concentration of cobblestones (6122) that adjoined/covered A1 Wall 5114 on the east.



Squares R-Q/11, looking south, top of Wall 6115 being exposed (ABM18-A-039)

Wall 6115 is a well-built north-south stone wall running in the balk between R and Q/11 and continuing to the north into the balk. On its southern end is an entranceway, bordered on the south by east-west wall 5155 (described below). The wall is preserved somewhat higher on the north than in the south; on its top, above the location of clay installation 6253, were two higher

stones, as well as on top of the large flat stone in its southern end. These were removed, assuming they were collapse, although the regularity of their placement made them look like a crenellation on top of the wall. Wall 6115 is preserved ca. 1.75 m high above the presently excavated floor level and thus can possibly be considered completely preserved. The presence of this wall might indicate that the room to its east (5141) was a roofed area, although this will become clearer when the northern closing wall is discovered and we can see how wide this space was. As of now, it measures ca. 7.5 m from Wall 6115 to Wall 4145/4193 in the east.

The eastern face of Wall 6115 is lined with a fine hard white plaster, which was sampled for analysis. Traces of a similar layer of plaster can be seen along the eastern face of the wall, in the balk of the entranceway. Beneath the A-2a floor (6175), the A2b destruction began with locus 6176, a layer with burnt debris and fallen bricks. This locus was closed with the appearance of 6253, a rectangular clay installation fused to the plaster of wall 6115, which continued from the wall into the depressions). This bin was constructed with the wall, as the wall plaster adhered seamlessly to it as one entity continuing down to the floor of the cultic room. 6253 is almost completely exposed but does continue into the northern balk. The top of 6253 has two plaster-lined depressions, separated in the center by an upright stone that was partially plastered' lending it the look of a double basin on top. In the back of the northern "sink" (where the plaster is somewhat damaged) is a plastered drainage hole. In the top of the wall of the installation stones were incorporated in the clay. The exterior seems to be covered with a thick mud plaster. A layer of soft dark ash and charcoal was found in the basin-like top. A sample was collected for analysis. Installation 6253 runs into the northern balk but it seems that it probably terminates shortly. The extant part measures 80 cm from the northern balk to the end and 60 cm from Wall 6115 to the east; it stands one meter high; depth of 'sinks' - ca. 8



View of draining hole in northern 'sink' (looking west). Photo by Nava in the field



Top of clay installation 6253 emerging, looking northwest (ABM18-A-602)

Stones 5180, which were seen in the section of the balk last season, turned out to be a semi-circle of stones surrounding the clay bin 6253 as a kind of screen wall, rather haphazardly built and standing ca. half a meter high. The stones began against wall 6115 on the south of 6253 and encircled it, running the northern balk. A few stones were missing from the eastern side (where it enters the northern balk), where one would ‘enter’ to use the installation. This opening is exactly on line with the offering table to the north, as well as with the large ‘massebah’ or lying stone to the north. Between the clay installation 6253 and stone screen wall 5180 is a gap of 30 cm (locus 6264), filled with dark ash and charcoal bits; an almost complete pyxis painted in red and black (Phoenician Bichrome?) was restored from sherds found just inside the opening; one sherd of the pyxis was found in one of the basins on top.



Square R/11, looking west at Wall 6115 with attached installation 6253 and surrounding stones 5180. Note stones on top of wall that appear like a crenellation. Plaster on Wall 6115 joining the installation (ABM18-A-934)



The cult room, north on the left (Carroll Kobs)

From the level of the top of installation 6253 down to the floor, the burnt debris was excavated as 6252; this continued down to the floor level – 5141 (note that in the eastern part of the room, the burnt layer equivalent to 6253 was excavated as 5141 as well). A bowl and other destroyed vessels, including the portion of pithos which remained in the balk in the previous season, were documented and removed. To the south of stone partition 5180 was a patch of whitish phytolith/plaster like that covering the cult stand in 2017; this white patch was just where we expected to find the bowl of the stand, but other than the white material, nothing was found. Between this patch and the wall of 5180 was a concentration of pounding stones and pottery fragments, including bowls, jugs and a chalice bowl sherd.



Square R/11, looking north; note concentration of stones and pottery fragments along 5180. Debris still attached to face of installation (ABM18-A-970)



Wall 5155 encloses this room on the south. It is covered on its western end by A1 Wall 5108; between them was a thin debris layer (6214, 6229; only the eastern part of Wall 5108 was dismantled this season, while the western part is still in situ in Square Q/11). Removal of the eastern part of Wall 5108 allowed us to expose Wall 5155 and to clarify that it is, indeed a wall, and is the southern closing wall of the western part of the cult room. Although the stones to the

east on the same line – 4185 – were built in an odd manner, with a kind of narrow top, while the top of Wall 5155 is more typically flat, both are definitely one and the same wall, with an entranceway in them, bordering the cult room on its south. This entranceway is found just to the south of the smaller ‘massebah’ stone (6283) that lay there. We are still not sure that it had originally stood upright and was deliberately laid down or whether it served as a threshold. Between this stone and wall 4185 was an intact animal jaw bone, a pounding stone, olive pits and several pieces of pottery (Locus 6254), along with a bronze fragment (61707). These were located somewhat above the floor level (376.75 – floor level here-ca. 376.50). Wall 5515 is built rather haphazardly of small stones and is preserved to a height of ca. one meter (in the west). Wall 5155 continues into the western balk; at this point, around 60 cm to the north, is north-south Wall 6115; an entrance is found between the northern face of Wall 5155 and Wall 6115. At this point, the lower courses of Wall 5155 protrude, lending a kind of conical shape to the wall, although this might be due to incomplete excavation at this point. Note that both Walls 4185 and 5155 are built of mostly small and medium field stones haphazardly set, so that it is difficult to discern clear courses. This contrasts with the construction method of the other walls in this unit.



Squares R-S/11, looking east; balk (6248) with mortar – underneath A1 Wall 5106- possibly an A-2a surface. Top of Wall 5155 emerging (ABM18-A-419)



Square R/11, looking south at entranceway (not completely excavated) in Walls 4185/5155, with stone 6283 to its north; patch with animal jawbone and (ABM18-A-834)

Along the northern face of Wall 5155, brick and stone bench 5177 was further clarified. On the east, it is composed of four brown bricks with white mortar lines, which begin just at the western lintel of the entranceway in Wall 5155. They run for ca. 2 m to the west where they are abutted by a stone segment, ca. 80 cm long. This segment terminates just on line with the small round mortar. Note that this 'bench' extends from the small lying-down 'massebah' (6283) that lies to the north of the entranceway in Wall 5155. All these elements are certainly related. 4196, described in the S/10-11 square, was removed.

To the west of the bench, just before the entranceway leading west, is a curious narrow brick formation, standing some 8 cm high, running along Wall 5155, starting where the round mortar is and running into the entranceway. A brown brick like the ones in bench 5177 abut its eastern end. An amorphous patch of similar brick material is found to its north, just inside the entranceway, but it is not yet clear if this is deliberate or collapsed. These brick items were removed, revealing a narrow line of north-south stones running just in front of the entranceway.



Square R/11, looking south at Wall 5155 and bench 5157 running along it, with bricks and mortar lines on the left (east) and stone segment on the right (west); note the western part of the entranceway in this wall on the far left (ABM18-A-896)



Square R/11 looking west at tend of season. Note entranceway between Walls 5155 and 6115 and plaster patch on eastern face of 6115 that attaches installation 6253 to it. Wall 6288, closing the southern hall, seen on the upper left (ABM18-A-1094)

Numbers were given to the large lying-down stones in the middle of the cult room: 6282 for the northern largest stone, 6283 for the smaller one to its south and 6287 for the stone offering table.

Stone 6283, the large flat worked basalt stone immediately south of larger stone 6282, was found laying above the floor. The stone was lifted, and it seems that it was laying on the floor and not constructed into it. Note that in the previous season we excavated a circular patch of white plaster that was set just above this stone, the meaning of which remains enigmatic. Another possibility is that this stone is a kind of threshold, which would lead to the entranceway in Wall 5155/4185 on the left (south). Note that it is on line with the entranceway in the southern end of Wall 6115, as well as the round mortar in front of this entranceway. Another suggestion is that originally, the large lying-down stone 6282 had stood on its long edge, creating a low partition between the two parts of the room (west and east). Possibly, the smaller stone 6283 was a threshold stone at the southern end of 6282. It is also possible that both of these stones stood erect, both on their long sides. Whether they are here in secondary use or not is difficult to determine.



The western end of the cult room at the end of 2018 (ABM18-A-1117)

Square R/12

This season, the northernmost section of R/12 was excavated, between Walls 2128 and 5155, to clarify the face of 5155. This is the western part of the narrow hall adjoining the cult room on the south. A small segment of a north-south wall was discovered at the end of the dig in the west of this strip. This wall, 6288 (see previous photo), is at least 2 courses high and abuts wall 2128. It continues north, and requires further excavation and clarification. If indeed a wall, it would be the closing wall of this 'hall'.

Square S/11

Limited excavation was carried out in the western part of Square S/11, to the west of Walls 4145 and 4193. Last season we remained in the dark ashy layer that apparently covered the floor and the goal this season was to reach the actual floor. This season we continued to excavate down (last traces of 4183, 5160) and found that the dark ash and brick debris continues down further down. Locus 6112 was opened as the matrix above the earthen floor. Within this soft matrix, a worked stone, a goat horn next to a few astragali, as well as substantial animal bones were found along the northern face of wall 4185.

Just above the floor (6144) was an ash pit located north of the large stone mortar. This ash pit, locus 6130, spread north into Square S10 and contained some animal bones and pottery sherds. It abutted the remnants of a tabun lined with stones (locus 6127) and might represent an ash dump from the oven. Stone remnants of the feature 5145 were removed from the tabun in order to expose it better. While the tabun's preservation was poor, there were remains of pottery attached to its clay walls in 2 small areas. Several stones acted as a step up to the tabun in the south. It seems that the antler and stone objects found just to the southwest of the oven might have been related to it. A sample of the oven was taken for geomagnetism. Locus 5160 is the burnt debris in front (west) of the oven; its excavation was completed this season. The deer antler and stone objects found in it are now understood to have been just in front (to the southwest) of the 'steps' leading to the oven.

Another goal this season was to determine if stones 4196 in the southern part of the room here was an actual north-south wall cornering with wall east-west wall 4185 or simply tumble from wall 4185. Upon careful excavation, these stones were removed and were deemed unconstructed. Substantiating this was the fact that within this stone tumble there were numerous

smashed pottery sherds and a small bronze razor. Tumble 4196 was completely removed, and the floor surface was reached across the entirety of the area.

The floor in this part of the room was reached at 376.34 (6144). This floor is the same as 5141 to the west, but is located to the east of the large lying-down stones 6282 and 6283. It is less well preserved than the floor in the west. Stratigraphically, this lowest layer of burnt debris and the floor below it abut the wall that runs underneath Wall 4145 – Wall 4193. This further supports the attribution of the destruction in the room to A-2b.



***Square S/11,
eastern end of cult
room, looking
south; soft debris
6112 in
southeastern part
of room; note goat
horn in debris
(ABM18-A-1221)***



Squares R-S/10-11, looking north; Note entrance in Walls 5155 and 4185. Floor and debris in eastern part of cult room abut Wall 4193. Arrow marks location of oven 6127(ABM18-A-1096).



Squares R-S/11-12, looking east; note relationship between Walls 4193 and 4185 (cut from ABM18-A-880)

BASED ON HEIGHTS AND RELATIONSHIPS, IT SEEMS THAT MOST OF THE FOLLOWING BELONGS TO STRATUM A-3

Square S/10-11 (Scott in the north)

Squares S/10-11 were excavated to the west and to the east of Wall 4193 and west of Wall 4186; this area comprises the northern part of the passageway between the eastern and western units of Stratum A-2.

Excavation began on the level of the pebble (possible) surface that was reopened in this square this season as locus 6174. This layer abutted Wall 4186 on the east and Wall 4193 on the west and is thus attributed to A-2b. A line of northwest-southeast stones running almost in the middle of this passageway here, 5175, was removed when it was floating. 5175 was sitting on the mudbrick debris 6174. It was difficult to tell if the mudbricks were below it or not, but ultimately upon removal of the stones it appeared less built and more like tumble. IF built, they could represent some kind of temporary obstruction in the passageway, and if collapse, then it may be questioned whether it fell from Wall 4193 on the west or from Wall 4186 on the north. If the former, then it may be assigned to the end of A-2b.

This pebble and debris layer sat above a burnt soil accumulation, 6193, less than 10 cm deep, which changed to mudbrick debris 6217. These layers cover a total of ca. 45 cm deep, so that the changes in matrix – occupation? – are very tight. These layers abut Wall 6242, exposed below Wall 4186 – described below.

The northern continuation of NW-SE wall 4186, the eastern border of the passageway in Phase A-2b, was excavated, partially in Square T/11 (a small patch, locus 6194, was excavated east of 4186 to clarify its direction). As excavation continued, it became clear that 4186 was sitting on yet another wall, 6242, which was one course high and followed the line of 4186 along its entire length in this square (and, apparently, in T/12 to the south), although protruding somewhat to the west. Wall 6242 stopped just before reaching the northern balk of S/10, and may form a corner and turn into the eastern balk with T/10. Further excavation will reveal its trajectory and more about its relationship to 4186. It was also considered that these stones 6242 are a constructive element, meant to bolster the northern part of Wall 4186 and not necessarily an independent wall. This is further supported because Wall 6242 is floating after only one course. It is difficult to determine their exact function, phasing or the relationship between the walls. It seems that there is no counterpart to this earlier phase in the western border of the passageway

(under Wall 4193), although it needs to be examined if it was contemporary with the lowest course of Wall 4193. It seems that 4192 and 4186 are contemporary and 6242 is earlier. **CHECK ELEVATIONS.**



Squares S-T/11, looking northeast; Wall 4186 on top of Wall 6252 (ABM18-A-1105)

Within the mudbrick and ash debris layer in the area between and below walls 6242 and 4193 (locus 6250), two unusual installations appeared: 6257 was a very compact, clay-like material in a loose rectangular shape. Large pieces of charcoal lay horizontally and in patches around the edges, like fallen beams or posts. The other installation, 6261, was a patch of very hard dark red clay material to the northwest of 6257. The installation was thin (15 cm deep) and relatively circular and composed entirely reddish soil, somewhat similar to tabun matrix but not burnt. It was completely excavated and removed. Samples were taken for analysis. Its function, as that of 6257 to its east, remain unknown. Both of these features, and the layer they are in (6250) are below the floating layer of Wall 6242. The presence of such installations in the 'passageway' indicates that at this phase this area predates the use of this area as a passageway, which is supported by the surrounding floating walls as well.



Square S/11, looking south; brick and wood installation 6257 between Wall 6242 and 4193. Below their floating levels (in Locus 6250) (ABM18-A-445)



Square S/11 looking north; installations 6257 and 6261 in layer 6250, below floating level of Wall 6242 (ABM18-A-816)

Excavation for the season stopped at the level of 6250 and surrounding brick and burnt debris. The nature of this locus, although quite burnt, did not seem typical of a destruction layer as it lacked complete pottery vessels and other finds. Possibly the burn here is the result of activities that took place in this area (no longer a passageway) and not of a destruction.

Based on the elevations, it seems that 6250 and the installations in it can be attributed to **Stratum A-3**: 6217 (ash layer, possibly a floor) abuts Wall 6242 at 376.30 (also the floating level of Wall 6242). Layer 6250 goes down below the floating level of Wall 6242 to 375.90. This can be compared to the A-3 floor excavated to the southwest in Square S/12 – Locus 4191 – which was at 376.02; the A-3 floors in the eastern part of Area A are at 376.25-30 (e.g. 1141, 1167) and the walls (e.g. 1158) there float at 376.30, 376.22. It is possible that there are two A-3 phases here, with Wall 6242 and layers 6193+6217 (north) and 6251 (south) being A-3a and 6250+6271 (pre-Wall 6242) being A-3b. It is not certain whether the A-3b here is the same as the phase identified in eastern Area A, this needs to be examined.

Square S/12 (Scott in the south)

Square S/12 was excavated for two weeks this season. We began excavating the pebbly surface/debris makeup, 6245 (=6174 to the north), which transitioned into 6251 (=6193.2617 to the north) with the appearance of the southern continuation of wall 6242. Stones 2170 were dismantled, and more stones, possibly part of 6242, lay flat beneath it and to the east.

Beneath 6251, the soil split into two different matrices: 6262, a loose gray soil in the north, and 6263, a compact red and gray mudbrick debris in the south (both seem to equal 6250 to the north, at least based on levels). These loci were separately excavated for about 30 centimeters until a uniform layer of smooth ashy debris, 6271, appeared across the square at an average elevation of 375.90 (=end of excavation of 6250 to the north). There was flat lying pottery, including a late bronze cooking pot rim and several unique shapes, such as a fine-ware jug with a ridged neck (for restoration), and several large chunks of charcoal. This ash was carefully scraped until the earthen floor appeared. Excavation for this season stopped at this level. It seems that this layer and floor should be attributed to **Stratum A-3**, as they are clearly underneath the A-3 building here, as seen in the western section.

On the southern end of Wall 6242, a stone formation is found that continues down beyond the floating level of 6242 and might be a separate, earlier entity that was incorporated in 6242 when it was built. Floor 6271 abuts these stones, but are below the floating level of 6242 here. Stones 6277 stop just north of the ‘altar/offering table’ that had been identified in the cultic corner between the pilasters 2118 and the one to the south. Two round basalt stones had been exposed on the A-2 layer, and now it seems that there are two more below (the lowest seems

surrounded by smaller stones), showing that it had been originally built in this phase (A-3?). The low screen wall to the west of this ‘altar’ – 2170 – was dismantled and it seems that there is a lower course of stones; one of them, in the center, is flat-lying and might be a kind of threshold or perhaps offering ‘table’ just in front of the ‘altar’.



Square S/12, at the southern end of the ‘passageway’, looking west under A-2 walls; clay floor 6271 (ABM18-A-1134)



Square S/12, looking east; southern end of Wall 6242, joining stones 6277 that penetrate deeper and ‘curve’ around to the east; arrow shows where Wall 2170 ran (ABM18-A-1109)

Square P-Q/12

After leaving a small sub-balk in the west, excavation proceeded below the various features ascribed to the A-1b phase in the eastern half of Square P/12 and the western quarter of Q/12 (described below) and reached a debris layer (6258) that abutted the floating level of A-1 Wall 5157 on the north and covered the top of a very burnt destruction layer (6260). This upper layer of the destruction debris began just when the top of Wall 6269 was revealed at 377.99; this wall borders this room on the north and runs underneath A-1 Wall 5157, with a gap of ca. 30 cm between them (=excavation of 6258). It is the western continuation of the line of Wall 2128, although it does not perfectly align with wall 2128, and protrudes somewhat to the south. It is clearly the northern closing wall for this room. Wall 6269 is built of small field stones stacked rather haphazardly, and stands 5-6 courses (almost one meter) high so far. Wall 6269 makes a corner on the east with brick Wall 6268, the eastern closing wall of this room (Wall 2128 makes a corner with this wall on its east).

6260 was changed to Locus 6267 (both with heavy destruction debris) when the top of brick Wall 6268 on the east became clearly defined. This is a very burnt and poorly preserved brick wall; its western face is very burnt and appears to have been covered with mud plaster, although no clear individual bricks can be seen. Its eastern face contains brick material but no individual bricks can be seen. A curious feature in its eastern face are three concentrations of stones, each of which containing three stones, that protrude from the face of the wall. A features seen in previous seasons in Wall 6268 (before we realized it was a built wall) was a row of small stones running in its lowest part, just above the large pavement stones of 5130, which abut it on the east. Such stones are not seen in the western face of this wall.

The burnt destruction debris (6267) continued down to the floor level. This layer contained massive chunks of mudbrick and complete fallen bricks, especially in the southern part of the room. It seems that these bricks fell from Wall 6268, although the closing walls on the west and south, not yet revealed, might have been brick as well. Within this layer, and extending into the mudbrick debris, were large, restorable wavy band pithoi (at least two, judging by the bases), two chalices, a lamp, and a bowl. It seems that the chalices, lamp and bowl might comprise a “lamp and bowl” foundation deposit, as they were grouped together and found along the bottom of Wall 6268. These were all carefully documented and removed. The floor in this room, below 6285, is not cobbled like 5130 immediately on the other side of mudbrick wall

6268, but is a packed earth floor. The mudbrick destruction debris ended with a layer of charcoal and burnt debris above the floor level (6285, opened at an elevation of 377.08). This ashy layer is identical to the one found on the floor in the hallway/room to the east, excavated in previous seasons. The floor below the ash layer, made of beaten earth, was not separately numbered this season.



Square P-Q/12, looking north; top of burnt destruction layer in A2 room; note A1 Wall 5157 on top of A2 Wall 6929 (ABM18-A-937)



Same as previous photo, looking east; note how Wall 6929 protrudes to the south beyond the line of A1 Wall 5157 above it. (ABM18-A-939)



Looking south;
The burnt
destruction debris
with vessels; note
whole fallen bricks
in the south;
(ABM18-A-1012)



*Pottery
concentration with
possible “lamp and
bowl” foundation
deposit (with two
chalices), next to a
wavy band pithos, set
against Wall 6268;
looking east (ABM18-
A-1068)*



Square Q/12, looking west; A2 pavement 5130 in foreground, abutting small stones in base(?) of brick Wall 6268; note three stone concentrations jutting out from the face of the wall, et above a grey ashy line (burnt wood?) (ABM18-A-1122)

Phase A-2a

Northern Part of Area A

Squares Q/11 and R/11

With the removal of the balk between Q/11 and R/ and the discovery of Wall 6115 (discussed in detail above in A2b), excavation was divided between west and south of the wall up to floating A-1 Wall 5108 (6114, 6275, 6151), east of the wall (6170, 6175). At 377.70, to the west of Wall 6115, a surface was discovered: 6151; above it is debris 6114. Material from this locus included fragments of large, restorable vessels. To the east of the wall, debris 6170 went down to a hard-packed, earthen floor 6175 (elevation 377.59) above the A-2b destruction debris in this room. This floor was difficult to see in the sections and during excavation of R/11 in 2017, but is clearly seen in Q/11. It is equivalent to 5134 (although the elevation of the latter is lower – 377.41-377.20); it is thus possible that the ash layer found above 5134 – 5129 – is the A-2 floor (its level is 377.55-377.43). Another segment that appears to be an A-2a surface was found in Square R/11 in the eastern part of the cult room. This is surface is 6234 (and debris 6224 above

it) – the area sealed by A-1 Wall 5106 that was removed this season. At 377.43, a layer emerged with pottery and a complete basalt mortar on it. Notably, the floor surfaces attributed to A-2a are at different levels on the west of Wall 6115- Locus 6151 at 377.70 and to the east – Loci 5134 at 377.41/20 and 6234 at 377.43.

The upper two courses of wall 6115, which is clearly an A2b wall, rise above the A-2a floor level. It may have been reused at this time for a bench or other purpose. Excavation of the floor west of 6115 stopped at the A-2a floor level. Thus, we see that while there is an occupation level that postdates the A-2b destruction and predates the A-1 construction, its floor surfaces are rather ephemeral and they are revealed on somewhat different levels.



Square Q/11, looking south; excavation around A2b Wall 6115; surface 6151 (A-2a) to the north; debris 6176 (A2b) to the east (ABM18-A-039)



Square Q/11, looking south; later cobbles 6122, partially on top of Wall 6115. A-1 stones 6149/6161 on the west (left) (ABM18-A-306)



Square R/=Q/11, looking south; A-2a surface 6151 to west of Wall 6115; A-1 stone pavement 6149 to the left (west) (ABM18-A-1186)

Southern Part of Area A

Square Q/13

This season, we opened up the northern two-thirds of square Q/13. We did not leave a balk to the north, since we had a clear picture of the section below. After excavating an A-1 layer here, the goal was to reach the level of the A-2a monumental stone pavement, 5130.

The probe down to A-2 was done below the layer attributed to this stratum that abutted Wall 6118; the wall was left in situ. On both sides of the floating wall, once the A-1 surfaces were removed, the top of the A-2 destruction was reached. To the west of wall 6118, under A-1 surface 6215 was a thin debris layer, possibly a fill (6231) that covered the brick debris and ash of A-2 6232. This locus continued until we discovered the southern continuation of mudbrick wall 6268 from square P-Q/11. At the end of the season, it appeared that 6268 may make a corner with a wall that runs to the west into the balk; the nature of the very burnt brick wall made it difficult to define it well. This area was too narrow to continue down to the level of stones 5130 and so stopped above them.



Square Q/13, looking northeast; A-1 Wall 6118 floating above A-2a destruction debris 6232 (ABM18-A_Kent-157)



Squares Q12-13, looking south; brick Wall 6268 continues south into Square Q/13, under A-1 level (Wall 6118 floating); Note burnt debris of 6267 to the west (right) of Wall 6267 in foreground (ABM18-A-1083)

To the east of wall 6118, the situation played out similarly to the western part. The possible surface attributed to A-1, 6204, covered a debris layer, 6219 that directly covered the A-2 destruction debris: Locus 6237. This destruction debris was excavated down to the level of the

mudbrick installation 5138 in square Q/12 that bordered stones 5130 on their east. We were able to trace the southern continuation of 5138 until it stopped before it runs into the southern balk of Q/13. It thus seems that this brick feature was localized to the eastern border of stones 5130 as a kind of partition or installation. Three stones lined the western side of 5138, but were quickly floating and removed (photo). Excavation stopped at the level of 5138 for the 2018 season.



Squares Q/12-13, looking south; brick installation/partition 5138 possibly not continuing to the south (ABM18-A-1080)

Square R/13

The A-2a subphase was excavated to either side of A-1 Wall 6148 and to the south and west of A1 Walls 6188 and 6189, which were left intact and floating.

To the east of wall 6148, the clear beginning of A-2a phase began below the A1 surfaces and stone layers (see details below) and below the floating level of walls 6188 and 6189 that are on the eastern end of this square and partly in Square S/13. 6255 was the A-2a destruction debris. This locus reached an ashy layer (6273) at 377.28. Around this level, we noticed a mudbrick wall set on a stone socle, running east-west along the southern edge of the square, termed Wall 6270. Excavation to the north of the wall- 6273 – proceeded down to the level of stones 4141. Wall 6270 was built similarly to Wall 6268 in Square Q/12; no individual bricks could be seen, and the wall seems to be composed of packed brick material that was hardly preserved above the stone socle. The destruction debris 273 to the north of Wall 6270 reached a fine layer of ash, 6281, that sat above a stone pavement identical to 5130 in square Q/12. This pavement was part of what we called the 4141 platform and is now clearly understood to be a pavement like 5130, though somewhat less monumental. Stones 4141 run up to and abut the foundation stones of Wall 6270. Stone floor 4141 (elevation 376.90 in the south, higher in the north where there are several large stones) and 5130 (elevation 377.30-10) were both covered with a layer of fine ash which contained no artifacts. The only difference was a thin layer of what appeared to be white plaster which covered some of the 4141 stones. Samples were taken for analysis, and excavation stopped for the season on this A-2a surface.



Square R/13 looking south at stone pavement 4141 abutting Wall 6270; note A-1 basin installation 6166 on the right (west) and Wall 6189 on the left (east) (ABM18-A-1074)

To the west of A-1 wall 6148, left in situ floating, excavation into the A-2a phase began clearly with its recognizable destruction, here locus 6233 (=6255, 6273 to the east). Directly above 6233 there were some cobbles in 6220 (elevation 377.77), which may go with the A1 surface above it or possibly with this A-2a destruction. This destruction continued until the matrix changed to ash, when we switched to a new locus 6286 (elevation 376.98; -6281 to the east?). The season ended with this locus still open.



Square R/13, looking south at A-2a level west of A-1 basin installation 6166; note large stone set into A-2a debris (ABM18-A-1076)



Square R/13 at end of season, looking north; A-1 features and walls above A-2a (ABM18-A-1140)

Of particular note on the west of wall 6148 is the very large stone 6284. It appears to be sitting directly on the A-2a surface, and is standing upright on its long side, ending just at the lower level of 6148. Its purpose is unknown, but looks very similar to the stone lying flat in R/11, stone 6282, if it had been stood up on its long edge. It is surmised that stone pavement 4141 reached this stone on its eastern face. Curiously, A-1 basin installation is built just against the top of this stone, indicating the possibility that the A-1 people encountered it when building 6166 and reused it.



***Square R/13, looking south;
large stone set in A-2a
destruction debris, as it
'supports' A-1 basin installation
6166 (ABM18-A-1077)***

Square S/13

A very small segment of A-2 was excavated in the northern end of this square; A-1 Walls 6188 and 6189 were built above a corner of two A-2 walls – 2126 (east-west) and a wall that cornered with it and ran into the southern balk (unnumbered). The narrow area between these two walls was excavated as 6266 and 6279 (see A-1 for photo).

Stratum A-1

This season, squares P/11, P/12, Q/11, Q/13, R/13, and S/13 show clear signs of the A1 strata, with the addition of two possible sub-phases, A1a and A1b. No A1 strata loci were opened in the eastern section. The remains will be presented here together and when we can discern the difference between the two subphases, they will be noted.

Square P/11

This season we opened up square P/11 for excavation. The goal was to understand wall 5157 and expand the area westward and to examine the nature and stratigraphy of the Iron IIA Stratum A-1. Excavation began with the removal of topsoil (6129). This locus was closed due to the emergence of a poorly constructed east-west wall 6159 in the northern part of the square; only 1 row and 1 course were preserved. It did not continue east into square Q/11. The layer abutting it on the south is 6158 and the narrow area to its north (up to the balk) is 6163). Some pottery and a number of grinding stones were found in these layers, comprised mostly of soft debris mixed with some brick material. It is not yet clear whether this represents a later A-1 layer or a post-Iron II occupation. Based on elevations, Wall 6159 could be contemporary with the uppermost phase of Wall 5157 on the south; both are preserved on top at about the same level (379.35-29), while Wall 6159 floats at 379.04/14 and 5157 at 387.28 (seen on its southern face). Thus it is possible that Wall 6159 and layer 6158 are A-1a.

When it floated, Wall 6159 was dismantled, and locus 6185 was opened over the entire square. This locus abutted the northern face of Wall 5157 and was a combination of mud brick debris and tumbled stones from 6155/5157. It represents the accumulation directly above the stone platform 6243. These stones were equal to those in Square Q11 (Locus 6149). 6243 covers almost the entire square, although they are lacking in the far north and northwest of the square, as well as on the south, where there is a straight strip separating it from Wall 5157. This possible trench, locus 6236, and separates wall 6155 to the platform/plaza stones of 6243. The line is quite clear and wide. It is unlikely that it is a foundation trench, but may have been some type of drain.

The southern balk of the square was removed to clarify the northern face of wall 5157. Initially, the upper courses of 5157 were thought to be a later addition, and assigned number

6155. The stones of 6155 are smaller than the large stones of 5157. It seems now that 6155 is in fact part of 5157, preserved at a different elevation. Wall 6155/5157 continued west almost to the western balk, stopping about 50 cm from the balk line. This may be an entrance.

Squares R–Q/11

The balk between the two squares was stratigraphically dismantled, down to the level of A-2 wall 6115. Above 6115 was a layer of topsoil (6102) and cobblestones (6122) found to the east of Wall 5114 and south of a stone wall that continues into the northern balk – 6197. Between 5114 and 6197 is a layer running into the northern balk and only excavated in a small area – 6125. To the west of Wall 5114 was loci 6223 and 6198. All of these elements are tentatively attributed to a late phase of A-1, although it is possible that they postdate A-1. Wall 5114 was dismantled this season. Wall 6197, which formed a corner with 5114 in the east, was also dismantled. It continues into the northern balk.

Wall 5108 was almost completely dismantled, leaving about one meter of wall remaining in the west. Excavation continued below to reach the level of the cultic A2b room, as described above.

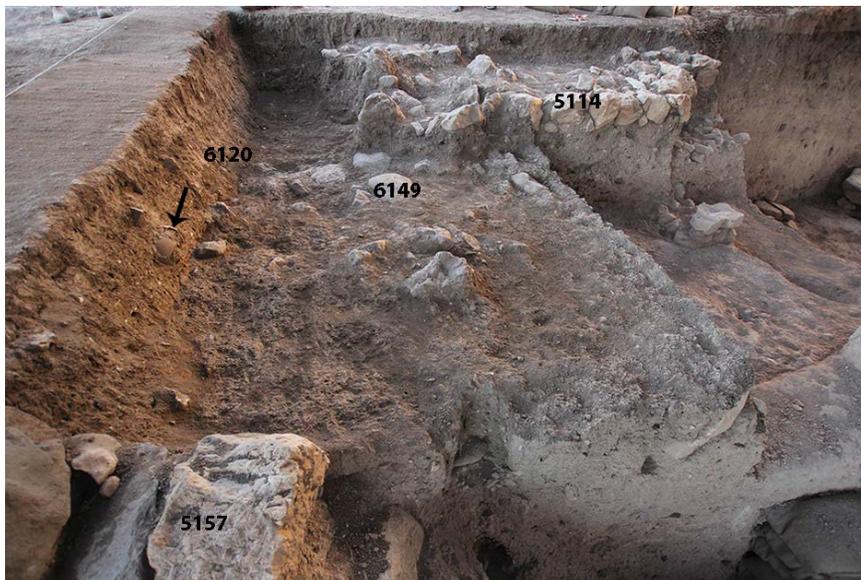
In the western part of the square the topsoil layer is 6110. When the level of Wall 5114 was reached, the locus was changed to 6120. Below this layer, was a layer of large and closely laid stones, 6149, at a height of 378.68. This ‘platform’ stopped about halfway through the square and continued through the western balk, meeting up with stones 6243 in square P/11. Patches of pebbles/small cobbles, 6161 (elevation 378.26), matching the cobbles of 6122 (elevation 378.25) in northwest R/11, were uncovered in the southeast corner of stones 6149, more or less abutting them, but also somewhat below them. It is not clear whether 6149 and cobbles 6161 are contemporary, but we are assigning them to the same phase at this point. It seems most likely that cobbles 6161 (like 6122 to the east) are surfaces that had related to Wall 5108 but became damaged and only patches were preserved. In the eastern end of 6149 are three large stones, one rectangular, that appear to have been deliberately placed there to denote the end of the podium. On the north, it seems that the stones protrude in a cross-like manner, although further excavation might fill in these ‘gaps’.

To the south of these stones (6149 and especially 6243) is a gap, 6162 (6236 in square P/11). It was thought that this was a foundation trench for Walls 5157 and 5108, but the line of

the large podium/pavement is too straight to be a foundation trench. The relation of 6149/6243 to the surrounding walls is unclear at this point, but it does seem to be contemporary with 5157 on its south, despite the gap. The relationship to Wall 5108 remains more tentative, but it too was probably contemporary – certainly sometime during A-1.

Within the western balk of Square Q/11 (in Locus 6120) we excavated a complete amphora filled with over 400 astragali (elevation 378.56). We dismantled the balk stratigraphically and found a circular mound of stones and brick material (6280, elevation 378.74) sitting on stone podium 6149/6243 close to where the jar of astragali was found. It is likely that the jar of stones sat on this circular installation.

It is possible that this podium is related to others found within the A1 stratum: 6147 (elevation 378.23), 6165 (elevation 378.76), and 6186 (379.34). The purpose of these stone installations is unknown. Undoubtedly, platform/podium 6243/1649 is the most well built and impressive; excavation to the north and west might reveal more of this feature.



Square Q/11, looking north; layer 6120 excavated down to the top of stones 6149; 5114 floating in the background; arrow pointing to vessel with astragali (ABM18-A-033)



Astragali pot in balk between Q-P/11 (ABM18-A-200)



Square Q/11, looking south; stones 6149 exposed; note the large stones on the eastern end (ABM18-A-324)



Squares Q-P/11, looking south; stone podium/platform 6149/6243 revealed after removal of balk. Arrow pointing to raised round podium where the astragali vessel was placed(ABM18-A-904)



Same as previous photo, looking west. (ABM18-A-906)

Square R/S11 (with the southwest portion of S/10)

Wall 5106 was completely dismantled to reveal the relationship between walls 5155 and 4185, and to reach the level of the A-2 cultic room floor. Underneath it was a segment of an A-2a level that superimposed the A-2b destruction and floor. The relationship of 5106 to 5108 to its west remains unclear.

Square P/12-Stratum A-1a

In order to understand the A2 building complex, wall 2128 and pavement 5130, the eastern half of Square P/12 was opened during the last weeks of the 2017 excavation. We continued in this square this season, and opened it to a full square to the west. Excavation began with clearing the topsoil (6164) from the western half and levelling it. This locus was closed when the top of Wall 5157 was reached in the north and Locus 6169 was opened at an elevation of 379.25. This locus covered the top of a well-preserved oven, 6178, at a height of 379.18. This well preserved tabun sat on a cluster of stones. Locus 6187 was opened as the accumulation above the A1a floor that went with the oven. A mortar and grinding stones were found on this surface, as well as pottery and bones. Along the western balk and continuing into it were stones 6186, a cluster of large stones similar to 6147, 6149/6243, and 6165. 6186 was left in-situ. It was found that there was an opening in the western end of Wall 5157, which would connect the activity in the oven room with that to the north – based on levels, this would be that of Wall 6159 and layer 6158, supporting their attribution to A-1a, as described above.

Excavation in the western half of the square stopped on the A1a floor level. Before excavating this square further, we want to expose more of this strata to the west and south. The oven was dismantled inadvertently at the end of the season.



Square P/11, looking north; A-1a features on floor 6187; note entrance in western end of Wall 5157; room to the north is on the A-1b level (Locus 6185), with floating Wall 6159 visible in the back (ABM18-A-180)



Same as previous photo, looking east (ABM18-A-459)

Excavation continued in the eastern half of P/12 and westernmost section of Q/12. This represents the lower, earlier A-1b level in this area (south of Wall 5157); Wall 5157 was in use in both phases. Wall 5178 and possible wall/stone feature 5179 that corners with it were clarified by excavating to the north and south. To the north of 5179, cobbles 6208 quickly appeared at

378.35 below the clean-up locus 6195/6196. These cobbles abutted the lower courses of 5157 in the north and 5179/5178 in the south. They did not continue to the western balk and seem to be a localized feature. An earth surface (6228, 378.10) was uncovered to the west of the cobbles at a lower elevation and with a mortar found in situ, as well as a poorly preserved oven (6241) against Wall 5157. Wall 5178 and the eastern part of Wall 5179 were dismantled in order to continue excavation down to A-2a. Floor 6228 and these walls covered the destruction. A small part of the western end of Wall 5179 was left in situ in a narrow sub-balk, while excavation to its east proceeded down in the A-2a destruction.

This phase is the one that is contemporary with stone platform 6243 in the room to the north.



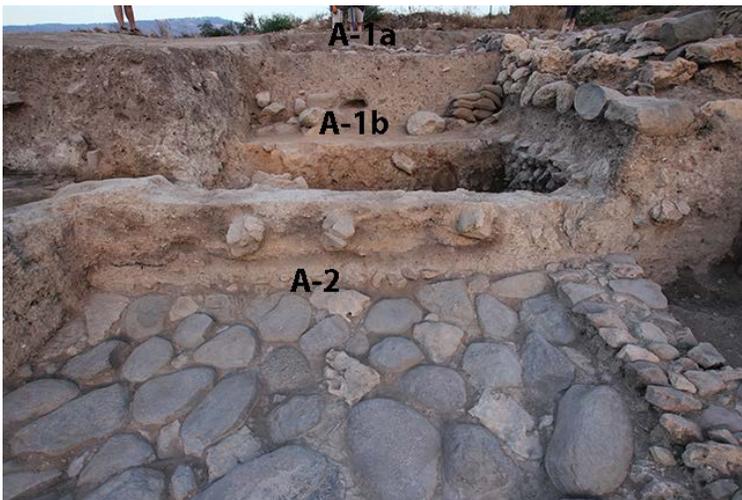
A-1b layer in Square P/12 (and western end of Q/12), looking north; note bottom of Wall 5157 (ABM18-A-Kent046a)



Square P/12, looking northeast; after dismantling of stones 6208; top of burnt A-2 destruction debris emerging (photo taken before 5179 was dismantled (ABM18-A-Kent054)



Superposition of A-1 Wall 5157 above corner of A-2 Walls 6268 and 6269 (ABM18-_950)



Squares Q-P/12, looking west at the superposition of Strata A-1a, A-1b and A-2. (ABM18-A-1122)

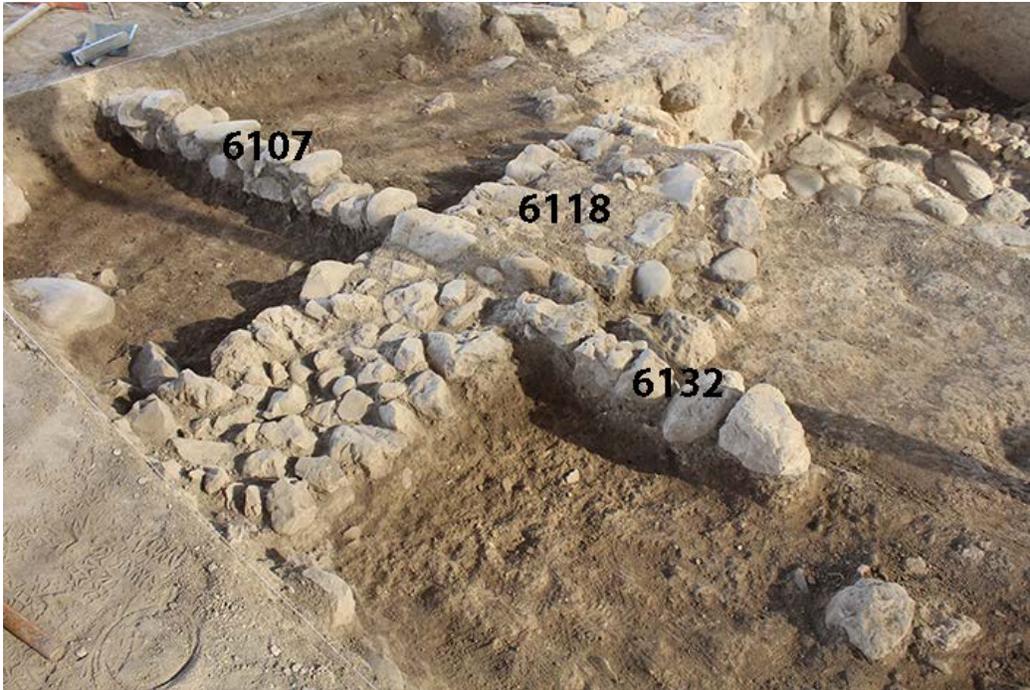
Southern Part of Area A in Stratum A-1

Square Q/13

This season, we opened up the full Q/13 square. We did not leave a balk to the north, since we had a clear picture of the section. The goal was to reach the level of the A-2a pavement, 5130. Less than 20 cm below topsoil (6103) we encountered the first wall, 6107, which ran east-west. We split loci north and south, and soon realized that there was a well-constructed north-south wall, 6118, which split 6107. 6107 became the wall abutting 6118 on the west, while 6132 was the wall abutting 6118 on the east. The square was split into quarters by these walls, and excavated as separate loci. 6107 and 6132 were very flimsy, built of one row of stones and floating after one course. It is difficult to attributed clear occupation surfaces to them, being just under topsoil and not well preserved. It is also difficult to phase them; the pottery is mixed late and Iron II. On the other hand, they somewhat recall Wall 6159 in Square P/11, which is attributed to A-1a. These walls were dismantled when we saw that they were floating. 6118, on the other hand, was very well constructed and consisted of ___ courses. Like the walls in R/13, 6118 also ended directly on the northern square line. It continues into the southern balk.

After flimsy Walls 6107 and 6132 were removed, we excavated both sides of the wall individually. No surfaces on either side of the wall were clearly identified. On the west, locus 6215 emerged as a possible A1 surface of packed earth (it was above the floating level of W6118). Pottery and part of a metal bangle were found on this surface. This surface may have been related to 6165, a cluster of stones continuing into the western balk. The lowest point of 6165 was 378.31, and the possible surface 6215 began at 378.18. 6165 was similar in construction to 6149/6243, and 6147, as well as 6208. 6165 was dismantled, and excavation continued below the A1 phase and into the A-2a.

On the east of wall 6118, there were no significant finds after the removal of wall 6132 until the appearance of the possible surface 6204. The surface was excavated to the floating level of wall 6118, and then we entered the A-2a phase.



Square Q/13, looking northwest (ABM18-A-Kent155)



A-1b Wall 6118, looking northeast (ABM18-A-157)

Square R/13

This season, we opened the northern two thirds of square R/13 with the goal of examining the A-1 remains above the southern continuation of the A-2 complex. Immediately below topsoil (6101, 6105), we encountered a layer with many stones, including several large stones, locus 6147, at a height of 378.23, in the eastern part of the square. Like the other patches of A-1stones

(6165, 6186, 6149), the purpose of this cluster of stones is unknown. These were possibly work surfaces or podiums meant to perform some activity.

Immediately to the northeast of 6147, two well-constructed walls formed a corner: north-south wall 6189 and east-west wall 6188. Their construction is similar to Wall 6118 in Square Q/13 to the south and they are apparently contemporary (A-1b). They were not dismantled this season. Some of the 6147 stones were abutting and overlapping the wall corner.

In the western portion of the square, two circular stone installations appeared. The western-most installation, 6134, continued into the western balk. Its elevation was 378.18, and was removed after documentation. In the middle of the square was installation 6133, which sat above Wall 6148 at a height of 378.28. It was also dismantled after documentation.

6147 was dismantled when all of the stones were floating. It thus might be concluded that this layer belongs to A-1a, covering the elements described now that can be attributed to A-1b.

Beneath 6133 we excavated the continuation of Wall 6148, which in fact is part of a unique installation and not a wall. It is constructed of several unusual stones, including a large conglomerate rock and large limestone with many holes in it, possibly natural. Immediately to the east of this wall and abutting the large conglomerate stone was another conglomerate, shaped into a perfect circle with a shallow depression on the top (locus 6166). Its elevation was 377.81.

To the west of Wall 6148, we encountered a possible earthen floor, 6192, at a height of 377.90. To the east, no identifiable surface was found. Locus 6238 was opened (highest point 377.76) at the floating level of 6166, and excavation continued into the A-2a destruction.



Square S/13, looking east; stones in upper layer of square (A-1a) – installation 6133 and stones 6147 in background (ABM18-A-Kent 137)



Square R/13, looking northeast; A-1b level, with installation 6166/6148 in center (ABM18-A-Kent146)



Installation 6166/6148 looking west; note conglomerate basin (ABM18-A-Kent 145)

Square S/13

A thin strip along the northern portion of Square S/13 was opened this season with two goals in mind: reach the level of A-2 wall 2126 and see if it forms a corner with a wall to the south, and to trace A-1 wall 6188 to the east.

Wall 6188 continued east, but had one missing portion in the center of the strip, continued east, then stopped before the eastern balk. It's possible these stones were robbed out at a later date. It was found that Wall 6188 cornered with a north-south wall, 6189, that was cut on its northern end quite near the corner. This corner superimposed Wall 2126 and a wall that corners with it on the west and runs to the south into the balk. We stopped excavation when we reached the level of the top of Wall 2126 (and the wall running to the south at its western end) to the north of Wall 6188. Walls 6188 and 6189 were preserved one course high and are apparently to be assigned to A-1b based on their relationship to elements in Square R/13, described above.

The debris between Walls 6188 and 6189 (6256) is disturbed, but contains Iron IIA pottery. A special find here is the top of a stirrup jar of Mycenaean IIIC style – found between

the A-1 and A-2 layers and thus, not in situ.



Square S/13, looking west; A-1 walls 6188 and 6189 above the corner of A-2 Walls 2126 and an unnumbered segment turning to the south (ABM18-A-1196)



Western part of Area A (“uptown”) at end of 2018

Stratum A-0

Stratum 0 contains what once was A1 and was renamed A-0 when Iron IIA elements were clearly revealed last season. It includes the modern terrace walls and the burials. Dating these elements is problematic. The terrace walls appear to be Ottoman, while the burials (6904, 6182) might be early Islamic, based on C14 dating of a similar burial excavated in previous season.