

Area B-Field Report, 2017

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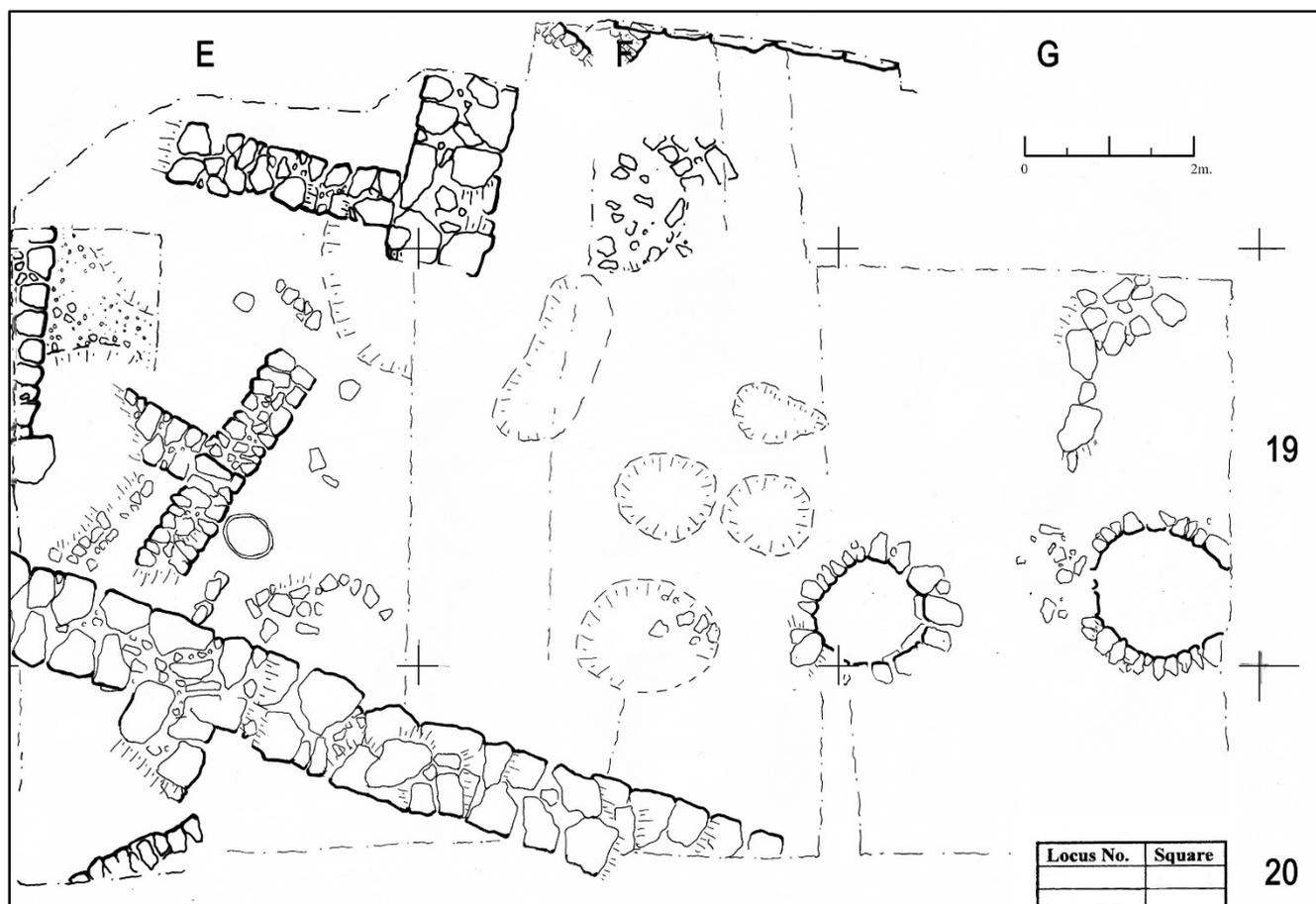
During seasons of 2015 and 2016 six main phases were identified (B1-B6) in Area B, located on the top of the eastern slope of the upper mound (Grid Square #306#).



View of the northern end of the tell looking west; star marks Area B

Phase B1 consists mainly of stone built cist tombs and an extensive agricultural soil layer of the medieval or later period. Phase B2 was exposed only at the north-western corner of the area and consisted of a corner of a poorly preserved building and some pits. Phase B3 contained three sub-phases (B3a, b, c) of a large building (Building 3701) that was dated to the Late Persian-Early Hellenistic period. In phase B4 dated to the Iron Age II, a massive wall system running from south-east to north-west was identified. In phase B5 a single building (Building 3790) was partially exposed, with ash layers and rich Iron Age I pottery assemblage. Phase B6 below is a Middle Bronze Age glacis, sloping down in a steep angle from the north-west to the south-east. Into the gravel composing this glacis many installations, pits and burials from various periods were dug and built, including two Iron Age stone lined silos (4769 and 4787), an Iron Age mudbrick installation filled with ash (3782) and a late Middle Bronze Age IIb burial (4788).

In 2017 excavation concentrated on exposing more of the phase B4 wall system and on better understanding the stratigraphic relations of phases B6, B5 and B4. Following the direction of phase B4 wall system, the excavation area extended west into squares D/19 and D/20, and south towards the southern halves of squares E/20 and F/20. Further excavation commenced in square E/19 and the northern half of square E/20. Additional excavation was done in the two Iron Age silos in square G/19 and the ash filled installation in square F/18.



Plan of Area B at end of 2016, all phases together

In addition to expanding our understanding of the Iron Age II phase B4, this year we've also identified an earlier phase of the Iron Age I. The features of last year's phase B5, are now assigned to Phase B5a, while the newly exposed earlier stratigraphic layer below is phase B5b. Both are dated within the Iron Age I based on stratigraphic relations and pottery assemblages. Under the floor level of phase B5b we've exposed a single baby jar burial inside phase B6 Middle Bronze Age glacis. This new baby burial joins an adult burial of the same period exposed in 2016 as part of sub-phase B6a.

Regarding the earlier phases of Area B, this year we've exposed a few more burials, cist tombs and other features of phase B1. Two additional buildings were partially exposed; both are clearly later than phase B4, but currently only one of them can be surly assigned to a phase later than B3. Both were tentatively assigned to phase B2, but since no connection between them or between each of them and the walls assigned to phase B2 in the previous season (2015) could be established, we've subdivided the phase into three (B2₍₁₎, B2₍₂₎ and B2₍₃₎) until we can better understand it. Of the Late

Persian-Early Hellenistic phase (B3) only a single wall and a few patches of the typical pebbled floors were exposed.

Phase B1

Phase B1 features that were excavated in previous seasons (2015-16) consisted of late pit burials, stone constructed tombs, meagre support walls, a few deep disturbances cutting into the earlier phases and a layer of dark agricultural soil extending through squares F-G/19-20. All these features were grouped into one phase although they do not comprise a comprehensive stratum and the relationship of the burials and other features to each other is not entirely clear, neither is their exact date. The excavation of Phase B1 features this season mainly included work on and around the stone built cist tomb 3739 in Square E/20, the excavation of a few smaller cist tombs in squares D/20 and E/20.

Table 1: Summary of the main features of Phase B1 excavated in 2017

Stratum	Squares	Definition	Loci	Walls	Proposed date
B1	E-F/20	Fills and accumulations below topsoil	5722, 5728, 5729, 5730, 5759, 5757		Late Medieval / Ottoman
	D-E/20	Stone filling on B4 walls	5703, 5740		
	D/20	Graves, cist tombs and fill inside them	5731, 5735, 5752, 5750		
	E/20	Graves, cist tombs and fill inside them	3739, 5709, 5741, 5745, 5746, 5747, 5749		
	D/19	Pit	5766		
Topsoil	D/19	Topsoil	5702		
	D/20		5701		
	E/20		5705		
	F/20		5723, 5727, 5734, 5743, 5757, 5758		
	F/1		5768		

Cist Tomb 3739 and Other Tombs in square E/20

Cist tomb 3739 is very similar in all aspects to cist tomb 3732 excavated less than 2 meters to the west in the previous seasons and described in detail in previous reports. Locus 5703, a filling of small field stones separates between the two. Tomb 3739, measures 1.8 m long and ca. 90 cm wide and is covered by four oval cover stones surrounded by smaller stones. It was discovered in 2015 under top-soil and below a secondary burial pit with bones of several individuals (3713), but was left intact until this season. The outer side of the north wall of the tomb was mostly exposed in 2016; it was dug into earlier layers of accumulations: 4708 and below it 4755. These layers were attributed to Phase B4 and were described in the 2016 field report. The eastern corner of tomb 3739 sits directly on wall 5733, and its southern wall directly on wall 5721, both walls of Phase B4.

The fill inside the tomb, as well as the interred skeleton, were excavated as locus 5709, leaving the stone walls standing to a height of ca. 50 cm. The walls were lined with two or three courses of field stones and under those were larger boulders and an ashlar block, most likely in secondary use. The interred skeleton inside the tomb belonged to an adult, possibly male, and like all other surviving skeletons in the area, was lying supine with its head to the west and feet to the east. South of the tomb, layers of disturbed accumulations, nearly 1.0 m deep, were excavated – 5722 and 5729 – before the top of phase B4 wall 5721 was exposed. The fills directly below the tomb and in the corner formed by B4 walls 5733 and 5721 were excavated as 5725 to a depth of 10cm, before packed earth floor 5742 of phase B4 was reached at ca. 400.30m a.s.l.

Also resting directly on Phase B4 wall 5721 were two small child's tombs, built of small and medium field stones placed between the larger boulders of the original Iron Age wall. These are tombs 5746 and 5749, the fill inside them, excavated as 5745 and 5747 respectively, contained mainly Iron Age material mixed with recent sherds. In tomb 5746 only bone fragments were recovered, while in tomb 5749 a nearly complete child skull was found.

Finally, tomb 5741 is another phase B1 tomb in square E/20. This tomb was found south of phase B4 wall 5720, surrounded by disturbed accumulations (5728, 5729 and 5730) about 20cm below the top soil. It was constructed by placing 9 medium sized field stones in an elliptic shape, about 0.8 m wide. Inside it only a few tiny fragments of bones were found.



Left: ABM17-B-013: View from the north at the north wall of tomb 3739. In the foreground, Phase B4 Wall 3789

Right: ABM17-FPh-106: View from the south on grave 5746 built between boulders of Phase B4 wall 5721. The corner of Phase B4 walls 3789 and 4790 is in the background



Left: ABM17-B-122: View from the north at tomb 5749, with skull in-situ.

Right: ABM17-FPh-046: View from the south on small grave 5741. In the background, the top of Phase B4 Wall 5721 with Phase B1 stones filling 5740 in the top left corner of the photo.

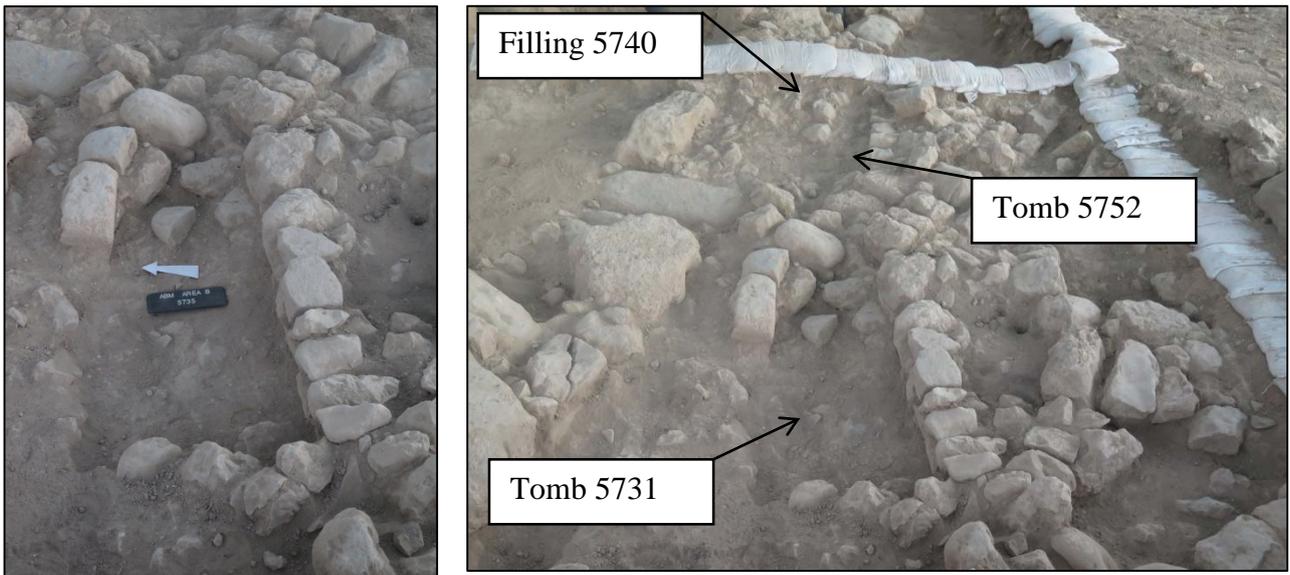
Tombs in Square D/20

Two cist tombs were found in square D/20. Only the bottom courses of their walls were preserved, while the higher courses and possibly the cover stone slabs were displaced by modern activities on the Tell (most likely our tractor).

The larger of the two is tomb 5731. It is elliptic in shape, about 1.7 m long and 0.8 m wide. It was exposed about 0.75 m below the top soil, and was preserved only to a height of 0.5 m. Tomb 5735 was dug into debris 5736 and 5738 related to phase B2₍₃₎ building 5737 (see below) and its construction damaged the building's corner of walls 5737 and 5753, removing it almost completely. The fill inside

the tomb was excavated as 5735 to a depth of about 0.4 m. A nearly complete adult skeleton was recovered at ca. 401.13 m.

The other tomb in square D/20 is tomb 5752 which was constructed into a small space between B2₍₃₎ wall 5753 in the south and B4 wall 5720 in the north. The tomb was preserved only to a height of a single course of field stones (ca. 25cm). It is elliptic, about 1.3 m long and 0.4 m wide. The construction of the tomb's south wall damaged the north face of phase B2₍₃₎ wall 5753, while the tombs north wall rests directly on top of phase B4 wall 5720. The fill inside the tomb was excavated as 5750 to a depth of ca. 30cm. Only bone fragments and a few glass fragments were found.



Left: ABM17-B-080: View from the west at tomb 5731

Right: ABM17-FPh-093: View from the west on square D/20. Phase B4 wall 5720 crossing from North-West to South-East.

Tomb 5752 also relates to feature 5740, a kind of field stones filling placed into gaps and crevices of the early B4 wall 5720 in order to make a more or less leveled surface. This surface abuts the northern wall of tomb 5752 in the south, boulders of phase B4 wall 5720 in the west and north, and boulders of B4 wall 5721 in the east. Originally we thought this surface is in fact a constructional element, part of the B4 Iron Age wall itself, but its excavation yielded glass pieces and a simple metallic earring with a stone bead (Reg. no. 57156), so well preserved, it was estimated to be not more than a few centuries old. It is very likely this surface is yet another grave whose floor shows some more effort in its construction.

In the section at the south west corner of square D/20 another wall was exposed: 3769. It was exposed ca. 0.5m below the surface and it is ca. 30cm high. Made of medium sized field stones and slightly

curved, we suspect this is a wall of yet another phase B1 tomb dug into the debris of 5717 and 5738 related to phase B2₍₃₎.

Other Phase B1 Elements

Other elements exposed this season and assigned to Phase B1 are pit 5766 and stones surface 5759. The later was assigned to B1 on account of its proximity to the surface and on the fact that it seals accumulations 5790 attributed to earlier Phase B4. It does not seem to be intentionally constructed as a living surface, and in fact the stones are quite haphazardly organized. It is a sloping surface dotted with field stones found about 20cm below top soil, ca. 40cm deep in some places and following the natural slope of the Tell from west (399.80) to east (399.36). In the north it is bounded



ABM17-B-FPh-168: View from the east on stones of 5759

by the top of phase B4 wall 3715. Based on the levels of the extensive layer of dark agricultural soil on the opposite side of this wall, it was already suggested in 2016's field report that Wall 3715 was known to the people who worked the terraces on this side of the tell. It is possible that the same people are responsible for stones layer 5759 on its southern side (maybe as part of agricultural field clearing).

Pit 5766 is an amorphous pit, ca. 0.6 m deep, the contour of which was not identified. It was assigned to phase B1 as it had clearly cut into the corner of Phase B2₍₂₎ walls 5704 and 5724 as well as into collapses 5706 within these walls. The pottery from the pit included Iron Age and Medieval-Ottoman sherds, but these might have also come from the loci around it. At the bottom of the pit we've reached the top of Phase B4 Wall 5791.

The excavation of the many cist tombs of Phase B1 evinces a similar picture in terms of construction methods and burial practices. The fact that all the cist tombs are generally built in the same orientation, none of them cuts or damages another, and all the surviving buried individuals show the same burial position, suggests they were all built within a single period, probably sometime within the 18th or 19th centuries. It is possible that the cover stones of the largest cist tombs were still exposed on the ground at the beginning of the 20th century. Aerial photographs of the Tell from the 1940's shows a few elements composed of 4-5 stone slabs arranged in a line at the vicinity where today we are excavating area B. Only in one instance have we found one burial on top of another: pit grave 3713

with disarticulated parts of several individuals on top of cist tomb 3739. The other main feature of Phase B1 is the extensive layer of dark agricultural soil described in detail in the 2016 field report. This dark soil contained many large decorated fragments of the famous Rashiya el-Fukhar pottery which suggests a contemporary or slightly later date for the agricultural use of the area in the 19th and early 20th century.

Phase B2

As already noted in the introduction, two buildings that were partially exposed this summer were assigned to Phase B2. However, because an actual connection between those two buildings or between them and the building and pits previously unearthed in 2015 could not be established, the phase was subdivided into sub-phases B2₍₁₎, B2₍₂₎ and B2₍₃₎. This is not a chronological subdivision; rather each of these sub-phases represents a stratigraphic layer or a building later than phases B3 and B4 exposed in a different square with no clear evidence of them being contemporary.

Table 2: Summary of the main features of Phase B2 excavated in 2017

Stratum	Squares	Definition	Loci	Walls	Proposed date
B2 ₍₂₎	D/19	<u>Building 5704</u> Fills Collapse	5707, 5732. 5706	5704, 5724	Late Hellenistic /Early Roman
B2 ₍₃₎	D/20	<u>Building 5737</u> Debris & accumulations Installation	5717, 5738, 5739, 5736, 5751, 5756 5754	5737, 5753	Late Hellenistic /Early Roman

Sub-Phase B2₍₁₎

(Square E/19-18) – Building 3740

The features of this sub-phase were exposed and described in the 2015 field report. A detailed description is brought here only in order to present a complete picture of all elements of Phase B2 and its subdivisions. The main element exposed of this sub-phase was the corner of two walls in the southwest of Square E/18 and the northwest of Square E/19. Wall 3740 runs for 1.75m from the northern edge of the excavation area towards the south where it meets with Wall 3741. The later runs for 1.8m to the western edge of the excavation area. Both walls were exposed approx. 402.40-402.30m a.s.l, were preserved only one course high and were composed of two rows of small and medium field stones. No related debris layer was identified.

Another element attributed to B2₍₁₎ is Wall 3720, a north-south row of nicely shaped field stones laid above the western row of Phase B3 Wall 3701. The wall was exposed at approx. 402.40m a.s.l and is nearly three meters long. Since there is no connection to the corner of Walls 3740 and 3741 attributed to this subphase, it cannot be said with certainty that Wall 3720 and these walls were contemporary, only that both post-date B3 Building 3701.

Sub-Phase B2₍₂₎

(Square D/19) – Building 5704

Again only a corner of a building, excavated in the southern half of square D/19, comprises this sub-phase. Wall 5704 runs for 2.5 m from the western edge of the excavation area to the south-east, and forms a corner with wall 5724 which runs north-east and was preserved only 1.8 m long. The corner itself, where the two walls were supposed to meet, is in fact missing, cut away by phase B1 pit 5766. Wall 5704 was exposed 10-15cm below top soil at approx. 402.60m a.s.l.; preserved only one course high and composed of two rows of small and medium field stones. Wall 5724 exposed at approx. 402.40m a.s.l. is composed of two rows of slightly larger field stones but was also preserved only one course high. Within this corner an extensive collapsed layer 5706 was exposed. The finds from the collapsed debris included bones and pottery, mostly dating from the Hellenistic to the Early Roman period. Unfortunately we could not excavate the collapse to its floor because of safety issues.

No floors or debris related to wall 5704 or to wall 5724 were found on the outside of the building. South of Wall 5704 accumulations 5707 of gray soil and scattered fieldstones were excavated to a depth of 20cm before the wall itself was floating. East of Wall 5724 similar accumulations were excavated in locus 5732, below which Wall 5767 and floor 5775 of Phase B3 were discovered.

Building 5704 is of a later date than Phase B3 building 3701. This is made clear by the fact that Wall 5724 'rides' on top of phase B3 Wall 5767, and by the exposing of phase B3 pebbled floors in lower levels than the floating levels of building 5704 walls. A connection between sub-phases B2₍₂₎ and B2₍₁₎ could not be established, and in fact the orientation of the two buildings seems to be completely different suggesting they are not contemporary. If this is true, further excavation would be needed to understand which one is the earlier since both sit directly on top of Phase B3 walls and elements.



Left: ABM17-B-106: Walls 5704 and 5724 of Building 5704. View from northwest.

Right: ABM17-B-055: Detail of collapse 5706 and Wall 5704. View from southeast.

Sub-Phase B2₍₃₎

(Square D/20) – Building 5737

Excavated in the southern half of square D/20, building 5737 was hard to articulate and expose within locus 5717, a layer of debris and collapsed stones 'hiding' the walls of the building among a few later Phase B1 cist tombs (5731, 5752). Locus 5717 composed of large and medium basalts and field stones and contained a large quantity of pottery including two nearly complete juglets and one nearly complete Iturian jar. It is very likely that the debris of 5717 relate to the walls of building 5737.

Again, this sub-phase comprises only a corner of the building itself, the rest still remains outside the excavation area. Wall 5737 runs for 1.5 m from the southern edge of the excavation area to the northeast, and forms a corner with wall 5753 which runs southeast for nearly 3 meters and reaches the southeast corner of square D/20 where it continues outside the edge of the excavation area. The corner itself, where the two walls were supposed to meet, is in fact missing, cut away by phase B1 cist tomb 5731. Wall 5737 was exposed 80cm below top soil at approx. 402.40m a.s.l.; preserved two courses high and composed of two rows of medium field stones. Wall 5753 exposed at approx. 401.25m a.s.l. is composed of two-three rows of small and medium field stones, preserved only one course high. An interesting quarter-circle-shaped installation 5754 built inside the corner of these two walls leaves no doubt that they are contemporary to each other and part of the same room. It is built of fieldstones and was preserved two courses high. Its exact function, as a bench, some kind of podium or a constructional element is unclear. Outside of the building, locus 5736 was excavated north of the building, and locus 5738 west of it. Both these loci were similar in matrix to locus 5717 above them,

and both were also probably disturbed by later activities such as the construction of phase B1 tomb 5731. No floors were discovered in these loci, and below them debris and ash belonging to earlier phases (5755) started appearing lower than the floating levels of the walls of building 5737 at approx. 401.0m a.s.l.

Within the corner formed by Walls 5737 and 5753 a very limited space could be excavated: layer 5739 was similar to 5717, 5738 and 5736, composed of debris and collapsed field stones. It was excavated to a depth of 40cm but was devoid of any finds. Below it, a layer of brown soil and scattered rocks (5751) was excavated to a depth of 25cm containing a mixture of pottery from the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period. A floor was not found.



Left: ABM17-B-083: Walls 5737 and 5753 of Building 5737. In the background, Phase B4 Wall 5720 running northwest-southeast. View from southeast.

Right: ABM17-B-071: Detail of corner installation 5754. View from southeast

Again no actual connection between the buildings of phase B2₍₂₎ and B2₍₃₎ could be established. Although they do seem to share similar orientation, preliminary pottery analysis of building 5737 presents earlier types than that of building 5704, and the same orientation is shared with Building 3701 of Phase B3 as well. It cannot be ruled out that Phase B2₍₃₎ is very close in date or even contemporary to Phase B3, something that cannot be said regarding Phase B2₍₂₎. Building 5737 sits above a layer of ashy debris and collapses (loci 5755, 5761, 5777, 5778 described below). These debris, are not yet fully understood and may belong to phase B4 or even phase B5.

Phase B3

The excavated features of Phase B3 exposed during the previous two seasons comprise part of a very substantial building, designated Building 3701. Its pottery dates it to the late Persian-early

Hellenistic period. The building contained three phases (B3c, B3b, B3a). It was built above a fill laid on top of the Iron Age structures (see B4, B5 below). This season our work on Phase B3 concentrated in only one area: the southern half of square D/19. Here we expected to find the continuation towards the west of Wall 3759 and Floor 3718 of Phase B3b-c, dismantle them and reach earlier layers below.

Table 3: Summary of the main features of Phase B3 excavated in 2017

Stratum	Squares	Definition	Loci	Walls	Proposed date
B3	D/19-20	Cultural accumulations	5760, 5781, 5783	5767	Late Persian/ Early Hellenistic
		Pebbled floors	5719, 5773, 5775		
		Floors make up	5726, 5784		
B4-3	D/19	Fills under Phase B3 walls and floors	5792		

Wall 5767 and floors 5773, 5719 and 5775

Wall 5767 was exposed at approx. 402.0m a.s.l, below accumulations of gray soil and scattered fieldstones 5732 (Phase B2₍₂₎). It was built of large and medium sized field stones, two rows wide and preserved to a height of a single course. The wall begins in the south-eastern corner of square D/19 and runs west for only 1.1 m. Its continuation further to the west must have been cut by Phase B1 pit 5766 and/or by the construction of Phase B2₍₂₎ building 5704. Indeed, Phase B2₍₂₎ Wall 5724 rides on top of the western end of Wall 5767, thus by the time Building 5704 was constructed, Building 3701, or at least its south-western part was already out of use. A fill about 20cm deep separates the floating level of Wall 5767 and the top of Phase B4 Wall 5791.

Wall 5767 is in fact the western continuation of Wall 3759 (square E/19) excavated in 2015 and dismantled in 2016. This is the southernmost preserved wall of Phase B3 Building 3701. A single pebbled floor, 3718, was exposed related to this wall and abutting it from the north, while south of it the entire area was disturbed by the construction of Phase B1 tomb 3732 (see 2015, 2016 field reports) and no floor or related debris were found. The same floor was also recorded this season north of Wall 5767 as locus 5775 in a small and limited area between the wall's north face and the fills below the floating levels of Wall 5724. Floor 5775 is a patchy pebbled floor, very similar to 3718, located at 401.93m a.s.l.

Although the continuation of Wall 5767 to the west was not found, a rich layer of cultural debris (5760, 5783, 5781) and a pebbled floor (5773, 5719) was found south of it, confirming that Building 3701 extended further south than we assumed until now. The rich accumulations 5760, and 5783 and 5781 west of it, were excavated to a depth of almost 30cm, and below them a few patches of

a pebbled floor were found: floor 5773 (401.88m a.s.l.) in square D/19, continuing as floor 5719 (401.87m a.s.l.) in the north-western corner of square D/20. The accumulations on the pebbled floor contained pottery from the Iron Age I to the Early Hellenistic period. In addition an iron knife blade, a bone tool and a cache of four hammer stones were found on the floor.

Below Phase B3 floor, loci 5784 and 5726 were excavated as the floor make-up, but the top of Phase B4 walls soon appeared. Phase B3 floor 5719 in square D/20 was only 10-2cm above the top of Wall 5720, and floor 5773 in square D/19 was approx. 20-5cm above Phase B4 Wall 5791. A fill of gray silty soil with white chalky bits was noted below the floors (5784, 5792). Although this fill is abutting Wall 5791 of Phase B4, we have encountered fills with similar matrix elsewhere in Area B separating Phase B3 floors and walls from earlier phases of occupation. It was excavated to a depth of ca. 40cm, containing a mix of pottery from the Iron Age I to the Late Persian-Early Hellenistic period, before the matrix changed to lighter mudbrickish silt.



Left: ABM17-FPh-404: A stratigraphic view of Wall 5767 of Phase B3 under Wall 5724 of Phase B2₍₂₎ and above Wall 5791 of Phase B4. View from south.

Right: ABM17-FPh-200: Part of pebbled floor 5773. View from west.

Phase B4

At the end of 2016, Phase B4 comprised of a 9 m long and 1 m wide massive wall that runs from north-east to south-west near the southern border of the excavation. For convenience, and following the development of the excavation, we sectioned this long wall into three separate wall numbers: 3715 was assigned to its eastern part in Square F/20 that was exposed in 2015; this part of the wall had been superimposed by the corner of Phase B3 Walls 1301 and 1302. Wall 3789 is the continuation in Square E/20, from the eastern border of the square up to a bonded corner with Wall 4790, which runs to the southwest. Wall 4740 is the continuation from this corner with Wall 4790 to

the western edge of square E/19. This part of the wall appeared to have been added in a later phase, and thus was assigned to Phase B4a.

There was no doubt that although Wall 4740 might have been added in a later phase, it was in use together with Wall 3789; they float at the same level and both cut Wall 3790 of Phase B5. Since Walls 4740, 4790 and 3789 formed a T-shaped corner, we assumed they all belong to the same system which had to be later than Phase B5 wall 3790. Wall 3715 seemed more problematic, as it seemed of slightly different construction, slightly different orientation, and had a much lower floating level.

Table 4: Summary of the main features of Phase B4 excavated in 2017

Stratum	Squares	Definition	Loci	Walls	Proposed date
B4	D-E/19-20	<u>Western casement:</u> Accumulations/fills	5718, 5770, 5801	5791, 4740, 4790, 5720	IAII
	E/20	<u>Middle casement</u> Accumulations/fills Floors Foundation trenches?	5725, 5744, 5780 5742 5811, 5788	3789, 5721, 5733	
	F/20	<u>Eastern casement</u> Accumulations/fills Floors Installation	5782, 5790, 5794, 5804 5785, 5806 5807	3715, 5808	
B5-B4	D-E/20	Debris & accumulations abutting walls of B4 and/or B5	5748, 5761, 5763, 5777, 5778, 5786		IAI-II
	E/19	Pit	5803		

This season we've excavated this long wall further to the south east and to the north-west. Wall 3715, the south-eastern section in square F/20, was exposed further and reached a length of 4.5m. In the north-west of the area Wall 5791, exposed to a length of 3.5 meters is the continuation of Wall 4740 in D/19. All together this massive wall is now 14.2m long, and the walls comprising it, from west to east are 5791 in square D/19, 4740 and 3789 in E/19-20 and 3715 in F/20.

Two meters south of this massive wall, a 14.5 meters long and 1 m wide wall running parallel to it was also exposed. Again, for convenience and following the progress of the excavation we divided it into several wall numbers: 5720 in square D/20, 5721 in square E/20 and 5808 in F/20-F/1. Two walls running from north-east to south-west between the two parallel walls form three casement-like rooms. The first and western of the two is Wall 4790, already discovered and partially exposed in

2016. This wall forms T-shape corners with Walls 4740 and 3789 at its northern end and with Walls 5720 and 5721 at its southern end. The second, western one, is Wall 5733 which forms a corner with 3789 and 3715 at its northern end, and with 5721 and 5808 at its southern end.

The Western Casement

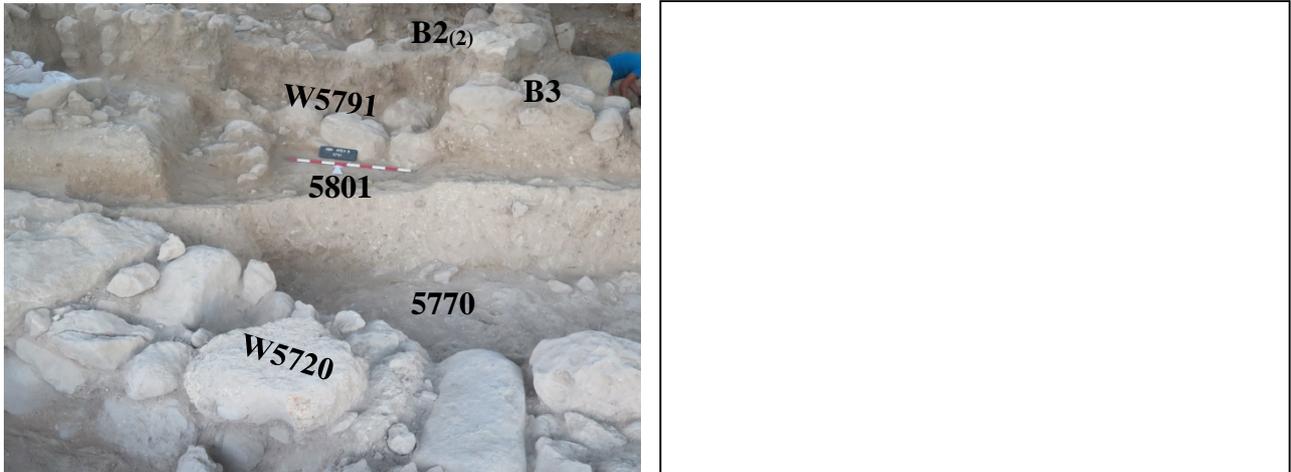
The western casement room is bounded by Wall 5791/4740 in the north, Wall 4790 in the east and Wall 5720 in the south. Its western wall was not found yet, though it might have appeared a day after the end of excavation at the base of the western section of square D/19 (at 401.30m a.s.l.) when it was trimmed for sections drawing.

Wall 5791 is the continuation of Wall 4740 in square D/19. It was exposed at approx. 401.80-401.70m a.s.l., about 10-20cm below Phase B3 floors. Wall 5767 of Phase B3 (continuation of Wall 3759) sits almost directly on top of Wall 5791 and has the same orientation. Although we did not reach the floating levels of Wall 5791, we can assume it floats at a similar level as Wall 4740 at about 401.0m a.s.l. On the north side the wall excavation did not go on below Phase B2₍₂₎ collapse 5706 because of safety issues, but further to the east, in square E/19 the foundation trench the wall (here assigned as Wall 4740) cuts Phase B5a wall 3790 and "bench" 4797.

Wall 4790, the wall separating the western and middle casements of Phase B4 wall system, is 1 m wide and runs for approx. 2.3 m in a northeast-southwest direction, from its T-shaped corner with Walls 3789 and 4740 to its opposite T-corner with Walls 5720 and 5721. The top course of the wall (about 40cm in height) was either removed or shifted by the builders of phase B1 tomb 3732, and was only preserved at the corners where the stones are at a height of approx. 400.15-400.20 m. The lower courses at the center of the wall were exposed (at about 400.70-400.90m) only after the dismantling tomb 3732. In fact, it appears the tomb builders used the boulders of Wall 4790 to construct the lower courses of their tomb. About a 40cm gap at the center of the wall is completely gone. Wall 4790 also has a peculiar feature which it shares with nearby Wall 3789: two very different floating levels. This will be discussed later below.

Wall 5720 is the southern wall of the western casement. It runs northwest from its T-corner with Walls 5721 and 4790 and into the edge of the excavation area at the border of square D/20. It was exposed 50cm below the top soil at approx. 401.70-401.30m a.s.l. The wall was slightly damaged by Phase B1 tomb 5752 and was used as foundation for filling 5740 as already described above. South of the wall, outside the casement room, a series of collapses and debris loci were excavated. These are 5755, 5777 and 5798 - ashy debris, 30-40cm deep, with many scattered stones, abutting the wall all along its southern face. Building 5737 of Phase B2₍₃₎ was constructed directly on these stone piles (particularly on 5777). Relating these collapses and debris to Wall 5720 and to Phase B4 is

problematic: among these debris an early wall, 5797, was exposed, and the debris, especially in 5755 and 5798 seem to be more substantial around it than in proximity to the B4 wall.



Left: ABM17-FPh-228: The western casement, looking north.

Right: The Painted Phoenician vessel from locus 5801.

Inside the western casement no floor was reached yet. The accumulations inside the casement were divided (northern and southern) by the balk between squares D/20 and D/19. At the top of the accumulations in the northern half of the casement (D/19) was fill 5792 (401.67-401.40m) which as mentioned above was a fill made in preparation for the construction of Phase B3 building. Below it, accumulation 5801 of eroded mudbrick material and gray silt contained a rich assemblage of Iron Age II pottery, including large fragments of a nearly complete and richly decorated Bi-Chrome Painted Phoenician jar. Locus 5801 was excavated to 401.25m a.s.l. by the end of the season. In the southern half (D/20), only accumulations 5718 were excavated to a depth of 35cm (401.28-400.95m). The matrix in 5718 resembles that of 5801, but it is less rich in finds.

In the eastern edge of the western casement, at the west of square E/20, the excavation went deeper. Here we already excavated in 2016 the accumulations of 4759, a fill similar to 5718 that was later disturbed by the builders of Phase B1 tomb 3732. The same fill (4759) also covered Wall 4791, a wall running nearly parallel and adjacent to Wall 4790, but of earlier phase B5a (the T-corner of Walls 4790-4740-4789 rides on top of it). Thus we may conclude that a floor of this casement can only be expected above the top of Phase B5a Wall 4790 (400.68). Hopefully we will find it next season.

The Middle Casement

The middle casement is the only room of the B4 wall system that has all its four walls exposed. It is bounded in the north by Wall 3789, in the east by Wall 5733, in the south by Wall 5721 and in the west by Wall 4790.

Wall 3789 is a massive, two-row wide wall that continues Wall 4740/5791 to the east in Square E/20. It begins near the western border of the square in a T-corner with walls 4790 and 4740 and runs southeast to a T-corner with Walls 3715 and 5733. It was covered by a ca. 50 cm deep fill (4708) containing Iron Age I, II and Early Hellenistic - Late Persian pottery. On its northern side, excavated in 2016, the wall is abutted by 4747, a ca. 20 cm thick layer of gray fill with mostly Iron Age II pottery that was laid or leveled by the builders of Phase B4 on top of earlier accumulations (B5 floor 4764) and thus, it is attributed to Phase B4-5. Though no foundation trench for Wall 3789 was located on its north side (as for example for Wall 3715 (see below) and Wall 4740 (see above)), the accumulations of 4747, B5a Floor 4764, "bench" 4748 and installation 4763 and the B5b fills and floor (4783, 5762 and 5800) were cut into by Wall 3789. It should also be reminded that the western continuation of Wall 3789, denoted Wall 4740 cut through B5a Wall 3790 and "bench" 4797. Wall 3789 has a peculiar feature: on its western 1.5 meters it is floating at approx. 400.40m a.s.l., while its remaining eastern 2 meters do not float yet (at 399.73m a.s.l.). This is not a result of a different constructional phase, as the stones on in the courses of the walls all bond together and there is no clear seam that separates the two parts of the wall. This same peculiar feature is also observed in Wall 4790, where the northern half of the wall (about 1m) which corners Wall 3789, floats at approx. 400.60m a.s.l. while the southern half of the wall does not yet float (at 399.85m a.s.l.). This higher floating level of the north-western quadrant of the middle casement has allowed the preservation inside the casement, and only within this corner, of the early remains of Phases B5a and B5b.

Wall 5733 was exposed almost directly below the top soil at approx. 400.61m. It is the wall dividing between the middle and eastern casements of the Phase B4 wall system. It starts in a T-corner with Walls 3789 and 3715, and runs for ca. 2m south-west to a T-corner with Walls 5721 and 5808. Like the other walls of the system it is 1m wide and built of large boulders and rocks. It was preserved to a height of more than 1.5m.

Wall 5721, the southern wall of the middle casement, was exposed at approx. 401.20-400.90m a.s.l. below top soil and a series of small Phase B1 tombs that were built directly on top of it using its boulders as support or as walls (See phase B1 above). The wall begins in a T-corner with Walls 5733 and 5808 and runs North-West for 4.5 meters to another T-corner with Walls 5720 and 4790. South of Wall 5721 a series of fills were excavated below Phase B1 tombs, beginning with 5744 and reaching 50cm deep with 5780 below it. These accumulations were tentatively attributed to Phase B4 since they currently relate only to Wall 5721.



Left: ABM17-B-115: The middle casement from the west. Note top of Phase B5a flat stones in the northwestern corner where casement walls are floating. Phase B4 floor 5742 is at the southeastern corner at the far end of the casement.

Right: Floor 5742 at the southeastern corner of the middle casement.

The space inside the middle casement was partially excavated in 2016. At the top locus 4755 was a ca. 20 cm deep gray fill layer partly disturbed by B1 tombs and rich in Iron Age II pottery. Below 4755 a cleaner Iron Age IIA debris layer was excavated about 15cm deep as locus 4792. This season locus 5725 was excavated below 4792. At approx. 400.30m a.s.l. a clayish floor-like surface 4742, devoid of any finds, was exposed at the south-eastern corner of the casement, and approaching the faces of both Wall 5733 and W5721. Below this floor fills in locus 4748 were excavated to a depth of 10cm before remains of Phase B5a appeared at the center and northwest of the casement space. These were excavated as 5772, 5787 and 5789 (See Phase B5 below). A narrow section (5811) was opened parallel to the north face of Wall 5721 and perpendicular to the not-floating part of Wall 4790, assuming B5 remains were not found here because of the digging of Phase B4 foundation trench. In addition, another section (5788) was opened at the eastern 1/3ed of the casement, adjacent to the western face of Wall 5733 and perpendicular to the not-floating part of wall 3789, where remains of B5 could not be located as well. These two loci were considered as possible foundation trenches, but both proved to be almost devoid of finds except a few Iron Age I-II sherds, a shell bead and a bone tool.

The Eastern Casement

The eastern casement is bordered in the north by Wall 3715, in the east by Wall 5733, and in the south by Wall 5808. Most of the eastern section of Wall 3715 was exposed in 2015. Its eastern end was further exposed during 2016 and this season as approximately 25-30 cm of topsoil covering the



ABM16-B-310: View from the north to B4 Wall 3715, preserved to a height of 1.6 meters, built on top of the MB glacis gravel.

top of the wall (4712, 5758) was removed. The wall begins at the eastern border of the excavation at square F/20 and runs northwest to the western border of the same square where it forms a T-corner with Walls 5733 and 3789. This western part of the wall, exposed in 2015 at about 400.55m a.s.l was preserved to a height of ca. 1.6 m. Its floating level is ca. 399.30 m in the west and 398.90 m in the east. It is clear that Wall 3715 cuts into Phase B6 Middle Bronze Age IIB glacis and was also built on top of it (the stratigraphic relations of Wall 3715 and the Middle Bronze glacis were discussed in detail in

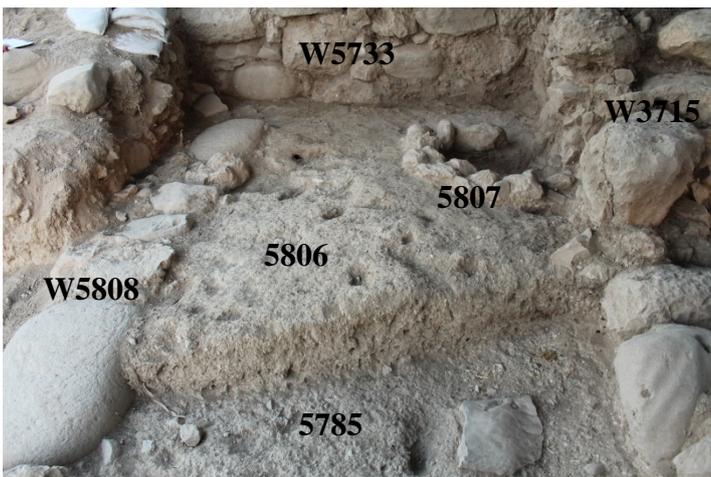
the 2016 field report). On its eastern reaches, Wall 3715 is also abutted by a 30 cm deep layer of debris directly below the topsoil (4728) and the accumulated dark soil assigned to Phase B1 (4752, described in 2016 field report). As the dark agricultural soil of Phase B1 clearly abuts Wall 3715, it is possible that this part of the massive wall system was used in Phase B1 as a terrace wall, or at least the inhabitants of Phase B1 knew this wall exists.

Wall 5808 was exposed at approx. 399.10m a.s.l. at the bottom of a ca. 70cm deep section cutting through the topsoil (5727) and highly disturbed accumulations (5757) at the edge of the natural slope of the hill. It was exposed to a length of 3.2m, starting near the northeastern corner of square G/1 and running north-west. There is a 60cm wide gap between the western end of Wall 5808 and the eastern face of Wall 5721. Although this could possibly be an opening or doorway, it is more likely that the wall will be found and the gap closed if the excavation deepens in the future. The wall closing the casement on the west is Wall 5733 which was already described above, and the wall closing it on the east was not yet found.

Inside the eastern casement excavation started from the topsoil (5723, 5743) at approx. 400.72m a.s.l. Below it layer of stones 5759, sloping with the natural direction of the hill was exposed at 399.80m and assigned to Phase B1 (see above). Below it the excavation reached a rich accumulation of dark soil with ash, organic material and scattered stones (5782, 5790 and 5794). Locus 5782 at the

eastern part of square F/20 was excavated 10cm deep, yielding Iron Age IIA pottery, when a stone slab was reached. In the locus around it, 5785 (398.76-398.70) a tuyere was found on an ashy floor surface. Accumulations 5790 and 5794 at the center and west of the same square were rich in burnt matrix, organic material (burnt olive pits) and Iron Age IIA pottery. Between them a line of disorganized stones (5804; 399.63-399.32m a.s.l.) was exposed but did not seem to be a built feature and was too high to be associated with any floor that might be found below (It was also higher than the top of Wall 5808). Once it was dismantled the two loci were united. These rich accumulations were excavated to a depth of up to 50cm. The most interesting find was a fascinating faience head of a bearded male statuette.

Further below, semi-circular installation 5807 built of medium fieldstones, and constructed against the south face of Wall 3715 was exposed as well as the top of Wall 5808 (399.12m a.s.l.). Around the installation and abutting all three walls of the casement room, the cultural accumulations were excavated as 5806 to a depth of 8cm before the end of the season. The floor (located at locus 5785 to the east) was not reached yet.



Left: ABM17-FPh_303: The eastern casement looking southeast.

Right: AMB17-FPh_296: The faience head in-situ in Locus 5790

Phase B4 Wall System - Summary

The system of massive walls of Phase B4 which is being excavated since 2015 has taken the shape of a long structure made of three consecutive casements – a casement wall or a building with casement-like rooms such as in a few Bit Hilani examples. Since no clear doorways were found to any of the casements, either from the north or south, a casement wall surrounding the upper part of the mound seems more likely at present. North and north-east of the wall system was a courtyard with silos and installations. Two stone lined silos, 4769 and 4787, were exposed and dug in 2016 and again this season in square G/19. These silos cut 1.6 and 1.1m deep into Phase B6 Middle Bronze Age glaucis

and the finds from the fill inside them suggest they belong to the same period as the casement wall. Another installation cutting deep into the glacis is 3782, a round pit with mudbrick walls that survived only partially. Its excavation in the south of square F/18 started in 2015 at 400.07m a.s.l. and this season we reached its bottom and the Middle Bronze Age glacis below at 399.20m. This installation was filled with ash and charcoal chunks, and separating the ashy black fill from the white gravel of the glacis it was dug into was quite easy even where the mudbrick walls did not survive. The ash also yielded beads, a scarab and a nearly complete painted Phoenician bowl.



Left: ABM17-FPh_275: Mudbrick installation 3782. Note the contour of ash against the white MB glacis gravel.

Right: AMB16-: Silo 4769, one of two stone lined silos north of Phase B4 wall system.



Left: Aerial photo of Phase B4 Wall System

Right: The fiancé head after partial cleaning in the Hebrew University lab

Phase B5

Phase B5 was defined in 2016. It composed of a single building – Building 3790. The building was discussed in detail in the 2016 report. This season we've identified an earlier phase which predates Building 3790. Thus the features that were previously assigned to Phase B5 are now assigned to B5a, and the earlier features are assigned to Phase B5b.

Table 5: Summary of the main features of Phase B4 excavated in 2017

Stratum	Squares	Definition	Loci	Walls	Proposed date
B5b	E/19-20	Cultural accumulations below B5a floors and walls. Floors and stone paving Ovens and installations	5762, 5764, 5765, 5774, 5789, 5810 5802, 5805, 5796 4782, 5776, 5793, 5795, 5812		IAI
B5a	E/20	Cultural accumulations, slab stones and packed earth floor	5772, 5787, 5809	3790, 4768, 4791, 4797, 4798	IAI
B5a/b	D/20	Debris and ash abutting B5 wall 5797	5798, 5755	5797	IAI
B6-B5	E/19	Accumulations below B5b floors	5799, 5800		IAI-MB

Phase B5a

Phase B5a is comprised of Building 3790 which was discussed in the report of 2016. Here a short summary of this building will be added with a few new elements of this phase that were newly discovered this season.

Two main walls were attributed to Phase B5a – 3790 (and its southern continuation in square E/20 – 4791) and 4768. The Building contains two small spaces (4757, 4749) north of Wall 3790, while on its south side, one rectangular wide space was excavated (4764). Wall 3790 is a southwest-northeast wall running ca 4.5 m from the northern face of Wall 4740. It seemed to have suffered some kind of trauma: the entire wall tilts to the east and its northern and southern ends tilt upward. Its western face floats 20-50 cm higher than its eastern face. Its northern and southern ends seem to float at higher levels (ca. 400.80 m), while its center seems to sink down and to ca. 400.55 m. Two round pillar bases were found flanking the northern end of Wall 3790, one on the east (in the eastern space of the building) and one on the west (in the northwestern space). The southern continuation of Wall 3790

is denoted 4791 and is found in the northwestern part of Square E/20, running into the balk below locus 5770 in square D/20; Wall 4740 clearly cuts the upper courses of Wall 3790/4791 and rides on top of its lower courses, creating the two wall segments.

The other B5a wall is 4768 in Square E/19. It abuts (not bonds with) the western face of Wall 3790. The western end of Wall 4768 was cut by a pit (4778). It probably continued to the west beyond the pit, penetrating under B3 Wall 3761.



ABM16-B-162: General view of Building 3790, looking south.

Building 3790 – Southwestern Space

In the southwestern room, bordered by Wall 4768 on the north, no floor was found. A feature in the southwestern room is Wall 4797, a sort of "bench" constructed of a one-course high north-south line of stones that runs parallel to the western face of Wall 3790. Debris 4772 abutted Wall 4797 from the west; it contained mostly Iron Age I pottery but no visible floor was detected. This season we dismantled this bench like feature (4797), excavated below it, and exposed a thin layer of mudbrick accumulations of phase B5b below.



Left: ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_097: The southwestern space of Building 3790, locus 4772, with the corner of Wall 4768 and W3790, looking north. Note shallow Wall or bench 4797 parallel to W3790
Right: ABM16_B_Fieldphoto_088: Floor 4748 in northwestern space of Building 3790, looking south. Note pillar bases (a and b) flanking northern end of Wall 3790.

Building 3790 – Northwestern Space

The debris accumulated in the northwestern room of Building 3790 and excavated in 2016 consisted of a layer of ash and stones that covered a beaten-earth floor (4749, 4748; 400.95 m-400.90 m) and an area of collapsed stones (4750). The ashy debris contained restorable pottery, including a pyxis and one or two storage jars, dated to Iron Age I. A large amount of burnt olive pits was found among the smashed jars (more than 30 in one of them), in the debris and on the floor itself. When the stones of 4750 were removed, a round, flat-topped pillar base was exposed under them at 400.89 m. This stone gives a good indication of the floor level in this room and an exact similar one was found on the other side (the eastern side) of Wall 3790. These pillar bases were resting directly on the Middle Bronze Age glacis gravel (Locus 4800), but while the gravel slopes to the southeast, a layer of fill separates between the Phase B5a floors and the sloping lower layers of gravel. The layer of fill west of Wall 3790 was excavated as 4785 and 4784 in 2016 and as 5764 this season. It was excavated to a depth of up to 30cm and contained mixed Middle Bronze and Iron Age I pottery. Below it a flat stone installation 5812 of phase B5b was found, and slightly lower than that and less than half a meter to the north a Middle Bronze Age II jar burial (5771) was exposed (see below).

Building 3790 – Eastern Space

East of Wall 3790, a layer of hard mudbrick material was reached (4764). This 7 cm deep layer of debris (ca. 400.70 m – 400.63 m) contained a large amount of Iron Age I and IIA pottery, including some possibly restorable vessels, and although no clear surface was found, this debris probably signify a floor that slopes from the level of the pillar base found in the north (ca. 400.80) to the level of an installation that was found at the southern end of 4764. This installation, locus 4763 (top: 400.72 m; bottom: 400.57 m), is made of small and medium field stones arranged in a horse-shoe shape, and it is adjacent to the north face of phase B4 Wall 3789. The late wall possibly cut through this installation, leaving only half of it intact. Another feature in this room is a bench-like wall, 4798, built of one row and two courses of field stones. It too seems to have been cut by Phase B4 wall 4740. The installation and bench like wall were dismantled this season. Below floor 4764 and its installation 4763, a 10 cm



ABM16-B: Debris and floor 4764 with installation 4763 in the foreground. Wall 3790 and bench 4798 in the background. On the left, Phase B4 Wall 3789. View from the southeast.

layer of accumulations was excavated in 2016 (4783). It sits directly on top of the Middle Bronze Age glacia layers in the north of square E/19, while in the south of the square, the gravel is much deeper because of the glacia's downslope. While excavating 4783, the contour of Phase B5b oven 4782 was found although at the time we assumed it belongs to floor 5764 of Phase B5a. This season we continued excavation below 4783, and exposed a floor of basalt slabs assigned to Phase B5b.

The continuation of the eastern space of building 3790 was exposed this season inside Phase B4 middle casement, limited to the northwestern corner of the casement where Walls 4790 and 3789 float at higher levels. Here a group of four large limestone slabs were found below accumulations 5748 (see B4 middle casement above). A thin layer of accumulations around these slabs (5722; 400.20m-400.08m a.s.l.) covered a small area in the corner of the casement where a clayish compact floor, 5787, was preserved at ca. 400.15m, running from under B4 Wall 3789 to the stone slabs themselves. The stone slabs were arranged more or less in a line from east to west at a height of approx. 400.30-400.05m a.s.l. The northern most stone slab is in fact under Wall 4790 of Phase B4. Accumulations 5772 and floor 5787 yielded mostly Iron Age I pottery, but also some Late Bronze and Iron Age IIA sherds. When the stone slabs were removed a

thin layer of very rich accumulation (5789) separated Phase B5a floor and stone slabs from Phase B5b floor below and its basalt slabs.



Left: ABM17-B-FPh_238: Phase B5a stone slabs (5772) and floor 5787 inside the northwestern corner of Phase B4 middle casement walls.

Right: ABM17-B-FPh_239: Detail of floor 5787 and its stratigraphic position below the floating level of Phase B4 Wall 3789.

Phase B5b

Phase B5b was defined this season, although one of its elements – oven 4782 – was already exposed in 2016. This phase lies directly below the floors and walls of Phase B5a. Its main characteristics are basalt stone slabs, and ovens. There are no walls associated with this phase.



*ABM17-B-FPh_364:
General view of
Phase B5b north of
B4 Walls 4740 and
3789. Looking
northwest.*

Phase B5b below Building 3790 Southwestern Space

The walls of Phase B5a were dismantled and removed in square E/19. The fill below Wall 4768 and bench like Wall 4797 was excavated as 5774 (400.77m – 400.60m), while the rest of the area below the southwestern space of building 3790 was assigned to 5765 (400.70-400.63m). The partially preserved oven 5793 was found resting on stone slabs (400.70-400.50m) below Wall 4768. The eastern half of this oven was destroyed by Wall 3790. Another oven (5795; 400.66-400.58m), not much of it survived, was located partially under Wall 4797. This oven continues in the west outside the excavation area in square D/19. The space between these ovens was mostly eroded mudbrick material. At ca. 400.60m a.s.l., a hard clayish surface was noted (5796), possibly the floor.



Left: ABM17-B-FPh_257: Floor 5796 after dismantling of "bench" 4797. Oven 5793 at the lower left corner, and oven 5796 on the right side. Note the floating level of B4 Wall 4740 in the background, and of B5a Wall 3790 on the left. View from the north.

Right: ABM17-B-FPh_264: Locus 5764 below the northwestern space of Phase B5a looking southeast. No floor surface was located, but note installation 5812 and oven 5793 right below B5a Wall 3790. In the bottom left corner of the photo note one of the pillar bases marking the floor level of Phase B5a. Also note the remains of a MB jar burial 5771 just to the left (north) of installation 5812.

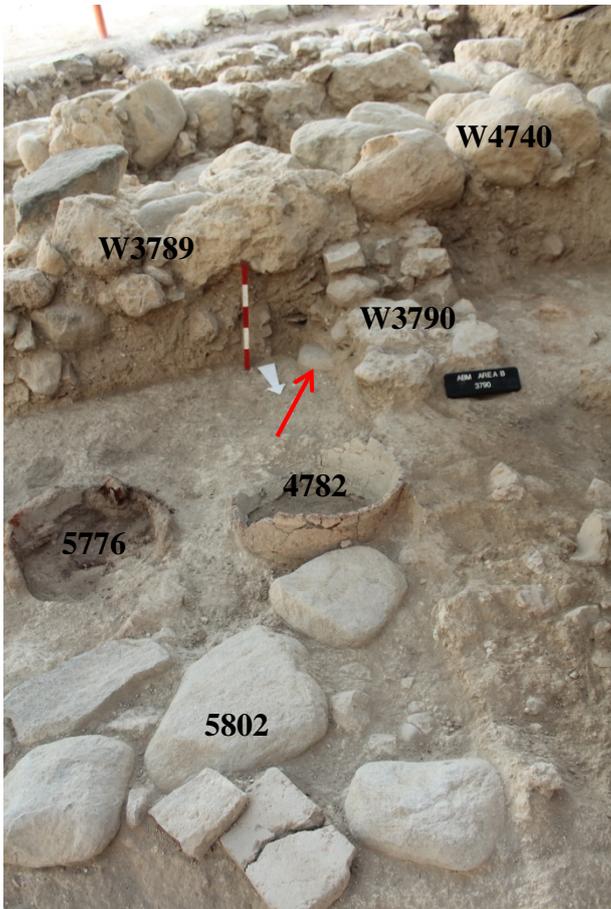
Phase B5b below Building 3790 Northwestern Space

The area below the northwestern space of Building 3790 was excavated as 5764 (400.71-400.56). The accumulations contained eroded mudbrick material mixed with gravel from the Middle Bronze Age glacis which was being exposed further in the north of the locus. No clear evidence of a floor was found, but the level of the B5b floor can be estimated at ca. 400.60m based on the small stone installation/platform 5812 located partially under Wall 3710 at 400.70-400.65m a.s.l. At its center, locus 5764 is cut by shallow pit 5803 (400.58-400.45m) which did not yield any significant amount of pottery that might help us date it, and could belong to either Phase B5a, b or B4. Also found

below the north east end of 5764, and partially below Wall 3790, was a Middle Bronze Age Burial which is described below.

Phase B5b below Building 3790 Eastern Space

Phase B5a Wall 3790 was entirely dismantled except a length of about 20cm at its southern end where Phase B4 Wall 4740 cuts and climbs on top of it. The fill below the wall was excavated as 5810



ABM17-B-FPh_389: Detail view looking south on basalt slabs 5802 with ovens 4782 and 5776. Note the floating level of this part of B4 Walls 3789 and of 4740. Stump of B5a Wall 3790 running south under Phase B4 wall system, and a B5b basalt slab right below both!

in which was exposed installation 5812 already mentioned above. In the area to the east of Wall 3790, excavation continued in locus 5762. The accumulations here are the same as those of 4783 excavated in 2016 right below B5a floor 4764. Twenty cm deep, the fill was made of eroded mudbricks, mudbrick material, and ash. It contained grinding stones, pottery of the Iron Age I, and organic material. These accumulations covered floor 5802: an area paved with eight or nine large basalt stone slabs. The slabs, their top at ca. 400.50m a.s.l., bordered on their south side oven 4782 already discovered in 2016 and a newly exposed oven 5776. A final proof, if one needed it, that Phase B5 should be separated to B5a and B5b was yet another basalt stone slab, an "extension" of basalt paved floor 5802, found in the south-west corner of the eastern space, directly below B5a bench-like Wall 4798, Wall 3790 and B4 Wall 4740.

The area north of stone slabs 5802 was excavated further down below accumulations 5762 as locus 5799. This locus, excavated 10cm deep, contained gray soil and gravel from the Middle Bronze Age glacis, exposed further and further south as excavation deepened. South of 5802, below 5762, and around the two ovens, fill 5800 was not excavated yet.

Phase B5b in Square E/20

Inside Phase B4 middle casement, and below Phase B5a stone slabs 5772 and floor 5787, a thick accumulation of mudbrick material was excavated as 5789. This accumulation rests on floor 5805 at ca. 400.0m a.s.l. It contained many fragments of two (or more?) smashed pithoi jars, ash and organic material. On the floor itself rest two basalt slabs, one large and flat and the other doughnut shaped with a depression in its center (mortar?). This floor and the rich accumulations on top of it were (like those of phase B5a above it) limited only to the northwestern corner of the B4 middle casement where the high floating level of the walls allowed the preservation of the earlier layers.



Left: ABM17-B-FPh_287: Stratigraphic view from the south of the space inside Phase B4 middle casement. The large stone slabs of Phase B5a (locus 5772) on top of accumulations in locus 5789 and the smaller basalt slabs of floor 5805 of Phase B5b. Also note the floating level of the western (left) side of Phase B4 Wall 3789 compared to its eastern side (right).

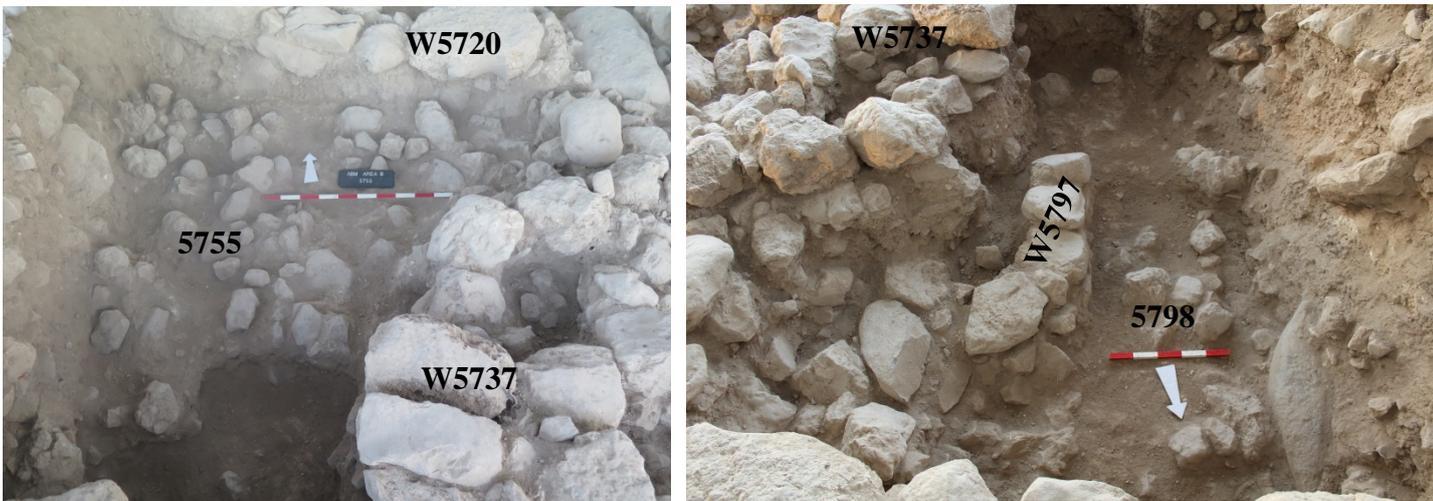
Right: ABM17-B-FPh_314: Debris and pithoi fragments in locus 5789 and the basalt slab and mortar-stone(?) of floor 5805. View from the west.

Phase B5a/b in Square D/20?

At the western half of square D/20, below accumulations and debris 5736 of Phase B2₍₃₎, the excavation encountered a thick layer of ash, stones and debris 5755 (starting at 400.98m a.s.l.). These were excavated to a depth of 12cm. It was assumed that the debris belong to Phase B4, since in the north they abut B4 Wall 5720, but it is also possible that the wall cuts into these. When a new, and earlier wall (5797) appeared east of the debris layer this assumption was questioned. Wall 5797 is a north-south running wall exposed at 400.88-400.80m. Only the western face of this wall was exposed

since its eastern part is buried under Phase B2₍₃₎ Wall 5737 and the debris and accumulation right below it. The wall seems to have been cut by B4 Wall 5720, which will place it at an earlier phase, and most likely B5a or B5b.

Debris and dark ash were exposed and excavated further below in locus 5798 (400.86m-400.50m). These ashy debris contained mostly Iron Age I pottery, and they abut both B4 Wall 5720 in the north and B5 Wall 5797 in the east. Finally at the bottom of 5798, a large and somewhat tilted basalt stone slab, similar to those characterizing our B5b paved area in square E/19 was also unearthed (at approx. 400.55m). No floor was yet detected.



Left: ABM17-B-FPh_209: Debris in locus 5755 looking north, with B4 Wall 5720 in the back, and floating Wall 5737 of Phase B2₍₃₎ on the right side of the photo.

Right: ABM17-B-FPh_419: Debris and in locus 5798 west of Wall 5797, looking south. Note large basalt slab at the western section.

Phase B6

The earliest evidence for occupation in Area B is the Middle Bronze Age glacia of Phase B6 described in much detail on the 2016 field report. The glacia gravel layers slope down from north-west to south-east. Embedded into the glacia is the burial of a single male skeleton, unearthed in 2016, with finds dating to the Middle Bronze IIC. We thus divide Phase B6 to B6a (the burial) and B6b (the glacia).



ABM16-B-305: Gravel layers of the Middle Bronze Age glacis in section across western border of Square F/19. Note one of the basalt slabs of Phase B5b on top of the glacis at the center of the photo.

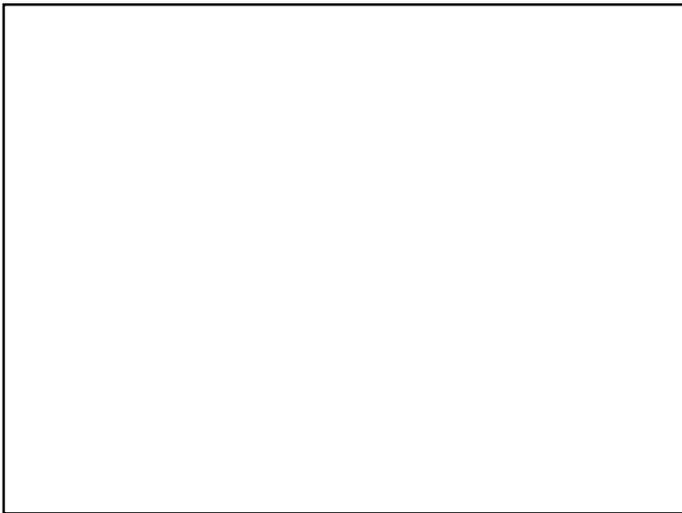
Table 6: Summary of the main features of Phase B6 excavated in 2017

Stratum	Squares	Definition	Loci	Walls	Proposed date
B6	F/19	B6; Glacis. Whitish-orange gravel layers	5710, 5712		MBIIb
B6a	E/19	B6a; Burials into the glacis	5771		MBIIb-c
Post-B6 features on MB glacis.	F/18, G/19	Accumulations of eroded mudbricks, and ash covering MB glacis (B4-B5)	5711, 5716		IAI-II
	F-G/19	Pits cut into B6 and other disturbances (B1-B3)	5714, 4795		Medieval-Modern
	F/18, G/19	Silos and Installations cutting into B6 (B4-B5)	5713, 5715, 4769, 4787		IAI-II

This season the excavation of the glacis was not in priority. We've cleaned and scraped a thin layer of glacis material in squares F/19 (Loci 5710, 5712) and removed thin layers of debris still partially covering it in G/19 (Locus 5711). Higher, in square E/19, we've exposed more of the top of this massive feature at the northern third of the square (locus 4800) as we excavated below the floor levels of Phase B5a and B5b. It was exposed there, sloping down from 400.80m a.s.l. right under the two pillar bases of B5a floor 4764, to 400.50m a.s.l. approx. 1.2 meters to the south below B5b accumulations 5762. In the eastern section of square E/19, one can clearly see the basalt paving 5802 of Phase B5b resting on the gravel of the glacis.

A B6a Baby Burial

A few centimeters right under Wall 3790, and penetrating into the glacis in locus 4800 another burial of the Middle Bronze Age was found (B6a). This one contained a baby interred in a fetus position within two broken jars, smashed by the pressure of the layers above them and accompanied by a pair of juglets and a carinated bowl. The pit in which the burial was placed was only 13cm deep.



Left: ABM17-B-: Detail of Middle Bronze Age baby burial 5771.

Right: ABM17-B-FPh_261: Stratigraphic view of the burial jar after clearing the skeleton and associated vessels (a). Note Phase B5a Wall 3790 (b) which had to be dismantled in order to excavate the burial and the pillar base (c) marking the floor level of the phase. At the bottom right corner Phase B5b installation 5812 (d) cut by Wall 3790.

Post-B6 Activities of Uncertain Stratigraphy

Into the gravel layers of the glacia, many pits, installations and silos were dug and constructed in later periods. The stratigraphic relation of any of those to one another is difficult, if not impossible to establish, and they can only be dated based on the finds contained within them. Unfortunately, many of these features were devoid of any material suitable for dating, though the associated pottery is mostly Iron Age; most of these features were excavated and described in detail in the field report of 2016. This season we've completed the excavation of some of them including Silos 4769 and 4787 (Square G/19) and mudbrick installation 3782 (Square F/18) mentioned above in the discussion of Phase B4 wall system. In addition we've excavated pit 5803 (Square E/19) mentioned in the discussion regarding Phase B5b, pits 4796, 4795 and 5714 discussed below.

Pit 4796

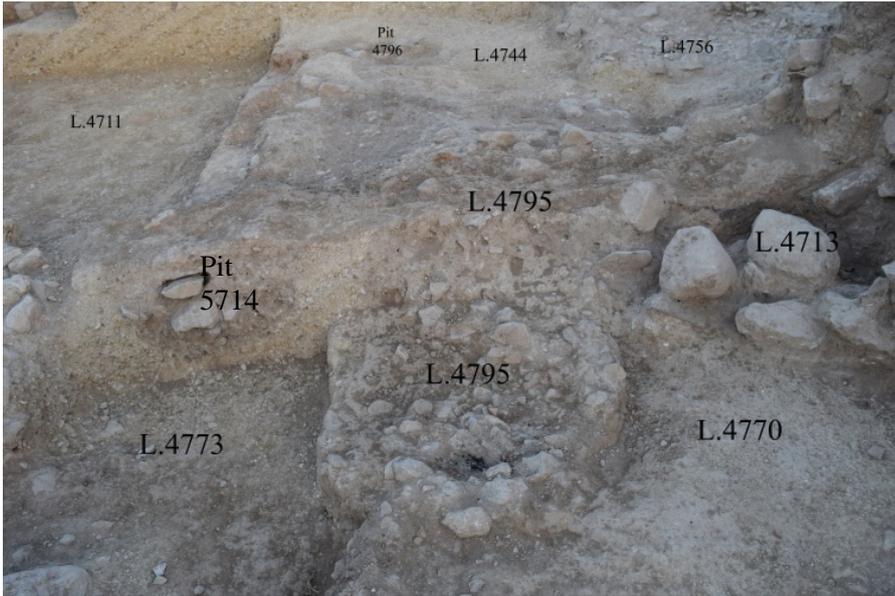
The outline of this small oval-shaped pit was exposed at a level of ca. 399.10 m on the last day of the 2016 excavation season. This year we've excavated it to a depth of 20cm to its bottom. Its diameter is about 60 cm and the color of its sediment suggests it is filled with ash or burnt soil with small field stones. It is dug into the Middle Bronze Age glacia gravel in L4744/5710. It contained a variety of sherds, including late glazed pottery.

Pit/Disturbance 4795

This is a large area or surface with concentration of eroded mudbricks, pottery, bones and stones that was exposed at a level of ca. 399.10 m across the northern part of Squares F-G/19 in 2016. It might have been partially excavated as part of 4770 which surrounds it on the north and east and contains similar material (mostly the compact eroded mudbrick material). On the west and south, it is bordered by Middle Bronze Age glacia gravel in 4744/5710 and 4773/5711. The concentration of material is amorphic in shape, stretching about 2 m long and 1.2 m wide. As noted and described in 2016, small pit 4754 was above this surface and thus is later. It was excavated to a depth of 60 cm and contained stones, compact mudbrick material and large quantities of pottery sherds dating from the Iron Age II. Further excavation is needed to reveal how deep it cuts into the Middle Bronze gravel.

Pit 5714

This pit was observed in the section on the balk between F/19 and G/19, cutting into Middle Bronze Age gravel between silo 4769 in the south and 4795 in the north. It was excavated to a depth of nearly 40cm. and contained a few large rocks, gray granular soil and sherds from the Iron Age I and II.



*ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_259:
Locus 4795 and pit 5714
before excavation; Pit 4796 in
the background. View from
the east.*