

Tel Abel Beth Maacah

Area A

2017

Fredrika Loew



The fifth season of excavation in Area A ran from June 25 to July 21, 2017. Fredrika Loew was the area supervisor, assisted by Carroll Kobs, Jeff Kobs, Kenton Williams, Scott Booth, Cale Staley and Lawson Stone. Christin Johnson was the registrar.

Area A is composed of two parts--the eastern portion and the western portion. Excavation in the eastern section involved small-scale projects in squares A-T/14, and a newly opened half-square of A/15 in the south. The western section was expanded to the west and to the north with the opening of squares Q/11, Q/12, P/12, R/11, and S/10-11.

The main goals of this season were: 1) to better understand the relationship between the A3 and A4 strata in Squares A/14 and A/15; 2) to excavate the entirety of room 4183 (the southern part of the cultic building of A4); 3) to expand the western A2 complex to the north and west.

Strata A6 and A5 were not excavated this season.

Stratum A4

Square B/13

The upper courses of Walls 2173 and 2107 were dismantled due to instability and concerns about conservation and safety. Only a few small finds, including a flint tool, were found during dismantling.

Stratum A3

Remains attributed to Stratum A3 were revealed in the southern area of excavation this year, and mainly limited to clarification and dismantling previously excavated squares, particularly A/14.

Squares A-T/14

During the 2016 season, a goal for squares A-T/14 was to better understand the A3/A4 strata relationship. This season, we furthered that goal by examining the relationship of slabs 4172, attributed to either A3 or late A4, and wall 4182, which is attributed to A3 strata, as it makes a corner with Wall 1158(=3102). A2 Walls 2130 and 4189, which were sitting on top of large chunks of burnt mudbrick (locus 5125), were dismantled up to the line of wall 4182 on the west in order to expose the slabs, which did indeed continue beneath Wall 4189 until they were cut by grave 5132. Excavation revealed that the slabs 4172 do not run below A3 Wall 4182 nor do they actually abut it; there is a narrow gap between them. The area exposed was too small to determine whether this was a foundation trench for 4182. If the abovementioned gap is, indeed, a foundation trench, then this means that slabs 4172 are either an earlier phase of A3 or belong to A4 (possibly a later phase). Further excavation to the south along the eastern face of Wall 4182 and perhaps someday in the west (which is currently occupied by a large olive tree) may provide more information for phasing. Ultimately, we remain ambivalent concerning the phasing of the slab floor 4172 vis a vi. On one hand, it is laid above the destruction debris of A4, while on the other hand, a layer of burnt and fallen bricks (4169) lays on top of it; moreover, it was superimposed by A3 Walls 3123 and 3141. A solution to this quandry might be related to the nature of the slabs and the two standing stones that are located on their eastern end (on a slightly lower level) in locus 4122. Possibly, after the destruction of the cultic room, the inhabitants returned and rehabilitated this small area (which might be larger if it continues to the west beyond the limit of the excavation), placing the two stones as a marker of the erstwhile holy spot. In fact, the nature of the stone slabs suggests the possibility that they are in secondary use and were removed from some other structure to be used here. When could such an activity have taken place? Certainly after the destruction of the A4 shrine but before the construction of the A3 room above, which effectively cancelled the shrine.

Another point to be considered when assessing the phasing of stone slabs 4172 is white plaster layer 4122 that runs below it and that is related to the two standing stones just to the east. This season, with the removal of the eastern part of A3 Wall 3102 down to the top of A4 Wall 2107, we were able to examine the relationship between this white plaster layer and these walls. Our understanding is that the white layer was cut by A3 Wall 3102, which supports the attribution of this activity to a later phase of A4. The abovementioned gap between the slabs and A3 Wall 4182 also lends credence to this scenario – slabs and white plaster predate A3 and postdate A4.



Squares A-T/14, looking west; A4 destruction debris in center, topped by two standing stones and stone slabs 4172. A3 and A2 walls in the background (after dismantling of 3102); A4 Wall 2107 on the right (ABM17-A-732).



Square T/14: View of relationship between slabs 4172 and A3 Wall 3102, looking west. Note the narrow gap between them: foundation trench or constructional feature? Left: unexcavated balk covering Wall 3102 (Kent photo 6047)



Square T/14, looking west. White plaster layer 4122 cut(?) by A3 Wall 3102 (ABM17-A-113)
 Right: looking north at slab floor 4172, white layer 4122 and Wall 3102; later grave with meter stick (ABM17-A-58)



Square T/14, looking down (north to the left). Bottom center: A4 cultic room. (ABM17-A-158)

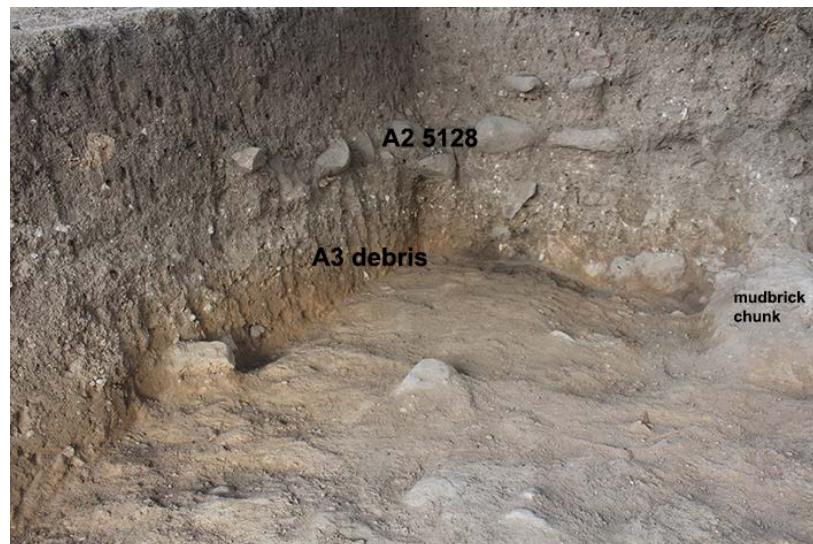
Square A/15

Excavation below the A2 elements in this square reached a layer that we attribute to A3, although its nature and function remains unclear. While dismantling A2 Wall 4146 (see

description below), it became clear that it was sitting on a huge chunk of mudbrick, likely a part of the brick collapse and debris seen clearly in the A/14 western section, above slabs 4172.



Square A/15, looking south. After removal of A2 Wall 4146, a very large burnt mudbrick chunk was found resting above debris 4169 covering the stones on the level of slabs 4172 (ABM17-A-673)



Square A/15, looking southwest; brown-burnt A3 debris below A2 wall 5128. Note large brick chunk on the right (north) of this layer (see previous photo) (ABM17-A-189)

Two walls, 5166 and 5152, appeared beneath the floating levels of the A2 walls, in a matrix of brown debris with white flecks that contained burnt patches. Wall 5166 runs east-west and has a clearly defined end in the center of the square. Wall 5152 runs NNE-SSW, and is not a clear wall. 5163, a surface containing clear portions of whitish plaster, runs up to Wall 5152 and fans out around it. It's possible that 5152 is not a wall, but some sort of installation. It seems to continue into the southern balk of the square and further excavation can hopefully clarify its

purpose. The plaster (5163) is concentrated in the east and none appears near Wall 5166; it is not clear that 5166 cut the plaster or if only a portion of the room had a plaster floor. It is important to note that the whitish plaster surface in Square A/14 (3145) began at an elevation of 376.33, less than ten centimeters lower than the plaster in 5163 (which appeared around 376.41, but with a slope up to 5152). It is thus possible that the two are part of the same occupation surface that is attributed to A3, as it covers the A4 destruction debris.

A probe into the northwestern portion of the square revealed that slabs 4172 do not continue south and end at the beginning of the new square, just around where the large mudbrick chunk is., although perhaps some slabs continue under the large mudbrick, but none are seen in the section. A gap is seen in the stones just to the north of this large brick. The slabs were localized in the western half of A/14.



Square A/15, looking east; Wall 5152 in background; lower left corner: top of large mudbrick seen in previous photo (ABM17-A-185); Right: closeup of stones 5152 (ABM17-A-185)



Square A/15, looking west; Stones 5152 in foreground surrounded by plaster 5163; Wall 5166 in background; note how slabs of 4172 terminate just before this wall and the mudbrick chunk to its north (ABM17-A-677). Right: same view, including northern part of slabs 4172 (ABM17-A-682)

Stratum A2

Much of the 2017 excavation season focused on the A2 phase and its subphases, found mainly in Squares S/11, R/11, Q/11, Q/12, and P/12. In the south, several A2 elements were revealed in Square A/15 as well.

Square A/15

During the 2017 season, the northern half of square A/15 was opened with a couple of goals in mind: 1) to try and phase slabs 4172, the two “pillar bases”/standing stones to the east of them, and associated loci; and 2) to reach the A4 destruction in the southern cultic room. This season we reached the level of slabs 4172.

A2 debris began immediately after topsoil/winterwash, though late pottery was seen in pottery sorting for at least half a meter due to the slope of the tell in the east. A semi-circular stone

installation (5111) appeared in the west, though it did not have a secure context and no floor was detected. The matrix did not change significantly until the A2 walls were floating: 1124 and 4146 were dismantled. A north-south wall (5128) abutting 4146 appeared sticking out of the balk, 1 stone wide and 1 course high, and was dismantled. A continuation of the NNE-SSW wall 1125 was excavated, but only the upper course was preserved and there was a gap between this segment of 1125 and the segment that once was in A/14. It did not appear that the wall had a clear ending, but seemed to be cut. There was no clearly detected floor around 1125, and it was dismantled when floating. The floating level of 5125 was equivalent to a hard clay floor (1111) in A/14 and 2108 in T/14, averaging 377.11m. This type of matrix was not seen in A/15.



Square A/15, looking north; A2 walls 5128, 4146 and 1125 (ABM17-A-025)



Square A/15, looking east, Stratum A2 elements. Stone circle 5111 in upper right. (Kent photo 5363)

Subphase A2b

The entire A2b complex became much clearer this season with the expansion to the 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

Below the possible floor (or collapsed ceiling?) ashy layer of 5129, attributed to A2a (see below) the soil changed to extremely hard mudbrick (5134) and burnt debris. This layer rested on a very burnt ashy layer (5141) that was excavated for the rest of the season. 5141 is a layer of very burnt debris- ash, charcoal, large chunks of fallen burnt orangey bricks – that went down 50 cm to a reddish layer with ash that might be the floor, although finds (including sherds of the pithoi, see below) were still found. Only when the mortar that is in the western balk and the other installations in this room (see below) will be floating will we know for sure that this is the floor. To the east of the mortar were three (?) large Tyrion Pithoi, smashed by mudbrick but fully

restorable. The soil around them, particularly on the north and west, was heavily burned and several buckets of soil were taken for sample. To the west of the pithoi, close to the balk and just before the mortar, a plaster-covered mudbrick had crushed a horned/petalled incense stand (a plaster sample was taken). The incense stand was large and cylindrical, with a flared rim and downturning horns or petals on its bottom (the base itself is missing). The uniformity of this break may mean it was broken pre-destruction. Near the rim are several holes. Inserted into the rim was the cylindrical base of a chalice or funnel (only the base was found so we still do not know) that was inserted into the rim. This base also had holes which perfectly lined up with those in the rim of the stand.

To the south of the incense stand was a large, perfectly preserved basalt mortar [or basin?]. It is rounded and differs from the larger and less symmetric basin found last season in Square S/11. It was filled with black ashy material. Two fragments of a lower basalt grindstone were found in the center of the square and an upper grindstone, with seeds beneath it, was found to the north near a group of stacked circular stones.

A very large, 1.6 m long basalt slab was discovered on the eastern edge of the square, oriented north-south. The stone was noticeably worked along the edges but the faces were natural; it was lifted at the end of the season to see the other side, which was rougher but did not bear any decoration. It is perhaps some kind of large threshold, as it had some collapsed stones and a large portion of built plaster covering its northeastern side. Some pottery on the 5141 floor seemed to go beneath the stone, indicating that the stone may have been a massebah that then fell over. Immediately to the south of the stone was an odd oval-shaped white 'plaster' installation with a darker colored 'hole' in the center. The entire installation was then sitting on a smaller flat round stone. One possibility is that this large stone is not a fallen massebah but rather a threshold and thus, this odd installation might be related to a door hinge apparatus. This smaller stone and likely the southern part of this installation continues into the balk below A1 wall 5106 so that only with the removal of the latter will we know what this arrangement is.

North of and beneath the balk under A1 Wall 5108, an east-west line of perfectly preserved mudbricks (un-numbered) were excavated. They measured 50 wide and 15 cm high and were burned in the destruction of the room. To the immediate west of these mudbricks was a short stone bench-like installation (5177) that runs next to the basalt basin. Another installation, 5180, appeared to the west of the smashed pithoi (and north of the mortar) and continues into the

section. It is heavily burned, covered and surrounded by a thick layer of ash, and its function is not yet known. Some pottery sherds seem to be resting on it in the section.

Near the pithoi in the north, a perfectly round 55 cm stone was found lying directly above two similar stones. The uppermost stone was cracked down the center, possibly from the intense heat of the destruction. It's possible that these stacked stones are a bamah. Though the level is somewhat higher than 4183, room 5141 is contemporaneous to it.

Stone installation 5155 appeared in the southern section of the square in similar line to the still not yet understood stones of 4185 (which have a rounded top). It is poorly constructed and may be a continuation of 4185, though it is located at a higher elevation and only a couple of courses high. It may continue to run to the south below walls 5106 and 5108, but is not seen in the sections.



Square R/11, looking down/west. Balk under A1 Wall 5106 with burnt layers; stones 4185 to the left (east). Note mortar in western balk, under burnt floor(?) 5129 (ABM17-A-216)



Left: Pithoi in situ (ABM17-A-334); Right: pithoi and altar (two top stones) (ABM17-A-401)



Right: the incense stand in situ (ABM17-A-339); left: with plastered brick on top; right: exposed (ABM17-A-376)



Square R/11, looking down/southeast, after removal of pithoi. Brick bench and stone installation 5177 east of the mortar. Note altar with cracked upper stone; grindstones on the floor and large 'massebah'; to the left (east) of the massebah is Room 4183 with the large mortar. Edge of large stone emerging just to south of the massebah – stuck in the balk under A1 Wall 5106.



Square R/11. Looking north at large fallen(?) stone and its relationship to the stones and plaster (A2a?) above its northeastern corner (ABM17-A-422)



Square R/11, looking down (north on top) at rounded white plaster adjoining the southern tip of the fallen(?) stone. Stones of 4196 in the lower right corner (ABM17-A-428)



Square R/11, looking southwest; meter stick on burnt debris of 5141; stones 5155 (ABM17-A-226)

Square S/10-11

This represents the expansion of the excavation in the area of the passageway to the north, covering the northern part of Square S/11 and the southern end of Square S/10. The elements revealed under topsoil and that abut Wall 4145 are attributed to A2a (see below). One of these is the stone concentration 5145 in the northwestern corner of the expanded area. When this was dismantled, the continuation of A2b Wall 4193 was revealed and found to continue to the north into the balk. This section of the wall is preserved at a much higher level and sits directly beneath W4145. The proximity of these two walls is unclear. What was the reason that Wall 4193 was no longer used and Wall 4145 was built? Possibly this is related to the fierce burning of the lower (A2b) occupation here.

To the west of 4193, the matrix again became patchy with pebbles, similar to those that appeared in S-T/12 but even patchier. The stone patches continued down and stone installation 5175 appeared, running parallel to 4193 but not on the same line as 4186. This installation was found in the last days, as the level of the possible A2b floor was being excavated. The season ended above the possible floor.

Because of the porcupine tunnel collapse west of 4193, it was difficult to find minute differences in the soil. Beneath locus 5153 was locus 5160 (equivalent to 5134), an ashy, mudbrick-filled destruction layer. A large, in situ burnt antler was found. It was extremely crumbly and broken severely. Because of the collapse, it was difficult to find minute differences in the soil. Burnt orange mudbrick debris covered the area, until the last few days where the soil changed to heavily ashy and contained lots of in situ broken pottery, burnishing stones, and large burnt bones. These finds were within a hard, compact, cracked surface of soil. It seemed that this difference in soil were caused by the porcupine's movement. The elevation is still higher than the mortar immediately to its south, but the bottom of 5160 seems to be the A2b floor, equivalent to 4183 and 5141 in R/11.



Squares S/10-11, looking southwest (ABM17-A-537)



Squares S/10-11, looking south; A2a Wall 4145 on top of A2b Wall 4193; note large mortar in very burnt debris 5160 – not yet the floor in this room (ABM17-A-544)

Subphase A2a

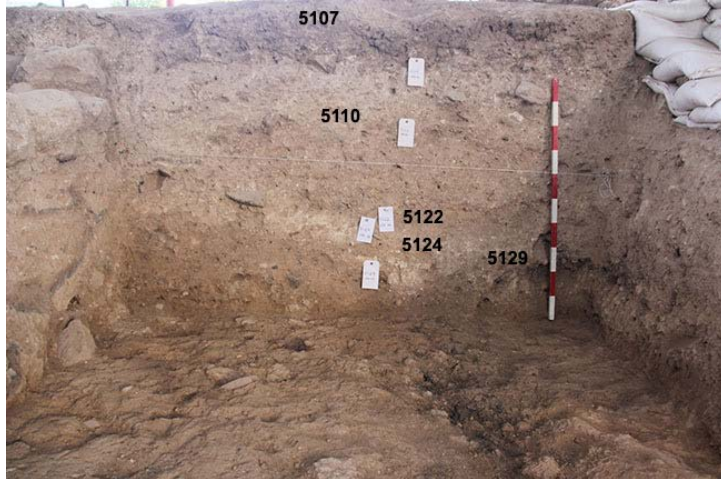
Square R/11

Square R/11 was opened this season to expand the space in S/11 (with the large mortar) to the west and to clarify the nature and phasing of Wall(?) 4196. It first began as a half square, then was expanded west with the appearance of Wall 5108, then the balk between R/11 and S/11 was removed. This opened the square for complete excavation.

Above the burnt destruction and many finds of Phase A2b (Locus 5141), a deep accumulation was found that remains somewhat unclear: on one hand, it seems to represent a later phase with a burnt layer and a floor, while on the other hand, it is possible that it is collapsed ceiling or a second floor.

The uppermost layer in R/11 consisted of extremely hard, chalky lime material (5107; also 5105), similar to what was previously excavated in R/12 and S/12. Beneath this hard, compact soil was a matrix of hard decomposed mudbrick and debris (5110). This ended after just ca. 5 centimeters at a thin ash layer (5122) that ran beneath Walls 5108 and 5106 (the ash can be seen clearly on the southern section of soil beneath wall 5106, but not clearly on the north or eastern faces). These walls are attributed to Stratum A1 (see below). This ash layer, 5122, was only 2 cm thick. Though very apparent during excavation, it is difficult to clearly see in the square's western and northern sections and appears to have been localized in the southern half of the square. It is possible that this thin layer was from an A2a ceiling collapse, which might explain why the soil was relatively sterile. Beneath the ash was more decomposed mudbrick (5124), similar to the matrix of 5110. Layer 5124 was 20 centimeters thick and covered ash layer 5129 (appeared at an elevation of 377.55). Unlike 5122, 5129 contained pottery, possibly restorable, more so than any loci above it. This locus was difficult to discern in the western section, but the northeastern section contained several buckets of pottery and many pieces could be seen in situ in the balk. Indeed, excavation in square S/10 had a similar amount of pottery localized in the southwest area. It is surmised that 5129 is an upper floor in this area and is thus attributed to A2a, although the alternative that this represents a collapsed upper floor or ceiling should also be considered.

The ashy layer 5129 covered the burnt layer 5141 and its contents (described above).



Square R/11, looking west at balk (subsequently removed). (ABM17-A-098)



Square R/11, looking west; layer 5129 (ABM17-A-102)

Square Q/11

Iron Age pottery was found mixed with later pottery around late (A0) wall 5114. The square was not excavated past the level of 5108, which abuts the floating level of Wall 5114, but the pottery contains a mix of Iron I and Iron II. It is possible that no major finds were excavated in the square, but there was a layer of small stone collapse (5126). The stones were larger and denser in the east, and spread out in the west. The eastern stones were within a harder, compact material. They did not cover or abut W5108. Beneath the stone collapse was a small installation of vertical pottery (5156) and a stone line (5169) which was dismantled at the end of the season. At this point, it is difficult to phase the elements in this square. It seems that 5114 might be later than the A1 Wall 5106. Stones and debris 5126 might be related to it, but also might be somewhat earlier. The relationship to Wall 5106 is also not clear; it is possible that 5156/5169 abuts its northern face, or that this wall cut into this layer. This would explain the mix of Iron I and IIA pottery.

It is interesting to note that excavation in square Q11 did not contain the hard lime layers or mudbrick debris of R/11. It is possible that the balk between the two squares contains remnants of a wall or some other separation in the A2a phase.



Square Q/11, looking east; late Wall(?) 5114 and layer of debris and stones (5108, 5126). (ABM17-A-046)



Same as above, looking north; Wall 5114 floating above 5108, 5126. (ABM17-A-043)



Square Q/11, looking south; sherds in 5156 and stone line 5169, with stones of A1 Wall 5108 to their south. Foreground: stones of 5114 floating above this matrix. (ABM17-A-210)

Square Q/12

Excavation in this square was aimed at expanding the exposure of the large courtyard in the southwestern part of upper Area A and to determine whether Wall 2128 continues to the west. Topsoil and the top of a hard white debris layer (most likely belonging to Stratum A1, see below) were removed with a tractor and the opening locus (5104) was relatively sterile and of a very hard whitish colored matrix, similar to Locus 5110 in Square R/11 to its north. This layer covered Wall 2128, which was found to continue to the west, as nicely built as it was all along. It seems that 5104 represents the collapsed and 'melted' brick superstructure of Wall 2128, as it collapsed to the south. This is clearly seen in the western balk of the square. Below this was a layer of softer debris with some ashy patches (5112) that just covered the top of Wall 2128. Immediately below it was a very burnt orangey and black matrix (5116), just like the layer excavated to the east in the previous season. Clearly, this is its continuation. When the wall appeared, continuing across the 5m square and into the western balk, the southern half of the square was excavated. 5112 continued in the south, which contained some dark ashy patches. There was no matrix change to a burnt material in this southern half, supporting the idea of 5116 as a mudbrick superstructure. 5127 was opened when the matrix changed to heavily ashy and the top of 2128 was reached.

As excavation of 5127 continued, large slabs began to appear covered in a thick layer of ash. The stones, a mixture of limestone, basalt, and one conglomerate, were given number 5130. They slope up slightly to meet the top of 2128 in the north, slope up to the balk in the west, and continue at a lower level into the southern section. The eastern half of the square had a clear line of the slabs and a chunk of harder sterile soil abutting the slabs. Postholes were clearly seen in the harder block of soil. The southern section showed the continuation of this harder block; there seems to be a gap between the two, but there is a possibility it may have been excavated without noticing. No artifacts were found on the slabs and there was minimal pottery, none of which seemed restorable though was saved for possible restoration.

A western step, left to hold the sandbags, was removed. Large pieces of charcoal from a horizontal piece of burnt wood were removed. The section in the west became clear: above 5130 is a line of small stones, possibly the lower course of a wall forming a corner with 2128. Above that is thick layer of burn and then three groupings of three stones sticking out from the section, each with burn patches around it.



Square Q/12, looking north; stone pavement abutting Wall 2128; burnt layer 5127 above the floor left as a section on the left (west) (ABM17-A-074)



Square Q/12, looking southwest at stone pavement 5130. Hard white brick material in balk (5116) represents collapsed bricks from Wall 2128 (ABM17-A-089).



Same as above, looking west; note burnt layer with three protruding stone groups inside the red burnt brick material above floor (ABM17-A-142)



Squares P-R-Q-11-12, looking northwest (ABM17-A-583); meter stick on top of A3 layer

Square S/10-11

During the second week, the unexcavated northern portion of square S/11 and a strip of square S/10 were opened with the goal of reaching the A2b level in the west and tracing the plan of walls 4145, 4193, and 4186.



ABM17-A-520

Excavation began with topsoil removal (locus 5131), which contained a portion of a human jaw and a few scattered bones in the center of the excavation area. The soil was loose and the context was poor. It proved to not be a burial and, if it was, was so dismantled and spread that it was impossible to define. The square was then split into two excavation areas: the west, locus 5136, which contained lots of stones, and the east, locus 5137, which was a softer soil. The

stones of 5136 became concentrated in the northwest after the first layer was removed; the stones were arranged almost like a pit, with the northwest being the lowest portion and the stones spreading out and upwards in a conical shape. When the concentration was clearly defined, it was given locus number 5145. The construction around the edges seemed purposefully constructed. The stone installation belongs to a later phase but is not easily dated.

Locus 5137 was closed when the soil began to have large ash patches and a change in matrix to very soft material at a level of 377.65. A clear line of stones running in a north-south direction appeared in the center of this area (between the assumed continuation of 4145 and 4186) and given number 5148. 5142 and locus 5149 were opened on either side of this wall. The continuation of 4145 was found, but only by another meter or so to the north before it stopped.

Locus 5149, the pebble-filled locus to the east of wall 5148, contained several interesting finds including burnt antler, a portion of a figurine, a piece of quartz, and a large quantity of pottery and bones. A floor was not easily detectable, though previous excavation of squares S/11 and T/11 revealed possible floors at a similar elevation (4163 at 377.33, 4168 at 377.30, and the finds between 377.37 and 377.45), making 5149 the possible A2a floor for east of wall 5148. The closing elevation for locus 5149 was 377.24, equivalent to the closing levels of floors 4163 and 4168.

To the east of 5148 and west of 4145, a patchy pebbled surface also appeared at 377.40, given number 5158, and closed at 377.35 when the pebble patches were fully removed. This locus too may be the A2a floor.

When the one-course wall 5148 was floating, and the pebbles of 5149 were fully excavated, the area east of 4145 was given one locus number, 5165.

To the west of 4145, excavation continued around 5145. Locus 5153 contained flat sherds of pottery on the western and southwestern sides which were a continuation of the several buckets of restorable pottery from locus 5129 in square R/11. 5153 is equivalent to the R/11 floor.

Stratum A1

Stratum A1, which used to refer to the Ottoman period terrace walls found just under topsoil, was reassigned to the new Iron IIA structures which were revealed for the first time this season, with the expansion of excavation to the west, i.e., further away from the slope erosion on the

east. These remains include several massive stone wall segments which, based on nature of construction and elevations, seem to belong to the same structure, although no connection was found as of yet. It is clear that these walls were built above the destruction debris of A2. Pottery associated with these walls, albeit not on a clear floor level, is all Iron IIA, including red slip and burnish, strainer jugs, carinated bowls, and cooking pots with handles.

Square R/11

A north-south segment of a wall (5106) was found running along the eastern balk of the square. It is composed of two courses of very large stones and is 2.3 meters in length and 1.1 meters wide; its southern end was dismantled by mistake by the tractor, and two large stones can be seen in the southern balk of square R/13 on a similar (although not quite straight) line to 5106. To the west of Wall 5106, after a gap of ## meters, is Wall 5108, an east-west wall of similar build to 5106; it runs 3.5 meters long by 0.90 meter wide; it is not clear whether the ends, especially on the west, were cut deliberately, or if the wall ended this way. It is most likely the latter case. The gap between the two walls might have been an entranceway. Wall 5108 has an interesting niche in its western half; two of the stones were placed standing up vertically, with a flat stone between them, creating what looks like a drainage channel, leading from north to south (transvecting the wall). Wall 5106 and 5108 are abutted by a debris layer (5110, 5122, 5124; the latter might be a floor) that contained mixed Iron I and IIA pottery; the matrix of this layer included stones and bones and it rested directly on the burnt destruction debris of Stratum A2 below (5141). A possibility is that layer 5124 is not a floor but rather some sub-floor fill, while the floor itself eroded away. However, it is possible that 5124 was a living surface.



Looking north at Square R/11 with A1 wall segments 5016 and 5108 (ABM17-A-575)



The A1 walls 5106 and 5108 clearly superimpose the A2 destruction. Squares R-2?11, looking west (ABM17-A-538)

Square P/12

In order to understand the A2 structure of wall 2128, half of square P/12 was opened during the last weeks of the excavation. This square began at true topsoil with no work from the tractor. The pottery was a mixture of late, Iron II, and Iron I. A wall, 5157, appeared running east-west in the northern section of the square and continuing into the balk on the west and north. Wall 5157 is

on a similar line to wall 5108 and may belong to the same structure, although they are not on exactly the same line.. The pottery associated with the wall (###) contained a mixture of Iron IIA and Iron I, although the majority of the pottery was of the former period. Finds from the square, which stopped right below the floating level of 5157 and therefore likely in the A2 phase, included several types of pottery and fragments of basalt bowls and a crucible, as well as several figurine and perforated cup fragments.



Square P/12, looking east (ABM17-A-553); this layer clearly covers that of A2 below (with Wall 2128 and stone floor 5130)



Squares R-Q/11, looking north at Wall 5108; note standing stones/drain in wall (ABM17-A-640)

Stratum A0

Stratum 0 contains what once was A1: the Ottoman period terrace wall.

Square Q/11

The northern part of Square Q11 contained an element immediately below topsoil stones-5114. Its construction is similar to the other Ottoman features and very different from 5108. It is wide and continues into the balk on the north and west, and may be some type of platform or terrace wall. It is built above the layers that relate to Wall 5108. For photos, see above.

A Late Burial- Square A/14

Burial 5132 was covered by slabs 4159 once formed part of the 4172 slab surface, but were reused during the later burial. The burial also clearly cut into the plaster 4119 and down into the A4 destruction debris. In previous seasons, it was hypothesized that a pit had cut wall 2130, and this hypothesis was confirmed this season by the presence of the burial directly below the 'pit' seen in the past seasons. Burial 5132 was very similar to burial 3177 in square A/13 to the north and both should probably be dated the same, to the early Islamic period. Both had slab covers (3112 and 4159) which were made from reused materials and both were less than .5 meter different in elevation (376.42 and 375.98, respectively). The bodies were both oriented east-west, lying on their right side with the heads on the west, facing south. Burial 5132 contained two small earrings near the skull, but otherwise no finds. The burial was thoroughly excavated and cleaned, lined with geotextile, and backfilled.



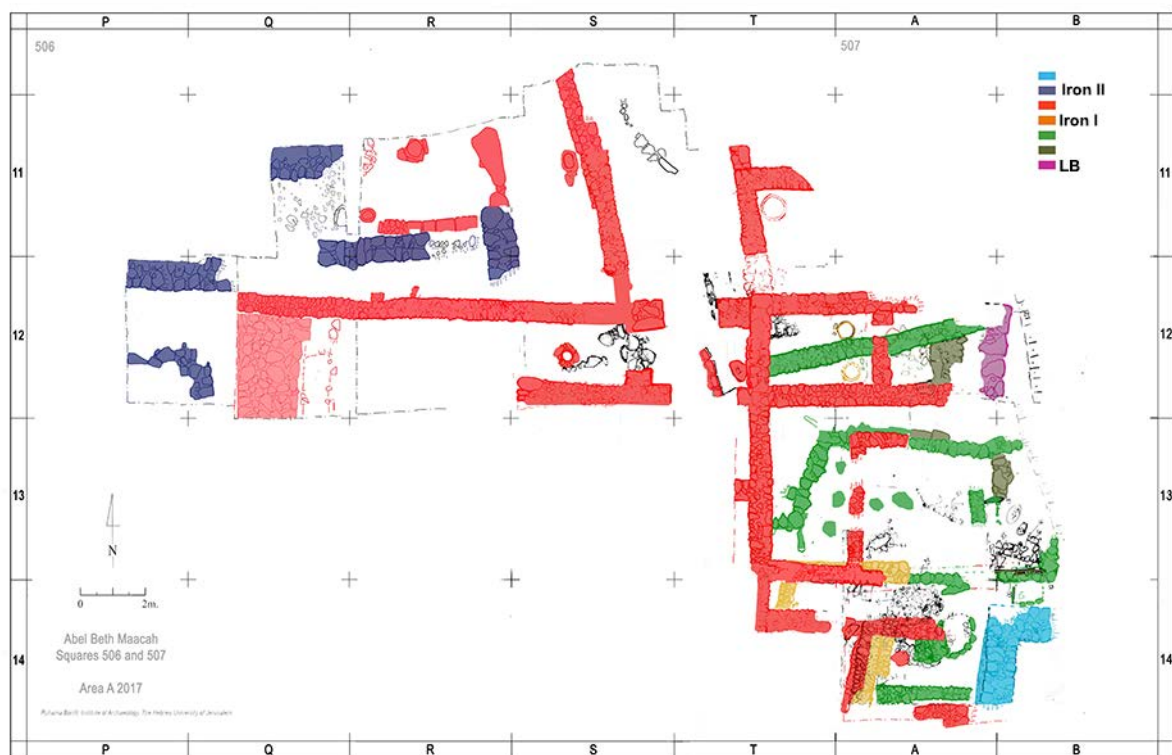
The burial (5132) covered by slabs, cutting into stone floor 4172, looking southeast (ABM16-A-158)



The burial after excavation; skull facing south. Note how grave cuts into white plaster layer. Right: Burial backfilled. Kent photo 5395 (left); ABM17-A-696



Square S/12, between Walls 2126 and 2128 – backfilled by IAA conservation instructions. Looking northwest (ABM17-A-578)



Superposition of strata, end of 2017 season.