

Tel Abel Beth Maacah – 2013 Excavation Report-Area A

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General

The first season of excavation at Tel Abil el-Qameh, site of biblical Avel Bet-Ma'akha (henceforth, Tel Abel Beth Maacah), was carried out from June 23 to July 19, 2013. The excavation was co-directed by Robert Mullins of Azusa Pacific University and Nava Panitz-Cohen of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Ruhama Bonfil of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was the surveyor and stratigraphic advisor. Funding for the excavation came from the generous support of Azusa Pacific University, with additional support by Cornell University (the Institute for the Social Sciences, the President's Council of Cornell Women, and the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, initiated by Professors Lauren and Chris Monroe). Graduate students led by Prof. John Monson of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School made a major contribution to the success of the first excavation season, as did the participation of some 35 volunteer team members. For more information see: www.abel.beth.maacah.org and www.facebook.com/AbelBethMaacah.

Two areas were chosen for excavation this first season: Area A at the eastern edge of the tell in the center of the saddle linking the upper and lower mounds, and Area F at the southern end of the lower mound (Fig. 1). This choice was made in the wake of a survey conducted in May 2012 (<http://www.abel-beth-maacah.org/index.php/2012-survey>), when finds dating to the Iron Age were uncovered in these two areas below topsoil. An additional consideration was the lack of building remains of the village, Abil el-Qameh, in these two areas.

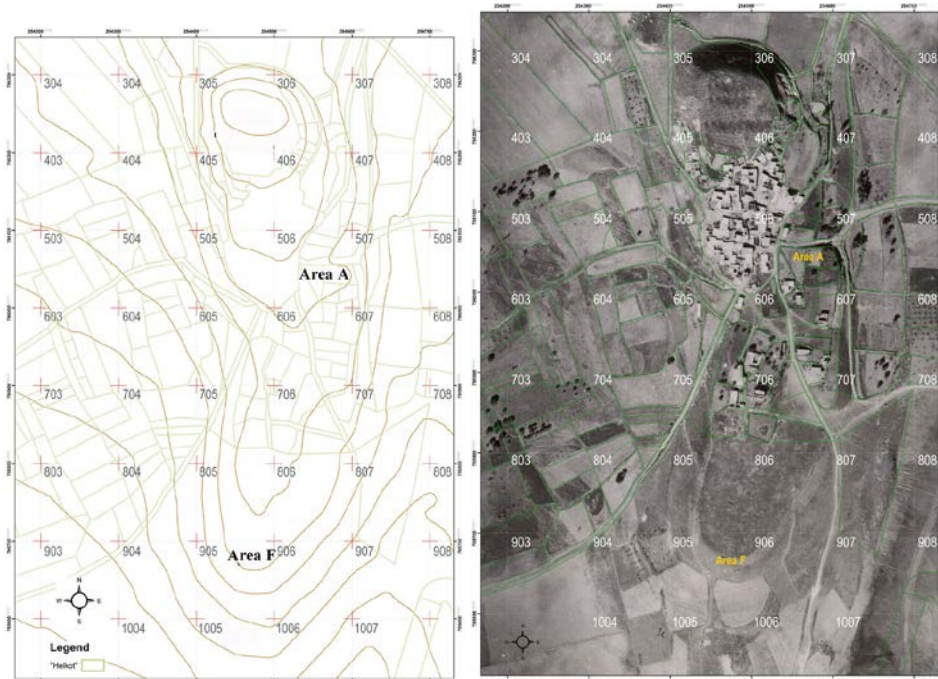


Fig. 1. Left: topographic map showing the survey and excavation areas; Right: excavation areas A and F marked on aerial photo (1945) of the Arab village, Abil el-Qameh.

The following report is a preliminary summary of the finds in **Area A** and the tentative stratigraphic assessment, pending further study.

AREA A

The location of this area was chosen due to protruding segments of walls and floors which were visible in the eastern section of the tell above the modern access road (Photo 1). This section had been identified and cleaned during the 2012 survey. Restorable pottery on the upper level (tentatively identified as Iron IIA at the time) and an intact ring flask (Iron I) found in the lowest level of the section on top of a basalt stone slab (A3/19 in Photo 1; Panitz-Cohen, Bonfil and Mullins 2012: 11–15).

The supervisor for Area A in 2013 was Ido Wachtel, assisted by Carroll Kobs, Jeff Kobs and Aviv Toren. Fredrika Loew was the registrar. All photos are by Robert Mullins, unless otherwise noted.

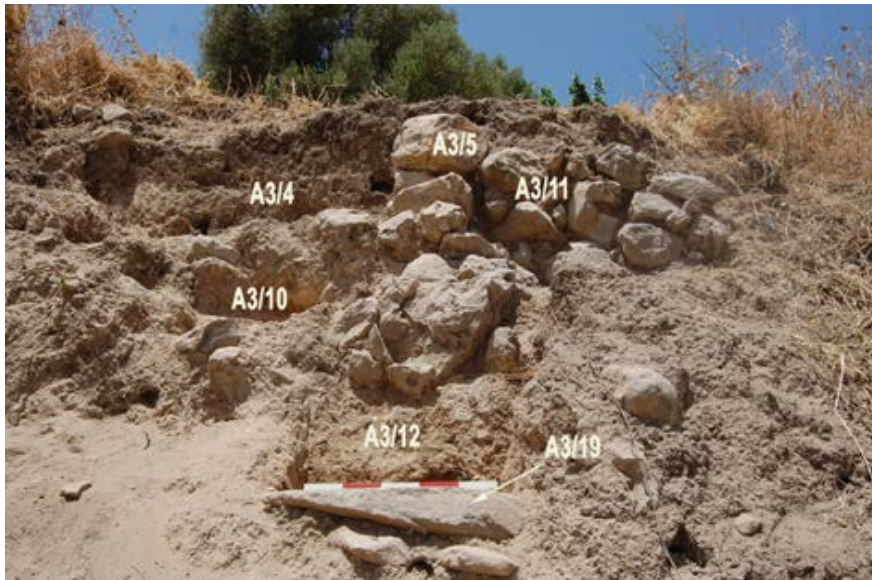


Photo 1. Section in eastern slope, Area A, with Iron Age walls exposed (revealed in 2012 survey)



Photo 2. Area A, ready for excavation, looking south. The section on the slope seen in Photo 1 is to the left (east) of the southern end of the area (below black dot).

Five squares were opened in the 2013 excavation season, positioned within the topographic grid of Squares 506 and 507 (Fig. 1, left). The squares from south to north are: A/14, A/13, A/12 on the east and T/13 and T/12 on the west. The location of the southeastern-most square was almost directly above the protruding segments of walls and floors in the eastern section of the slope found during the 2012 survey and described above (Photo 2). Only the eastern part of Squares

T/12–13 was excavated this season. Each square was based on a 5x5 m grid with 0.5-m wide balks left between them, creating squares with net internal measurements of 4.5x4.5 m (20.25 sq m). However, due to the proximity of tell's slope on the east, Squares A/14–A/12 were narrower (ca. 3.5 m in wide on the south and decreasing to a mere 2 m wide on the north) (Photo 3). As the excavation proceeded down, this width expanded, so that the southern square (A/14) reached a little more than 5 m from west to east and the northern square (A/12) reached nearly 4 m wide by the end of the season (Photo 3).



Photo 3. Area A looking north. The uppermost phase was revealed after removing the agricultural topsoil layer, which is visible in the western section of the southern square on the left. Square A/14 is in the foreground.

Initial probes and examination of the heights of the architecture in the eastern section indicated that there was some 0.3–0.7 m of sterile agricultural soil above the ancient remains. Since we could see this sterile layer in section from the May 2012 survey, we knew that we could make careful and strategic use of a JCB mechanical device under strict archaeological supervision and under the conditions of the Israel Antiquities Authority excavation license and supervision, to remove this layer, beginning with the surface level of 378.43 m in the south and 387.21 m in the

north. This activity proceeded until the top of stone walls were encountered at 378.13 m in the northwestern square (Square T/12, Wall 1108, Phase A1) and 377.50 m in the southwestern square (Square A/13, Walls 1114 and 1115, Phase A1) (Photo 4).



Photo 4. Square T/13 looking west at the section in middle of square. The agricultural topsoil layer is above Phase A1 Terrace Wall 1115.

A total of four main stratigraphic phases were identified – Phases A1 to A4 (Table 1; Photo 5). The entire accumulation removed this season reached a depth of 2.25 m.

Table 1. Summary of the stratigraphic phases from A1 to A4

Local phase	General description	Height Range	Loci	Walls
A1/ Topsoil	Late (Ottoman?) terrace walls below agricultural topsoil (removed partially by JCB) built directly on Iron Age walls of Ph. A2. Burial/skeletal remains (Square A/14)	378.43– 377.52	<i>Square A/13</i> : 1102 <i>Square A/14</i> : 1101, 1105, 1161 <i>Square T/13</i> : 1103 <i>Square T/12</i> : 1104, 1106, 1107, 1134	<i>Square T/12</i> : 1108, 1133 <i>Square T/13</i> : 1115, 1116
A2	Walls of a well-constructed building oriented N/S-E/W with related floor of hard-packed clay from Iron IIA or Iron I	377.60– 376.83	<i>Square A/12</i> : 1122, 1123, 1135 <i>Square A/13</i> : 1109, 1119, 1132 <i>Square A/14</i> : 1111 <i>Square T/12</i> : 1139 <i>Square T/13</i> : 1113, 1128, 1129, 1138	<i>Square A/12</i> : 1120, 1121, 1136 <i>Square A/13</i> : 1118 <i>Square A/14</i> : 1124 <i>Square T/13</i> : 1114, 1117, 1147
A3	Wall segments oriented N/S-E/W; related debris layer with scattered stones (possibly fill laid under the A2 floors); one floor in Square A/13 at 376.41 and northern part of Square A/14 at 376.42 m	376.93– 376.41	<i>Square A/12</i> : 1146 <i>Squares T–A/12</i> : 1154, 1165, 1166 <i>Square A/13</i> : 1126, 1140 <i>Square A/14</i> : 1131, 1143, 1151 <i>Square T/13</i> : 1141 <i>Squares T/12–13</i> : 1170	<i>Square A/13</i> : 1126 <i>Square A/14</i> : 1130?, 1157 <i>Square T/13</i> : 1158, 1168, 1169
A4	Tops of walls oriented roughly NE/SW; related debris layers and one possible floor in Square A/14 at 376.30 m	376.40– 376.17	<i>Square A/12</i> : 1171, 1172 <i>Squares T–A/12</i> : 1174 <i>Square A/13</i> : 1150 <i>Square A/14</i> : 1152, 1153 <i>Square T/13</i> : 1156	<i>Square A/12</i> : 1173 <i>Square A/14</i> : 1163



Photo 5. Area A at end of the 2013 season, looking south.

Phase A4

The earliest remains in Area A were reached in all excavated squares, although only the top of this level was exposed by the end of the season (Fig. 3). The fragmentary nature of these remains did not allow us to decisively conclude whether they comprised a homogeneous layer, so the attribution of each element to this phase was done mainly on their location below elements attributed to Phase A3.

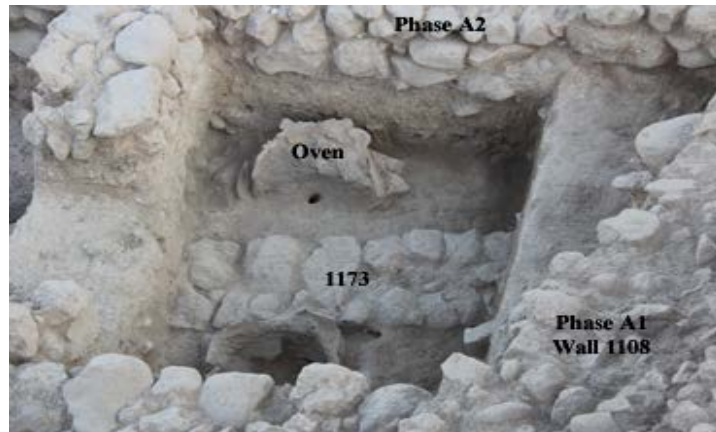


Photo 6. Wall 1173 between Oven 1165 and Pithos Installation 1166.

Remains that can be attributed to Phase A4 in Squares T–A/13 include a layer of soft brown earth interspersed with hard burnt reddish chunks of brick, gray and white ash patches and fallen stones (Loci 1156, 1159 and 1150). This layer, which measures ca. 0.50 m deep, might be a fill laid above the earlier occupation elements in preparation for the construction of Phase A3. Alternatively, it could be debris from buildings of the lower unexcavated level.

A small probe in the southeastern corner of Square A/13 penetrated to a depth of 375.52 m, just on the level of the top of the stones in the section of the eastern slope (Wall A3/5 in Photo 1). This small probe indicated that this “wall” did not continue further west, and was just a lone stone that happened to be visible in the section, possibly part of a north–south wall. This remains to be further clarified in future seasons.

Remains attributed to Phase A4 in Square A/14 were reached only in the eastern half of the area, as the western half was only excavated down to the A3 level (Photo 7). These remains comprise two installations (1153 – a flimsy circle of stones set on a layer of hard red burnt brick and an unnumbered patch of chalky chunks adjoining a large stone), a wall (1162), and debris (1152) on a white plaster layer (1167) that might be a floor at 376.30 m. The attribution of Wall 1162 to Phase A4 is still uncertain at this point, and it is possible that it is a later terrace wall on the slope. Wall 1162 was cut on the south by what seems to be a late burial (1161).

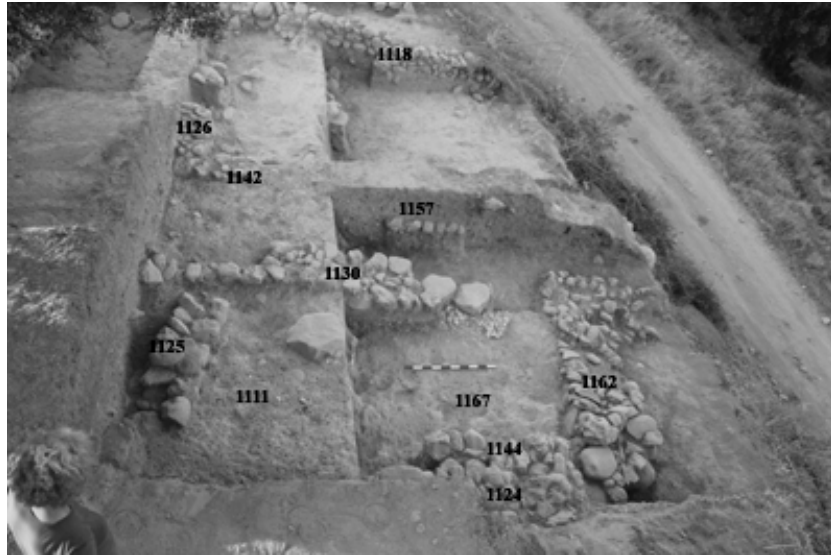


Photo 7. Squares A/13–14, looking south and Square A/14 in the foreground. Phase A4 Wall 1162 is on the right (east) and the meter stick rests on a possible surface (1167) covered by debris (1152).

Summary of Phase A4

The nature of the occupation in Phase A4 remains unclear at the end of the 2013 season, as the remains are very fragmentary. It seems that most of this was an open area, extending at least 8 m from north to south. The eastern part of this open area contained a ca. 0.50 m deep accumulation of debris with many sherds and bones, burnt brick and ash, along with soft earth and stones that might represent a fill laid here in preparation for the construction of the architecture of the next phase (A3). Alternatively, it may represent destruction debris of a building that lies below.

Finds include a large amount of pottery sherds and bones, as well as some grindstones and a broken iron arrowhead, found mostly in the debris/fill loci in Squares A–T/13. Preliminary examination of the pottery shows that it should be dated to Iron Age I, although an early Iron IIA date may be considered as well, based on further ceramic analysis. The ceramic finds included sherds of collared-rim pithoi and straight triangular cooking pot rims.

Phase A3

The remains attributed to Phase A3 directly overlay the debris and architecture of A4. This phase is characterized by rather fragmentary architectural remains found mainly in Squares A/13–14, abutted by debris and floor layers (Fig. 4). The east–west walls were found sunken towards the slope on the east, where erosion damaged their eastern end.

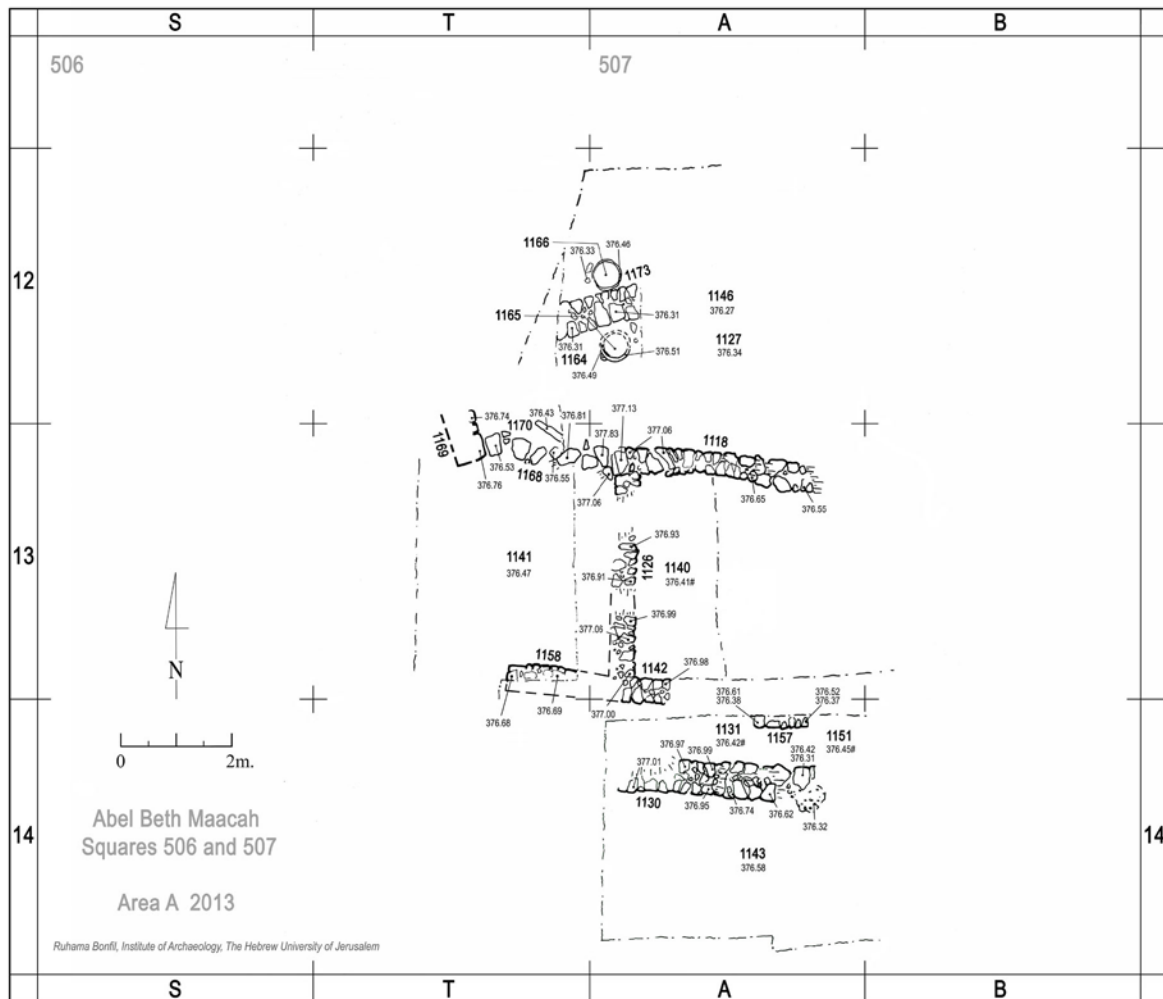


Fig. 4. Plan of Phase A3

Squares T–A/12 contained a well-built, albeit damaged oven (1165), and an installation (bin?) composed of large pithos sherds (1166). The oven's exterior was lined with sherds. Phase A4 Wall 1173 ran between these two elements. Though belonging to the previous phase, its top had been clearly visible to those who used the oven and pithos-installation as noted above (Photo 8). No floor was found associated with the oven. At the eroded eastern end of Square A12 was a layer of soft debris mixed with brick material (1146) containing some pottery and bones, and a flint blade.



Photo 8. Squares A–T/12; Oven 1165 and Installation 1166 flanking A4 ‘sleeper’ Wall 1173.

The room or courtyard with the oven and pithos-installation was bordered on the south by Wall 1118 in Square A/13, which was one of several relatively poorly preserved walls in this square (Photos 9–10). East–west Wall 1118 ran a length of 4 m from its corner on the west with Wall 1126 to the erosion line on the eastern slope of the mound, sloping down as it continued east. The construction is somewhat haphazard, but it is a sturdily built wall and incorporates several large basalt oval-shaped boulders. A north–south wall (1126) that apparently had originally made a corner with Wall 1118 runs 3.5 m distance from this corner to the corner it makes with Wall 1142 on the south.

A curious feature of Wall 1126 is its segmentation (Photos 9–10). It seems that two parts of the wall were removed during its lifetime, creating three individual segments with two gaps in between them. This left one-meter-long segments of the wall in the south and in the middle. The northern segment which adjoins Wall 1118 is only 0.35 m long. The southern gap is 0.5 m wide and the northern gap ca. 0.7 m wide. These gaps would have allowed access to the space to the west of this wall, although the stones were removed quite haphazardly and no attempt was made to make these “openings” orderly or aesthetic. It is possible that the upper part of this wall was abutted by A2 Floor 1113 to the west (see below), although its relationship to Walls 1118 and 1142 and to Floor 1140 support its attribution to Phase A3. On the south, Wall 1126 makes a corner with Wall 1142, a well-built 0.90 m long segment that terminates abruptly on the east.



Photo 9. Square A/13 looking north. Phase A3 remains.



Photo 10. Square A/13 looking west; segmented Wall 1126 against the western balk. Note the scattered stones in Debris 1140 in the foreground.

Within the boundaries of these three walls (1118, 1126 and 1142) there was a space running 4 m from north to south and at least 4 meters from west to east (where its continuation is cut by the slope's erosion). A 0.30 m thick accumulation of debris rested on a possible floor (1140) comprised of hard clay mixed with whitish material at 376.41 m. In the center of this space was a large amorphic heap of stones surrounded by soft brown earth (Locus 1137; 376.85–

376.71 m) that was difficult to phase. They were either part of a fill laid above the A3 remains in preparation for the construction of Phase A2, or they were part of some installation/ construction related to Phase A3 that had been severely damaged or dismantled.

To the west of the unit formed by Walls 1118, 1126 and 1142 is a layer (1141) mixed with compacted brick debris and soft brown soil. This was not a floor surface, but it terminated on almost the same level (376.47 m) as Floor 1140 to the east. On the western end of this debris is a feature that was identified underneath A2 Wall 1114 – a distinct, though patchy line of yellow-white plaster at 376.60 m. Its continuation to the north consists of a thin layer of phytolith mixed with ash (Photo 10). This possibly represents a floor that originally covered the area to the east of the line of Phase A2 Wall 1114, but was not preserved there. However, it is possible that this is an element that was laid in preparation for the construction of A2 Wall 1114 that will be clarified only when the wall is dismantled.



Photo 10. Square T/13 looking west at Phase A2 Wall 1114 above the plaster layer and A3 Debris 141.

Another wall attributed to Phase A3 is Wall 1158. This is a short segment whose southern face was exposed in the southern balk of Square T/13 (Photo 12). This might be the continuation of Wall 1142 to the west (see Fig. 4).



Photo 12. Square T/13 looking south at A3 Wall 11458 in southern balk; Phase A2 Walls 1147 and 1114 are to the right (west) and A1 Terrace Wall 1115 is above.

Other walls attributed to Phase A3 in Square T/13 are 1168 and 1169, as they are underneath A2 Wall 1114 (Photo 13); however, their exposure is too limited at this point to determine their true architectural relationship to the other walls of this phase.



Photo 13. Square T/13, looking west; Walls 1168 and 1169 underneath A2 Wall 1114.

Elements attributed to Phase A3 in Square A/14 appear to be a continuation of the walls and related features in Square A/13 to the north. They too are rather fragmentary and badly eroded on the east. These walls include east–west Wall 1130, a 3.5 m long segment that seems to have been cut on the west by a pit as it terminates abruptly on the east; it too slopes down to the east like the other walls of this phase (Photo 14) . It should however be taken into account that the phasing of Wall 1130 is not yet certain and it might belong to the next phase, A2.

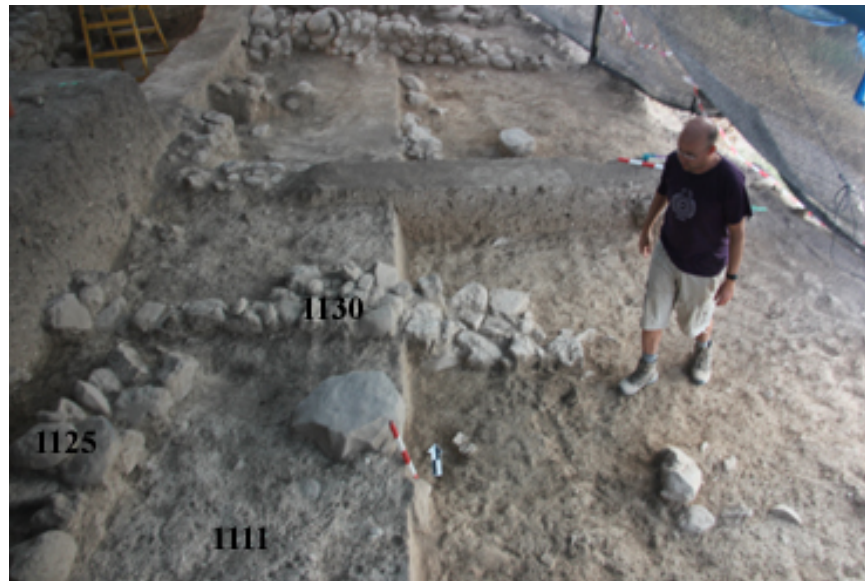


Photo 14. Squares A/14–13 looking north; Wall 1130 in center; note the descent of wall to east. Wall 1118 is in the far north at the top of the photo.

In the space to the south of Wall 1130 is a layer of debris (1143) that may possibly be considered a sub-floor fill or debris layer related to the construction of the A2 floor above; no floor surface was found here.

Summary of Phase A3

The fragmentary walls and debris layers related to them were revealed below the floors of Phase A2 (see below). The depth of accumulation ascribed to this phase is not more than 0.40 m and it may be that these elements were an early phase of A2. If so, then some of the A3 walls could have been re-used in A2 and some of the debris might constitute a fill to level out the area in preparation for the construction of Phase A2. This possibility might be supported by the fact that the remains are close to the eastern slope of the mound. The rather shallow depth of the debris in this phase raises the question as to whether a brick superstructure had stood on the stone walls

that were revealed, or whether these walls had originally been no more than low screen walls. If the former, then it seems that the brick superstructure and its debris were removed when Phase A2 was built.

A relatively small amount of pottery was recovered from loci of Phase A3, most of it similar to that of A4. These include large fragments of pithoi, some with wavy band reliefs of a type found on Tyrian or Phoenician-type pithoi, and cooking pot rims. Other finds include several grindstones, bones, flint, and a few olive pits.

Phase A2

Phase A2 is the best preserved of all four phases exposed this season. The remains consist of a large building which was only partially exposed, as it continues to the west and south, beyond the limits of the excavation. The eastern end is eroded on the current line of the tell's slope (Photo 5 above; Fig. 5).

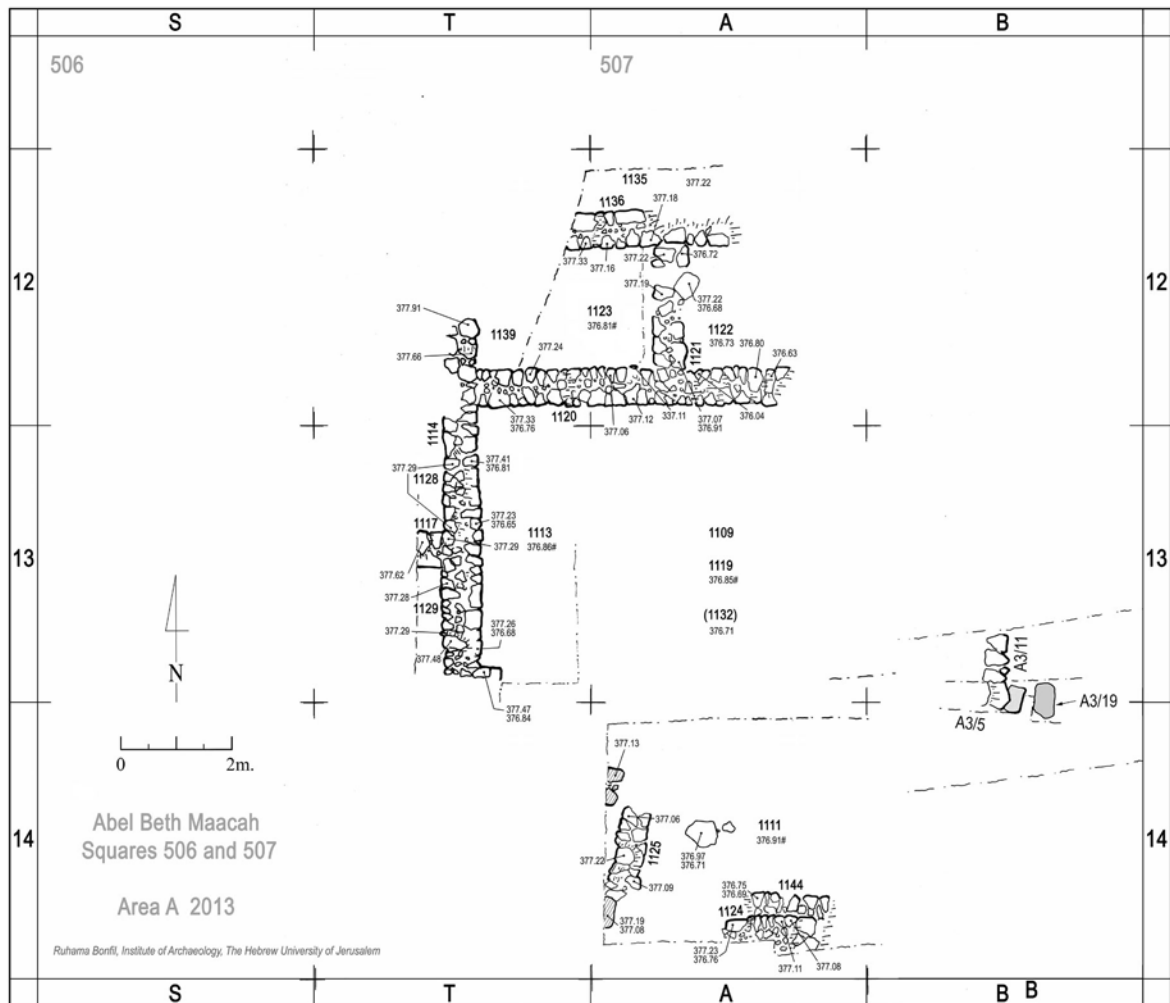


Fig. 5. Plan of Phase A2

The walls of this building, preserved two to five courses high, are oriented on a N–S/E–W axis and were revealed just below the terrace walls of Phase A1 in Squares T/12–13 (Photos 14, 16–17). Judging by the matrix and the depth of soil of the related loci, it seems that these walls originally bore a mudbrick superstructure. The eastern ends of the walls sloped down towards the east and were damaged by the erosion line of the tell. The general plan consists of a building with small rooms surrounding a central courtyard. Remnants of four rooms have been uncovered so far – two on the north and two on the west (Squares T/12–13 and A/13) (Photo 5). The debris layers and the floors which relate to this building are uniform in nature and were clearly detected throughout the building. This debris layer consists of distinct light brown compact soil tinged with a light gray color visible mostly in the sections, and dotted with white

chalky inclusions (measuring ca. 1–2 cm x 1 cm each) and mixed with decayed mudbrick debris and chunks. A large number of pottery sherds were found, many of them large fragments of storage jars and pithoi that might be restorable, as well as many large bones.

Two rooms of the building were excavated in Squares T–A/12 (Photo 15). Wall 1121, the dividing wall between the rooms, does not bond with the northern or the southern walls, which suggests that it was added at a later phase or that this is a constructional feature (Photo 16). Although not completely exposed, the southwestern corner of the western room was identified (covered in part by a Phase A1 terrace wall), so the room may be reconstructed as 3.1 x 2.1 m, bordered on the west by the northern continuation of Wall 1114 (see below) that is presently covered by an A1 wall (Photo 17).

A debris layer (1112, 1139) composed of light brown soil with small white chalk inclusions and mudbrick debris lay on a hard beaten-earth surface in the western room (1123 at 376.81 m), although no clear floor level was discerned in the east, perhaps due to erosion (1122 at 376.73 m). A fair amount of pottery was recovered in these rooms, particularly close to floor level and possibly restorable, including large pithos sherds and cooking pot rims. Other finds include bones and a few olive pits; microarchaeology samples were taken from above the floor.

No floor was detected north of Wall 1136, the northern wall, possibly due to erosion in this area close to the eastern slope.



Photo 15. Squares T–A/12, looking south; two northern rooms of A2 building: Room 1123 on the right (west), with earlier elements below and Room 1122 on the left (east), eroded on the edge.



Photo 16. Square A/12 looking south at southeastern corner of Phase A2 Room 1123, the northwestern room exposed this season.

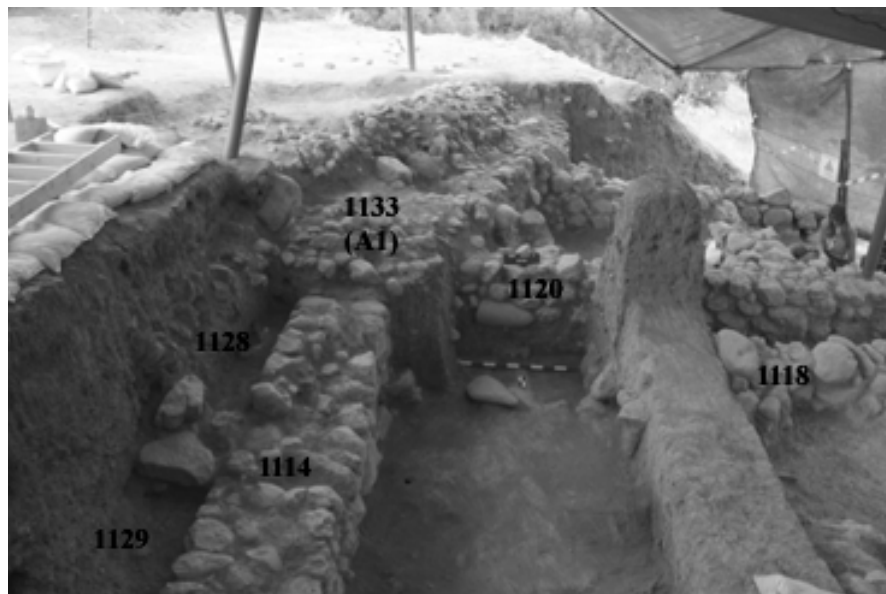


Photo 17. Squares T/12–13, looking north at the corner of A2 Walls 1114 and 1120 superimposed by A1 terrace walls 1108 and 1133.

Wall 1114 is a well-built wall running along the western end of Square A/13 and continuing to the north to border the northwestern room as well. A short segment of an east–west wall (1117) that extends from Wall 1114 to the west, 2 m to the north of the southern balk of Square T/13, divides the narrow space between this wall and the western subsidiary balk into two rooms: 1128 on the north and 1128 on the south. These were not excavated due to the narrow area, but they clearly parallel Rooms 1122 and 1123 on the north (Photo 17).

To the east of Wall 1114 is an open area that extends c. 9.5 m from north to south and at least 7 m to the east (where it is cut by the erosion on the slope). This large open area is filled with a layer of light brown soil rich with white chalky inclusions and mudbrick debris which

rested on a hard clay surface (1113 at 376.86 m in the west and 1119 at 376.85 m in the east). The debris contained a large amount of pottery, possibly restorable and mostly comprised of large pithos sherds and cooking pot rims, as well as fragments of fallen bricks. Close to the floor were concentrations of many bones and scattered sherds. One hundred percent of this debris was sifted and many microarchaeology samples were taken above the floor. Other finds include a fragmentary basalt mortar (at 376.90 m), a grinding stone (at 376.92 m), and olive pits found in sifting.

The remains attributed to Phase A2 in Square A/14 are at the southern end of the courtyard of the A2 building (Photo 18). On the south of the square are two walls: 1124 and 1144. Wall 1124, adjoining the southern balk, was cut at both ends – on the east by a later burial (1161) and on west by an unknown factor (or perhaps was never built to begin with). Adjoining the northern face of Wall 1124 was Wall 1144, whose top was ca. 0.40 m lower than that of Wall 1124. Its eastern end was cut by a later burial (1161) and its western end seems to terminate on purpose, since just at this spot, a small storage jar was set into the clay makeup of the floor here (Photo 19). An intact juglet (11171) was found ca. 0.40 m to the east of the storage jar on top of a thin debris layer that covered the top of Wall 1144. It is possible that Walls 1124 and 1144 comprised a kind of bench or intentional niche for these vessels. If so, then this would have been an installation located within the southern confines of the central courtyard of the A2 building.



Photo 18. Square A/14, looking south; top of walls under sterile agricultural soil.



Photo 19. Square A/14 looking south at Wall 1124 with the storage jar to the right (west) and the juglet to the left (east) in front of Wall 1144 (Photo 20)



Photo 20. Square A/14, looking south at Walls 1124 and 1144, with storage jar at western end of 1144. Phase A1 burial 1161 cuts the walls on the east.

The floor in this part of the open courtyard (1111) was well preserved (376.91 m to 376.83 m) and concentrated mostly in the west; the eastern part was eroded. Above the floor is a layer of light brown soil rich with white chalk inclusions, large pottery sherds that are possibly restorable, and bones. This debris was 100% sifted and yielded more than 15 olive pits. Additional finds on the floor included a pestle and two grinding stones. Like to the north, this floor is made of very hard-packed clay. About 1.5 m north of Wall 1124 was a well-worked flat-topped stone which might have been a pillar base or working surface on the floor. Its top was flush with the floor (376.91 m) while its base penetrated into the level of the A3 debris below (376.71 m) (Photos 2, 8, 16, 21).

A feature that is phased with A2, but might be a remnant of a somewhat later stage, is Wall 1125 running NE–SW. It measures 1.50 m long by 0.45 m wide, and is comprised of six stones in a row and runs near the western balk (Photo 18).

Summary of Phase A2

The architecture attributed to Phase A2 is well-built and demonstrates careful planning. The building is apparently comprised of rooms around a courtyard, although the remains are very fragmentary at this point, given its close proximity to the tell's eastern slope. The nature of the finds – large amounts of pottery (but all fragmentary and mostly pithoi and cooking pots) suggests that the debris layers, at least in part, are fill.

Phase A1

This is the latest phase in Area A, uncovered just below topsoil. Mechanical equipment was used to remove sterile agricultural soil layer from the tell surface down to 378.23 m in the north and 377.50 m in the south, where stone walls of Phase A1 were encountered.

Phase A1 includes four walls oriented northeast–southwest in Squares T/12–13. Skeletal remains, possibly of a burial, were found in the southeastern corner of the area, on the edge of the slope. No floors were associated with these four walls, supporting the conclusion that they are agricultural terrace walls or stone fences around agricultural plots. The northeast–southwest orientation of the A1 terrace walls follows the topographic line of the slope that must have existed when the walls were built, in contrast to the north–south orientation that can be seen today.

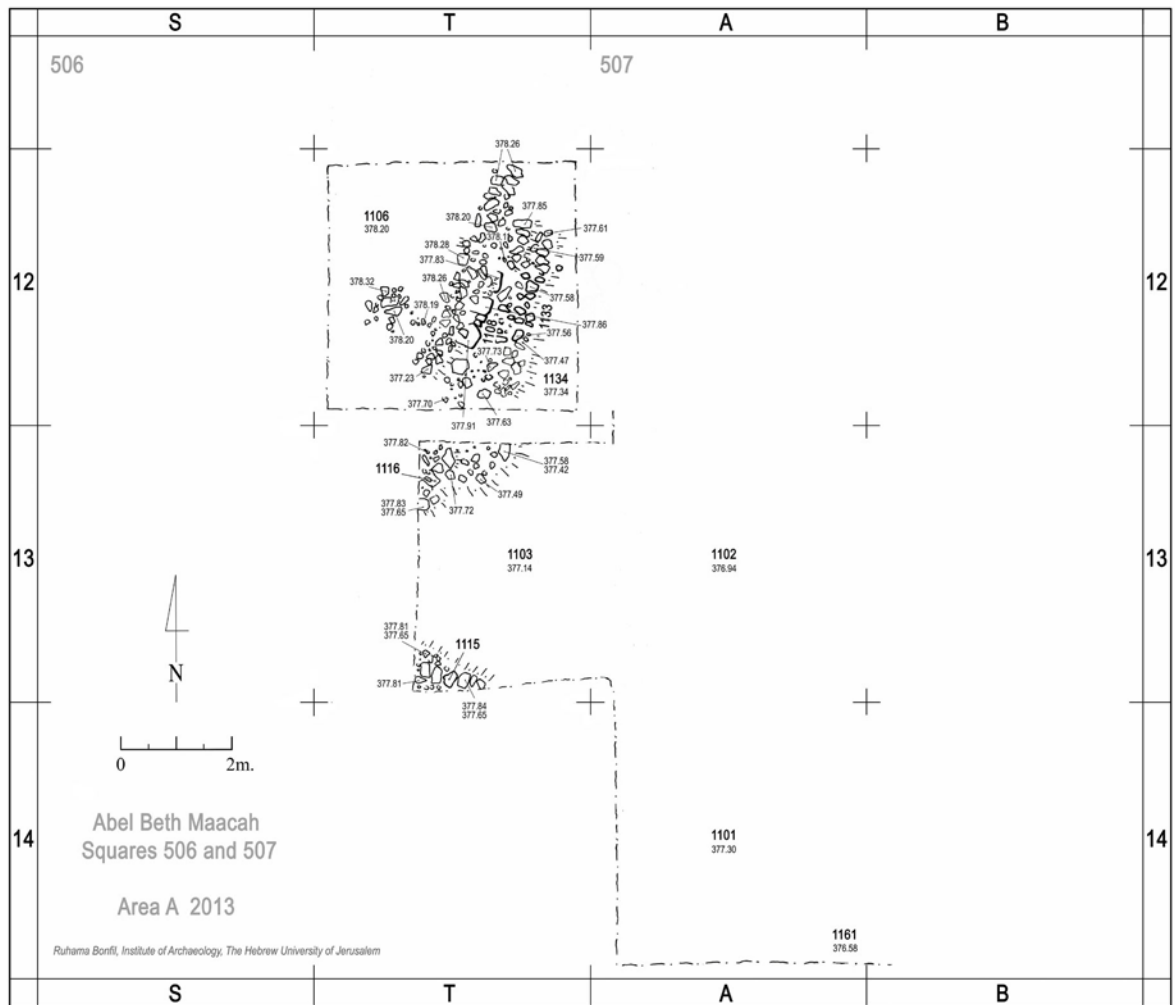


Fig. 5. Plan of Phase A/1

Two of the terrace walls were revealed in Square T/12: Wall 1108 on the west and Wall 1133 adjoining it on the east at a level ca. 0.60 m lower (Photo 21). Both are built of small to medium-size field stones which were laid loosely on top of a few larger stones that might have been robbed from the Iron Age walls immediately below.



Photo 21. Square T/12, looking south, A1 terrace Walls 1108 and 1133 covering A2 Wall 1120

Segments of such walls were also found in Square T/13 (1115 and 1116), possibly the same wall that had been cut in the middle by the JCB when it removed the agricultural topsoil (see Photo 4).

The Phase A1 terrace walls directly covered the Iron Age walls from Phase A2. Wall 1133 covered the corner of Walls 1120 and 1114 (Photos 17, 21) and Walls 1115 and 1116 covered Wall 1114 and Wall 1115 (Photos 4, 22). The gap between the A1 and A2 walls was no more than 0.10–0.20 m.

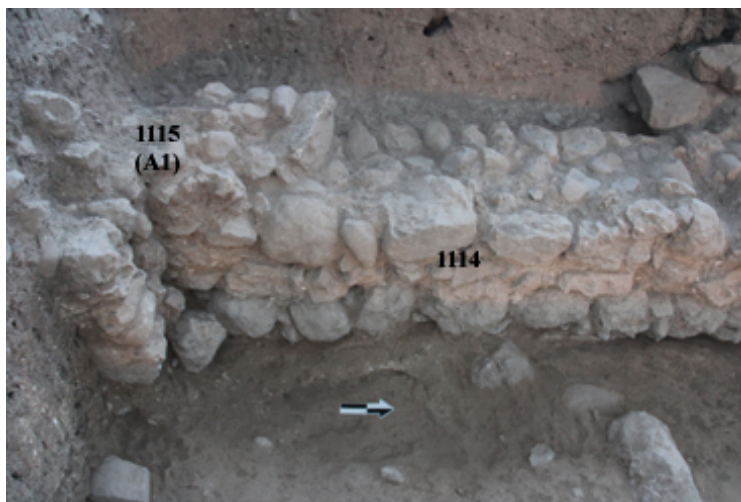


Photo 23. Square T/13 looking west at the southern end of A2 Wall 1114 covered by A1 terrace Wall 1115.

There is no clear indication of the absolute date of the terrace walls. Relatively, they are later than the Phase A2 Iron Age walls, but there is an obvious large chronological gap between them. The proximity between the two phases is interesting. The very small gap between the two show that when the terrace walls were built, the walls and debris of Phase A2 were close to the surface. This suggests two possibilities: a) the area was flattened, leveled, and lowered of its later debris before the terrace walls were built; b) the terraces were built directly on the top of the Iron Age II debris, with no other human activity having taken place in the interim. If the second option is the correct one, it would suggest that the terrace walls were built not much later than the end of the Iron Age occupation, or that there had been very little accumulation above them, perhaps due to erosion, since this area is close to the eastern edge of the mound. Future excavation and dismantling of these walls will help to date them.

In the southeastern corner of Square A/14, skeletal remains were found (1161) in what appears to be a possibly modern burial. The shallow pit in which the bones were found (376.58–376.40 m) cut the eastern end of Wall 1124 (Phase A2) and the southern end of Wall 1162 (Phase A4). The pit continues into the southern balk.

The possibility that Wall 1162 in Square A/14 (attributed here to Phase A4) belongs to Phase A1 and is yet another agricultural terrace wall has been considered, based mainly on the nature of its relationship to the A4 layers to its west. However, since this wall was exposed only at the end of the excavation season on the edge of the slope, it remains to be further clarified.

Very few finds were found related to this layer. The few sherds in topsoil are mixed and include what appear to be Medieval and Ottoman-period pieces (such as a clay pipe fragment), as well as a few glass fragments. Further examination of the pottery is needed to determine a more precise date, if possible, in light of the scanty finds and lack of floors.