

Area B-Field Report, 2016

Ariel Shatil

Area B is located on the top of the eastern slope of the upper mound (Grid Square #306#). Aerial photos point to the possibility that the higher northern part of the tell contained a large building, possibly a citadel. In the 2015 season, four main phases were identified (B1-B4). Phase B1 consists mainly of stone built cist tombs of the Medieval 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. Phase B4 contained various activities that in 2015 were not sub-divided into phases due to insufficient exposure and unsealed contexts that contained mixed pottery from Iron Age I and Iron Age II.

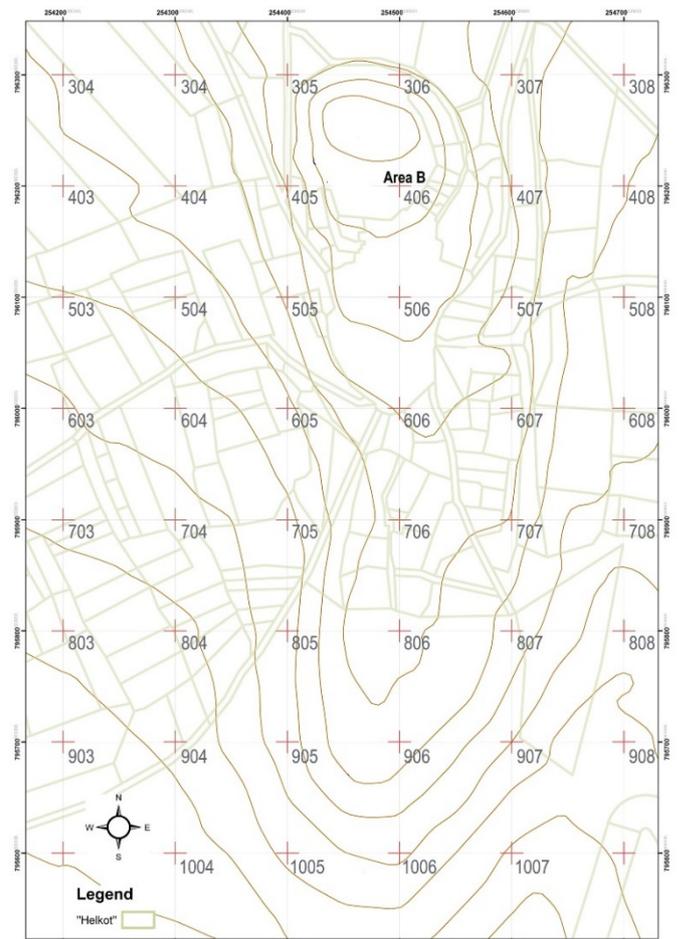


View of the northern end of the tell looking west; black star = Area B

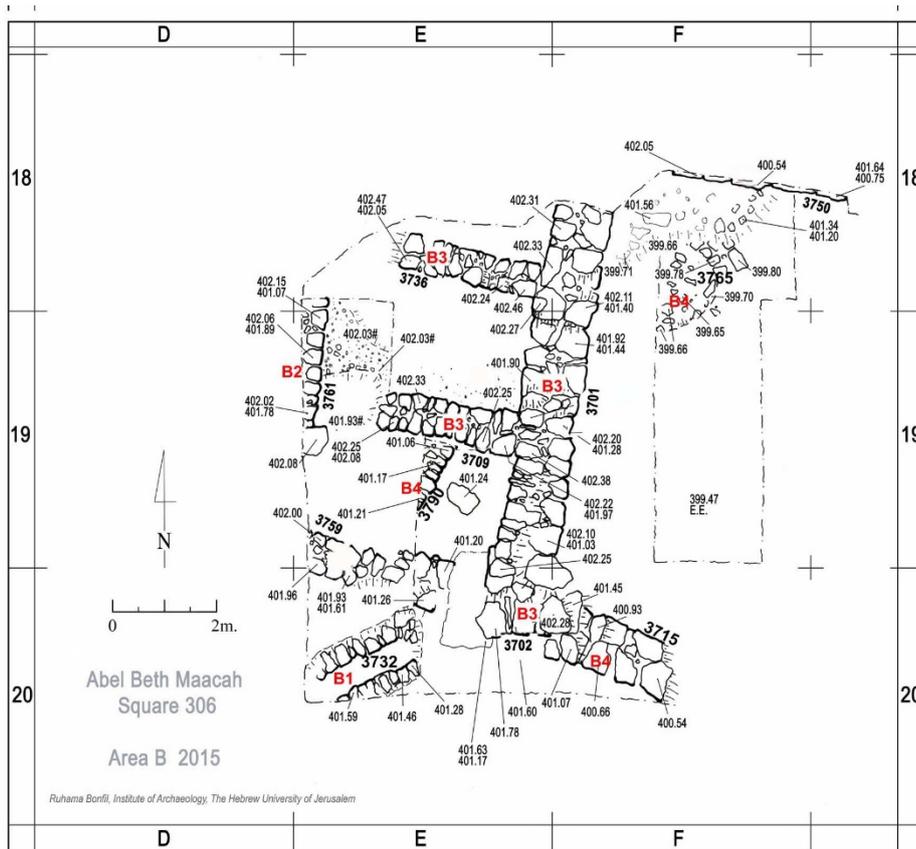
In 2016 excavation concentrated in two main areas separated by the high baulk left under the dismantling of Phase B3 massive wall 3701:

A) In the west of Area B, excavation concentrated in Square E/19 and the northern part of Square E/20 in order to reach and clarify features of Phase B4 below the Late Persian-Early Hellenistic building 3701.

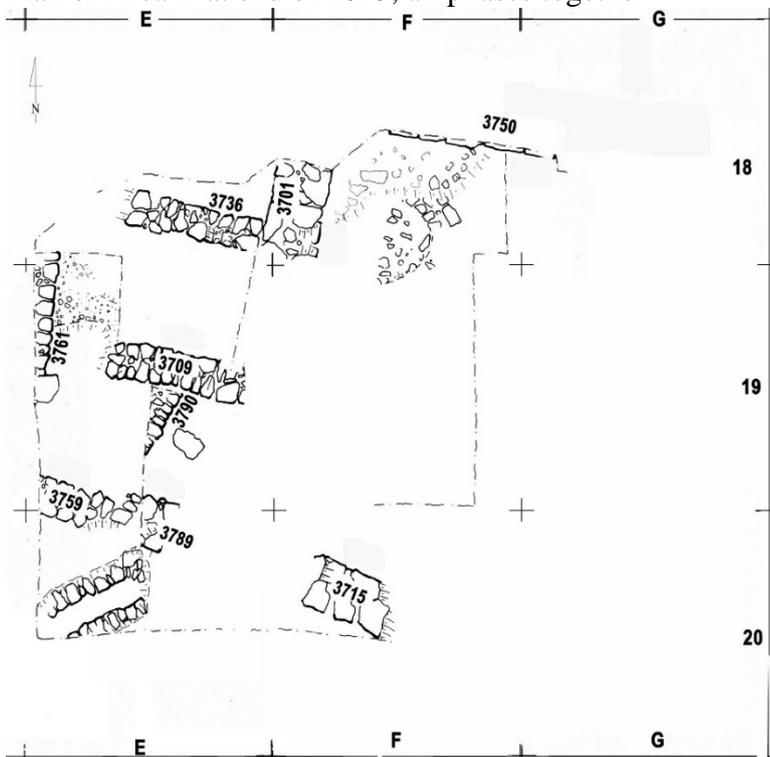
B) In the eastern part of Area B, where, due to the slope of the tell and the excavations of 2015, the digging begun at much lower levels a.s.l., the aim was mainly to articulate and define the different activities and features assigned to Phase B4 during 2015. Excavations took place in the southern half of Square F/18, Squares F/19 and G19, and the northern half of Squares F/20 and G/20. A higher strip of about 1 meter wide, running north-south along the western border of Squares F/20-19, was left from the last season and we maintained it throughout 2016



in order to have a clean section running through the excavated area.



Plan of Area B at end of 2015, all phases together



Area B at the beginning of 2016, most of Wall 3701 and all of Wall 3702 dismantled.

In addition to the three well-defined phases (B1-B3) which were already described in last year's report, this season we managed to successfully define three earlier phases. Phase B4 consists of a massive wall system tentatively dating to the Iron Age IIB and sub-phased to B4a and B4b. It should be noted that the designation of B4 in 2016 is different than in 2015, when all elements pre-B-3 were classified (tentatively) as B4). Phase B5 consists of some walls, debris, floors and an oven dated to the Iron Age I or Iron Age IIA. The main feature of Phase B6 is a rampart dating to the Middle Bronze Age IIB (B6b) and a burial inside it, dated to the Middle Bronze IIC (B6a).

Table 1: Summary of strata and main features excavated in 2016

Stratum	Squares	Definition	Loci	Walls	Proposed date
B6	F-G/19-20; E/19	B6b; Glacis. Whitish-orange gravel layers	4711, 4716, 4744, 4762, 4766, 4773, 4779, 4800		MBIIb
	F/19	Glacis dark soil filling?	(4723?)		
	F/18-19	B6a; Burial into the glacis	4788, (4723?)		MBIIb-c
Post-B6 features	F/18-20, G/19-20	Eroded accumulations with collapsed stones, mudbricks, and ash covering glacis (B4-B6?)	4709, 4710, 4713, 4714, , 4752, 4761, 4765, 4770, 4774, 4775, 4781, 4793	4776, 4794	
	F/19	Pits cut into B7 and other disturbances (B4-B6?)	4719, 4721, 4723?, 4727, 4734, 4738, 4754, 4756, 4786, 4789, 4795, 4796		
	F/18-19	Silos and Installations cut into B7 (B4-B6?)	3782, 4717, 4730, 4769, 4787		
"B5b"	E/19	Accumulations below B5 floors.	4783, 4784, 4785, 4799, 4772,		

B5	E/19	Building 3790. Debris and ash on floors Packed earth surfaces with an oven, remains of shallow flimsy walls, and installations	4735, 4736, 4741, 4751, 4748, 4749, 4750, 4763, 4764, 4771, 4782,	3790, 4768, 4791, 4797, 4798	IAI-II
B4-5		Debris & accumulations abutting walls of B4 and B5	4737, 4739, 4747, 4757, 4760, 4761		
B4	E/19-20	B4b; Addition to wall system 3715		4740	IAII
	E/19-20, F/20	Foundation trench	4743		
	E/19, F/20	B4a; Massive stone wall system 3715. Foundation trenches	4755, 4792 4715, 4724,	3715, 3750, 3789, 4790	IAII
B3-4	E/19-20	Fills under Phase B3 walls and floors	4708, 4720, 4722, 4725, 4726, 4729, 4733, 4742, 4759, 4760, 4778, 4780		
B3	F/18	Stone floor outside Building 3701	3751	3750?, 3759	Late Persian/ Early Hellenistic
	E/19	B3c; Early phase of Building 3701. Floor	3718, 4718	3709	
		B3b; Middle phase of Building 3701. Floor under W3709	3718, 4706, 4707		
		B3a; Late phase of Building 3701. Dismantling of wall 3709	4705		
B1	F/19-20	Pits and disturbances	3722, 3764		Islamic/ Medieval?
	F-G/20, G/19	Dark layer of (agricultural?) soil	4745, 4746, 4752, 4753, 4767		
	E/20	Cist tomb L3732	3732, 4758		
Topsoil	G/19, F-G/18	Topsoil	4712, 4728, 4731, 4732, 4777		

Phase B1

Phase B1 features that were excavated last season (2015) consisted of late pit burials, stone constructed tombs, a meagre support wall and a few deep disturbances cutting into the earlier phases. These 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 clear, neither is their exact date.

The excavation of Phase B1 features this season included work around the stone built tomb 3732 in Square E/20, the excavation of the large disturbance or pit 3764 in squares F/19-20, and excavation of an extensive layer of dark agricultural soil in squares G/19-20. It should be noted that B1, in fact, represents all the latest elements and layers in Area B and does not constitute a coherent, well-dated stratum.

Tombs 3732 and 3739

The cist tomb, measuring 2 m long and ca. 90 m wide and covered by five oval cover stones surrounded by smaller stones, was discovered and excavated last season. The fill inside the tomb, as well as the interred skeleton, were excavated as 3745, leaving the stone walls standing to a height of ca. 80 cm. The walls were lined with three courses of field stones and under those were large, partially hewn, boulders, three on the north side, and two on the south, which were thought to either be removed from Phase B3 Wall 3701 and reused to build the grave, or were part of the continuation of Phase B4 Wall 3715.

The south wall of the tomb is directly adjacent to the southern excavation limit; the north wall is supported from the outside by field stones of different sizes that were piled against it (4758). The work this season commenced by removing these field stones to expose the wall's northern face. The top courses of the wall were then dismantled leaving the three big boulders at the base. The narrow triangular space between the northern wall of the tomb and the southern face of Phase B4a Wall 4740 was excavated as 4759. This accumulation, cut by the builders of the tomb, was excavated to a depth of ca. 45cm before Phase B5 wall 4791 was exposed beneath it. The fill directly under the tomb, 4780, was excavated to a depth of ca. 15 cm, when Phase B4 Wall 4790 was exposed beneath it. The finds in 4780, 4758 and 4759 included a mix of Iron Age to Medieval pottery.



Left: ABM16-B-144: View from the north east at tomb 3732 after removal of the upper courses of its northern wall to expose the boulders in the lowest course.

Right: ABM16-B-157: View from the north to the northern face of Phase B1 tomb 3739. In the foreground, the top of phase B4 Wall 3789.

As Wall 4740 is the western continuation of Wall 3715, and it does not seem as if boulders were removed from it, last year's suggestion that the boulders used to construct the lower part of the tomb were part of the continuation of Wall 3715 is probably not correct. Instead, it seemed the boulders were removed or just shifted from nearby Wall 4790 which runs northwest to south east from its interlocked corner with Wall 3789 and thus, lies directly under the tomb.

Immediately to the east of tomb 3732, accumulations cut into by the building of tomb 3739, also a Phase B1 tomb, were also excavated: 4708 and below it, 4755. These layers are attributed to Phase B4 and are described below.

Disturbance 3722 and 3764

Last season, in the area just to the north of Wall 3715 and up to a narrow subsidiary balk left in the middle of Square F/19 (3.0 m to the north of Wall 3715), the stratigraphic situation was unclear due to the presence of concentrations of stones: 3722, 3757 and 3764. It was not clear whether these were the tops of very disturbed walls or whether they might have been silos, pits or collapse. The stones of 3757 appear to have a rounded contour and in fact, upon their removal in 2015, it seemed that they cut into the layers underneath them (3785) suggesting that 3757 represented the bottom of a pit. Stone concentration 3722, on the other hand, did not appear to have any obvious contour, and contained a mix of Iron Age, Medieval and modern finds. Yet another concentration of stones (3764) was found on a somewhat lower level slightly to the east of stones 3722. Stone concentration 3764 appeared to be larger in area and arranged on an east-west line, but it was impossible to determine at

that point if 3764 and 3722 did not comprise a wall or collapse, nor what was their relationship to Wall 3715.

During this season we excavated both stone concentrations. 3722 was significantly damaged when Wall 3701 was dismantled using heavy machinery before the beginning of the season. Although not much of it remained, it was found to have had an amorphous contour and contained mostly small and medium sized field stones. The pottery from this and last season contained a mix of sherds from the Iron Age I to the Ottoman period, as well as glass fragments and bits and pieces of plastic and rubber. The concentration of stones 3722 was found to be sitting directly on top of the larger concentration of stones 3764, and in fact they both could be one and the same.

3764 contained much larger rocks and boulders that penetrated almost 1 m deep through the debris around it (3758, 3774, 3781, 4712, 4728, 4752) and into the MB rampart of Phase B6 (4711, 4762). The stones had a round contour, ca. 2.5 m in diameter, directly under the stones of 3722, at ca 400.00 m; as the stones went deeper, it narrowed down, eventually reaching a diameter of only ca. 1.2 m at level 398.95 m. The finds included Iron Age I and II, Persian-Hellenistic, Islamic and Medieval pottery as well as glass and pieces of plastics and rubber. It thus is clear that this is a disturbance.



Left: ABM16-B-019: View from the north at disturbance 3764, stone concentration 3722 above it, and B4 Wall 3715 in the background.

Right: ABM16-B-123: View from the north at disturbance 3764 excavated to its bottom, penetrating into Middle Bronze Age rampart layers. B4 Wall 3715 in the background.

Agricultural Soil Layer

Directly below the topsoil in Squares G/19-20 (Loci 4731, 4732), and below the topsoil at the north-western corner of F/20 (Loci 4712, 4728), a thick layer of dark soil was encountered at approximate level of 399.05 m. The soil layer is about 20-30 cm thick and slopes down from west (ca. 399.05 m) to

east (ca. 398.80 m). The pottery and other finds in the loci making up this layer suggest a late date, but it appears that at least the stone concentrations noted last season and on this one as well (see above; 3722, 3764, 3757 etc.) penetrate this layer, which makes these features contemporary or later than it.

In the corner of Square F/20, a dark soil layer (4752) was reached after removal of ca. 70 cm of topsoil and debris (4712, 4728). The dark soil here abutted the northern face of Phase B4 Wall 3715 on the south, and the southwestern quadrant of stone Silo 4769 in the north. Towards the east, it continued into Square G/20 (see below; 4746) and in the west, it disappeared at the border of the large stone disturbance 3764, which seems to cut even into this late layer. 4752 was excavated to a depth of 30 cm and was found to be covering the sloping layers of gravel belonging to the Middle Bronze Age rampart of phase B6 (4711). The finds in the locus included pottery dating to the Iron Age II, Persian-Hellenistic and Medieval periods, flint and stone tools.

In Squares G/20, the dark soil was excavated as loci 4746 and 4753 (although we might have encountered it already at slightly higher level at the east of 4732 which was mostly topsoil). It was encountered after the removal of ca. 25 cm of topsoil. Here, the dark soil layer was excavated to a depth of 25 cm. In the north, this layer covered the top of the southeastern quadrant of Silo 4769 and continued in Square G/19 as 4745 and 4767 (see below), in the east and south it reached the edge of the excavation and in the west it continued into square F/20 as 4752 (above). Directly under this layer we reached debris covering the Middle Bronze glacia gravel (4765) or the glacia itself (4766) and silos 4769 and 4787. The finds in 4746 and 4753 included a mix of sherds dating from the Middle Bronze to Medieval periods.

In Square G/19, the layer of dark soil was excavated as loci 4745 and 4767. It was encountered after the removal of ca. 40 cm of loose gray topsoil. In the western half of Square G/19, 4745 was excavated to a depth of ca. 20 cm. It covers the top of the northern half of silo 4769, abuts the accumulations of mudbrick material 4770 in the north and was not noticed beyond the western balk in Square F/19. In the eastern half of Square G/19, 4767 was excavated to a depth of ca. 20 cm. In the north and east, it reached the limits of the excavation area and in the south, it continued in Square G/20 as 4753. Locus 4757 covers the top of collapsed wall 4776, as well as the top of silo 4787. The finds in 4745 and 4767 included a mix of Middle Bronze to Medieval pottery as well as a bead, metal scraps and flint tools.

An interesting repeated find throughout the excavation of this layer, as well as in the topsoil above it, is a thin well-fired type of pottery with white geometric decoration on a dark surface, including herringbone designs and guilloche bands. Such sherds were also found in disturbance 3764.



ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_266: view from the west on the eastern edge of excavation, square E/19-20. The layer of dark soil can be seen in the section, just above Phase B4-5 silo 4787.

Phase B2

No elements could be related to Phase B2 this season.

Phase B3

Phase B3 comprises part of a very substantial building, designated Building 3701, that was excavated in 2015. Its pottery dates it to the late Persian-early Hellenistic period. The building contained three phases (B3c, B3b, B3a). Its western part was built above a fill laid on top of the Iron Age structures (see B4, B5 below). All the remains excavated last season were located to the west of Wall 3701, while whatever had belonged to this unit to the east of Wall 3701 has eroded away, aside from a small remnant of a stone pavement (3751) and, possibly, the southern face of a wall (Wall 3750) on the north edge of the excavation. This season our work on Phase B3 features concentrated in two areas: 1) west of the dismantled Wall 3701, in Square E/19: Wall 3709 of Phase B3a was dismantled in order to allow us to expose the layers beneath it. In the same square, Wall 3759 was dismantled and Floor 3718 of Phase B3b-c was excavated in order to reach earlier layers below it. 2) in the lower step east of dismantled Wall 3701, in Square F/18: the relations between Wall 3701, paved stone floor 3751 and Wall 3750 were clarified and the floor itself was dismantled in order to excavate below it.

West of Building 3701

Wall 3709 and the Floors Below It

In the center of Square E/19, Wall 3709 was constructed in Building 3701 latest occupation phase - B3a. It divided the large space west of Wall 3701 into two smaller areas, while the earlier floors of Phases B3b and B3c were supposedly left more or less intact under its foundation. At the beginning of 2016, Wall 3709 was dismantled. Right below it was a very thin layer of fill (4705), ca. 2–5 cm thick, covering patchy remains of the pebble floor of Phase B3b (4706). The floor patches found under the wall at ca. 402.00 m were similar in composition to Phase B3b floor 3763 found last year north of Wall 3709, abutting Wall 3761 in the west. On the floor a silver earring (47017) was found.

Another layer of fill (4707), ca. 10 cm thick, separated floor 4706 from the remnants of the next floor (4718) belonging to Phase B3c. Again we only found patches of this floor preserved under the dismantled wall at level ca. 401.85. The poor state of preservation of this floor is similar to its state as found last season north of Wall 3709, in loci 3768 and 3773.

Floor 3718 and Wall 3759

In the southwestern quadrant of Square E/19, Floor 3718, belonging to Phase B3b-c was left intact at the end of 2015. This year it was excavated, yielding a few Iron Age II sherds. Below it, a fill (4720, 4725), separating the floor from earlier phases of occupation, was excavated to a depth of ca. 45 cm, containing a mix of pottery from the Iron Age I to the Late Persian-Early Hellenistic period. W3759, the southernmost preserved wall of Phase B3 Building 3701, was also dismantled, in hopes of finding the continuation of earlier Wall 3789 below it. Indeed, its continuation (Wall 4740) was found about 5–10 cm below the floating level of Wall 3759.



Left: ABM15-B-246: A view from the west of floor 3718 and Walls 3709 and 3759 at the end of 2015's season.

Right: ABM16-B-001: Remains of phase B3b pebbled floor 4706 in the balk left under Wall 3709

East of Building 3701

As noted above, almost all the remains of Phase B3 east of Wall 3701 were eroded away, leaving only a few features, one of them is the southern face of a wall composed of large boulders (3750) that was revealed at the northern limit of the excavation area in Square F/18; it apparently had a corner with Wall 3701, but the actual corner was still in the balk and unexcavated by the end of 2015. A small segment of stone pavement (3751) was preserved in the (assumed) corner of Walls 3701 and 3750 at 401.55 m; it abuts the boulders of Wall 3750 to its north and the boulders of Wall 3701 to its west. This season, we excavated the western part of Square F/18 in order to confirm our assumption that the two walls formed a corner, as well as to expose the earlier layers sealed under the stone floor 3751. Floor 3751 was dismantled, but produced no finds aside from a large fragment of a basalt bowl (47173) in secondary use in the pavement. Right below the pavement, 1.5 meters of accumulation were excavated (4742, 4760, 4761, 4781), before any architectural features were encountered. These accumulations, at the latest, are contemporary with the construction of Phase B3, and they sit on top of a mudbrick installation excavated last season (3782) which cuts into Phase B6, but whose exact dating is not yet clear. Hence we attributed these accumulated layers to Phases B3-B5.



Left: ABM15-B-284: View from the south to Wall 3750, stone floor 3751 and Wall 3701 in Square F/18 at the end of 2015 season

Right: ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_011: View of Square F/18 from the south after removal of Floor 3751. Note gap between Wall 3701 and Wall 3750, and the differences in floating level.



Same as above right, after straightening the balk

The excavation of the northwestern corner of F/18 also revealed that Walls 3701 and 3750 do not, in fact, make a corner. There is a gap of about 1.2 m between the western end of Wall 3750 and the eastern face of Wall 3701. This could either mean that Wall 3750 is earlier than Wall 3701 and the later cuts through it, or that Wall 3750 belongs to a different building (which continues to the north) and there is a narrow alley running north–south between them. The low floating level of Wall 3750 (more than 50 cm lower than that of Wall 3701) and its characteristics, which are very similar to those of Phase B4 Wall 3715 in Square F/20 to the south, suggests the possibility that both options might be true. It is possible that Wall 3750 was originally built in Phase B4, as it seems to be parallel to Wall 3715 and built using the same type of stones and construction methods, but it was re-used in Phase B3, as clearly evidenced by Floor 3751, which abuts both Wall 3750 and Wall 3701. The fact that in phase B3, Walls 3701 and 3750 do not form a corner suggests that Wall 3750 is the southern limit of a different building spreading to the north and east. Expanding the excavation beyond its current borders in the north of Squares E-F/18 would be needed to confirm these suggestions.

Phase B4

Many of the features and loci excavated in 2015 and assigned then to Phase B4 did not comprise a comprehensive occupation phase and had to be separated into sub-phases. Clarifying the features and stratigraphy of phase B4 was one of the main goals for this season. Despite the fact that stratigraphically, the features and layers were phased this season, the absolute dates remain tentative, pending more in situ and secure contexts related to the walls uncovered.

In the western part of the area (Square E/19), the top of an Iron Age IIB(?) level was reached by the end of 2015. The tops of two walls were revealed: a northeast-southwest stone wall (3790) and a northwest-southeast stone wall (3789). These two walls were assumed to be forming a corner which was still hidden in the balk. We also assumed the wall system had been filled in when the substantial Building 3701 was built in Phase B3. This season however, excavation revealed that the two walls do not belong to the same phase. Wall 3789 was found to be a continuation of Wall 3715 and belongs to Phase B4, while Wall 3790 was an earlier wall assigned to Phase B5.

In the eastern and lower part of the area (Squares E/18–19), it was tentatively suggested at the end of 2015 that a destruction layer expressed by an articulated child skeleton (3788) and collapsed burnt bricks and stones (3762 in Square F/19 and 3765, 3769 in Square F/18) might be dated to the Iron Age IIA or B. It was also considered that the circular brick installation with ash in Square F/18 (3782) was either part of the occupation phase that suffered this destruction, or alternatively, a later

The Wall System

The main, and in fact the only securely attributed feature of Phase B4, is a massive wall system that comprises a ca. 1 m wide, 9.5 m long wall that runs in a northwest-southeast direction in the southern part of the area (Squares E–F/20 and the southwestern corner of Square E/19). 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 the excavated area (and beyond) at the southwestern corner of Square E/19. This part of the wall appears to have been added in a later phase, and thus was assigned to Phase B4a (see below).

Wall 3715

Most of the eastern section of this massive wall, Wall 3715, was exposed in 2015. Its eastern end was continually exposed this season as approximately 25 cm of topsoil covering the top of the wall (4712) was removed. The wall begins close to the eastern border of the northern half of Square F/20 and runs northwest to the western border of the same square. This section of the wall was preserved to a height of ca. 1.60 m in the west, and ca. 0.50 m in the east. Its floating level is ca. 399.30 m in the west and 398.90 m in the east. This part of the wall is built of massive unworked round boulders with a filling of smaller stones and large pebbles between the boulder courses. At its highest it was preserved to a height of four such alternating boulder-pebbles courses.

Wall 3715 has a foundation trench on its northern side that clearly cuts into the gravel of the MBII Phase B6 rampart. The foundation trench was noted in the higher 1 m wide step left at the western edge of Squares F/18-20 (L4715, ca. 400.14 – 399.79), where it cuts through the Phase B6 gravel (4716), leaving a ca. 60 cm wide gap filled with dark soil between the northern face of Wall 3715 and the southern edge of the (cut) sloping gravel. Below this higher step, the foundation trench was also visible in Locus 4724, a ca. 80 cm deep, 50 cm wide stretch of dark fill separating the northern face of Wall 3715 from the light-colored gravel in 4711 of the MB glacis. The foundation trench 4724 was clearly identified in the northwestern corner of Square F/20, as further to the east it was disturbed by features of Phase B1 (stone disturbance 3722, 3764), which cut through the foundation trench. At approximate 399.10 m, excavation in 4724 (the foundation trench) reached a thick hard layer of compact gravel (4762), belonging to the Middle Bronze rampart, that continued sloping down to the

south, below the floating level of Wall 3715. It is thus clear that Wall 3715 cut into the rampart and was also built on top of it

Further east along the wall's northern face, it is 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 above), maybe of agricultural nature, which rests on top of the Middle Bronze rampart. 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. It thus should be noted that what we can say at this point, in light of the lack of secure in situ deposits relating to Wall 3715, it is post Phase B-6 and pre-Phase B-3, since it was covered by B3 Wall 1302. Excavation south of Wall 3715 was not carried out as the area between the wall's southern face and the balk was too narrow.



*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 rampart gravel. It should also be noted that the founding level of Wall 3715 is much lower than that of*

what we consider its western continuation (Wall 3789 and 4740, see below).



ABM16_B_Fieldphoto 007: Squares E–F/19–20, looking west. Foundation trench (FT) of Wall 3715 cutting Phase B6 sloping rampart layers



ABM16_B_Fieldphoto 008 View from the east to Wall 3715 (left) and its foundation trench (4715 and 4724), cutting into gravel layers of the Middle Bronze Age rampart



ABM16-B-081: closeup of FT see in previous photo, with cut of rampart gravel in center

Walls 3789 and 4790

Wall 3789 is a massive, two-row wide wall that continues the line of Wall 3715 to the west in Square E/20. It begins at the eastern border of the square and runs northwest to a bonded corner with Wall 4790, a substantial stone wall that runs southwest, beyond the present border of the excavation; 4790 was exposed for ca. 2.5 m and is 1 m wide. The wall does not yet float. It was covered by a ca. 50 cm deep fill (4708) containing Iron Age I, II and Early Hellenistic - Late Persian pottery (attributed to Phase B1, described above). On the south, Wall 4790 is abutted by a ca. 30 cm deep gray fill/debris layer rich in Iron Age II pottery and containing many bones (4755, 4792). This fill (also partly disturbed by the cut of the B1 tombs) also abutted Wall 4790 which, as mentioned above, corners with Wall 3789. Below 4755 was yet another debris layer, 4792, that is in fact the continuation of 4755 but was opened when Wall 4790 became clear. Thus 4792 clearly abuts the eastern face of this wall and the southern face of Wall 3789 and is a locus that can be considered in situ in relation to these walls.

On its north, Wall 3789 is abutted by 4747, a ca. 20 cm thick layer of gray fill with mostly Iron Age II pottery that might have been laid or leveled by the builders of Phase B4 on top of earlier accumulations (possibly a B5 floor – 4764, see below) and thus, it is attributed to Phase B4-5. Though no foundation trench for Wall 3789 was located (as for example for W3718 (see above) and Wall 4740 (see below), the accumulation and apparent Floor 4764 (as well as a thin layer that might be a fill – 4783- found below 4764) were most probably cut into by Wall 3789. It should also be noted that the western continuation of Wall 3789, denoted Wall 4740 (see further below) cut into Wall 3790, which bordered B5 Floor 4764.



Left: ABM16-B-160: View from the north to Wall 3789 and the floating Wall 4740. Earlier Wall 3790 in the foreground.



Right: ABM16-B-276: View from southwest to Squares E/19-20. In the center, Wall 3789 corners with Wall 4790, and Wall 4740 abuts this corner from the west. Note the corner partially covering Phase B5 Wall 4791, which is cut by B4 Wall 4740 (or runs below it?)

As mentioned above, at its western end Wall 3789 corners with Wall 4790. This is a bonded corner which leaves no doubt that the two walls were built together. Wall 4790 is 1 m wide and runs

for approx. 1.6 m in a northeast-southwest direction, from its corner with Wall 3789 and into the southern edge of the excavation. 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 corner with Wall 3789 where the stones are preserved to a height of approx. 400.15 m. The remains of Wall 4790 were exposed (at about 400.70m) only after the dismantling of the northern wall of the stone constructed tomb 3732. In fact, it appears the tomb builders used the boulders of Wall 4790 to construct the lower courses of the tomb. L4780, the fill directly under the tomb, was excavated to a depth of ca. 15cm, when 4790 was exposed beneath it. It included a mix of Iron Age to Medieval pottery.

From the east, Wall 4790 is abutted by the rich fills of 4755 and 4792 which were already discussed above. From the west it is abutted by 4759, a compact gray soil with small field stones and very few finds that was possibly laid there or leveled by the builders of phase B4 or phase B3, but was later disturbed by the builders of tomb 3732. The same fill (4759) also covered Wall 4791, a wall running nearly parallel and adjacent to Wall 4790, but of an earlier phase, as the corner of Walls 4790 and 4789 partially rides on top of it.

Phase B4a – Wall 4740

From the west, another wall joins the corner of Walls 3789 and 4790: Wall 4740. This wall abuts the corner's western face and is floating at ca. 400.90, higher than the preserved height of most of Wall 4790 stones. This suggests that at least technically this wall was added later, and thus we assigned it to phase B4a.

Wall 4740 was exposed once phase B3 Wall 3759 as well as its related floor 3718 were removed. Below the floor and wall, approx. 45cm of fills were excavated (4720, 4725) containing a mix of Iron Age I, II and Late Hellenistic-Early Persian pottery. This fill was probably laid or leveled by the builders of Phase B3. Although phase B3 Wall 3759 and phase B4a Wall 4740 are practically one on top of the other and running in approximately the same orientation, the two walls are separated by a layer of ca. 30-35cm of fill between the bottom levels of Wall 3759 and the top levels of Wall 4740. As was already mentioned above, Wall 4740 cuts earlier phase B5 Wall 3790. Between the southern end of W3790 and the northern face of Wall 4740, a gap, about 50cm wide was noted. Hence we assigned the 50cm adjacent to the wall's northern face to locus 4743 which represented the wall's foundation trench. The foundation trench, 50cm wide and 40cm deep, contained Iron Age I pottery and some bones.

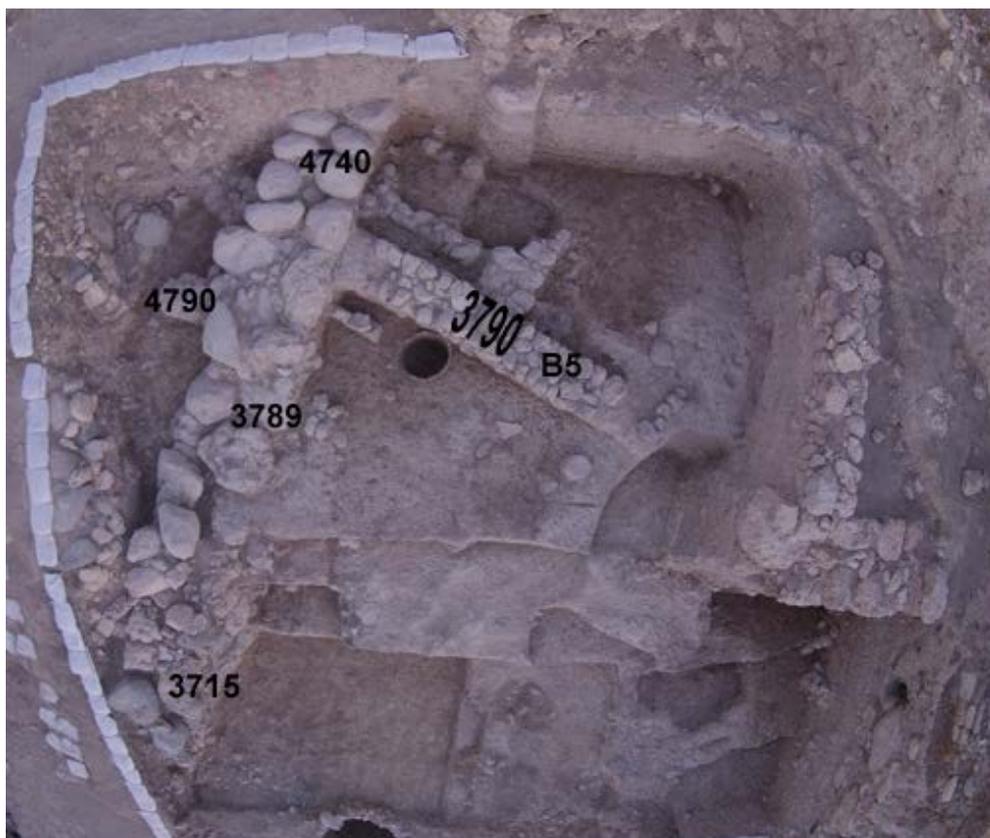


ABM16-B-147: Wall 4740 cuts through earlier W3790. View from the east

The foundation trench 4743 cut into a series of loci that rest below the fills of 4720 and 4725. The gray accumulations of locus 4739, 40cm deep, contained mostly Iron Age II material. These accumulations abut Wall 3790 of Phase B5 on the east, and partially cover Wall 4768 of the same early phase. Below them accumulations of 4757, ca. 10cm deep, abut Phase B5 Wall 4768, although at this level (ca. 400.90 – 400.80) the west face of Wall 3790 already seems to float at its southern end (its eastern face and its northern half float only 30-50cm lower). 4757 contained Iron Age II sherds, bones and flint. Locus 4772, further below 4757, represents fills lower than both Wall 4740 of Phase B4 and Walls 3790 and 4768 of Phase B5. It contained Iron Age I and II pottery. On its southern side, Wall 4740 is abutted by 4759 already discussed above.

Walls 3715, 3789 and 4740=One Wall System?

At the end of 2016, the northwest-southeast line of massive wall that runs near the present southern border of the excavation, is not entirely understood and it is possible that the phasing is more complex than what is presently assumed (all belong to Phase B4). From the top, it seems that Walls 3789 and 4740 were used together; they float at the same level and both cut Wall 3790/4791 of Phase B5. Since Wall 4740 makes a corner with 3789, we assume it belongs to this system as well. Wall 3715 is more problematic, as it is of different construction, slightly different orientation, at a much lower floating level and so far, no clear material can help to date it, other than it cutting into and being built above the Phase B6 MBII rampart and B1 material cuts its foundation trench. This opens up the possibility that it might be dated anywhere after the Middle Bronze Age and before the late Persian-early Hellenistic period. The easternmost stones of the upper course of Wall 3789 cover the top of the western end of Wall 3715 (see aerial photo); however, the stratigraphic significance of this is not yet clear.

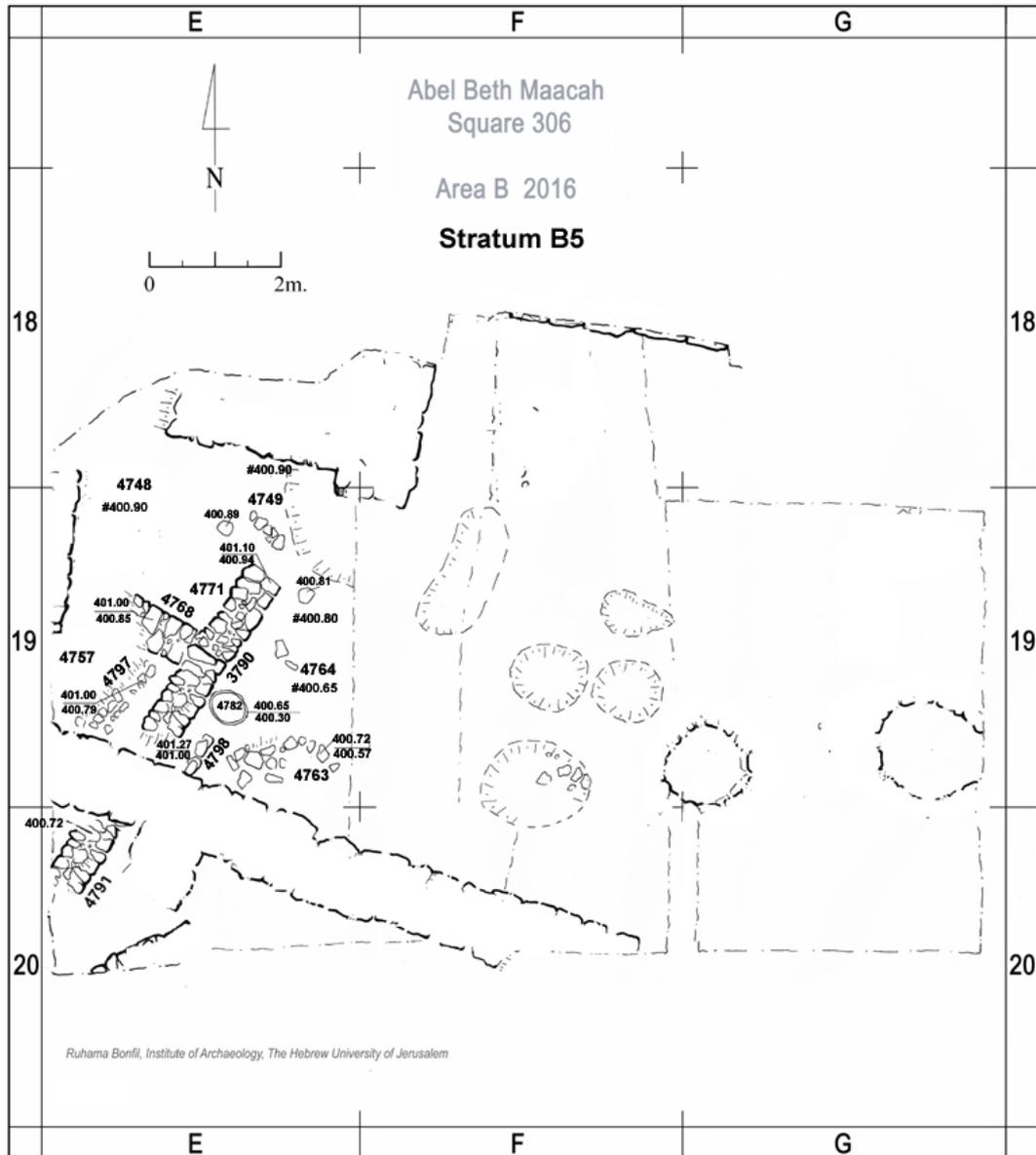


Drone Photo 29. Aerial view of Walls 3715, 3789 and 4740. Note Wall 3789 cutting Wall 3790.

Phase B5

Building 3790

Below the western rooms and walls of the large Phase B3 Building 3701 was a deep fill with Iron I and II pottery (3666, 4720, 4722, 4725), as well as an ash layer (3779), above elements (walls, features and layers) that we attribute to Phase B5. These were assigned to Phase B5 because they are cut on the west by the massive B4 wall system described above, but not because any clear elements that can be attributed to B4 were found above them and below B3 Building 3701. The reason for this is not clear. It is possible that the deep fill laid, apparently in preparation for the construction of this building, obliterated such remains.



Tentative plan of Phase B5, end of 2016.

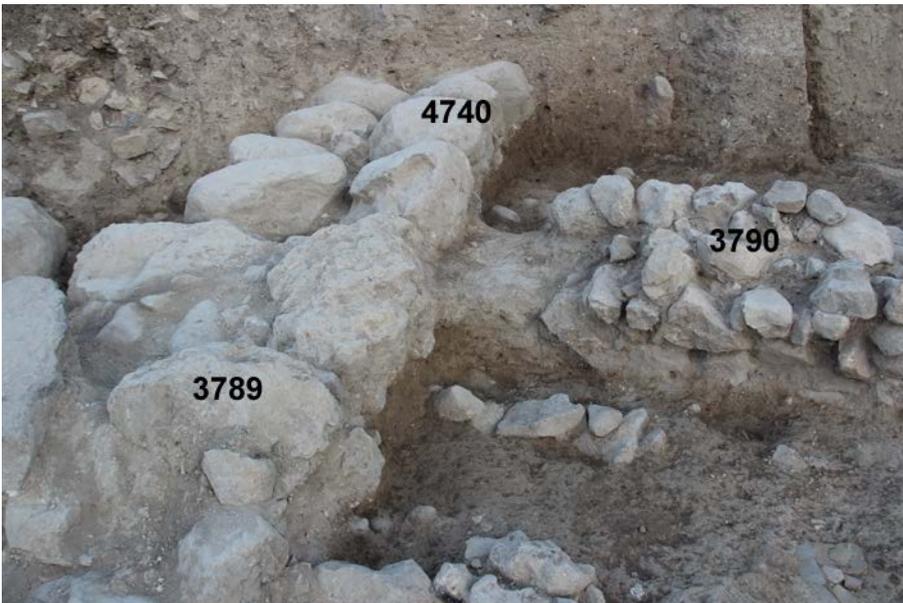
Two main walls are attributed to this phase – 3790 (and its southern continuation – 4791) and 4768. The two walls form Building 3790, which contains two small spaces (4757, 4749) north of Wall 3790, while on its south side, one rectangular wide space was excavated (4764).

Wall 3790 is a southwest-northeast wall running ca 4.5 m from the northern face of Wall 3789/4740. Wall 3790 seemed to have suffered some kind of trauma, either by the pressure of the massive buildings of Phases B4 and B3 above it, by the construction of the Phase B4 walls that cut through it, or even possibly an earthquake. 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 end floats at ca. 400.80 m, its southern end floats at ca. 401.00 m, while its center floats at ca. 400.55 m. Its

northern end terminates on a straight line, suggesting that it was not cut, although there is no continuation to the north. Two round pillar bases were found flanking this 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). See further below.

The southern continuation of Wall 3790 is denoted 4791 and is found in the northwestern part of Square E/20, running into the balk; Wall 3789/4740 clearly cuts this wall, creating these two segments. A layer of about 20-30 cm separates the floating level of Phase B4a Wall 4740 and the top of Phase B5 Wall 4791 directly below it. In fact, the relationship between these B4 and B5 walls is the main basis for the distinction between the two phases. Wall 4791 was discovered at ca. 400.70 m, below debris 4759, 45 cm deep, which was partly disturbed by the builders of Phase B1 tomb 3732, although this debris originally might have been laid or leveled by the builders of Phase B3 or B4. The top of Wall 4791 (Wall 3790 continuation on the southern side of phase B4 Wall 4740) was discovered at level ca. 400.70m, and does not yet float.

The second B5 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) which could either belong to Phase B4 or to B3. It probably continued to the west beyond the pit, penetrating under B3 Wall 3761.



ABM16_B140: Square E/19, looking west at the cut of B4 Wall 4740 into B5 Wall 3790.



*ABM16-B-162: General view of Building 3790, looking south.
The Southwestern Space 4757*

In the southwestern room, bordered by Wall 4768 on the north, Wall 3790 on the east and cut by phase B4 Wall 4740 and its foundation trench (4743) on the south, no floor was found. A thick layer of fills and accumulations were excavated here starting with loci 4720 (ca. 401.75 m-401.55 m) and 4725 (ca. 401.55 m-401.30 m), a fill right below B3 floor 3718 that was probably laid or leveled by the builders of Phase B3 and contained a mix of pottery from the Iron Age I to the Late Persian-Early Hellenistic period. Below this fill, a layer of gray soil (4739) was reached (ca. 401.30 m-400.90 m) and 4757 (ca. 400.90-400.80 m) that partly covered the western face of Wall 3790 and entirely covered Wall 4768. When the entire western face of Wall 3790 was exposed and Wall 4768 was defined, the locus became 4757. Curiously, at this level (4757), the western face of Wall 3790 already seems to float at its southern end. Both 4739 and 4757 contained mostly Iron Age II sherds, but since they were disturbed by the construction of Wall 4740 and cut by its foundation trench (4743) they were both attributed to B4-5.

A feature in the southwestern room is Wall 4797, a one-course high north-south line of stones that runs parallel to the western face of Wall 3790. Its top is lower than the floating level of 3790 (ca. 401.00 m top, 400.80 m bottom) and it seems to have been cut by Wall 4768 on its north (although it is possible that they originally formed a corner). Thus, this wall probably should be attributed to a lower phase, denoted tentatively Phase 5b. It is, however, possible that the top of this wall was re-used in Phase B5. Debris 4772 abutted Wall 4797; it contained mostly Iron I pottery. See also Wall 4798 in the eastern space, described below. This supposed lower phase (Wall 4797 and debris 4772) were set directly above and is floating above the gravel layer of the MBII glacis here.



ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_097: The southwestern space, locus 4772, with the corner of Wall 4768 and W3790. Note shallow Wall 4794 parallel to W3790 – possibly an earlier phase (B5b)



Southwestern space on the level of Locus 4772 (lower phase of B5), looking north (same view as previous photo, with the northwestern space in the background).

The Northwestern Space 4749

The debris accumulated in this part of Building 3790 were already exposed at the end of 2015 when excavating below the floor and walls of Phase B3 Building 3701. For technical reasons, different numbers were given to each quadrant of the northern half of Square E/19. In the northwestern

quadrant, 3771, a homogeneous fill layer, laid above ashy layer 3778 were both excavated down to ca. 401.00 m. In the northeastern quadrant, a similar fill layer, 3775 and 3784, were followed by the ashy layer in 3791 excavated down to 401.08 m. The ashy layers included some stones and much charcoal. This season we kept the division of the northern half of Square E/19. In the eastern quadrant, a layer of ash and stones, 4736, was excavated begun at 401.10 m. The layer of ash and stones was excavated to a depth of 15 cm. It covered a beaten-earth floor (4749; 400.95 m-400.90 m) and an area of collapsed stones (4750) that might have been part of Wall 3790 or a stone-built installation. Indeed, some of the stones of 4750 seemed to be structurally organized (even standing on their narrow sides), while other seemed out of place and collapsed. The ashy debris contained restorable pottery, including a pyxis and one or two storage jars, tentatively dated to Iron I pending restoration. Another jar was found smashed under some of the stones of 4750. A large amount of burnt olive pits was found among the smashed jars (more than 30 in one of them, B47629), 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 the northwestern quadrant of E/19, accumulations 10 cm deep were excavated in locus 4735 above a beaten-earth floor 4748, but these were not as ashy and full of debris as those in 4736 (which was above floor 4749). The floor itself, 4748, was exposed at 400.91 m. Although the floor or the accumulations on top of it did not yield restorable pottery as did 4736, 4749 and 4750, many burnt olive pits were found in the floor layer, as well as an iron arrowhead (47498). The pottery accumulated in 4736, 4735, 4750, 4748 and 4749 mostly contained Iron Age I and Iron Age IIa sherds. In the corner of Walls 3790 and 4768, locus 4741 was excavated. This accumulation of stones and mudbricks seems to represent another area of collapse, similar to 4750, or possibly a disturbance. It was excavated to a depth of 25 cm, but we could not find a continuation of the earthen floors 4748 and 4749 in this corner. The accumulation in 4741 contained mostly Iron Age I pottery.

The pillar base under stone collapse 4750 and the northern part of floors 4748 and 4749 were resting directly on the Middle Bronze Age rampart gravel (4800), but while the gravel slopes to the southeast, a layer of fill separates the Phase B5 floor and the sloping lower layers of gravel. This layer of fill was excavated as 4785 in the eastern quadrant of the square and 4784 in the western quadrant. These fills were excavated to a depth of up to 20 cm and contained mixed Middle Bronze and Iron I pottery.



Left: ABM16-B-030: A view from southeast to debris of locus 4736 and the stones of 4750
Right: ABM16-B-046: Smashed jar and a pyxis in 4736, looking south



Left: ABM16-B-092: The stone collapse of 4750 view from the west
Right: ABM-B-165: View from the northwest on floor 4748/4749. Note the concentration of stones and burnt debris (4741) in the corner of Walls 3790 and 4768



ABM16_B_097: Square E/19, looking south at destruction debris 4736 in northwestern room of Building 3790. Note mudbrick block 4771 west of Wall 3790.



ABM16_B_090: Square E/19, looking north at balk under B3 Wall 3736 – note deep fill above burnt destruction layer of Phase B5 in the section.

The Eastern Space 4764

East of Wall 3790, excavation this season began in locus 4737 along the eastern face of Wall 3790, and locus 4733 in the eastern edge of the square (E/19) below the dismantled Phase B3 Wall 3701. The accumulations in 4733 were excavated to a depth of 30 cm and those in 4737 to a depth of 10 cm. When the entire eastern half of the square was leveled, these loci were united to comprise locus 4747 along Wall 3790, and locus 4751 in the northeastern part.

Locus 4751 was excavated to a depth of only 10 cm, when gravel of the Middle Bronze Age glacis was exposed at a level of ca. 400.79 m, as well as the contour of pit 4723 (see below) which cuts into this gravel. The pottery in 4751 was mostly Iron Age I. Exactly at the border of 4751 and 4747, at a level of 400.80 m, a flat round post-stone, similar to that found in floor 4749, was exposed. This stone gives a good indication of the level of the floor in the large eastern space of Building 3790, even though this floor, of beaten-earth, was not very well-defined.

Debris layer 4747 was excavated to a depth of 20 cm (ca. 400.90 m-400.70 m), it contained a large amount of pottery, mostly Iron Age I and IIA. The accumulation of 4747 abuts the eastern face of B5 Wall 3790; its relation to Phase B4 Wall 3789 on its south is not clear, though it seems that 3789 would have cut into this layer. Below 4747 is a layer of hard mudbrick material (4764) was reached. The 7 cm deep layer of debris in 4764 (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 rests on a floor that slopes from the level of the pillar base 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. Although we could not locate a foundation trench for the phase B4 Wall 3789 that will demonstrate this wall cuts into 4764, and it appears as if the accumulations about Wall 3789 from the north, they are more likely earlier and should be attributed to phase B5. A phase B4 floor that goes with Wall 3789 is unlikely at this level in account of the existence of the earlier Wall 3790 which will make living fairly uncomfortable.

Below the debris and possible floor 4764, a 10 cm layer of accumulations was excavated (4783). This debris sits directly on top of the Middle Bronze Age glaucis layers in the north of square E/19, while in the south of the square, the gravel is much deeper because of the glaucis' downslope. While excavating o4783, the contour of Tabun 4782 was found. The tabun probably belongs to the floor above – 4764 – but only its sub-floor part was found. It was excavated to a depth of 30 cm. Alternatively it might belong with a floor further below which we did not yet reach. In light of the fact that in the north, floor 4764 sits directly on the Middle Bronze Age glaucis, this is less likely.



ABM16-B-203: View from the south to the accumulation in 4764. In the foreground, installation 4763 (right) and the top of Wall 4798 (left)

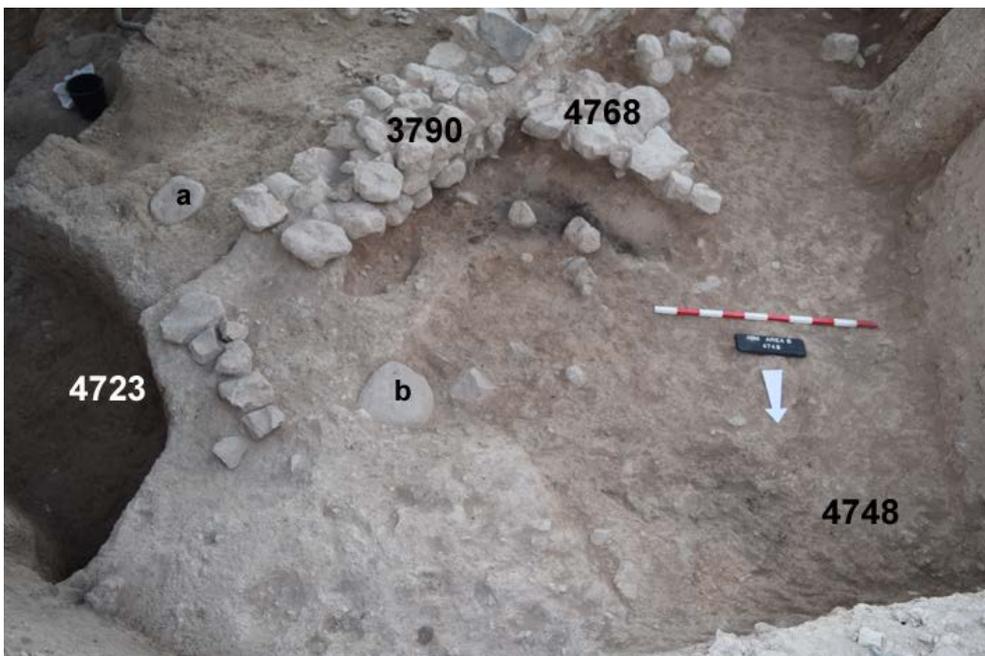


Installation 4763 from the southeast. Wall 3790 in the foreground, and on the left, phase B4 Wall 3789.

Besides Tabun 4782 and installation 4763, another feature that might belong to this phase is the shallow, short Wall 4798, ca. 1 m long, found parallel and adjacent to the southern end of Wall 3790. This wall is similar to Wall 4797 that was found on the other side of Wall 3790, in the southwestern space of the building. Wall 4798 was exposed at level 400.80, and does not float yet. It is possible that this wall too might belong to a slightly earlier phase (denoted B5b tentatively).



ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_123: Building 3790 from the southwest. Note the two round flat pillar bases on both sides of the north end of Wall 3790. Also note phase B4 Wall 4740 cutting through Wall 3790 on the right of the photo.



ABM16_B_Fieldphoto_088: Floor 4748 in northwestern part of room, looking south. Note pillar bases (a and b) flanking northern end of Wall 3790. Pit 4723 cutting rooms on the north.



ABM16-B-287: Building 3790, eastern space: top of Oven 4782 being exposed in 4764, looking north.



ABM16-B-287: Building 3790, eastern space – Floor 4764, Layer 4783 and Oven 4782, looking northwest

Phase B6

The earliest occupation in Area B was reached in both the eastern and the western parts of the area. The exposure of this phase in the western part (E/18-19) is limited, while its exposure in the eastern part (F-G/18-20) is much more extensive. The main feature of Phase B6 are layers of whitish-orange gravel which we interpret as a Middle Bronze Age rampart; these layers slope down from north to south. Embedded into the rampart is the burial of a single male skeleton, unearthed with finds dating to the Middle Bronze IIC. We thus divided Phase B6 to B6a (the burial) and B6b (the glacis).



ABM16_B_348: Looking west at sloping rampart layers in relation to other elements.



ABM16-B-305: Gravel layers of the Middle Bronze Age rampart in section across western border of Square F/19

Phase B6b

Squares F/19–20

Excavation of the eastern half of Area B in 2016 began following the removal of loose soil and stones that tumbled down from the west as a result of dismantling the boulders of Phase B3 Wall 3701 using mechanical means. Careful excavation began at ca. 399.50 m, close to the levels at the end of the previous season. An intriguing feature revealed at the end of the season of 2015, was a concentration of whitish chalky gravel material. This material ran both east-west (Locus 3785 on the upper step in Square F/19, and 3780 in the same square, below the step) and north-south (a clearly demarcated ca. 60 cm wide line, running to the north revealed in the western part of Locus 3748 on the upper step in Square F/19).

This season, a clean layer of the same gravel material was exposed in 4711 in the southern half of Square F/19, immediately as excavation of the square begun, at a level of ca. 399.45 m. Locus 4711 was excavated to a depth of 70 cm (ca. 398.75 m) with no apparent change in material. Towards the north, the gravel sloped gently upward to 4710 (ca. 399.60 m) where it is mixed with gray soil, stones and debris. Below 4710, in 4744 (ca. 399.30 m), the debris disappeared and the gravel became cleaner and clearer and was excavated to a depth of 20 cm (ca. 399.10 m). Further north, in Square F/18, the excavation did not reach deep enough to locate the gravel layers, but in the section bordering F/18 and F/19, it is clear that the layers of gravel continue north under later accumulations (4756, 3782, 4730).



ABM16-B-FieldPhotos_254: View from the south to Squares F/19-20. Note the white layer continuing north under installation 3782 and accumulations 4756.

In the south, at the border of Squares F/19-20, the gravel layer was disturbed by a 2.5 m diameter pit/stone concentration assigned to Phase B1 (3764), which contained mixed Iron Age, medieval and modern finds. As 3764, was cleared out and excavated the gravel was found beneath it (at ca. 398.95m) continuing to slope down southward towards Wall 3715 of Phase B4 (see below). Wall 3715 runs in a NW-SE direction and its 1 meter deep foundation trench (4715, 4724, ca. 400.15-399.10) cuts into the white gravel layer. At the bottom of the foundation trench, the gravel, probably pressed by the weight of the boulders comprising Wall 3715, appears again as a hard thick plaster-like layer (4762, ca. 399.11 m). It continues sloping southwards beneath the floating level of the wall. On top of the 1 meter wide higher strip at the western border of F/19-18, the gravel was exposed along almost the entire step (4716, at ca. 400.17m). It was excavated to a depth of 20 cm. At the southern end of this step, the gravel is cut by the foundation trench of Wall 3715. At the northern end it is cut by accumulations of ash (4717) found inside the circular mudbrick installation 3782 which was already discovered last season.



ABM16-B-312: Middle Bronze glacis gravel sloping under the boulders of Wall 3715 (on the left). Note foundation trench 4724, 4715.

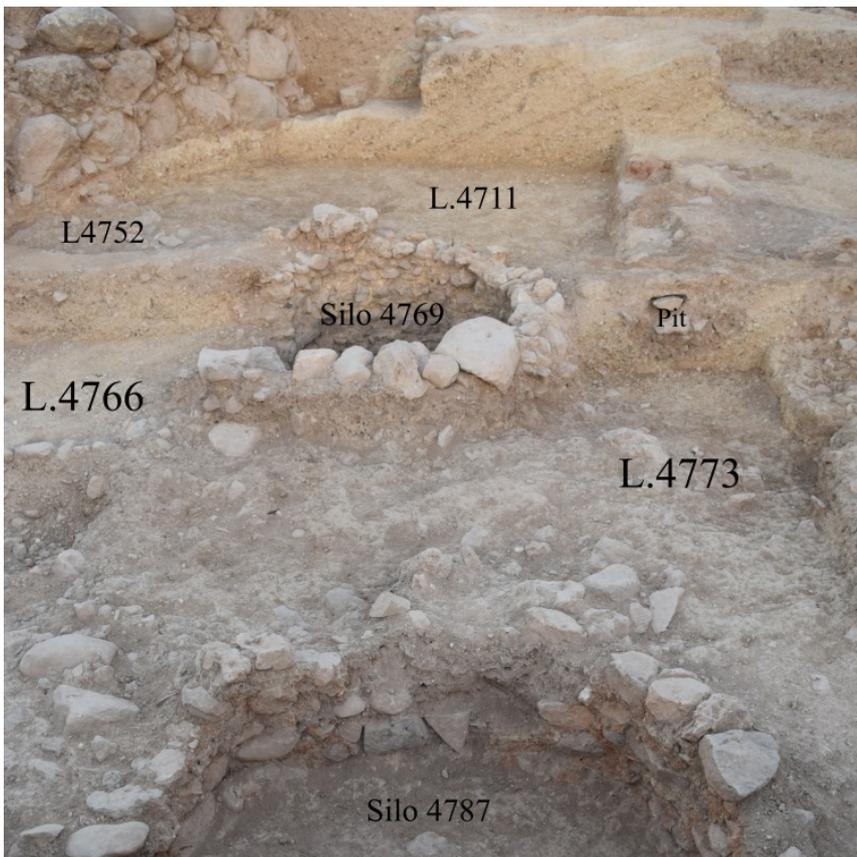
The eastern section of the step at the western border of Squares F/19-18, as well as the section left under Phase B3 Wall 3701 about a meter further west, shows the orientation and the stratification of the superimposed gravel layers. The sections provided an indication that at its highest preserved spot, near the northwestern corner of Square F/19, the upper level of the rampart was at least at 400.75 m, from which it sloped down in a southeastern direction, reaching a level of 398.35 m in the southeastern corner of the excavated area in Square G/20. Thus, the rampart as exposed so far is exposed over a depth of 2.4 m.

At the northwestern corner of Square F/19, the ca. 1.5 m section under Wall 3701 showed that the rampart was cut by a large pit (4723) filled with fine dark soil. At the bottom of 4723, a few human

bones could be seen which indicated the pit is a burial cutting into the rampart. While the southern line in which 4723 cuts through the gravel was very clear, its northern limit was not seen in the section.



ABM16-B-268: View from the east on section at the north-west corner of square F/19, where pit 4723 can be seen cutting into the Middle Bronze Age glacis gravel layers.



ABM16-B-245: Squares F-G/19-20 from the east. The Middle Bronze glacis gravel in 4766 and 4773. Note the gravel in the sections on both sides of silo 4769. Squares E/19-18

The gravel layers were also identified in Square G/20. The material was exposed at a level of ca. 398.80 m in locus 4766. It was excavated down to a depth of about 45cm in the entire northern half of the square. Just north of 4766, in Square G/19, the gravel was exposed in 4773 at a level of ca. 398.70 and was excavated to a depth of ca. 25cm.

In the western part of Area B, the gravel of the rampart (4800) was noted at the border of Squares E/19-18, directly below packed-earth floors of Phase B5 (4748, 4749) at level ca. 400.80 – 400.70 m. The outline of pit L4723 was identified cutting into the gravel here at a level of ca. 400.80 m. The pit has an east-west running elliptic shape, but its northern half is outside the excavated area under Phase B3 Wall 3736 and the section below it. The pit was excavated from the top to a depth of 50 cm, when it was clarified that the darker filling of the pit sits on top of layers of glacial gravel (4779, starting at ca. 400.30 m). The burial which was seen in section (4788) was found to be embedded in the gravel of the glacial in L4779, lower than the dark accumulation or filling of Pit 4723 and in a different orientation (north-south) than the orientation of the pit itself. The elliptic shape of 4723, the fact that the continuation of the gravel to the north, past 4723, could not be located in the section under Wall 3701 and the fact that the burial was lower than the pit's bottom, lead us to re-think the nature of 4723. Three theories were raised in connection to this pit: (a) from this point, the builders of the rampart used soil filling instead of gravel, thus 4723 is not a pit but rather a continuation of the rampart to the north. (b) The fill in 4723 is related to later activities dug into the rampart, and only by chance did it not disturb the burial right underneath it, or (c) pit 4723 is in fact the burial pit of the skeleton in 4788, dug into the MB rampart, and partially filled in with gravel from the rampart but mostly with a different, darker soil. To verify any of these theories, the dismantling of the rest of the Phase B3 walls (Wall 3736 and the stump of Wall 3701 on the north) is required.



*ABM16-B-285:
View from the
south to the
northern part of
E/19 and
southern part of
E/18. Note the
white Middle
Bronze Age
gravel in 4800.*

Phase B6a

The Rampart Burial - Locus 4788

At the northwestern corner of Square F/19, ca. 1.5m under the floating level of the dismantled phase B3 Wall 3701 and below the bottom of the dark fill in Pit 4723 described above, a human burial was exposed, embedded in the rampart gravel (4779). The burial itself was assigned to 4788 (ca. 400.30 – 400.05m). The hard packed gravel of the glacis did not provide a good preservation of the human remains; the bones were crumbling and hard to excavate without breaking them.

The bones were identified at the field by a forensic anthropologist (Alon Barash) as an adult male. The body was placed in a semi-fetal position, lying on its left side, facing east and with its head in the north. The legs were folded at the knees, but the spine was straight (rather than bent towards the knees). The left arm was stretched to the south, fingers resting on the pelvic bones. The right arm was folded back, the elbow behind the line of the spine vertebrae, and the palm of the hand resting across the chest with two of its fingers inserted into a large bronze loop-ring with a mounted “Hyksos” scarab and two bronze toggle pins (B47609, 47610). Additional finds related to the burial were a carinated bowl (broken) (B47104) and a cylindrical juglet (intact) (B47103) placed ca. 20 cm east of the skeleton, and a broken steatite scarab (B47084).

The finds associated with the burial date it to the Middle Bronze IIB-C, and it is possible that it was dug at the time of the construction of the glacis, or at some point thereafter. Besides the problematic pit 4723 (see above), there is no clear evidence that a pit was ever excavated around the skeleton and its associated funerary equipment.



*Left: ABM16-B-298: View from the east of burial 4788 and pit 4723. Note the relations between the gravel layers 4799, the burial itself and the bottom of the pit's darker fill above 4779.
Right: ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_241: The skeleton with the toggle pin and scarab in-situ.*

The Middle Bronze Age Rampart - Summary

The Middle Bronze Age rampart in Area B is composed mainly of layers of whitish-orange stoney gravel. It slopes down in a northwest-southeast direction from a level of ca. 400.90 m in the north of Square E/19 to a level of ca. 398.35 m in the southwest of Square G/20. It appears that in the north of Square F/19 the glacis is either cut by later construction works to a depth of more than 1.5 m, or the builders used a different soil for the glacis construction.

The glacis layers of gravel are most prominent in 4711, 4716, 4744, 4762, 4766, 4779 and 4800. These loci are characterized by their paucity of finds – whether ceramic or other. An interesting and unique find from 4711 is a Middle Bronze type cylinder seal fragment found at the north-eastern quadrant of the locus (B47580). The burial exposed in L4788 dates the construction of the glacis to the Middle Bronze Age Ila-b.



ABM16-B-323: View from northeast at the sloping layers of the Middle Bronze Age glacis in Area B. Background: Wall 3715 of Phase B4 with gravel layers below it.

Post-B6 Activities of Uncertain Stratigraphy

Into the gravel layers of the glaciis, 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 are listed as Phase B4-5. The features are described below from north to south.

Mudbrick Installation 3782 and its Surroundings

On the eastern end of the western excavated area, in the southern half of Square F/18, the roughly 2 m diameter oval installation 3782 was partially uncovered in the previous season. It was covered and filled by a layer of ash (3765, 4717) revealed below the debris of 3752. The installation was abutted by eroded destruction debris on its south and east (3762 and 3769 in Square F/19). In 2015, only the eastern half of the rounded mudbrick wall was revealed, while its north and western half remained underneath the higher step left unexcavated along B3 Wall 3701 and under the Phase B3 paved stone floor 3751 and the ca. 1.6 m of accumulations below it. Its southern part was not well identified and seemed to have been damaged by later activities.

Floor 3751 and the accumulation under it in Square F/18 were excavated in order to expose more of the northern part of 3782. Below the floor accumulations of dark-gray soil (4742, 4760), a thick layer of eroded mudbrick material (4761) was excavated. Excavation however reached only to the top of the mudbricks (ca. 399.80 m) and the remaining parts of the installation were not yet discovered. An interesting feature that was found in this corner of the excavation is a flimsy fieldstone construction (Wall 4794) or the stump of two thin walls which seem to generally fall on the same orientation as the circular mudbrick wall of the installation. This construction is preserved to a height of ca. 50 cm above the level of the preserved mudbricks (ca. 400.23 m). Although the extent of exposure of this feature is still very limited, this stone construction may be a corner of a building later than the installation that continues to the north, or it could be a part of the installation itself. Excavations on the southern side of the installation and outside of it in square F/19, could not reveal the installation's south-eastern quarter, and the conclusions of last season, that this part of the mudbrick walls were damaged or were eroded away are maintained.

Excavation inside the installation itself also continued this year to a depth of ca. 10 cm and a small patch of a possible packed earth floor abutting the surrounding wall was noted at level 399.51m.

The excavation continued below this tentative floor to a depth of 8 cm (4730), when the mudbrick wall was floating.

Although on the northern end of the 1.2 m wide higher step left on the western edge of Square F/19 the fills inside the installation (4717) were not excavated, work on adjacent loci 4716 and 4719 revealed that the installation and the accumulations inside it cut into the gravel of the Middle Bronze rampart in 4716, almost reaching the burial in 4788. The pit 4719 however, although also cutting into the Middle Bronze gravel in 4716, seem to have cut the southern part of the mudbrick walls. Thus, the installation itself is later than the Middle Bronze Age, but earlier than pit 4719.

Around and outside the installation in Squares F/19-18, two loci (4738, 4756) were excavated that were thought at first to be pits cutting into Middle Bronze gravel layers, but were later understood to be a uniform layer of debris containing large amounts of pottery sherds and bones that lies directly under the mudbrick installation; they are attributed to Phases B4-5. In Square F19, just outside and to the south of the installation, locus 4738 was exposed at ca. 399.41 m and was excavated to a depth of nearly 20 cm. Since the mudbrick wall of the installation was not preserved here, it was also apparent that the material in 4738 continues to the north under the floating level of the installation. On the border of Squares F/19 and F/18, just outside and to the east of the 3782, 4756 was exposed at a level of ca. 399.51 m and was excavated to a depth of 30 cm. Because the excavation further to the north and west did not yet reach the level of this rich layer of debris, its exact extent is unknown. It is clear however, that to the south and to the east, it does not extend much beyond the outline of the oval installation. This lead to the conclusion that this layer is either a feature earlier than installation 3782 that is not yet completely understood, or an intentional foundation placed by the builders of 3782. It is clear however, that this layer rests on top of Middle Bronze glacia layers, as these were discovered under 4738 (ca. 399.25m) and also seem to continue under L4756, which was not excavated to its bottom yet.



Left: ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_218: View from the south on the corner in Square F/18.



Right: ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_274: View from the east on square F/18.

The function of installation 3782 remains unknown, other than that it entailed an activity that left burnt residue. The idea that this might be a pottery kiln was considered, though there is no slag or other items that might support this idea so far.

Pit L4719

Pit 4719 is an oval pit with a northeast-southwest orientation. It was already noted at the end of 2015's season at the eastern edge of locus 3748, bordering Middle Bronze Age gravel on its western outline, but was not recognized as a pit. The eastern part of the pit was excavated in 2015 as part of L3762,



ABM16-B-235: Pit 4719. View from the east.

while the western part remained visible on the unexcavated 1.2 m wide step left along the western border of square F/19. During 2016, the fills accumulated in the western half of the pit were excavated to a depth of ca. 40 cm. The pit is ca. 1.5 m long and 50 cm wide (originally it was probably twice as wide). It contained gray loose soil with some field stones and a few large pottery sherds including Iron Age I and IIA sherds, one of them bearing a potter's mark in the shape of a cross or an X on the handle. The pit is dug into the Middle Bronze Age rampart, just east of burial 4788, but also cuts through installation L3782 which is possibly why the southern wall of the installation is missing. Thus, pit 4719 is later than installation 3782 and its associated debris (L3762, L3769) and foundation layers (4738, 4756), but its exact dating must wait further pottery analysis. Samples of soil from the pit were taken for analysis.

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 excavation and it was not excavated. 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 rampart gravel in L4744. It is assigned to a wide range of phases (B2-4

Pit 4754

This is a small pit located near the northeastern corner of square F19. It was exposed at level ca. 399.29m, under a concentration of field stones (4713). Similar concentrations of stones are known in this area from the previous season (e.g. 3722, 3757) as well as from this one (e.g. 4713, 4714), and based on their pottery finds are attributed to phase B1 or even to modern activities. Pit 4754 is pear-shaped, 1 m long, and 65 cm wide at its widest point. South and west of the pit, it is bordered by Middle Bronze Age gravel of locus 4744, while in the north and east it is bordered by stones (4713) and late accumulations (4745). It was dug on top of locus 4795, a larger pit or a disturbance which although not excavated, seems to be cutting into the Middle Bronze Age gravel in Squares F-G/19. The pit contained fine ash or burnt soil. The pottery included Late Bronze and Iron Age I sherds, but the pit is attributed to a broad range of phases (2-5). Soil samples were taken for analysis.

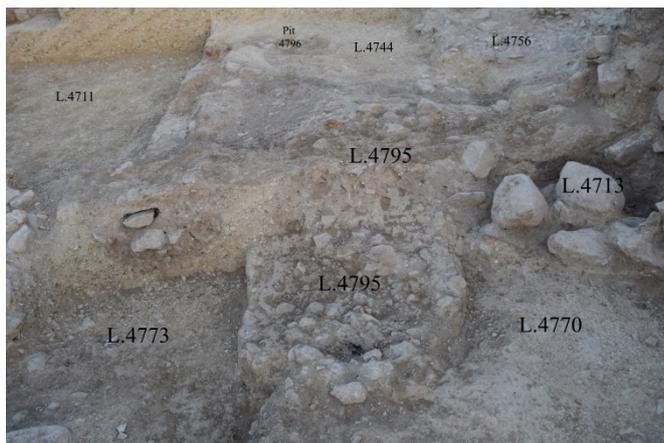
Pit/Disturbance 4795

This is a large area or surface with concentration of eroded mudbricks, pottery, bones and stones that was exposed at a level of ca. 398.75 m across the northern part of Squares F-G/19 on the last day of the excavation, although 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 rampart gravel in 4744 and 4773. The concentration of material is amorphous in shape, stretching about 2 m long and 1.2 m wide. As noted above, the small pit 4754 was above this surface and thus is later. It was excavated to a depth of 10 cm and contained stones, compact mudbrick material and large quantities of pottery sherds dating from the Late Bronze and Iron Age I periods. Further excavation is needed to reveal how deep it cuts into the Middle Bronze gravel.

Pit 4721

This pit was located on the southern part of the 1.2m wide step running along the western border of square F/19. It is about 1m in diameter. The pit contained mostly medium-sized field stones, and was shallow, only ca. 20cm deep. It was dug into the Middle Bronze Age gravel in 4716. It contained no finds.



Left: ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_259: View of locus 4795 from the east.

Right: ABM16-B-052: View of square F/19 from the west. Pit 4734 yet unexcavated, and pit 4727 excavated half-way through.

Pit 4727

The outline of pit 4727 was exposed near the center of Square F/19 at level ca. 399.45 m. It is about 1 m in diameter, cutting through the gravel of the Middle Bronze Age rampart gravel (4711 south of the pit, 4744 north of the pit) to a depth of nearly 80 cm, though we did not excavate it to its bottom. The pit contained fine brown clayish soil with only a few sherds from the Iron Age II and Persian(?) periods. Soil samples were taken for analysis.

Pit 4734

The outline of pit 4734 was exposed at level ca. 399.5 m, under a concentration of field stones (4714) at the eastern border of Square F/19, about 20cm east of pit 4727 described above. Similar concentrations of stones are known in this area from the previous season (e.g. 3722, 3757) as well as from this one (e.g. 4713, 4714), and based on their pottery finds, are attributed to phase B1 or even to modern activities. It is possible that pit 4734 is simply a more concentrated continuation of the stones above it in 4714. The pit is about 1m in diameter and was dug to a depth of ca. 60 cm into the Middle Bronze Age rampart gravel (4711 south of the pit, 4744 north of the pit). At its bottom, the gravel was encountered at ca. 398.90 m. The pit contained large and medium-sized field stones, a Middle Bronze Age(?) sherd with a rope decoration, Iron Age I and II sherds and a glazed medieval sherd.

Pit 4789

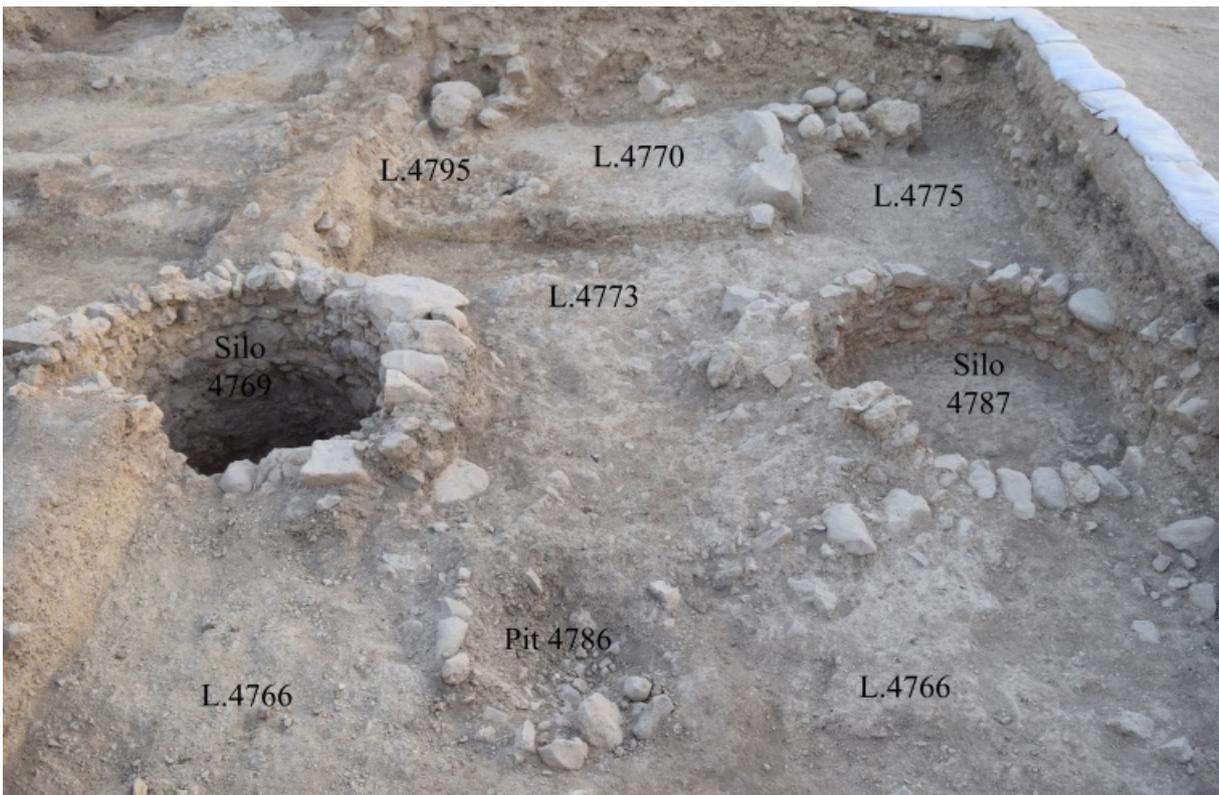
The outline of pit 4789 was exposed at level ca.398.90m in the center of Square F/19. It was partially covered by the stones in the large late pit or deep disturbance 3764 which reached down to level ca. 398.95 m. Pit 4789 has a semi-rounded, somewhat amorphic shape, about 80cm in diameter. It was dug into the Middle Bronze Age gravel in 4711 to a depth of 20cm. It contained small and medium sized field stones, a significant amount of Middle Bronze Age and Iron Age I and II pottery sherds, a basalt hammer stone (B47526), and a small silver disc (B47558).



Pits in Squares F/18-19

Silo 4769

This is a deep circular stone lined pit, ca. 1.70 m in diameter that was exposed at a level of ca. 399.00 m, exactly at the corner of Squares F-G/20 and F-G/19. It lays under a layer of late, possibly agricultural, dark soil (4745, 4746) that covered its eastern half, while its western half was covered, and partially abutted by late mixed debris (4752). The silo is dug into Middle Bronze Age rampart gravel – 4711 to its northwest, 4773 to its northeast and 4766 to its southeast. The silo was excavated to a depth of 1.3 m, but its stone lining does not yet seem to float, although a hard-packed earth layer was reached that might be its floor. The stone lining consists so far of 8-10 courses of medium sized field stones, with a filling of small stones and brownish mortar between them. The pit contained layers of dark gray and brown soil, mixed with ash, bones and pottery dating to the Middle Bronze Age, Iron Age I and II. Other interesting finds from the silo are an equid complete lower jaw (B47572), a bead of semi-precious stone (B47418) and an Iron Age II Phoenician figurine head fragment (B47416). The striking similarities between silo L4769 and silo L4787 suggest they both belong to the same phase.



ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_260: View from the south of squares G/19-20. Silos 4769 and 4787 in the center.



Silo 4769, meter stick on probable floor



ABM16-B-Fieldphotos_216: Silo 4769 with equine (donkey?) mandible.

Silo 4787

This is a circular stone lined pit, ca. 1.70 m in diameter, very similar to Silo 4769 and just 2 meters to the west of it at the eastern half of G/19-20. The top of the silo was exposed at a level of ca. 398.7m. It was found under a layer of late, possibly agricultural, dark soil (4767, 4753).



The silo is dug into Middle Bronze Age rampart gravel – 4773 to its north and 4766 to its south. In the north, it is bordered by an accumulation of debris 4775. The silo was excavated to a depth of almost 0.5m, but its stone lining does not yet float. The stone lining consists so far of 4 courses of medium sized field stones. The pit contained layers of dark gray and brown soil, mixed with ash, bones and pottery dating to the Iron Age I and II. Another interesting find from the silo is a basalt hammerstone (B47540). The striking similarities between silo L4769 and silo L4787 suggest they both

belong to the same phase. At this point, both are phased to B4-5, but further examination of the pottery is necessary.

Pit 4786

The outline of pit 4786 was exposed at level ca. 398.45 at the northern edge of square G/20, just to the south-west of silo L4787 and south-east of silo 4769. The pit's lips are partially lined with stones and it is about 65cm in diameter. It is dug into the Middle Bronze Age glaciis gravel of L.4766. The pit was excavated to a depth of 20cm, probably not yet at its bottom. The few sherds from inside the pit are dated to the Iron Age II.