

Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon
Excavation Season, June 9–July 20, 2012



2012 Report to the Leon Levy Foundation
February 25, 2013

LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON
GRID 38 FINAL REPORT 2012

J. Walton



Grid 38 Overview at the Conclusion of the 2012 Season (Photo # 23124)

Squares 74, 76, 85

Joshua Walton, Grid Supervisor
Simeon Ehrlich, Square Supervisor
Benjamin Felker, Square Supervisor
Sarah Vander Vorst, Assistant Square Supervisor

GRID 38 FINAL REPORT 2012

Introduction

In 2012 the Leon Levy expedition to Ashkelon continued work in Grid 38 under the direction of Lawrence Stager and Daniel Master, with thanks to the continued generous donations of Shelby White. This year's excavation built on the work from 1985–2011, which uncovered much of the Late Bronze Age (LB) through the Roman Period occupation of the area. Work this season was concentrated in the southeast and east areas, Squares 85 and 76, as well as smaller projects in Square 74. The goal for the season was to understand the early phases of Philistine occupation in Square 85 (Phases 18–20). In Square 76, one of our main goals was to create a stepped terrace on the eastern side of Grid 38 to protect against erosion of the eastern section, with plans to eventually uncover the eastern extent of the Iron I period buildings excavated in 38.75 during the 2007–2009 seasons.

As always, successful excavation is dependent on experienced knowledgeable staff members and motivated, hard-working volunteers. This year special thanks are due to the field staff: Simeon Ehrlich and Benjamin Felker, as well as assistant staff member Sarah Vander Vorst. Without their vigilance and dedication to quality field excavation, we could not have achieved the level of success sustained in this year's excavation. Additional thanks are given to Benjamin Felker, who produced all of our top plans, to Melissa Woolley for her excellent photography, and to Daniel Master and Adam Aja for their helpful assistance in dealing with the stratigraphic analysis.

The following is a summary of the major architectural features, use and space, and special finds from the 2012 season.

Pre-Phase 23

This season, we began the backfilling of certain portions of Grid 38, most notably Squares 74 and 84 north of the Egyptian wall (38.84.F1080). Before we began this process, we dug a final probe in Square 84 to confirm that there was no occupation in this part of the site prior to the Phase 23 courtyard surfaces, which we excavated in 2010. To investigate this question, we brought in a JCB to dig out silo 38.84.U1148/1149, which was excavated down to bedrock (clean beach sand) in 2008. The JCB dug more than an additional three meters, finding nothing but loose, sterile sand (see Photo DSC_8286). This confirmed what we had found in previous probes, suggesting that there is no Early Bronze Age (EB) or early Middle Bronze Age (MB) occupation in Grid 38.

Phases 21–23

In preparation for backfilling parts of Grid 38, two sections were excavated this season: 38.74 north and 38.74 south. The bulk of the material excavated from these baulks dates to the LB occupation Phases 21 and 22. Most of the layers from the southern baulk line up with the Phase 21 courtyard layers 74.1079 and 74.1089 (Baskets 9295–99, 9310). These baskets had LBII pottery, from both Phase 21 (B 9298, B 9310) and 22 (B 9296, B9297, B 9299), while some were mixed (B9295). One basket, B 9301, corresponds with

74.1168 and has MBIIC/LBI pottery consistent with Phase 23. Included in this bucket was an entire lamp, as well as another possibly restorable lamp. The extensive number of lamp and bowl deposits found associated with the Phase 22 building suggests that one of these deposits may have been located here (the pit for the deposit cut into the Phase 23 courtyard, thus explaining the predominance of Phase 23 material), but a bowl to complete the deposit was not identified (although there were large sherds in the basket, which has been sent for restoration). Since this area was open space from Phases 21–23, no new knowledge was added through the excavation of this section.

The northern section of 38.74 was also excavated this season, most of the fills belonging to U1101 and 1154 from Phases 21 and 22.

Phase 20

Although Phase 20 was not extensively excavated this season, we uncovered a few walls that were constructed in this phase. Wall 38.85.U291, running east-west across the northern edge of Square 85, is a Phase 20 construction; it is preserved and re-used in Phases 19a and 19b. While the founding levels of the wall have not yet been reached in Square 85, the northern half of the wall was preserved in 38.75, excavated as 38.75.U343, and was associated with Phase 20 surfaces. Additionally, while cleaning for photographs at the end of the season, a line of mudbricks, 38.85.U350, was identified running east-west along the southern edge of the square. This feature is currently thought to be the top of a Phase 20 wall, but further excavation is necessary.

In 38.74, both the north and south baulks were excavated to prepare for the backfilling of the square. While these layers were primarily Phases 21 and 22, some Phase 20 fills, particularly B9300 which lines up with 74.L1074, were excavated as well.

Phase 19b

We ended the 2012 season having just uncovered traces of the Phase 19b building in 38.85. Many of the floors are only partially exposed and have been covered with geotextile cloth to await excavation next year. Phase 19b features four interior rooms on the western half of the square and a large courtyard that covers the eastern side. The floors of this building are very clean, and there is no evidence of destruction. The continuity with Phase 19a suggests that the building was constructed in 19b and renovated in 19a, leaving very little material on the 19b floors. There was no entrance into the building from the street (38.85.U301), thereby suggesting that the courtyard was the front room with the four smaller rooms serving as interior back rooms. We presume that the entrance is from another street in 38.86, which has not yet been excavated.

Room 332

The southwest room of the Phase 19b building is bounded on the west by a stone wall (85.U284), separating it from the street (85.U301), on the north by a mudbrick wall (85.U270) with a stone foundation, and by a mudbrick wall (85.U315) on the east. The southern closing wall is behind the south section and not in the current excavated area. Although given the size of the northern rooms, the wall is probably very close to our

southern section. This room features a phytolith beaten earth floor (85.U332), as well as several possible mudbrick features. Vertical mudbricks, U327 and U334, are possible edges for storage bins, even though both stand in isolation at the moment. Cut into this surface is pit 85.U347/348, which was identified in cleaning but not excavated this season.

Room 335

The southeast room is bounded by wall 85.U315 on the west, mudbrick wall 85.U316 on the east, and 85.U270 to the north. Like Room 332, the southern extent of this room lies behind the section. Cut into the beaten earth floor 85.U335 is a pit (85.U345/346) and a shell lined installation (85.U329). Cut into the northern wall (85.U270), there is a potential doorway into the northeast room. The stone foundation of this wall stretches all the way across the northern extent of Room 335, but there is a meter wide gap in the middle where there is no mudbrick, representing a possible entranceway with a stone threshold.

Room 336

The northeastern room is perhaps the most interesting of the smaller rooms. It is subdivided into four sections, possibly bins, by a series of vertical mudbrick wall segments. Two of these, 85.U325 and 85.U331, run east-west on parallel lines down the center of the room, with a small channel in between. North of 85.U331 the space is further segmented by north-south mudbrick feature 85.U328. Thus it appears that the northern third of this room consists of two bins, while the southern half is one larger bin with a narrow walkway down the middle. Alternatively, it is possible that the main floor of the room is in the south, with a channel or trough in the middle and two bins in the north. One problem in understanding this room is that its eastern closing wall was robbed out by the foundation trench of 85.U230, thereby confusing the relationship between the northeastern room and the courtyard. On the north the room is closed by wall 85.U291. This wall was constructed in Phase 20 but had an opening cut into it, likely in 19b, allowing entry from Square 75 (see Photo A12_22745). On the west the room is closed by mudbrick wall 85.U304, and the on the south it is closed by 85.U270 with another possible doorway, as discussed previously in the section detailing Room 335.

Room 339

Finally, the northwest room, Room 339, consists of a beaten earth floor (85.U339). It is bounded to the north by 85.U291, in the west by 85.284, to the east by 85.U304, and in the south by 85.U270. This room features a mudbrick bin in the southeast corner (85.U341) and vertical mudbrick along the street wall (85.U349), which may be part of another bin.

Courtyard

The courtyard in 19b is still in need of excavation, with patches of surfaces just beginning to show in excavation. It seems to have the same extent as the 19a courtyard. In

comparison with other courtyards excavated in Grid 38, there was a lack of features, especially pits and postholes, with only two identified at this point. A large stone, shell, plaster, and pottery sherd installation was found in the southeast corner. This resembles a sunken vessel installation, but no vessel has been uncovered. Some of the laminations of the 19a courtyard surface seem to seal this installation, thus phasing it to 19b (Photo A12_22744).

Phase 19a

The 19a building is a renovation and reconstruction of the Phase 19b building; it follows essentially the same floor plan with a few minor structural alterations. Evidenced by the dearth of material remains and the lack of a destruction layer, the 19a building was clearly intentionally abandoned. The floors are exceptionally clean, and even the pottery finds are scarce.

In the northwest room, a new floor layer (85.302) was put down, covering features 340 and 349. This floor consisted of a thick phytolith layer, which FTIR tests showed to be the remains of reed mats, which would have covered the floor.

The northeast room maintains the use of bins U325, 321, and 328. In the southern portion of this room, a new working platform made of chalk was laid between bin 325 and wall 270. This chalk surface was slightly raised above the floor. It was initially thought to be the floor makeup; however, this was later proved not be the case. To the west of U322 a cache of 78 loom weights and a Cypro-Minoan stamped jar handle were excavated. These artifacts were excavated *in situ* on a floor (excavated as U322) but existed on a lower elevation, made of beaten earth. This floor lacked the heavy chalk inclusions of platform U322. Two varieties of loom weights were excavated on this floor: larger cylindrical weights, of which there were 32, and smaller rectangular weights, of which 46 were excavated. These weights were separated into two piles, and seem to represent two alternate sets of weights for the same loom. Different size weights have been hypothesized for use with the weaving of different thicknesses of thread. The loom for these weights was no longer present, apparently having been taken with the family when the house was abandoned. Only the unbaked clay spools and a few broken sherds remained. It is possible, however, that the loom was used in conjunction with the working platform. A mudbrick platform was excavated in Room 191 of 38.64. Room 191 also contained a large amount of loomweights, which were also stored in piles in proximity to the platform. Similar phenomena are attested at other sites as well, particularly Tell es-Saidiyeh. In the northern half of this room another beaten earth floor (U326) was excavated but was relatively empty of material remains.

The southeastern room sees the addition of bench U283 and the laying of a second beaten earth floor U321. The bench is clearly sitting on top of the early floor U335, which traces beneath it.

The southwestern room sees the addition of mudbrick feature U299. The exact nature of this feature is unclear. Built up against wall 284, it lacked clear definition throughout excavation. There were limited bricklines, and much of the material looked like concentrated debris. It is thus possible that this feature is merely collapsed superstructure from wall 284, though we did not find similar deposits anywhere else along the wall. At this point, it seems that the structure is a highly eroded, mudbrick rubble filled bench. The

eroding sides obscured most of the bricklines, and the interior would have been entirely rubble anyway. Such features are well known and commonly attested in the Philistine levels at Ashkelon (38.75.340).

The courtyard featured an ashy surface layer (U300, 309, 314) containing several features. A square ashy pit, possibly a firebox (U330), was cut into this layer, as was another ashy pit (U294) which contained many bones. A grinding installation consisting of a broken tripod basalt grinding bowl set into a chalk installation (U310) was found in the southeast corner alongside a number of pestles (Photo A12_21571–73).

Phase 18

Phase 18 in 38.85 is very poorly preserved due to the deep cuts of the Phase 17 foundation trenches, particularly for walls U230 and U185. To the best of our knowledge, all of 38.85 is a large, open courtyard area during Phase 18, bounded to the north by a small stone wall, U289, part of which was excavated in 38.75 during the 2007 season (38.75.W280) and to the west by the street wall (U284).

This phase was particularly difficult to identify, due to the close proximity between the Phase 17b and 19a floors. These three phases were characterized by a continuous sequence of laminations, all of them disturbed and difficult to trace. This difficulty was compounded by the lack of Phase 18 architecture. Because of this, many of the 18 surfaces were originally thought to be Phase 17b surfaces. However, with the removal of the Phase 17b walls, they were found to trace beneath these features. Thus, surfaces 85.U240, U260, U268, U287, U250 and U311 are all equivalent and part of a larger courtyard surface extending across the entire western half of the square.

The clearest Phase 18 sequence was found in the southeastern part of the square. Here, the courtyard surface U240 clearly traced beneath the Phase 17 mudbrick walls (U207 and U174) but ran above the top of the mudbrick walls associated with Phase 19a (U283, see 2012_38.85_Video 7). This surface equals 85.U260, which was created separately last season when it was still unclear if the surface ran up to or underneath the Phase 17 walls. With the removal of the Phase 17 walls at the beginning of this season, it became clear that U260 and U240 were part of the same large open courtyard surface.

Similar to large open spaces excavated in previous seasons, most notably the large courtyard in Phase 17 in 38.75 (U232), there were numerous pits and postholes cut into the Phase 18 surface (U266/267, U319/320, U264/265). The most notable feature was an installation cut into U268 in the northwest corner, U282. This feature was a shell-lined pit, similar to the sunken jar installations excavated in previous seasons (see for example 83.F451). The installation was lined with shells, sloping down to a pit containing a decorated bichrome krater (Photo A12_20700). The use of a krater in this type of installation is attested in other contexts (83.F448), but the use of an elaborately decorated bichrome example is as of yet unattested.

It appears that street wall U284 continued in use through Phase 18, but it was not very clear whether the courtyard surfaces interfaced with this wall or were cut by the Phase 17b foundation trench (U279). It seems, however, that the courtyard surfaces are distinct in composition from the Phase 18 street fill (U256), so it seems most logical that the street wall was reused in this phase.

In the eastern part of the square, contexts were similarly disturbed, which made it difficult to distinguish between the 19a courtyard laminations and the Phase 18 laminations. The disturbances left by the foundation trenches for the Phase 17 and Phase 14 architecture further compounded these issues. The main feature of Phase 18 in the western half of the square was wall U295, a stone structure. This structure was cut into by the later Phase 17 constructions (U272 and U271, Photo A12_20974), while the 19a courtyard surface (U314) clearly ran beneath it. Surface 303 ran up to this wall in the south, and, thus, by extension was also affiliated with Phase 18. This parallels floor 298 in the southeast corner, but the two do not connect due to the cut of foundation trench U248. No surface was identified north of wall 295, but a pit (U297/298) was discovered that contained a bowl and an overturned cooking pot (Photo A12_21000). The elevation of this pit suggests an affiliation with a Phase 18 surface. Certain features of this deposit are reminiscent of the bowl and lamp deposit tradition, but it is not at all clear that this was the intention in this case.

It is possible that the western and eastern surfaces are all part of one very large courtyard; however, any north-south dividing wall would have been robbed out by the construction of Phase 17 wall U230.

Phase 17b

While last season the majority of the Phase 17 floors were removed in the western half of the square, the architecture was not fully understood, and considerable work was still needed in the eastern half. These issues were all addressed in the early part of the season with the removal of the Phase 17 walls in the western half of 38.85 and further excavation around the mudbrick features that remained in the eastern half of the square.

The eastern half of the square consists of two main rooms, a northern and a southern room, that are bounded on the west by stone wall U230 and separated from each other by mudbrick wall U272 with a stone foundation. The eastern extent of these rooms is unclear, as no closing wall was identified before the section. The southern room was mostly robbed out by foundation trench U248. South of this cut surface 286 was excavated in the southeastern corner; it connects to U258 in the north, which abuts wall 272.

In Phase 17a, this room was renovated with the addition of a poorly constructed mudbrick bench (U203) against W272 and the addition of a mudbrick closing wall to the east (W271), which ran right up against the eastern section. Floor 258 traces beneath both of these features. No clear surface was identified with these features, but U274 seems to be the leveling fill for their construction. The southern room included a number of metal artifacts including a bronze balance pan (MC 65190), a bronze spear point (MC 65199), and other copper alloy fragments (MC 65191).

The northern room originally extended into 38.75, with U251 as the southern continuation of the Phase 17b floor, 75.328, and abuts W272. This space is divided in 17a with the construction of wall U235.

In the western half of the square excavation focused on dismantling the Phase 17 architecture. During this process, we were finally able to record the extent of the size of these walls. The foundation stones for walls 185 and 230 were much larger than anything seen in any of the Iron I buildings at Ashkelon, measuring up to a meter in length. Wall U230 was particularly noteworthy because while dismantling it, two foundation deposits

were discovered within (not underneath) the wall. Both deposits were decorated strainer jars (RP 12260, 12263). One was located at the northern end, and the other was located at the southern end. Additionally mudbrick wall segment 85.U184 was determined to be a Phase 17a buttress added to support stonewall U185. When dismantling these features, it became clear that U184 was built later and against W185 (Photo A12_20685).

A final project involved cleaning the eastern section of Square 84, south of the southern extent of 38.85. During this process, the continuation of W185 was identified to the south, extending a further meter beyond the current excavation area and defining the extent of the Phase 17 building (Photo A12_22746).

Phase 15

At the end of the season, a large stone wall (76.U74) was uncovered on the western edge of Square 76. No associated floors have been excavated. Based on the excavated material from Square 75, this feature is thought to be a Phase 15 construction, but further excavation is needed next season. A mudbrick debris layer (U71, U77) may be collapse associated with this wall. These layers were not fully excavated, and it is unclear whether the limited ceramic finds are 8th century as opposed to 7th.

Phases 14 and 13

Excavation in Square 76 was conducted through the Iron IIB and Persian occupation of Grid 38. While in previous excavation areas four distinct Persian phases were identified, this was not the case in 38.76 partially due to a complete lack of architecture associated with this phase. This phase consists of multiple layers of exterior fills and laminations, possible courtyard space, and also possible exterior space. The south tell slopes to the northeast, and 38.76 is on the eastern extent of the excavated field. Therefore, it is possible that occupation in the Persian period in this field does not extend into this excavation square. All of the laminations slope dramatically to the east, suggesting a steep falloff and further supporting this interpretation.

Most of the ceramics excavated from the Persian period date best to Phase 13 (38.76.U47, 65, 66, 74), with a few sherds of attic ware suggesting a 5th century date consistent with Phase 13 elsewhere in the grid. The possibility remains that multiple phases are represented by these fills. Cut into these fills were several large pits, similar to what was found in other Persian fills (U55/56, U59/60, U69/70)

Below these fills were a number of layers containing mixed pottery including red-slipped material characteristic of the 7th century, mixed with material that is equally at home in the 7th century or Persian periods (U75, 79, 81, 82). A mudbrick feature U80 with shell lining may belong to this phase or to Phase 15 and needs further excavation next season.

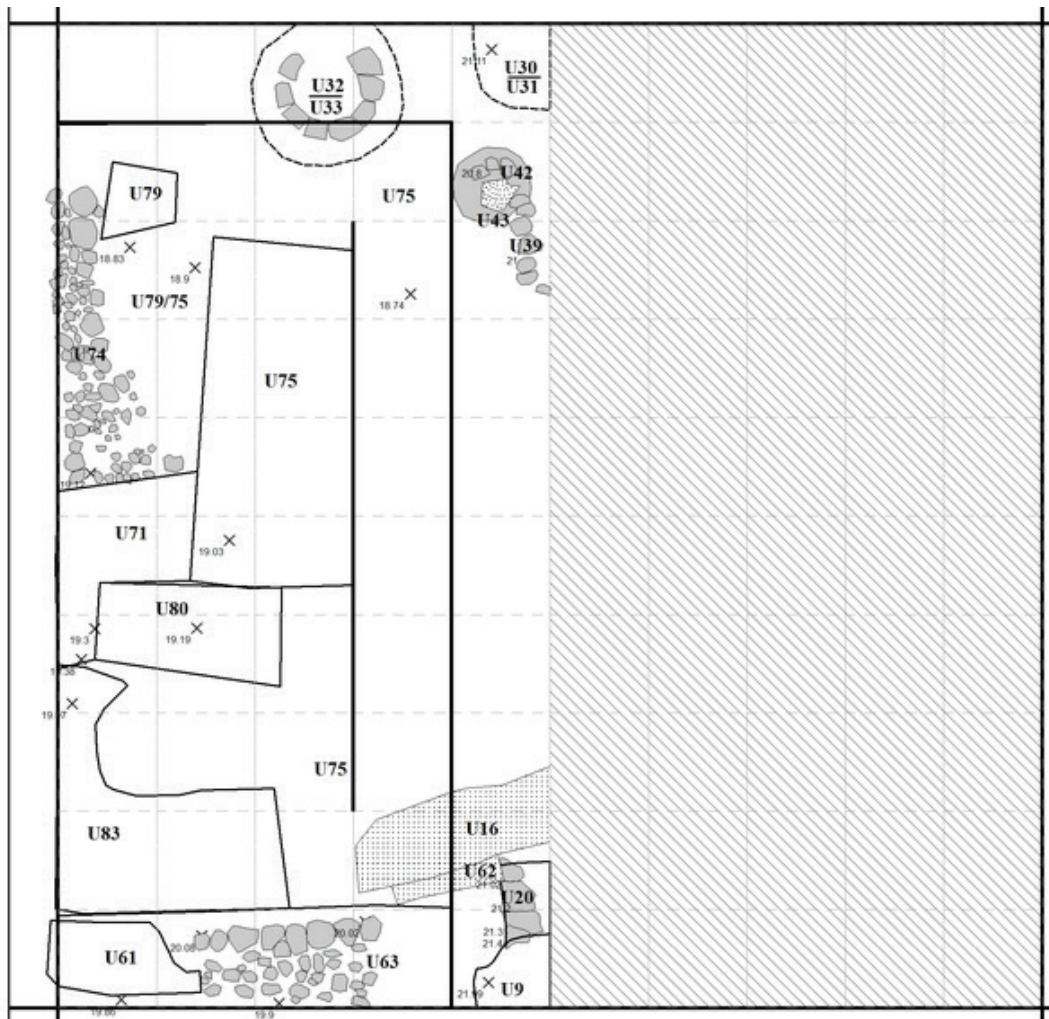
Hellenistic / Roman / Byzantine

In the southern half of 38.76, a complex system of drains was excavated with elements dating to the Hellenistic period through the Byzantine period. None of this material had accompanying floors or other architecture.

The earliest feature was a pair of walls, constructed of well-cut ashlar (U62) corning with a north-south wall (U20) in the southeast corner. No associated surfaces were discovered. It is unclear what type of structure these walls relate to because much of the surrounding material was robbed out by the Roman drain.

In the Roman occupation layers a series of drains were cut deeply into the Hellenistic and Persian levels. These drains consisted of walls of light concrete mortar and kurkar (U40), with fieldstone paved channels (U54). These drains were similar to those excavated in 38.85 in 2008. Deep foundation trenches (U57) for the sewer walls were identified, all filled with the characteristic greenish backfill associated with leaking sewage. A second sewer wall was presumed to have existed to the south but was apparently robbed out for the construction of the Byzantine drain (RT 46). This trench was later cut by the foundation trench (U51) for the Byzantine sewer wall (U17).

The Byzantine drain was constructed, like the Roman drain, of mixed concrete and kurkar walls, consisting of more concrete than stone (U16, 17) with a poured concrete and pave-stone channel (U50). During the Islamic period, this drain system was backfilled (U6/7, U3). These layers were identified last season as Islamic pits, before the true nature of the drainage system was identified.



Ashkelon 13/11
 Grid 38
 Square 76
 JW/BF
 July 17, 2012
 Top Plan #23
 1:50
 DwgID 19812



Ashkelon 13/11
 Grid 38
 Square 85
 JW/SE
 July 17, 2012
 Top Plan #25
 1:50
 DwgID 19811

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T. Hoffman



Grid 47 Overview at the Conclusion of the 2012 Season (Photo # 23276)

Squares 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 44, 45, 46, 54, 55, 56, 63, 64

Dr. Tracy Hoffman, Grid Supervisor
Dr. Ryan Boehm, Square Supervisor
Robyn LeBlanc, Square Supervisor
Jon Busby, Square Supervisor

GRID 47 FINAL REPORT 2012

Introduction

This summer marked the final year of excavation in Grid 47 where for five seasons we have worked to excavate the Roman period odeon standing southeast of the intersection of the cardo and decumanus. First excavated by John Garstang in the 1920s, the city center of classical period Ashkelon has long been of interest to archaeologists and park visitors alike. With excavation now complete, attention shifts to the conservation and restoration of the odeon and its subsequent development as a key feature of the Ashkelon National Park.

The goals of the final season of excavation were as follows:

1. Excavate the Byzantine, Islamic and Crusader period occupation and reuse of the odeon first exposed during the 2011 field season. Of particular interest, to determine the relationship between the Phase 3 water cistern and the last wall of the odeon's cavea.
2. Find and expose the third wall of the cavea on the east side of the odeon and expose the corner where it meets the back wall of the scaena frons.
3. Identify the original surface of the sewer in Square 64.
4. Find more evidence of the Hellenistic period building over which the Roman basilica and then later odeon were founded. In particular, find a floor associated with the Hellenistic walls visible in Square 34 in order to better date this early phase.
5. Find the east flanking room of the bouleterion, the twin of the one visible on the west side of the odeon.
6. Prepare the area for the restoration of the odeon.

The occupational sequence excavated in Grid 47 this season stretched from the Hellenistic through the Crusader period. In the early phases this area became integral to public life in Ashkelon. It was defined by monumental public buildings which shaped the center of the classical period city. After the Roman period, the area underwent a change which culminated in residential occupation during the medieval period. The value of the area's location, along the road running from the Jerusalem Gate towards the sea, was evident in a large-scale Fatimid period building program that converted the remains of the former odeon and immediate area into a residential quarter. The construction of a well, a water cistern and settling tank, several stone-lined pits and sumps as well as elaborate masonry walls completed the transformation. The area remained residential until it was abandoned, the cistern and well deliberately put out of use and backfilled with large ashlar blocks, during the Crusader period in the late 12th century. Throughout each period of occupation the orientation of the buildings, the construction methods employed and the building materials used varied, though reuse or "recycling" was common, and those variations revealed much about not only changes in ideas about cities but also the practical application of those ideas in the vibrant city that was Ashkelon.

The Late Hellenistic/Early Roman period, Phase 7, was the earliest period of occupation uncovered in Grid 47. Two separate probes, dug in an effort to find floors associated with the earliest identified walls, encountered large leveling fills used in the construction of the 1st century basilica and then again the odeon which contained only Iron

Age ceramics (**34.131**, **45.129**, **45.130**, **45.131** and **45.132** for example). In one probe, in the east flanking room of the bouleterion, those leveling fills went down to bedrock. The evidence clearly suggested that soil for use in the construction of the foundations for the monumental Roman buildings was being mined from specific locations, perhaps the east slope of the South Tell, throughout the Roman period and both Roman building programs.

The architecture of this period though fragmentary was quite impressive. In Square 34, excavation during the 2011 field season uncovered two large walls, **34.30** and **34.102=34.117**, constructed out of kurkar ashlar (each one measuring an identical 23 x 60 cm) set in a white plaster in alternating courses of vertical and horizontal construction. This season excavation uncovered more of **34.30** and though there were no associated floors discovered with the walls, it was clear they belonged to a building of some importance, perhaps even one of the city's major public buildings in the Late Hellenistic/Early Roman period.

Another aspect of the Late Hellenistic/Early Roman city plan was theorized this season though no direct archaeological evidence could be identified in support of the conclusion. **64.15**, the large east-west vaulted sewer running through the grid, was on its discovery in the 2011 field season thought to be wholly Roman in its construction with continued use into the Islamic period. This season it was suggested that the sewer was in fact the reuse and expansion of an earlier Hellenistic period sewer. A sewer which may have originally run under a street that ran roughly south-east to north-west through this area, an orientation which placed the sewer at right angles with the Late Hellenistic/Early Roman walls, **64.22** in addition to the walls mentioned above, and which provided a good view of the plan of the city center in that period. We were not able to prove this theory through excavation, a probe through the floor of the sewer, **64.30**, did not produce any datable ceramics. Stratigraphically, the sequence worked, however, and it appeared to be a viable theory.

In the 1st century C.E., Phase 6, a new building program significantly changed the plan of the Hellenistic city with the construction of new monuments following a new orientation, that of the newly constructed *cardo* and *decumanus* which intersected just to the north-west of this area. The most important addition to the area was a large basilica, which measured approximately 300 x 115 feet, with a bouleterion on its southern end. This complex, first excavated by Garstang in the 1920s, was built over at least one of the earlier Hellenistic buildings, one wall of which, **34.117** was incorporated into the construction of the new basilica.

There proved to be significant changes in the building techniques between Phase 7 and Phase 6. The walls of the Late Hellenistic/Early Roman building were made of cut kurkar ashlar placed in a white plaster with a distinctive pattern in the courses, blocks laid horizontally, then vertically and then horizontally again and so on. There was no cement in the Phase 7 walls. Quite the opposite was true in Phase 6 during which the most significant change in construction methods was the use of cement. Though finer than the cement used in Phase 5, a later Roman building phase, the walls of the basilica and bouleterion uncovered in a probe, **45.106**, **45.107** and **45.94**, were covered in concrete.

Further changes in the area were associated with the continued development of the Roman forum. It was in this period that the sewer, **64.15** and **64.21** was rebuilt and expanded to meet the growing needs of the city center. The expansion included not only the enlargement of the main east-west oriented channel, large enough for someone to walk

through and clean, but also the addition of at least one (and probably more) feeder channel, one of which, **64.28**, was discovered this season.

Changes in the city plan, building methods, and architecture continued apace in the late 2nd/early 3rd century, Phase 5, when the Roman forum was remade again. The basilica and bouleterion were put out of use or significantly modified and reinterpreted by the construction of an odeon. This small theatre was the city's second (Ashkelon's main theatre lied to the south situated in the south-east corner of the site on the slopes of the MB mudbrick ramparts) and suitable for small musical performances, poetry readings and similar such entertainments. It may have continued as a meeting place for the city council as well. Whether or not it was roofed, measuring approximately 45 meters wide put it at the outside limits for such a construction, remained unclear.

Though the odeon put the earlier Roman buildings out of use existing walls were utilized. The east exterior wall of the basilica, **34.101**, became the floor in the passageway through which patrons would walk as they entered the odeon on its east side.

34.102=117, the Hellenistic wall, **34.102=117**, which was preserved to a height of two meters was utilized in the north-east corner of the odeon. This new construction both replaced and yet acknowledged the existing structures in a process some have called the monumentalization of the bouleterion. The orientation of the structures are the same and the odeon's scaena frons was built neatly around the corners of the earlier basilica.

During the Byzantine period, late 4th through mid-7th centuries, the area underwent a functional shift going from an area of monumental public buildings to one more commercial and residential in nature. When exactly in the Byzantine period, Phase 4, the odeon went out of use as a theatre remained unclear but that it did was indisputable. The building became a quarry and not only was there direct evidence for the dismantling of the building and its decorative features, the cut column base in Square 34 for instance and **45.76** a layer filled with piece of scored and decorated plaster, but also there were deep fill layers, such as **64.17** between the second and third walls of the odeon's cavea, which indicated the robbing was extensive in the Byzantine period.

The building was simultaneously or subsequently, again the exact timing was unclear, subjected to a process known as "in-filling" in which standing monuments of the Roman period were utilized in the construction of new spaces and sometimes buildings. In the case of the odeon, two mosaic floors were laid down within interior spaces of the theatre, one over the east pier of the scaena frons and another in between the second and third wall of the cavea adjacent to the scaena frons, while a third was built up against the theatre's exterior wall. The floors, **34.2**, **34.96** and **36.15**, were clean when uncovered but the type of the mosaic employed suggested the possibility they were used as shops.

There was no evidence for occupation in the 7th and 8th centuries in the grid, repeating a pattern found throughout the site, though it was likely that the newly created Byzantine spaces continued to be used at the same time the odeon continued to be robbed. How late those two processes continued into the 9th and early 10th centuries was unclear in large part because of later activity in the area. The next major building phase, Phase 3, was in the Fatimid period, the late 10th/11th centuries, when the east section of the second and third walls of the cavea were reused in the construction of a large building(s) that also involved large leveling fills being laid down around newly constructed walls. This building phase included the construction of a well, a water cistern with a settling tank, cobble surfaces and several stone-lined pits.

This phase also marked a fundamental change in the nature of settlement in this area of the site. Gone was the monumental public architecture of the Hellenistic and Roman periods and the traces of those buildings which survived into the Byzantine period all erased by the construction of a residential quarter. While the surfaces associated with this phase were clean ceramics collected from the leveling fills and stone-lined pits, large numbers of Lustre ware as well as several restorable Chinese vessels, in addition to metals, a pair of scissors, boning knife and several other knife blades, and the worked bone all hinted towards the area housing residents of some means. The quality of construction, **47.75=45.102** being a prime example, further supported that conclusion.

In Phase 2, the Crusader period, 1153-1187 C.E., the Fatimid period buildings were renovated and reoccupied. New walls were constructed, new plaster surfaces put down in the courtyard areas and a wine vat constructed in one of the earlier Fatimid period buildings all while other existing features such as the well and the cistern continued to be used. This phase was securely dated by the presence of imported ceramics, including Slip Painted wares and Aegean Coarse Incised Wares, in the construction of the vat. At the end of the Crusader period, the entire area was deliberately put out of use, the cistern and well backfilled with large, heavy cut ashlar blocks. The late 12th century abandonment of the area marked the end of occupation not just in the area of Grid 47 but, as has been seen in other areas of excavation, the ancient site of Ashkelon.

Phasing

The phasing in Grid 47 remains the same as in previous seasons though some adjustments were made to the specific dates of each phase which are as follows:

| Phase | Period | Material Remains |
|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Phase 7: Hellenistic/Early Roman | 2 nd /1 st c. B.C.E. | Monumental public building |
| Phase 6: Roman | 1 st c. C.E. | Basilica and Bouleterion |
| Phase 5: Roman | 2 nd /3 rd c. C.E. | Odeon |
| Phase 4: Byzantine | 6 th /7 th c. C.E. | Re-use of odeon, shops (?) |
| Phase 3: Fatimid | late 10 th /11 th c. C.E. | Residential quarter |
| Phase 2: Crusader | late 12 th c. C.E. | Residential quarter |
| Phase 1: Garstang/Modern | 20 th c. C.E. | Excavation, park use |

It should be noted that there were two changes in the dates of the phases in Grid 47. First, Phase 3 was previously dated to the Abbasid/Tulunid period. Excavation of the units dated to this phase instead place it solidly in the Fatimid period. Secondly, Phase 2 was previously identified as Fatimid/Crusader in previous seasons. Again, excavation this season showed that it was a distinct Crusader horizon datable to the mid-12th century, 1153-1187 to be exact, and that it was distinct from the preceding Fatimid period.

Recording Techniques

A few notes about the recording system used in Grid 47. Several squares were combined in order to facilitate the recording process. Thus, several squares were larger

than the 10 x 10 meter area typically employed at Ashkelon. To summarize the Grid 47 squares:

Square 34 = Squares, 33, 34, and 35

Square 36 = Square 36

Square 45 = Squares 45 and 46

Square 55 = Square 55

Square 64 = Squares 45 and 46

This information was included on all appropriate square and grid plans. It was also clearly indicated in the OCHRE data as necessary. The size of the excavation area as well as staffing levels also meant that a unit which crossed square lines was often excavated and recorded under just one square. In all such cases the recording of the unit was done under one square, and noted as such in the fieldbook, while the dimensions and appropriate details of a unit were correctly represented on top plans and phase plans.

Finally, Grid 47 does a true Harris Matrix. There is no single, combined grid matrix. Rather, units (architectural features) which cross square lines are highlighted in red so that they are easy to identify.

Phase 7: Late Hellenistic / Early Roman (Monumental Public Building)

This season excavation uncovered more of the Hellenistic wall, **34.30**, first found last year, as well as its foundation trench on the east face of the wall, **34.133**. Pottery from the trench placed the construction of the wall, and the building, in the Late Hellenistic or Early Roman period. In other words, no earlier than the second half of the second century B.C.E. The foundation trench for the wall was cut through an ashy fill, **34.136**, which also contained an interesting trench, **34.136**, full of burned material. Samples were taken from the ash but the material has not yet been processed and the function of the trench has remained undetermined. The only other architecture from this phase was **34.139**, a wall under the west pier of the odeon's scaena frons which ran on a similar orientation to that of **34.30**.

This year it was determined that a drain discovered in 2011, **64.15**, was likely a Roman period reuse and expansion of a probable Hellenistic period sewer which originally ran under a street. This conclusion was based on the sewer's orientation which followed that of the Hellenistic city plan exposed throughout the grid as well as a line of stone, **64.25**, at the bottom of the sewer which follows a different line than the sewer's vaulted roof. The exact dimensions and characteristics of the earliest phase of the sewer were not identified.

During his excavation, Garstang identified two walls in his open air museum as belonging to the Hellenistic period without offering more information. Those walls, **53.41** and **53.36**, were identical and comprised of a single row of cut ashlar and a square platform. Towards the end of the 2012 season a small probe was dug in between **53.36** and **53.8** and excavation revealed that the Hellenistic wall **53.36** was a wall with an engaged column base (Photo ID 22537). The wall, furthermore, appeared to be cut by the later bouleterion wall, **53.51**, thereby confirming Garstang's Hellenistic date.

Phase 6: Roman, 1st c. C.E. (Basilica and Bouleterion)

The Hellenistic city plan was significantly reworked in the Roman period during an expansion of the forum. Infrastructure was increased and new monuments constructed on a orientation that focused on the new cardo and decumanus, the main intersecting streets of the classical city. This year, a probe dug in Square 45, made a significant contribution to our understanding of the basilica and bouleterion which were a focal point of the forum. Excavation uncovered the walls of the bouleterion's east flanking room as well as a floor associated with those walls. **45.106** and **45.94** were two north-south walls which cornered with east-west wall **45.107** forming the north-west corner of the bouleterion's east flanking room. All three walls were constructed of large cut ashlar over which cement was poured thus obscuring the dimensions of the individual stones. A hydraulic plaster bedding, **45.110**, perhaps the bedding for an opus sectile floor, ran up to the face of **45.107** with which it was clearly associated. Pottery collected in the layer above the floor, **45.97**, read Roman while that removed from the sealed context below the floor bedding, **45.129**, was Iron Age in date and did not prove helpful in dating the construction of the wall. The height of **45.110**, 19.52 meters, was substantially lower than the fragment of opus sectile floor visible in the west flanking room preserved by Garstang in his open air museum which called into question his reconstruction of that room.

While digging the probe an important pattern in the bouleterion's construction emerged. The leveling fills below the floor bedding, such as **45.130** and **45.131**, contained only Iron Age pottery. The fills had a high concentration of sand mixed with silt and contained little except pottery and bone. As the Roman forum was expanded it was likely that dirt was being mined from the east side of the South Tell in areas that had not been disturbed for some time. Thus, there was reverse stratigraphy within the bouleterion, and later odeon, as Iron Age fills were laid down in the Roman period to level earlier Hellenistic material for new construction. This same pattern, sandy fills full of Iron Age pottery, was repeated in the construction of the Phase 5 odeon.

The expansion and development of the Roman forum included the expansion of the city's infrastructure. It was in this phase that the Hellenistic drain, perhaps seen only in the line of stones at the bottom of the existing Roman period sewer, **64.25**, was reused and expanded for continued use in the Roman period. (**64.25** had an orientation slightly offset from the line of the Roman period sewer and the stones ran into the south wall of the sewer.) The Phase 6 drain, **64.15**, was large and measured approximately 1.15 x 1.50 meters. It's side walls were constructed out of large ashlar blocks on which no traces of plaster were visible though that could be explained by the longevity of the drain, almost one thousand years, and the buildup of phosphates on those walls. The roof of the drain consisted of three courses of cobbles set in a shell laden cement (Photo ID 19084). The floor of the drain was identified as **64.26** (Photo IDs 20713, 20718), a cement surface that ran up to **64.25** and under **64.3**, the Byzantine rebuild of the sewer. This surface was determined to be the original or earliest remaining surface of the sewer. A probe dug through it, **64.30**, produced no ceramics. A further attempt to date the sewer was undertaken as the roof of the structure was excavated but again, no ceramics were recovered. Therefore, the date was established stratigraphically and by the presence of Late Roman/Early Byzantine ceramics in the fill just above the surface perhaps reflecting

the period during which the sewer was cleaned less regularly. This season a north-south oriented feeder channel, **64.28**, was discovered (Photo IDs 22539 and 22540_). It was of much smaller dimensions and measured only 20 x 41 cm. It entered the large sewer through the north side of **64.15**, at the level of the roof, and silted up in Phase 4, the Byzantine period. The sewer was well constructed with a stone floor, constructed walls and a roof constructed of ashlar rounded on their interior faces which made the drain appear arched. The extant features of the sewer at the end of this season (Photo ID 19070), **64.15**, **64.18**, **64.26** and **64.28**, dated primarily to Phase 6 and then **64.18**, a constructed platform which coincided with the odeon building program, to Phase 5.

Phase 5: Roman, late 2nd/early 3rd c. (Odeon)

In the Severan period, the city center underwent another transformation as the 1st century basilica and bouleterion were put out of use by the construction of an odeon, or perhaps the monumentalization of the bouleterion. The new odeon followed the same orientation of the earlier Roman buildings and incorporated the walls of both the Hellenistic and earlier Roman buildings into its construction. While the majority of this structure was exposed in previous seasons, it was left to this season to uncover the east side of the third wall of the cavea which also served as the exterior wall of the odeon. The east side of the third wall, **64.5=55.4=45.126=45.98=45.103=45.88=45.90=45.125=36.8=34.51** (see final photos for pictures), was extensively robbed in later periods and was poorly preserved. Two walls, **45.88** and **45.90**, were determined to be part of the odeon structure this season though their exact purpose remained uncertain. It was theorized they were part of the third wall that functioned as a radial wall lending structural support to both the second and third wall of the cavea. At its northern terminus the third wall of the cavea, **34.8** and **34.51**, was founded directly on one of the earlier Phase 7 Hellenistic walls, **34.117**, and together the meeting of these walls formed the north-east corner of the odeon.

This season also uncovered additional information about the constructional fills associated with the odeon. As was the case with the earlier Phase 6 buildings, at least one layer, **34.131**, was full of Iron Age ceramics. That layer as well as several others, **34.133**, **34.132**, **34.131**, **34.130**, **34.128** and **34.127** were excavated in the east pier of the scaena frons. The layers, all sub-floor and leveling fills associated with the construction of the odeon and the stage structure, were comprised of different materials, ranging from kurkar, to sandy silt and then dirt matrices. They closely mirrored many of the fill levels excavated in the west pier of the storage structure in 2010 though the hard kurkar bedding in the west pier was not present in the east pier's construction. Several interesting finds came from these fills including a bronze pin (MC 66083), an Ashdoda figurine (MC 66099), paving stones (MCs 66162, 66186 and 66037), a possible stamped handle (MC 66102) and a remarkable hand carved bone hand holding an implement (MC 65976).

The sewer in Square 64, **64.15**, previously expanded in Phase 6 continued in use with the odeon. In this phase, the roof of the sewer, **64.21**, was bonded with **64.18**, a platform (surface?) which covered the sewer where it intersected the third wall of the cavea, **64.5** (Photo IDs 19070 and close-up 18983). The platform distributed the weight of the third wall ensuring that the sewer would not collapse under the additional weight of the newly constructed third wall.

Phase 4: Byzantine (In-Filling of Roman Odeon)

Unused as a theatre but still standing in the Byzantine period, the odeon was robbed, became a stone quarry and was simultaneously had its walls reused in a phenomenon seemingly localized to the east side of the structure. This was most visible in Squares 34 and 36 where new floors were constructed in spaces bounded by walls of the scaena frons as well as the second and third walls of the cavea in a process known as in-filling. Two mosaic floors discovered in previous seasons and excavated this season as well as a previously excavated marble tiled floor provided vivid evidence for this process.

34.2 (Photo ID 18737) was a mosaic floor of white industrial tessera bedded on the east pier of the scaena frons while the walls were still standing. The excavation of the floor and its bedding levels, **34.44**, **34.107**, **34.109** and **34.110** (Photo ID 19705) placed their construction in the Byzantine period. **34.96** (Photo ID 18827, 18830) was a second mosaic floor, again made of white industrial tessera, bedded in a cement/plaster matrix, **34.122**, more than half a meter deep. This floor ran up to the inside face of the third wall of the cavea, though that connection was severed by the later robbing of the wall and subsequent construction of leveling fills. This floor was significantly disturbed by the construction of a later Phase 3 wall. **45.44** (Photo ID 18529) was a poorly preserved marble tiled floor built up against the inside face of the second wall of the cavea which clearly indicated that reuse of the odeon was not just limited to exterior spaces and those adjacent to the scaena frons but also further inside the building.

This year a third mosaic floor was found, **36.15** (Photo ID 21576, 20732) which ran up to the outside face of the third wall of the cavea, **36.8**. While very similar to the previous two floors, **36.15** was of finer quality. Both white marble and red ceramic tessera were incorporated into the design of the floor. As the floor continued to be used a wall, **34.9**, was constructed on top of it dividing the room into two smaller spaces. The wall either marks a further change in the Byzantine reuse of the room or, perhaps, modifications during the early Islamic period. (The floor and wall were left unexcavated in order to prepare them for possible inclusion in the restoration of the odeon.)

There were two ephemeral structures also associated with this phase. **45.123** was a very limited, patchy cobble surface which probably dated to the robbing of the odeon. It was under a later Phase 3 wall. **45.46**, was a wall built up against the remains of the **45.98** section of the third wall of the cavea, for an unknown purpose.

One final speculative note about an undated white industrial tile mosaic floor in Garstang's open air museum (visible in the final photos). Built between the third wall of the cavea, as reconstructed by Garstang, and the outside wall of the bouleterion's west flanking room, this floor must be dated to either the odeon phase or, perhaps, the Byzantine period reuse of the structure.

Phase 3: Fatimid (Residential Quarter)

After an apparent gap, there was no evidence for occupation in the 7-10th centuries, a major building program was undertaken in the area of the former odeon which, after the Byzantine reuse, was left in ruins. The area remained, however, a prime location situated as it was on the road leading from the Jerusalem Gate into the heart of the city. The Fatimid

period building campaign included the continued robbing of the second and third walls of the odeon's cavea, the laying down of large leveling fills, the construction of at least two buildings, partially founded on the robbed out cavea walls, a water cistern and settling tank, a well, and several stone-lined pits. The end result was a residential quarter comprised of several buildings, of which only exterior areas were exposed, as well as waste and water management systems. Excavation did not uncover any streets, which would have provided a better sense of how the city plan may have further changed during this period, unfortunately. Some of the features in this phase were previously and erroneously assigned to the Byzantine period prior to their excavation this season which finally clarified their dates.

The Fatimid building phase started with the laying down of foundations for walls and outdoor cobble surfaces that blocked off and stabilized the already robbed second and third walls of the cavea and continued with the construction of large leveling fills put down at the same time new walls were being built. Examples of these foundations included **45.=45.112** (the foundation for wall **45.10** and surface **45.41**, and **45.121**. These foundations were constructed in alternating cobble and dirt courses. Much of the stone used was clearly robbed from odeon walls. The large leveling fills put down inside those new foundations and laid over the robbed sections of the cavea's third wall were typified by **45.22=34.94=36.25**. Though excavated separately, the fills were equaled after each produced pieces from a single restorable Qingbai bowl. Heavy silt layers, these fills contained restorable vessels, large quantities of bone, and glass.

The central structure in Phase 3 was bounded by **45.8=45.75=45.102** (Photo ID 19063 showing a section of the wall), a large east-west wall, which abutted **45.92=45.93=45.40=34.9** (Photo ID 19064), a large north-south wall that was built up against and over the second wall of the cavea, **45.7**. Together these walls formed the south-west corner of a large building, the largest extent of which lay beyond the east baulk. The first wall, **45.8=45.75=45.102** was a rubble core/ashlar faced wall. It had a relief arch as well as courses that had stones arranged in a horizontal-vertical-horizontal pattern. This wall stood 2.8 meters tall and measured 4.42 meters long. The second wall, **45.92=45.93=45.40=34.9**, with foundation pit **34.97**, was equally well built though its design was not as elaborate. **34.97** was clearly dug for the construction of **34.9** which was founded directly on **34.101**, a Phase 6 basilica wall.

South of the building was a second outdoor, or possibly courtyard, area holding a number of stone-lined pits. First, as mentioned previously, **45.26=45.112** and **45.121** were put down to close off and contain large fills put down over the robbed portions of the cavea walls. **45.26=45.112** was a large rubble and dirt foundation for **45.10** (Photo ID 21319), a long east-west rubble core/ashlar faced wall built in a style similar to that of **45.92=45.93=45.40=34.9** and **45.8=45.75=45.109**. **45.26** functioned not just as a foundation for **45.10** but also as one for a cobble surface, **45.41** which provided access to **45.1/61** (Photo ID 18201), a stone-lined pit built up against **45.7**, the second wall of the odeon's cavea. **45.62/69** (Photo ID 21318) was another stone-lined pit, this time built up against the third wall of the cavea, **45.126**, and Phase 3 wall **45.10**. This second pit was full of restorable vessels, juglets, cooking wares, and glazed vessels that dated no later than the late 10th/early 11th centuries. Missing were the hallmarks of the Fatimid period, Lustre ware, Under-Glaze Painted ware and FFS which were much more common in the mid-late 11th century and beyond. **45.124**, was a third stone-lined installation, of uncertain

purpose, built up against **45.121** and **45.126**. **45.101** was a short cobble wall that ran from **45.69** to **45.75=45.102** perhaps dividing workspaces within the courtyard.

The east-west wall **45.10** served as the boundary with another outdoor space just to the south in where there was a large water cistern, **45.12=55.9=55.36** (Photo ID 18798) and its foundations, **45.49**, with an associated settling tank, **55.50/51** (Photo ID 18800). The construction of the cistern cut the third wall of the cavea completely severing any connection with segments of the wall to the north. It was a remarkable effort. The associated tank was built up against **56.1** (Photo ID 18799), an ashlar wall from a third building which was preserved beyond the baulk. The cistern and settling tank were connected by a ceramic pipe, **45.52**, which ran between the two installations when the tank was in use. Unfortunately, when found the pipe had already been broken and only its two ends were preserved.

North of wall **45.8=45.75=45.102** there was a very different pattern. There was very little architecture, no surfaces and no evidence with which to interpret the function of the building. Just north of the wall was an open area, without the installations and cobbles surfaces of the areas to the south, that was bounded in turn on the north by the construction of two walls put down directly on top of the Phase 4 mosaic floor, **36.15** after a cement or plaster fill, **36.14**, was put down to help stabilize and strengthen the walls to be built next **36.17** and **36.24**, both rubble core with ashlar faced walls, were put down beside each other with no clear distinction in their periods of construction. Whether they were closing walls for the building represented by **45.8=45.75=45.102** could not be determined. They appeared to be the closing wall for a second building largely preserved beyond the bounds of the excavation area. These two walls, as was the case with other walls in the Fatimid building program, reused stones robbed from the odeon. Unlike some of the other walls, these two were not particularly well built. Two pits were cut into the same floor, **36.6/7** and **36.10/11**, perhaps while the walls were being constructed.

The majority of the Fatimid period occupation lay to the east of the second wall of the cavea. There was, however, an important feature of the building phase that lay to the west of the second cavea wall. It was a well, **45.27** (Photo ID 18333, and inside 18430), built against the west face of the second wall of the cavea. It was very well built with a square superstructure, a construction similar to another well excavated in Grid 64, as well as square handholds within the well shaft which allowed for easy access.

Beside the cobble surface **45.41** the only other floor that could be associated with the Fatimid building phase was a poorly preserved plaster surface, **34.4** (Photo ID 18566), which ran up to the east face of **45.93=45.92=45.40=34.9** at the north end of the wall.

There were several stone installations of undetermined function associated with the occupation of this area. **45.115/116/117** was an installation built up against **36.5**, an east-west stone wall. The exact dating and construction of this wall was problematic due to its incomplete excavation. Fills on the north side of the wall suggested a Phase 2 date while those on the south side suggested a Phase 3 date as evidenced by the installation built up against the wall and sealed by the later Crusader period plaster surface, **45.86**. One possible explanation was that the wall identified as **36.5** was in fact a Crusader rebuild of an earlier Fatimid wall, a pattern repeated in a number of other locations. Without excavation it was impossible to determine whether that was the case but it seemed likely. **34.129** was built up against **45.92=45.93=45.40=34.9**, on the west face of the wall and **36.27** was built up against **36.8**. These installations were always found directly underneath the large

leveling fills with nothing inside them to hint at their original purposes.

The Fatimid period residential quarter marked a significant change in the use of this area of the city. In the absence of streets it was impossible to distinguish how much of the street system also changed though it was likely to be extensive. Massive rubble and dirt foundations were constructed, large leveling fills put down and new walls, rubble core/ashlar faced the most common construction method, built using stone robbed from the abandoned odeon. That the residents of Ashkelon in this period were of some means was readily apparent in the quality of small finds collected during excavation from the large quantities of Lustre ware ceramics to imported Chinese Celadon and Qingbai wares. There were several coins, a rare Crusader lead token (MC 65666), bone inlay (MC 65240), and at least two knife blades. These objects joins those found in previous seasons, in particular, a pair of scissors (MC 61857) and a boning knife (MC61926) found in **45.14/18**, a small pit.

Phase 2: Crusader (Residential Quarter)

During the Crusader period the existing Phase 3 Fatimid period buildings continued to be used though there were some changes as new walls were built, old walls were rebuilt with new dimensions and new surfaces put down in the outdoor spaces. The well continued in use as did the water cistern. The most significant new construction was a large, two-tiered wine vat.

The walls of the wine vat (Photo ID 20976) included **45.102=45.75=45.8**, the south wall of vat, **34.36**, a rebuild of **36.5** (see discussion of this wall in Phase 3 for more details) the north wall of the vat, a new wall, **45.73**, on the east side, new wall **45.111**, a parallel north-south wall that divided the upper section of the vat from the lower, and **34.9 (=45.93= 45.92=45.40)** which was the closing wall of the vat on its west side. The interior of the vat was plastered on three separate occasions, **45.71=36.2**, **45.105** and **45.109**. Fill layers between the first two both produced Crusader ceramics while the bedding for **45.109** including Fatimid period ceramics clearly dating the vat to Phase 2. While dismantling **45.73**, a four line Arabic inscription was recovered (MC 65402, Photo ID 21472, 21473) From personal communication with Moshe Sharon we learned it was part of a tombstone inscription which gave the date 961 C.E., and the name al-Dimashq.

In addition to the construction of the vat and the new walls, several new surfaces were constructed. **45.86** (Photo ID 19121) was a plaster surface associated with the vat. Its construction put **45.115/116/117** out of use. **45.77** (Photo 19120) was a second plaster surface lying to the south of **45.86** and separated from it by **45.89**, a modern cut which disturbed both floors while simultaneously severing their connection. **45.77** was contemporary with **45.100**, an triangular shaped area of thick plaster with a square shaped indentation in its center adjacent to a poorly preserved east-west fieldstone wall, **45.80**. **45.77** ran up to and was associated with **45.66** a cobble surface that put the Phase 3 stone-lined pit **45.62** out of use. **45.64** was a narrow stone drain constructed and used with the new cobble surface. The south closing wall of this area was also reworked as **45.74** was rebuilt on **45.10** (Photo ID 18816).

The north wall of the vat, **36.5**, became the southern boundary of an open area between the building holding the wine vat and a second one built over the earlier Byzantine mosaic floor. **36.3** (Photo ID 20737) was a rebuild on **34.17** and **34.24**. In the area bounded by those walls and, presumably, **34.9** which also continued in use or which may

have in fact been a Fatimid addition to the room holding the Byzantine mosaic, **36.18** was a large leveling fill put down over which **36.19**, a clay surface, was constructed. That surface gave access to **36.12/13**, a stone-lined pit that was found empty, capped by a single large stone with a hole pierced through it.

As in the preceding periods, the construction methods of the Phase 2 buildings were distinct from that of the existing architecture. In the case of the Crusader period walls, new ones were often founded on a thick plaster layer, this was the case with **45.73** and **34.36**, while the rebuilds were either of cut stone or medium to large fieldstones and not the rubble core/ashlar faced walls of the earlier Fatimid period.

The Crusader occupation was rich in small finds, at least two restorable vessels were recovered. It did not last, however, and when the area was abandoned several features including the well and the cistern were put out of use and backfilled with ashlar blocks.

Phase 1: Garstang/Modern

This season we excavated several layers that belong to modern activity within Grid 47. **45.15** was a section of Garstang's fill removed as we dug a probe looking for more evidence of the Hellenistic building. **45.89** was a modern trench running east-west through the eastern half of the square. While removing the trench, we recovered a nail with a washer around it clearly placing the material in the modern era.

In Square 55, **55.39** was a layer of fill we excavated in order to determine the relationship between the Phase 3 water cistern and the third wall of the cavea. The material was heavily disturbed by a flood that occurred during the offseason and was regarded as contaminated. Excavation of the fill did demonstrate, however, that the cistern completely cut through the third wall of the cavea and did not use it in part of its foundations.

Conclusions

The final season of excavation in Grid 47 was a rewarding one in which most if not all of the research goals were met. This new phase of excavation not only clarified much of what was discovered and recorded by Garstang in his earlier excavation but also added to it by identifying a complex occupational sequence, Hellenistic through Crusader, not fully recognized by Garstang. The area was systematically developed from the Hellenistic period, when it first became the sight of monumental architecture, into the Roman period when the monumentalization of the city center continued first with the construction of a large basilica and bouleterion and then an odeon, and then subjected to change first on a small scale as the odeon was reused and stripped for buildings materials during the Byzantine period before finally, undergoing a fundamental shift as it became a residential quarter in the Fatimid and Crusader periods. Currently two publication projects, the Islamic period volume and an article being authored by Ryan Boehm and Robyn LeBlanc, are analyzing and preparing to present the occupational sequence in Grid 47. Both should offer much greater insight into this important area of the ancient city.

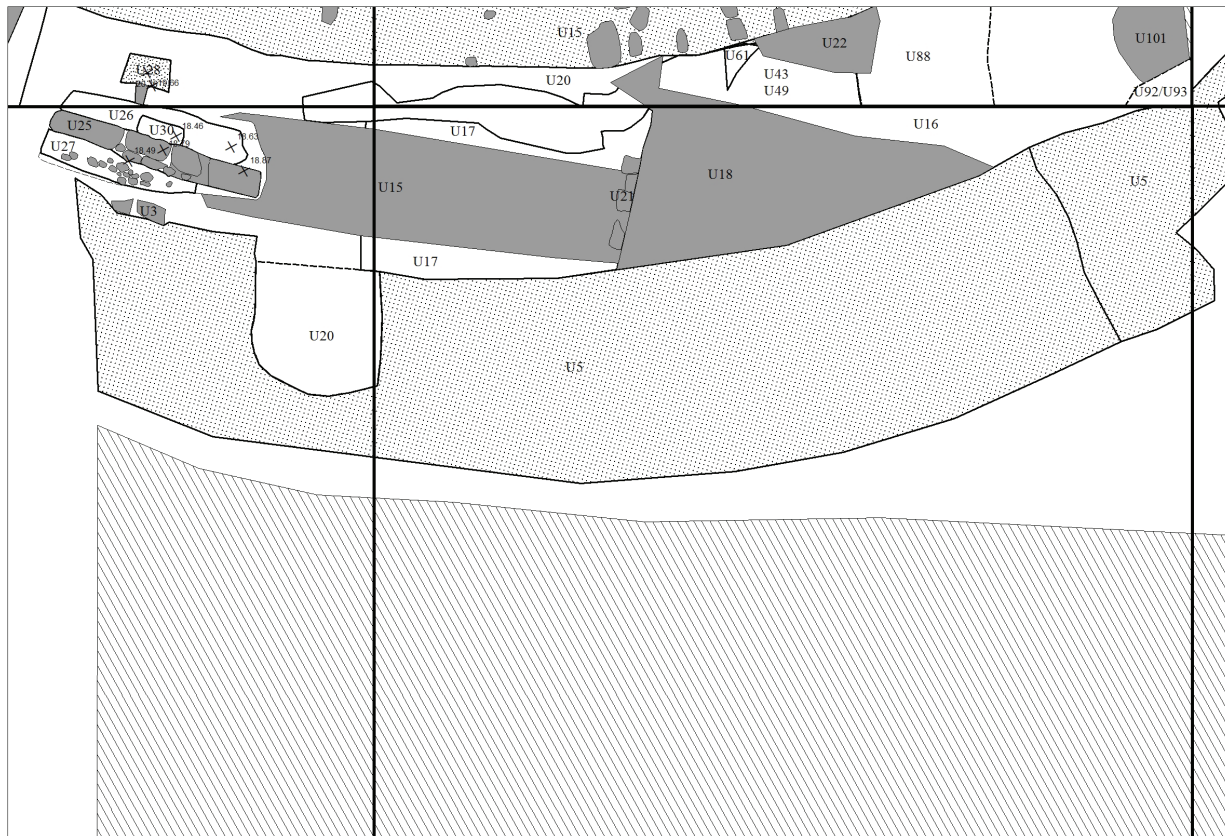
The archaeological goals met, all that remains is the conservation and restoration of the odeon which is scheduled to commence later this year. When complete, it should offer visitors the opportunity to imagine what theatergoers in antiquity might have experienced

as they stood in the orchestra gazing at the stage. An inspiring sight then and, perhaps, once again in the future.

Grid 47
Square 34 & 36
RAB/TH
July 15, 2012
Top Plan #21
1:50
DwgID19798



Squares 32, 33, 34, and 35 are all recorded as one square, Square 34



Ashkelon 43/12

Grid 47

Square 64

JB/TH

July 21, 2012

Final Top Plan

1:50

DwgID19826

Squares 63, 64,
and 65 are all
recorded as
one square,
Square 64

LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON

GRID 51 FINAL REPORT 2012

K. Birney



Grid 51 Overview at the Conclusion of the 2012 Season (Photo # 23123)

Grid 51 Professional Staff

Dana DePietro
Mark Lester
David Wheatley
Alethia Williams
Laura Wright
The Waffle Machine

Grid 51 Volunteer Staff

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Jared Aguayo | Sam Roberts |
| Katherine Cohen | Jessica Saba |
| Ben Conner | Jessica Seckler |
| Natty Durant | Noy Shemesh |
| Pascal Fiorentino | Nicole Siegel |
| Helen Freeman | Larissa St. Clair |
| Hailey Hillsman | Desirae Sweet |
| Christopher Jones | Gordon Tucker |
| Myrna Kenney | Kathleen Tucker |
| Nichole Moos | Arakua Wellbeck |

GRID 51 FINAL REPORT 2012

Season Objectives

The goal for the 2012 season was to fully excavate the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic (Phase 5) material and to bring the upper areas of the Grid (Squares 74 upper, 75, 83, 84, and 85) into Phase 6, the late 5th-early 4th century Persian period. This period in Grid 51 is characterized by a well-constructed insula with mudbrick floors. The season's goal was largely realized. This season the early Hellenistic phase remains (Phase 5) were exposed and excavated in the southernmost row of rooms, (Squares 83-84), which now sit poised above the Phase 6 Persian mudbrick-floored building. In Squares 74 and 75, Phase 6 surfaces from the aforementioned building were excavated and the street material between Building 1 and 2 was similarly brought into Phase 6. Phase 6 mudbrick surfaces were likewise exposed and articulated in two adjacent patches in Square 84.

Despite the appreciable aesthetics of the Phase 6 mudbrick flooring, it was the Phase 5 remains that were in fact the most interesting of the season, and offer the most insight into the occupational history of Insula 1 and the transition from the Persian to the Hellenistic period.

Phasing and Chronology

There are at present ten known phases within Grid 51, which adhere roughly to the chronology below:

Phase 1: Islamic (Fatimid-Crusader, 10th-12th c. A.D., 2 subphases)

Phase 2: Byzantine (4th-7th c. A.D.)

Phase 3: Early Roman (late 2nd B.C. – 1st A.D.)

Phase 4: Late Hellenistic (ca. 3rd-early 2nd c. B.C.)

Phase 5: Early Hellenistic (ca. 350-305/290 B.C.)

Phase 6: Late Persian (ca. 400-350 B.C.)

Phase 7*: Persian (ca. 500 B.C – ca. 400 B.C.)

Phase 8*: Iron IIC (7th century)

Phase 9*: Pre-7th century

**Phases 8-9 were not excavated in 2012. Phase 7 will be the focus of the 2013 season, while Phase 8 and below will be the focus of 2014.*

The 2012 Season results are presented below in chronological order, from earliest to latest. Readers are encouraged to consult the final reports from 2008-2010, which present a complementary picture to the Phase 4-6 rooms not excavated in 2012.

The Persian – Hellenistic Insula: Phases 7-4

These phases presently constitute the major focus of Grid 51. Work over the previous three seasons has revealed a substantial portion of a Persian – Hellenistic neighborhood consisting of two *insulae* separated by a NW-SE running street, which was laid out parallel to the coastline. As noted in previous reports, the building plan remained essentially consistent throughout some 6 centuries of occupation, reusing the same general wall lines albeit with changes in the placement of doorways and interior walls. In the early phases of excavation we used geographic designations for the rooms (NE, NW, etc.) to describe the activities of each phase. However, as more of the building has been exposed – and given current plans for exposing an additional 5m to the south in the 2013 season, these designations are becoming unwieldy and a different nomenclature is required. For this reason we are turning to a simple numeric designations for each room – illustrated below - beginning with Room 1 in the northwest of Building 1, with numbers increasing towards the east. (See Fig. 2, below.) This mirrors the larger grid pattern of the site of Ashkelon itself and will accommodate the southern expansion without requiring any further changes to the numbering system.

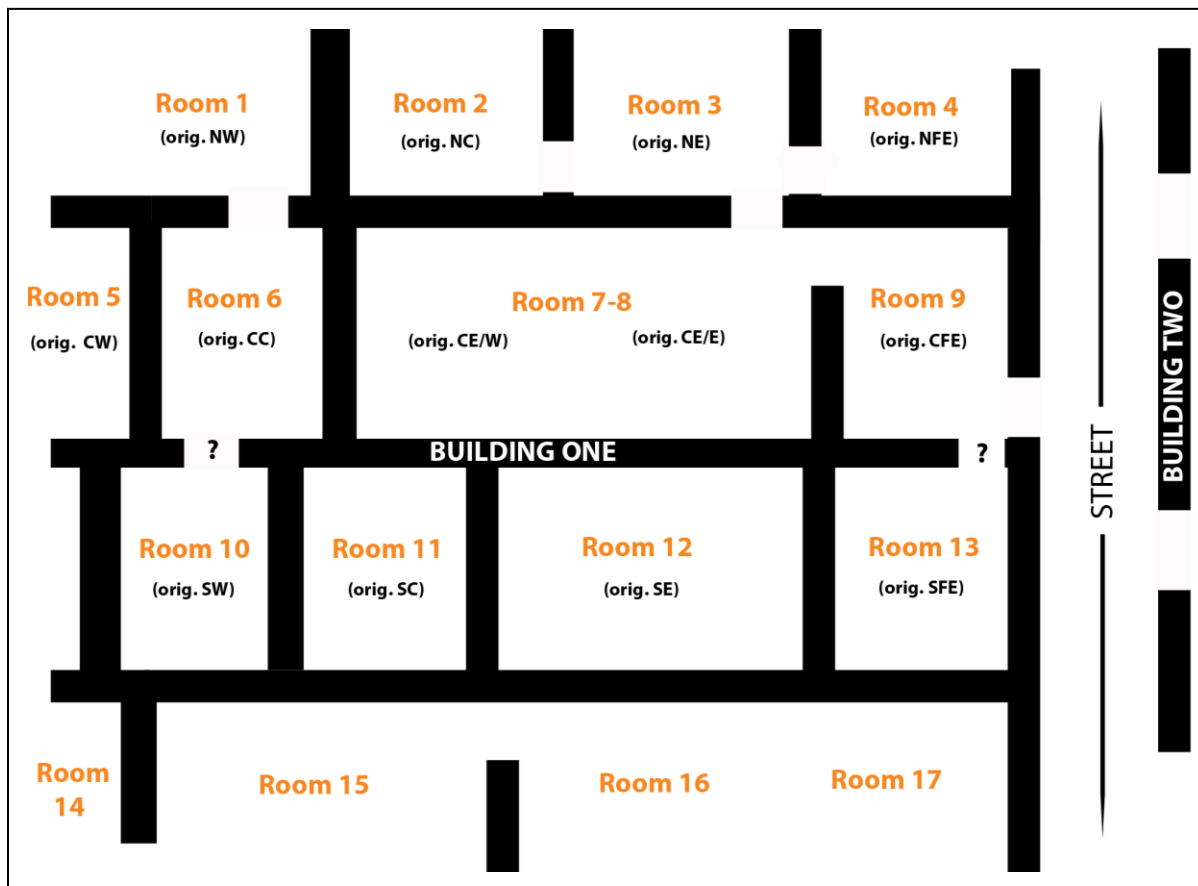


Fig. 2 Room designations in Insulae 1 (not to scale)
Doorways shown are those functional in Phase 5 (Late Persian)

The block plan above is composite representation of the Persian – Hellenistic occupation in Insula 1, based on existing walls and robber trenches. While most rooms are consistently structured, it should be noted that there are two rooms which were subdivided on occasion. Room 7-8, for example, is separated into two rooms in the earliest Persian Phase 7, but in Phase 6 is unified as a single larger room. Likewise Room 12, while a single room in Phases 7-4, is subdivided in Phase 3. The precise division between Rooms 16 and 17 is not yet known due to the substantial robbing of both walls and floors in this area (this space having likely housed something like a subfloor chamber for the Phase 1A bathhouse).

PHASE 6: The Persian Mudbrick-Floored Building (ca. 400-350 B.C.)

This season revealed mudbrick floors in the eastern half of rooms previously excavated in 2008: Room 7-8 (initially described in the 2008 reports as the Center-East room) and Room 12 (appears in the 2008 reports as the SW room). In Room 8, the east-west bricks of the equivalent floor **74.U173** were found to continue one row to the east, after which point the pattern ceased and bricks were fit in the remaining space up to **74.U323** in whatever manner possible.



Fig. 3 Phase 6 Mudbrick floors 74.U420 in Room 12 (left) and 74. U417 in Room 8 (right). Photo # 22546

In Room 12, the mudbrick floor **74.U420** (= **74.U190**) was seen to continue the north-south brick arrangement of the earlier floor, with well preserved mortar lines up to 4cm in thickness between bricks. The seemingly elegant arrangement of the mudbrick floors of Room 12 stands in stark contrast to its hodgepodge of closing walls, each representing different types of construction. This mix of styles is typical of the more erratic nature of the interior wall construction of the insula in many phases. The Room 12 surface **74.U420** (= **74.U190**) was bounded to the north by **74.189=215**, a wall with solid field and cobblestone foundations up to seven

courses deep. Its western limit, however, was **74.U131**, a sloppily constructed mudbrick wall with bricks of shockingly poor quality. Its eastern limit, the wall **74.402** was largely robbed out at the end of the phase by trench **74. U.....** Despite this activity the few stones remaining on its northern end abutting wall **74.U403** are small but well-cut ashlar. (The southern closing wall was robbed in the Fatimid period, **74.U265**.) The room spanned roughly 5 x 3.3m.

Room 7-8, mostly excavated in 2008, was an even larger room defined in this space by the N-S mudbrick wall **73.U216** to the west, **73.134=74.201** to the north, **74.189=215** to the south and an eastern closing wall (as yet unexcavated) beneath the Phase 4 wall **74.U323**. The room dimensions were 7 x 3.3m, and it was accessible from doorways to the east (north of **74.U323**), and the north, through a doorway (**74.U291**) in **74.U201**, connecting to Room 3. This is a rather large span for an interior room, however there is no indication of any division or additional support structure - either now or from previous seasons of excavation. The mudbrick floors in this space, **74.U173=74.417** continued the horizontal pattern from the western half of the room until the builders ran out of space in proximity to the eastern wall, after which point a mix of orientations were applied.

The occupational debris above the mudbrick floors in both rooms was quite thin, and few finds of note were recovered, certainly nothing to indicate the use of the room. We note here only a single coin **MC #** recovered from **74.U420** in Room 12, and an unusual chalk game piece from above the floor **74.417**, **MC# 65841**.

In two rooms, Room 9 and Room 13, Phase 6 floors were of beaten earth rather than of mudbrick. Subsequent excavation may yet reveal lower Phase 6 surfaces in these rooms, however the ceramic horizon marks these surfaces and their subfloor fills as entirely Persian (and therefore not Phase 5). The sequence of these surfaces - especially in Room 9, where the doorway connects them - is visible in relation to the neighboring street accumulation and thus provides a narrow phasing window.¹

In Room 9, the occupational debris **74.U355** was relatively thin but its ending appears to have been somewhat abrupt, with substantial amounts of what appears to have been collapse - stones, collapsed mudbrick and pottery - on the original floor **74.U415**. One complete juglet **RP# 12339** was recovered from this debris. A socket stone, **MC # 65778** likely functioned with the door for the adjacent cobblestone threshold into the street **74.U427**. Despite the seemingly poor quality of this beaten earth floor in relation to the mudbrick flooring in contemporary rooms, a number of the small finds from this space stand out in quality. These include three bronze pins, including one fibula **MC # 65789**, and a piece of ivory inlay **MC #66194**.

A similar pattern holds in Room 13, immediately adjacent to the south, though a bit lower down the terrace. The surface in this room, **74.U415**, was thickly coated with *hamra* clay, in several applications, leaving the impression of a red plastered surface. A bronze pin **MC # 66003**, a fragment of worked limestone **MC#**

¹ The sandy street layers of **75.U89** and **75. U86** Phase 6 and V streets, respectively can be seen accumulating above the doorway connecting Room CFE to the street. Above these - also visible in the doorway thankfully preserved in the baulk between 74 and 75 - we see also the start of the Phase 4 backfilling of the street and this room (**75.U76**, **74.U249**)

65827, a complete Egyptian alabaster/gypsum alabastron **MC# 65672** and fragment of an alabaster bowl were found on this floor.

Collectively, while the finds are relatively few, the small materials collected from the Phase 6 floors are richer in nature and quality than those that tend to be recovered from later periods. This is especially so in Rooms 9 and 13, despite the poor character of their floors relative to the mudbrick tiles. Perhaps we misjudge the quality of the mudbrick floors; perhaps the bright red hamra floors were more aesthetically pleasing and considered better suited for display to visitors entering the storefront or vestibules of the Insula, while the mudbrick floors were limited to the interior spaces.

The end of Phase 6 was marked in all rooms by signs of abandonment and disruption, most clearly seen in Rooms 9 and 13. At Dor, a disruption dating to ca. 350 B.C. is associated with the aftermath of the Phoenician uprising, despite the fact that there was no widespread destruction at the site. It becomes difficult to postulate a political reason for the abandonment we see at this horizon at Ashkelon, most particularly as Phoenician rebellion against the Persians was a Sidonian-led event, and it is unclear that the cities under Tyrian control were affected. (Stern 1995:274). Nonetheless, the break at ca. 350 B.C. remains clear at Ashkelon as well.

PHASE 5: The Persian-Hellenistic Transition – Reuse of the Mudbrick Building

This season's efforts were focused on excavating remaining Phase 5 surfaces in Building 1, and the contemporary street material in Squares 75 and 85. The exterior spaces in Squares 75 and 85 were only excavated for half of the season in an effort to focus attention on the interior spaces of Building 1. Nevertheless most of the Phase 5 street was excavated, and we now have our first glimpse of the Persian period drainage system in Square 85.

Phase 5 is the first period in which Hellenistic pottery appears, and is characterized by the reoccupation of the mudbrick floor building after a short lapse in occupation. Exposure of Phase 6 surfaces is marked by signs of abandonment - lenses of sand and clay atop the mudbrick floors (**73.L 74.L193 = L173, 74.L150, 74.LNFE, 75.U83**) in several rooms. These layers accumulated atop the limited Phase 6 occupational debris, suggesting mudbrick melt and exposure, and were followed by shallow leveling fills for the Phase 5 beaten earth surfaces which followed.

In most rooms of Building 1, Phase 5 occupation tended to be or poorly preserved, suggesting only a short window of occupation.. The greatest density of occupation was exposed in Room 6 (excavated in 2008-2009) and in Room 12 and the Courtyard Room15 excavated in this season, and with the help of the botanicals recovered from this spaces should do much to illuminate the use of space during this period.

The Interior Spaces: Rooms 12 & 13 and Building 2

In Building 2 the Phase 6 walls **75.U52, 75.U85, U.43, U.61 and U.69** were reused in Phase 5, and the V street **75.U86** accumulated against them. Our limited information regarding Phase 5 in Building 2 derives almost entirely from the

section, as the Phase 4 installations were cut down through whatever patches of Phase 5 flooring might have been extant just inside the line of the walls. From the 75 East section, however, a thin line of floor, **75.U** can be seen sloping down from north to south in a small area of the doorway between **75.U41** and **U.61**, where it was undisturbed by the later bins. This surface appears at an elevation equivalent with the mudbrick and stone threshold **75.U93** which appears at the midpoint of this sizeable doorway. Laminations of **75.U** were traceable in a very small (30cm) area between the top of this threshold and the section. Atop this surface, also visible in section, was a dense area of pottery collapse, perhaps associated with the Phase 5 destruction or abandonment of the Building (to be discussed below).

In Building 1, Phase 5 surfaces were excavated in Rooms 12 and 13. In these spaces the Phase 6 walls were largely reused with the exception of their shared wall, **74.U402**, which was robbed out at the beginning of this Phase for the construction of a more substantial N-S dividing wall, later robbed out by the trench **74.U290**. The surface in Room 13 to the east held minimal occupational debris, only slight lenses of clay and ash in small quantities. The paucity of occupational laminations was wholly offset, however, by one magnificent find attributed to this floor, an agate pendant Achaemenid stamp seal **MC # 65088**, pictured below.



Fig 4. (a) Achaemenid Stamp Seal MC# 65088 from 74.U399 and its impression (Photo # 21416); **(b) Persepolis parallel PFS 1428** (Garrison et al. 2001: Pl. 127 b.)

The image is that of a crowned figure in a long, layered robe, stabbing a griffin in the neck with his left hand, holding a weapon or staff down in his right hand behind him. Immediate parallels can be found among the Achaemenid period Persian Fortification seals (e.g. PFS 1428 above)², but such iconography is generally typical of Achaemenid seals and is a familiar variant belonging to the rich tradition of “master of animals” seals. Other Persian period comparanda, both exact parallels and those exhibiting slight variations (uncrowned figures, stabbing the beast in the belly rather than the neck, etc.) are known from the Persepolis fortifications as far as west as Sardis³ and likely beyond. As such it does not lend itself to precise dating.

² M. Garrison et al. (eds.) *Persepolis Fortification Seals Vol. 1: Images of Heroic Encounters* (2001), Cat. No. 230.

³ Dusinberre, *Aspects of Empire in Achaemenid Sardis*

In Room 12, a dense phytolith-rich surface **74.U392=74.184** spanned the extent of the room, reusing the Phase 6 walls, except that it was limited on the east by a newly constructed closing wall (now robbed by **74.U290**). The 74 2012 Square report notes some complicating factors to this interpretation, namely the fact that a strip of flooring appears to have been preserved in a thin E-W line that spanned the southern extent of this trench. The other candidates for N-S closing walls to this space must be ruled out: **74.402**, the Phase 6 wall, was robbed out by trench **74.400** at the end of VI and is covered over by Phase 5 leveling fills set down prior to the construction of the Phase 5 floors. The foundation trench of **74.U334**, the Phase 4 closing wall, was cut from elevations far above the V surfaces on either side. The preservation of the surface in this southern end of the trench may reflect instead the presence of a doorway in this space connecting Rooms 12 and 13. The depth and sharp horizontal line of the robber trench north of this line of floor might best be understood as the robbing of the ashlar jamb.

This surface was thick with white phytoliths. According to phytolith and microarchaeological samples taken from this floor in fall 2011 (from the south subsidiary section), the dense organic material coating this floor is largely cereal chaff mixed with some straw. No installations were recovered from the space. The density of the phytolith accumulation and suggests that this space might have been used for the processing or storage of cereals.

The Exterior Spaces: Street and Courtyard



Fig 5. The Phase 5 courtyard, viewed to the north. (Photo # 22751)

The courtyard (Room 15) was accessible from rooms immediately to the east and west (14 and 16) through doorways built with ashlar jambs. It was delineated by wall **83.U25** to the west, **83.U52=84.U100** on the south, on the east by the robbed wall **84.U18**⁴ (robbed out by Fatimid trench **84.U26/27**). Its southern boundary is

⁴ Given the pattern of rebuilds within the space, it seems likely that 84.U18 was similarly rebuilt in 4; however with only the ashlar of the doorjamb remaining it becomes impossible to reconstruct the

unknown and extends south of the currently excavated area. The original courtyard surface **83.U85=84.U161** was covered by some 20cm of occupational accumulation **83.U65=84.U119**. This was most dense in the area of the tabun **84.U152** which had been set against the southern face of the wall **84.U100** near the eastern doorway.

It was here that the concentration of ash was the heaviest, and lensed out towards the north and the east, where the sandy striations more typical of courtyard space appeared. The tabun (**Fig. 6**) was in use throughout the entire phase and can be seen in section crushed and covered over by the Phase 4 courtyard surface **83.57=84.117**. Note too the late 4th-early 3rd c. Attic imitation incurved rim bowl lying against it in the photo to the right. To the south, an east-west row of mudbricks **84.U162** served as a bench or narrow working platform.



Fig 6. Closeup of Tabun 84.U152. (Photo # 22758)

The small finds and phytolith evidence recovered from the courtyard present a comprehensive picture of domestic industry, most particularly in relation to food preparation. A tabun **84.U152** roughly 50cm in diameter was set into a shallow pit (**84.U172/173**) cut into the lowest surface of the courtyard, with its doorway oriented to the southeast. Roughly a half meter away was a flat, polished basalt stone facing the tabun doorway that might have served either as a seat while tending to the oven, or as a work surface for the kneading of bread. (see above, **Fig. 5**) Numerous implements of food preparation were recovered throughout the room. These include a grinding stone and mortar (**MC # 66043, MC #65996**), hammerstone (**MC # 66043**), along with blades of both obsidian and flint (**MC# 66191 & 66015**). An intact cow's head including one horn core **MC# 65893** was set against the southern edge of the wall **83.U52**.

Preliminary analysis shows botanical remains of olive and grape seeds, as well as cereals recovered from microarchaeological sampling. Extensive flotation samples were taken by finegrid and phytolith samples from throughout the room⁵, and we await the results of this more thorough analysis over the coming year.

division. This is particularly true given the Grid-wide pattern of reusing the ashlar jambs – by far the sturdies portion of the wall – while relaying courses of rubble fill.

⁵ From Tabun **84.152**: Sediment Samples 1055-1063; From early Phase 5 surface **83.U85=U161** From upper surface **83.65=119** Sediment Samples 889-894, 959-965, 995-999.

Yet the area was not exclusively dedicated to culinary activity. A total of 1.2kg of iron slag was recovered in several large chunks, most from the area immediately next to the tabun (**MC # 65792, 65842, 65885**) and an additional sample 2 meters to the south (**MC # 66041**). This is the largest cache of slag recovered thus far from any room in the grid, and raises the possibility of on-site metal production. Despite the proximity to the tabun, it is unlikely that this oven was in any way involved in metals production as these installations are not constructed to be able to maintain the temperatures necessary for such work. (Though it should be noted that the assumption that tabuns were dedicated solely for food preparation has been the subject of reasonable criticism.) It seems reasonable to assume that the courtyard served as an arena for numerous industries.

Between Buildings 1 and 2 a drain channel, **75.U100 = 85.U41**, was constructed down the center of the street either in late Phase 6 or early Phase 5. This channel was set offline with the late Hellenistic drain construction, and appears to have used horizontally placed store jars in a row, in lieu of piping, preserved in a few places. Such jars were recovered from the south end of Square 85, where they seem to have been placed in a slightly stepped pattern: the bottom of the northernmost jar is some 20cm above the mouth of the southernmost jar.) Our understanding of this drain is limited at present as it was cut through by a Phase 4 pit, perhaps a settling area associated with the sidespout of the Hellenistic drain?). Moreover, as always, it is sometimes difficult to delineate between Phases of Street.⁶ As this was only partially excavated due to other priorities within the Grid, we hope to return to this question next season to better understand the Persian period drainage system in this southeastern corner of the neighborhood.



Fig. 7. Pithos Drain (85.U49) in Late Persian/ Early Hellenistic Street.
(view to S)

⁶ The difficulty in delineating the break between Phase 5 and Phase 6 street (**75.U76** and **U89**, respectively) renders the clear attribution of this early drain to one or the other somewhat challenging, given that the sandy composition of the street is difficult to distinguish from the sandy composition of the drain itself, and organic leeching has altered the color of both. The north section, however, seems to show the cut beginning in the Phase 5 street. (This difficulty will be resolved with further excavation next season).

A Note on the End of the Persian Period

The date for the disruption and abandonment marking the end of Phase 5 is difficult to pinpoint precisely. In Grid 57⁷, the end of the Persian period has dated on the basis of a coin hoard found underneath the floor of Phase 3 Room 341. The 17 coins found therein date to between 305-290 B.C. This break between the Persian and Hellenistic periods in Grid 57 was termed a destruction horizon, and attributed to violence, based on evidence of burning found in Rooms 306 and 103, and the appearance of 2 arrowheads in another non-adjacent space. The destruction has been vaguely attached to Ptolemaic activities in the southern Levant at this time. In Grid 38, a similar 'destruction horizon' was noted but during excavation they had great difficulty separating the Late Persian destruction (Phase 10) from a destruction of the previous Persian Phase 11, which apparently caused a great deal of confusion during excavation, as preliminary ceramic analysis also confirms. Moreover from the extant photographs, in many cases it is not often clear that all of the material described as "destruction" and "collapse" are in fact either of those things. Careful examination of those excavation reports, coupled with renewed attention to the ceramic data, will be required to make sense of this transition in Grid 38.

In Grid 51, then end of Phase 5 seems to be marked more by abandonment than by active collapse or destruction. We lack, for example, evidence of collapsed or burnt roofing material. Moreover even in areas where disruption seems to have been most marked, such as in the Room 15 Courtyard, the interpretation becomes problematic. The latest Phase 5 courtyard surface, when first encountered, revealed a dramatic splay of pottery (**Fig. 8**) and pockets of ash suggesting the possibility of fire and collapse or at least hasty abandonment. (See also Fig. 5, above for context).

Closer examination of the ceramics themselves, however, shows that for the most part the splay of pottery does not belong to intact vessels. There are large portions of 2 or perhaps 3 store jars, but apart from these all the rest are mixed, belonging to unrelated vessels. Moreover, the sherds are concentrated primarily in the area shown in the photograph to the right, splaying north into the center of the room from roughly the middle of the southern closing wall **83.U52=84.U100**. It may be that these were vessels originally stored upon shelves which later collapsed onto the exposed floor. This would also explain why the sherd density was greatest along this wall. The ash is likewise concentrated in the vicinity of the tabun and thus may be unrelated to the building's end. These elements, while not contradicting the possibility of a building destruction, do complicate the interpretation. Finer – and in particular micro archaeological analysis of ash and phytoliths – in other rooms will help bring resolution to this question.

⁷ MC # 31620, 57.68, LF336.



Fig. 8 Pottery Splay in Courtyard 15 (view to N; cut through by later well)

As to the chronology of the transition, the 305-290 B.C. date of the Grid 57 coin hoard has in recent publications been broadly extrapolated to mark the end of the Persian period site-wide. As we refine our chronology, Grid 51 offers an opportunity to address this question anew, to assess both the degree of destruction/disruption and its date. Ceramically, Phase 5 is the earliest period in Grid 51 in which Hellenistic pottery appears, although these forms are infrequent. As expected, most such forms are East Mediterranean imitations of Attic Black Glaze, and can arguably span the late 4th and 3rd centuries. Likewise forms of Southeast Aegean mushroom-lipped amphora, not produced until after 350 B.C., also appear in Phase 5 and support a late 4th or early 3rd century date⁸. To this gradual accumulation of ceramic data we can also add three additional coins recovered from Phase 5 floors⁹, and eagerly anticipate their reading.

Phase 4: Hellenistic Insula

While V essentially constituted a reuse of VI, Phase 4 marked a significant change in the use of space in the *insulae* and a concerted effort at refurbishing the building as a whole. The leveling fills set down for the Phase 4 surfaces tended to be

⁸ M. Lawall, "Ilion and Alexander: Amphoras and Economic Archaeology," *Studia Troica* 12: 197244, 2002, nos. 81-84.

⁹ MC# 65758 from 74.U184=392 in Room 11; MC # 58281 from 74.U192 in Room 3; MC # 65838 from 84.U151 in Room 16.

quite substantial and were often filled with mudbrick debris and ashlar from the surrounding structure (74.U249, 75.U76, 83.62=73.180, etc.)¹⁰ before the new walls were rebuilt. The Phase 4 walls 74.U245, 74.U222, 74.U323, 74.U330, 74.U255, 74.U145, 83.U25 and 83.U56=84.U162 excavated this season tended to be constructed of sizeable fieldstones, have integrated corners and where doorways were reused were integrated into and reused the Phase 5-4 ashlar jambs. The only shift in construction pattern was found in the intersections between Rooms 3, 4 and 9. Here, where the E-W Phase 5 walls 74.U199 and 74.U 2? had been built abutting, the Phase 4 E-W rebuild 74.U222 was constructed together with the short N-S stub 74.U255 to form a corner which served as the northern side of the doorjamb connecting Rooms 8 and 9. The N-S wall 74.U245 was constructed abutting this corner, covering the eastern end of 74.199.

Phase 4 in the Grid has thus far been characterized by dense occupation in the interior rooms and indications of industrial activity in the rooms proximate to the street.¹¹ This season Phase 4 was exposed and excavated in several rooms in the southern portion of the building (Rooms 12 and 14) in areas either further down the step (Room 14 in Square 83) or in areas which had been until recently covered by the large Islamic bathhouse walls 74.F9= 73.F20 (Room 12 in Square 74). The Hellenistic courtyard (Room 15) contemporary with these rooms was also excavated this season.

The greatest - and yet the emptiest - density of Phase 4 occupation was revealed in Room 14 in the far southwest of the Grid. Here a series of three surfaces accumulated in relation to the exterior courtyard space in Room 15. Rooms 14 and 15 were separated not only by the doorway on the southern end of 83.U25, but also by an additional mudbrick and ashlar threshold 83.U70=77. This substantial threshold was positioned E-W and abutted the western edge of 83.U25, to prevent courtyard materials from being tracked into the interior space of Room 14. The placement of 83.79=77 thus marks not only a doorway, but indicates that there was likely an E-W wall extending to its west, the edge of which lies just beyond Square 83's western edge.¹² Within Room 14 (north of the threshold) were a series of three occupational surface accumulated over a span of some 30-35cm (83.U80, 83.U78, 83. U67). Despite the depth of occupation, these thin striations produced little in the way of occupational remains, the exception being faunal material and a single flint blade (MC#66113).

In Room 9, the last remains of the heavily disturbed Phase 4 surface 74.U373 were removed, along with the partially preserved mudbrick platform (?) 74.U369 upon it. As discussed in the 2010 Square 74 Report, the surface had only been preserved in the very center of the room and the remainder of the space had been utterly wracked with pits and disturbances containing mudbrick debris and the

¹⁰ Collapsed ashlar of 75.U76 are visible in the final 2011 Grid photo (see 2011 Grid report title page.)

¹¹ Installations for making lime plaster in Building 2, evidence of burning installations and thickly coated *hamra* floors in Rooms 9 and 13 of Building 1. See 2010 and 2011 Grid reports.

¹² Such an east-west wall can be seen to have existed along this line during Phase 3, as the precisely aligned E-W robber trench 83.U26/7, visible in the west section, demonstrates.

chunked up remains of surfaces. The landscape and nature of the debris suggests an end-of-phase destruction of some sort of large plastered installation - presumably involving some sort of subfloor basins, given the size of the pitting actions - within the room.

In Room 12, defined in this phase by **74.U334** to the east, **74.U145** to the north and **74.U187** to the west (the southern wall robbed by the E-W trench **74.U265**), a phytolith rich surface with very dense areas of burning and charcoal was uncovered. In contrast with the Phase 5 phytolith surface which preceded it, the microarchaeological reports show that the thick white deposits on this surface were not cereals but rather quantities of straw and grass, perhaps indicative of grass matting. Additional finds from this floor include a coin **MC# 65583**, a bronze pin **MC# 65852** a netting needle **MC # 65654**, and a single lint blade **MC# 65746**.

As in the preceding Phase 5, the courtyard (Room 15) was accessible from rooms immediately to the east and west (14 and 16) through doorways built with ashlar jambs. It was delineated by wall **83.U25** to the west, **83.U56=84.U132**, on the east by the robbed wall **84.U18**. Its southern boundary probably ran along the southern baulk and was robbed by a Fatimid trench. Both the eastern and western doorways had constructed thresholds; the eastern access (**84.U123 = 84.U135**) utilized stone steps and the western mudbrick curbing/steps (**83.U72**).

The courtyard space showed indications of industrial use, although different in nature from the Phase 5 courtyard which preceded it. A wide patch of hydraulic plaster was set down on the surface **84.U117** in an area immediately adjacent to the doorway to Room 15.¹³ The plaster was quite thick in some areas, up to 3-4cm thick. The plastered surfaces appear to be coating a clay-lined depression sloping against the (now-missing) eastern closing wall **84.U18**. Ephemeral patches were likewise noted in the south of the courtyard, and identical hydraulic plaster was also recovered from the surface in the adjacent room to the west, **83.U67**, and can even be seen in the 83 West Section passing over the threshold **83.U77** and lensing out as it moves further north into Room 14.

The shift from standard to hydraulic plaster is apparently the result of the deliberate addition of silica to the mix, an outcome which can crudely be achieved using simple materials such as sand. While the Phase 4 plaster contains enough silica to mimic the chemical signature of hydraulic plaster, its consistency and composition is remarkably soft for this species of plaster. Thus if it is indeed hydraulic plaster, it is a poor form of it. Notwithstanding, the use of this specific type of plaster, coupled with the thickness of its application, suggests a serious concern with liquid retention and permeability that exceeded the abilities of more conventional plasters or the favored *hamra* clay. It may simply increase the resilience of the plaster when exposed to liquid, where *hamra* might require continuous reapplication. Without any additional data, however, we cannot presume to identify the industries being conducted here. Botanical samples were taken from the area and we await these and the corresponding phytolith report.

¹³ 84.U117 Sediment Sample # 905, 83.U67 Sediment Sample # 926. Presence of silica was confirmed through FTIR.

The FTIR suggested that in some, though not all areas, both the plaster and the clay lining were heated to over 600 degrees; however the microarchaeologists on staff also noted that it is possible that such a reading might also result from the rapid transfer of newly made plaster from a nearby place of manufacture to the surface upon which it was being applied. We can only note that the space seems unlikely to have been configured to produce plaster *in situ*. A more likely source would be the lime plaster bins excavated in 2010 from Building 2 across the street.

While it is not possible to reconstruct specific installations in this Phase 4, it is clear that the nature of the courtyard changes in the Hellenistic period, the transition marked by a shift away from the domestic/culinary use towards the industrial, although the phytolith data should better illuminate the distinction, once received. This shift in activity continues the pattern seen in other rooms of both *insulae* during this phase. Additional evidence, albeit thinner, for industrial activity in Building 1 during this phase may be the patches of kurkar surfaces, perhaps to accommodate drainage, that were noted in the southern edge of Room 11 (**84.U90**) and the northern edge of Room 17 (**84.U167**, exposed but not excavated this season.)

Phase 3

As noted in previous reports, the surfaces attributable to Phase 3 were largely removed by bulldozer, but are yet visible in the eastern section of Square 75. Excavation of significant portions of Islamic robber trench in Squares 84 and 85 this season also illuminated a sequence of floors which can similarly be tied to the Phase 3 horizon by elevation. These surfaces were cut through by the Islamic trench **85.10** but are visible in the south subsidiary section (Photo # 9784).

Several Phase 3 surfaces were excavated during the previous season in Squares 83-84. This year we removed the subfloor fills for these floors. In 2010 the Phase 3 fills in Squares 65 and 75 produced some of the richest finds of the season, including a series of Rhodian stamped amphora handles dating to the mid- 2nd century which provided a *tpq* for Phase 3. (MC #s 63206, 63106, 62249). To this collection we can now add another stamped Rhodian or Knidian handle **MC#66221**, recovered from the Phase 3 fill **84.U71** (Room 16) in the southeast of Square 84.

As preserved, the handle as reads, in two lines: ΕΠΙ...ΚΡΑ[....]. Two names are attested which begin with the syllable 'Κρα'; Κράτης and Κρατερός, both of which date to VR Grace's Period VI, 108-88 B.C. However, names in such handles quite frequently span two lines, and it is therefore possible – and perhaps even likely, given the spacing – that the -κρα- is instead a syllable in the middle of the name. In this case the -κρα- syllable is probably to be completed κρα[της or κρα[τευς.

Unfortunately there are over 18 names containing a -κρα- element attested on Rhodian handles, and while most of these cluster in her groups III-IV (220-146 B.C.), such names can span the entire range of forms from periods III-VII, up to the late 1st century B.C. (Grace 1985:35). The previous collection of handles (**MC#s 63202, 63106, 62249**) suggested a date in the late 2nd century B.C.



**Fig. 8 Rhodian Stamped Handle
(MC # 66221)**

The final piece of Phase 3 was noted only at the end of the season and remains poorly understood. It appears that a circular pit, or perhaps settling channel, was cut down through the street in either Phase 3 or Phase 4 (the uppermost portions of these streets having been removed by bulldozer in the original cut of Square 85).

Phase 1B: Islamic Robbing Activities

This season also witnessed the long-anticipated end to most of the seemingly bottomless Fatimid-Crusader robber trenches, several of which had reached over 2m in depth. All continued to provide remarkable examples of well-preserved Islamic pottery. Most appear to have bottomed out just above Phase 6. The only trenches which remain to be bottomed out are those in 85, the southern E-W trench of 84, and the northern trench in 74.

Phases 1A – 2

No material from these phases was excavated in 2012.

Note for the 2013 Season

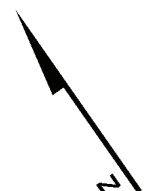
Two areas lag behind and will require additional attention in the 2013 season in order to bring them into Phase: Square 85 has for the past two seasons only been excavated part-time, in an effort to focus on areas immediately adjacent to architecture and as such lags in Phase 4 (Hellenistic.) The overlapping cuts and side channels of several superimposed drainage systems are clustered here, and there are questions that lack resolution in this area which should be attended to.

Likewise, the southeastern section of Square 84 served as the foundation for the sandbag staircase and exit from the Grid, and as such could only be excavated in a limited fashion this season. This area was heavily disturbed by the Islamic

robbing activity but is currently also in Phase 4. Repositioning of the fence and the expected 2013 expansion should allow for new routes of egress and provide the chance to excavate these out of phase areas more fully.

Thanks are due to directors Larry Stager and Daniel Master for the continuing opportunity to participate in the new phase of the Ashkelon Expedition.

DwgID 19820



Ashkelon 43/12

Grid 51

Squares 75/85

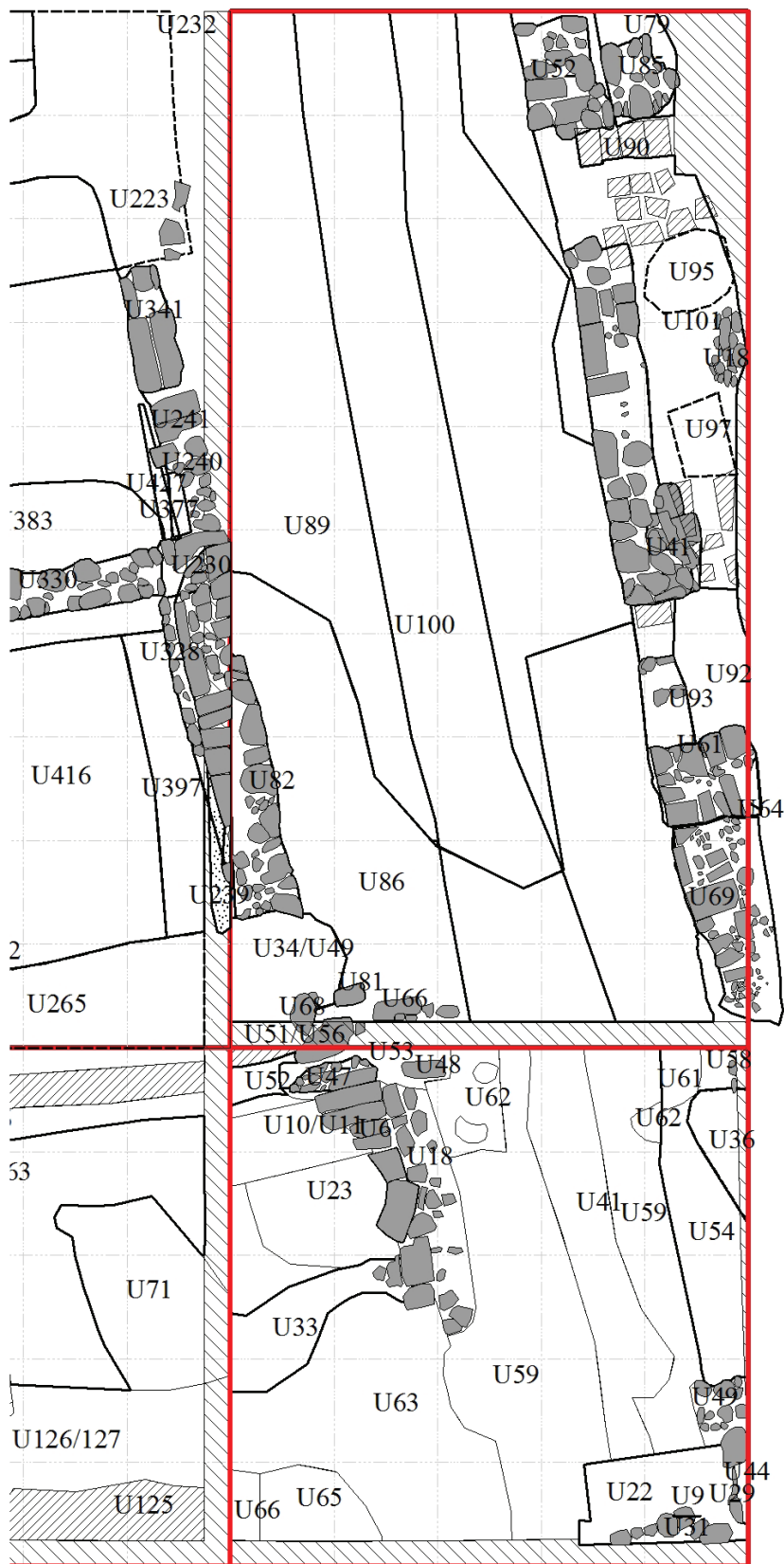
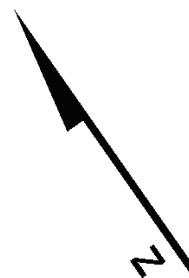
KJB/AW

July 20, 2012

Top Plan #13

1:50

DwgID 19828



West half of square 75 and
NW corner of square 85 shown

Ashkelon 43/12

Grid 51

Squares 83/84

KJB/LW

July 20, 2012

Top Plan #21

1:50

DwgID 19827



NE corner of square 83
and north half of square 84

