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## 2007 Bethsaida Field Report

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## THE SEASON OF 2007



A jug from the vicinity of the Roman Temple

# BETHSAIDA EXCAVATIONS SEASON OF 2007

DR. RAMI ARAV  
DIRECTOR, BETHSAIDA EXCAVATIONS PROJECT

The excavation season of 2007 extended between May 29<sup>th</sup> to July 6<sup>th</sup>. Ninety five students and faculty participated in two sessions of 3 weeks each session.

## *Participants*

Director of Excavations: Dr. Rami Arav University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO)  
Assistant Director: Dr. Carl Savage, Drew University  
Project Director: Dr. Richard Freund Hartford University  
Co-Director: Dr. Elizabeth McNamer, Rocky Mountain College  
Co-Director: Dr. Nicolae Roddy, Creighton University  
Co-Director: Prof. Dr. Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, University of Munich  
Co-Director: Dr. Steffanie Keim, University of Munich  
Dr. Aaron Gale, West Virginia State University  
Dr. James Albright, Missouri Western State University  
Photography: Hanan Shafir  
Coordinator: Stephen Reynolds, UNO  
Autocad: Christina Etzrodt, UNO  
Pottery restoration: Bernhard Trams  
Conservation: Orna Cohen  
Numismatics: Dr. Donald Ariel, IAA  
Recorder: Shai Schwartz, Kibbutz Ginosar  
PR: Judith Schwartz, Kibbutz Ginosar

## *Consortium members for 2007 are:*

University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Drew University  
Grace University  
Hartford University  
Rocky Mountain College

University of Munich  
Missouri Western State University  
The college of Idaho  
Wartburg College  
Truman State University

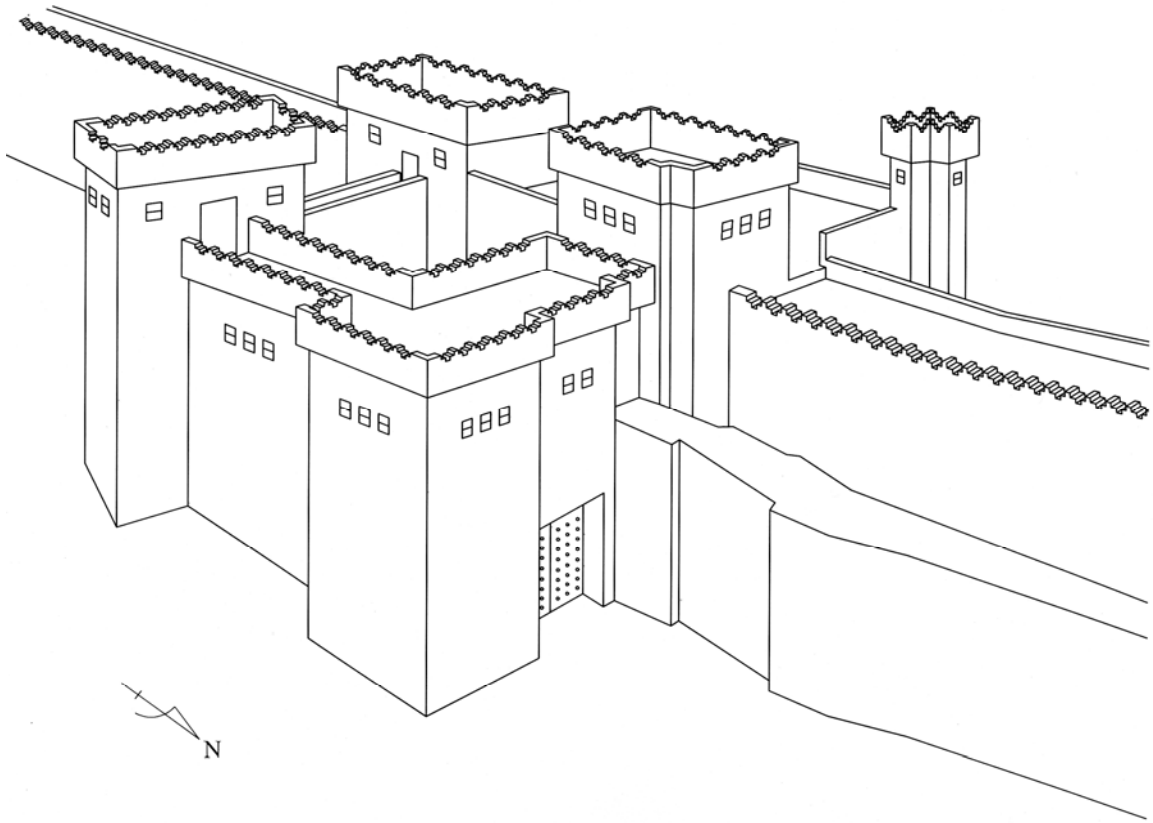
## *Sponsors*

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Nathan Schwalb Family Foundation

### *Excavations and Finds*

Thirty two loci were excavated in 2007 in areas A. They are located at the courtyard, the paved road to the city and probes in chamber 3. Area A-West, was designated as a separate area. It is located west of the city gate and includes the plaza and the immediate areas near the gate. Area C was excavated for only 8 days and revealed further segments of the Hellenistic Roman residential quarter. All these areas yielded rich finds and enhanced our understanding of the site.

### *AREA A – THE CITY GATE*



*The Courtyard*  
*Locus 1764*



This locus is located east of the southern tower. The excavations in this area aimed to remove the Roman remains above Stratum V and to see how the pavement of the courtyard (Stratum V) relates to the wall W405, which connects the bastion to the southern tower. During the dig the Roman wall W329 was totally removed as well as remnants of a Roman floor that unlike Stratum V was nicely leveled. The pavement indeed reaches W 405 and was built after W405 was already constructed.

*Finds*

Finds in this locus included a mixture of Hellenistic-Roman and Iron Age II pottery. Noteworthy are small fragments of limestone in basket 17842 which originally covered the W405. Another special find was a round basalt stone in a diameter of 6 cm. which could have been sling stone, remains of the battle over the city.

*Locus 1768*

This locus is a probe conducted at the southern side of the courtyard. The purpose of the dig in this place was to clarify a straight line of stones in the pavement of the courtyard which was suspected to be a wall. The probe was excavated to a depth of 50 cm. and proved that the line of stones is not a wall.

*Finds*

Finds from the probe included red slip rim of an Iron Age IIA goblet, Iron Age IIA, cooking pot and many fragmentary bricks. This constitutes the fill of the infrastructure of the courtyard.

## *The Road leading to the City*

### *Locus 1765*



This locus is confined to the area on the road that contained a large collapse of the outer city wall (W401). The pavement of the road was found under the collapse in a very good state due to its meticulous construction. Small and medium size stones were imbedded into clay and created an even floor. Next to the city wall there was a 5 cm thick line of lime plaster. This apparently all that is preserved from the lime plaster that coated the city wall. This adds to other evidence for lime plaster that were found scattered in the area in previous years and confirm the conclusion that the city gate and the city walls were all coated with a thick layer of white wash and plaster.

#### *Finds*

Finds include pottery from a large variety of periods. There were shards dating from the EBII, shards dating from the Iron Age II and Hellenistic and Roman shards. This testifies to the fact that the pavement was constructed in the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and continued to be in use until the Roman period.

### *Locus 1769 – The Ex-Mural Market Place*

This probe is located in square P50 which is 5 m. north of the outer city gate. The probe revealed that the paved road continues to the east and creates a large paved plaza outside the city gate. It is most probably the area of the ex-mural market place, known in the Bible by the name Hutzot.

#### *Finds*

Finds include shards of pottery dating from the Iron Age II to the Hellenistic Roman period and indicate the longevity of the pavement.

### *Probes in chamber 3*

#### *Locus 1766*

This probe started last year. At the upper part of the probe the excavators cleaned the chamber 3 threshold and discovered a stone with a socket near the threshold. This is where the hinges of the door closing the chamber were located. It is obvious therefore that these chambers were closed with doors.

The probe below the chamber 3 floor revealed the continuation of W913 which continues from chamber 2. It means that the passageway of the 4 chamber city gate, Stratum V, did not exist during Stratum VI and the construction of the four chamber city gate did not continue a previous ground plan.

Below the two stones which represent the remnants of W913 there was a poorly constructed wall, typical to Stratum VI construction, running east-west. It was given a number W950 and although it connects to the remnants of W915 it might also be dating to an earlier phase. W913 creates a 50 cm. north projection from W950. It is possible that this is the entrance to the city from the inner city gate of Stratum VI. W950 was excavated to a depth of 80 cm. Excavations at the northern end of chamber 3 started this year, will hopefully help to locate the entrance to the city.



#### *Finds*

Very few finds were discovered in the probe. The finds consist of Iron Age IIA pottery, body shards of a jar with a handle and with incised decoration.



Locus finds from 1766, notice the Cypro-Phoenician juglet and Iron Age IIA cooking pot shard.

*Locus 1770*

This probe is located farther back in chamber 3, east side of the column base of the Roman temple. After removing the debris of the upper floors which include a large semi-dressed stone in a block shape, a layer containing 15 cm. of ash and grain was discovered.

*Finds*

Very few pottery shards were discovered. They include Iron Age II cooking pots, oil lamp and mouth jar.

*Locus 1771*



This probe is located below the debris of Stratum V. The excavations revealed a thick layer of ash and grain situated on a compact fill layer of dirt. This thick layer of dirt



is the infrastructure of Stratum V. Below this layer there was a layer of scattered stones, most probably the top of a wall dating from Stratum VI.

#### *Finds*

Relatively few shards of pottery were retrieved from this probe. They consist of Iron Age II pottery such as carinated bowls, a rim of a jar with a shallow ridge under the rim and one shard was identified as Cypro-Phoenician.

#### *Locus 1772*

This probe is located at the northern end of chamber 3 and was only started.

#### *Area A West*

This area is located west of the Iron Age II city gate. Excavations in this area are supposed to discover the immediate surroundings of the city as one enters the gate. Thus far, it is clear that the pavement that covers the passageway of the gate does not continue to the plaza inside the city. Instead the excavations reveal thick layers of crushed limestone laid in several layers. This sequence of layers testifies to a long use of Stratum V. This area was perhaps a plaza which contained the sacrificial high place and a place for people to gather. Farther west, segments of pavements were discovered indicating perhaps a paved street. Future excavations will aim to discover the nature of this area.

#### *Locus 2025*

This locus is located in grid C,D 53,54. It started with top soil and therefore represents Stratum I. The top layer was heavily disturbed by modern military remnants and debris. This modern debris were leveled and covered during the late 1970's and early 1980's and no remains of any structures were discerned on the ground. During the excavations a wall built in the medieval period (W1000) was discovered in the southern part of the north end of the square.

#### *Finds*

Finds from this period include a mixture of medieval Hellenistic and Roman pottery shards and glass, small iron ring, iron nail, two lead net weights and two coins.



Finds from L 2025



Glass from L. 20205

### *Locus 2033*

This locus is located under locus 2024 and constituted debris of a medieval structure.

#### *Finds*

A mixture of finds dating from the medieval period to the Iron Age was found in this locus. Among the special finds there were Turkish clay pipes, Medieval glazed pottery, Roman Galilean bowls, Athenian black pottery, Roman Apulian ware, iron nails, coins, cosmetic spatula, medieval glass bracelet and a Roman lead net weight.



Finds from L. 2033

*Locus 2034*

This locus is located under locus 2022. It started with removing a thick crushed and compacted limestone floor. A new hard packed layer of black and white ash appears under this layer, together with scattered stones which made the infrastructure of Stratum V.

*Finds*

Many bones appear in the locus and perhaps they were mixed with the infrastructure. Many shards of pottery were discovered. One basket contained 406 shards. All pottery were identified as Iron Age II B.



Finds from L. 2031 combined with L. 2034. Notice remains of an antler and burnt bones.

*Locus 2035*

The southern part of the locus is bordered by a deep pit in the ground resulting from a removal of a modern Syrian military bunker. The north boundary is the section that continues the excavations west of the city gate. At the east there is the sacrificial high place of Stratum V and there were a few walls of poor masonry dating from Stratum II. The topsoil of this locus contained a debris and dump of stones and dirt. A poor wall was discovered at the north part of the locus and a curved wall connecting to the poor walls that had been discovered in this area in previous season.

*Finds*

Finds include Hellenistic – Roman pottery, Herodian oil lamps, glass, coins and metals, in addition to medieval glazed pottery and Turkish pipes. Among the special finds there was a Persian period blue and white glass bead, a bronze drop earring, and a bronze coin.



Locus 2035, Herodian oil lamps



Finds from L 2035

### *Locus 2037*

This locus is located under Locus 2033 in square D,E 53,54 and is confined by the medieval wall W1001, and by the Roman period W1002, and remnants of a Medieval wall at the south that are situated on remains of a Roman wall.

### *Finds*

The locus contained finds from the medieval period, mixed pottery shards from the Hellenistic and particularly the Roman period. Among the special finds there were black Athenian pottery shards, Galilean bowls with triple ridge on rim, Apulian ware and Spatter washed ware, Eastern Terra Sigillata and an undated ivory object.



Locus 2037, an undated ivory object

### *Locus 2038*

The locus is located below locus 2037 and between walls W1000, W1001, W1002. It started with the removal of a layer of hard packed material. Below this layer there were remnants of a paved floor on which the Roman wall W1002 was built and the medieval wall 1000. The Roman wall W1002 has a feature which looks like a small entrance with a lintel. Further excavations will be conducted to find out the nature of this small entrance and to discover whether this is an Iron Age II part of the street leading from the gate to the city.

### *Finds*

The finds represent a mixture of periods including Turkish clay pipes, medieval glazed pottery, Ummayed shards, Roman and Hellenistic pottery shards. Noteworthy among the Hellenistic pottery are Galilean bowls, Roman casseroles, Roman glass, iron nails and a small number of Iron Age II shards.

### *Locus 2039*

The pavement stopped at the south area of locus 2038 and a new locus was assigned to this area. The excavations revealed a pit dug at the bottom of the entrance which may indicate drainage. Next was there were finds typical to Stratum VI and included scattered large boulders. This area was too small to draw any architectural conclusions.



### *Finds*

Finds included a mixture of Hellenistic – Roman pottery coming from a pit excavated during the Roman period, together with Iron Age II shards such as jars and cooking pots.

### *Locus 2040*

This locus is located in a straight line from the passage way of the gate. This area is heavily disturbed by pits from different periods dug into a sequence of limestone levels that formed the plaza. A late Iron Age pit is disturbed by a Hellenistic pit and the result is a mixture of finds from a large variety of periods.

### *Finds*

The finds include a Hellenistic juglet without a rim, typical to ritual objects. Cypro-Phoenician shards, Iron Age II cooking pots, a clay stopper, and an arrow head melded to a pota and a fragment of a figurine of a pregnant woman seated on an arm chair.



Finds from L. 2040

### *Locus 2042*



A pit discovered in the middle of locus 2039. The bottom of the pit was filled with medium size stones. Finds in the pit include medieval glazed shards, a Turkish pipe and basalt grinding stones.

### *Locus 2043*

Digging through a hard packed floor in square CD 54, below locus 2025, was designated as this locus. W1004 was found at the west side of the locus and serves as the border of it.

#### *Finds*

The finds include mixed pottery of which the majority was medieval. There were glazed pottery, Turkish clay pipe and a few shards of Hellenistic – Roman pottery.

### *Locus 2044*

This locus is combined with locus 2043 and contains the remains below the packed dirt floor. Finds include mixture pottery shards, Iron Age II pottery, Galilean bowls, medieval shards and an iron axe head.





*Locus 2045*



This locus includes the remains of a Roman pit. This pit cut into a late Iron Age pit and was partially destroyed by a medieval pit. Unlike the other pits, the walls of this pit were constructed by small basalt stones and the bottom was made of crushed and compact hard limestone.

*Finds*

Since this pit was cut by later medieval pits the finds include also medieval pottery such as Turkish clay pipes and glazed pottery in addition to Hellenistic-Roman pottery shards and even Iron Age II shards and an iron axe head. At the bottom there was a layer of 30 cm. of white material that was taken to a lab for testing.



*Locus 2046*

This locus is located west of wall W1004 in square C54. Finds include Hellenistic – Roman pottery and a Roman coin.



Finds from L. 2046

#### *Locus 2047*

This locus follows locus 2035 and was identified once the semi circular wall W1005 was discerned. This semi-circular wall was connected to the other remnants of the Hellenistic – Roman structures in this area that has been excavated in the past.

#### *Finds*

Finds include Hellenistic and Roman shards of pottery such as casseroles with everted rim, globular cooking pots, Rhodian wine amphora, ivory object and two iron objects.



Finds from L 2047

#### *Locus 2048*

This locus combines loci 2043 and 2044. After removing a large amount of debris, rocks and dirt, a remnant of a floor was discovered at the west part of the locus at an elevation of about 169.70. This elevation is 40 cm. lower than the elevation of the pavement in locus 2038 and perhaps is a part of a paved street. Further excavations in this area will focus on the possibility that there is an Iron Age paved street in this area.

#### *Finds*

Finds consisted mainly of Hellenistic – Roman shards of pottery including Galilean bowls, globular cooking pots with triple ridges on rim, Eastern Terra Sigillata as well as medieval glazed pottery and modern pottery. Among the special finds there was a lead fishing weight.

#### *Locus 2049*

This locus is an extension of the excavation in square E 54 and aimed toward excavating the entire square. The excavation started with removing top soil and the first two days there was no sifting. Some stones appearing in a straight line in the last day seem to indicate a wall. Further excavations will determine this possibility.

#### *Finds*

Among the finds there were medieval glazed pottery, of which one bears line decorations, Roman shards, basalt rounded stones, Hellenistic Roman casserole rims, spatter washed ware, Galilean bowls. Special finds were an iron chisel or a nail, an iron object with a hole pierced at one end, and a broken murex shell.

### *Locus 2050*

This locus continues the loci excavated in square D 54 with a purpose of continuing the excavated area to the end of the square. A few stones arranged in an east-west direction may indicate a wall. Further excavation will be conducted to verify this possibility. Finds include shards from the following vessels: Hellenistic globular cooking pots, ETS, Ummayed decorated handle, medieval glazed pottery and broken bricks.

### *Locus 2051*

This locus constitutes the floor of the structure with the semi circular wall situated west of the Iron Age II sacrificial high place. It is located below locus 2047. It was given a different locus number in order to distinguish the finds from the layer that made the floor, from the finds that were found above the floor.

### *Finds*

The finds may be considered as being at the period of the construction of the wall and the floor. There are Hellenistic red and black ETS, Hellenistic decorated pottery and Hellenistic Roman, globular cooking pots and spatter wash ware.

## **AREA C**

The excavations in area C during 2007 revealed more remains of the residential quarter dating from the Hellenistic – Roman period. The excavations reveal that the north-south paved street turns to the west and creates a little plaza at this turn.

### *Locus 1579*

Is located in square E26 and aimed toward discovering more remains of the building excavated in previous season. Among the finds there was a 13 cm. round flint stone used as a hammer or as a sling stone.



Finds from L. 1579

*Locus 1580*



Wall W668 discovered in the dig of Locus 1579, bisected the locus and two different loci were assigned, Locus 1580 for the square east of W 668 and Locus 1581 for the area west of the wall. The locus was filled with stones, debris of wall W668 and perhaps some additional walls. Among the finds there was a large flat grinding stone. Pottery included shards dating from the Hellenistic period such as Athenian black glazed pottery, and globular cooking pots and shards of a large Hellenistic pithos, and one Seleucid coin.



Finds from L. 1580

*Locus 1581*

Work in locus 1581 was mainly confined to leveling the top soil and removing previous excavations debris before reaching the first levels. In the center of the locus the excavation revealed a smashed large Hellenistic jar. Other finds include pottery from the Iron Age II to the Roman period.

### *Locus 1582*

The locus is located east of wall W633 in square D26. The finds of this locus include a basalt anchor, a bead, and Hellenistic shards of pottery.



A basalt stone anchor

## RESTORATIONS

### *ARCHITECTURE*

Orna Cohen completed another stage in the conservation and restoration of the architectural remains. The work accomplished in 2007 included removal all the stone debris from the road approaching to Bethsaida. Now the road is cleared and future visitors will use this road to enter the city.

The deep probe in front of the outer city gate which revealed Stratum VI was totally covered. The eastern wing of the outer city gate was reinforced and elevated to about two courses of stones on top of the entry way.

The debris in the eastern section was partially removed and excavations in this place will resume in 2008 in order to establish the line of the outer eastern wall that connects the outer city gate to the bastion.

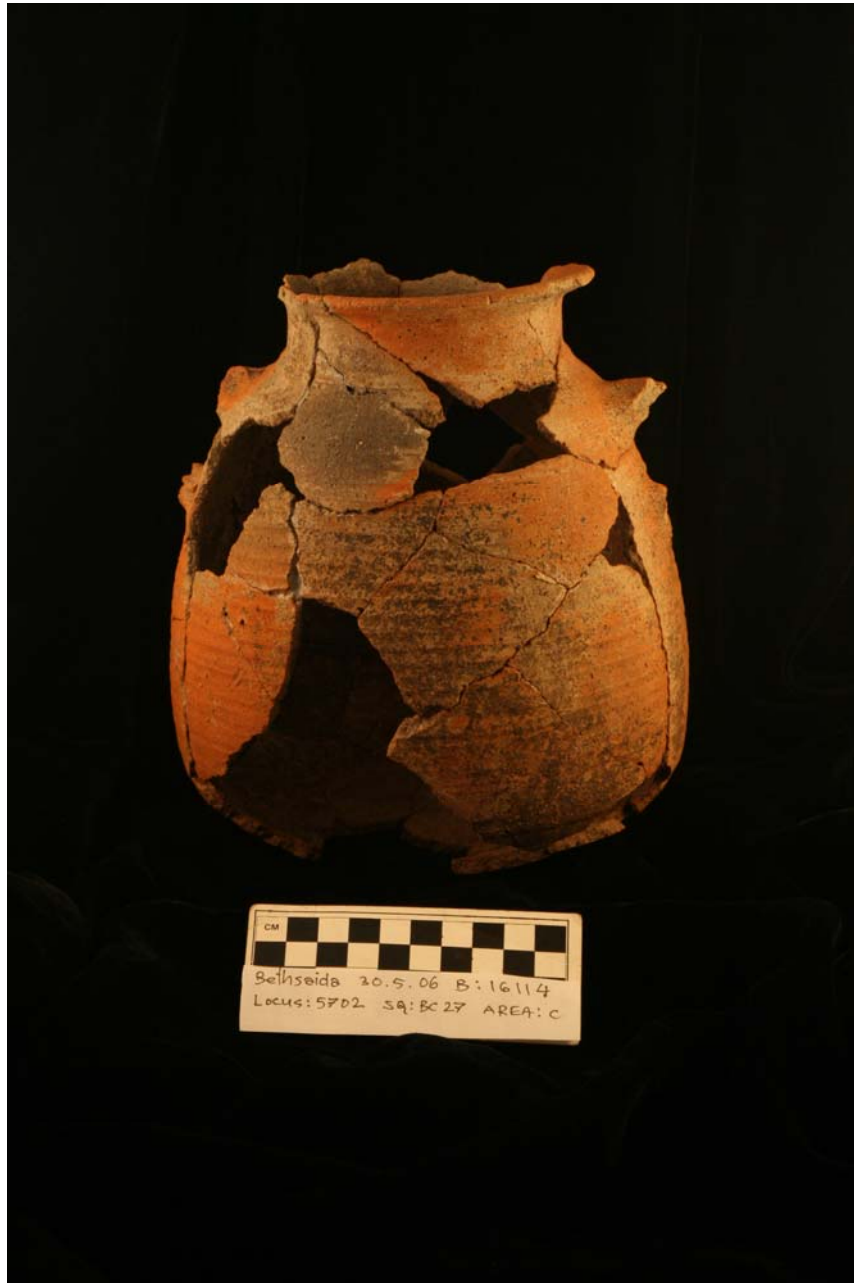
All preservation and restoration works were approved by IAA department of conservation.

### *POTTERY*

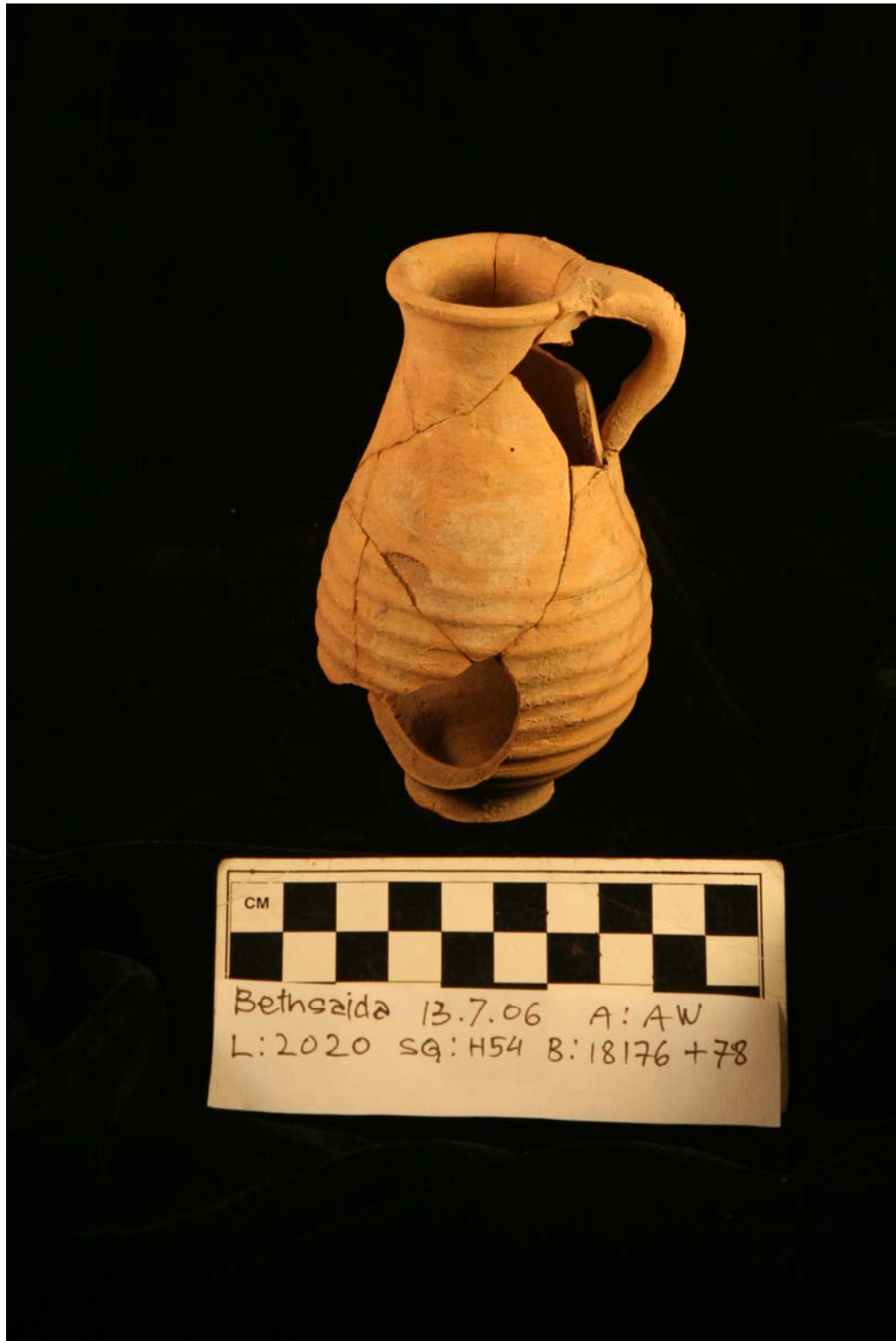
Barney Trams spent the winter and spring of 2007 in restoration and reconstruction of pottery. Barney worked on three different assemblies, the Iron Age IIA storage house located at the southwestern corner of the inner city gate. The Roman period pit next to the temple and the wine cellar in Area C.

The storage house was excavated in the late 1990's. It yielded a large amount of pottery shards of large vessels, remains of the Assyrian conquest. Barney successfully finished restoring a pithos with wide mouth of fine greenish clay.

The wine cellar in Area C contained about 17 jars and jugs. This is a nice addition to our collection of wine jars from a wine cellar that was excavated in the mid 1990's.



A small jar from the wine cellar in Area C



A juglet from the pit near the Roman Temple, the Jug at the cover of this report is also from the same pit.



The pit next to the temple contained vessels that presumably were used at the temple and were discarded in a pit. This type of pits is known in archaeology. This collection is added to a few more pits that were discovered around the temple. One of the most remarkable finds from these pits was a bronze incense shovel that was discovered in 1996.

Orna Cohen has successfully restored two bronze bowls found in pit the vicinity of the temple and originated from the temple vessels. The two bowls were found one inside the other.



A Bronze bowl from a pit next to the Temple



A bowl from the pit L 2020 near the temple.