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## 2008 Bethsaida Field Report

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February 19, 2009

## BETHSAIDA 2008 EXCAVATIONS REPORT

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### Consortium Members Class of 2008

Six weeks of excavations were carried out from May 18<sup>th</sup> to July 4<sup>th</sup> 2008. The team members were:

Dr. Rami Arav, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Director of excavations

Dr. Richard Freund, Hartford University, Project director

Dr. Carl Savage, Drew University, Assistant Director

Dr. Elizabeth McNamer, Rocky Mountain College, Co Director and Area Supervisor

Dr. Nicolae Roddy, Creighton University, co-Director and an Area Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Heinz, Wolfgang Kuhn, University of Munich, co-Director

Dr. Steffi Keim, University of Munich, co-Director

Dr. Boyd SeEVERS, Northwestern College

Dr. Aaron Gale, West Virginia State University, Area Supervisor

Dr. Otieno Kisiara, Nazareth College

Prof. Dr. Habil. Ilona Skupinska-Lovset, University of Lodz, Poland

Christina Etzrodt, AutoCAD technician

Stephen Reynolds, coordinator, Area Supervisor

Orna Cohen, conservation

Jane Marshall, conservation assistant

Dr. Donald Ariel, Numismatics

Dr. Jessie Pincus Ben-Avraham, Bar Ilan University, Ground Penetrating Radar  
Hanan Shafir, photography  
DreAnna Hadash, artist  
Bernard Tram, pottery restoration  
Shai Schwartz, recording

In addition to the staff members, there were students from University of Nebraska at Omaha, Rocky Mountain College, Creighton University, Hartford University, West Virginia State University, Northwestern College, and Nazareth College.

Noteworthy are our long times standing volunteers digging with us for numerous years. Among them are Kelen and Emmitt Wilson, Reginald Bolich.

### *The Excavations*

Four areas were excavated during this season at Bethsaida. Area A West, east of the city gate, Area A city gate, Area A plaza and Area C.



This area includes remains of early Roman residential area adjacent to the temple and some fragmentary walls dating from the Middle Ages.

#### *Locus 2048 Grid C, D, 54 Stratum 2*

This locus initially started in 2007 and combines loci 2043 and 2044 into a new locus. It contains early Roman potter, glass, and fishing weights.

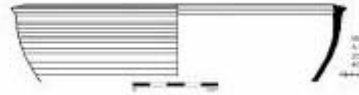


Iron nail locus 2048, basket 18514

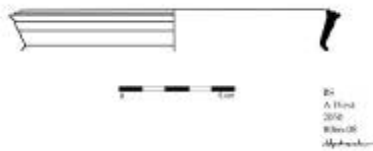
*Locus 2050 Grid C, D, 54, 55 Stratum 2*

This locus is located east of remains of a Roman period wall of undetermined purpose. It was initially opened in 2007 as an extension of the square. It contains early Roman pottery and glass. Since this is rather a small locus no architecture were discerned at locus. At the bottom of the locus the top of a very solid wall, apparently Iron Age, appears.

*Selected pottery drawings from locus 2050*



Early Roman cooking pot with triple ridges on rim



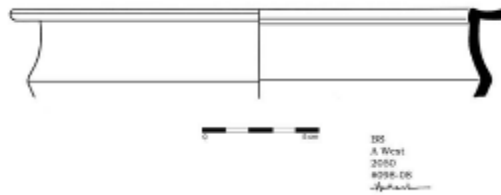
Early Roman deep bowl with triple ridges on rim



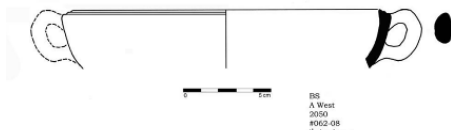
Early Roman casserole with everted rim



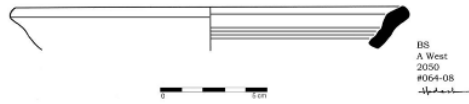
Early Roman Casserole with everted rim



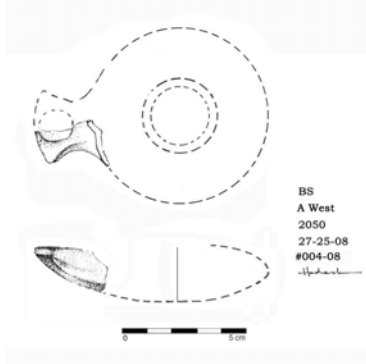
Early Roman Casserole with everted rim



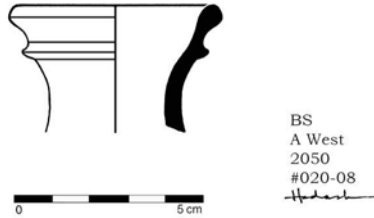
Early Galilean bowl with triple ridge on rim



Galilean bowl



First century CE "Herodian" oil lamp



Early Roman jug



First century CE glass



Sample of pottery from basket 18977, notice Arabic inscription in green on yellow glazed pottery



First century "Herodian" oil lamp



Basket 18543, First century CE cooking pots, and casseroles

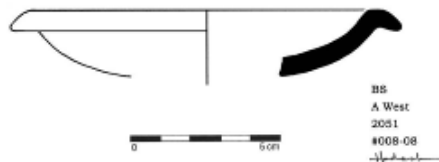
*Locus 2051 Grid HI 54/55 Stratum 2*

This locus which was started in 2007 is located west of the Iron Age sacrificial high place. Remains of poor semi circular structures were discovered in this place. The finds from this locus contained early Roman pottery, glass, bronze and iron objects.



Locus 2051

Finds from Locus 2051



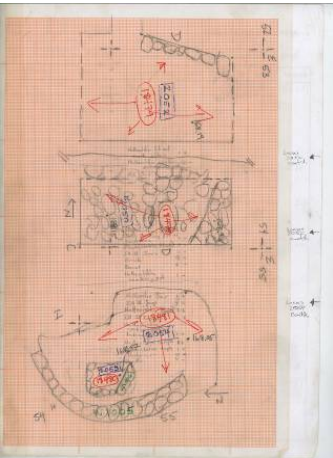
A deep bowl with everted rim, Iron Age IIB



Iron pin, Hellenistic Roman period

*Locus 2052, Grid 53D Stratum 1*

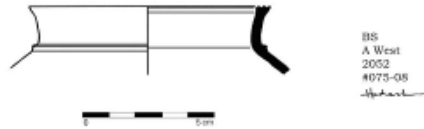
This locus began by removing debris over a circular wall, part of a circular structure bisected by a wall. Similar structures were found in this vicinity. The remains included medieval pottery, early Roman potter, glass and metal object.



Area A West field diary



Area A West Locus 2052



Early Roman cooking pot with triple ridges on rim



Early Roman deep bowl or a lid with triple ridges on the rim



Pottery shards from basket 18486 locus 2052



Pottery shards from basket 18493, locus 2052



Glass rim of a bowl, first century CE





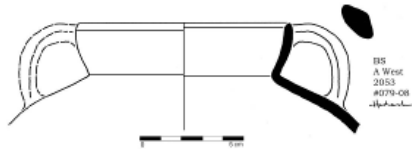
Medieval glazed pottery, brown line on yellow



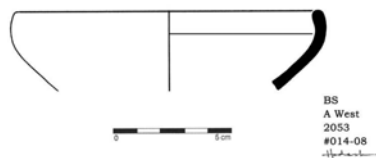
Glass handle, first century CE

*Locus 2053, Grid 55H Stratum 2*

This locus contains a possible pit with loose soil. The locus contained early Roman pottery such as cooking pots and hemispherical bowls and a high quality fine ware. In addition to that there were about 100 bones in this pit.



Globular cooking pot with tall neck, Hellenistic early Roman period



Hemispherical small bowl, Hellenistic Early Roman period



Basket 18469, fine ware rim and WWW shard.

*Locus 2054 Grid H55 Stratum 2, Number of find basket taken from this locus: 7*

This locus is located under Locus 2051 and was made to distinguish the finds from the pit Locus 2053 and the locus that contain the pit and the area Locus 2052. This locus is west of the sacrificial high place and contains scattered remains of early Roman Hellenistic poor structures, early Roman pottery and glass in addition to a tri-facial bronze arrowhead with a socket, the type which is dubbed sometimes, Scythian. Pottery include, Galilean bowl of the early type, Spattered Wash Ware bowls early Roman casseroles and jars, Hellenistic Early Roman globular cooking pots with tall neck, craters dubbed as “mortaria” that some date to the Persian period, a pin of a fibula and about 600 bones. However, most of the pottery material is early Roman which indicated the period of this locus. Finds



Casserole with everted rim, early Roman



Globular cooking pot with tall neck



Hellenistic early Roman Deep bowl



Basket 18482, locus 2052 a “Scythian” arrowhead

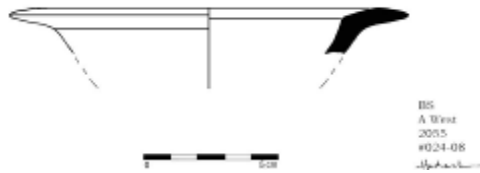


Basket 18488, deep bowl rim and base

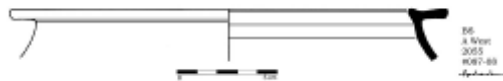
*Locus 2055 Grid H55 Stratum 2, Number of find basket taken from this locus 13*

This locus is beneath locus 2054 and was formed as a new locus when loose brown soil was observed. It contains loose rocks. At the bottom of this locus the top of a very thick and solid wall appears. It may belong to an Iron Age structure adjacent to the sacrificial high place.

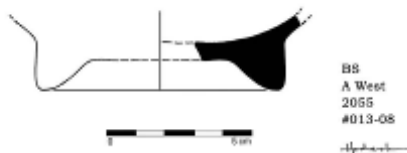
The finds include early Roman, Hellenistic and Iron Age II pottery and glass. Among the outstanding finds is a fragment of a fine ware skyphos dating to the first century CE and a bronze fibula. About 500 bones were collected in this locus.



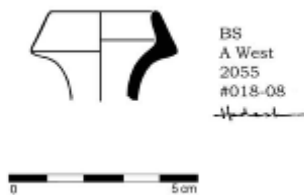
Early Roman deep bowl



Early Roman casserole with everted rim



Iron Age IIB tripod cup



Hellenistic early Roman jug



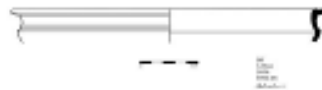
Skyphos

*Locus 2056 Grid 53D, Stratum 2. Number of find baskets collected: 5*

This locus is located south of wall W1006 and possibly is part of the room dated from the Roman period in Locus 2037. Finds include early Roman casseroles with everted rim, Hellenistic early Roman cooking pots, Fine Ware, glass and a second century BCE coin (Seleucid, Hasmmonaeon or Roman provincial).



Locus 2056



Early Roman casserole with everted rim

*Locus 2057 Grid 54D Stratum 2, total of 3 find baskets were collected*

This locus is located south of wall W 1003. It was probed to search for pavement of stratum 5. Most of finds were Hellenistic Early Roman pottery including cooking pots and black glazed fine ware. The most outstanding find from this locus was a small glass bead in blue and yellow spiral lines.



Basket 18524, black glazed Athenian pottery, red find ware



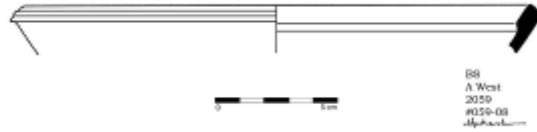
Blue and white glass bead

*Locus 2058, Grid 53D Stratum 2, Total of find baskets: 6*

This locus is located under locus 2056. It contained debris of small stones. Finds include Hellenistic early Roman pottery shards, Roman glass and iron nail.

*Locus 2059, Grid 53D, Stratum 2, Total number of find baskets: 10*

This locus is located under locus 2052 and contains hard packed surface. We expected the outer face of a structure that was excavated in 1994. Since no other face of the wall appears, the structure that was excavated in 1994 might well be an underground room. The finds belong perhaps to the infrastructure of this building. The finds include early Roman cooking pots and jars, early types of Galilean bowls, glass, medieval glazed pottery and iron nails.



Early Roman Galilean bowl with triple ridges on rim



Basket 18542, medieval glazed pottery

*Locus 2060, Grid 54C, Stratum 2, Total number of find baskets: 3*

This locus is located north of wall W1002. It is confined by wall W1001 and W1003. Finds include Hellenistic and early Roman cooking pots, Galilean bowls.



Locus 2060

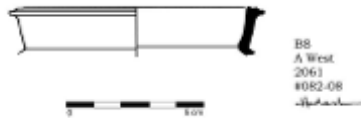
*Locus 2061, Grid 53C, Stratum 2, Total number of find baskets: 35*

This locus is located below Locus 2048 and confined by wall W1000 and remains of other walls. It is a small room measuring 3X2.5 m and paved with coble stones. Since there are no entries found to this room it may have been a basement.

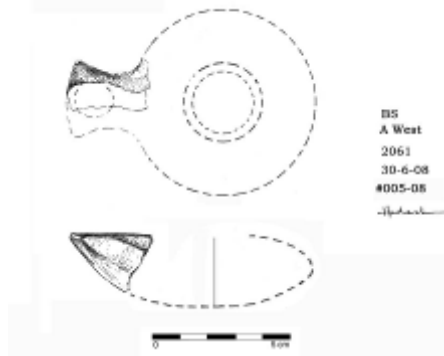
The finds include early Roman pottery and glass, "Herodian" oil lamps, bronze ring and three bronze coins, two perhaps Islamic or Ottoman, and one coin minted in Tyre dating from 16/17 CE.



Locus 2061



Globular cooking pot with triple ridges on rim



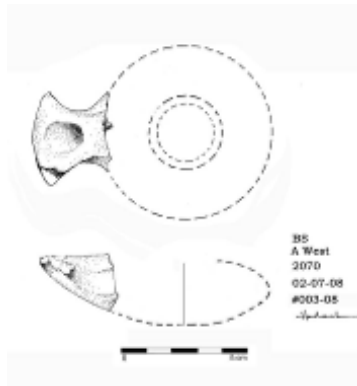
"Herodian" oil lamp

*Locus 2062, Grid 53D, Stratum 2, Total of number of find baskets: 11*

This locus is located below locus 2058. It borders by the semicircular wall W1006 at the north and west the end of the dig at the south and the balk at the east. The cobblestone pavement to the south is missing in this area. Finds include early Roman pottery, "Herodian" oil lamps, cooking pots, a shard with black figure style decoration, an interesting sand stone bead, glass including ribbed bowl Roman glass.



Locus 2062



"Herodian" oil lamp



Athenian black figure style



Basket 18581, Sand stone bead

*Locus 2063, Grid 54D, Stratum 2, Total number of find baskets: 1*

This locus is located at the northeast corner of the wall W1006 and contained Hellenistic early Roman pottery.

*Locus 2064, Grid 55H, Stratum 2, Total of find baskets: 4*

This locus is located west of the sacrificial high place. It contains a mixture of Hellenistic and Iron Age II finds resulting from the destruction of this area due to modern Syrian bunker. Among the outstanding finds is a bronze blade.

*Locus 2065, Grid 55H, Stratum 5, Total find baskets: 5*

Location: West of the sacrificial high place. It contains Hellenistic pottery and finds. Among the outstanding finds are a 7 cm long cone shaped pin with and eye at the point and a worked bone with cut end to fit a socket.



Basket 18588, bronze pin

*Locus 2066, Grid HI 54-55, Stratum V, total number of find baskets: 12*

Location, west of the Iron Age IIB sacrificial high place. This locus represents remnant of the packed gray floor, remains of a larger floor of the plaza adjacent to the city gate. Ashes remains on the floor testify fire that destroyed the city gate and is ascribed to the Assyrian king Tiglath Pileser III. The floor clearly seals the granary of Stratum VI. Finds contain Iron Age IIB shards of pottery, Cypro-Phoenician shard of a juglet, and small amount of Hellenistic to Roman pottery most probably intruded from upper layers.



Locus 2066



Basket 18598, Cypro-Phoenician shard of a juglet

*Locus 2067, Grid H54 Stratum 2, total of find baskets: 4*

This locus is a Roman pit excavated in earlier levels. The finds include a stone fishing net weight, Galilean bowls, Early Roman pottery, Iron Age II pottery, an Iron chisel and a second half of the second century CE Roman coin.



*Locus 2068, Grid A/B52, Stratum 2, Total find baskets: 4*

This locus begins with removing top soil. Among the outstanding finds are a broken glass bead and a silver coin of the Austrian queen Maria Theresa dating from 1763. Pottery included Hellenistic and early Roman pottery and a shard of a Roman oil lamp.



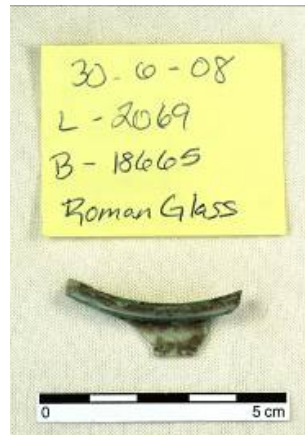
Maria Theresa coin, 1763

*Locus 2069, Grid H54-55, Stratum 2, Total find baskets: 27*

Location: near a poor semi-circular wall. Finds include Hellenistic and early Roman pottery, glass, Iron nail, iron chisels, Bronze pin, Iron tip of projectile.

Nine coins were discovered in this locus. Eight were possibly Seleucids or Hasmonaean coins and one is perhaps a Herodian coin.

An intact Hellenistic oil lamp was found in the northern wall that confines the locus.



Basket 18665, a rim of a glass bowl



Basket 18633, Hellenistic Oil lamp

*Locus 2070, Grid G54, Total of find baskets: 18*

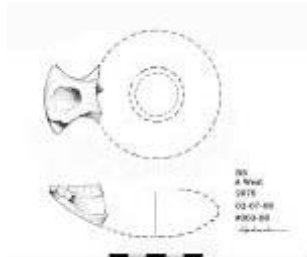
Remains of a thick wall dating from the Hellenistic early Roman period run at the east side of the locus and mark its eastern end. Top of a thick wall perhaps dating to the Iron Age were discovered at the bottom of this locus. The finds include Carnelian bead, an iron Roman military pickaxe known as dolabra in a very good state of preservation, iron pruning hook; a hand shaped bronze fibula, a lead net fishing weight, a metal sling object and a worked bone, perhaps a loom shuttle. Among the pottery shards there are "Herodian" oil lamp, shards of a fine Roman decorated oil lamp. The decoration include ivy leafs and a wreath. a fine ware chalice with white paint decoration of six petal rosette in the center, ivy leafs and concentric circles of white dots. One coin dating from the reign of Domitian (81 – 96 CE) was also found. In addition there was a small fragment of might look like a Byzantine Samaritan oil lamp dating perhaps from the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.



Basket 18692, fine ware chalice, white paint on black.



Basket 18696, "Herodian" oil lamp



"Herodian" oil lamp



Basket 18716, a dolabra



Basket 18643, Decorated Roman oil lamp



Basket 18697, Domitian coin

*Locus 2071, Grid H54, Number of find baskets: 1*

This locus was made for removing of the semicircular wall W1005 that dates from the Hellenistic period. The wall was very poorly constructed and might have been only a fence. The finds contain mostly of Iron Age II pottery and a few Hellenistic pottery.

*Locus 2072, Grid B54, Number of find baskets: 8*



## Locus 2072

Location: This is top soil locus located in the western side of a circular structure (perhaps granary) bisected by a thick wall. Although there are many medieval glazed pottery, most pottery shards are early Roman and Hellenistic and include, inverted Roman casseroles, early Roman globular cooking pots, Hellenistic handle of a Rhodian wine amphora.

*Locus 2073, Grid A/B 51/52, Stratum II, number of find baskets: 13*

Location: This locus is a top soil and aims to connect area that has been excavated in 1994 and the new excavated area to the south. Remains of wall were found in the locus but not yet a coherent ground plan of a structure. Finds include medieval glazed pottery, Roman and Hellenistic pottery, sling or grinding stones, Roman glass, two bronze pin, and iron nail and a Roman provincial bronze coin.



Basket 18688, diagnostics

*Locus 2074, Grid H54, stratum 5, one find basket collected*

This locus consists of removal of a hard packed dirt floor dating from Stratum V. Finds include Iron age II cooking pots and a late Bronze Age bi-chrome ware.

*Locus 2075, Grid I 54/55, Stratum VI, Number of find baskets: 4*

Location: This locus is located between the Stratum VI wall that supports the sacrificial high place of Stratum V and the granary of Stratum VI. These two walls connect by a short wall built in good construction. Since this space was excavated a few years ago Hellenistic and early Roman shards of pottery fell to it and the result was mix pottery of Iron Age II and much later pottery. Among the special finds there was a bronze pin.

*Locus 2076 Grid CD 53/54, Stratum 2, number of find baskets: 5*

Location: This locus number represents removal of a balk. Most finds are Hellenistic Early Roman pottery shards.

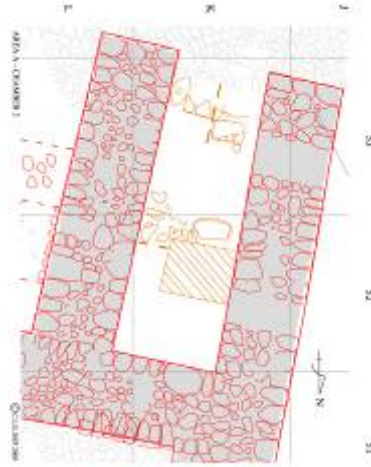
*Locus 2077, Grid C53, Stratum II, Number of find baskets: 1*

Location: removal of a balk. Hellenistic and early Roman pottery shards make most of the finds. One Seleucid coin was found in this locus.

*Locus 2078, Grid 55, Stratum II, Number of baskets: 2*

This locus number was given to removal of remains of Hellenistic wall. The finds include Hellenistic and early Roman pottery shards.

### Area A City Gate Stratum VI

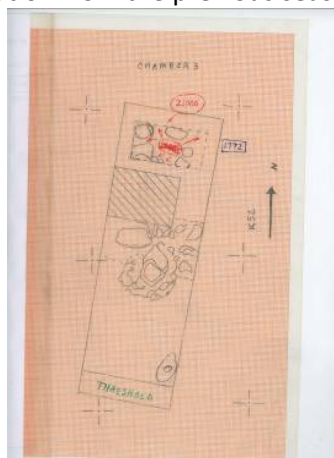


Excavations this season were conducted in Chamber 3 of the city gate in purpose to discover more remains of Stratum VI and to identify the city gate elements in this stratum. The excavations were first carried out in the inner section of the chamber. Later the outer section of the gate was excavated. Finally, the column base of the temple dating from the Roman period was removed and excavations were conducted in this area. The results show that the entrance to the city could have been located in the area of chamber 3. It means that the entry to the city in Stratum V was completely altered from the entrance of Stratum VI.

#### *Locus 1772, Grid K52, Stratum V and VI, Number of find baskets: 7*

The excavators of this locus encountered with fill material and small ash deposits which made the infrastructure of Stratum V. Below the infrastructure level remains of walls and a floor in elevation of 169.48. It is about one meter below the floor of Stratum V.

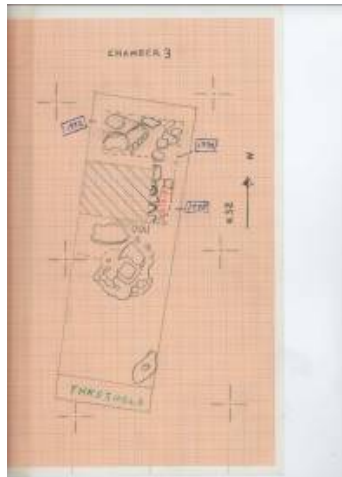
Finds included Iron Age IIA cooking pot, Late Bronze Age bi-chrome ware, and a Hellenistic cooking pot shard that perhaps fell into the excavation from the previous season.



Locus 1772, a probe in chamber 3

*Locus 1774, Grid K52, Stratum V, VI, Total number of find baskets: 5*

This locus is quite narrow and is located between the eastern walls of Chamber 3 to the wall of the Roman temple in Stratum II. Below the infrastructure there were remains of large stones, possibly a wall and a floor in the elevation of 169.41 which is similar to the floor in locus 1772. Finds include Iron Age II cooking pots, and bi-chrome shards of brown lines on a shoulder of presumably a jug. This could date from the Late Bronze Age.



Locus 1774



Iron Age IIB-A Cooking pot



Basket 21012 diagnostics, LB decorated shard

*Locus 1775, Grid K52, Stratum V and VI, Number of find baskets: 4*

This locus continues the probe in Chamber 3. Similar to the other probes, after a level of infrastructure of about 15 cm. remains of a walls appear. The floor of this locus was discovered in 169.66 which is similar to the floors discovered in the other loci. This floor is about one meter below the floor of Stratum V. The finds include basalt grinding stones and Iron Age IIA pottery including cooking pots and jars and jugs.

*Locus 1776, Grid K25, Stratum V, Number of find baskets: 2*

This locus continues the probe of Chamber 3 to the south. Loose soil and medium size stones were found. Finds include Iron Age II A; among the outstanding finds is a bottom of a bowl with an incision of branches emerging from a stalk.



Basket 21013, decorated bowl base

*Locus 1777, Grid K52, Stratum V and VI, number of find baskets: 4*

This locus contains the removal of the column base of the Roman temple, the remains of the floor of Stratum V. The finds include burnt grain and shards of pottery dating from the Roman period and the Iron Age IIB.

*Locus 1778, Grid K52, Stratum V and VI, number of find baskets: 10*

Location: below locus 1777. It contains the infrastructure of Chamber 3. Two thick layers of ash and grain (perhaps barley) were found. This indicates that the granary burnt more than one time during the approximately 120 years of its existence. A solid wall belonging to Stratum VI was found at the western end of the locus.

The finds include Iron Age IIB pottery, cooking pots, two fragments of oil lamps, red slip and burnished shards, carinated bowl, a rim fragment of a hippo jar, pieces of limestone, bones. An outstanding find is a bead made of hard limestone in red black and white colors. The bead has broken from a larger piece and contains two pierced holes along the bead and deep incisions marking the areas between the holes.



Locus 1778

## Area A the Plaza



*Locus 1773, Grid 50P, total finds basket; 8*

Location: This is a section excavated at the eastern slop just outside the outer city gate. The finds include two stone built terraces in a distance of 1.5 m. The elevation difference between the terraces is about 1.2 m. The small finds include Iron Age II pottery and Hellenistic shards of Rhodian wine amphora.



Locus 1773

## Area C



Area C consists of a residential quarter. The remains include a few courtyard houses, a wine cellar and two lanes meeting in right angles. Work this season concentrated on the area where the two lanes meet.

*Locus 1580 Grid E25, stratum 2, number of find baskets 12*



This locus was opened in 2007 and continued during the 2008 season. Location: At the southern border of the locus are remains of a wall running east-west at the junction of the north-south and east-west lanes. This area contained debris and destruction made in modern period and only but a few areas preserve authentic remains. The small finds of this locus include Iron Age II, III pottery, Hellenistic cooking pots and in situ remains of an oven and one Phoenician coin dating from the 222 – 126 BCE.

*Locus 1581, Stratum 2, Number of find baskets 16*

Location, near the east-west lane. This locus was started in 2007 and works continue in the 2008 season. It is a courtyard or a room of a Hellenistic house used also in the early Roman period. Finds included Iron Age II pottery, Hellenistic and early Roman pottery, glass and a nice flint sickle blade.



Hellenistic globular cooking pot with long neck

*Locus 1583, Grid F 26, Stratum 2, Number of find basket: 15*

Location, east of wall W668. This wall is perhaps Iron Age wall in original that was reused in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. It runs north-south and is about 70 cm. wide. A small stone compartment was found attached to the wall and was found empty. North of this compartment there was a group of clay round loom weights. This type of loom weight is known from the Iron Age and it indicates that W668 which is attached to the floor, on which the loom weights were found, dates from the Iron Age.



Locus 1583

*Locus 1584, Grid F 26, Stratum 5, Number of finds basket: 7.*

Location, this is a rectangular locus 3 X 0.5 m and is confined by two long and poorly built walls. The locus contains collapse of large boulders, Hellenistic pottery was found among the collapse. A Seleucid coin (222-129 BCE) was also found in the locus.

*Locus 1585, Grid E 26, Stratum 2, Number of find baskets: 26*

Location: north of the east-west lane. This locus is about 2.5 by 2.5 m and is perhaps a courtyard or a large room near the east-west lane. The locus was rich in finds which include lead and basalt fishing weight, a little figurine of the Egyptian god Bes, remains of the faience are still discernable on the

figurine, ivory bead and an intact Attic oil lamp (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE), with cream slip and burnish. Similar oil lamps are known from Egypt.



Locus 1585, Hellenistic oil lamp



Basket 16855, Egyptian Bes faience figurine

*Locus 1586, Grid F 26-27, Stratum 5, number of find baskets: 8*

Location: under locus 1854, finds, small number of Iron Age II pottery shards and a clay bead.

*Locus 1587, Grid E 25, Stratum 2, number of find baskets: 3*

Location: A top soil new locus at the north of Locus 1580. Finds include shards of pottery of Athenian black glazed, Cypro Phoenician black on red and a mixture of Hellenistic and Iron Age pottery.