

GRID 94 2017 SEASON REPORT

Excavation of Grid 94 was carried out together with supervisors Kaz Hayashi and Rebekah Dutton (Square 91), Katie Steely (Square 90) and Lyuba Manoilova (80) together with volunteers Linnaea Ardeval, Katie Barnes, Caroline Diemer, Diane Friesen, Payton Hanby, Ed Limmer, Mery Hones, Cade Kamaleson, Sophia Kim, Joel Korytko, Audrey Lam, Tricia Lyons, Hannah Master, Katelyn Powell, Jack Sheffer, Gordie Tucker, Abby Walker, Joel and Tommy Wasserman who worked with us for all or part of the 2017 season.

Grid 94 was laid out in three 10 x 10 squares (Squares 80, 90 and 91) established on the lower slopes of the western edge of the tell, just beyond the limits of the national park. Four excavation areas were established within the grid: two trenches along its eastern edge, which included a 4x10 area along the eastern edge of Square 90 and an adjacent 4x6 area to the north, along the eastern edge of Square 91 (hereafter "91 Southeast"), and two areas at the farthest extents of the grid, in a 4x4m trench in the northwest of Square 91 (hereafter "91 Northwest") and a 4x4 area in the southwest of Square 80. These areas were opened with the goal of gaining a window into the overall stratigraphic sequence, but also to understand the nature of the topography in relation to the occupational buildup, and to assess the value of the area for future seasons with particular interest in its viability as a site for Persian/Hellenistic period research questions (for which the site of Grid 94 had been specifically selected). Briefly summarized, these research questions center upon Shimron's fluctuating relationship between the coast and the interior during these centuries, the nature of its botanical remains as metonymic indicators of imperial agricultural economy in the Jezreel at large, and the degree to which the site conformed to the cultural profile offered by other Jewish sites in the Hasmonean and Roman periods.

Preliminary survey and test trenches in the area had conveyed a mixed picture of what was to be expected below topsoil in this area. The survey results had suggested alternately the predominance of Middle Bronze Age (Portugali 1982) or Byzantine (Tel Shimron Survey 2016) occupation in this lower part of the tell, a discrepancy perhaps attributable to the plowing of the fields in alternate directions. The 2016 test trench cut into the lower-lying fields to the northwest of 94 had encountered Persian period architecture just over a meter below topsoil. On the basis of this Grid 94, being set slightly higher up the slope to the east of this test trench, was expected to preserve somewhat more of the post-Persian occupational levels, and indeed this was confirmed during the season's work, although these later phases were heavily disturbed and fragmentary. Four phases of activity, with signs of more below, were identified and excavated during the 2017 season: Phase 1 (1A Modern and 1B Plow zone), Phase 2 (Byzantine/Early Umayyad), Phase 3 (Byzantine), Phase 4 (Early Roman/Roman), and Phase "pre-4" which includes the material uncovered in the two end-of-season probes excavated in the northwestern and southeastern corners of Square 91. Note that this phasing is obviously preliminary and will doubtless be revised and adjusted in the coming seasons.

"Pre-Phase 4"

This awkward moniker is assigned to those levels below Phase 4 architecture which were encountered in smaller probes dug within our excavation areas but for which we lack larger context across the grid. These small probes were sunk over the last two days of excavation in two places: a 2 x 4 m area along the southern edge of 91 Southeast and in a (ca. 1.5 m²) area in the northwest area of 91 Northwest. These explorations were undertaken not merely to offer a window onto coming phases but also specifically to field test the preliminary

results of the geological survey and bedrock study carried out by Drs. Clark and Moshier throughout the 2017 season.

As with the 1982 and 2017 field surveys, the results of the bedrock mapping were contradictory. The initial model presented by Clark and Moshier had indicated the presence of a sharp dropoff between the exposed bedrock on the road immediately east of the grid and the area of excavation itself, followed by a more gradual descent to deeply buried bedrock (over 20 m deep) in the field west of Grid 94. According to this initial reconstruction, bedrock was to be expected at ca. 4m under topsoil on the eastern side of the Grid 94, with the expectation of greater depth to the west. However their second, revised model projected instead a gradual slope from the exposed bedrock on the road down into the western field. The recalibrated data projected that the approximate depth of bedrock along the eastern edge of Grid 94 could be as little as 0.8m below topsoil, sloping down to a mere 1.4m in depth on the western edge of Squares 90 -91. The implications for future work in Grid 94 were clear: with bedrock 4m below, occupation in Grid 94 might be expected to continue to some significant depth and chronological complexity. With bedrock less than a meter below, the likelihood of earlier occupation was virtually nil. The position of the southern probe in Southeast 91 was selected specifically to test the viability of these 0.8 – 1.4 m measurements.

While we did not reach bedrock in either probe, the depth reached in the Southeast 91 probe (2 m from topsoil) rendered invalid the measurements suggest by the latter bedrock model. Work in both probes moreover offered a rich, if limited, view of several phases to come below Phase 4, and therein the viability of Grid 94 as a long-term excavation area. Detailed descriptions of these subphases can be found in the 94.91 Square reports, and as such we highlight here only two revelations key to future work in the Grid.

Southeast 91 revealed sizeable architecture, which was encountered immediately below the Phase 4 industrial courtyard. The centerpiece of this pre-Phase 4 horizon was a massive north-south brown and gold mudbrick wall **94.91.U52** over 1.25m wide and exposed to 1.8m in length, built at least five rows wide and preserved five courses deep atop stone foundations **94.91.U61**. This ran along the eastern edge of the square, continuing into the baulks in the south and east, and to the north underneath walls **94.91.U56** and **94.91.U8** which had been built in the same general alignment atop its western edge. The eastern and southern sections of Square 91 show that the wall **94.91.U52** had been cut into by postholes from later surfaces and damaged by a number of pits, as well as by the robbing and foundation activities related to these later Phase 3 and 4 walls.

Wall **94.91.U52** functioned together with a compact brown surface (**94.91.U71**, at elev. 122.8 m) which was seen abutting the lower mudbricks of **94.91.U52** on its western edge. Cobbles visible on the northern and southern exposed area of this surface may have ringed a central burning installation. (This burning feature is not yet numbered; its outlines were noted only during final sweeping). A few fugitive north-south brick lines – not quite in alignment with the faint northeast to southwest cant of the bricks of wall **94.91.U52** - were visible in the floor, appearing in two parallel rows to the west of this wall as well as in one line roughly 1 m further to the west, close to the western baulk, and may suggest mudbrick paving.

The date of the original construction of wall **94.91.U52** is uncertain given the limited sample size. Persian and Hellenistic pottery, along with a fair amount of residual Late Bronze Age material, were recovered from the bricks themselves. The associated floor **94.91.U71** was exposed but not excavated this season, however the ashy silt **94.91.U60** above it, as well as

the bricky layer – perhaps a paved mudbrick surface - **94.91.U62** which ran up to its eastern face both contained predominantly Hellenistic and Persian period pottery, with a single bucket whose latest reading was transitional Late Hellenistic to Early Roman.¹

The scale of wall **94.91.U52** is beyond that of any other architecture in the grid, and - if we are understanding its scope and dimensions correctly - would seem suited to a monumental building, fortification or massive retaining/terrace wall. Its alignment appears to follow the contours of the lower tell, which may tip the scales towards the latter options. Although neither its function nor its specific contours are yet fully understood, it is nonetheless clear that this wall shaped the topography of the subsequent phases. Certainly the pits for the Phase 4 sunken jar installations **94.91.U22** and **94.91.U53** had been cut directly into its preserved top, and this feature served as the founding surface for the Phase 4 floors and industrial installations associated with Phase 4. The later preference for bricky courtyard surfaces may be the direct result of quarrying or topple from **94.91.U52**.

The Northwest 91 probe likewise reached a total depth of 2m from topsoil, and exposed a small area of four occupational phases below Phase 4, the ceramic dates of which spanned the Hellenistic to the Late Bronze Age.² The earliest horizon, only reached in the final hours of excavation, featured two cobble walls **94.91.U68**³ set on an (unexcavated) surface at elevation 121.66. The walls were each roughly 1 m wide, made entirely of small (fist-sized) to mid-sized cobbles preserved 4-5 courses high, and cornered in the southeastern corner of the probe. No associated surfaces were recognized, but the cobbles were covered over and put out of use by a gravel and crushed plaster surface **94.91.U64** = **94.91.U67**, which functioned together with cobble paving **94.91.U66**. All the dateable pottery collected from this surface or below it (from at or below elevation 121.9 m) was Late Bronze Age. While it would be unreasonable to postulate a dramatic occupational leap backwards from the Hellenistic to the Late Bronze Age in the Grid⁴, this material from the bottom of the 91 Northwest probe is especially meaningful when considered in light of the large quantities of Late Bronze material recovered from the mudbricks of the large wall **94.91.U52** in the Southeast. Collectively these point to the presence and proximity of Late Bronze occupation, which had been unrecognized in this area of the site prior to this point.

Phase 4: Early Roman/Roman

Phase 4 was the most substantial occupational phase encountered during the 2017 season, characterized by a sequence of mudbricky surfaces, stone pavings and installations which for the most part seemed more typical of industrial than strictly domestic activity. Architecture in this phase was frustratingly rare, concentrated almost entirely in the north and in Square 80.⁵ Within these fragmentary remains it was still possible to delineate “zones” of

¹ Note that B004433 contained one possible Byzantine body sherd, which came from the area proximate to the baulk and which was otherwise an outlier.

² Very little pottery was recovered from this limited exposure and such it must be stressed that these results are extremely preliminary.

³ When first encountered in the last hour of excavation these walls were perceived as a single patch of cobbles and therefore given only a single number. This will need to be remedied in the coming season.

⁴ Particularly in light of the fact that the elevations at the bottom of the 91 Northwest probe are the same as those of the Phase 4 surface **94.80.U6** in the southwest of the Grid.

⁵ The attribution of the occupational levels in the probe in southwest of Square 80 to Phase 4 must be considered tentative as it is so far removed from the eastern excavated areas. The remains in Square 80 are assigned to this

activity with two subphases: the southern zone, encompassing the southern half of Square 90 (an area of roughly 4x4m), the middle zone, spanning the northern half of square 90 (4 x 5.5m), and the northern zone of Square 91, which included both the 91 Southeast and 91 Northwest excavation areas. In all three areas two horizons of occupation (Early and Late) were evident within Phase 4, the two distinguished by the reconstruction of the courtyard surfaces and a slight change in character of the space in the south, especially in Square 90. A fourth “zone” can be glimpsed in the southwest corner of Grid 94 in Square 80, although there only a single horizon attributable to phase 4 was identified. Phase 4 thus offers a small window into the larger industrial building or neighborhood which may have spanned Grid 94 during the Early Roman period.

Phase 4 Early: Northern Zone.

The northern zone was delineated by two northeast-to southwest fieldstone walls with rubble cores, **94.91.U5** (in 91 Northwest) and **94.91.U56** (in 91 Southeast). These two walls ran parallel to one another at a distance of 8m apart. Both walls functioned together at the outset of Phase 4 with pebble and gravel layers **94.91.U4** (which ran up to the east face of wall **94.91.U5**) and **94.91.U34** (which ran up to the west face of wall **94.91.U56**). The identical character of these mixed pebble and gravel surfaces, both of which also bore traces of calcite plaster, suggest the possibility that these walls bounded two adjoining courtyard spaces, as indeed the frequent lenses of sand within these layers collectively support a picture of outdoor use. The white calcite crust noted throughout these layers appears to have been a man-made plaster rather than a diagenetic process⁶, and was observed in greatest density closest to the walls (i.e. on the east side of **94.91.U34** and on the west edge of **94.91.U4** where it runs to the wall **94.91.U5**). The better preservation of the surface treatment in proximity to walls may be the result of these being less-trafficked areas. Areas of calcite density are also visible on these surfaces in the east baulk of 91 Northwest and in the west baulk of 91 Southeast, and this greater density may hint at the presence of a northeast-to -southwest wall in this baulk between them, awaiting future discovery. It is also significant that this courtyard surface **94.91.U34** can also be seen continuing across the entire northern edge of Square 91.⁷ As such, wall **94.91.U56** must corner or end shortly beyond its visible preserved extent; this, too, will have to be among the first questions addressed in any subsequent season.

phase on the basis of the similarity in construction style of its walls relative to those assigned to Phase 4 in Square 91 (**94.91.U5** and **94.91.U56**), the alignment of the wall **94.80.U4** which runs perpendicular to Phase 4 walls **94.91.U5** and **94.91.U56** and the suggested trajectory of walls **94.80.U10** and **94.80.U11** which appear to run parallel to them. This proposed connection is supported as well by the Late Hellenistic-Early Roman date of the ceramic assemblage associated with its floors, which corresponds neatly to Phase 4.

Note that such an attribution presumes some terracing between the eastern and western halves of the grid: the founding levels of wall **94.91.U5** and the **94.80.U4** are separated by roughly 1m (122.8 and 121.8, respectively). The step down would presumably have occurred somewhere along the eastern edge of Square 80.⁵ It might likewise be possible to postulate a small (40-50cm) step between the spaces of 91 Northwest and 91 Southeast, the two separated by a wall line running in the baulk between them (for which see discussion in Phase 4 Early: Northern Zone, below).

⁶ As determined by the Weizmann Institute. See Sediment samples for **94.91.U6** (SS 12055-7, SS012145-6), **94.91.U4** (SS012147-8, SS012150, SS012152, SS012183) and **94.91.U34** (SS012168-70, SS012385).

⁷ Only the southern half of the courtyard was excavated below the level of the Phase 4 wall **94.91.U56** as part of work carried out in the late season probe; the northern half – including the Phase 3 wall **94.91.U8**, has not yet been fully excavated.

In 91 Southeast, to the west of wall **94.91.U56** areas of mudbrick paving were set atop the gravel-rich courtyard surface **94.91.U34** and may have served as work platforms. These include a wide 3x4 swath across the western edge of Square 91 (**94.91.U35**) and a north-south row of mudbricks set against the west face of wall **94.91.U56** (**94.91.U36**). Brick lines were clearly evident in **94.91.U36** but not fully discernable in **94.91.U35**, although both shared an average depth of ca. 8-10cm. A small hearth **94.91.U27** had been constructed on **94.91.U35** on the west side of the square, in which the presence of ash and phosphates suggest the use of dung fuel for cooking.⁸ These functioned together with patches of cobble paving in the west, north and east (**94.91.U19**, **94.91.U25** and **94.91.U13**, respectively).

To the east of wall **94.91.U56** was a grey mudbrick surface constructed using bricks similar in size to those seen in **94.90.U2=58** to the south, at 25 x 40cm. This surface functioned together with an unusual sunken jar installation **94.90.U22**, the purpose of which remains unclear. The installation **94.90.U22** had been initially mistaken for a tabun due to the wall of thick clay which surrounded it, but subsequent tests carried out by the Weizmann Institute determined that it had never been fired, despite the orange patina on its interior and exterior surfaces (Sediment samples nos. SS0012252, SS0012058).⁹ The sunken jar within was a Hellenistic amphora (**RP004262**) which had been shaved off at the shoulder and set into a pit in floor **94.91.U20**, such that some 15cm of the jar would have remained standing above the level of the surface. A 5cm thick surface chalky plaster surface was laid around the outer edge of the jar. A thin wall of chalky clay, some 30cm high and 5cm thick (and seemingly manufactured in the same manner as a tabun), was then set down directly on top of this plaster surface along the interior edges of the pit, and rose to at least 20cm above the surface **94.91.U20**. A ring of cobblestones was then set down on the plaster between them, encircling the jar within the clay wall.

The function of this unusual installation **94.91.U22** is unclear. The absence of the heavy black and white ash buildup typical of tabuns – absent both from within the feature and on the surrounding surfaces – confirms the results of the Weizmann’s study of the sediments. The cobbles and plastering outside the vessel may indicate a concern with drainage and thus point to the storage of liquid contents, but this cannot be confirmed. Additional sediment samples (SS 12060, 12230-2) were taken from the the fill in the bottom of the jar as well as from underneath it to assess any possible phytolith content.

Phase 4 Early: Middle Zone

The bricky surface of **94.90.U54** (= **94.90.U58** in the west and **94.90.U59** in the east) appeared to span both the southern and middle zones, that is to say all of Square 90, although brick lines were difficult to identify in certain areas, in large part because the surface had been cut by such a variety of pavings and installations. The northeast to southwest bricklines visible in **94.90.U54** could nonetheless be identified on the west side of this middle zone in the area north of pavement **94.90.U48**. Within the middle zone of the courtyard were at least four, and possibly five, stone-ringed circular installations (**94.90.U61**, **94.90.U63**, **94.90.U64**, **94.90.U65**; perhaps **94.90.U62**). These can be seen cut into the bricky surface **94.90.U58**.

⁸ Elisabetta Baretto, Weizmann Institute, personal communication July 2017. See Sediment Sample nos. SS12159-64, 12185, 12253. A basalt stone placed in the bottom of the hearth showed signs of heating on its upper side.

⁹ The exterior edge showed signs of heating “when it was installed” but the interior had no evidence of heat exposure consistent with tabun temperatures.

Each of these has a diameter of roughly 85cm, and in their size and stone-framed exteriors are reminiscent of the stone-encircled jar installation **94.91.U22** in Square 91 to the north with which they are contemporary. These functioned together with cobbled and paved work surfaces to to their north (**94.91.U33**) and south (**94.90.U48**). On the eastern edge of the courtyard was a sixth installation **94.90.U60**, a circular pit in the center of which was the plastered neck of a jar – perhaps a drain – which probably functioned together with a thickly plastered surface **94.90.U57** which sloped down into it from the north and west.

Phase 4 Early: Southern Zone

In the southern zone, the south of Square 90, the earliest horizon was a mudbrick surface **94.90.U54**¹⁰ made of laid – or artfully toppled – grey mudbricks of poor quality which lay end to end in diagonal rows running northeast to southwest and spanned the full width of the southern zone excavated area. The bricks were roughly 25cm wide and 40cm in length, and where preserved only seemed to be 10cm deep. Most were light grey, exceedingly crumbly and contained very large inclusions, including large pottery sherds and even small to mid-sized cobbles. No architectural parameters could be defined for this surface.

On the southern edge of this southern zone was a rectangular (ca 2 x 1.9 m) plastered installation **94.90.U52** (see PH 752) which was both heavily eroded and disturbed by nesting rodents. The installation **94.90.U52** appears to have extended as far as a line of large cobbles visible in the southern baulk (see 94.90 South Section drawing) which may have served as its southern edge. Originally ringed with small stones, the rectangular surface of **94.90.U52** had been thickly coated with a gravelly plaster which incorporated numerous pebbles of basalt. The plaster was poorly preserved especially on the western side of the feature but visible in patches across the installation, and was deepest on **94.90.U52**'s southern edge where it was preserved to 3cm thick. This plaster had been applied as a coating over the top of the mudbrick surface **94.90.U54** below, and Weizmann samples taken from this plaster confirmed that it was true plaster which had been heated to high temperature. The resulting coating of gravel and fired plaster was indeed exceedingly hard and would have been very durable.

The precise purpose of this installation cannot be determined, but its shape, size, durability and heavy plastering call to mind a small pressing platform, the use of which would not be inconsistent with the presence of sunken jars documented in Square 91 (**94.91.U22**) and anticipated in Square 90 (**94.90.U60**). A circular pit line emerging underneath the circular patch of paving **94.90.U55** on the north side of this platform may suggest an adjacent sump. Such simple, or even crude, presses consisting only of a pressing/treading floor with adjacent sump are known elsewhere in the Galilee and have parallels in periods spanning the Late Hellenistic to Abbasid periods.¹¹

Phase 4 Late (All Zones)

In Phase 4 Late, the northern and middle zones maintained their industrial character while a slight shift occurred in the south. Walls **94.91.U56** and **94.91.U5** continued in use, and in the northern and middle zones courtyard accumulations continued. East of wall

¹⁰ Contemporary with and possibly equivalent to **94.90.U58** and **94.90.U59** (the two initially separated by the pit **94.90.U23**, but whose consistency suggests that they are the same.

¹¹ E.g. Horbat Kelah South (Roman/Byzantine reused in Abbasid)

94.91.U56, the Phase 4 Early sunken jar installation 94.91.U22 was cut through and put out of use by another sunken jar installation of more traditional type 94.91.U54, cut into pit 94.91.U53. The jar itself was the body of an imported Aegean Hellenistic amphora (RP001309; the toe is damaged), and like the Phase 4 early jar RP004262 in 94.91.22 had been sheared off at the shoulder. Its upper extent would not have protruded from the pit, instead large body sherds had been placed around the edges of the pit 94.91.U53, concave side facing inward, to create a make-shift funnel into the jar. This installation too had been built up against the eastern face of wall 94.91.U56, and functioned together with a line of cobble paving (94.91.U45) set around its eastern and southern edge. To the west of the wall 94.91.U56, gravelly courtyard layer 94.91.U18 built up over the plastered cobble surface 94.91.U33 and hearth 91.94.U27, putting both out of use, and new cobble pavings and were set down in the northern (94.91.U29) and middle (94.91.U19, 94.90.U18) zones of the courtyards, the latter set down over the bricky courtyard surface 94.90.U24=26 which spanned the middle zone. The middle zone in Phase 4 Late had been heavily disturbed all along its eastern edge by Phase 2 pits 94.90.U30 and 94.90.U21, and along much of its western edge by Phase 1 pit 94.90.U13. As such it is difficult to reconstruct the installations with which it functioned.

In the southern zone, the northeast-southwest mudbrick surface 94.90.U54 (=etc etc) was paved over by new shallow surface (or topple), 94.91.U2=45=44. These mudbricks were of the same dimension as in the earlier horizon but were placed end to end running north-south, and were set down over the top of the plastered press floor (or basin) 94.91.U52 putting it out of use. The space was then subdivided with the construction of a north-south partition wall 94.90.U6, which functioned together with a newly laid cobble surface 94.90.U29 to its west, and floor 94.90.U8 to the east. On this floor a near-complete Late-Hellenistic/Early Roman globular cooking pot (RP009048, PH 294) and Late Hellenistic-Early Roman pyramidal loomweight (MC 009046; PH 155) were discovered, both next to a small cobble and sherd hearth 94.90.U28.

In Square 80 in the southwest of Grid 94 only a single Phase 4 horizon was identified. Here three fieldstone and rubble core walls, each of which had been partially robbed, were founded in alignment with the fieldstone walls 94.91.U56 and 94.91.U56. North-south wall stubs 94.80.U10 and 94.80.U11 were constructed abutting east-west wall 94.80.U4, separating the area into a southern room (south of wall 94.80.U4), and two spaces to its north of which we have only the smallest glimpse. Occupational horizons were only well-preserved in the southern room, where a cobble and stone paved surface 94.80.U6, set over subfloor fill 94.80.U9, lipped up to the south face of wall 94.80.U4. A sizeable quantity of large animal bones was recovered from this floor, a faunal assemblage which included cut portions of pig and dog. North of this wall was a small exposure of a narrow (90cm x 40cm) space, perhaps a corridor, between walls 94.80.U10 and 94.80.U11, which contained the compact grey surface 94.80.U8 between them. A faience amulet in the shape of papyrus (MC010069, PH231) was recovered from floor 94.80.U8, iconography which conveys youth, growth, fertility and regeneration. Such amulets are common at coastal sites such as Dor and Ashkelon in the Iron IIC and Persian periods but rare in the Hellenistic period, with Hellenistic comparanda occurring only from 'Atlit, and those from funerary rather than domestic contexts (Herrmann 2008: 392). Even if residual, the appearance of such an amulet at Shimron bolsters the impression of the site's coastal connections in the Persian and Hellenistic periods, prior to the Hasmonean shift at the turn of the 1st century B.C. (for which see discussion below).

A Note on Phase 4 Chronology:

The ceramic assemblage suggests a date for these Phase 4 courtyards in the transitional Late Hellenistic to Early Roman period. This range is supported generally by the stamped amphora handles recovered from these layers which provide a *terminus post quem* of the 2nd century B.C. These include **MC009501**, a Rhodian stamped handle reading ἐπὶ Θεότορος, and dating to Grace's Period IIIa (198-190 B.C.), recovered from underneath the Phase 4 Early paving **94.91.U13** above **94.91.U35**, and a second stamped handle (**RP009086**) reading ἐπὶ Εὐκλεὺς πανόμου, an eponym dated to Grace's Period IIa (234-220 B.C.), recovered from the Phase 4 Late courtyard **94.91.U18**. The ceramics of Phase 4 were throughout marked generally by the presence of Late Hellenistic and early Roman Kefar Henanya Form 4 cooking vessels, as well as Shikhin and other storage jars most common to the 1st century A.D. Such jars have parallels in 1st B.C. to 1st A.D. levels at sites in the Lower Galilee such as Yodefat (Aviam 2014: 141, Fig. 5). The challenge remains to determine the outer date limit of these Phase 4 assemblages. By contrast with the residual Hellenistic period material represented in the fills, the early Roman assemblage represented in these layers is almost totally devoid of Roman sigillata wares. (It is noteworthy that earlier Roman sigillatas are likewise poorly represented in the mixed fills from Grid 23/33). This serves to confirm the impression of the Galileean orientation of Shimron during this period, and suggests a shift in the nature and connections of the site from being more coastally oriented in the Hellenistic period to being increasingly inward-facing during the early Roman period. From an archaeological perspective, however, this Galileean shift poses a difficulty for the non-specialist in that the more readily dateable ceramics – the imported sigillatas and finewares – do not appear, and there is considerable conservatism in the plainware forms. As a result, it is conceivable that these layers could continue into the Roman period. The fills which put the Phase 4 surfaces out of use (e.g. **94.91.U9** and **94.91.U10**) also contained predominantly Hellenistic and Early Roman pottery (including two near-complete Hellenistic unguentaria **RP 001092** and **RP 001126**; see photos PH 375 and PH373, respectively). Only one bucket in these was solidly Roman.

Phase 3: Roman/Early Byzantine

This was the most problematic phase, and one which will certainly require revision in the coming seasons.

Phase 3 occupation included only two “orphaned” walls, **94.90.U11** and **94.91.U8**, which could not be definitively connected with any other architecture in the grid. These two walls were in rough, though not exact alignment slightly northeast to southwest, **94.91.U8** extending the full length of Square 91 and **94.90.U11** extending for five meters in the southern half of Square 90. There was no connection between the two, nor was any robber trench recognized which would have implied such. Both were encountered almost immediately under topsoil and were clearly compromised, probably by plowing activity: wall **94.90.U8** in particular seemed to be canted westward at a slight angle, as though it had been damaged. Both also lacked the orderly, large foundation stones of the Phase 2 east-west walls. While the upper courses of **94.91.U8** had clearly been robbed out by a trench cut from the top of the plow zone **94.91.U2** (missed during excavation; see 94.91 South Section drawing),

94.91.U11 was too close to the surface for robbing activity to be identifiable. No surfaces could be connected with these walls.

While it would offer greater architectural coherence to move these walls either up to Phase 2 (to function together with the east-west walls **94.91.U17**, **94.91.U17**, or **94.90.U14**) or down a phase (to function together with the Phase 4 courtyard surfaces), a few key relationships prevent their explicit association with either, unless allowances are made for unusual circumstances. In Square 90, the foundation trench **94.90.U20** for Wall **94.90.U11** was cut into the shallow fill layer **94.90.U10** (which itself lay only a few centimeters under topsoil) on the west side of this wall, and the line for the trench was evident also in **94.90.U2** on the east of the wall. As such, wall **94.90.U11** must have been constructed later than this Phase 4 courtyard surface. The presence of a coin (**MC009399**) which may belong either to the era of Hadrian (2nd century A.D.) but more likely that of Julian II (4th century A.D.) places this wall in a period later than was ceramically attested both for the courtyard spaces of Phase 4 generally as well as **94.90.U2** specifically.

Wall **94.91.U8** presents a more complicated picture. In Square 91, the Phase 2 cobble pavement **94.91.U25** which lipped up to the east-west Phase 2 wall **94.91.U17** crossed over the northern remaining stones of the north-south wall **94.91.U8**, putting it out of use. These northern stones of **U8** were at an angle; there is nothing to suggest that this area could have functioned as a cobble threshold or the presence of a doorjamb in wall **94.90.U8**. Wall **94.91.U8** also appears to have been cut on its southern end by the construction of Phase 2 east-west wall **94.90.U12**. Wall **94.91.U8** thus clearly cannot belong to Phase 2. Its relationship with the Phase 4 surfaces is somewhat more complicated, in part because documentation of its relationships may have been confused by the fact that the the upper foundation stones of the earlier Phase 4 wall **94.91.U56**, over which **94.90.U8** was immediately constructed, were visible protruding along the eastern edge of wall **94.90.U8**. As such connections noted during the season between the Phase 4 surfaces, such as floor **94.91.U20** and its related installations (i.e. the tabun/jar installation **94.91.U22**) and **U8** can now be seen to have instead been documenting the relationship between these features and the stones of wall **94.90.U56**. It is clear, however, that the gravelly courtyard horizon of **94.91.U34** passes underneath wall **91.94.U8** and can be seen continuing into the eastern baulk, and that the narrow pit or robber trench **94.91.U57** which removed the southern end of **94.91.U56** appears to have been cut from **94.91.U10**, above Phase 4 surface **94.90.U20** (although from section this trench appears itself to have been cut by the foundation and later robbing trenches of **91.94.U8** and as such the precise lines are difficult to ascertain, particularly on the east side of the wall lines.) Given these constraints, it is clear that wall **94.90.U8** must belong either to Phase 3 or at best to a latest horizon of Phase 4 which cannot be separated out from the other. This must be clarified in future seasons.

Where the architectural remains were few, a number of coins (many residual) could be assigned to this Late Roman – Early Byzantine horizon.¹² Of particular note are two coins of Constantine II (**MC000547** from **94.90.U1** and **MC009396** from **94.90.U15**, PH 128-30 and PH 289-90) dating ca. 340 A.D., and a coin of (most likely) Julian II featuring an Apis bull, dating ca. 360 A.D. (**MC009399**, PH308-310, noted above.) Collectively these reflect robust connections with the major centers of the east from the outset of the Byzantine empire.

¹² Preliminary coin readings reflect initial impressions and were carried out by non-specialists.

Phase 2: Byzantine/Early Umayyad

The remnants of the Late Byzantine/early Umayyad occupation in Grid 94 were heavily disturbed. All that remained below the plow zone were the fragmentary foundations of a building characterized by three northeast to southwest walls. From south to north these were Walls 94.90.U14 and 94.90.U12 in Square 90, and fragments of Wall 94.91.U17 in Square 91. All three walls ran parallel to one another and separated the space into three areas, although in the absence of clearly correlated north-south wall lines the eastern and western limits of these rooms are undefined. Of the three walls, 94.90.U12 and 94.90.U14 were preserved only to their lowest two courses and were similarly constructed, each founded on a line of extremely large but unworked stones ranging from 49-60cm in width, with smaller fieldstones and cobbles between. All that remained of Wall 94.91.U17 were a few courses of standing stone of its northern edge, the majority of the wall having been robbed out by trench 94.91.U21. This small preserved section of 94.91.U17 - much like walls 94.90.U12 and U14 to the south - included two stones of 60-65cm in size, with smaller fieldstones above.

Phase 2 occupational remains were preserved only in the northernmost room at the north edge of Square 91 Southeast, the known boundary of which was 94.91.U17 to the south. Here a cobble surface 94.90.U25 preserved to just over 1.1m remained *in situ* and could be seen lipping up to the north face of 94.91.U17. Substantial quantities of pottery and bone debris were recovered from in and around these cobbles, a density of deposition suggestive of outdoor space.

The central room or space was limited by 94.91.U17 to the north and 94.90.U12 to the south, and the southern space by 94.91.U17 to the north and 94.90.U14 to the south. Foundation trenches 94.90.U33 and 94.90.U34 were identifiable for Walls 94.90.U12 and U.14, respectively. These trenches were cut from an original level obscured by the plow zone and all associated surfaces in both the central and southern rooms had been cut away. Along the southern edge of the wall 94.90.U14, and nearly - thought not quite - parallel to it, a narrow channel 94.90.U19 had been cut from a surface obscured by the plow zone. A few small cobbles running along its southern edge suggest that it may originally have been stone-lined. Its narrow width and downward slope to the east suggest that it may have functioned as a drain of some sort. Although there was no evidence for any coating, the dense mudbrick matrix into which it was cut (Phase 4 mudbrick surface 94.90.U2) may have obviated the need for plastering.¹³

No Phase 2 surfaces nor architecture were preserved either in Square 80 or 91 Northwest in this phase, likely due to their placement slightly lower down the slope from 91 Southeast. Phase 2 activity in 91 Northwest was marked instead only by a series of large, deep pits 94.90.U30 and 94.90.U38 cut from a level obscured by the plow zone. There were no remains assigned to Phase 2 in Square 80.

Phase 1: Modern

Plow Zone (1B)

The Phase 1B horizon is represented by the area under topsoil of denser, heavier clay buildup which was the result of plow zone activity. This layer (94.91.U2=94.91.U23,

¹³ It is tempting to presume a missed pit and connect the drainage channel with the patch of small cobble pavement 94.90.U48 which first appeared below it. However the mudbrick surface of 94.90.U2 was preserved in this area and covered over the cobble pavement in all other areas.

94.80.U2, 94.91.U3=94.91.U34) could also be identified across the grid and ranged from 15-40cm in depth in various parts of the grid, while generally being shallower in the east and deeper in the west. The striations of the plow zone suggest several phases of activity. It is clear from sections in all squares that plowing activity removed occupational material associated with the latest walls, and in so doing prevented the identification of the top elevation from which a number of the earlier pits and trenches from Phases 2-3 were cut. Robber trenches **94.90.U15** and **91.U21** which cut away the Phase 2 east-west Byzantine/Early Umayyad walls **94.90.U12** and **94.91.U17** (respectively) fall into this category: the top elevations of these trenches could be tracked only as high as the plow zone and the level from which they were cut was obliterated, as was evident in the east sections of both Squares 90 and 91.

Topsoil (1A)

The latest layer is the top layer of topsoil **U1** which ranged from 10-25cm thick across the entire grid, sloping dramatically down to the west (NE, NW SE, SW). Two robbing actions are attributed to modern, or at least post-Umayyad, activity in the grid and were visible cut just underneath topsoil: north-south trenches **94.90.U13= 94.91.U28** and **94.80.U5**. Both are the only trenches oriented directly north-south, in contrast to the construction (and robbing) actions in earlier periods which are set to a grid aligned slightly northeast to southwest. Both robber trenches were cut from just below topsoil and extended beyond the edge of their respective squares and as such their full width is unclear. In Square 80, trench **94.80.U5** seems to have cut in to the Phase 4 wall **94.80.U11**, however the trench does not span the full width of that wall. As such it may be that the disturbance of **94.80.U11** was only incidental, and that **94.80.U5** had originally targeted a later wall in similar alignment.

In Square 90, two additional pits, the bottoms of which may have been stone-lined, were identified in section having been cut from the top of the plow zone and immediately under top soil, suggesting additional modern activity (see 94.91 E Section Drawing). These were not identified during excavation.

Summary and Observations for Future Work

The work completed during the 2017 season did indeed shed some preliminary light on the occupational sequence represented in Grid 94, although – much like the surveys which preceded the season – the results were not always as expected.

Grid 94 was opened with the hope that it would be a rich area for the study of the Persian and Hellenistic periods, and offer a clean sequence by which cultural and agricultural developments could be tracked. The astute reader will nonetheless note that despite the preservation of the later (post-Roman) periods, Grid 94 does not at this time appear to offer a clean sequence of Persian through Hellenistic levels, at least insofar as the probes were able to reveal. Surprising signs of Late Bronze Age material at the bottom of the northwest 91 probe coupled with the undefined nature of the bedrock in this area – with exposed bedrock visible on the road less than 10m to the east – makes the promise of a full sequence somewhat less certain than originally hoped. Persian and Hellenistic period occupation may well be preserved at lower elevations, but is noteworthy that the large quantities of residual Hellenistic finewares in the Phase 4 courtyards, which early in the season raised expectations

of a robust Hellenistic phase underneath, appear to have diminished substantially, rather than increased, in the pre-Phase 4 layers. This may point to a reduced Hellenistic presence in the area, although clearly the data set is small. By the same token, however, the Late Bronze remains from two areas in the Grid may demonstrate the future potential of the Grid as a focus for study of pre-Classical periods. Regardless, it is clear that a nuanced understanding of the underlying topography of the bedrock in this area will be crucial to the development excavation strategy of the coming years. This, together with work connecting the non-contiguous excavation areas, will likewise clarify the possibility of and mechanisms for terracing throughout the area which will have implications for our broader understanding of the topography and urban landscape of the lower tell.

Finally, any new site presents a learning curve. One additional goal during excavation was to better understand the soil types, construction styles and materials, diagenetic processes both in relation to longue durée site formation as well as the narrower processes of collapse and degradation evident within the occupational levels themselves. Attention paid to these details during the 2017 season has taught us much, and will allow for swifter and more efficient recognition of these patterns by all staff in future seasons.

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