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Horvat ʿEthri—A Jewish Village from the Second Temple Period and the Bar Kokhba Revolt in the Judean Foothills

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Abstract

The ancient site is located in the Judaean Shephelah, on an elongated ridge. It was founded at the end of the Persian period. The village was at its largest in the first century CE, covering an area of *c.* 12 dunams. Based on finds of at least four ritual baths (*miqwa'ot*), stone vessels, pottery types, oil lamps and the coins assemblage, it's inhabitants were most likely Jewish. The village was abandoned following the Jewish War against the Romans (66–70 CE) and re-inhabited in the interval between the two Jewish revolts. It participated in the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 CE) and was violently destroyed. The place was resettled partially during the Late Roman period by gentiles, and existed until the fifth century CE. The most outstanding feature uncovered is a public building containing a courtyard, a large *miqveh* and a vestibule opening into a rectangular hall with three pillars in its centre. The structure, perhaps a synagogue, was erected between the revolts against the Romans and used until the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Horvat ʿEthri[1] is situated in the Judaean Foothills (Shephelah), within the ʿAdullam Hills—*c.* 35 km southwest of Jerusalem, 5 km southeast of the Elah Valley and 8 km northeast of Beth Guvrin (fig. 1). The site extends over approximately 2 hectares, lying at the northwestern end of a spur, *c.* 406 metres above sea level (fig. 2). The location provides natural defence and an unobstructed view of the surrounding countryside.

[1] The site, informally called Horvat Hoah, is situated at coord. 14740/11745 (Old Israel Grid). On modern maps the site appears as Horvat Shuʿa, Meʿarot Shuʿa, Trig. Point 406, or is not marked at all. The Arabic name, Kh. Umm es-Suweid, appears on the PEF map, sheet XXI, and on maps from the British Mandate period. Kh. Umm es-Suweid was translated in the PEF list as: 'The mother of black things; or of a little water'; see: E. H. Palmer, *The Survey of Western Palestine, Arabic and English Name Lists* (London, 1881), p. 408. Arab peasants gave us another translation: 'the mother of the buckthorns'—these thorny bushes are abundant on this hill. The name Khirbet el-Hih was wrongly given to the site in the IAA Gazeteer, and subsequently in our excavation licences. The *ostracon* with the inscription ʿEthri, discovered in our excavation (see below), finally gave the site an official name, approved by the Israel Official Names Commission on 26 March 2001.

The main structures exposed at the site are from the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Unlike other sites in Israel, later occupation levels did not significantly alter the plan of the Second Temple / Early Roman period settlement. It was, therefore, possible to study a well-preserved village from this period with its residential areas, public building—perhaps a synagogue, courtyards, lanes, underground complexes, industrial installations and burial caves.

The site was excavated from 1999 to 2001 by the authors, under the auspices of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA).[2]

Ancient roads, bordered on both sides by large fieldstones, lead to the settlement from the east, south and west. The narrow valleys situated to the north and south of the hill were cultivated. The site drew its water supply from wells, hewn along the valleys towards the ground water, and from rainwater, collected in cisterns, hewn in and near the built-up area. Agricultural terraces were built along the slopes surrounding the settlement. Watchtowers, stone-quarries, rock-cut tombs and other installations were located on the rocky outcrops, among the terraces.

The rock-cut winepresses, discovered in the vicinity of the site bear evidence to one of the inhabitants' sources of livelihood[3]—the viticulture, mainly along the cultivable terraced slopes and in the nearby fertile valleys.

[2] The salvage excavation was a result of ongoing illicit excavations and antiquities looting that caused great damage to the site's structures and stratigraphy. Despite the systematic looting of the site over the past 30 years, several buildings covered by heavy debris and rock-cut underground chambers escaped the attention of the looters, enabling us to examine undisturbed *loci*. The objective of the excavation was to expose the site and open it to the public. Our excavation was the first to be undertaken on the spot. The site was briefly surveyed by the PEF team, who reported: 'Heaps of stones, foundations, caves and cisterns', see: C. R. Conder and H. H. Kitchener, *The Survey of Western Palestine: Memoirs*, vol. III: *Judaea* (London, 1883), p. 380. We are grateful to the late Amir Drori, IAA former director, for his support. The excavation was directed by the authors with the participation of Oz Ganor, Vladis Krogliak, Nahum Sagiv and Yoav Farhi (area supervision and finds registration), Sʿaid el-ʿAmaleh (metal detection), Tanya Kornfeld, Slava Pirski, Vadim Essman, Natasha Zak, Rachel Graff and Irena Brin (surveying and drafting), Carmen Hersch (drawing), Tsila Sagiv, Clara Amit and Ze'ev Radovan (field and studio photography), Yossi Nagar (physical anthropology) and Michal Ben-Gal (pottery restoration). We were assisted by the 'Kramim' Company, Yair Zoran and his sons, Dan Barag, Amos Kloner, Hanan Eshel, Ya'akov Meshorer, David Amit, Alon Klein, Yeshu Drei, Yeshaiahu Lander, Hagit Neugeborn, Zvi Greenhut, Donald T. Ariel, and many other friends and volunteers. Conservation and reconstruction work began under the direction of Ya'akov Schaeffer, Ami Sabah and Eyal Kaho. Research has been made possible by the generous assistance of Yad Hanadiv, the Rothschild Foundation, the Jeselsohn Epigraphic Center of Jewish History, and the Ancient History and Mediterranean Archaeology Program at the University of California, Berkeley. For a preliminary report, see B. Zissu, 'Village Razed, Rebel Beheaded; How Hadrian Suppressed the Second Jewish Revolt at Horvat ʿEthri', *Biblical Archaeological Review* 33/5 (2007), pp. 32–41.

[3] The discovery of elements of olive presses in secondary use indicates an additional branch of agriculture: the growing of olives for oil production. Abbreviations written on *ostraca*, considered to refer to dried figs, would constitute evidence for the cultivation of fig trees. A rock-cut columbarium, located at the northern slope of the settlement, may have been used for raising pigeons and producing manure. We may learn about spinning and weaving of cloth from the finding of loom weights made of unbaked clay and of stone, and spindle whorls made of stone, glass and lead.

The History of the Settlement

The Persian Period

The earliest phase of the settlement was at the end of the Persian period, during the 4th century BCE (**Phase I**). No buildings were preserved that can be dated with certainty to this period. The existence of a settlement is indicated by pottery fragments and coins[4] from the second half of the 4th century BCE that have been discovered on the surface and in bedrock pockets beneath floors of later buildings.

The Hellenistic Period

From the Hellenistic period (**Phase II**) remains of walls that were integrated into later structures have been preserved (in Unit U, fig. 3, and also probably in Units S and P), as well as rock-cut caves: water cisterns (e.g. Cistern XII), and subterranean limestone quarries (in System II). It is difficult to assess the physical structure of the settlement at this period, since it seems that many structures were dismantled or integrated into the buildings of phase III—during the first half of the 1st century CE.

The numismatic assemblage hints that the site was continuously inhabited, throughout the Hellenistic period. There is no way of appreciating what occurred during the tumultuous days of the Macedonian conquest and the wars of the Diadochi. The earliest coins of the Hellenistic period are a single coin of Alexander the Great (posthumous, *c.* 317 BCE) minted in Cyprus and several coins of Ptolemy I Soter.[5] The diffusion of coins from the Hellenistic period found in the various areas of the site and the distribution of the earlier hewn cavities shows that the settlement extended over more than 0.7 hectare.

The complete absence of imported pottery vessels, especially Rhodian stamped amphora handles is conspicuous. The same phenomenon was observed in Hasmonean Jerusalem.[6] A similar phenomenon was observed in Jewish Galilean ceramic assemblages from the Early Roman period at Yodefat[7] and elsewhere.[8] It is difficult to asses if the absence attests to a rejection of

[4] The coins include a few minute silver Yehud coins, minted probably in Jerusalem, a minute coin that was apparently struck in Babylon, as well as imitations of Athenian coins, including two tetradrachms possibly minted in Egypt; see H. Eshel and B. Zissu, 'Two Notes on the History and Archaeology of Judea in the Persian Period', in A. M. Maeir and P. De Miroschedji (eds), *'I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times', Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Winona Lake, 2006), pp. 823–831.

[5] The numismatic assemblage from the Hellenistic period consists of bronze coins of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, and hundreds of *prutot* of Alexander Jannaeus and other Hasmonean rulers. Four silver coins deserve mention: one hemiobol of Ptolemy I probably minted in Jerusalem (of the *Yehud* series), two tetradrachms minted in Tyre by Antiochus VII and Demetrius II, and one didrachm of Demetrius II struck in Tyre.

[6] D. T. Ariel, *Excavations at the City of David*, vol. 2 (Qedem 30; Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 13–28; see also discussion by F. Vitto, 'Potters and Pottery Manufacture in Roman Palestine', *Bulletin of the University of London Institute of Archaeology* 23 (1986), pp. 55–56.

[7] D. Adan-Bayewitz and M. Aviam, 'Iotapata, Josephus, and the Siege of 67: Preliminary Report on the 1992–1994 Seasons', *JRA* 10 (1997), p. 165.

[8] D. Avshalom-Gorni and N. Getzov, 'Phoenicians and Jews: A Ceramic Case-Study', in A. M. Berlin and J. A. Overman (eds), *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History, and Ideology* (London / New York, 2002), pp. 79–81; A. M. Berlin, 'Romanization and Anti-Romanization in Pre-Revolt Galilee', in Berlin and Overman (eds), *The First Jewish Revolt*, pp. 59–70.

Gentile wine and other products, due to the impurity of foreign lands. But it is questionable whether gentiles were considered ritually impure during the Second Temple period, as recent research shows.[9] It is also unclear when the laws forbidding the eating of Gentile foods were promulgated.[10] Perhaps other factors were involved, as economic isolation, avoidance of market connections with Gentile cities, rural tastes, or difficulties acquiring expensive imported wine.

One or two of the ritual immersion baths (*mikva'ot*), were probably installed during the Hasmonean period, suggesting that the inhabitants of the site were Jewish.[11] From the second half of the 2nd century BCE thenceforth the *mikva'ot* became an essential component of a Jewish house or region and an integral part of the way of life of the Jewish community. The details of these ritual baths are provided in the Mishnaic tractate *Mikva'ot*. The basic study of the religious rules and the archaeology of these installations has been provided by R. Reich.[12]

These stepped baths are covered, rock-hewn pools of water, with sides coated with white, gray (or both) waterproof plaster to prevent seepage of water. Rainwater was channeled into the baths. The baths discovered match the religious requirements for ritual purification (albeit, formulated much later, by the Rabbinic *halakha*). All were connected with the ground, with a capacity larger than the minimal 40 *se'ah* (*c.* 0.5–1 cubic metre), and are deep enough to allow full immersion of the bather.

Given the geographical location of the site, on the boundary region, between Judaea and Idumaea[13] just to the north of the areas annexed by John Hyrcanus I,[14] it is reasonable to assume that occupation postdating

[9] J. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 287–291; C. H. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 45–67, 199–204.

[10] D. T. Ariel, 'Imported Greek Stamped Amphora Handles', in H. Geva (ed.), *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem conducted by Nahman Avigad, 1969–1982*, vol. I: *Architecture and Stratigraphy: Areas A, W and X-2, Final Report* (Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 277–278.

[11] The Hasmonean period *mikwa'ot* are as follows. (a) *mikveh* no. I, located *c.* 25 metres north of the buildings K and U. This well preserved installation includes a trapezoid vestibule (1.8×2.5×3.9×4.5 metres, max. depth 2.9 m). Nine steps carved out of the rock descend to the opening (which is 0.9 metres wide and 2 metres high). The immersion room is irregular—4×4.3×4.7×4.9 metres—and its max. height is 5 metres. Three hewn steps descend to the immersion basin. The maximal volume of the installation could reach *c.* 74 cubic metres. The walls were covered with a thick layer of white plaster. The ceiling of the immersion room consisted of the local *nari* layer. (b) The rock-cut, stepped and white-plastered installation integrated in hiding system no. XV (beneath hall M1). This installation was damaged by later (Early-Roman) building and cutting operations, and its features will be presented in the final report.

[12] R. Reich, *Miqva'ot (Jewish Ritual Immersion Baths) in Eretz Israel in the Second Temple and Mishnah and Talmud Periods*, PhD Dissertation Submitted to the Hebrew University (Jerusalem, 1990; Hebrew).

[13] M. Avi-Yonah, 'Historical Geography of Palestine', in S. Safrai and M. Stern (eds), *The Jewish People in the First Century* (Assen, 1974), pp. 82–83.

[14] A. Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs: Relations of the Jews in Eretz-Israel, with the Nations of the Frontier and the Desert during the Hellenistic and Roman Era (332 BCE–70 CE)* (Tübingen, 1988), pp. 44–78; A. Kasher, *Jews and Hellenistic Cities in Eretz-Israel: Relations of the Jews in Eretz-Israel with the Hellenistic Cities during the Second Temple Period (332 BCE–70 CE)* (Tübingen, 1990), pp. 115, 130.

Hyrcanus I would be associated with Jews (either new Judean settlers or converted Idumaeans). However, the archaeological evidence alone, does not provide unequivocal evidence of Jewish presence prior to the Hasmonean conquests.

The Early Roman Period

We assume that the site was inhabited continuously during the first century BCE.[15] There is no way to assess the nature of the transition from the Hasmonean to the Early Roman period, neither to present well dated buildings or *loci* from this period. During the first half of the 1st century CE, extensive development and building activities took place all over the area of site (**Phase III**). The village, which reached an area of *c.* 1 hectare, most likely attained its greatest extension in the days preceding the Jewish War against the Romans (fig.4).

New, distinctively planned residential quarters were constructed, enclosing two central plazas (*c.* 17×45 metres).[16] Narrow lanes lead off the plazas, to the architectural units.

These units included central courtyards, surrounded by rows of lateral rooms. The walls of the structures were built of large *nari* stones. The outer corners of the buildings and architectural elements like lintels and doorposts of doors and window frames were finely trimmed of large *nari* blocks, indicating attention to details. Molded architectural adornments are absent.

It appears that the roofing of the rooms was made of wooden beams upon which twigs or reeds were laid and a layer of soil applied. Only in one of the rooms (K5) the rough texture of the walls was smoothed with a layer of white plaster. The walls of the other rooms were probably covered with clay. In the corner of the neighbouring room K6 a *tabun* (cooking oven) was found. It was made of thick, rough clay and coated with sherds and earth.

The residential rooms along the perimeter of the settlement are adjacent to one another, exposing a continuous external wall built of large stones, which was apparently intended to provide security against the risk of brigandage.

The two westernmost rooms (K1 and K4, fig. 5) of Unit K were built of large and well-drafted ashlars, forming a stronger rectangular structure (7×10 metres). Its location, at the edge of the village, enabling a command of the slope to the west and the thickness of its walls (1 metre) may explain its possible use as a defence tower controlling the approach from the west.

Open courts were set outside the buildings by dressing and levelling of the bedrock and filling the depressions. Rainwater ran off from the roofs of the houses and the open spaces was drained—often by means of channels—into at least 12 water cisterns and 4 ritual immersion baths (fig. 6), which were carved in a planned manner beneath open plazas and inner courtyards. White or gray hydraulic plaster has been preserved on the walls of the cisterns and ritual baths. The nature of construction and the stonecutting work attests to

[15] The assumption is based on the finding of coins of Mattathias Antigonus and Herod the Great, among other finds.

[16] This open plaza could be the 'town square'—רחובה של עיר—mentioned in the Mishnah (*mBik*. 3:2).

the familiarity of the masons with the local bedrock.[17]

The stonecutters fashioned raised foundations for buildings in the *nari* rock, together with openings and shafts descending to underground chambers. Beneath some of the dwellings small underground systems were hewn: each system included a vertical or stepped entrance shaft and a short, twisting tunnel, at the end of which were one or two small chambers; these are characteristic components of hiding complexes, common in the Judaean Foothills.[18] Some of these systems were found sealed and contained diagnostic assemblages of finds from the 1st century CE.

The finds that were discovered beneath and above the floors of the residential rooms located above the undergrounds, and the stratigraphic context of the access shafts to them, evidently show that the underground systems IV, V, VI were installed during the construction of the rooms at the beginning of the 1st century CE. The small systems in the western part of the settlement went out of use after the destruction of the site in the Jewish War of 66–70 CE. This conclusion can contribute to a more accurate dating of the early development of the hiding complexes phenomenon in the Judaean Foothills. The rock-cut systems in the eastern part of the site were developed and remained in use in the period between the two revolts against the Romans and during the days of the Bar Kokhba revolt (70–135 CE).

The residents of the village in the 1st century CE were Jews, as attested by typical 'ethnic' indicators, as ritual immersion baths, fragments of stone household vessels and stone ossuaries (see below).

The stone vessels belong to the well-known type of vessels, common all over the country at urban and rural sites from the late Second Temple period. These stone vessels were made of white chalk, by lathe-turning, hand-carving, or both. According to Jewish law, stone vessels cannot become impure; consequently, they are always fit for use, unlike pottery, which must be broken if it becomes impure.[19]

The ceramic and numismatic assemblages are also characteristic to Jewish settlements in this period. The ceramic assemblage is composed almost exclusively of locally made vessels of types common in Jerusalem and Judaea during this period (see discussion and reservations above). Some complete vessels and thousands pottery fragments from the Early Roman period were discovered; only two storage jars were produced outside Judaea proper, apparently in the Southern Coastal Plain.

[17] Soft limestone or *kirton* of the Tzorʿa formation, ʿAdullam detail, covered by a thin layer of *nari*.

[18] A. Kloner, 'Underground Hiding Complexes from the Bar Kochba War in the Judaean Shephela', *BA* 46 (1983), pp. 210–221; A. Kloner and B. Zissu, 'Hiding Complexes in Judaea: An Archaeological and Geographical Update on the Area of the Bar Kokhba Revolt', in P. Schäfer (ed.), *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome* (Tübingen, 2003), pp. 181–216.

[19] *mKel*. 10:1; *mBetz*. 2:9; *mPar*. 3:1); J. M. Cahill, 'The Chalk Vessel Assemblages of the Persian / Hellenistic and Early Roman Periods', in A. De Groot and D. T. Ariel, *Excavations at the City of David 1978–1985*, vol. III. (Qedem 33; Jerusalem, 1992), pp. 190–274; Y. Magen, 'The Stone Vessel Industry in the Second Temple Period, Excavations at Hizma and the Jerusalem Temple Mount', in L. Tsfania (ed.), *Judea and Samaria Publications* 1 (Jerusalem, 2002).

Burial caves used by the site's inhabitants at the end of the Second Temple period were located along the northern and eastern slopes, beyond village's limits. Three tombs have been found along the eastern slope: each one was entered through a small square opening, which was initially closed by a blocking stone. These caves contained mainly a square chamber with a standing-pit in their centre and waist-high benches around three sides. This type of tomb is dated from the Iron Age onward, but specimens from the Hasmonean period were found in the area of Jerusalem.[20] It is possible that these tombs were used even subsequently, during the Early-Roman period. The tombs were opened and their content was looted. On the eastern slope a larger burial system (XXXIV) was surveyed, that consisted of a courtyard, a vestibule and a square chamber with *kokhim*—perpendicular burial slots, hewn into its walls (fig. 7). This system was also plundered, but from the heaps of dirt in its courtyard, broken fragments of a limestone ossuary were recovered.[21] Similar burial systems were common in Jerusalem and Judaea during the 1st to the beginning of the 2nd centuries CE.[22]

The settlement was partly destroyed in the Jewish War against the Romans, (66–70 CE) and afterward abandoned for a short period. Remains of the conflagration—ashes on floors—were noticed mainly in the eastern wing of Unit T. It seems that if there was fighting, it took place at the eastern side of the settlement—the weakest point in the site's natural defences. In the western wing of the settlement (Units K and U) no burnt level was observed. In this area the houses were abandoned during the Jewish War and never resettled. *Prutot* from the second and the third years of the war (67–68 and 68–69 CE) were found, many of them on floors of buildings and courtyards. Worthy of special notice are a silver half-shekel coin from the 3rd year of the revolt, concealed in system XIV (fig. 8) and a bronze coin—the smallest denomination of the 4th year of the war (69–70 CE).

Cistern XII and its Contents

At the time of the construction of the hall M1, the open court M3 was set along side its north-eastern wall, thus cancelling an earlier rock-cut water cistern. This cistern, with an oval plan (6.5×4 metres, *c.* 6 metres depth) and a flight of steps hewn along its inner walls, belongs to a type common at Maresha, and dated to the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE.[23] This type of cisterns was found in other Judaean Shephelah sites and below the Temple Mount at

[20] A. Kloner and B. Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period* (Leuven / Dudley, 2007), pp. 87–88.

[21] Ossuaries are small, covered receptacles made of soft limestone and sometimes painted or ornamented with carved or incised designs. Many of them carry inscriptions in Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic. The ossuaries are found in rock-cut tombs, and were used by Jews for secondary burial of human bones. The practice of collecting bones in ossuaries began in the late first century BCE and continued in Jerusalem until the destruction of 70 CE and in Judaea until the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. The main study and collection of material was published by L. Y. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem, 1994).

[22] Kloner and Zissu, *The Necropolis* (as in n. 20 above).

[23] A. Kloner, 'Water Cisterns in Idumea, Judaea and Nabatea in the Hellenistic and Early Roman Periods', *ARAM* 13–14 (2000–2001), pp. 461–485.

Jerusalem.[24] The cistern was filled with hundreds of broken jars and cooking pots characteristic of the 1st century BCE to the first half of the 1st century CE, apparently when the hall was erected and the open court was set, during **Phase IV** (see below). It is possible that the large assemblage of shattered vessels was collected from dwellings destroyed in the Jewish War, in the course of their reconstruction.

On *c.* 28 of the fragments were inscriptions written in the Jewish (square Hebrew) script in black ink.[25] Most of these *ostraca* contained single letters and numbers, presumably recording evidence of secular administration in common abbreviations.[26] The script can be dated on palaeographic reasons to the 1st century BCE–1st century CE.

1. (8317), fig. 9. \ /// [סאין] [דבלין] Dv[elin] S[ʾein] 4 (=D[dried figs] S[ʾein][27] 4). There is a second, illegible row of 5–6 letters.
   The recording of the dried figs on the *ostraca* can attest for their production and storage. The difficulty in this reconstruction is that dried figs were probably counted as fig-cakes and not weighted in S'ein.[28]
2. (4624), fig. 10. \ // ¬ [דינריין] D[enarii] 13. For similar financial records from Masada, see Yadin and Naveh.[29]
3. (8314), fig. 11. 9 \\ //// [סאין] S[e'in] 26. For other examples of the sign 9 (=20), see Yadin and Naveh.[30]

On other sherds amounts of an unknown product were counted in S[ʾein] and/or K[abin]. Marks used to designate numerals also appear. Same marks are common at Masada, Qumran, Murabbaʿat and elsewhere.

The name עתרי (*ʿEthri*) was written in Hebrew on fragment no. 4 (4625), fig. 12, revealed in this locus (this *ostracon* gave the site its name). This inscription, in conjunction with physical data such as the location of the settlement and its size, on the eve of its destruction, suggest that the site should perhaps be identified with *Κάφεθρα* (*Caphetra* = Kefar ʿEthra).[31] This village, 'unjustly called a town' (*ψευδοπολίχνιον*) located in the Judaean Foothills was set on fire

[24] S. Gibson and D. M. Jacobson, *Below the Temple Mount in Jerusalem: A Sourcebook on the Cisterns, Subterranean Chambers and Counduits of the Haram al-Sharif* (BAR International Series 637; Oxford, 1996), pp. 225–233.

[25] We are indebted to Esther Eshel for her assistance.

[26] For parallel accounts, see Y. Yadin and Y. Naveh, 'The Aramaic and Hebrew Ostraca and Jar Inscriptions from Masada', in J. Aviram, G. Foerster and E. Netzer (eds), *Masada I: The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965, Final Reports* (Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 58–60.

[27] The *Se'ah* סאה (plural *Se'in*) is a measure unit equivalent to 13.2 cubic cm or 6 *Qabin* קבין (singular *Qab*=2.2 cubic cm; *yTer*. 47b).

[28] See Yadin and Naveh, 'The Aramaic and Hebrew Ostraca' (as in n. 26 above), pp. 46–47; we are particularly grateful to Joseph Naveh for his remarks.

[29] Yadin and Naveh, 'The Aramaic and Hebrew Ostraca' (as in n. 26 above), p. 59, nos. 597–603.

[30] Yadin and Naveh, *The Aramaic and Hebrew Ostraca* (as in n. 26 above), p. 59, nos. 593–595.

[31] For a detailed discussion of the proposed identification of this site and the neighbouring Capharabis at H. Burgin, see B. Zissu, *Rural Settlement in the Judaean Hills and Foothills from the Late Second Temple Period to the Bar Kokhba Revolt*, unpublished PhD thesis, Hebrew University (Jerusalem, 2001), pp. 335–346.

during a campaign carried out by Cerealis and units of the Fifth Legion in the region in the year 69 CE.[32]

We should keep in mind that the village—κώμη—was a common form of settlement in Judaea. Until recently, the physical form and architecture of Second Temple period villages in Judaea proper was mostly unknown.[33] Recently, remains of two other sufficiently preserved villages have been uncovered at Qiryat Sefer[34] and at Kh. Umm el-ʻAmdan.[35] An analysis of the physical layout and environs of these villages (as well as other less preserved exemplars) have pointed to several common features: The villages occupy an area of 1.5 hectares. The architectural units were planned, with square rooms grouped arround courtyards. The exterior walls of the buildings form a continuous, wall-like line, as in a 'city whose roofs form its wall'.[36] In the centre of the village is a large public plaza containing sometimes a rock-cut ritual bath and cistern(s). Several other cisterns and ritual immersion baths were hewn in the courtyards. Residential quarters are separated by alleys. The three villages have a public building, identified as a synagogue (see discussion below). Construction is mostly modest, and based on local available materials. Only few architectural elements, as doors and windows frames and external corners were carefully crafted. The floors were made of compressed earth or dressed bedrock. There are no architectural adornments, and no interior decoration as mosaic floors, stucco mouldings and painted walls. Industrial caves (e.g. olive presses), storage caves, cisterns, and so on were hewn in the bedrock. Burrows linked the artificial underground cavities which turned into hiding-complexes during the revolts against Rome. The rock-cut family burial caves were located beyond village's limits. Primary and secondary burial was customary, with bones collected in ossuaries. A comparison with the much similar material culture of 1st-century Galilee, as eloquently presented by Andrea M. Berlin, is beyond the scope of the present study.[37]

Between the Jewish Revolts against the Romans and the Bar Kokhba Revolt (70–135 CE)

The site was resettled during the period between the revolts against the Romans (**Phase IV**). We can speculate whether these were returning original residents or Jewish migrants from other places. The new settlers restored some of the destroyed courtyard buildings, adapting them to their needs by re-dividing

[32] Josephus, *War*, IV:552–554.

[33] Y. Hirschfeld, 'Jewish Rural Settlement in Judaea in the Early Roman Period', in S. E. Alcock (ed.), *The Early Roman Empire in the East* (Oxbow Monograph 95; Oxford, 1997), pp. 72–85; Y. Hirschfeld, 'Early Roman Manor Houses in Judea and the Site of Khirbet Qumran', *JNES* 57 / 3 (1998), pp. 161–189; Zissu, *Rural Settlement* (as in n. 31 above).

[34] Y. Magen, Y. Zionit and O. Sirkis, 'Khirbet Badd Isa—Qiryat Sefer', in N. Haimovich-Carmin (ed.), *The Land of Benjamin* (JSP 3; Jerusalem, 2004), pp. 25–32.

[35] A. Onn, S. Wexler-Bdolah, Y. Rapuano and T. Kanias, 'Khirbet Umm el-ʻUmdan', *HA-ESI* 114 (2002), pp. 64*–68*.

[36] *mArakh*. 9:6.

[37] Berlin, *Romanization and Anti-Romanization* (as in n. 8 above).

the rooms, changing their functions and raising floors. Two stables were built in rooms N7[38] and T22. In our estimation the renewed settlement occupied less than half of the area that had previously been built up. The principal residential buildings were arranged in an enclosed compound, measuring approximately 50×35 m, with rows of rooms grouped around three rectangular courtyards (Units N, M, T and possibly also Unit Q; fig. 4 and figs. 13, 14). Outside of the built-up area were open courts, caves and agricultural installations.

The rectilinear exterior walls were constructed of large stones, with only one or two entrances from outside. Some of the buildings rose to a height of two stories: The use of especially large stones and the sturdier construction of the foundations of the rooms T10–T13 is probably an indication for the existence of a second story.

Along side the courtyard Units N and T, to the northeast, the public building (M), was erected. It is most likely that this building served as a synagogue (see discussion below).

Underneath the residential units of this phase, underground complexes were installed, including burrows, chambers and connections to existing water cisterns. Access to the complexes was usually obtained through stepped or vertical shafts carved into the levelled bedrock floors of the rooms. At the head of the shafts recesses were designed for placing blocking slabs that concealed the opening (fig. 15). The presence of typical dating finds would suggest that these systems served as hideouts for the residents of the village, during the Bar Kokhba revolt.

These were presumably the defences described by Cassius Dio:

> *To be sure, they did not dare try conclusions with the Romans in the open field, but they occupied the advantageous positions in the country and strengthened them with mines and walls, in order that they might have places of refuge whenever they should be hard pressed, and might meet together unobserved under ground; and they pierced these subterranean passages from above at intervals to let in air and light.* (*Historia Romana*, LXIX, 12, 3).

Some of the systems, such as the large complex XV (see description below), were looted before our excavations. A smaller complex (XIV) was reopened during the Late Roman period, and remained subsequently sealed. It contained a small assemblage of finds from the time of the Jewish War and many artifacts from the Bar Kokhba revolt, including characteristic Judaean oil-lamps, Roman coins and three bronze coins that were re-struck by the rebels' administration.[39]

The inhabitants of the settlement participated in the Bar Kokhba revolt. At

[38] This stable was built perhaps earlier, in phase III, and was reused during phases IV and V.

[39] One coin was from year one (132–133 CE), and two from the undated series attributed to the third year of the revolt (134–135 CE). Five silver denarii concealed during the Bar Kokhba Revolt were uncovered. The outer stones of the westernmost corner of the village contained one imperial denarius of Vespasian (dated 71 CE) and one of Hadrian (119–138 CE), and the outer stones at the easternmost edge of the site contained three denarii: one of them belongs to the undated series from the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt, while the others are imperial denarii of the emperors Vespasian (72/3 CE) and Trajan (101/2 CE).

the end of the revolt the village was violently destroyed, as evidenced by the excavation finds, including a burnt layer that was uncovered on the floors of the rooms in the centre of the site (units N6, N4). On the floor of room N4 we discovered a denarius restruck by the Bar Kokhba administration in the 2nd year of the revolt (fig 16 left); burn stains were visible on it. The ritual bath XI was re-used as a mass burial (Locus 4142), and contained the skulls and bones of at least 12 individuals (7 adults, including females and males, 4 adolescents and one fetus) apparently slaughtered during the conquest of the settlement. Y. Nagar of IAA studied the bones *in situ,* and observed cut marks on a neck vertebra, indicating that at least one individual was beheaded by a sword blow. He concluded that the bones were left exposed for a certain period, and only thereafter collected and buried in the bath. A similar mass burial was found at Yodefat, containing the bones of at least twenty individuals slaughtered during the fall of the town in 67 CE.[40]

The human bones were mixed with ashes, pieces of charred wood and diagnostic finds: fragments of pottery, as bowls, casseroles, cooking pots, jars, jugs and juglets (fig. 17b) and glass vessels (some of the glass fragments were deformed due to the fire), fragments of wheel-made and knife-pared ('Herodian') oil-lamps, (fig. 17a:1) mould-made Judaean oil-lamps (fig. 17a: 2, 3), round discus lamps, and pieces of stone vessels (fig. 17b: 16). The assemblage also included two silver coins, bonded together: a tetradrachm minted by Vespasian at Antioch (69/70 or 70/71 CE) and a drachm minted at Bostra during the days of Trajan (111 CE).

From the archaeological point of view this well-dated assemblage of finds is of great significance, enabling us to observe the typological differences that had developed in the shapes of the domestic vessels from the period that predates the Jewish War against the Romans to that of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (66–135 CE). Similar types of pottery and glass vessels were found at the recently excavated site of Shu'afat[41] as well as at other rural Judean sites.[42]

The fate of this village was similar to that of many other settlements in Judaea. The rural areas of Judaea apparently took an active part in the revolt, and suffered a large-scale devastation when re-conquered by the Roman army during 135 and even beginning of 136 CE.[43] The main historical source for

[40] M. Aviam, 'Yodefat / Jotapata: The Archaeology of the First Battle', in Berlin and Overman (eds), *The First Jewish Revolt* (as in n. 8 above), pp. 130–131.

[41] R. Bar-Nathan and D. A. Sklar-Parnes, 'A Jewish Settlement in Orine between the Two Revolts', in J. Patrich and D. Amit (eds), *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Region* (Jerusalem, 2007), pp. 57–64 (Hebrew); N. Katsnelson, 'Early Roman Glass Vessels from Judea—Locally Produced Glass? Preliminary Report', in Patrich and Amit (eds), *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Region*, pp. 5*–11*.

[42] See Y. Tsafrir and B. Zissu, 'A Hiding Complex of the Second Temple Period and the Time of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt at 'Ain-'Arrub in the Hebron Hills', in J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East*, vol. 3 (Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement 49; Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 2002), pp. 7–36, and lit. cit. there.

[43] P. Schäfer, *Der Bar Kokhba-Aufstand. Studien zum zweiten jüdischen Krieg gegen Rom* (Tübingen, 1981); W. Eck, 'The Bar Kokhba Revolt: The Roman Point of View', *JRS* 89 (1999), pp. 76–89.

the aftermath of the revolt is again the *Historia Romana* of Cassius Dio:

> *Fifty of their most important outposts and nine hundred and eighty-five of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Five hundred and eighty thousand men were slain in the various raids and battles, and the number of those that perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out. Thus, nearly the whole of Judaea was made desolate, a result of which the people had had forewarning before the war.*

Public Building (Structure M; figs. 13, 14, 18)

The public building is part of an architectural complex, which included a broad hall (M1), a vestibule (M2), an outer open court (M3), an inner courtyard (T9) and a public immersion bath (XI).

The availability of an adequate construction area alongside the residential Units N and T, apparently determined the location of the hall M1. This building is clearly an addition to these already existing structures. The planners were satisfied with this area, whose topography dictated a broad-house layout, without the need to enlarge it by the construction of an artificial platform. The builders had to deal with several existing rock-cut features—two ritual baths and a cistern—within the precincts of the planned structure M1. One of the baths was filled with large stones and earth and covered under the floor level while the second bath and the cistern were concealed and integrated into the hiding complex XV (see description below).

The rectangular vestibule, or *narthex* M2 (3.5×13 m) was accessed from the east and west via two entrances in its narrow walls that were closed with doors.

The single entrance to the hall M1, *c.* 1 m wide, was set in the middle of the vestibule's northeastern wall, while the opposite wall of the hall faced Jerusalem. Thus, upon entering the hall, one was oriented north-east, towards Jerusalem.[44]

The walls of the rectangular hall (*c.* 13×7 metres; 0.9 metres width) were built of two faces of dressed blocks with a filling of stone rubble (fig. 18). The walls were preserved to a maximum height of five courses. In our proposed restoration, (fig. 14) the ceiling was supported by three round columns, each consisted of several drums and topped by a Doric-like capital. One capital and one drum, made of the local *nari* stone, were found in secondary use in the adjacent room T4 (fig. 19 B and C). The columns rested on square stone pedestals. After the destruction of the public building the columns were dismantled; only two pedestals and the foundation of the third remained *in situ*, in the centre of the floor of the hall, being integrated in the next building stage (fig. 18).

[44] When comparing the direction of hall M1, counted from the entrance to the centre of the opposite wall, as against a topographical 1:50000 map, there is a minimal deviation of only 5.5 per cent (the building is oriented at an azimuth of 40/360 degrees as against 60/360 degrees on the map).

Architectural Ornamentation

Building M was apparently plain and simple. Three fragments of a moulded cornice made of *nari* have been found on the surface of the open court M3, just below the building, and it seems that belonged to it (fig. 19 A). In our reconstruction the cornice adorned the upper portion of the building and supported the edges of the roof.

The floors of the structure were made of levelled bedrock; the depressions were filled with gravel, and the walls were probably covered with clay. No remains of a Torah-shrine, artistic representations, inscriptions or mosaics were present.

Alongside the hall M1, to the northeast, an open court (M3) was established. A rock-cut bench ran along its length, parallel to the hall's long wall (fig. 20). This court ended in a terrace wall made of large stones, which also marks the edge of the built-up area. A lane (*c.* 3.2 metres wide), runs under this wall, supported by a lower parallel terrace. This lane enters the village here, and was probably the end of the road approaching from northeast.[45] During the erection of the hall and the setting of the open court and the lane, an earlier rock-cut water cistern (XII) was filled and closed up (see below).

A stepped corridor cut into the corner of the hall M1 gives access into the public hiding complex (XV), installed beneath the public building. This corridor was formerly the entrance to a ritual bath, which was cancelled during the building of M1. The plan of the subterranean complex XV was ultimately determined during the construction of the public building by attaching three earlier hideouts, each one consisting of a shaft (fig. 21), a burrow and a small chamber.[46] These were joined by means of longer burrows to two large subterranean water reservoirs. The stepped *dromus* of one of the reservoirs was concealed, the lower portion of it was filled with earth and stones, and two burrows breached its walls. In this manner the reservoir could serve as a concealed 'public shelter' for those visiting the hall M1 and residents of nearby buildings N and T. One of the burrows that breached its side enabled the connection to the upper part of the second reservoir, facilitating concealed storage and drawing of water.

A mixed assemblage of finds from the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods was found in the looted complex, including a *prutah* from the second year of the Jewish War and finds from the Bar Kokhba Revolt: Judaean and round discus oil-lamps, fragments of pottery and stone vessels.

The vestibule M2 gave access also to a rectangular inner courtyard—T9 (measuring 5×14 m). On its side, a rock-cut stepped corridor descended into the immersion room, hewn perpendicular to the corridor (*mikveh* XI, fig. 6;

[45] The section cut through the fill beneath this street revealed diagnostic pottery from the 1st century CE and two coins: one of Alexander Yannai (no. 8372) and one of Herod Archelaus (no. 8375).

[46] One of the early units contained a stepped shaft and a small oval chamber; a didrachm of Demetrius II minted at Tyre in 128 BCE and worn away by use had been hidden in a niche in the floor of the chamber.

for a description of its contents, see above).[47] A smaller, second ritual bath (*mikveh* XIII) was located adjacent to the eastern entrance of the vestibule; within it a stone sundial was found (not *in situ*; fig. 22). It is unclear whether *mikveh* XIII was intended to be used by those arriving at the public building, or whether this was the bath of the residents of Unit T.

At the time of the construction of the public building the open court M3 was set along side its north-eastern wall, thus cancelling the earlier water cistern XII (fig. 20). The cistern was intentionally filled with hundreds of broken jars and cooking pots characteristic of the 1st century BCE and the first half of the 1st century CE (see above).

The Date of the Public Building

The hall M1 was likely built between the two revolts of the Jews against the Romans, and was used until the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. The date is based on diagnostic pieces of pottery and coins discovered on the floors of hall M1 and vestibule M2, as well as in the sections underneath their floors.[48]

During the late Roman period the public building was restored and its internal space was reorganised, while the external walls remained unchanged. This activity altered the original plan and makes it difficult to analyse and understand the remains of the initial phase.

The Late Roman–Early Byzantine Period

Soon after 200 CE, the ruined village was resettled and restored by new residents, perhaps of a pagan origin (**Phase V**). They were presumably veterans of the Roman army, who were granted estates in the hinterland (*chora*) of the recently founded *colonia* of Eleutheropolis. This new chapter continued for

[47] In our opinion, *Mikveh* XI is associated with Building M since it is accessed directly from the vestibule M2. Its location in courtyard T9 also enabled access from the nearby building T. We assume that the installation was not associated with Building N, which it abuts, since there was no clear access from building N to courtyard T9. In any case, *mikvaot* I and XI are communal, vs. *mikveh* XIII, which seems to be integrated in building T. Berlin has shown an interesting example of what appears to be a public *mikveh* (Unit B6) located within Unit B at Gamla; see A. M. Berlin, *Gamla I: The Pottery of the Second Temple Period* (IAA Reports 29; Jerusalem, 2006), plan 3.1 on p. 65; p. 80.

[48] The filling below the floor level of hall M1 contained twelve coins: two Seleucid (nos. 4431, 4468), three Hasmonaean (nos. 4474, 4500, 4477), one of Herod the Great (no. 4473), two of the Roman procurator Festus (nos. 4475, 4511), two from the second year of the Jewish War against the Romans (nos. 4418, 4417), and one minted in Gaza in 69/70 CE (no. 4481). An additional coin minted at Ascalon in 112/3 CE (no. 4430) was found in the dumps excavated from this *locus*. This coin, preserved in mint condition, can date the erection of the building shortly after 112/3 CE. In the debris covering the floors nine coins were found: one coin of Alexander Yannai (no.4397), one autonomous coin of Ascalon from the 1st century BCE (no. 4381), two coins of the Roman procurator Ambibulus (nos. 4378, 4379) one coin of Agripas I (no. 4335), one coin from year two of the Jewish War against the Romans (no. 4322), one coin of Constantius II (no.4334), and two unidentified coins (nos. 4356, 4380). Another section was dug perpendicular to the northern wall of the building, the wall being built directly on a fill of limestone quarry chips, compressed into the dromus of the water cistern XV-18, whose original purpose was cancelled, as explained above, when the cistern was integrated in the complex XV. The fill contained few diagnostic pieces of pottery that provided a *terminus post quem* for the construction of hall M1.

c. 250 years till the abandonment of the site in the 5th century. This phase was not accompanied by significant architectural alterations (fig. 23).

The courtyard buildings at the eastern part of the site—Units M, T, N, Q—were renovated. Some of the rooms were sub-divided and in some places the floors were raised. Complex T was entered through a porch that led to a stone paved courtyard bounded by verandas on two sides. The verandas were added at the expense of the open space of the internal courtyard. Behind the veranda, surrounding the courtyard, were rows of lateral rooms. A stone staircase, built in one of the corners of the courtyard led to the upper floor or to the flat roof.

Transverse arches based on piers supported the roofing of some of the rooms. The arches were robbed—only their bases or the piers remained *in situ*. The few matching voussoirs found in the debris show carefully crafting and tightly fitted joints. The use of stone arches—an architectural innovation—suggests that the builders lacked wooden beams long enough to effect the span, as opposed to earlier roofing traditions, when such beams were available.[49] Some large stone slabs found in the debris were conceivably balanced on top of the arches as part of a rough corbelling. Square tiles, made of coarse, fired clay, were found in the debris above the floors. The tiles were perhaps initially employed in the pillars of a *hypocaust* of a bathhouse of the Roman type, that was not located.

The public building was adapted to domestic purposes: the vestibule M2 was divided into two units; one of which served as a kitchen, as evidenced by a *tabun* built in one of the corners. The internal area of the hall M1 was divided into three units that apparently served as a residence, and their ceiling was based on three transverse arches, partly supported by two of the pedestals of the previous phase.

We assume that the underground complexes had no further use, because they were filled with dirt and debris and were blocked off. A burial cave that was installed within a subterranean chamber belongs to this period; it was originally cut in the 1st century CE, as part of a small hiding/storage complex (cave III). The cave contains a square burial room along whose sides three *arcosolia* with burial troughs were carved out. On the façade of two of the troughs schematical motifs were carved: two discs, one amphora, an altar, and an extremely stylised *kliné* (fig. 24).

Four winepresses, installed earlier to the east of the ancient settlement were renovated during this stage. The particularly interesting 'Winepress Z' was located on a plain rocky surface, at the eastern extremity of the ancient settlement, *c.* 17 metres off Unit T. One can distinguish two architectural stages in the operation of this installation: the early one, from the 1st century CE, and the late one, from the 3rd–4th centuries CE.[50]

[49] This change in roofing methods can perhaps be related to extensive deforestation—a side effect of Roman army operations during the two Jewish revolts. On the ancient woodlands of Judaea see discussion in S. Applebaum, *Prolegomena to the Study of the Second Jewish Revolt (AD 132–135)* (BAR Supplementary Series 7; Oxford, 1976), pp. 38–39.

[50] In the early stage 'Winepress Z' included a treading floor, a filtration vat and a collecting vat. The treading floor (4.7×5 metres) was hewn in the rock, while its northern, western and

Public Building M (Synagogue?) in Context

The remains revealed in the excavation imply that the residents of the site were Jews who participated in the Bar Kokhba Revolt, during which their village was destroyed. The public building M was probably the community's synagogue between the two revolts against the Romans.

The specific designation of the building as a rural synagogue, with a variety of actual uses is not definitive. It appears to be the most logical designation but there is an absence of definitive evidence. Perhaps a full appreciation of our judgment that it was in fact a synagogue, could be better appreciated by examining the archaeological and historical evidence of early synagogues.

During the 3rd to 7th centuries CE, the synagogue was the most important building identifying a Jewish community. This was not the case in the Early Roman period, before the destruction of the Temple.[51] Synagogues played less of a role in that period than afterwards. Although the sources refer to synagogues, remains of such buildings are rare in the archaeological record.

The synagogues of the Second Temple period had a variety of uses, as community centres, used for political and social meetings, meeting place for the study of the Scriptures, the collection of charitable donations, courtrooms, and many others.[52] E. Fleischer emphasised that in the Second Temple period the synagogue building was not used for worship.[53]

The written sources—mainly Josephus and the New Testament confirm the existence of 1st-century CE synagogues at several towns and villages:

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southern walls were built out of large blocks of *nari*. The northern, retaining wall was 1.7 metres wide and was preserved to 1–2 courses. The two other walls were 0.7 metres wide. We assume that the northern wall was intended to support the lever and weights press for secondary pressing of grape pulp. The floor was originally covered with coarse white plaster, most of which has been worn out. The eastern, partition wall, was hewn in the bedrock, and was badly preserved. This wall, 0.50 metres wide, once separated the treading floor from the two vats to its east. The must flowed through a channel, cut at the base of the partition wall, to an almost square filtration vat (0.7×0.8 metres, 0.6 metres deep). A conduit, 0.1 metres in diameter, cut *c.* 0.3 metres above its base, led the must to the square collecting vat (measuring 1.9×1.9 metres, 1.6 metres deep). Two steps were cut into the northeastern corner of the collecting vat. In its northern corner a round depression had been carved (0.5 metre in diameter, 0.25 metres deep). In the later stage, a round pit was hewn in the centre of the treading floor, measuring 1.7 metres in diameter and 0.6 metre deep. Most likely, a round stone base for a vertical wooden screw was originally installed in it, but this was not found in the excavation. Thus, the lever and weights press of the earlier stage was replaced in the later stage by a vertical screw. The must produced through the secondary process was drained through a channel covered with small stone slabs to the collecting vat. At this stage, the walls of the vat were plastered (the plaster contained ribbed sherds) and the floor and steps were covered with coarse white mosaic.

[51] From the written sources and the archaeological evidence it can be learned that this institution emerged among the Jewish communities of the Diaspora and the Land of Israel during the Hellenistic period. In Lee I. Levine's opinion, from the days of the Hasmoneans the synagogue building inherited the public functions of the city-gate; see L. I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue, The First Thousand Years* (New Haven / London, 2000), pp. 20–41.

[52] Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (as in n. 51 above), pp. 124–159.

[53] E. Fleischer, 'On the Beginnings of the Obligatory Jewish Prayer', *Tarbiz* 59 (1990), pp. 402–406 (Hebrew).

Nazareth,[54] Capernaum,[55] Tiberias[56] and other Galilean locations.[57] Synagogues existed at the coastal cities of Dor[58] and Caesarea.[59] The presence of several synagogues at Jerusalem is explicitly noted—first of all by the inscription of 'Theodotos son of Vettenos',[60] the New Testament[61] and the Tosefta.[62] The existence of a synagogue at Qumran (and perhaps other Essene sites) is hinted in the Damascus Document.[63]

One of the documents discovered in the Cave of the Letters, and dated 128 CE recorded a courtyard adjacent to a synagogue at 'En-Gedi.[64]

Compared to the abundance of indications and descriptions in the sources, only six synagogue buildings from the late Second Temple Period period were discovered in Israel: at Gamla,[65] Masada,[66] Herodium,[67] Qiryat Sefer[68] and Khirbet Umm el 'Amdan.[69] Netzer published a building discovered next to the Hasmonean palace at Jericho—dated to the first half of the 1st century CE—perhaps the earliest known synagogue in Judaea.[70]

[54] Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16–30.

[55] Mark 1:21–29; Luke 4:31–38, 7:5; John 6:35–59.

[56] Josephus, *Vita*, 277–303.

[57] Mark 1:39, 3:1; Matthew 4:23, 9:35; Luke 4:15, 13:10–21; John 18:20.

[58] Josephus, *Antiquities*, 19, 279–311.

[59] Josephus, *War*, 2, 266–270, 284–292; *Antiquities*, 20, 173–178, 182–184.

[60] J. S. Kloppenborg Verbin, 'Dating Theodotos (CIJ II 1404)', *JJS* 51 (2000), pp. 243–280.

[61] Acts 6:8–9, 24:12, 22:19, 26:11.

[62] *tShab* 16:22; *tMeg* 2:17.

[63] Damascus Document II, 21–12, in M. Broshi (ed.), *The Damascus Document Reconsidered* (Jerusalem, 1992). See also discussion in Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (as in n. 51 above), pp. 60–63. The broad-room (locus 4) at Qumran was defined as an assembly chamber. Around the walls of the room are built-in benches and alongside it are additional units of a public nature; see R. de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London, 1973), pp. 10–11, 26, pl. XXXIX; Y. Rapuano, 'The Hasmonaean Period "Synagogue" at Jericho and the "Council Chamber" Building at Qumran', *IEJ* 51 (2001), pp. 48–56.

[64] P. Yadin 19; see N. Lewis, Y. Yadin and J. Greenfield (eds), *The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of the Letters, Greek Papyri, Aramaic and Nabataean Signatures and Subscriptions* (Judaean Desert Studies 2; Jerusalem, 1989), pp. 83–87; the word 'synagogue' is partly restored. See also H. M. Cotton, 'Ein Gedi between the Two Revolts', *SCI* 20 (2001), pp. 139–154.

[65] Erected in the second half of the 1st century BCE; see Z. U. Maoz, 'The Synagogue of Gamla and the Typology of Second-Temple Synagogues', in L. I. Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 35–41; Z. U. Maoz, 'The Synagogue in the Second Temple Period', *Eretz-Israel* 23 (1992), pp. 331–344 (Hebrew); D. Sion and Z. Yavor, 'Gamla—Old and New', *Qadmoniot* 121 (2001), pp. 8–11 (Hebrew).

[66] E. Netzer, *Masada III, The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965, Final Reports, The Buildings, Stratigraphy and Architecture* (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 402–413.

[67] G. Foerster, 'The Synagogues at Masada and Herodium', *Eretz Israel* 11 (1973), pp. 224–228 (Hebrew).

[68] Magen et al., *Khirbet Badd Isa* (as in n. 34 above), pp. 200–206. This building was clearly used also in the period between the two revolts against the Romans, 70–135 CE.

[69] See Onn et al., 'Khirbet Umm el-'Umdan' (as in n. 35 above); this building was also used during 70–135 CE. Our thanks are due to the IAA archaeologists Alexander Onn, Shlomit Wexler-Bdolah and Yehudah Rapuano for personal communications and instructive visits at this excavation.

[70] E. Netzer, 'A Synagogue from the Hasmonean Period Recently Exposed in the Western Plain of Jericho', *IEJ* 49 (1999), pp. 203–221; but see criticism by L. I. Levine, 'The First Century Synagogue: Critical Reassessment and Assessments of the Critical', in D. Edwards (ed.), *Religion*

L. I. Levine emphasised that the synagogues from the late Second Temple period have varied architectural plans.[71] Only some of the buildings are oriented towards Jerusalem. Also the location within the settlement may differ. This diversity is prevalent also in details like the location and number of doors and the presence of benches. Thus, attempts to create a typology of these buildings were unsuccessful.[72]

The above-mentioned notwithstanding, Levine hinted at the architectural principle common to buildings at Gamla, Masada, Herodium, and Qiryat Sefer:[73] in all of them the central area of the hall is emphasised, facilitating communal participation in the political, religious or social activities (a 'community-oriented framework'). This outline was influenced (not necessarily in a planned manner) by the Hellenistic council-houses (*bouleuteria*; *ekklesiasteria*). Levine demonstrated that these buildings are 'neutral communal structures with no notable religious components', lacking the distinctive ornamentation and the Torah shrine which mark the religious profile characteristic of the Late Antiquity synagogues.[74]

Building M at H. ʿEthri has several common features with the other buildings mentioned but also different components.[75] As explained above, the ar-

and Society in Roman Palestine: Old Questions, New Approaches (New York / Oxford, 2004), pp. 70–102.

[71] Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (as in n. 51 above), pp. 69–71; Levine, *The First Century Synagogue* (as in n. 70 above).

[72] For such attempts, see Foerster, *The Synagogues* (as in n. 67 above); Maoz, *The Synagogue of Gamla* (as in n. 65 above).

[73] It should be noted that in its early phase (period II, dated 135–250 CE) the synagogue at Nabratein in Upper Galilee was a broad house entered through a vestibule; see E. M. Meyers, J. F. Strange and C. L. Meyers, 'Second Preliminary Report on the 1981 Excavations at en-Nabratein, Israel', *BASOR* 246 (1982), pp. 35–37. Four columns located at the centre of the hall apparently supported the ceiling. In our view there is a remarkable architectural similarity in the plans of the early phase at Nabratein and that of the synagogue at Qiryat Sefer.

[74] Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (as in n. 51 above), pp. 69–70.

[75] In our opinion there is a great resemblance in the layout of building M and the Herodian structure at Masada, where the *sicarii* who occupied Masada (66–74 CE) constructed their synagogue. In its initial stage, erected during the time of Herod, the building consisted of an anteroom which led to a broad hall. The ceiling of the hall was supported by five round columns that were placed on square pilasters arranged along the southern, western and northern sides of the hall. The *sicarii* altered the original plan: they dismantled the wall separating between the narthex and the hall, removed two of the pillars from the western row and added a cell in the north-western corner. Four tiers of benches were added, adjacent to three of the walls of the hall, except for the north-western side, which only had one bench. The plan of the building and its finds from the *sicarii* stage, including the *genizah* of scrolls with passages used in the synagogue liturgy and the *ostraca*, show that it functioned at the time as a synagogue—used for assemblies and for religious purposes. The interpretation of the initial stage is still an open question. Y. Yadin suggested that even in the Herodian stage this was a synagogue, used by the Jewish members of Herod's court; see: Y. Yadin, *Masada, Herod's Fortress and the Zealot's Last Stand* (New York, 1966), pp. 184–186; Y. Yadin, 'The Synagogue at Masada', in L. I. Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 20–21. N. Avigad accepted Yadin's opinion; see N. Avigad, 'The "Galilean" Synagogue and its Predecessors', in L. I. Levine (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 44. Levine proposed that it was a reception hall; see Levine, *The First Century Synagogue* (as in n. 70 above), p. 78. According to Maoz, the building served at that time as a *triclinium*, similar to the one at Herodium; see Maoz, *The Synagogue of Gamla* (as in n. 65 above), p. 40. E. Netzer, who published the final architectural report of the excavations, believed that during the initial phase the building served as a stable; see: Netzer, *Masada III* (as in n. 66

chitectural complex included a vestibule, a broad hall, an inner courtyard with a ritual immersion bath, and an exterior courtyard with a bench.

The broad hall M1 is lacking a definite architectural axis and has no central internal focus. Upon entering the hall, one faced northeast towards Jerusalem. This orientation is extremely significant, while keeping in mind that the hall was most probably erected after the destruction of the Second Temple, during the Yavne period, when numerous religious and liturgical functions that were customary in the Temple were transferred to the domain of the synagogue: the reading of the *Shemʿa*, *Hallel*, and Psalms, the priestly benedictions, the *shofar* blasts on the Sabbath of the New Year, etc.[76] This reality was expressed in the regulations of Rabban Yohanan Ben Zakai and Rabban Gamaliel,[77] and in the maxim 'The *Tefillahs* [prayers] were instituted to replace the daily sacrifices.' [78]

The direction of the prayer to Jerusalem determined the orientation of the worshippers in the synagogue and the location of the ark with the Torah scrolls. In the Yavneh era, *c.* 100 CE, the שמונה עשרה *Shmoneh ʿEsreh* prayer (or the עמידה *ʿAmidah*), was standardised by Rabban Gamaliel. This prayer requires the worshipper to turn his face towards Jerusalem.[79] The origin of the custom is earlier yet: 'Those who stand and pray outside of the Land of Israel, turn to face the Land of Israel [to pray] [. . .] Those who stand and pray in the Land of Israel turn to face Jerusalem [. . .] Those who stand and pray in Jerusalem, turn to face the Temple mount.' [80]

Most probably that due to late remodeling inside the hall M1, during the 3rd century CE, remains of many of the initial features were not preserved—like the stone benches—that were perhaps dismantled. We should not discount the possibility that some of these features were mobile—like wood benches or a portable holy ark. According to the sources, it seems that movable items were indeed used: during prayers they would bring and 'leave the ark'.[81] During this period the ark did not have a permanent position as a result of the variety of uses of the synagogue hall in community life. Even the benches (if they were always needed) and the *bema* were sometimes made of

above). On account of negligence in planning of the building and the lack of ornamentation, he negated the possibility that it was a synagogue; Netzer, *Masada III* (as in n. 66 above), p. 412. Netzer assumed that the dung found between the floors of the two stages belonged to the original use, *versus* Yadin, who explained the dung as belonging to an intermediate stage, that of the first Roman garrison. In our opinion the archaeological evidence stands against the stable suggestion: the floor of the Herodian phase was made from white plaster unsuitable for a stable.

[76] J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Berlin / New York, 1977), pp. 130–138.

[77] *mRosh Hashanah* 4, 1–4; *bRosh Hashanah* 21b, 31b.

[78] *bBer.* 26b.

[79] I. Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, New English Edition (Philadelphia / New York / Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 201–203; S. Safrai, *In Times of Temple and Mishna: Studies in Jewish History* (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 112–113 (Hebrew); Fleischer, *On the Beginnings* (as in n. 53 above), pp. 426–437.

[80] *yBer.* 4:6, D, E, F; see discussion in Safrai, *In Times of Temple* (as in n. 79 above), pp. 159–160.

[81] *tMeg.* 3, 21, I.

wood.[82] The mobility of the items of furniture allowed flexibility and efficient use of the space of the hall, for differing needs.

The relative simplicity of the building at H. ʿEthri and the absence of artistic representations are common to the other early synagogues. The unearthing of architectural elements such as square pedestals, a column drum, a Doric-like capital, and a moulded cornice, support the possibility that this was a synagogue. Similar elements (cornice column drums and capitals) were found at other synagogues from this period, which were mentioned above and first and foremost at Qiryat Sefer.

The existence of a rock-cut bench along the external courtyard M3, indicates that public gatherings were also held outside of the building. In many examples courtyards were connected with the ancient synagogues. Levine deals with the community functions of the courtyard, which represents an area of transition between the street and the synagogue complex.[83]

Ritual immersion baths were discovered in the vicinity of the Second Temple period synagogues at Masada, Herodium, Gamla, Kiryat Sefer, Umm el ʿAmdan, Jericho (and perhaps also at Jerusalem, as mentioned in the Theodotos inscription).[84] Levine views both the *mikva'ot* and the synagogues as elements belonging to the communal centre.[85] Although the customs of impurity and ritual purification are independent of the synagogues, many traditions link between them and biblical laws and liturgy. Some are content to wash their hands and others immerse the entire body, and for this a *mikveh* is required.[86]

We presume that the recent discovery of synagogues from the 1st–2nd centuries CE at the two other Judaean villages that were thoroughly excavated and sufficiently preserved—at Qiryat Sefer and at Kh. Umm el ʿAmdan, is not due to pure coincidence. Only future excavations of public buildings in the villages of Judaea and the Galilee will enable us to know whether synagogues were a regular feature of the Jewish rural settlements before the Bar Kokhba revolt.

The synagogues of the *Darom*—the southern part of Judaea, dated to the Mishnah and Talmud periods (4th–7th centuries CE) contain elongated vestibules and broad halls.[87] The direction of prayer facing north towards Jerusalem was emphasised by the construction of a *bema* and niche, in which

[82] *yMeg.* 3:1, VIII; and see also Safrai, *In Times of Temple* (as in n. 79 above), pp. 160–161.

[83] Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (as in n. 51 above), pp. 306–308.

[84] The destruction of the Temple probably reduced the significance of ritual purification, therefore the baths were a rare feature at the Mishnah and Talmud period synagogues; see R. Reich, 'Synagogue and Ritual Bath during the Second Temple and the Period of the Mishna and Talmud', in A. Oppenheimer, A. Kasher and U. Rappaport, *Synagogues in Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 205–212 (Hebrew).

[85] Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (as in n. 51 above), pp. 70, 306–311.

[86] Reich, *Synagogue and Ritual Bath* (as in n. 84 above), pp. 205–212.

[87] For a discussion of the buildings at Susiya, Eshtamoʿa, Maʿon and ʿAnim, see D. Amit, 'Excavations at Maʿon and ʿAnim: Their Contribution to the Study of Ancient Synagogues in Southern Judea', *Cathedra* 68 (1993), pp. 6–35 (Hebrew); apparently also the initial, 3rd-century CE phase at Rimmon was a broad-house; see A. Kloner, 'The Synagogues of Horvat Rimon', in R. Hachlili (ed.), *Ancient Synagogues in Israel, Third–Seventh Century CE* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 43–48: 44.

the holy-ark was permanently located.

Despite the chronological gap, one must take notice to the architectural similarity between the basic architectural plan of building M and that of the synagogues of southern Judaea. It seems that we should recognise here the forerunner of a planning tradition of a rural synagogue, whose origins are in the period between the two revolts against the Romans, (or even earlier) which was sophisticated in the *Darom* synagogues of the Mishnah and Talmud era. If this is the case, the building at Horvat 'Ethri offers a possible 'prototype' for this type of building.

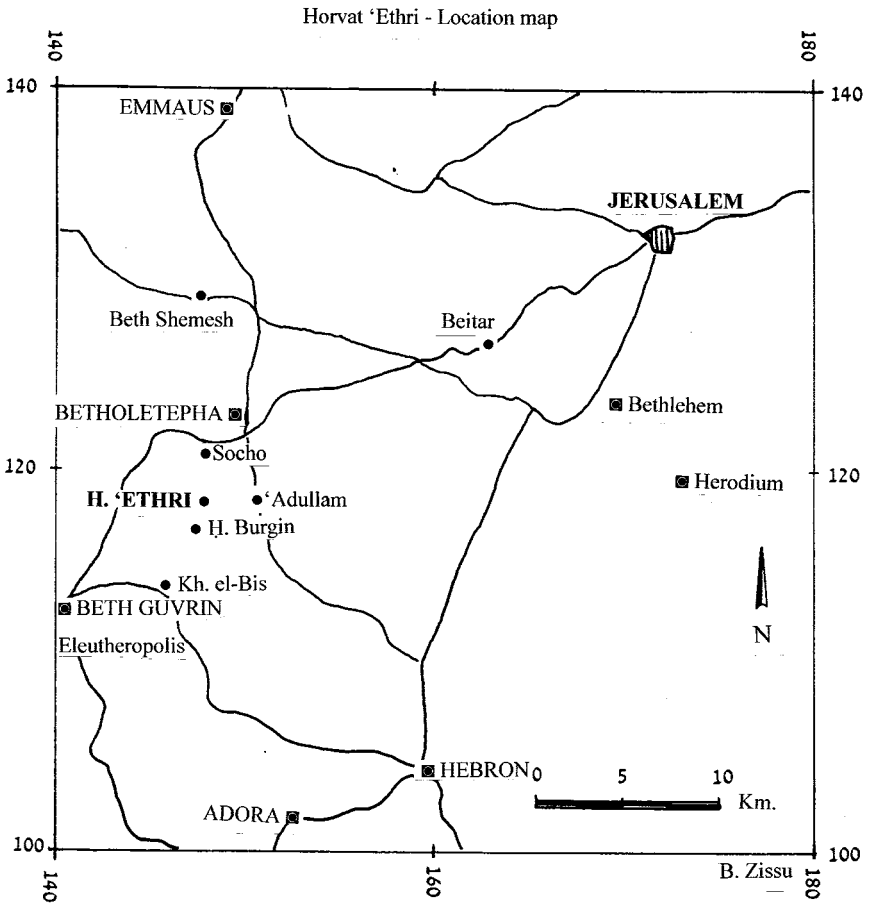

Fig. 1. Horvat ʿEthri—Location map. (B. Zissu)

Fig. 2. Aerial view of the site, looking northeast. (B. Zissu, April 2000)

Fig. 3. Rooms U3 and U6 looking southeast. (B. Zissu)

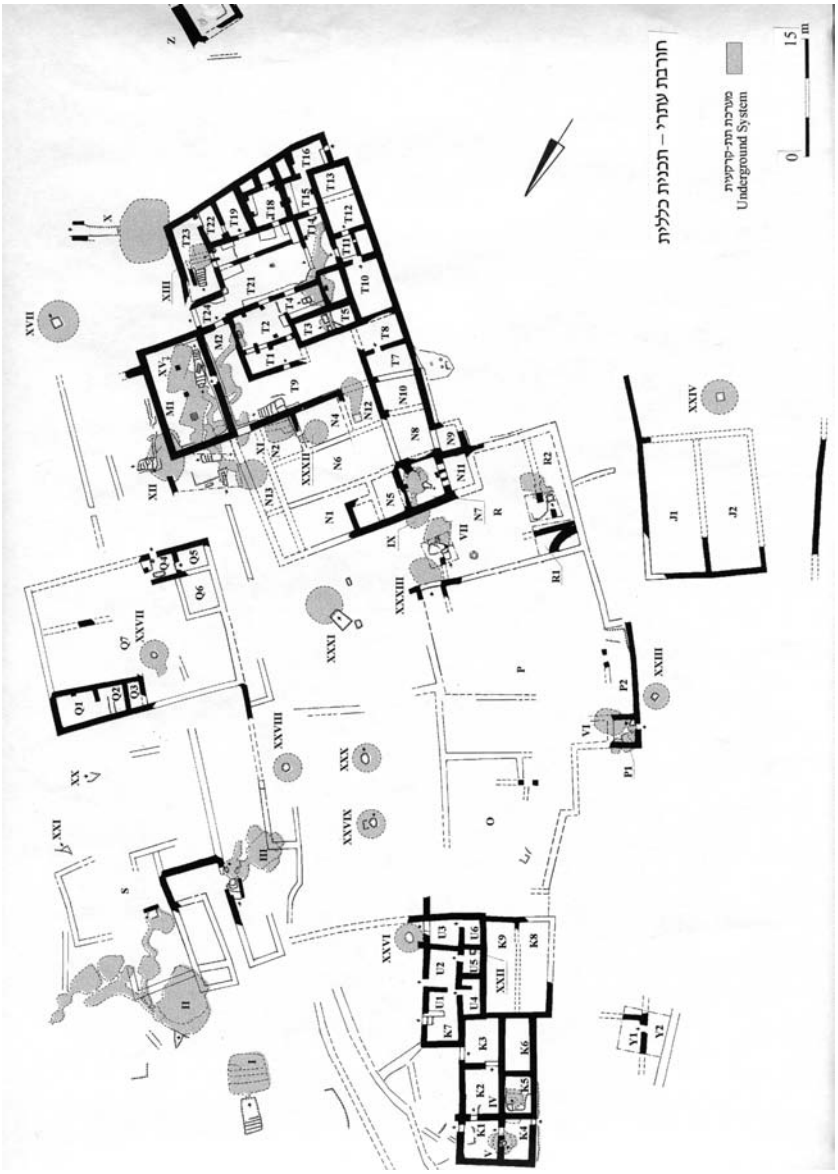

Fig. 4. General plan of the site, 1st century CE. (V. Essman, S. Pirsky, N. Zak)

Fig. 5. Rooms K1 and K4, looking east. (B. Zissu, Goody Gat)

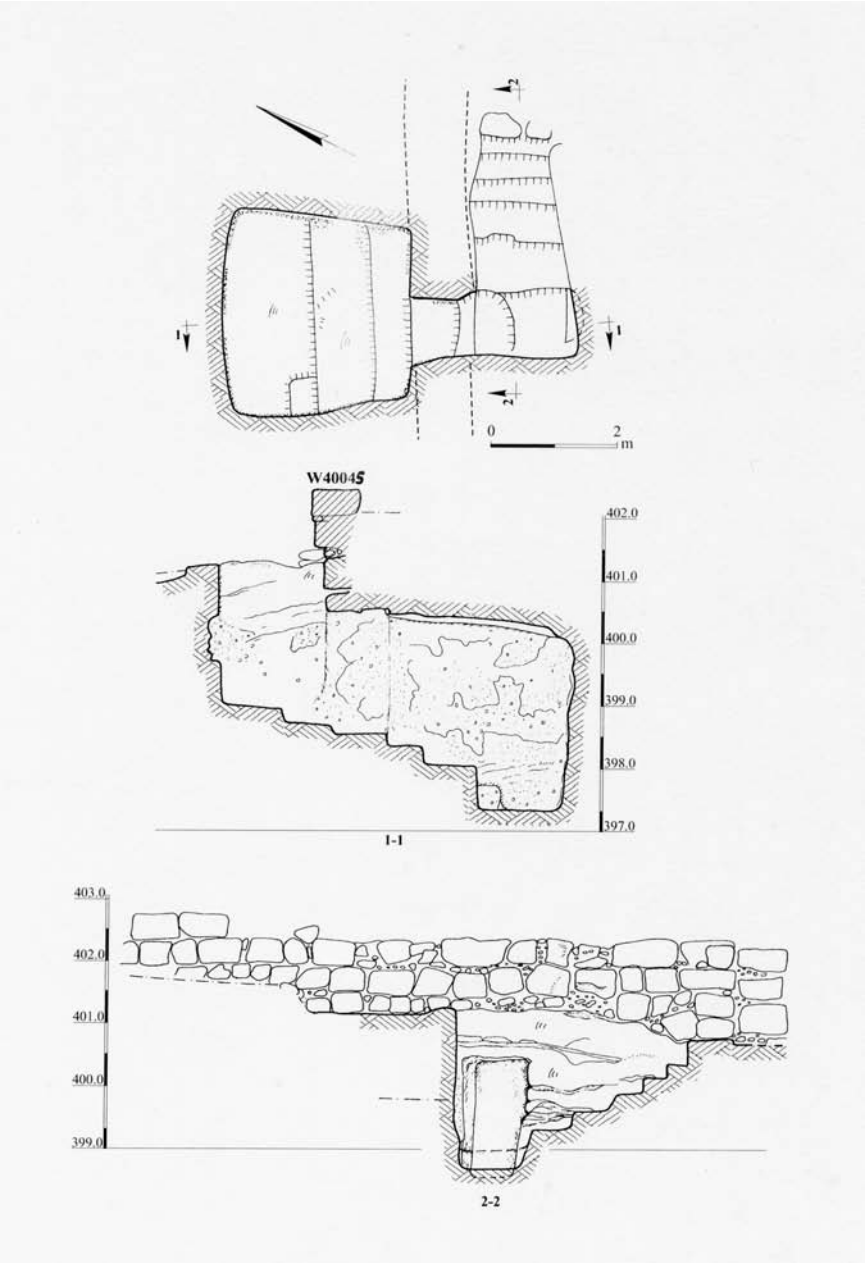

Fig. 6. Plan and sections of *mikveh* XI, a typical ritual immersion bath. (T. Kornfeld)

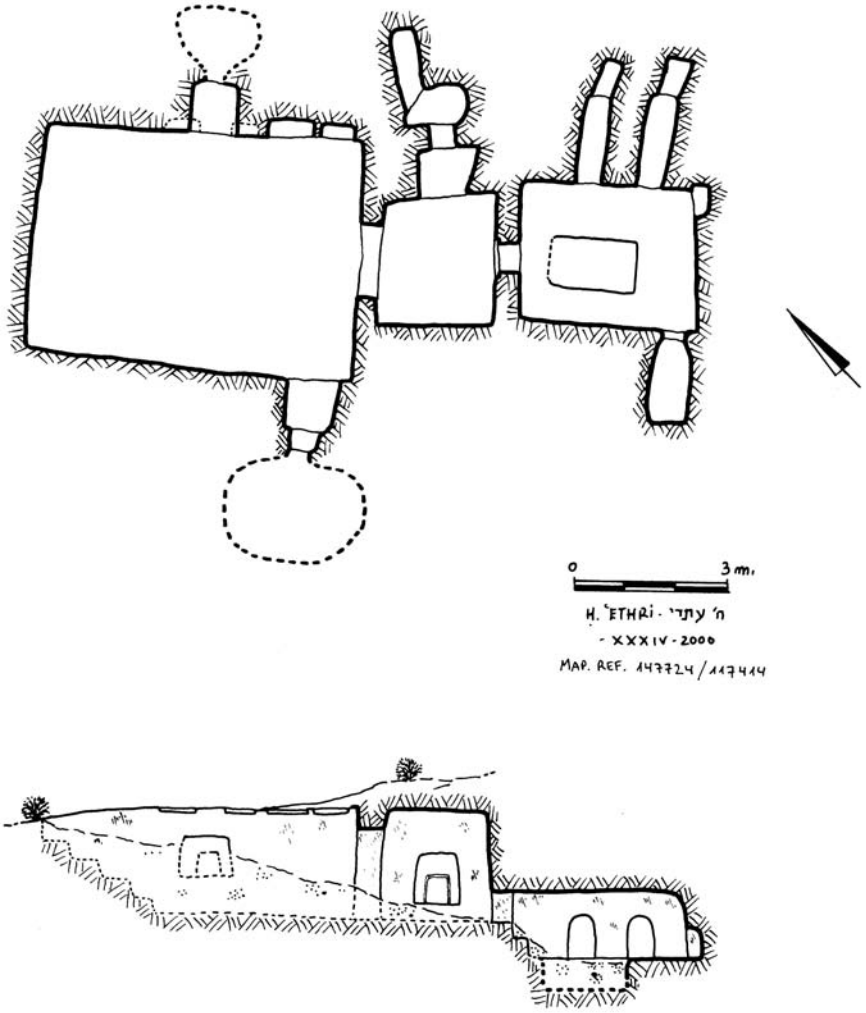

Fig. 7. Plan and section of burial system XXXIV. (B. Zissu)

Fig. 8. Half Shekel from the year three (68–69 CE) of the Jewish War against the Romans. Obv: Cup, the rim is decorated with row of seven pellets; above it, date: שג (=year 3). Around, in Paleo-Hebrew: חצי השקל (=Half Shekel). Rev: Stem with three pomegranates; around: ירושלים הקדושה (=Jerusalem the holy); AR, 6.87 gr; 18 mm; axis 10; L. 4161; b. 4817. (Z. Radovan)

Fig. 9. Ostracon no. 8317. (Z. Radovan)

Fig. 10. Ostracon no. 4624. (Z. Radovan)

Fig. 11. Ostracon no. 8314. (Z. Radovan)

Fig. 12. Ostracon no. 4625. (Z. Radovan)

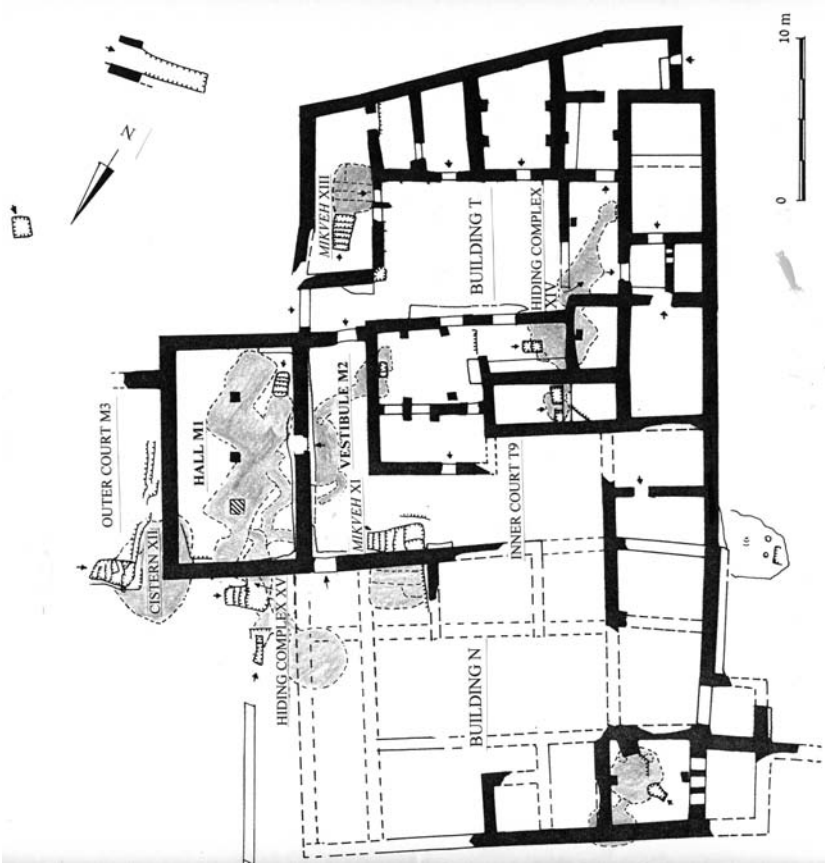

Fig. 13. Plan of the public building M and adjacent architectural units. Rock-cut caves grey-shaded. (R. Graf)

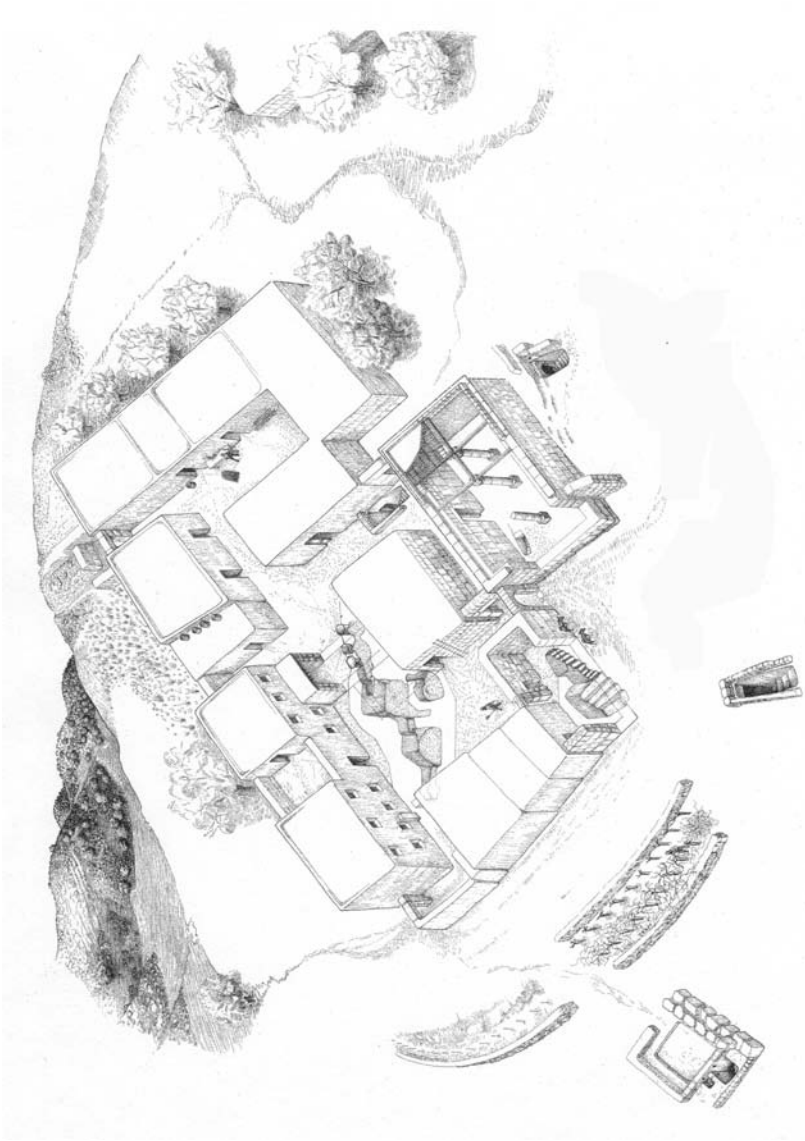

Fig. 14. Artist's reconstruction of the main buildings of the period 70–135 CE. (R. Graf)

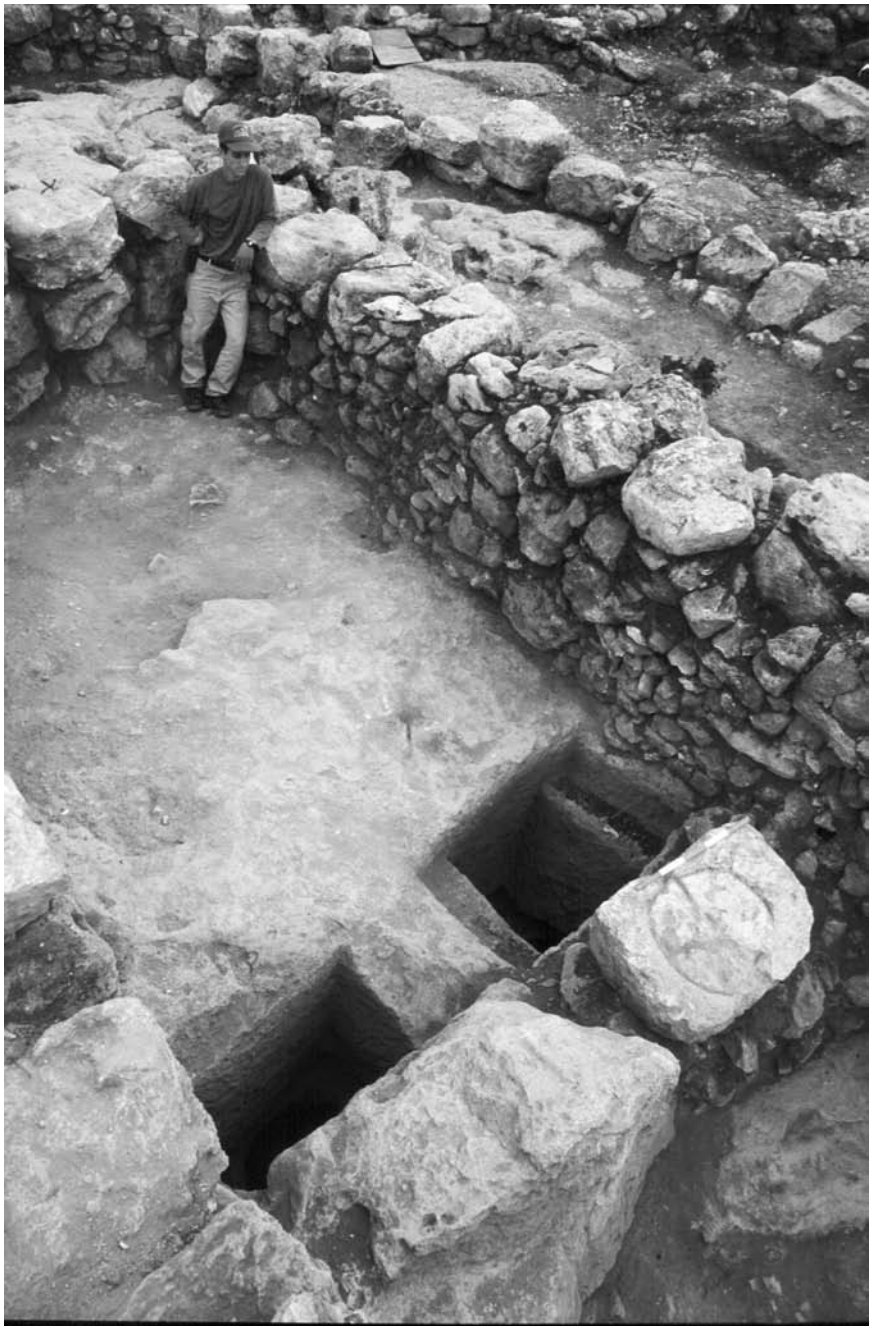

Fig. 15. Shafts hewn in floor of room T3, leading to system XIV. (B. Zissu)

Fig. 16. (right) Undated denarius of the Bar Kokhba revolt, attributed to 134–135 CE. Obv: Bunch of grapes with small leaf; inscr.: שמע(ון) = Shimʿ[on]. Rev: Two trumpets; inscr.: = ל[חרות] ירושלם = For the freedom of Jerusalem; AR, 3.39 gr, 19 mm; axis 0.6; L. 2109; b. 2393. (B. Zissu)

(left) Denarius of the second year of the Bar Kokhba revolt (133–134 CE). Obv: Three letters inscr. in wreath: שמ/ע = Shimʿ[on]; Rev: Flagon with handle; on r. lulav; inscr. שבלחר ישר(ר)אל = Year two of the freedom of Israel; AR, 3.18 gr, 20.5 mm; axis 12; L. 4207; b. 8439. (B. Zissu)

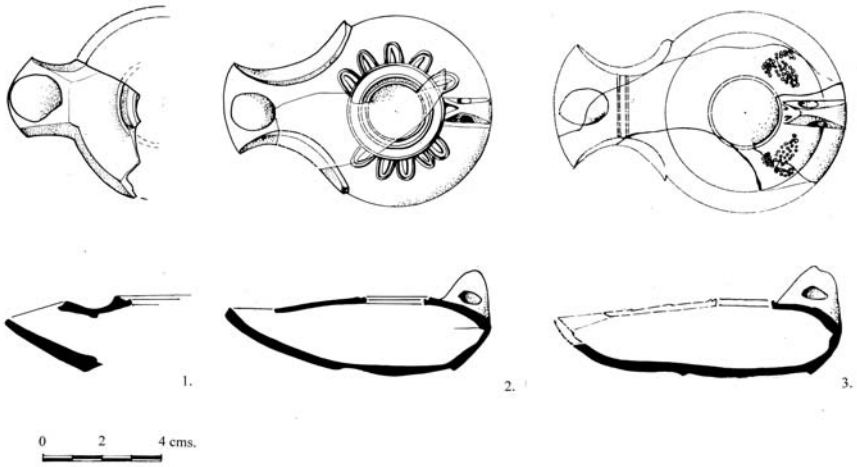

Fig. 17. Finds plate: the finds originate from **Locus 4142** (135 CE destruction), and represent the period 70–135 CE.

17a. Wheel-made, knife-pared ('Herodian') oil-lamp (1); Mould-made Judaean (*Darom*, 'Southern') oil-lamps (2, 3). (C. Hirsch)

(1) Wheel-made, knife-pared ('Herodian') oil-lamp; (2, 3) Mould-made Judaean (*Darom*, 'Southern') oil-lamps. All oil-lamps originate from **Locus 4142**, described above.

No.	*Vessel*	*Exc. no.*	*Description*
1.	Oil lamp	4720/1	orange-gray clay; soothed on inside and outside
2.	Oil lamp	4743	reddish-gray clay; soothed
3.	Oil lamp	4744/21,4	light brown; soothed

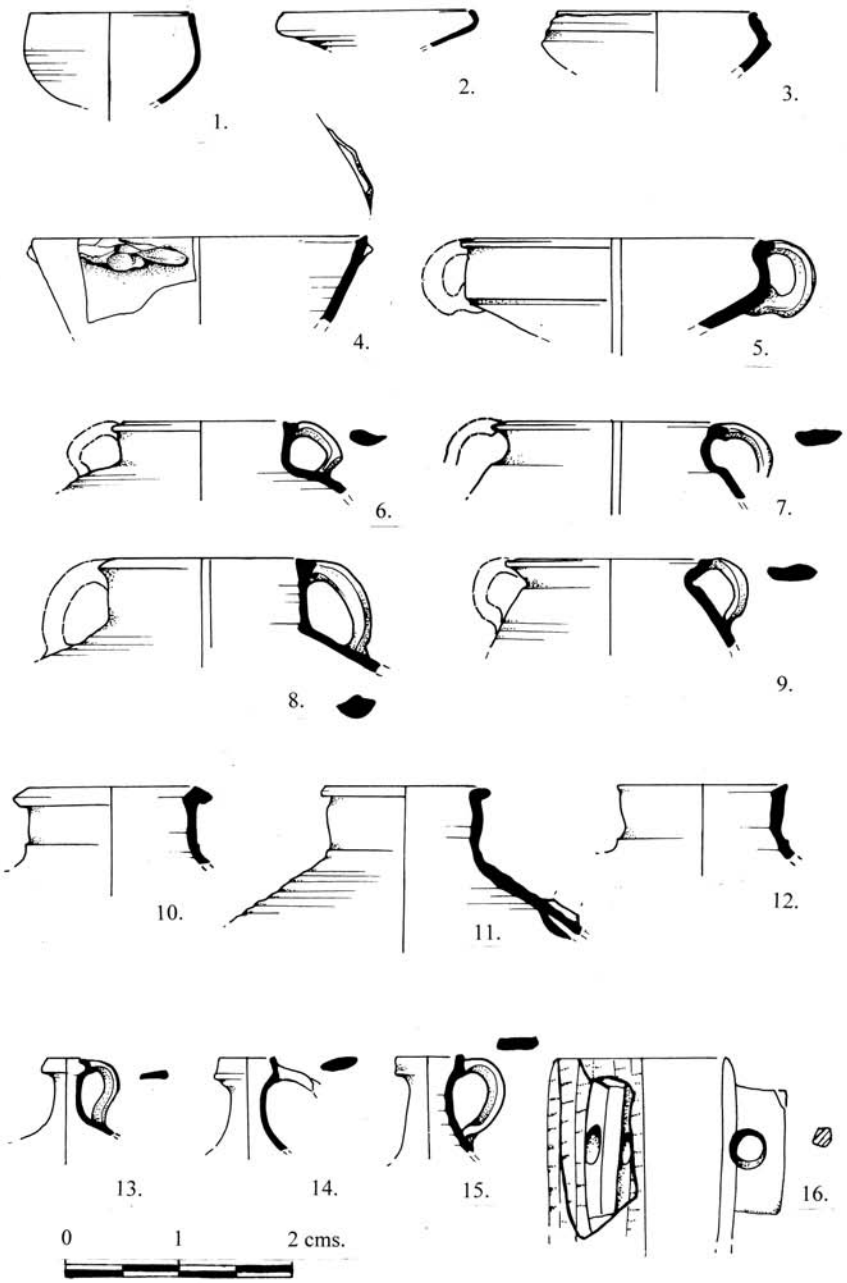

Fig. 17 (cont.). Finds plate: the finds originate from **Locus 4142** (135 CE destruction), and represent the period 70–135 CE.

17b. Pottery types (1–15); Limestone vessel (16).

Opposite: (1–15) Sample of pottery types; (16) Limestone vessel. All finds originate from **Locus 4142**, which is a sealed layer of ashes, and assemblage of finds, covering the basin and steps of *Miqweh* XI. This destruction layer was dated to 135 CE; the finds represent the period 70–135 CE.

No.	*Vessel*	*Exc. no.*	*Description*
1.	Bowl	4741/34	orange-gray clay
2.	Bowl	4765/64	red-gray clay
3.	Bowl	4733/21	coarse, gray clay
4.	Casserole	4753/12	brown-red clay, gray grits, including quartz and mica
5.	Casserole	4730/21	coarse gray-brown clay
6.	Cooking pot	4725/9	coarse gray-brown clay
7.	Cooking pot	4765/38	reddish clay, gray core, white grits
8.	Cooking pot	4741/27	coarse gray clay
9.	Cooking pot	4741/7	coarse brown-gray clay
10.	Jar	4725/12	orange clay, white grits
11.	Jar	4738/1	orange-reddish clay, white and orange grits
12.	Jar	4725/5	coarse brown-reddish clay, air bubbles
13.	Juglet	4741/37	orange-gray clay
14.	Jug	4741/54	orange-gray clay, white grits
15.	Jug	4753/14	brown-reddish clay, white grits
16.	Mug	4771/1	limestone, knife-pared

Fig. 18. Photo of M1 and M2 during 1999 season, looking NW. (B. Zissu)

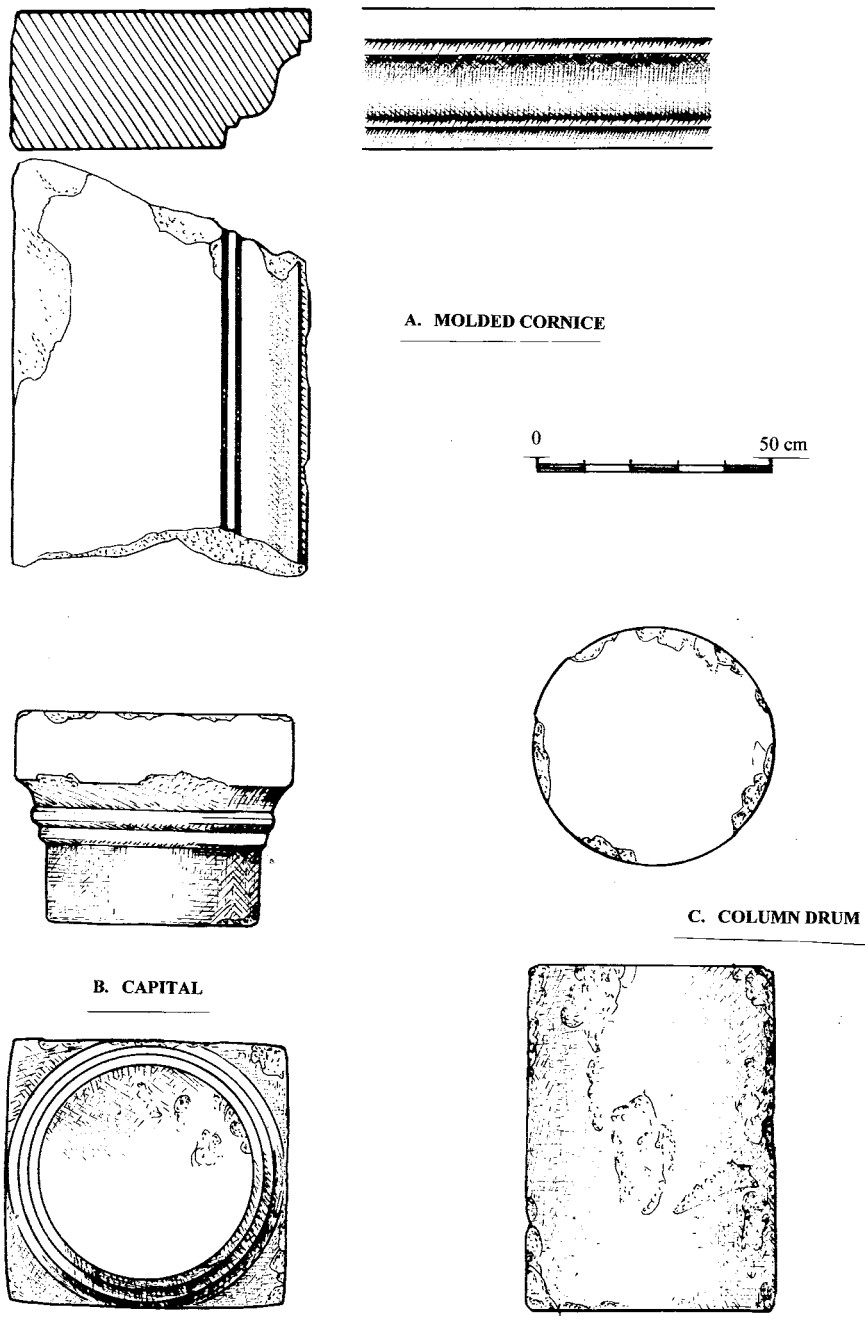

Fig. 19. Three architectural elements, probably originating from hall M1.
(T. Kornfeld, R. Graf)

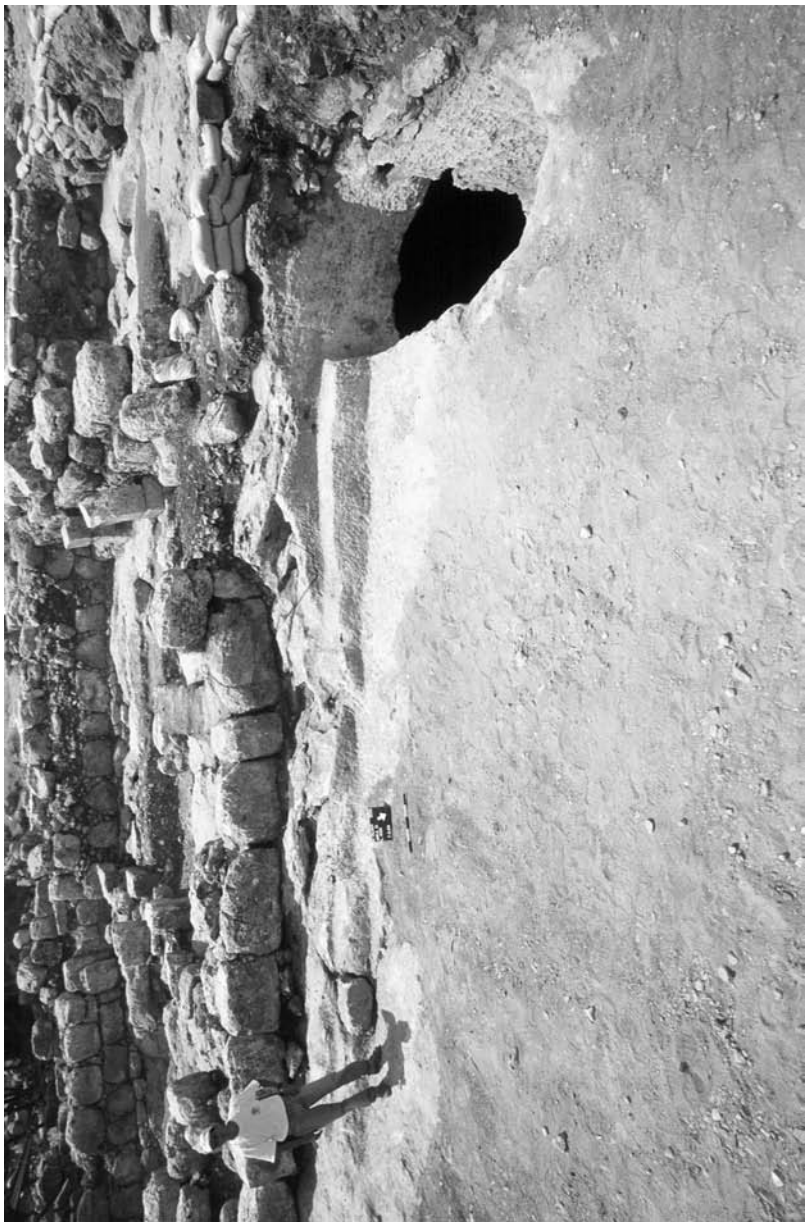

Fig. 20. Northeastern wall of hall M1, the open court M3, the rock-cut bench parallel to the hall's wall, and the *dromus* of cistern XII, looking SW. (T. Sagiv, Goody Gat)

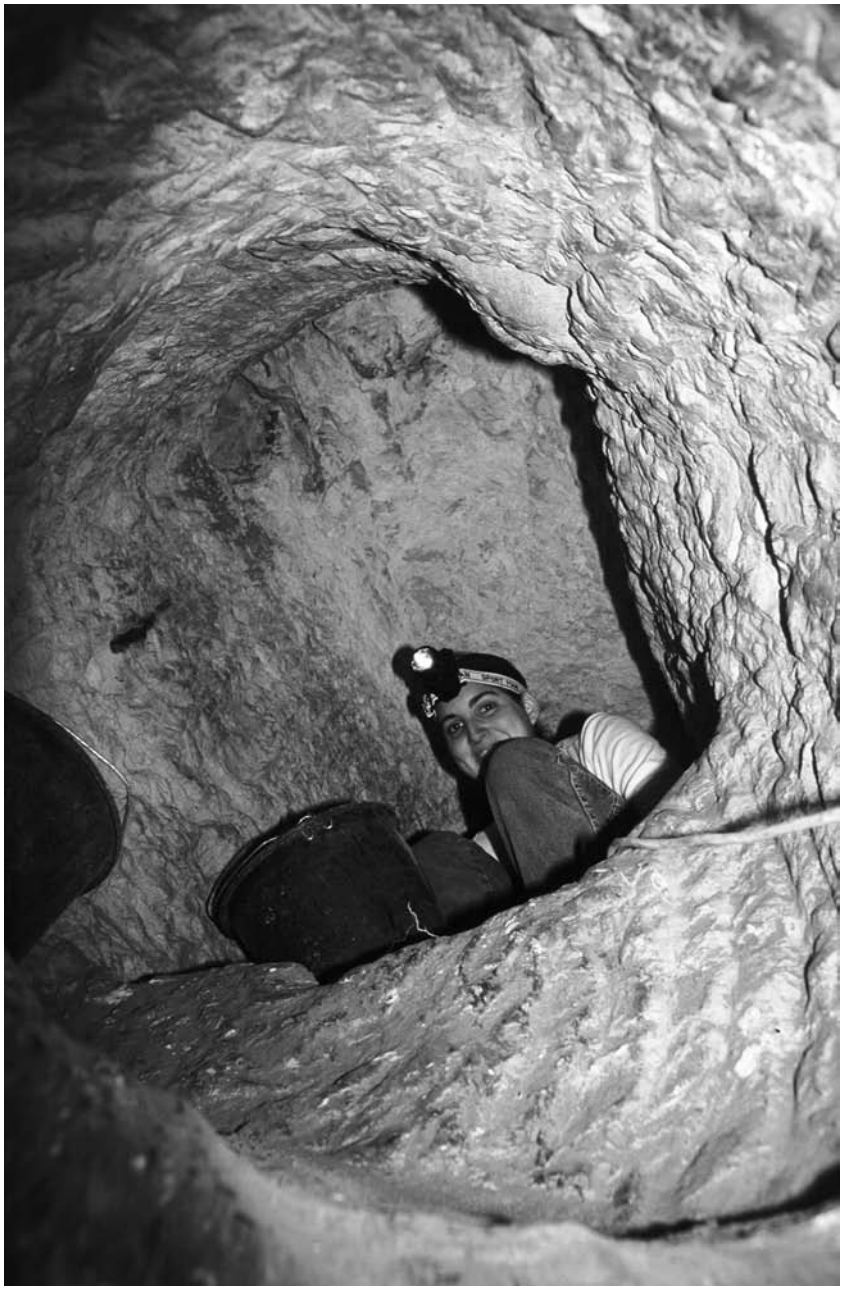

Fig. 21. Vertical shaft descending into one of the storage chambers in hiding-complex XV. (A. Graicer)

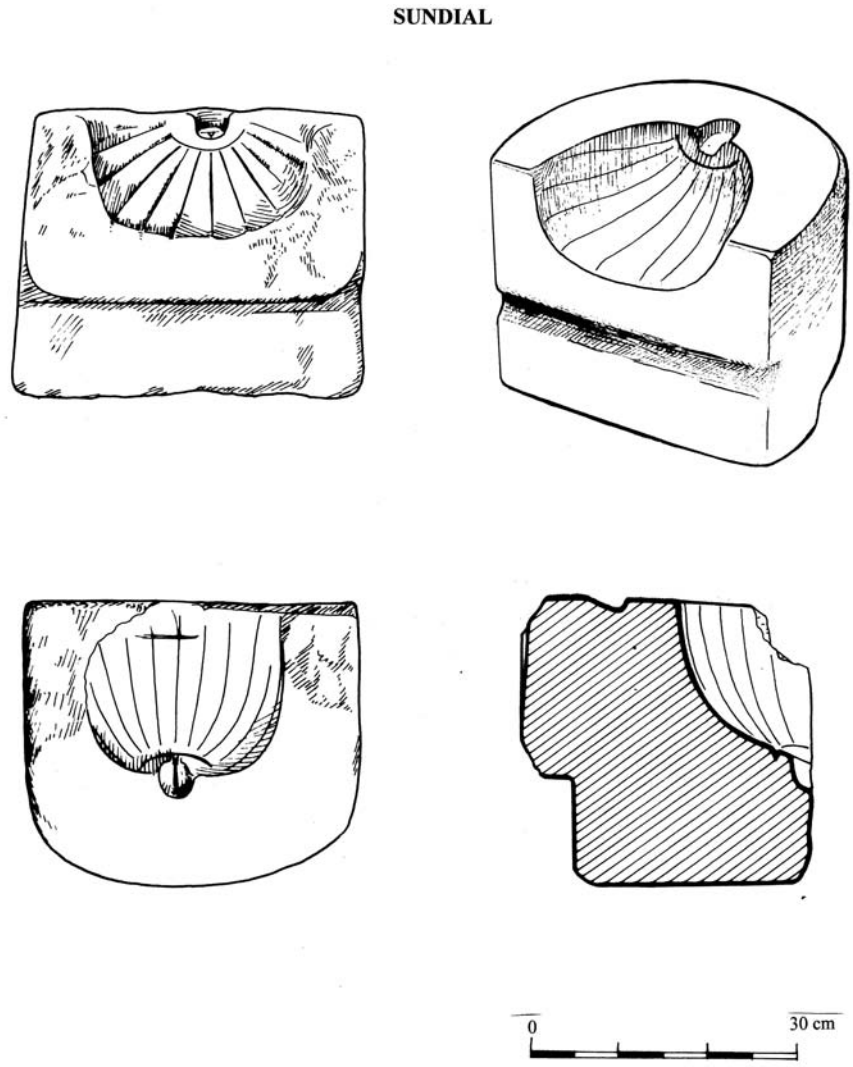

Fig. 22. Drawing of the sundial found in *mikveh* XIII. (T. Kornfeld)

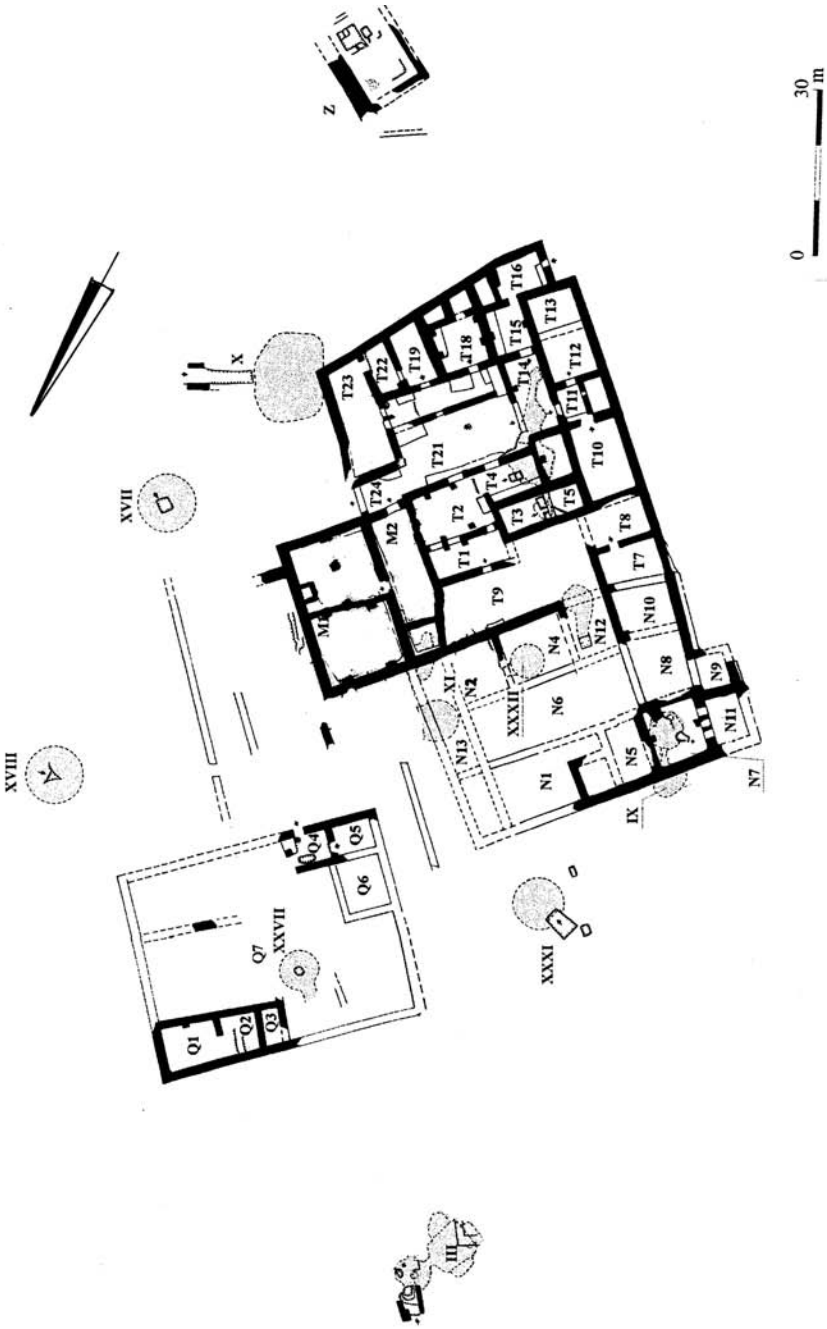

Fig. 23. Plan of the site during the Late Roman-Early Byzantine Period (Phase V). (V. Essman, S. Pirsky, N. Zak)

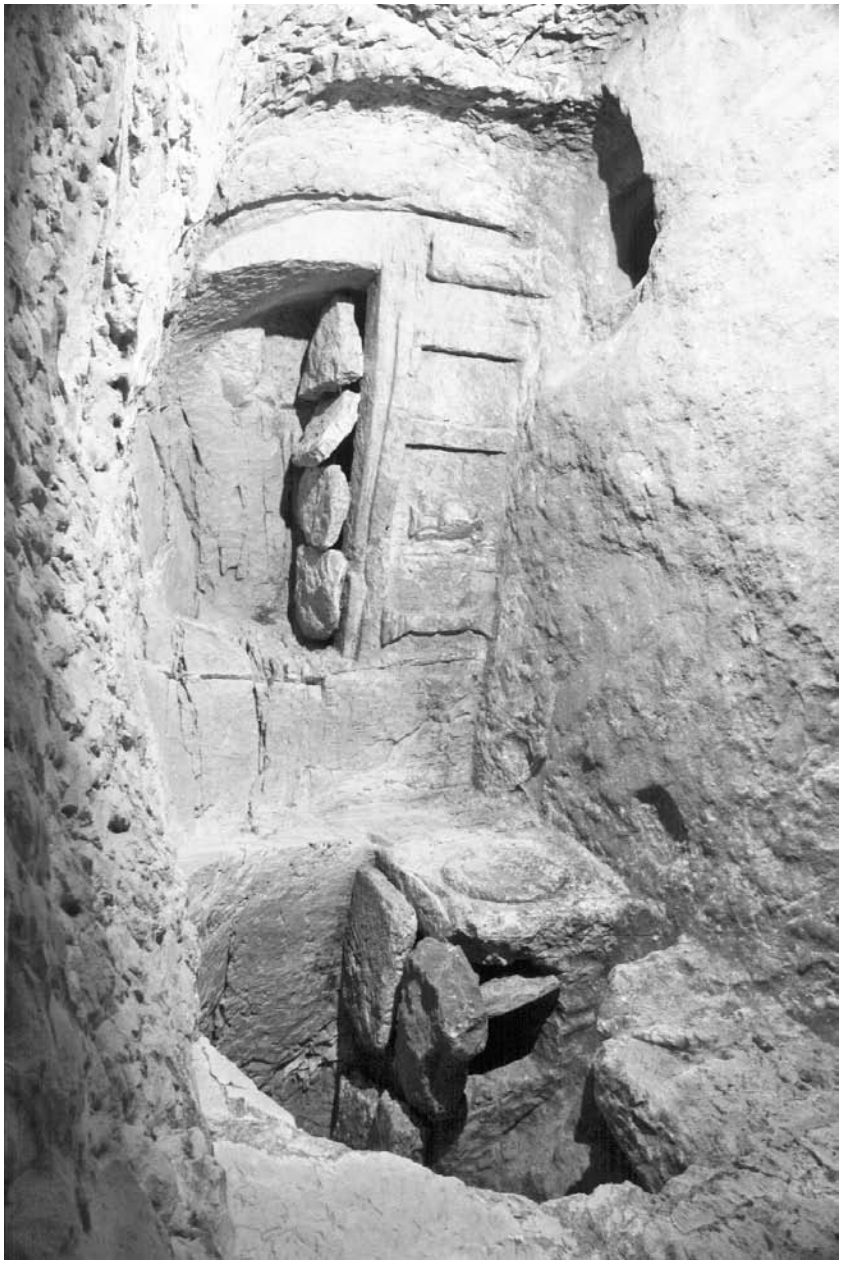

Fig. 24. Burial cave III, looking south. (T. Sagiv)