

Tel Dor — 2016

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21/11/2021
Preliminary report

The 33rd excavation season at Tel Dor (License No. G-75/2016; map ref. 1922–27/7246–50) was carried out in July 2016. The excavation was directed by I. Sharon (the Hebrew University), A. Gilboa (the University of Haifa), A. Yasur-Landau (the University of Haifa) and S.R. Martin (Boston University). The staff included A. Ratzlaff (Area D5 supervision), R. Shahack-Gross (Area K supervision), K. Acquisto (Area D2 unit supervision), H. Shochat (Area D5 unit supervision), P. Zajac (Area K unit supervision), J. Quiery (D2 recording), T. Raz (D5 recording), I. Ogloblin (K recording), S. Matskevich (architectural drafting), S. Mermelstein and J. Tafe (registration and finds processing), B. Monnickendam-Givon (late pottery analysis), E. Gerstein and I. Shapira (photography), R. Linn (architectural conservation), R. Shafir (pottery restoration) and T. Uri (administration). The excavators were overseas students and volunteers, and students from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Haifa. The expedition was lodged at the Bet Oren Guesthouse and the working facilities were at the CONRAD Ha-Mizgaga Museum at Kibbutz Nahsholim. The excavations were carried out under the auspices of the Israel Exploration Society, and funded by the Berman Center for Biblical Archaeology, the Zinman Institute of Archaeology and the Department of Maritime Civilizations at the University of Haifa, the Goldhirsh-Yellin Foundation, the Israel Science Foundation (Grant No. 209/14), the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and anonymous donors. Four educational programs were conducted during the season: the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Haifa study excavations, the University of Haifa conservation course, and a field school in collaboration with the International School of the University of Haifa.

The 2016 excavation was carried out in Areas D2 East and D5, two previously excavated areas on the tell, and in Area K1, a new area opened on the shore at the southern foot of the tell.

The excavation in Area D2 continued to clarify the stratigraphic sequence of the facade walls of the southernmost insula of the Persian to Roman-period towns, exposing remains from the Iron–Persian and Roman periods. The excavation in Area K1, in the northeastern corner of the southern lagoon, aimed to reexamine walls that Raban (1995) identified as quays; the remains were dated to the Iron Age and the Hellenistic/Roman period. The excavation in Area D5 continued to focus on the large Iron Age structure designated the ‘Courtyard Building’.

Area D2 East — Iron Age to Roman Period

In this area, last excavated in 2000, the superimposed facade walls of the southernmost insula of the Persian to Roman-period towns were previously exposed south of the east–west street. In the 2016 season, excavation was continued here to clarify the stratigraphic sequence of the facade walls. The excavation area was also expanded to the south and east, exposing the upper, later part of the stratigraphical sequence that was also exposed on the southern slope.

The sequence of superimposed east–west facade walls that was exposed south of the east–west street in the 1996–1999 seasons was cleaned in order to refine the stratigraphic sequence. According to the revised scheme (Figs. 2, 3; Table 1), Walls W17816a and W17816b are the uppermost ashlar-built courses that are contemporary with the Roman-period street pavement (Phases D2/1 and D2/2). Wall

W17816c=W16D2-531, built of smaller flat ashlar, may either be the foundation of W17816, or the uppermost preserved course of an earlier wall, the former option being more plausible. Stages i–iii are accordingly understood as part of the same Roman-period construction.

Two underlying stages of the facade wall are dated to the Hellenistic period, according to the dating of the ceramic assemblages retrieved in the area south of the facade. Ashlar-pier wall W19985, exposed in the eastern part of the area, is the later Hellenistic facade wall (Stage iv, Phase D2/3). It is built directly on top of a fieldstone wall W16D2-511 (Fig. 3) that probably continues to the west as W19984 and forms a corner with W19980. The western end of the earlier facade wall (W16D2-511=W19984; Stage v, Phase D2/4) runs slightly further south than the Roman facade wall W17816.

Table 1. Area D2 East: Stratigraphic Sequence of Main Features

Stage	Sq AI/12	Sqs AG–AH/12	Phase	Suggested Period
i	W17816a + W17817a	W17816a	D2/1	Roman
ii	W17816b + W17817b	W17816b	D2/2	Roman
iii	W17816c	W16D2-531	D2/2 foundation? D2/3?	Roman/Hellenistic?
iv		W19985 + W16D2-538	D2/3?	Hellenistic
v	W19984 + W19980	W16D2-511	D2/4?	Hellenistic
vi	W19983	W19490 + W19478	D2/5a-b	Persian
vii	Pit L16D2-527		D2/5c	Persian
viii		W30005	D2/6	Iron Age
ix		W16D2-540, F16D2-528, L19967	D2/7?	Iron Age

Iron Age to Persian Periods. The 2016 season focused on clarifying the stratigraphy and the dating of the elements exposed in the deeper Iron Age II layers that were reached in the 1996–2000 excavation seasons. The fragmentary walls, robber trenches and a fragmentary floor made it evident that this area was extremely disturbed: in Sqs AH/11–12 and in Sq AI/12 were found fragments and robber trenches of several walls, while the whole of Sq AI/11 did not reveal any new architectural remains besides a fragmentary floor (F16D2-528). The architectural remains here represent at least two late Iron Age phases. A north–south fieldstone wall (W30005), whose northern part was robbed, cuts a *ṭabun* (L19967) that seems to be contemporary with another north–south wall (W16D2-540), which, in turn, is cut by the Persian-period facade wall W19490 (Fig. 4). Consequently, W30005 is attributed to Phase D2/6, and the earlier W16D2-540—to Phase D2/7. Floor 16D5-528, cut by a large Persian-period pit, probably belongs to the earlier Phase D2/7, according to its compatible elevation. A square stone seal

with the image of a griffin was found in a fill above W16D2-540, provisionally ascribed to Phase D2/6 (Reg. No. 16D2-5315; Fig. 5).

The earliest facade wall exposed to date is the ashlar pier wall (W19490=W19983), which runs about one meter south of the later facade walls. The stratigraphic sequence suggests that this facade belongs to the Persian period (Stage vi; latest sub-phase of Phase D2/5), but its exact dating is not yet substantiated. The western part of this wall is built into an early Persian-period pit L16D2-527 (Phase D2/5c).

Roman Period. The partially collapsed southern balk on the southern side of the excavation area revealed a noteworthy, although not *in situ* find—a worn and broken *kurkar* Attic Ionic base (Reg. No. 16D2-5012; Fig. 6); its original location and dating are not known. Similar architectural elements of *kurkar* or marble have occasionally been found at the site.

The newly opened squares on the eastern side of the area exposed several elements dating to the latest Late Roman-period occupation on the tell (Phase D2/1). The eastern continuation of the paved Roman street (F16D2-530=F17813=Street 2; Fig. 7) was exposed alongside the southern edge of the street, marked here as W16D2-550; it may have been the continuation of the latest facade wall (W17816). South of the facade, inside the insula, the excavation exposed two fragmentary *tabuns*, set below the street level. These *tabuns* were attributed to Phase D2/2, as several similar Early Roman installations were previously found in the adjacent squares.

Area K1 — Iron Age and Hellenistic Period

In Area K1, in the northeastern corner of the southern lagoon, the excavation focused on the coastline part of a planned section through the southern slope of the tell (see Fig. 1). This area was excavated in the 1980s by Avner Raban (1995), and preliminarily investigated in 2014 by a team from the Maritime Civilizations Department at the University of Haifa (License No. G-2/2014). The excavation aimed to reexamine Raban's identification of the walls as quays, and to determine their date.

Underlying a recent thick layer of shells, fragmentary monumental architecture was reached in the southern part of the area. One wall (W16K1-106) may be the western continuation of Wall 4, first recorded by Raban, and subsequently excavated in 2014 (Area DS; Figs. 8, 9); its western end continues into the sea. Two courses of the wall were uncovered, the upper course built of mortared large headers, and the partially excavated, lower course probably built of stretchers. In the 2014 season, the wall was dated to the Hellenistic period, based on Hellenistic-period ceramics, coins and other objects retrieved from between the stones (EoS report G-2/2014, unpublished). In the 2016 season, the exposure of characteristic Roman mortar construction led to redating the wall to the Roman period (Phase K1/1); it is also possible that the wall was built in the Hellenistic period and repaired in the Roman era.

A second wall (W16K1-137) is differently constructed of large boulders and irregularly cut smaller stones. In Sqs AC/7–8, the wall runs parallel to W16K1-106, and on the east it zigzags to the south for c. 2 m, and then continues into the eastern balk. The short section exposed of the wide wall precludes any precise determination regarding its course, although it may have run east–west, with offsets. The

relationship between W16K1-106 and W16K1-137 is not clear, and the latter wall could not be dated as the adjacent deposits contained mixed material from the Late Bronze Age to the modern era.

In the northern part of the area (Sq AC/8), the excavation reached undisturbed deposits. A possible surface was found directly below the recent sand and shell layer in the eastern part of the square, and a stone subfloor was exposed in the western part. An underlying white sandy layer sealed by the surface makeup contained uncontaminated Iron Age I pottery sherds. In the southern part of the square, several patches of a surface designated 'lime plaster floor' (F16K1-111) were exposed (Fig. 10), but no relation could be established between this floor and W16K1-137 to its south, as the southern edge of the floor was disturbed. The ceramic assemblage from the surface dates to the Iron Age, mostly to Iron Age I. On the lower tell slope in the northeastern corner of the area, phytolith-rich layers (L16K1-122) were cut by a round disturbance (L16K1-130), possibly a pit or an animal burrow, preventing any determination regarding the sequence of the deposits (Fig. 11).

The Iron Age architectural features uncovered in Area K1 indicate that this area was settled, and thus was above the water level, at least during part of the Iron Age.

Area D5 — Iron Age

In Area D5, the excavation continued the work of previous seasons, focusing on both sides of the courtyard of the large Phase D5/9 of the so called 'Courtyard Building' (see Fig. 1). On the western side, the excavation dug down to the layers predating the building, and on the eastern side, an area last excavated in 2011 ([Matskevich, Gilboa and Sharon 2014](#)) was renewed, uncovering additional parts of the building and the later fill layers. The term 'Courtyard Building' is retained for consistency with previous reports, although the structure does not conform to the courtyard building definition formulated by Gilboa, Sharon and Zorn (2015).

Phase D5/11: Iron Age I (Ir1a in Dor terminology). The excavation reached the bases of the eastern and western walls (W11D5-665, W11D5-666) of Room 3 in the Courtyard Building, revealing underlying mudbrick walls similar to those previously discovered under the three stone walls of the western wing. In the 2013 season, these lower mudbrick walls were assigned to Phase D5/10 ([Matskevich et al. 2021](#)). However, as the phytolith layers are now ascribed to Phase D5/10 (see below), the mudbrick walls should tentatively be assigned to an earlier phase, D5/11, because the mudbrick walls and the seemingly associated floors are overlain by the phytolith layers. In a deep probe dug in the central room (Room 2), the excavation reached a deposit that seems to be the top of a destruction layer. This destruction layer, also known from the Phase D5/11 layer under the courtyard of the Courtyard Building and from other excavations areas, is dated elsewhere to the Ir1a *late* horizon of Dor (see [Gilboa, Sharon and Shalev 2009](#)).

Phase D5/10: Pre-Courtyard Building Early Iron Age IIA and earlier. In the eastern part of the area, the excavation reached a few wall fragments that predate Phase D5/9: a field-stone wall (W16D5-350), partly covered by a phytolith layer, an adjacent line of bricks and a fragment of a north–south stone wall

(W16D5-355) that continues southward under the city wall (W5603; Figs. 12, 13).

Previously, we understood the phytolith surfaces found in the three rooms of the western wing as floors of the Phase D5/9 Courtyard Building ([Matskevich et al. 2021](#)). We now consider these surfaces to be earlier, and, as in the courtyard area, to belong to Phase D5/10 ([Gilboa, Sharon and Shalev 2009](#)). The only exception is the phytolith Floor 13D5-145=F11D5-624 in Room 2 (Fig. 14) that covers the southern part of W11D5-665, which is considerably lower than its northern part. Apart from this floor, there are no floors associated with this wing of the building, and therefore no ceramic assemblages that could date it. Another feature that probably dates to Phase D5/10 is a drainage system that consists of two drains and a sump (L16D5-840 and L16D5-842; Fig. 15) found in Room 1 of the west wing. The larger drain extends from the sump northeastward under the western wall of the courtyard (W10817), and the smaller drain leads off from the larger one to the northwest and disappears in the balk under the wall of the Phase D5/8 late Iron Age tower. The sump was capped by a large slab that was embedded in the lowest phytolith surface, while the sidewalls and the capstones of the drains were built of rather small-sized stones. The smaller drain is only preserved where it connects to the large drain and in the balk. Among the notable finds of Phase D5/10 were two small bronze weights—in the shape of a porcupine and probably a duck (Reg. Nos. 16D5-3050 and 16D5-3270 respectively)—with pieces of lead sunk in their bottoms.

Phase D5/10 is tentatively dated to Iron Age IB and early Iron Age IIA (Irlb and the Irl|2 transition at Dor).

Phase D5/9: Late Iron Age IIA (Irl2a). Several new features were observed in the eastern wing of the Phase D5/9 building. A narrow room paved with shells was defined in the northwestern corner of the wing, east of W5562, and a doorway in its southern wall (W5563) leads into another room (Figs. 16, 17). The shell floor (F16D5-323) and the threshold are both attributed to the Phase D5/9c use of the building. This room was partially covered with a stone collapse.

The deposits south of W5563 sloped southwestward, toward the corner of W5562 and W5603, the long ashlar (headers) stage of the city wall (Fig. 16). The stone collapse in this unit was even more impressive than that exposed in the northern room. It contained large stones, as well as saddle querns, one ashlar and other architectural fragments, all leaning against W5562. The collapsed stones overlay a floor (F16D5-357; Fig. 18) that possibly reached W5562 and W5563. The floor is c. 0.5 m lower than the threshold in W5563, and it slopes further down into the balk under W5603. The floor reached *Tabun* 16D5-361 found next to W5603, c. 2 m east of its corner with W5562.

Both the shell floor and F16D5-357 are attributed to the final use of the building, Phase D5/9c, but the southern floor sunk under the weight of the collapsed stones. The architectural fragments found in the collapsed debris probably came from the Courtyard Building, and they may have been piled-up there after the building fell out of use. Among the architectural fragments found in the corner of W5562 and W5603 were two ashlar of slightly different dimensions (0.30 × 0.35 × 0.40 m, 0.35 × 0.37 × 0.52 m; Fig. 19), both with semicircular depressions that fitted together to form a small cup-shaped door socket (Reg. Nos. 16D5-4357, 16D5-4358).

The Phase D5/9 Courtyard Building is a very large structure (over 225 sq m), extending west, north and

east into unexcavated areas. It comprised at least one courtyard, surrounded on three sides by rectangular units that probably provided spaces for storage and industry. Unfortunately, only a few fragmentary floors were preserved, precluding any determination regarding the specific functions of the rooms. The building seems to have been abandoned, and subsequently dismantled rather than violently destroyed.

Our interpretation of the Phase D5/9 Courtyard Building and of the earlier Phase D5/10 structure is ongoing. At this stage, we propose that immediately after the Phase D5/11 destruction layer—visible below the courtyard area of Phase D5/9—a stone structure was built in the eastern part of the area, while the courtyard and the western wing were either open spaces within this structure or external areas, evident in the stratigraphical record as phytolith surfaces and various installations (see Fig. 14). The Phase D5/10 building was probably enclosed on the south by a city-wall, possibly a western continuation of the Area D2 'Bastion' east of Area D5 (see [Matskevich, Gilboa and Sharon 2014](#)). In the next rebuilding stage (Phase D5/9), the stone structure was expanded westward and possibly northward, and its eastern wing was reorganized by a new set of dividing walls. The similar orientations of the Phase D5/9 Courtyard Building and the underlying structure, along with the reuse of some elements, such as the long walls in the western wing, suggest that there may have been no gap between the Iron Age 1b–2a occupation phases, but this remains to be established.

Phase D5/7: Iron Age IIC (Ir2c). The latest feature explored here in 2016 was a pit dug into the westernmost Room 3 (Fig. 20). The pit (L16D5-821) was filled with ashy sediment and large amounts of pottery sherds, among which were Assyrian types and many restorable vessels. The pit was dated to the late eighth or first half of the seventh century BCE, and assigned to Phase D5/7c. This late Iron Age pit is typical of the sort of features encountered in the southwest area of the tell (Areas D2 and D5) during the Assyrian domination period—probably remains of an open industrial area (for discussion of other Phase D5/7c pits, see [Gilboa, Sharon and Shalev 2010](#); [Sharon, Gilboa and Shalev 2011](#); [Gilboa, Sharon and Shalev 2014](#)). Another ashy pit with remains of slags and hammer scales (L016D5-310), was uncovered in Sqs AU/9–10 and may belong to the same phenomenon, but the pottery in it was mixed (late Iron Age and Persian period) and this attribution is uncertain.

In the eastern part of the area, several previously excavated architectural features of Phases D5/7 and D5/8 were removed. Some fill deposits in the southeastern part of the area, adjacent to the city wall, yielded late Iron Age pottery. Preliminary observations suggest that these deposits continue southward, below the uppermost course of the city wall W5603 (Phase D5/7).

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Sharon I., Gilboa A. and Shalev Y. 2011. Tel Dor – 2009. *HA-ESI* 123.

1. Plan of the southern part of the tell.

2. Area D2 East, the facade area.

3. Area D2 East, the facade, looking north.

4. Area D2 East, late Iron Age remains, looking north.

5. Area D2 East, stone seal showing a griffin.

6. Area D2 East, Attic Ionic column base and schematic profile drawing.

7. Area D2 East, part of the Roman street pavement F16D2-530, looking northwest.

8. Approximate location of Area K superimposed onto Avner Raban's plan (after Raban 1995: Fig. 9.12).

9. Area K1, looking south.

10. Area K1, patches of plaster surface F16K1-111, looking north.

11. Area K1, phytoliths L16K1-122 and disturbance L16K1-130, looking north.

12. Area D5, aerial view at end of 2016 season.

13. Area D5, city wall W5603 built above W16D5-355, looking south.

14. Area D5, plan of Phase D5/9 Courtyard Building walls (white) and Phase D5/10 phytolith surfaces (gray).

15. Area D5, drain L16D5-840 and sump L16D5-842, looking southeast.

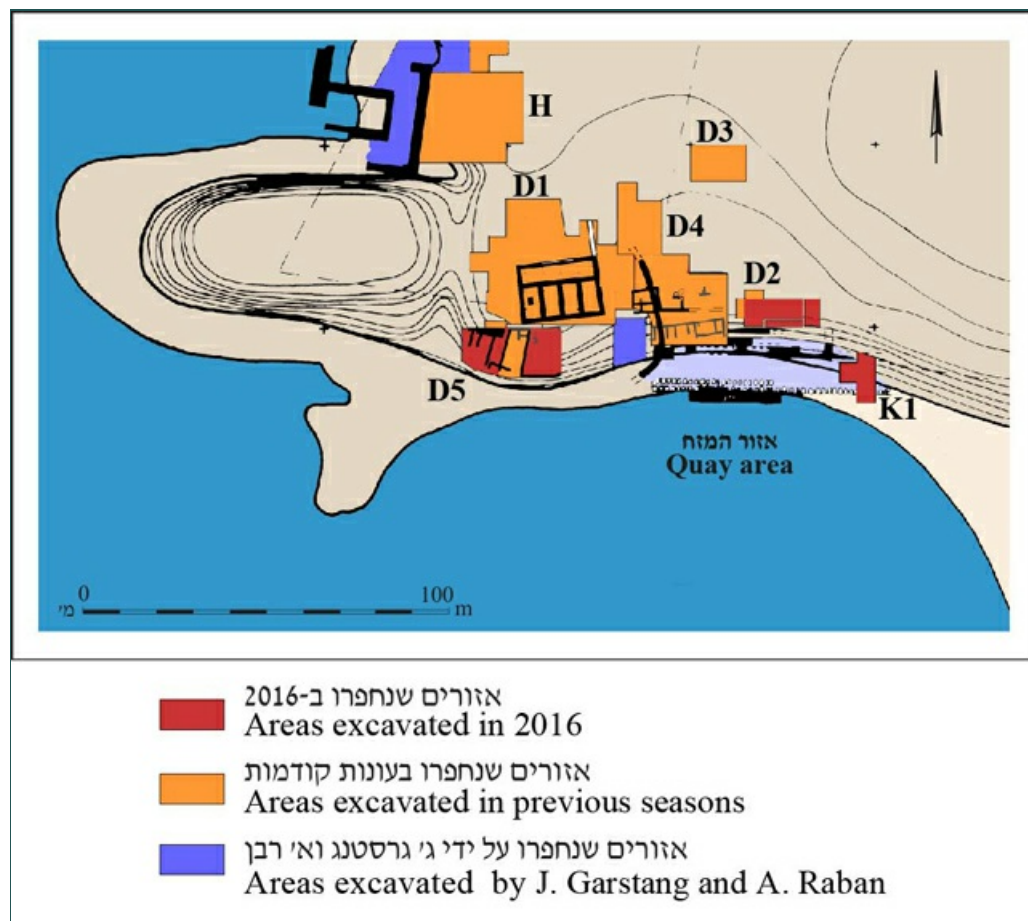
16. Area D5, rooms east of Phase D5/9 courtyard, looking west.

17. Area D5, eastern wing of Courtyard Building, looking north.

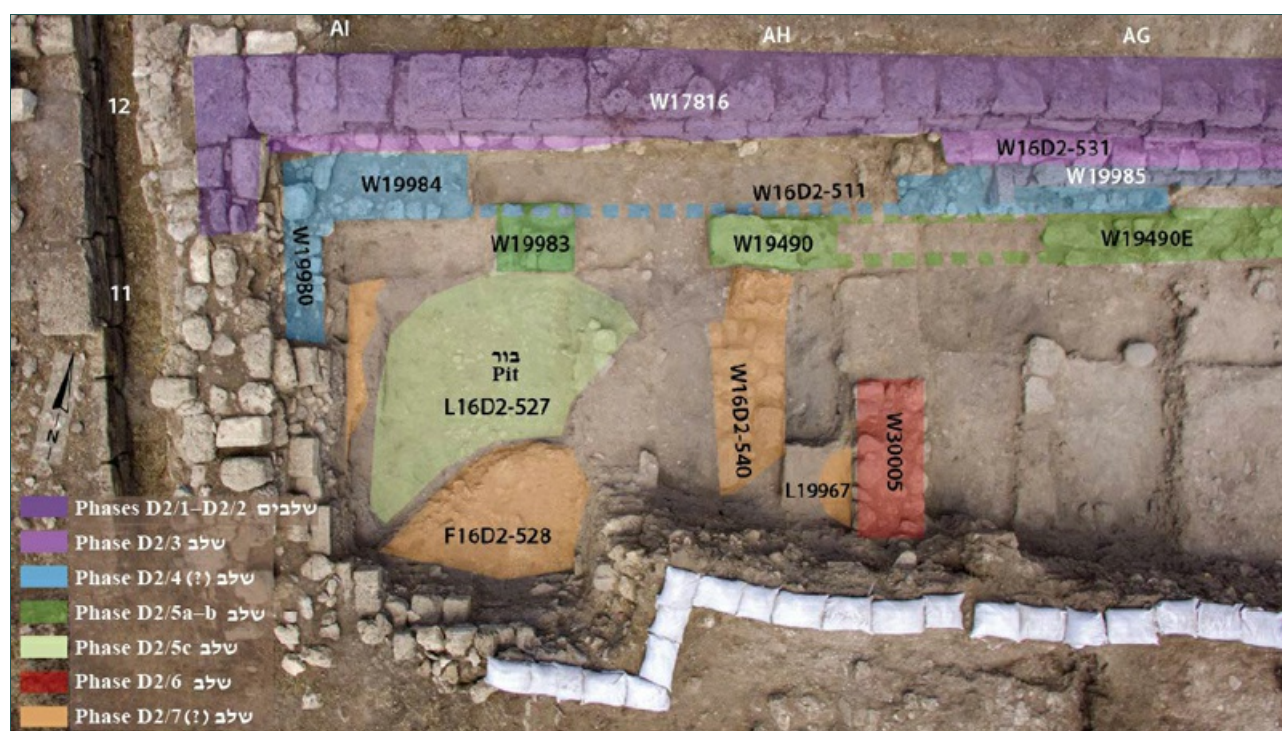
18. Area D5, stone collapse on Floor 16D5-357, looking west.

19. Area D5, two parts of door socket in corner of W5562 and W5603.

20. Area D5, seventh century BCE pit, looking south.



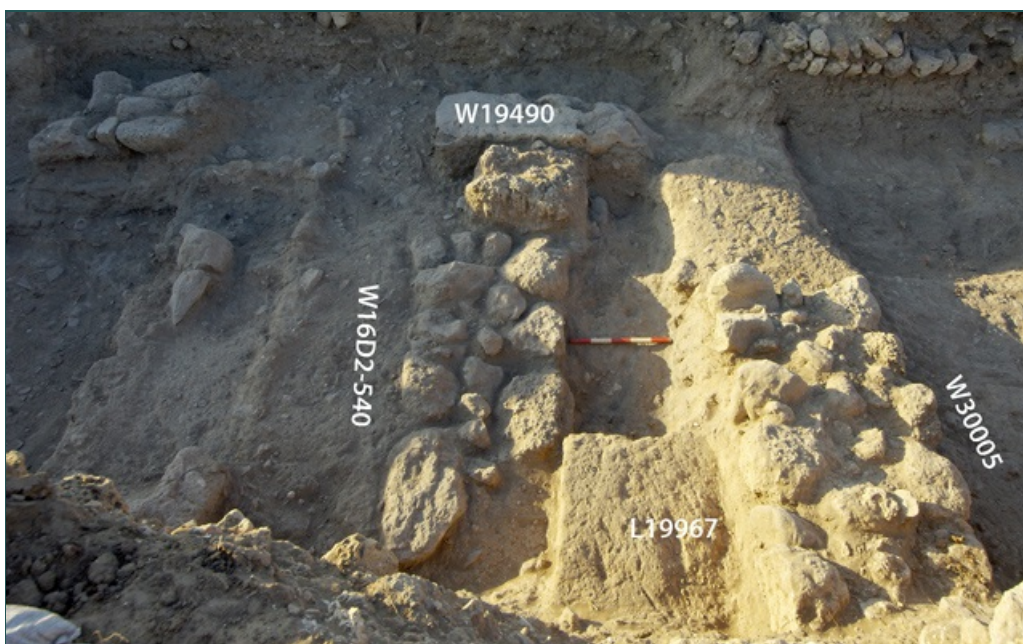
1. Plan of the southern part of the tell.



2. Area D2 East, the facade area.



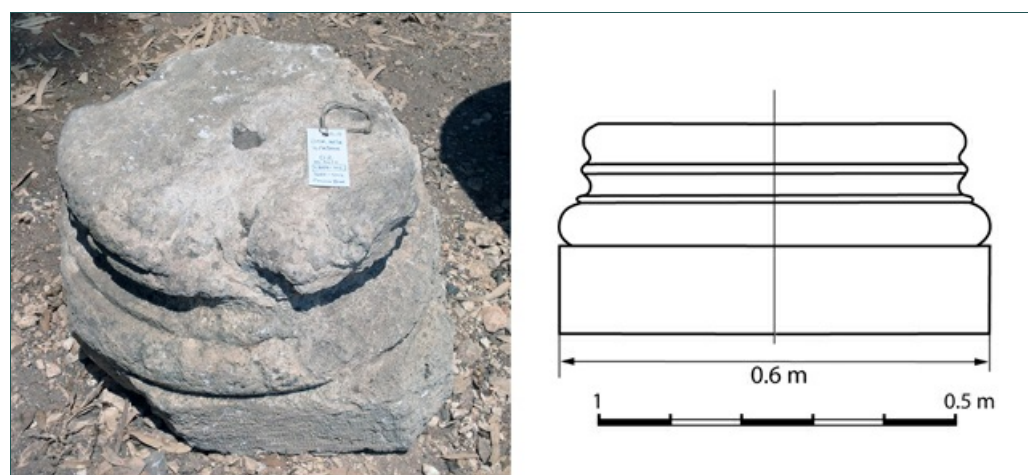
3. Area D2 East, the facade, looking north.



4. Area D2 East, late Iron Age remains, looking north.



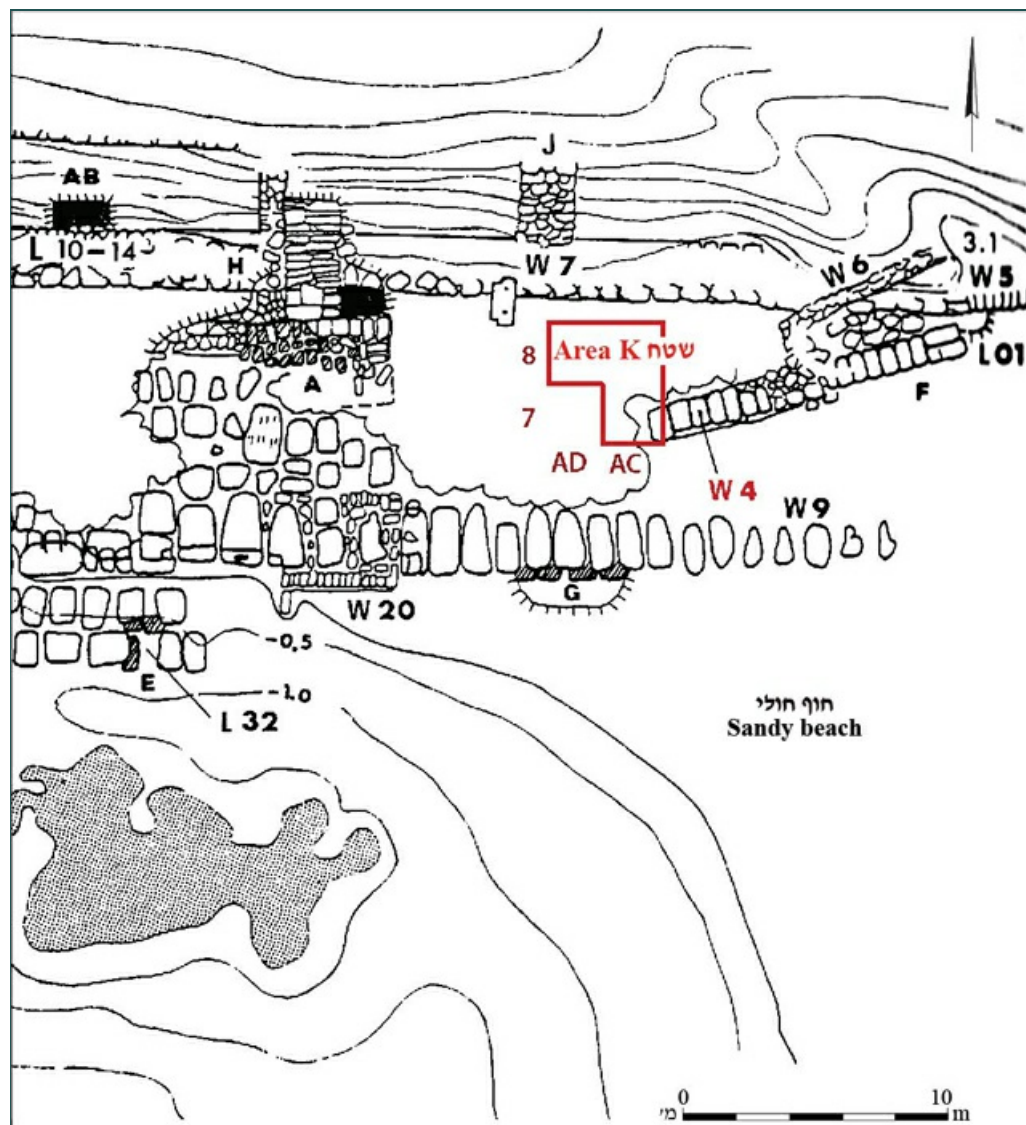
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7. Area D2 East, part of the Roman street pavement F16D2-530, looking northwest.



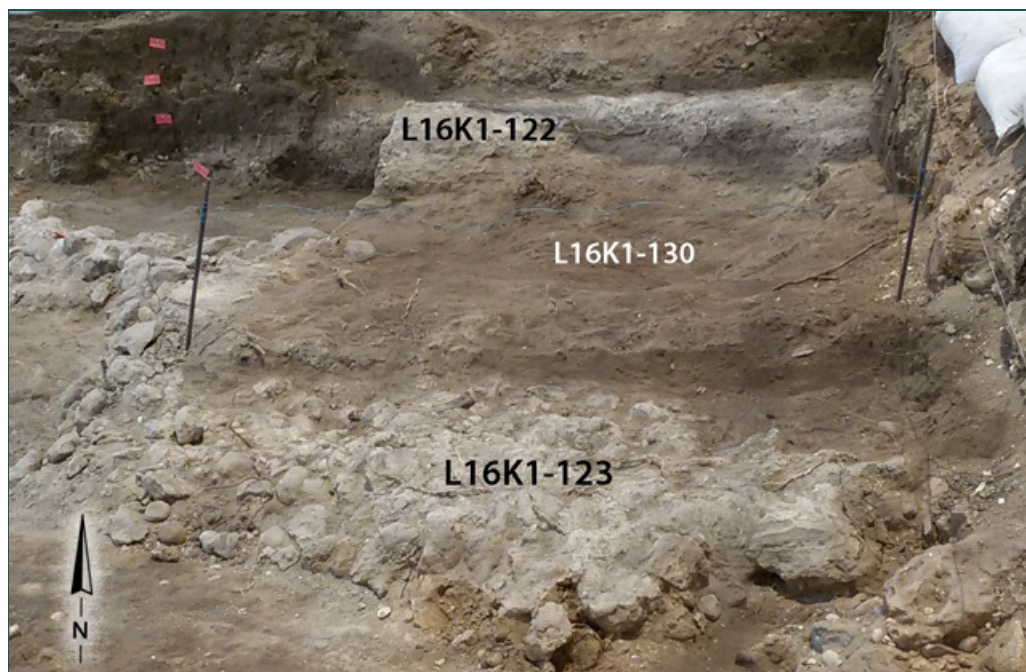
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9. Area K1, looking south.



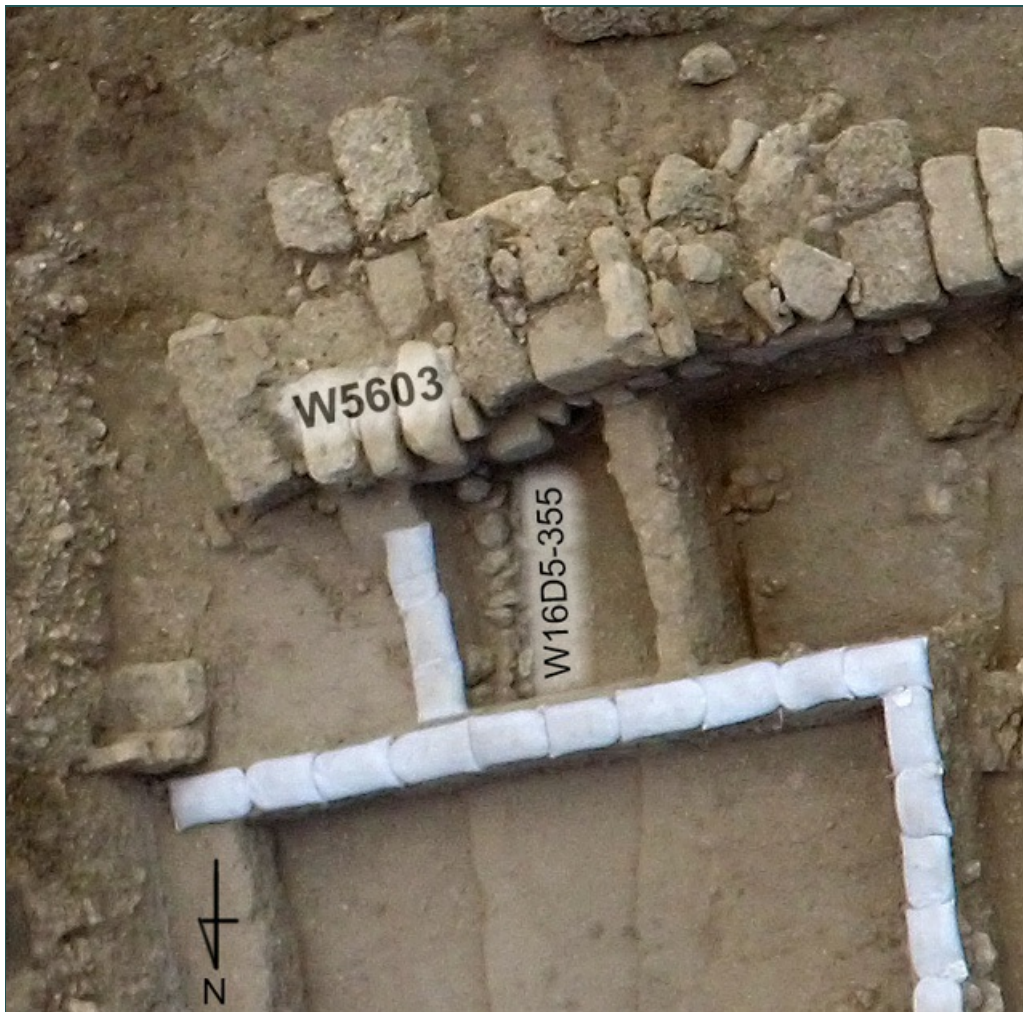
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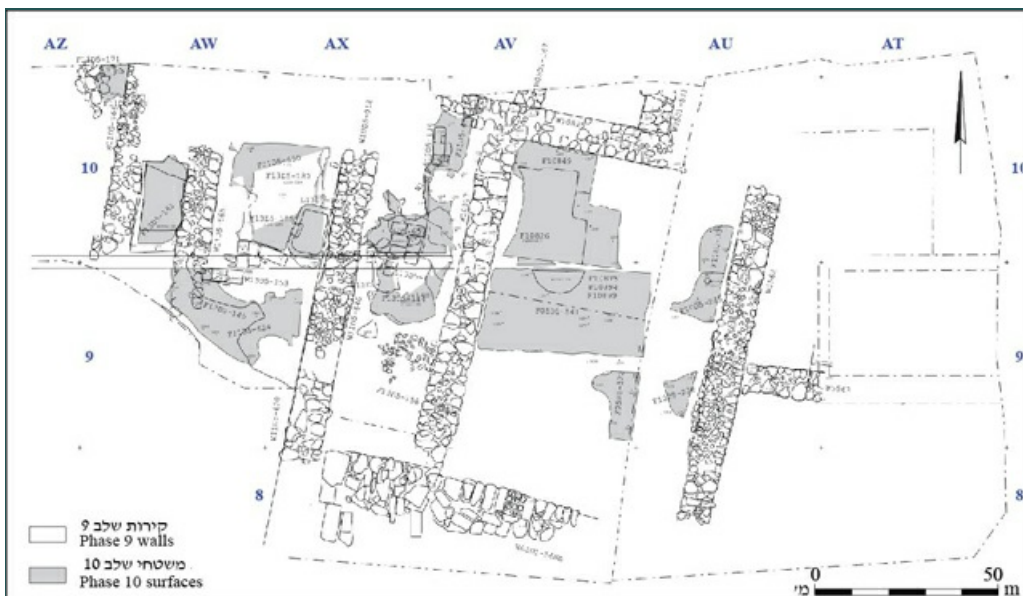
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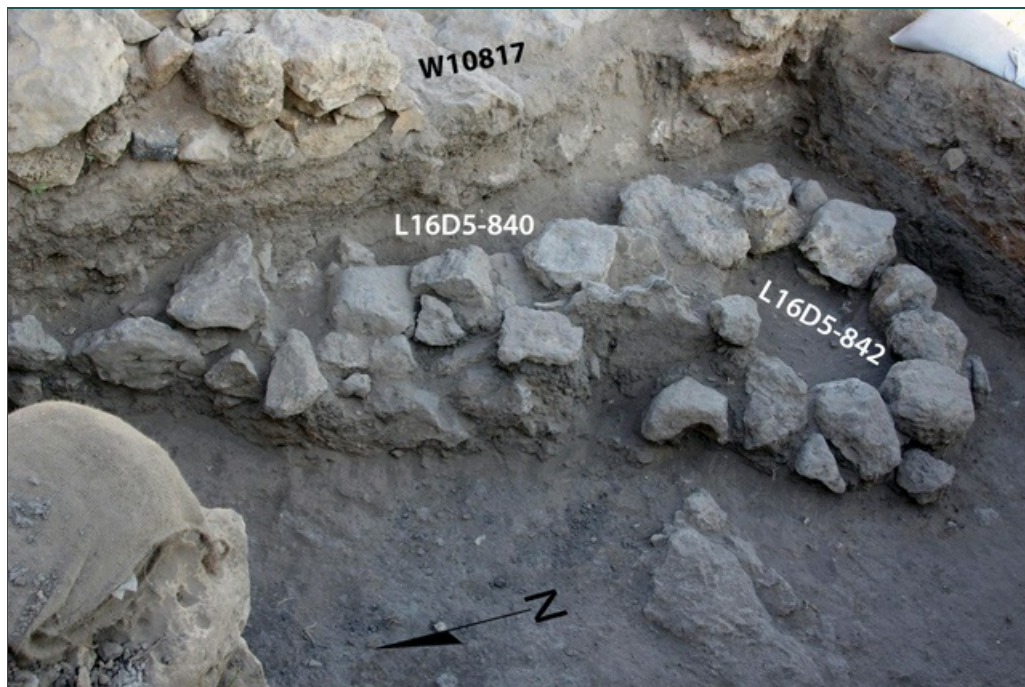
12. Area D5, aerial view at end of 2016 season.



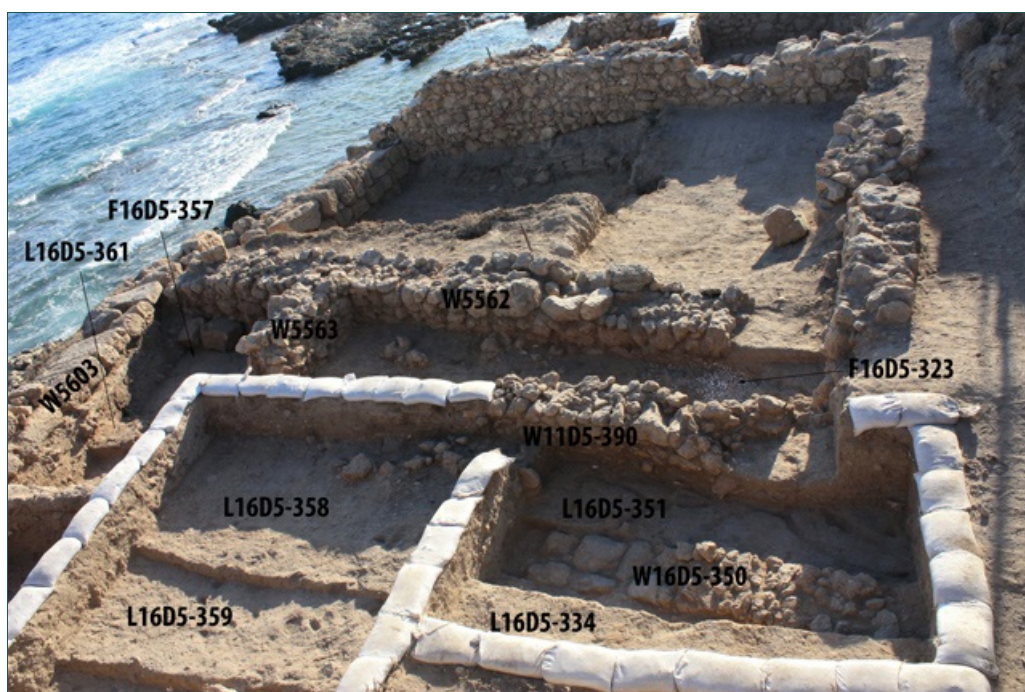
13. Area D5, city wall W5603 built above W16D5-355, looking south.



14. Area D5, plan of Phase D5/9 Courtyard Building walls (white) and Phase D5/10 phytolith surfaces (gray).



15. Area D5, drain L16D5-840 and sump L16D5-842, looking southeast.



16. Area D5, rooms east of Phase D5/9 courtyard, looking west.



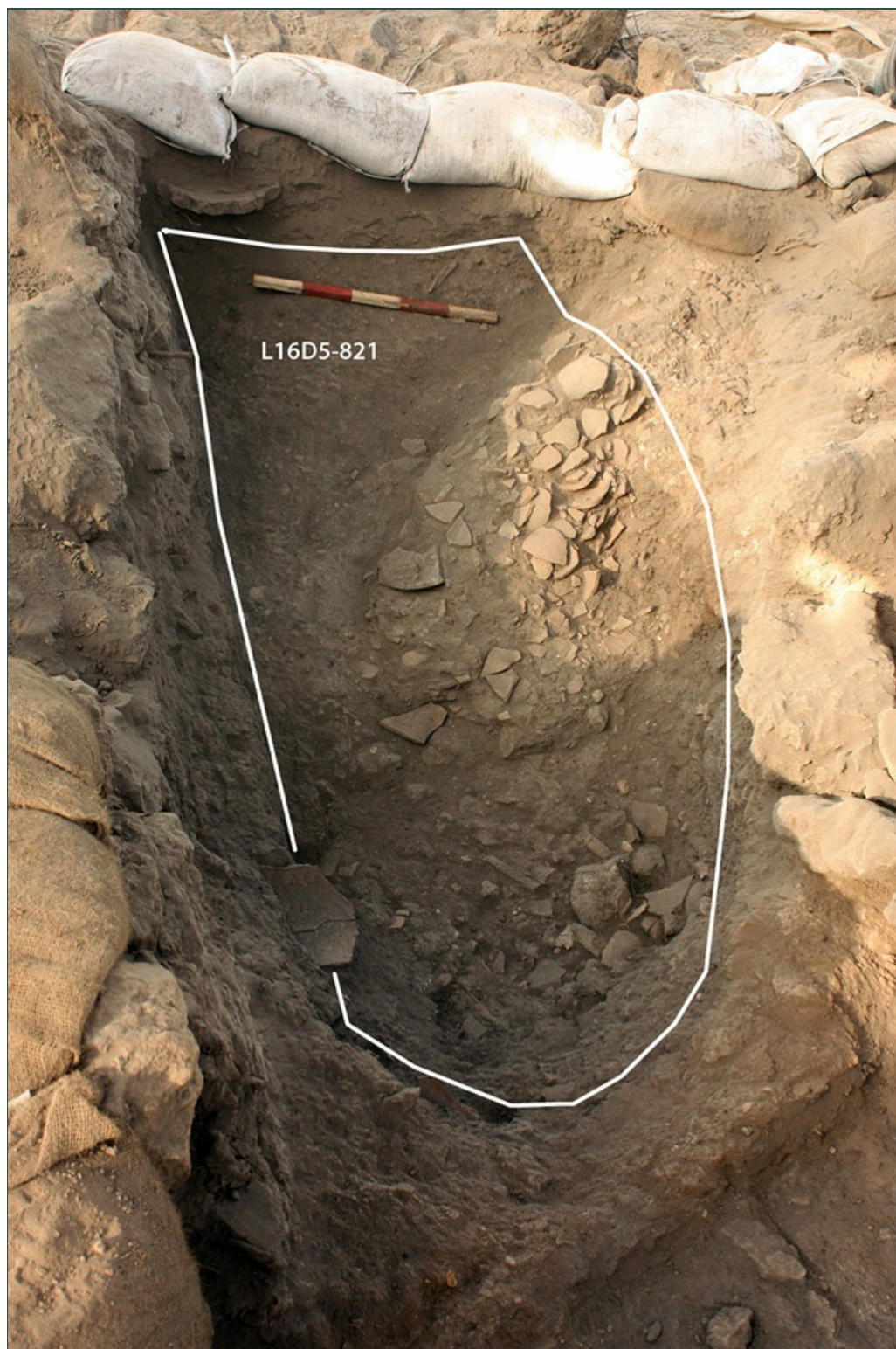
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