

pottery uncovered in each building, the inscription (found during the 2008 season), the seal and various metal objects. The site functioned as a rich urban centre.

One would expect mention of a town of such importance in the biblical records; indeed, we suggest its identification with Sha'arayim, mentioned twice in association with the late eleventh century BCE (1 Sam. 17:52, 1 Chron. 4:31–32) (Garfinkel and Ganor 2008).

The Iron IIA city came to a sudden end. Its location on the border between Judah and the Philistine kingdom of Gath suggests that it might have been destroyed during one of the many military clashes that took place in this area.

The site was in use for a short time in the Late Persian–Early Hellenistic period, during which it was a fortified centre. The large number of metal objects and coins indicates a rich population. No restorable vessels were found in this layer, indicating that it was abandoned peacefully.

During the late Roman period (fourth–sixth centuries CE), the site was occupied again and a massive complex built on its summit. During its three phases of use, the site seems to have had a great military importance. This is due to its strategic location on the northern side of the 'Elah Valley, on the main road from the Coastal Plain to Jerusalem.

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The Jaffa Visitors' Centre, 2008

Between 1–18 July, 2008, excavations were undertaken by the newly founded Jaffa Cultural Heritage Project in Qedumim Square, Jaffa, under the direction of A.A. Burke (Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles) and M. Peilstöcker (IAA). The excavations were supervised by K. Keimer and G. Pierce (UCLA graduate students); the work was carried out by UCLA undergraduates.

Soundings were conducted within the visitors' centre and outside it, between the visitors' centre and Mifratz Shlomo Street to the east. The former were intended to clarify the stratigraphy related to Jacob Kaplan's excavations in Area C and to ex-

amine the possibility of reaching Bronze and Iron Age stratigraphic remains by means of probes within the previously excavated area. The excavations outside were conducted in cooperation with the IAA's request to provide oversight for efforts by the Old Jaffa Development Company to reclaim space on this part of the tel without disturbing archaeological deposits.

Area C was so designated by Jacob Kaplan during his 1961 and 1965 excavations.¹ Also retained were Kaplan's square designations, which could be easily identified on his unpublished plans.² Since

1 Kaplan 1962: 149–150; 1966: 282–283.

2 We would like to thank Orit Tsuf (University of Haifa), who is publishing the re-

1965, salvage excavations in this area had been conducted by the IAA from July to September 1992, prior to the enclosure of the archaeological remains under a roof, which required the construction of a frame around the entire area so that the structure could be built (Brand 1994). This enclosure now functions as a tourist visitors' centre, operated by the Old Jaffa Development Company.³

Excavations within the Visitors' Centre

As excavation planning proceeded for the visitors' centre excavations, the identification of references to specific features within Kaplan's preliminary reports led to the conclusion that a deep probe for early materials would not be fruitful in the lowest area previously exposed and probed by Kaplan. Kaplan, in fact, indicated that his soundings yielded three phases of pre-third-century BCE remains in this area (1962: 149). While he did not specify to what phases these remains belonged, the realisation that his sounding had been situated exactly where we had intended to place our own meant that a new strategy was necessary.

Four probes were excavated within the lines of the conspicuous ashlar masonry dated by Kaplan to the early Hellenistic period (fig. 1), which can be traced across the entire excavation area today. Although the probes were excavated with primary reference to these wall remains, they can

also be localised within Kaplan's excavation squares: probe 1 within squares CC101 and DD101, probes 2 and 3 within square DD101, and probe 4 spanning squares CC100, CC101 and DD101 (figs. 2–3).

Probe 1. — This probe was opened on a north-west to south-east orientation along the elevation of the northern ashlar wall (L.1005), which disappeared on the west into the layers of earth, and across a stepped stone feature (L.1000/1007) that abutted the southern elevation of Wall 1005. Thus, at the outset of our excavations there was no evidence for the western end of Wall 1005. Very quickly, however, the upper course of L.1006, the outer face of an ashlar wall, was identified to the west (fig. 4). Eventually, this wall was completely exposed and remained standing to nine courses, while Wall 1005 stood even higher at 12 courses (fig. 1). These two walls appear to constitute the western and northern limits of both a first-storey room and a second-storey room above the level of the doorway at the eastern end of Wall 1005, which Kaplan had already exposed in 1961 as part of the so-called cellar or catacomb (Kaplan 1962: 149). None of the excavation records suggest that Kaplan was aware of the limits of this room; on the contrary, he left the western half of the room unexcavated. Our excavations revealed the remains of the plaster floor that had probably covered this entire space (L.1025) at the level of the floor (approximately 19.20 m. ASL; fig. 3).

Our excavations also enabled us to identify the enigmatic stepped stone structure (L.1000/1007) that cut across the centre of this space (figs. 1, 3). This feature turned out to be nothing more than a modern mantle of stones (as revealed by modern debris just underneath these stones), probably dating from the 1970s, which

mains from Kaplan's excavations in Area C, for providing us with Kaplan's plans and her insights on these excavations. Tsuf also provided preliminary readings of the classical ceramics recovered during the excavations.

3 The Old Jaffa Development Company provided permission to excavate within the visitors' centre, for which we are very grateful.

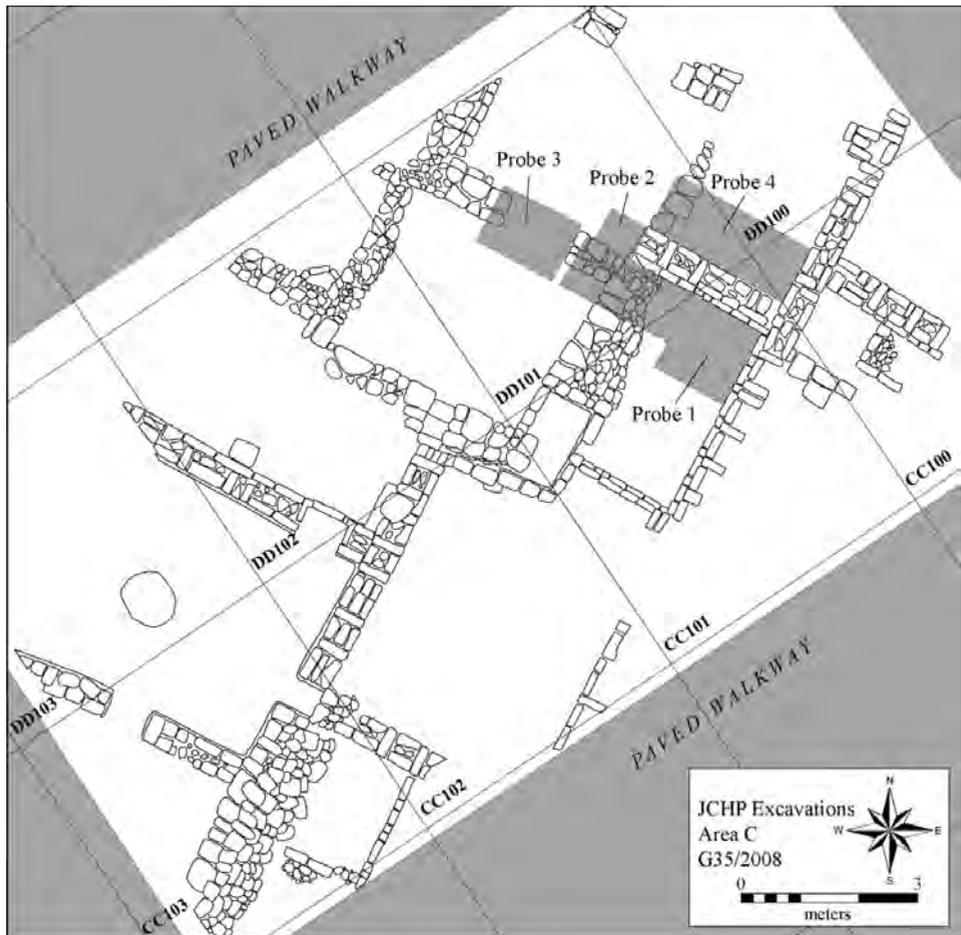


Fig. 1. 2008 visitors' centre excavations, showing Kaplan's excavation grid (drawn by G.A. Pierce)

was intended to prevent further erosion of the lower courses of an early Roman wall, laid across this room from its southern wall to its northern one, 60 cm. to the east of and parallel to L.1006. Although Kaplan exposed the early Roman wall in his 1961 excavations as the western limit of the 'cellar', he apparently did not excavate any of the Early Roman fill deposited on its western side (L.1004, 1008, 1012), which we excavated following the removal of the modern stepped stone struc-

ture. The last 50 cm. (L.1012) of this 2.18 m. deep Early Roman fill included a large quantity of dressed ashlar that had collapsed from the southern extension of Wall 1006, which is distinctly broken away from top to bottom (fig. 5). In addition to Hellenistic and Early Roman pottery, the Early Roman fill produced two nearly complete lamps and a bronze bracelet (?).

The excavation of probe 1 revealed the full dimensions of the central room, which

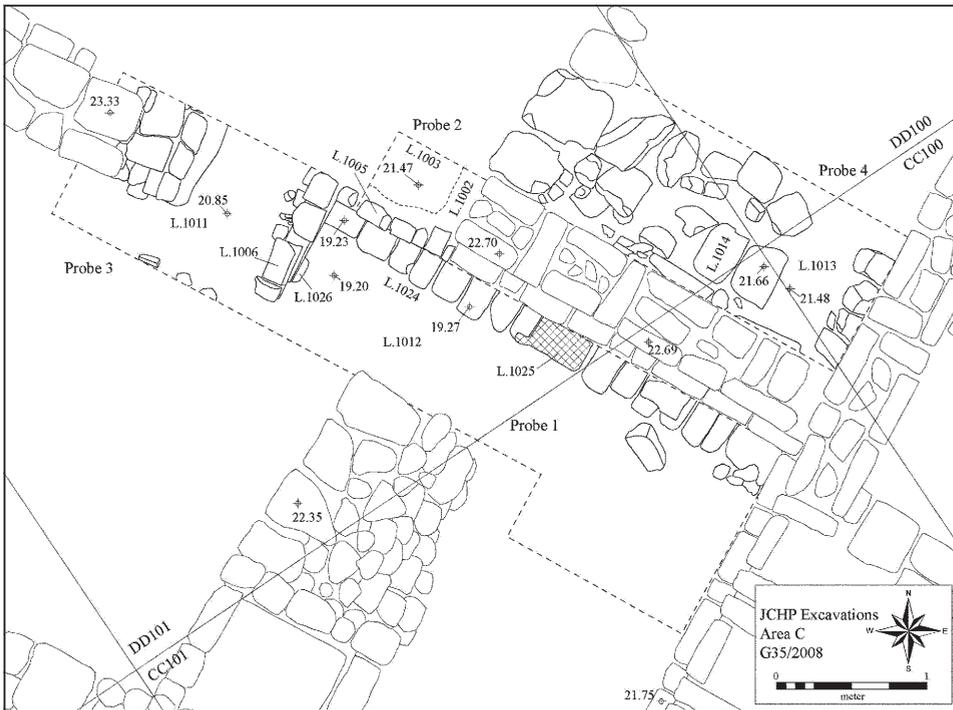


Fig. 2. Location of excavation probes within visitors' centre in Area C (drawn by G.A. Pierce)

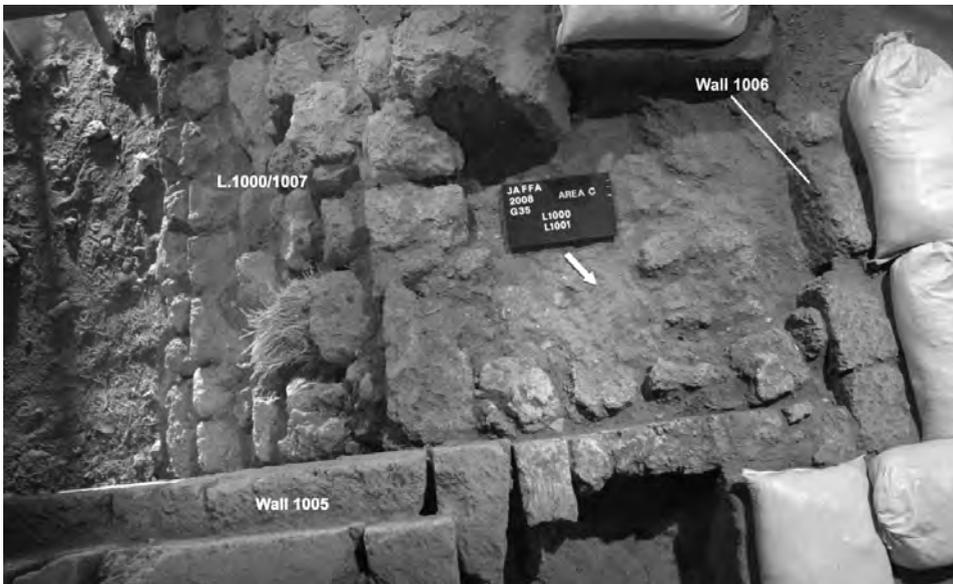


Fig. 3. Probe 1 in initial phase of excavation; probe 2 at bottom, behind southern face of Wall 1005 (view to the south-west)



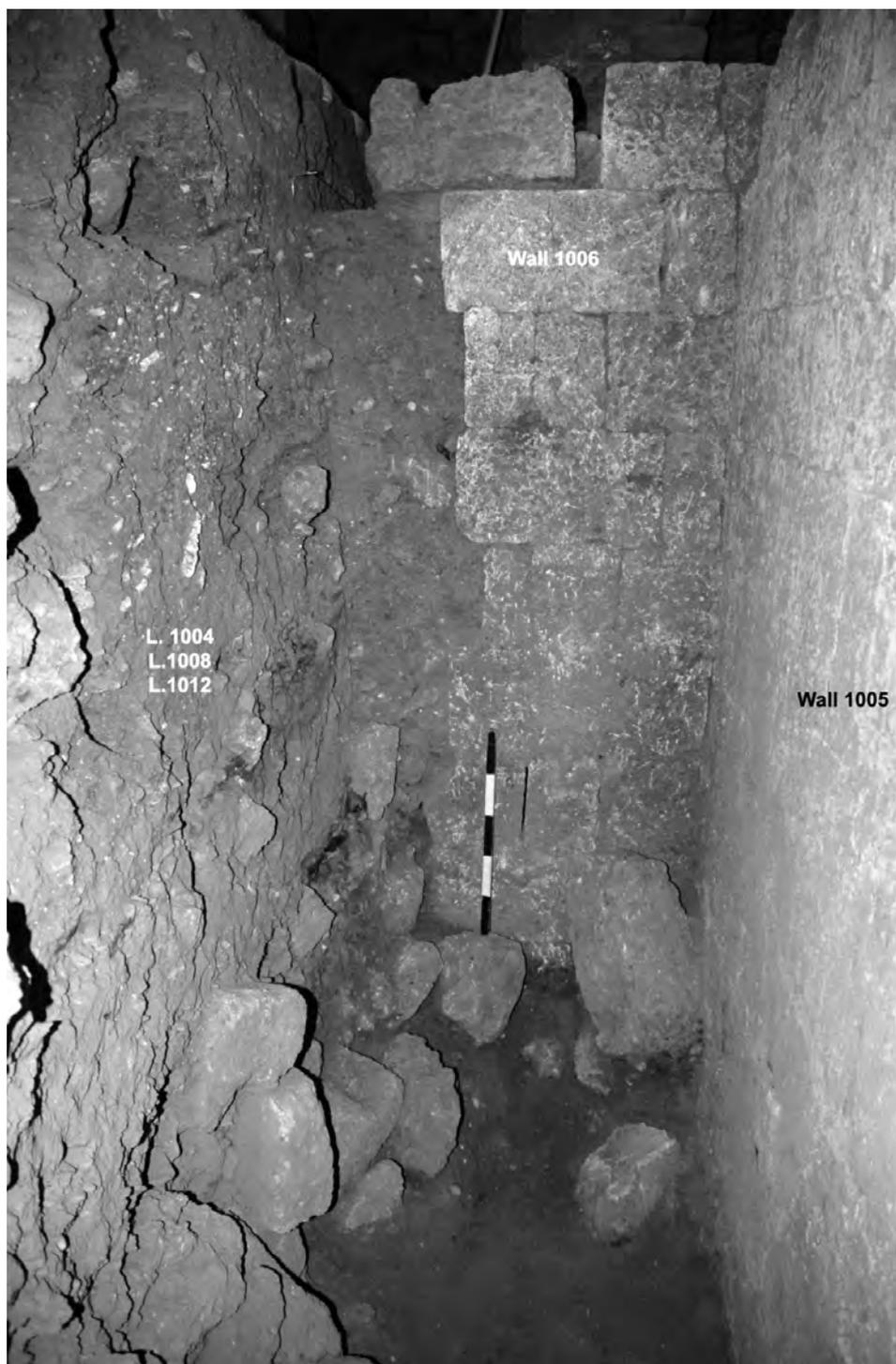
Fig. 4. Probe 1 at end of excavation; note discolouration of Wall 1005, showing location of debris below L.1000/1007 (view to the north)

was constructed of ashlar headers and stretchers — 3.40 m. along each side, with a height of *c.* 2.5 m. As evident along the north, east, and south elevations, already exposed by Kaplan, ledges ran along the ceiling of the first storey to the north and east, and the wooden beams of the second-storey floor rested on them (fig. 1). At the base of Wall 1005, a wall of undressed stones (L.1024) was exposed, on a similar but not identical line, suggesting an earlier phase of construction. Based on the masonry of Wall 1024 and its comparison with the Persian masonry exposed by Kaplan in Area A, coupled with the fact that it is earlier in date than Wall 1005, this sub-floor feature is tentatively assigned to the Persian period, making it the earliest feature known in Area C.

Other Probes. — Three smaller probes were excavated in an effort to clarify stratigraphic relationships with the Hellenistic ashlar masonry building (fig. 3). Probe 2, to the north of Wall 1005, was undertaken to identify the northern face of this wall (fig. 4). It was unsuccessful, because the northern face of Wall 1005, like the western face of Wall 1006, appears to have been robbed out, collapsed, or both. As a result, this probe was stopped shortly after it was begun.

Probe 3 was undertaken to identify the west face of Wall 1006. After the exposure of two courses of the eastern elevation of L.1006, it became evident that something had caused the wall to buckle. Only later, during the excavation of probe 1, did it become apparent that the entire southern

Fig. 5. Probe 1 showing collapsed ashlar blocks and line of break in Wall 1006; probe 3 located behind Wall 1006 (view to the west)



extent of Wall 1006 had collapsed and/or been removed, from its upper courses to the level of the floor (fig. 5). The probe was also instrumental in our attempts to relate the Roman period wall at the west end of the probe to the earlier Hellenistic (?) wall (L.1006). Poorly preserved traces of a plaster floor were detected in the probe, the sub-floor fill of which (L.1010) included a fragment of an early Roman-period Judaeon limestone cup; no occupational debris, however, was encountered on the floor. Nothing else of note was encountered, and the probe was abandoned — in order to avoid undermining Wall 1006 — before its northern face had been identified.

After the completion of probes 2 and 3 and as we were nearing the completion of probe 1, probe 4 was opened to the north of Wall 1005. Its purpose was to determine if the room to the north of Wall 1005, which was accessed through the doorway at the eastern end of Wall 1005 (fig. 1), possessed a ceiling that would need to be

removed before the continuation of excavations in 2009. Excavation revealed that no ceiling (or floor of the second storey) remained intact in this space, although a substantial amount of debris of ashlar masonry filled it (L.1013; fig. 6). The probe was discontinued after excavations reached the lower edge of the stone lintel on the inside of the doorway (on the north side of Wall 1005). As seen in fig. 6, the condition of this lintel necessitated its replacement after Kaplan's excavations; unfortunately, narrow wood beams were used during earlier conservation efforts (fig. 1), which may need to be replaced before substantial work here can continue. Although very little pottery was recovered from this locus to permit a confident dating of the fill, it appears that this fill, as on the south side of Wall 1005, dates from the Early Roman period. It is uncertain how this room functioned, but it is possible that this narrow space led from the doorway north and up a set of stairs to the second storey.



Fig. 6. Probe 4 to the north of Wall 1005 (view to the south-west)

The excavations of the 2008 season were quite successful in determining the nature and extent of the so-called third-century BCE remains that Kaplan first exposed in 1961, but which largely remain below the surface level across Area C within the visitors' centre. As excavations proceed within the central room in which probe 1 was excavated, and within the rooms to the west of Wall 1006 and north of Wall 1005, there is tremendous potential for exposing *in situ* early Hellenistic remains, which Kaplan was not able to reach in this area due to the limited duration of his excavations. The character of the architecture of the Hellenistic building (which compares well with early Hellenistic architecture at Tel Dor) and the fact that the building appears to have been filled in a single operation during the early Roman period seem to tentatively support Kaplan's proposed third-century BCE date for this structure. Nevertheless, further excavation will be necessary to identify the nature of this structure, the function of its various rooms, and the precise date of its construction, use and subse-

quent modification, already preliminarily documented by Kaplan.

Excavations East of the Visitors' Centre

In addition to the probes within the visitors' centre, another one was opened on the east side of Qedumim Square. Although only two days of exploration were possible before the end of the excavation season, it quickly became evident that architectural remains were present immediately below the modern paving, thus confirming Kaplan's observations regarding both Areas C and X. On the basis of Kaplan's stratigraphic sequence for Area C (see Kaplan 1962) and the relative levels of architecture detected within the visitors' centre, a date in the early Islamic period is likely. Unfortunately, due to the limited time available for this probe, very few ceramics were recovered; consequently, a more precise dating is not yet possible. Our findings demonstrated, however, that reclamation efforts for this portion of the site are not possible without disturbing archaeological deposits.

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*Khan el-Hillu, Lod, 2008**

The second season of excavations at Lod lasted four weeks, from 11 May to 6 June,

2008. The excavation, on behalf of the Nelson Glueck School of Archaeology of the Hebrew Union College and the Karev Foundation, was directed by Y. Gadot and

* For the results of the first season, see *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 120, http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.asp?id=874&mag_id=114.