

THE CONSORTIUM FOR THE EXCAVATIONS OF BETHSAIDA  
BETHSAIDA BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT  
LICENSE 2011  
REPORT ON THE 2011 EXCAVATIONS  
SEASON



Figure 1, A jasper stone seal depicting a male figure striding to right.

RAMI ARAV

UNIVERSITY OF OMAHA AT NEBRASKA

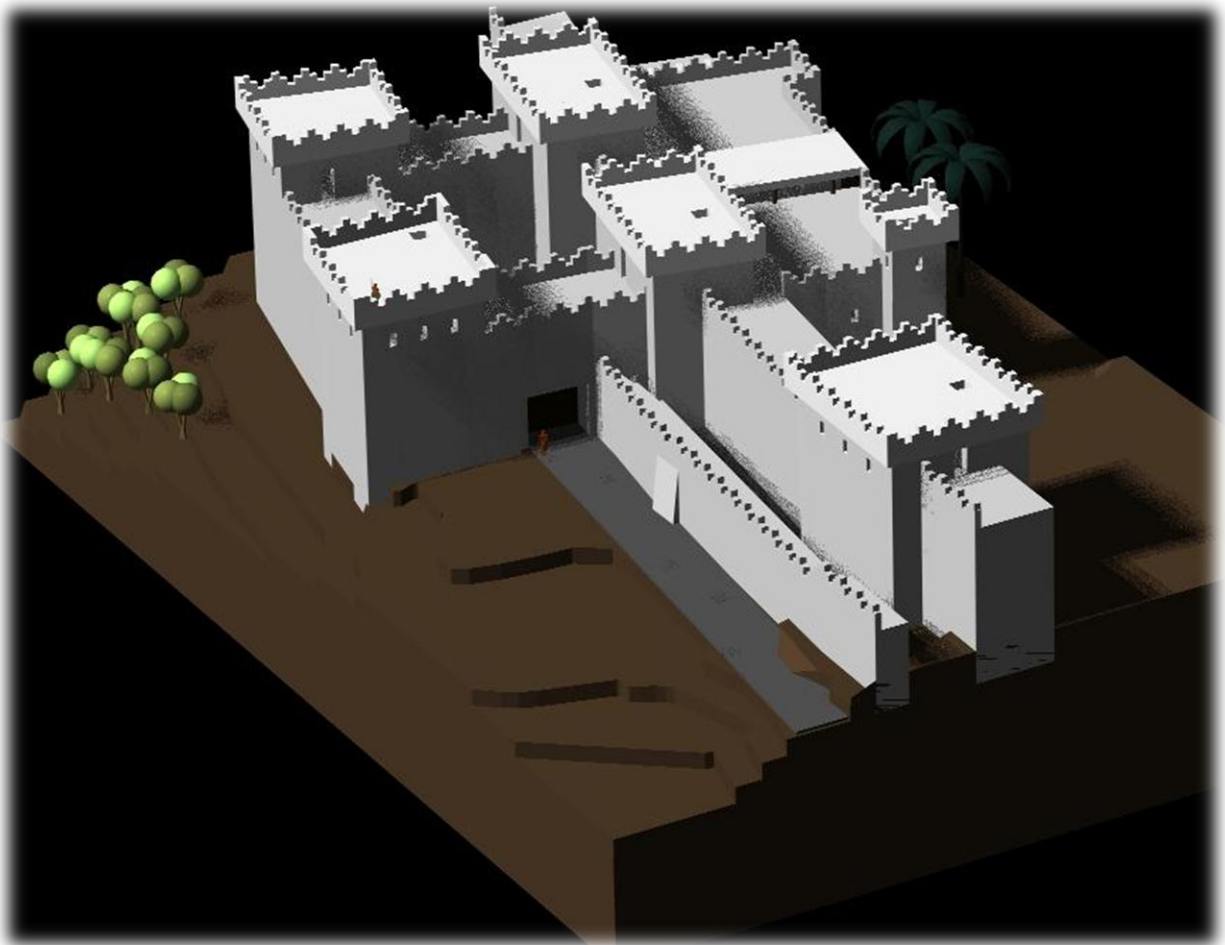


Figure 2, Bethsaida Stratum V, city gate, 3D image created by Nicholas Birt

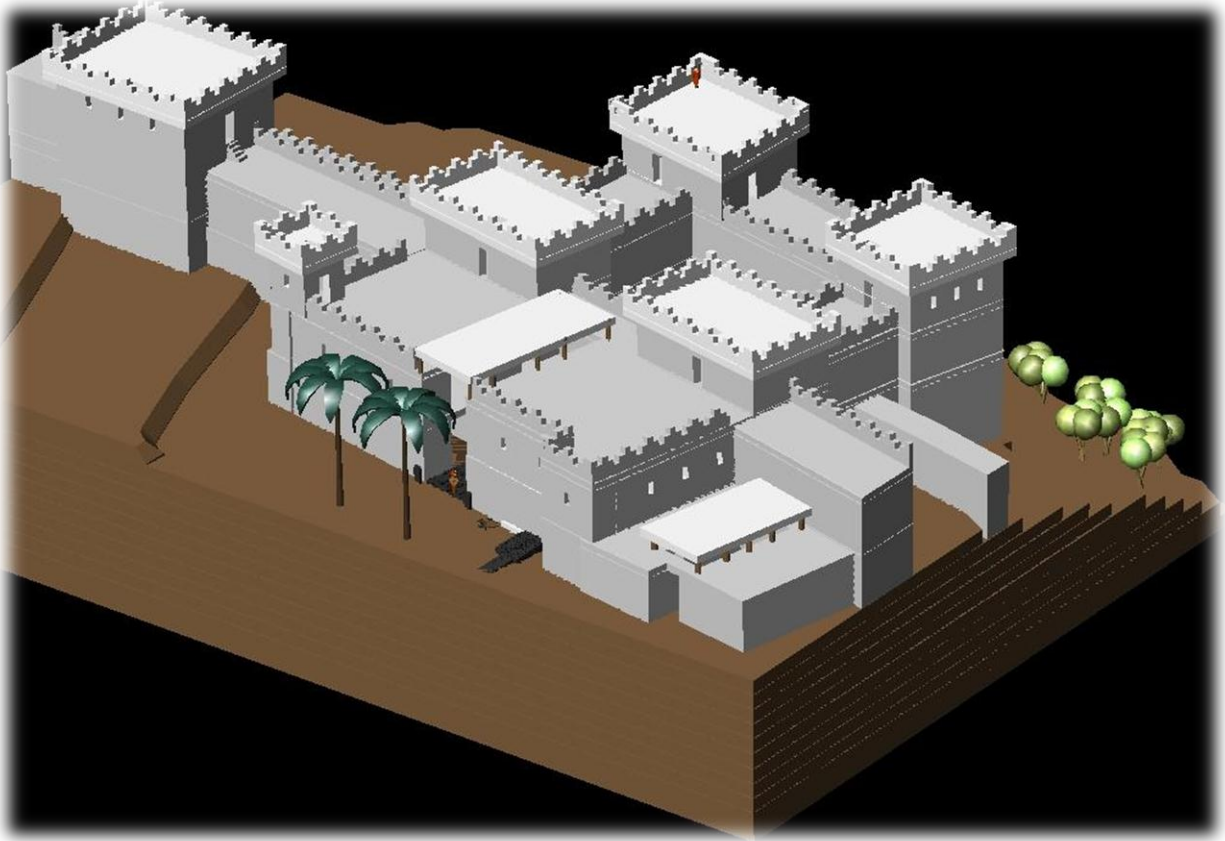


Figure 3, Bethsaida City Gate Stratum V, 3D image created by Nicholas Birt

## *The Expedition*

The excavation season of 2011 consisted of two sessions of two weeks each in the month of June and an early bird week in the end of May.

As usual the expedition was housed in Kibbutz Ginosar. We are very grateful for the extraordinary hospitality that has been consistently shown to the expedition since 1994.

### *Faculty participants at the 2011 excavation season:*

Dr. Rami Arav, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Senior Fellow, Zinnman Institute of Archaeology, Haifa University, Director of Excavations

Dr. Richard Freund, Hartford University, Project Director

Dr. Carl Savage, Drew University, Assistant Director, Area A West Supervisor

Dr. Kate Rafael, Hebrew University, Assistant Director, Area A South Supervisor

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

Dr. Mark Appold, Truman State University

Dr. Donald Ariel, IAA, Numismatics

Dr. Walter (Chip) Bouzard, Wartburg College

Orna Cohen, Conservation

Maha Darawsha, University of Connecticut

Christina Etzrodt, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Cartography

DreAnna Hadash, artist

Prof. Israel Hershkovitz, Tel Aviv University, Physical Anthropology

Dr. Toni Fisher, Engineering Corps, Zooarchaeology, Co-Director

Charlene Green, Pottery Reconstruction

Dr. Steffi Keim, University of Munich, Germany

Dr. Halla Kim, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Dr. Gregory C. Jenks, School of Theology, Charles Sturt University, St Francis Theological College,  
Brisbane, Co-Director

Dr. John Kloppenborg, University of Toronto

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

Kristy Leahy, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Project Coordinator

Dr. Jacqueline Anne Lloyd, Laidlaw University, Auckland New Zealand

Shai Schwartz, Kibbutz Ginosar, Recording, Land Survey

Hanan Shafir, Photography

Bernard Trams, Pottery Reconstruction

Sarah Yeoman, West Virginia State University and the Biblical Archaeology Society

*Participating Students from the following institutions:*

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Hartford University

West Virginia State University

University of Toronto

Creighton University

Tel Aviv University

Truman State University

*Volunteers*

We especially recognize the long time volunteers who year after year keep on coming to excavate at Bethsaida and who make enormous contributions to the excavation of the site, to the understanding of the results, and to the esprit de corps of the entire expedition:

Andrea Bakas, USA

Celso Betdinger, USA

Philippe Bestion de Camoulas, France

Karin Nobbs, France

Marcia Sanders, USA

Viveka Ponten, Sweden

Emmit and Kelen Wilson, USA

Andrea Read

Kay Magilavy

*The Consortium for the Excavations of Bethsaida, class of 2011*

Charles Sturt University, St Francis Theological College, Brisbane, Australia

Drew University

Rocky Mountain College University of Munich

Truman State University

University of Nebraska at Omaha

University of San Diego

University of Connecticut at Hartford

University of Munich

Wartburg College

## The Excavation

Fifty eight loci were excavated in the 2011 excavation season in three different zones of Area A. These areas are designated by orientations, Area A West, South and East.

### Area A South

#### Stratum VI



Figure 4, Area A South. Stratum VI in blue, notice the city gate, entry way and the massive structure at the west

During the last days of the excavations, we encountered what seems to be the city gate of Stratum VI. It is only partly unearthed and we will devote the next season to assess this assumption. Thus far the following elements of the gate were discovered:

1. The northern chamber of the gate. This chamber was originally excavated in 1994 but only now actually understood. It consists of a north-south wall that was previously thought to be part of the infrastructure that is situated to its west. This wall (W1500) creates an angle of 90 degrees with W 300. It has been already observed in 1994 that W 300 goes under the eastern wall of the Storage House of Stratum V (W 311) and perhaps meets with the city wall. In the next season we intend to excavate this segment and see whether there is indeed a passageway. Finds from this chamber included an outstanding bichrome jug, discovered in 1994 and reconstructed recently by Barney Trams, which shows red and black strips on the body of the jug and a Cypro-Phoenician amphora with an unidentified inscription on the neck.



Figure 5, Bichrome jug with black and red strip decoration Stratum VI, Locus 822A, basket 2877

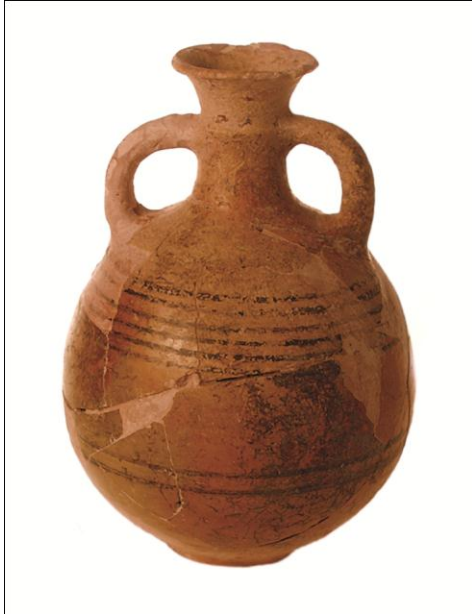


Figure 6, Cypro-Phoenician jar, bichrome decoration, an un-deciphered inscription is on the other side part of the neck.

2. A passage way of 3.30 m separates wall W1500 from its counterpart, the southern wall W 1170. This is 60 cm short of the entrance to the monumental Stratum V city gate. However, its proximity to the perimeter of the city would suggest that it served as a city gate. The passage way was bisected in Stratum V by the southern wall of the storage house (W 304) which means that in Stratum V this entryway to the city was altered and was made a short distance to the north. Thus far only the area south of the W 304 was excavated to a floor level. This floor area consists of the following loci: L. 1131, L. 1134
3. This suggested passageway was blocked by the north-south Roman city wall that was constructed, most probably, by Philip the son of Herod the Great in about 30 CE. Roman finds including pottery shards and oil lamps were found in the foundation trench of this wall. This area contained locus 1131. The locus was incorrectly written as number L. 1107.





Figure 7, Roman oil lamp near the Roman city wall.

4. The floor of the passageway was coarsely paved with small and medium stones with remains of white plaster on top of it. Lining up with W1170 there was a shallow threshold that runs across the entrance and perhaps connects to W 1500.
5. Locus 1133 included Iron Age II shards of pottery of "Hippo" jars, Cypro-Phoenician shards, Iron Age IIA cooking pots and a handle with X mark. The reason for this mixed pottery is perhaps the foundation trench of the Roman period that cut through the earlier strata and caused this situation.



Figure 8, Iron Age IIb "Hippo" jar

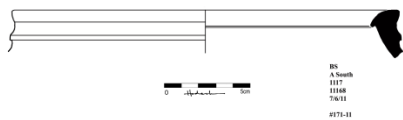


Figure 9, Iron Age II b Crater



Figure 10, basket 11168, locus 1133, Area A south, from left to right upper line: a jar, crater, Cypro-Phoenician shard, cup Cypro-Phoenician shard



Figure 11, Area A South, locus 1133, basket 1172, diagnostics shards, notice an Iron Age IIA CP

The most extraordinary find in this locus was a seal in black jasper stone, found on the floor level of the structure depicting male striding to the right. He is wearing a long robe, tightened by a wide girdle; his left leg extends outside of the robe recalling a Mesopotamian style. His right hand is extended forward and ends with a round small and shallow hole, a mark of the drilling technic. His left hand is down behind him. White residue marks his long hair that is behind his head. A drilling mark, perhaps an attempt to erase a former sign, is seen behind the figure and on the same ground level of his feet.

This figure does not have an exact parallel neither in style nor in iconography and it seems that it is a local Aramean rendering of common Iron Age seals.

At the back of the seal there is a crude engraving that marks the head of a scarab. A hole is drilled along the stone.

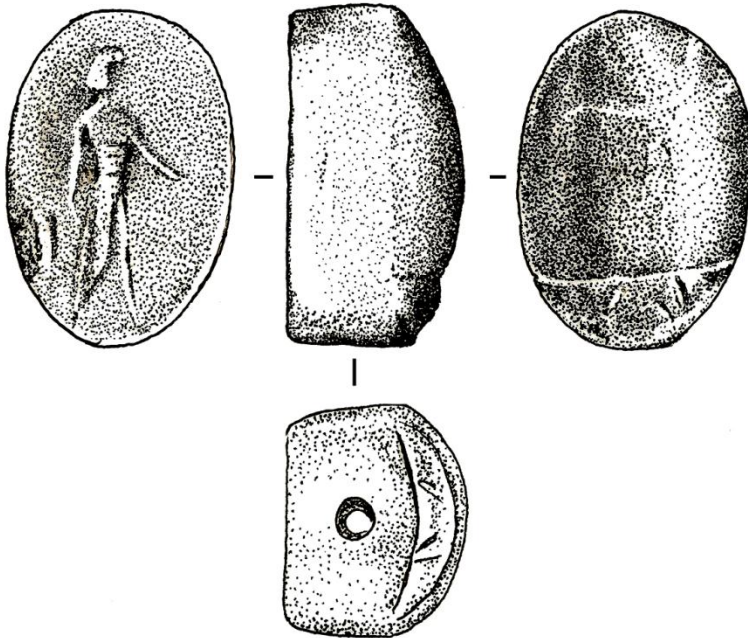
The date of the seal and the level is around the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.



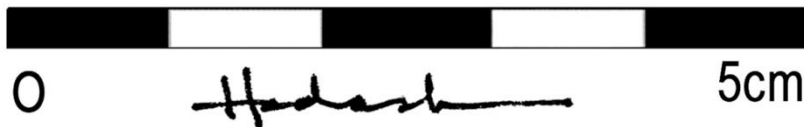
Figure 12, a seal in jasper stone, showing a male striding to the right



scan



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Figure 13, seal on jasper stone

West of the proposed city gate, and parallel to W 1500, there is a massive podium built out of very massive stones and served presumably as an infrastructure to some kind of a building. A very narrow passage of about 70 cm wide separated this structure from W1500. There is thus far no explanation to such a narrow passage. Other segments of this massive podium have already been discovered in Chamber 1 and lining up with the segment discovered under the southern wing of the storage house of Stratum V. Ground Penetrating Radar revealed that this wall continues under the paved passage way of Stratum V into chamber 3. It seems that the sacrificial high place is situated on this podium. All these segments add up to a podium of about 35 m long and thus far unknown width. Further excavations are needed to determine the nature and ultimate size of this podium.

Loci associated with this podium that were excavated during the 2011 season are: L. 1121, 1129, 1136, 1137, 1138.

Locus 1140 was erroneously marked as L. 1115 in the field log and in photographs. It consists of remnants of crushed limestone floor situated on top of the Stratum VI podium and below the foundation of Stratum V. It is not yet determined whether it is part of Stratum VI or perhaps another layer between VI and V.



Figure 14, Patches of floor on top of Stratum VI podium and below W310 which belongs to Stratum V.



Figure 15, Locus 1136, basket 11150, Iron Age IIA shards, red slip on rim bowls, plain rim jars, plaster and cooking pots.



Figure 16, Locus 1129, basket 1118, Iron Age IIA shards, notice the red slip and wild burnished shard and the skyphos-like handle.





Figure 17, Winged bronze arrowhead, locus 1129 (erroneously marked as L. 1104)



Figure 18, An Iron Age II handle with X mark



Figure 19, Locus 1122, notice the boulders of the podium of Stratum VI



Figure 20, Scaraboid, Stratum VI, showing two aureus flanking Horus with ankh sign, locus 1122, basket 11188.

It is hard to exaggerate the significance of the Tenth Century BCE monumental remains at Bethsaida. If what appears to be thus far a city gate is a city gate, the first conclusion would be that the Stratum V city gate that dates from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BCE is not built on the 10<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> city gate but removed about 25 m to the north.

### *STRATUM V*

Not much has been excavated of Stratum V. The large room at the entrance of the storage house was further excavated and its western wall continued to be unearthed. Among the most spectacular finds from this stratum is a Phoenician glass bead with eye decoration of blue white and green.



Figure 21, Phoenician glass bead with eyes decoration.

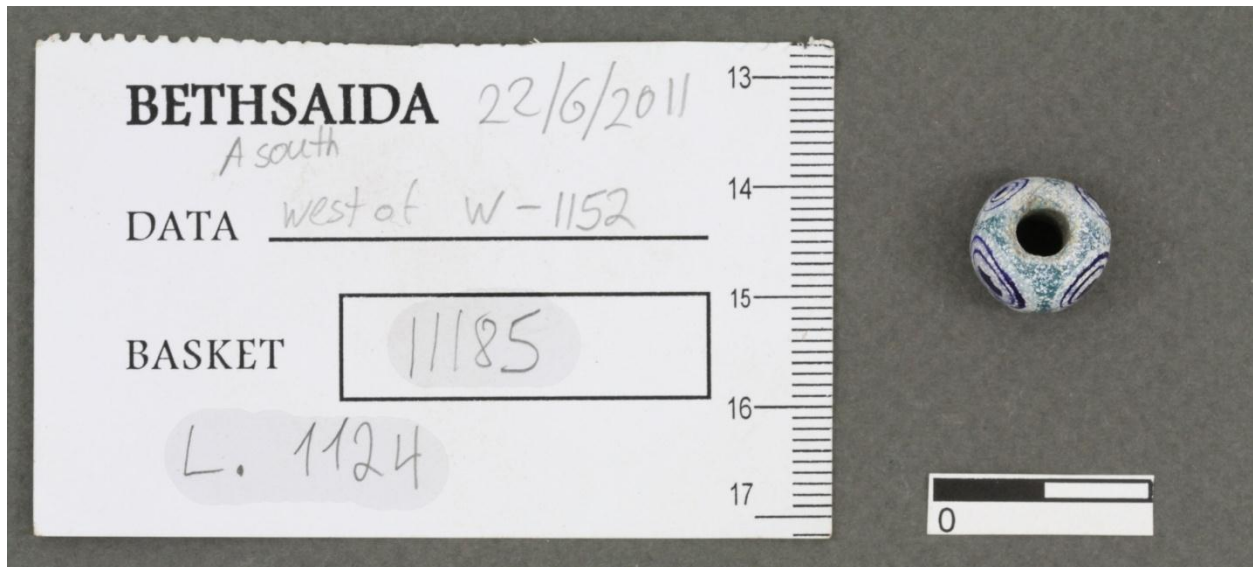
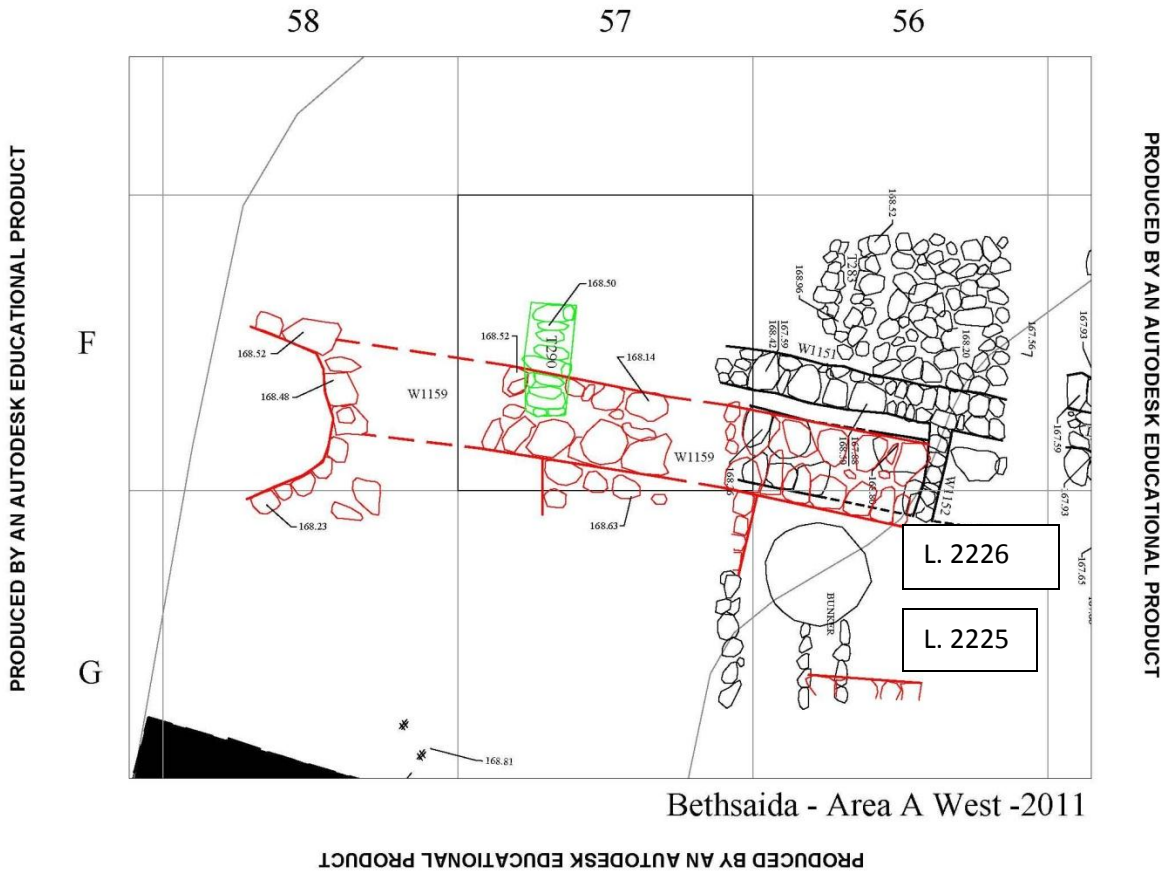


Figure 22, A Phoenician glass bead with eye decoration.

## *STRATUM II*

Hellenistic phases of Stratum II,

A thick wall, 1.4 m, meticulously built of mid-size stones, running north – south, was excavated some seasons ago and was assigned as W906. The southern continuation of this wall is excavated since 2010 and was assigned as W 1159. At the north, this wall is connected to a round structure, 6 m in diameter. At the southern end, another round structure is emerging from 2011 excavation season. The purpose of this wall and the round structures are not yet defined. We are looking for the possibility that it might have been remains of a small but well-fortified Early Hellenistic fort.



Bethsaida - Area A West - 2011

Figure 23, W 1159 is seen in red. It runs to a round structure at the south.

Due the destruction of this area in modern times, the finds associated with this wall were found mixed with finds from upper layers. However, some loci contained finds dating from the early Hellenistic period. Below are some examples.

*Loci 2225, 2226*

These loci are located in G 56 and, as stated above, were heavily disturbed by modern destructions caused by digging deep ditches in the area. The following picture illustrates the state of the preservation of this area.



Figure 24, Locus 2225, notice the debris and the heavy destruction in this area.

The finds from this locus were therefore not homogenous but contained shards and small finds from the Hellenistic to the Middle-Ages.



Figure 25, Mixed pottery from L. 2225, notice the base ring of a red slip fine ware. The hole in the center indicates a secondary use. Notice the iron chisel at the bottom of the picture.





Figure 26, mixed pottery from l. 2225, notice the black glazed Hellenistic oil lamp, the black glazed potter, red slip fine ware and jars.

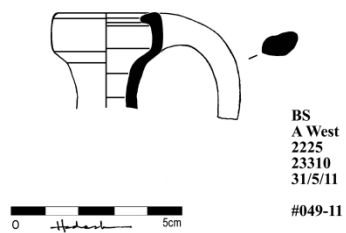


Figure 27, Early Roman juglet.

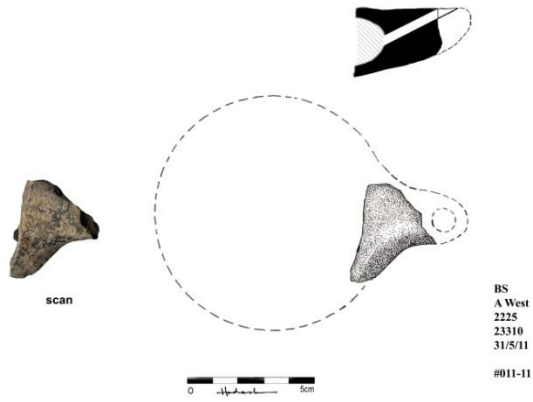


Figure 28, oil lamp

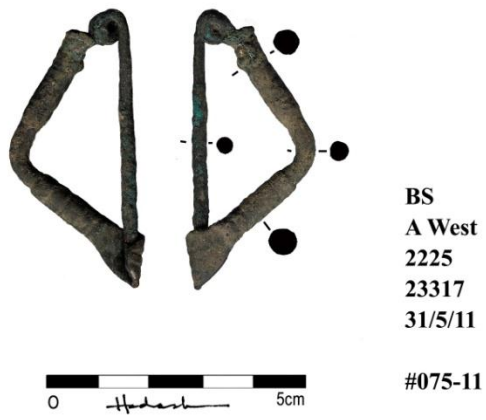


Figure 29, bronze fibula



Figure 30, Mixed pottery from L. 2226, notice the Early Hellenistic shards.



Figure 31, Pottery and finds from L. 2226, notice the Megarian shards in the center line, the fine ware red slip and Hellenistic CPs.



Figure 32, Pottery from locus 2226, notice the Rhodian wine handle, red slip bowl and the triple ridge on rim CP.

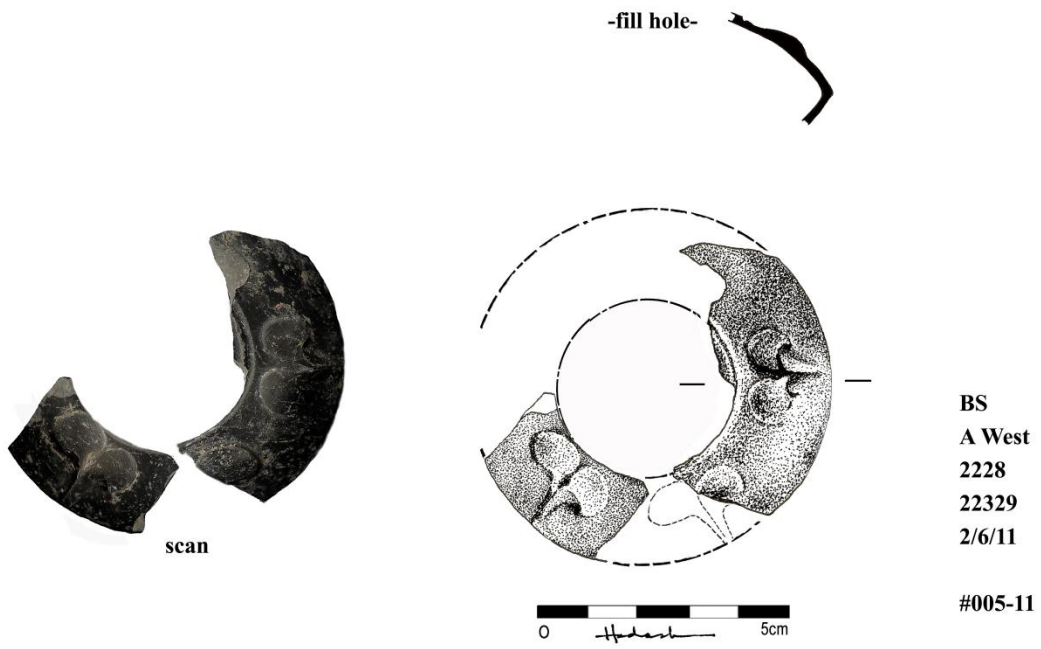


Figure 33, Black glazed oil lamp with ivy leaves decoration.

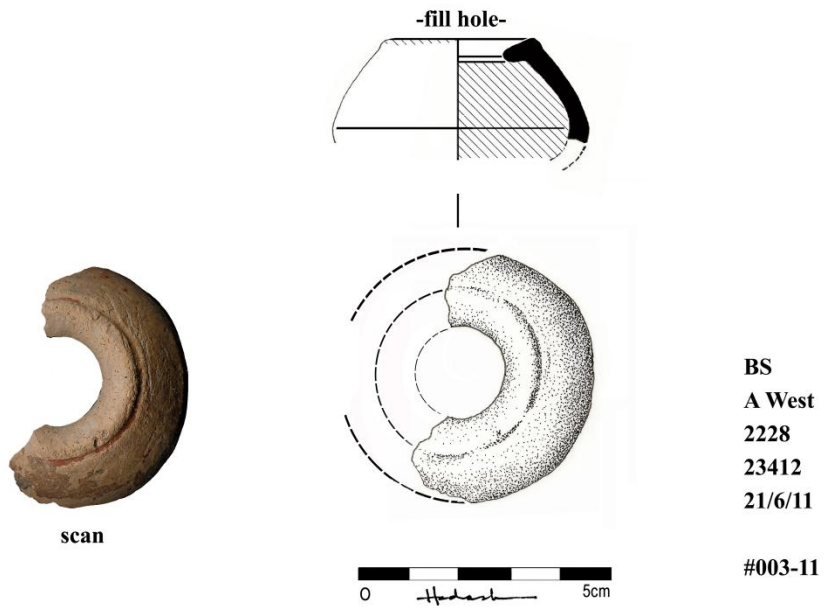


Figure 34, Hellenistic oil lamp, remains of red slip on the groove.

### *Stratum II Early Roman phase*

These are the top layers close to the surface and therefore very much disturbed. The pottery and finds were found mixed with later periods.

Locus 2220 that was excavated in 2010 continued to be excavated and was finished this year. It yielded a very nice pavement with remnants of walls on the north, west and south sides. The east side was thoroughly destroyed due to a Syrian military bunker that was excavated in this area.



Figure 35, L. 2200, notice the missing pavement at the east due to modern destruction.

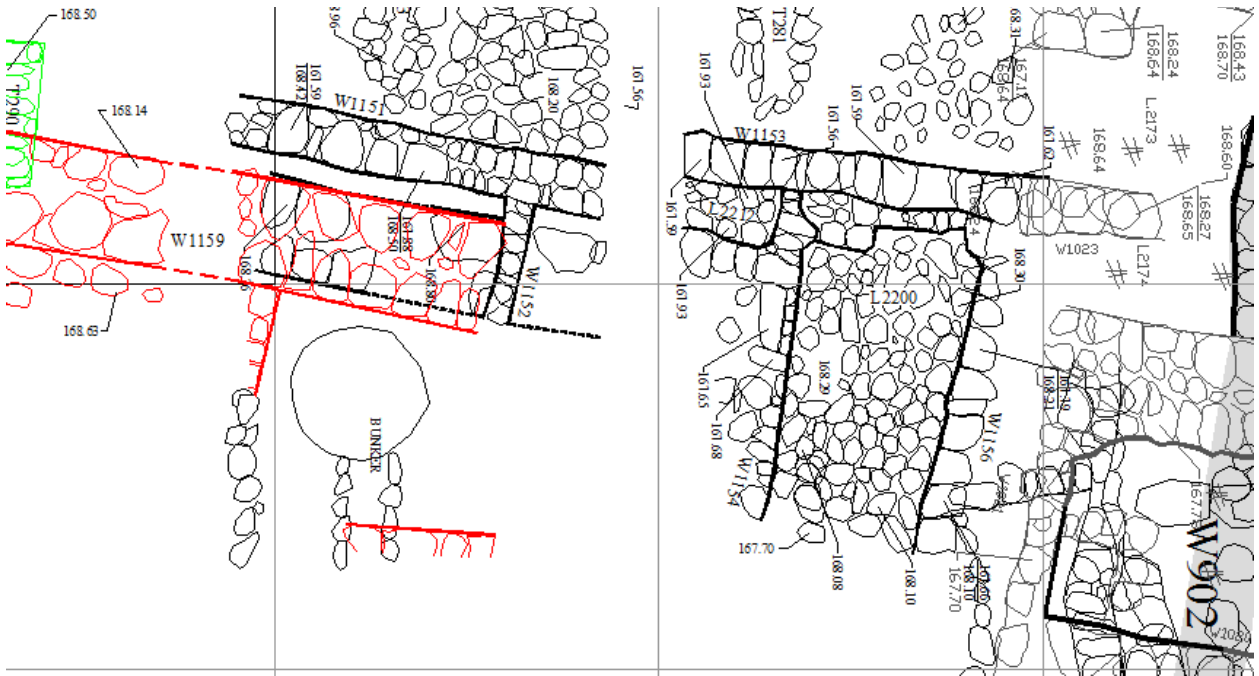
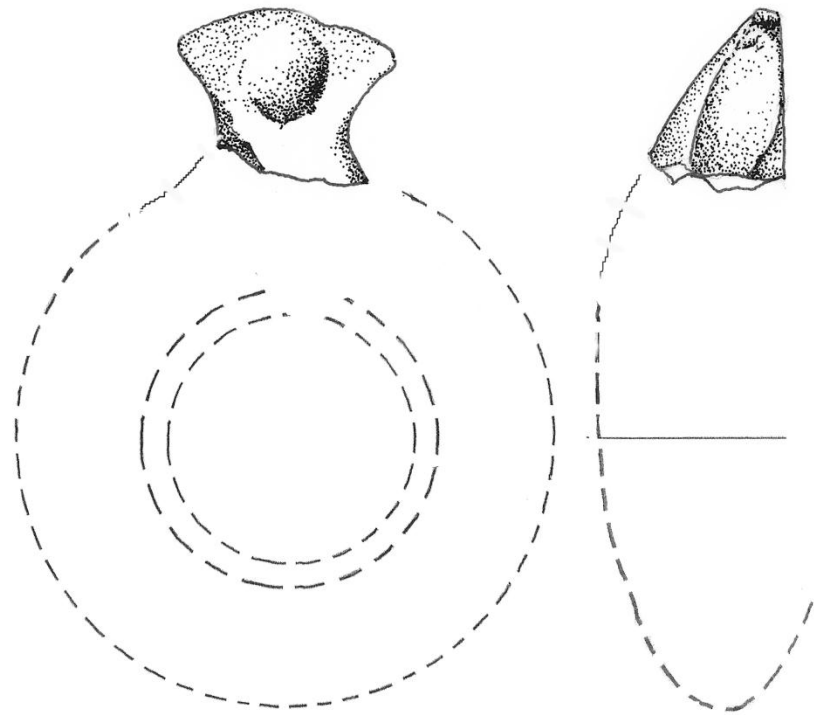


Figure 36, Area A West





Figure 37, Iron sickle notice the remains of the wooden handle.



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Figure 38, "Herodian" oil lamp in L. 2200