

*Khirbet el-Maqatir, 2000\**

The fifth season of salvage excavations at Khirbet el-Maqatir (grid ref. 17378 14693) was conducted between 22 May and 15 June 2000. The excavations are sponsored by the Associates for Biblical Research (Frederick, MD; henceforth: ABR) and are directed by Bryant G. Wood. Consortium institutions included Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies (henceforth: Berkshire Institute); Bryan College (Bryan, TN); Dallas Theological Seminary; The Master's College, IBEX (Israel Bible Extension); Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (henceforth: Southeastern Seminary); and Southwest Institute of Biblical and Theological Studies (henceforth: Southwest Institute).

Staff members were: P. Briggs (Southwest Institute; surveyor); G. Byers (ABR; administrative director and square supervisor); O.E. Collins (Berkshire Institute; square supervisor); S. Collins (Southwest Institute; square supervisor); J.J. Davis (Grace Theological Seminary; tomb excavation); E.W. Fields (Ozark Christian College; square supervisor); D. Fouts (Bryan College; square supervisor); L. Fuller, (ABR; pottery processing); B. Janeway (Wheaton College, square supervisor); G. Johnston (Dallas Theological Seminary; square supervisor); G.E. Kellner (ABR; objects registrar); D. Lanier (Southeastern Seminary; square

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supervisor); M.C. Luddeni (ABR; photographer); E.H. Merrill (Dallas Theological Seminary; square supervisor); A. Moseley (Southeastern Seminary; square supervisor); C. Payton (Wheaton College; square supervisor); L.P. Ritmeyer (Ritmeyer Archaeological Design; architect); D. Shive (Washington Bible College; square supervisor); S.L. Souza (ABR; pottery drawing); D.B. Weirick (ABR; pottery registrar). Labour was carried out by volunteers mainly from the U.S., but also from Africa, England and Israel.

*The Excavations*

The goals of the 2000 season were: 1) to further clarify the layout of the LB I fortress, particularly the western and eastern walls; 2) to continue investigation

of the LB I fortress's north wall; 3) to section and date a fortification wall exposed in 1999 in Square G24; and 4) to conduct salvage excavations of robbed-out tombs near Kh. el-Maqatir. Between the 1999 and 2000 seasons a fence was erected on the site to enclose an agricultural plot (Fig. 1), making the south-west corner of the LB I fortress inaccessible for excavation. It was therefore impossible to investigate a 3.0 m. wide curvilinear wall segment discovered in 1999 in Squares C-D14, possibly part of a circular tower at the southern perimeter of the fortress lying on the same axis as the gate.

*The Late Bronze Age I (Fig. 1)*

Considerable progress was made in

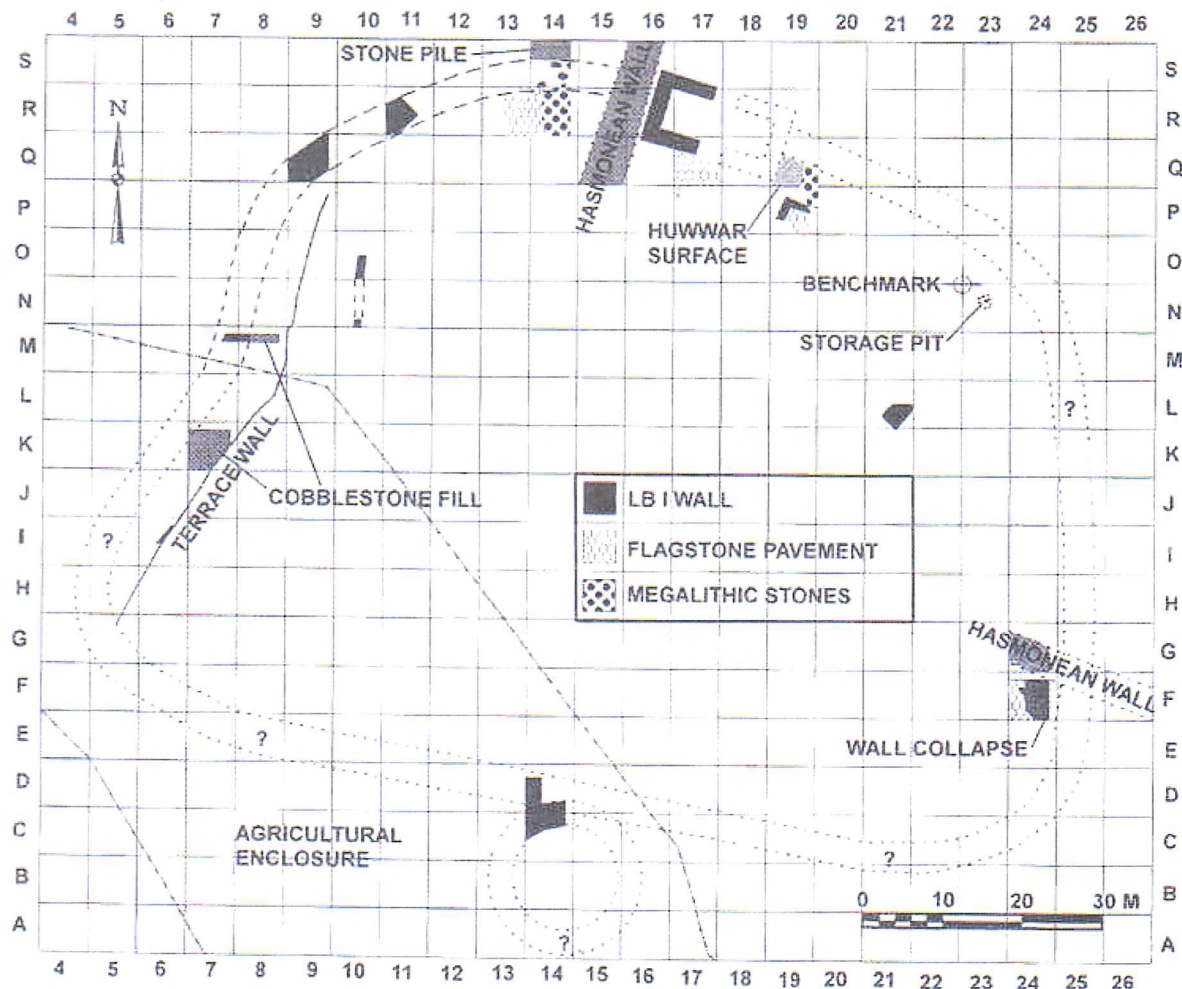


Fig. 1. Kh. el-Maqatir, 2000: plan of LB I fortress.



Fig. 2. Flagstone pavement inside north wall of LB I fortress (Square R14: foreground; R13: background).

determining the layout of the LB I fortress located on the site's south-eastern slope, *c.* 120 m. below the summit. The west wall was located in a probe trench in Squares M7-8. Although the outer face had been robbed out, several courses of the inside face remained intact. The surviving width is 3.3 m., suggesting that the original width was the same as the north wall: 4.0 m. It was founded on exposed bedrock, sloping to the south-east. Abutting the inside face is a

stone fill (4.7 m. wide), preserved to a height of *c.* 0.9 m. at the wall face. The fill could be a supporting abutment, a terrace for a perimeter road running parallel to the west wall, or both.

A stone pavement was found lying on bedrock in Square R14 (Fig. 2), just inside the north wall, now robbed out in this location, and 10 m. west of the gate. The pavement appears to be part of a plaza or a perimeter road. Additional evidence of a

flagstone pavement was found in Square Q17 in 1996. Lying on the Square R14 pavement was a 2–3 cm. layer of powdery ash and clumps of burned and flaking limestone. That the LB I fortress was destroyed by conflagration is borne out by the discovery of calcined building stones in several locations, particularly in the gate area, of calcined bedrock in Squares P17, P18, Q16, Q17 and Q20, of refired LB I pottery, and of a possible ash layer in Square F24 (see below).

Above the ash in Square R14 there was a layer of soil (20–25 cm. thick), on which twelve megalithic stones lay. A number of similar megaliths were found in a comparable position on the east side of the gate (Squares Q–P19). Several megaliths resting on bedrock in Square S14 apparently were part of the north wall. It appears that the megaliths in Square R14 toppled from the north wall, or possibly from a tower adjacent to the gate, some time after the fortress's destruction. Fragmentary remains of the pavement were also found to the west in Square R13 (Fig. 2).

What appears to be a similar flagstone pavement lying on bedrock was exposed immediately below the surface in Square F24 on the east side of the fortress, covered with an ash layer (up to 10 cm. thick). On the east side of the square there was a north–south line of random stones, perhaps collapse from the fortress's east wall. The date and nature of the pavement and overlying stones still require clarification.

A poorly-preserved corner of a structure was found c. 10 cm. below the surface in Square P19. Founded on bedrock, the walls are c. 0.9 m. wide. The north wall is oriented north-west to south-east, parallel to the original fortress wall, now robbed out in this area. Pottery from the square is predominantly MB–LB I, with some later contamination. There were

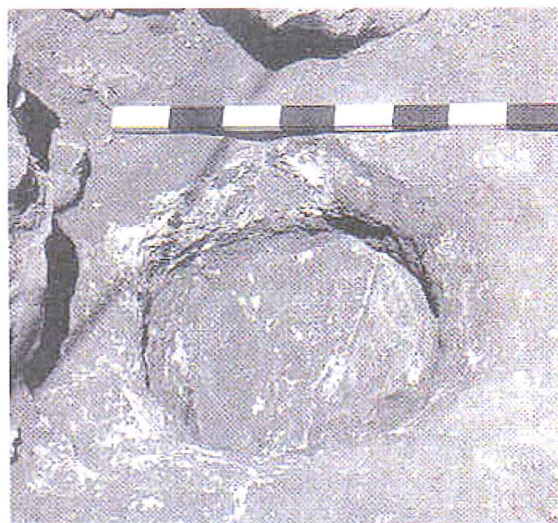


Fig. 3. Cover of rock-cut storage pit (Square N23).

remnants of a paved surface within the building with several calcined paving stones, suggesting that the structure was destroyed by fire.

A rock-cut storage pit was discovered in Square N23, its cover stone still in position (Fig. 3). It is bottle shaped, with a square cross-section (c. 1.5×1.5 m.) and an opening c. 45 cm. in diameter. The 2.2 m. deep pit was filled to a depth of c. 1.3 m. with soft fine soil that had filtered in around the cover stone. MB–LB I sherds at the bottom of the pit suggest that it was part of the LB I fortress. Its location just within the original line of the LB fortress wall supports that conclusion.

Three small finds from disturbed contexts are noteworthy: an alabaster ornament (Fig. 4:1), a brass band (Fig. 4:2), possibly from the Islamic period, and an ivory ornament with a dotted circle motif (Fig. 4:3), commonly found on ivory and bone inlay in the MB–LB I period.

#### *The Iron Age I*

Small domestic structures were built into the ruined north-west wall of the LB I fortress in the Iron Age I. In Squares Q9 and R11 the outer segment of the LB I wall was

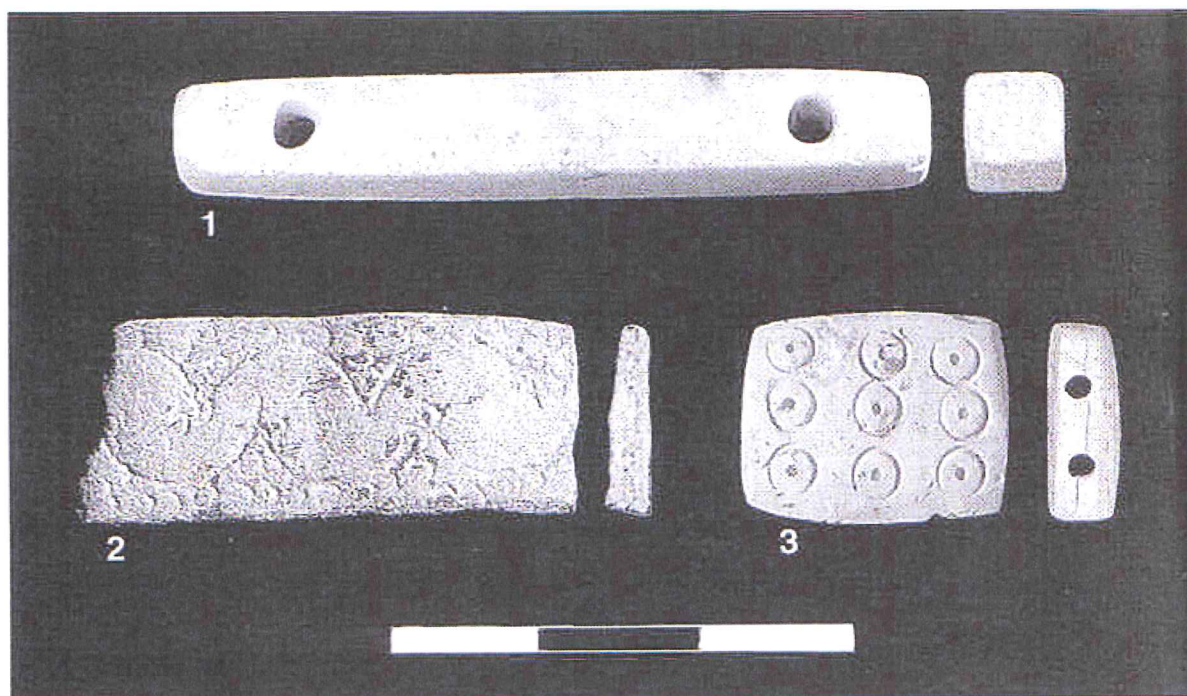


Fig. 4. Small finds from Kh. el-Maqatir: 1) alabaster ornament; 2) incised brass band; 3) incised ivory ornament.

used as the structures' rear wall. The pottery suggests a twelfth–eleventh-century date for this occupation phase.

#### *Late Hellenistic/Early Roman Period (Hasmonaeen)*

In 1999, a 3.6 m. wide wall, oriented north-west to south-east, was excavated in Square G24. A section cut through the wall in 2000 provided a Hasmonaeen date. It appears to be the southern wall on the eastern side of the Hasmonaeen fortress. In Square L26 a *miqweh* was discovered (Figs. 5, 6). Steps cut into the bedrock lead to an arched entrance to an underground chamber. The steps continue to the back of the plastered chamber (cross-section: 2.2×2.5 m.; height: 1.7 m.). Although two holes (c. 25 cm. in diameter) were cut into the bedrock above the *miqweh*, neither was connected to the *miqweh* itself.

#### *Excavation of Tombs*

Salvage excavations were carried out in three robbed-out tombs in the vicinity of

Kh. el-Maqatir, which represent the three major occupation phases at the site.

Tomb 4, dating from the late Middle Bronze–early Late Bronze Age, is located in Square AA5 outside the south-west wall of the LB I fortress. It is a single-chambered tomb (c. 1.5×2.2 m. in cross-section and 1 m. high), whose entrance was blocked by a rectangular sealing stone (c. 60×50 cm.; 26 cm. thick). Remains in the tomb were fragmentary and sparse. In addition to unfired pottery, the tomb contained bone fragments, a few teeth, five beads, three stone tools and the rim of an alabaster vessel.

Tomb 2, located 426 m. south-east of the Hasmonaeen fortress, is from the Late Hellenistic–Early Roman period. It has a rectangular entrance and a main chamber (c. 2.5×2.5 m.). Off the main chamber there are seven *kokhim* (each c. 0.5 m. wide and 1 m. high; depth varying from 0.5 to 2.2 m.). The only ancient remains in the tomb were a few pottery sherds, bone fragments and teeth.

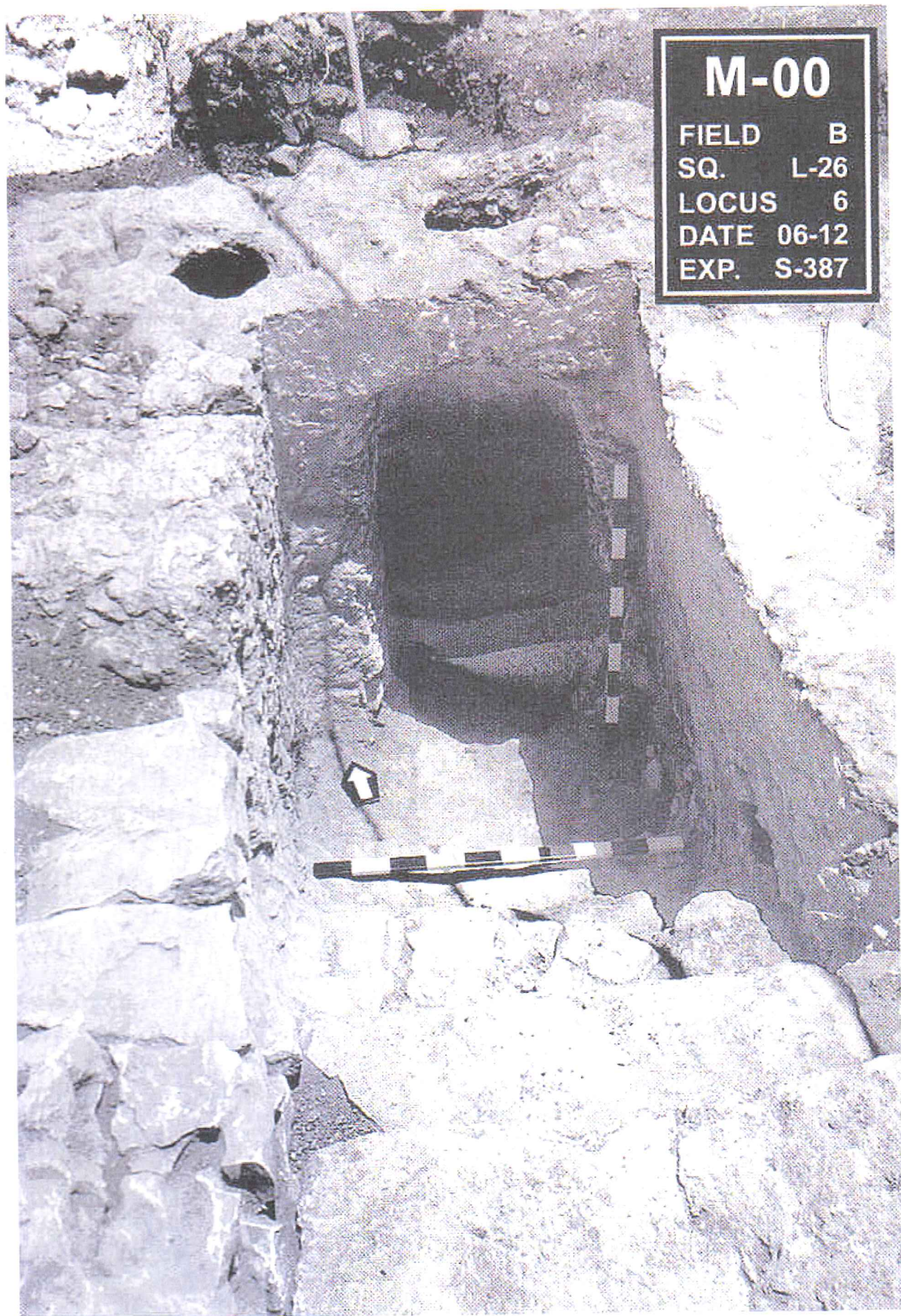
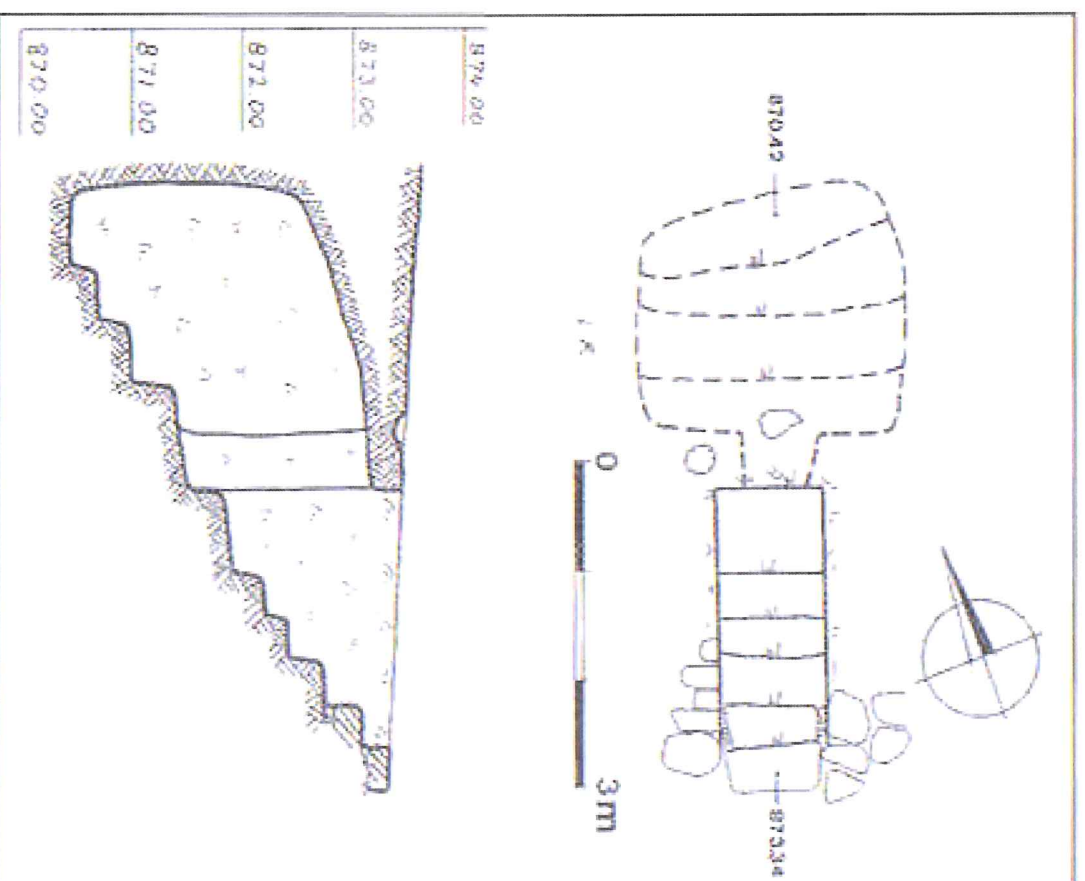


Fig. 5. Entrance to *miqveh* (Square L26).



Tomb 1, a single-chambered tomb, 384 m. south-east of the Hasmonaean fortress, is Byzantine in date. A thick blocking stone (55 × 55 cm.; 20 cm. thick) was left in position by the tomb robbers in the entrance. The internal dimensions of the chamber are c. 1.7 × 1.5 × 1.1 m. A few pottery sherds and glass fragments were all that was left in the tomb.

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Fig. 6. Plan and section of *miqweh*.