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Victory at Ai: Archaeology and Joshua 7-8

Featuring: Dr. Bryant
Wood

ABR Director of Research



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Edward Robinson, who visited Kh. el-Maqatir May 5, 1838:

“To this ruin one of the Greek priests at Taiyibeh...had chosen to give the name of Ai; and we found the same name among some of the people of the village. But there is not the slightest ground for any such hypothesis. There never was anything here but a church...”

*(Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea 2, p. 126.
Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1841.)*

Ernst Sellin, who visited Kh. el-Maqatir in 1899:

**“Women of Ramallah, who were searching for snails,
called it Khirbet Ai.”**

*(Mittheilungen von meiner Palästina-reise 1899, Mittheilungen und Nachrichten
des Deutschen Palaestina-Vereins 6 [1900]: 115.)*

William F. Albright, 1963:

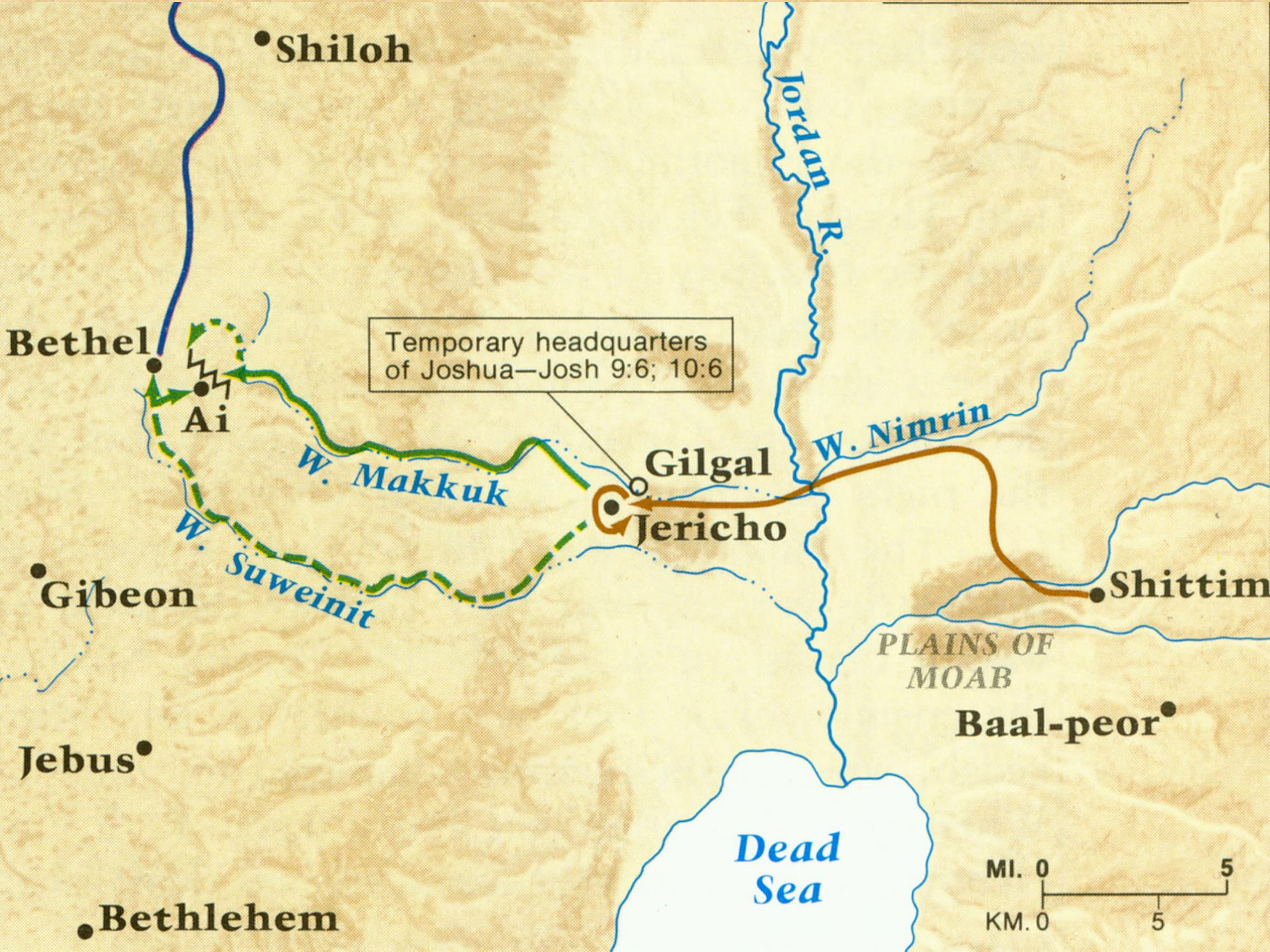
“Since the writer has scoured the district in question in all directions, hunting for ancient sites, he can attest the fact that there is no other possible candidate for Ai than et-Tell.”

*(The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra, p. 29.
New York: Harper & Row, 1963.)*

Amihai Mazar, 1992:

“There is no evidence of a second-millennium Canaanite city at this spot [et-Tell] or at any other site in the region. This constitutes unequivocal archaeological evidence for the lack of correlation between the story in Joshua 8, with all its topographic details, and a historical reality.”

(The Archaeology of Ancient Israel, p. 283. New Haven: Yale University, 1992.)



• Shiloh

Bethel

Ai

Temporary headquarters
of Joshua—Josh 9:6; 10:6

Gilgal

Jericho

W. Makkuk

W. Suweinit

W. Nimrin

Shittim

PLAINS OF
MOAB

Baal-peor

Gibeon

Jebus

Bethlehem

Dead
Sea

MI. 0 5
KM. 0 5



① Central Ridge Road ⑤ Joppa-Amman Road

Central Hill Country of Israel in the Vicinity of Kh. el-Maqatir

Topographical requirements for Ai:

1. **Strategically important**
2. **Near Beth Aven** (Josh 7:2)
3. **East of and near Bethel** (Josh 7:2; 12:9)
4. **Ambush site between Bethel and Ai, west of Ai** (Josh 8:9, 12)
5. **Militarily significant hill to the north** (Josh 8:11)
6. **Shallow valley to the north** (Josh 8:13–14)

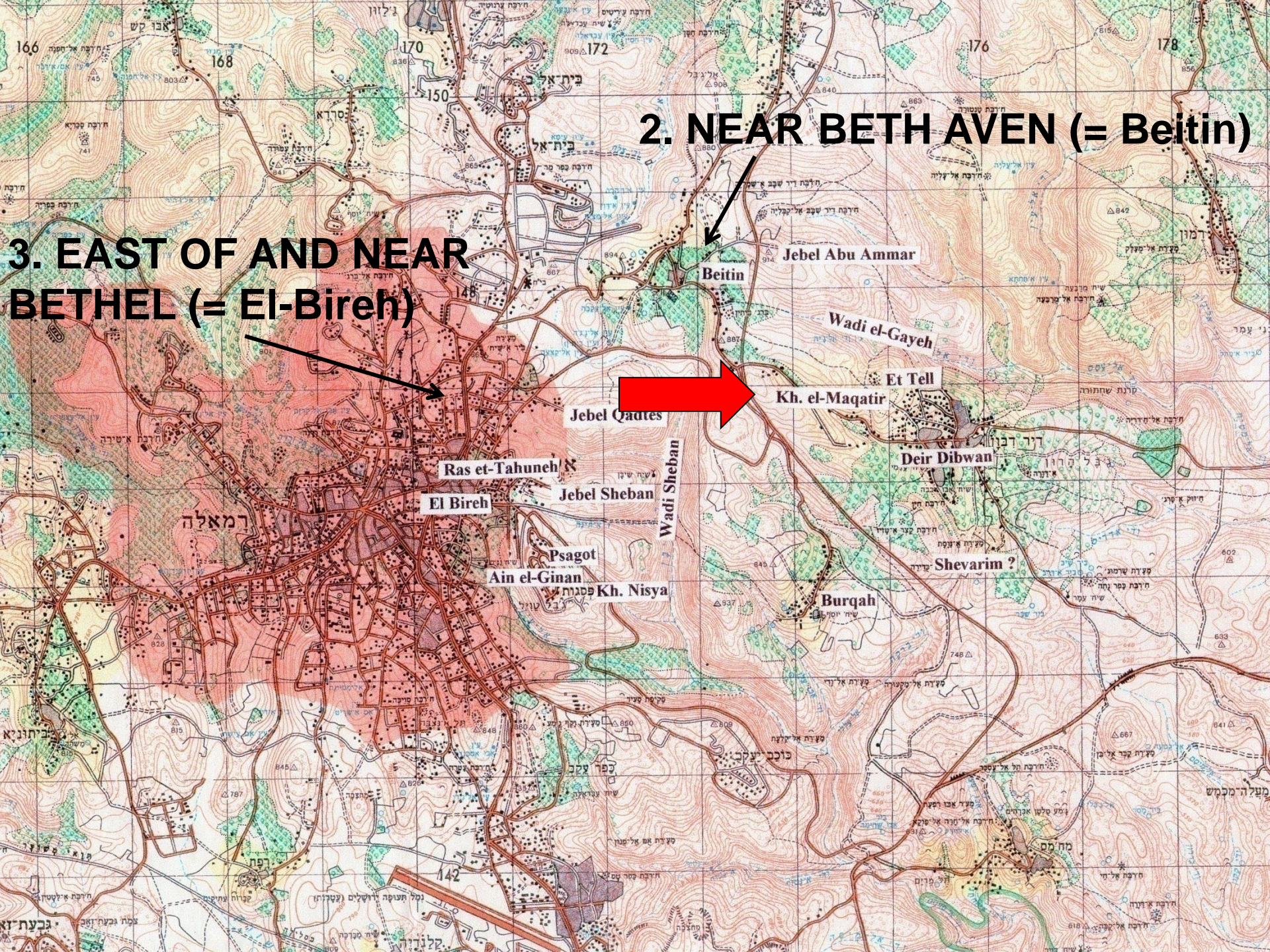
1. STRATEGIC LOCATION

Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, “Go up and spy out the region.” (Josh 7:2)



2. NEAR BETH AVEN (= Beitin)

**3. EAST OF AND NEAR
BETHEL (= El-Bireh)**



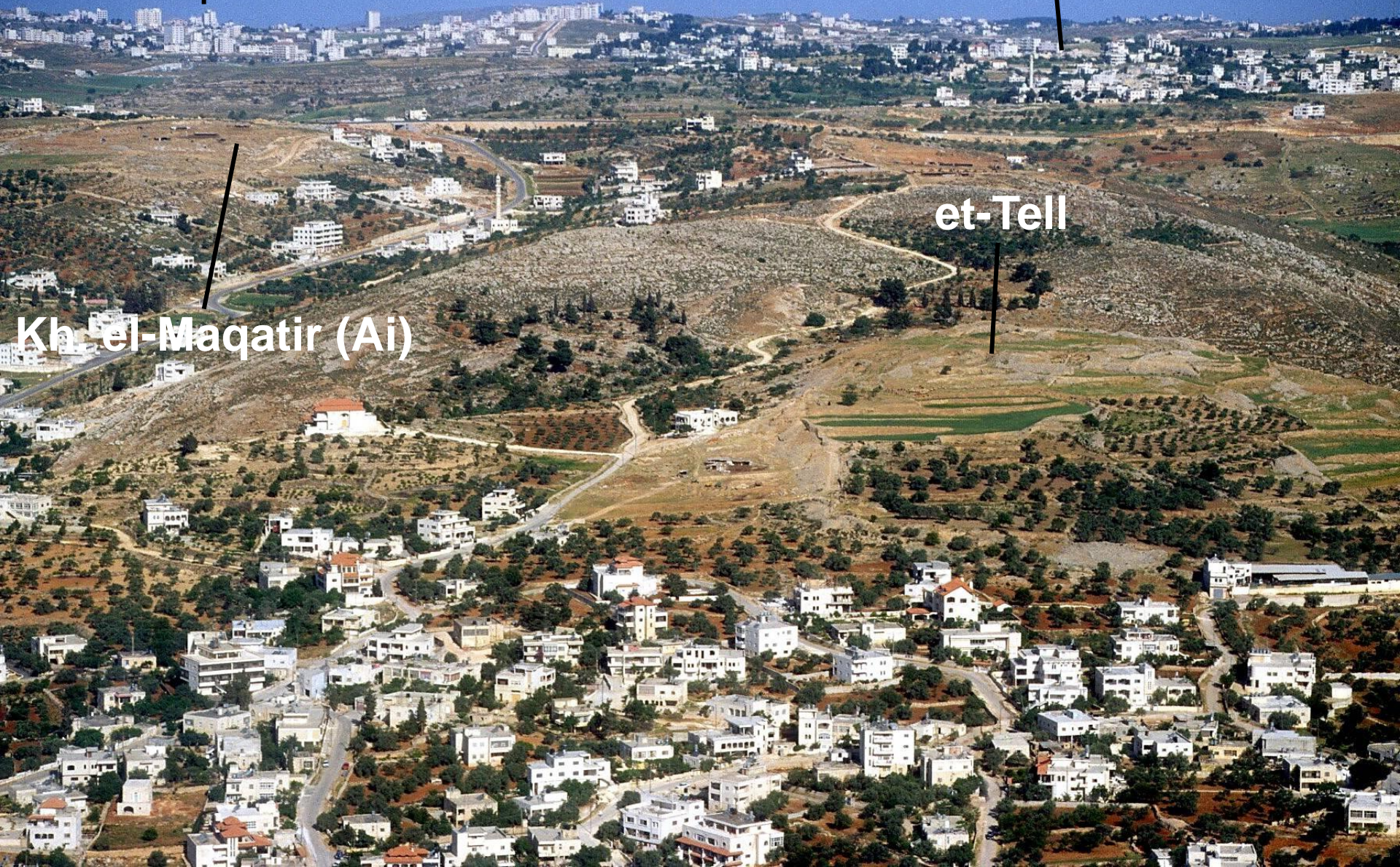
View northwest

El Bireh (Bethel)

Beitin (Beth Aven)

et-Tell

Kh. el-Maqatir (Ai)



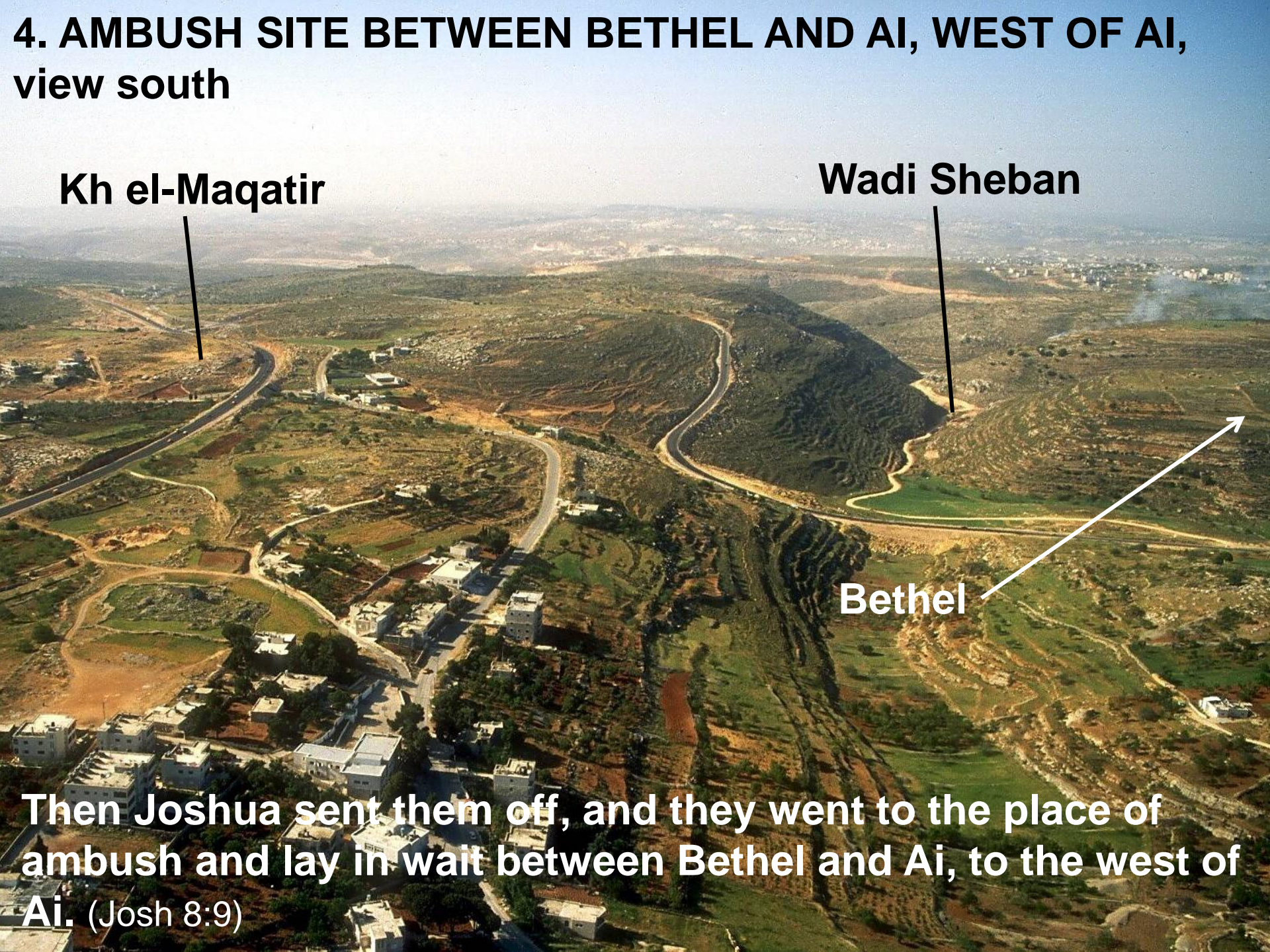
4. AMBUSH SITE BETWEEN BETHEL AND AI, WEST OF AI, view south

Kh el-Maqatir

Wadi Sheban

Bethel

Then Joshua sent them off, and they went to the place of ambush and lay in wait between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai. (Josh 8:9)

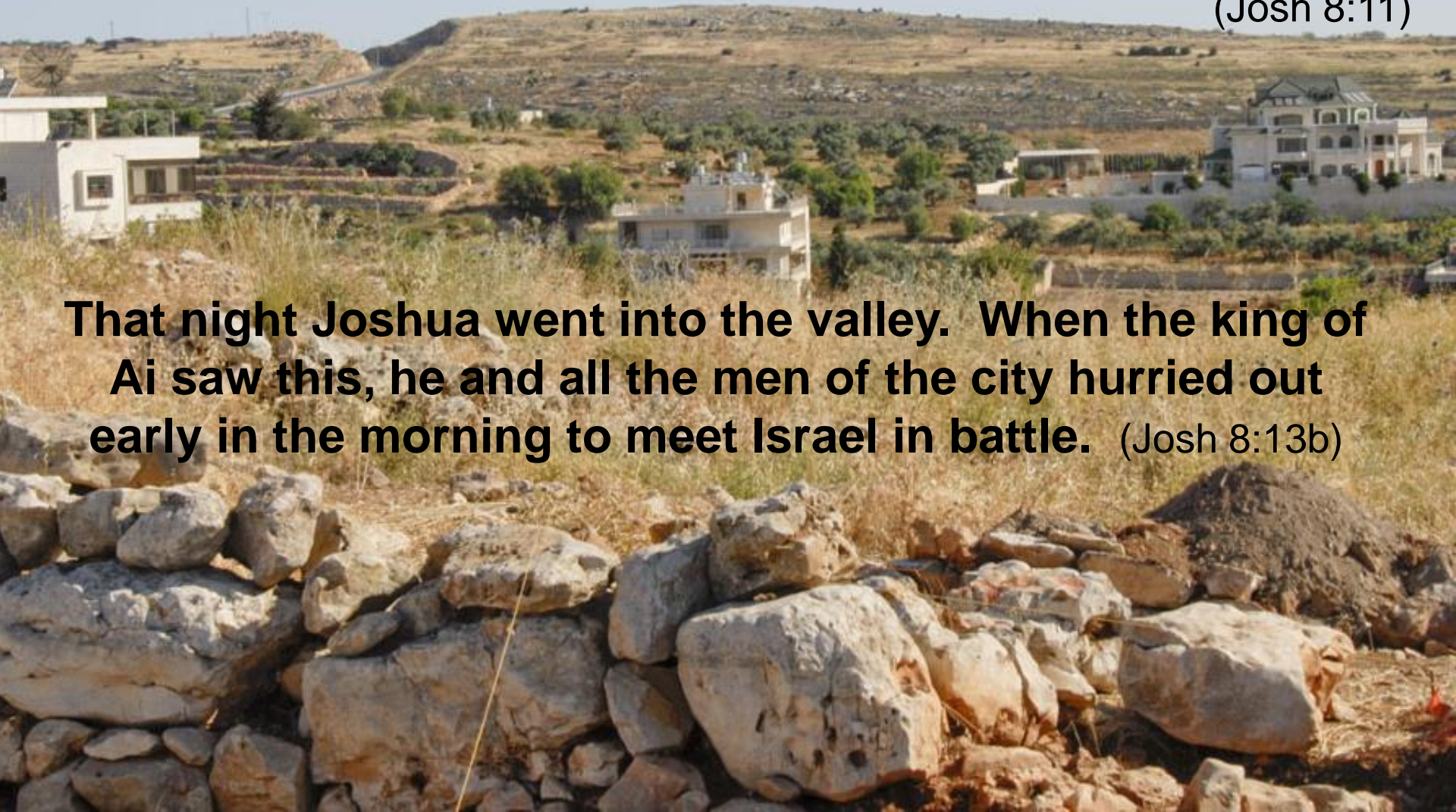


5. and 6. COMMAND CENTER AND SHALLOW VALLEY

The entire force that was with him [Joshua] marched up and approached the city and arrived in front of it. They set up camp north of Ai with a valley between them and the city.

(Josh 8:11)

That night Joshua went into the valley. When the king of Ai saw this, he and all the men of the city hurried out early in the morning to meet Israel in battle. (Josh 8:13b)



Archaeological requirements for Ai:

- 1. Smaller than Gibeon** (Josh 10:2)
- 2. Fortified in LB I** (Josh 7:5; 8:29)
- 3. Gate on the north side** (Josh 8:11)
- 4. Destroyed by fire at the end of LB I** (Josh 8:19, 28)
- 5. Left in ruins following the destruction** (Josh 8:28)

A satellite map showing a rural landscape with a road network. A red oval highlights a specific area in the center. The map includes various geographical features like fields, roads, and buildings. There are also some technical overlays like a purple line and yellow dashed lines.

Kh. el-Maqtir

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Imagery Date: Nov 26, 2007

31°54'53.53" N 35°14'54.88" E elev 0 ft

Eye alt 2737 ft

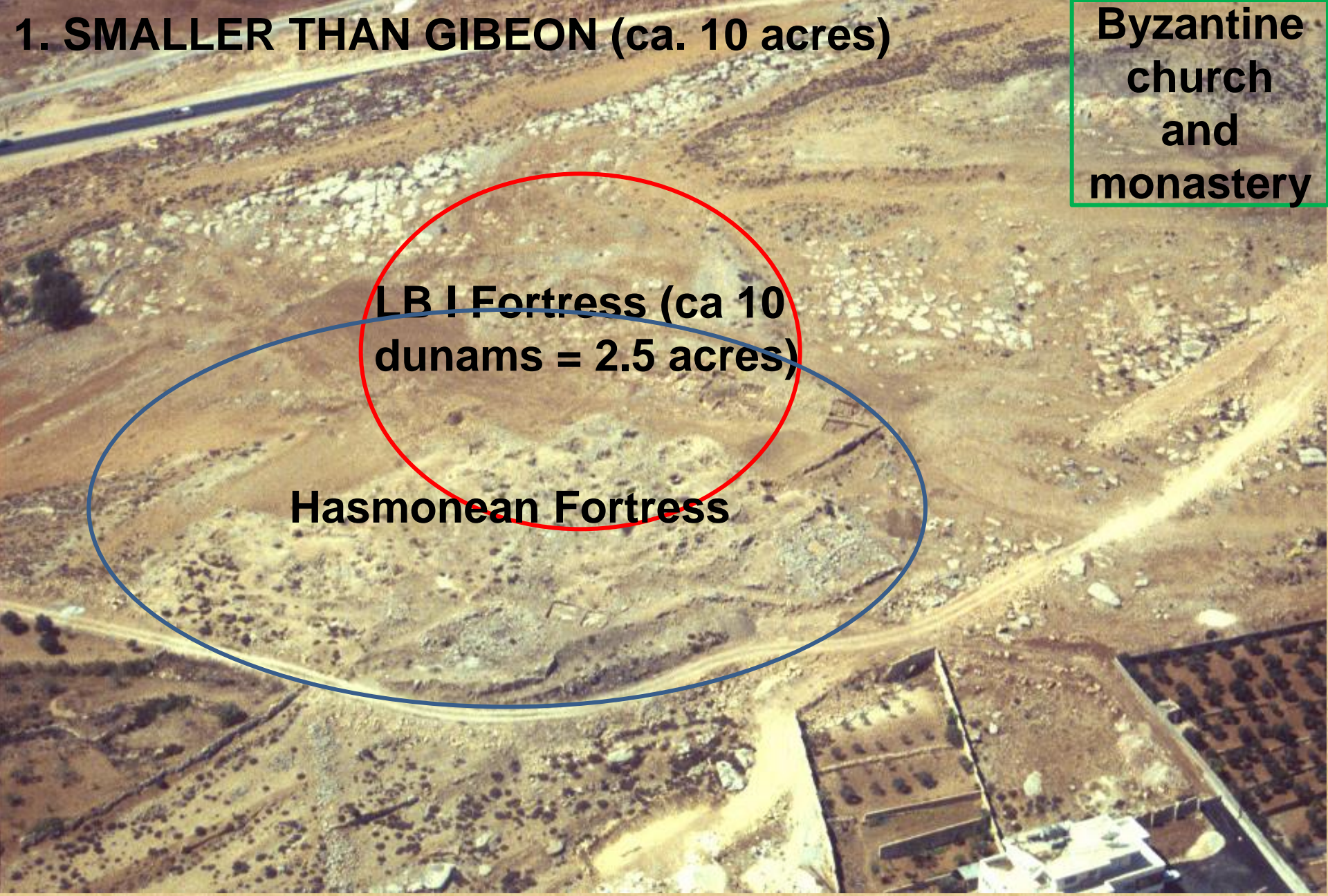
Google

1. SMALLER THAN GIBEON (ca. 10 acres)

**Byzantine
church
and
monastery**

**LB I Fortress (ca 10
dunams = 2.5 acres)**

Hasmonean Fortress



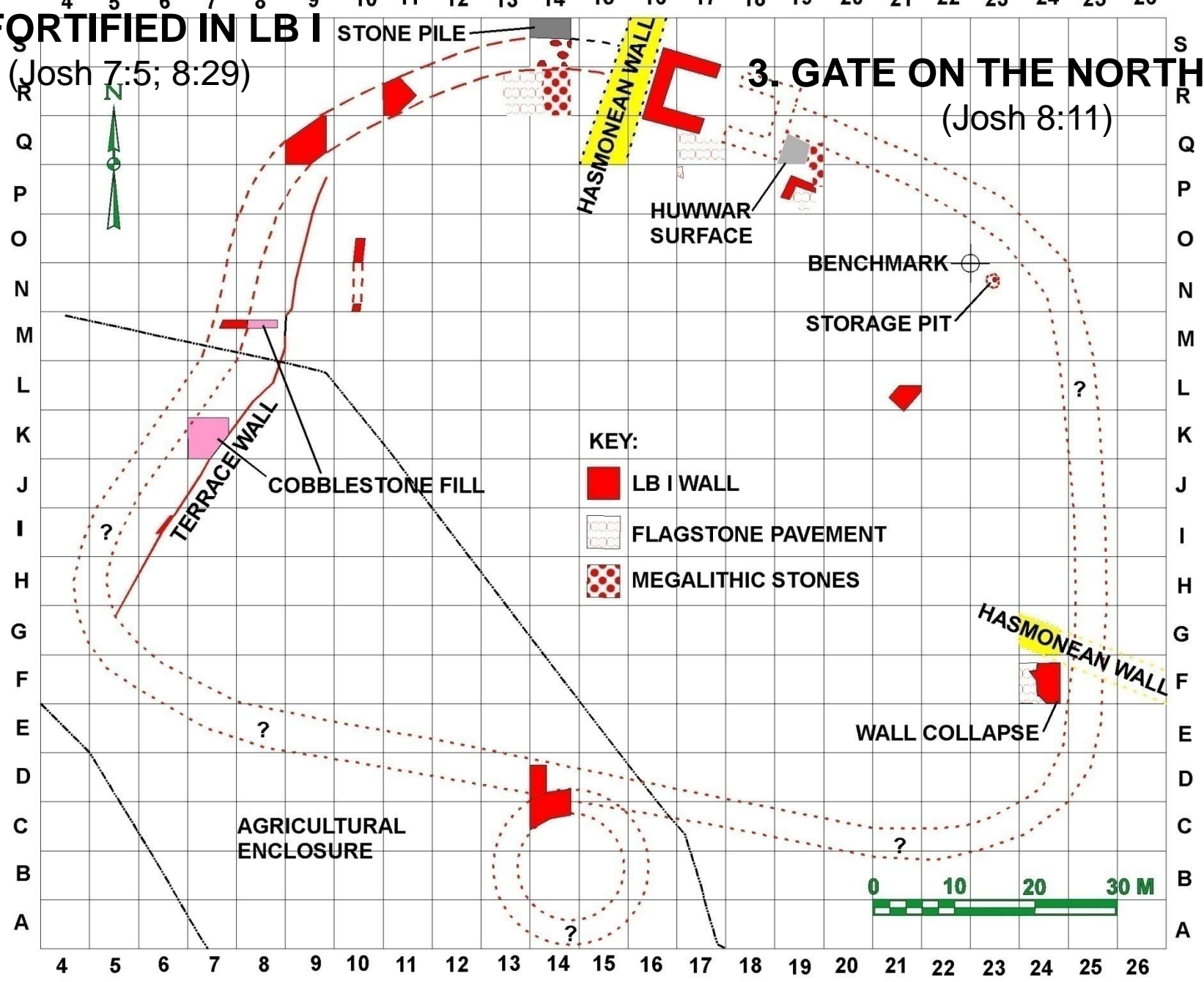
Kh. El-Maqatir, view west-northwest

2. FORTIFIED IN LB I

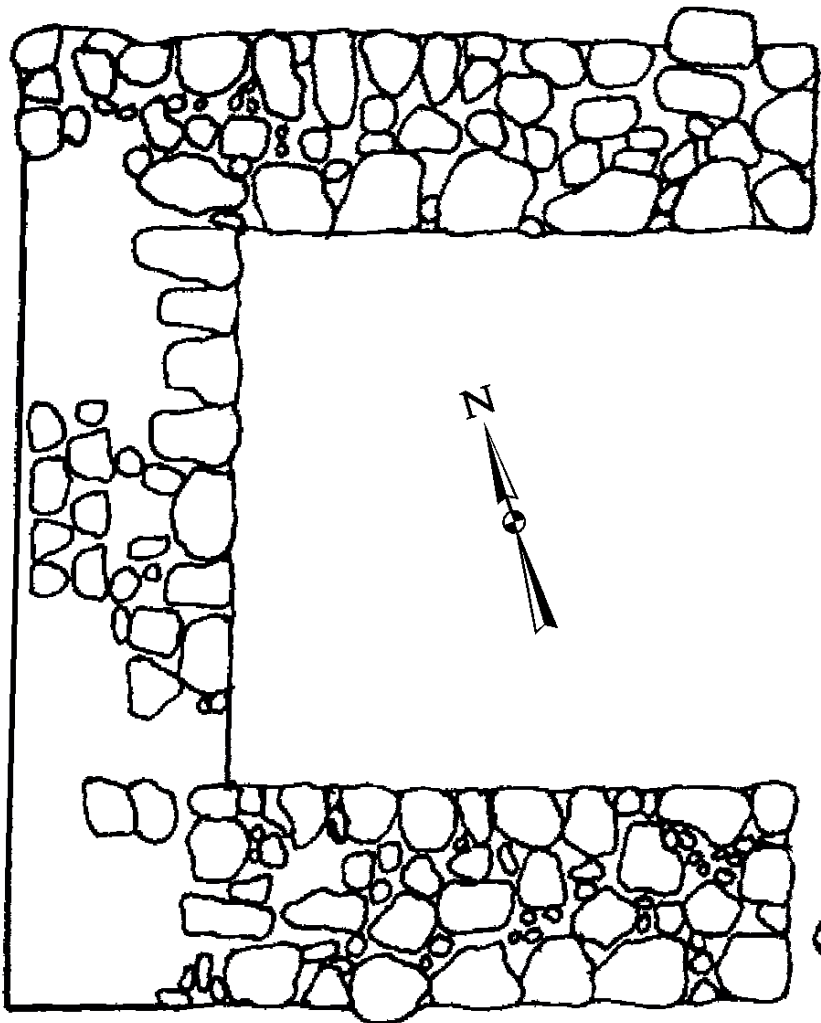
(Josh 7:5; 8:29)

3. GATE ON THE NORTH SIDE

(Josh 8:11)



THE LB I FORTRESS AT KH. EL-MAQATIR, 2000



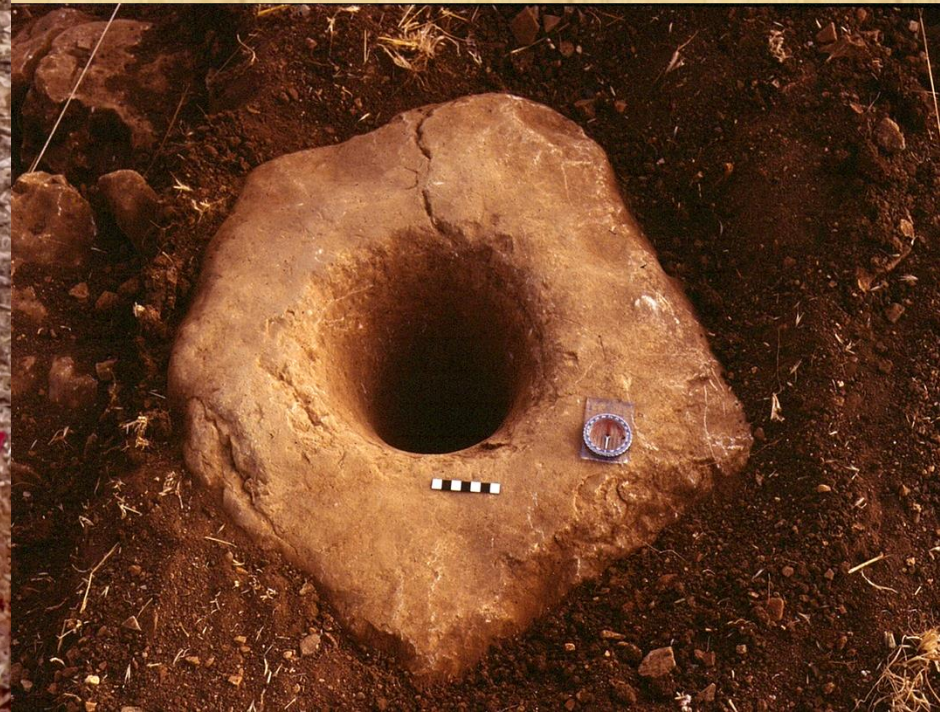
**West chamber of
the LB I gate at
Kh. el-Maqatir**

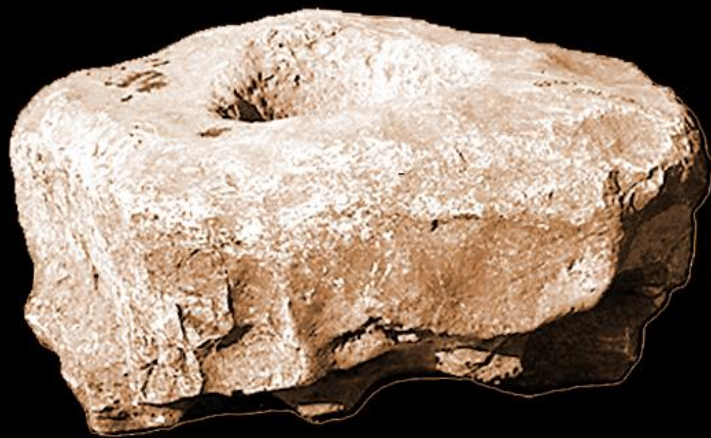
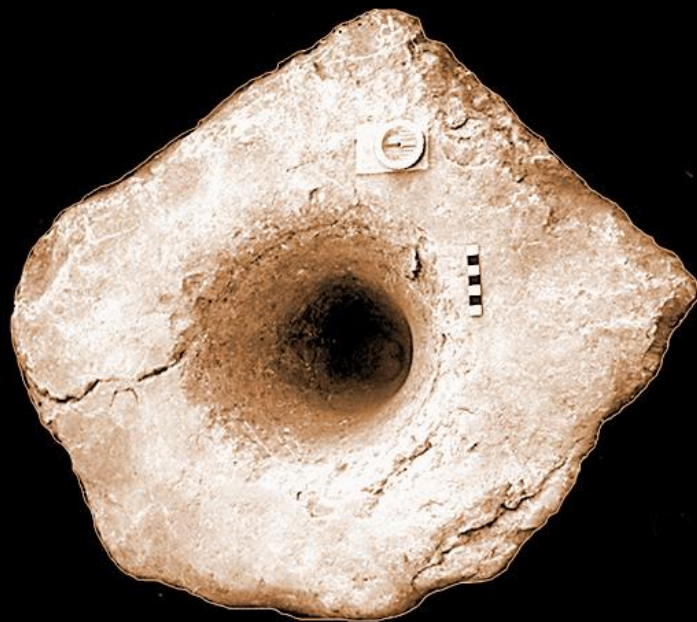
Upper socket stone



Lower socket stones

Discovery of the gate, 1995



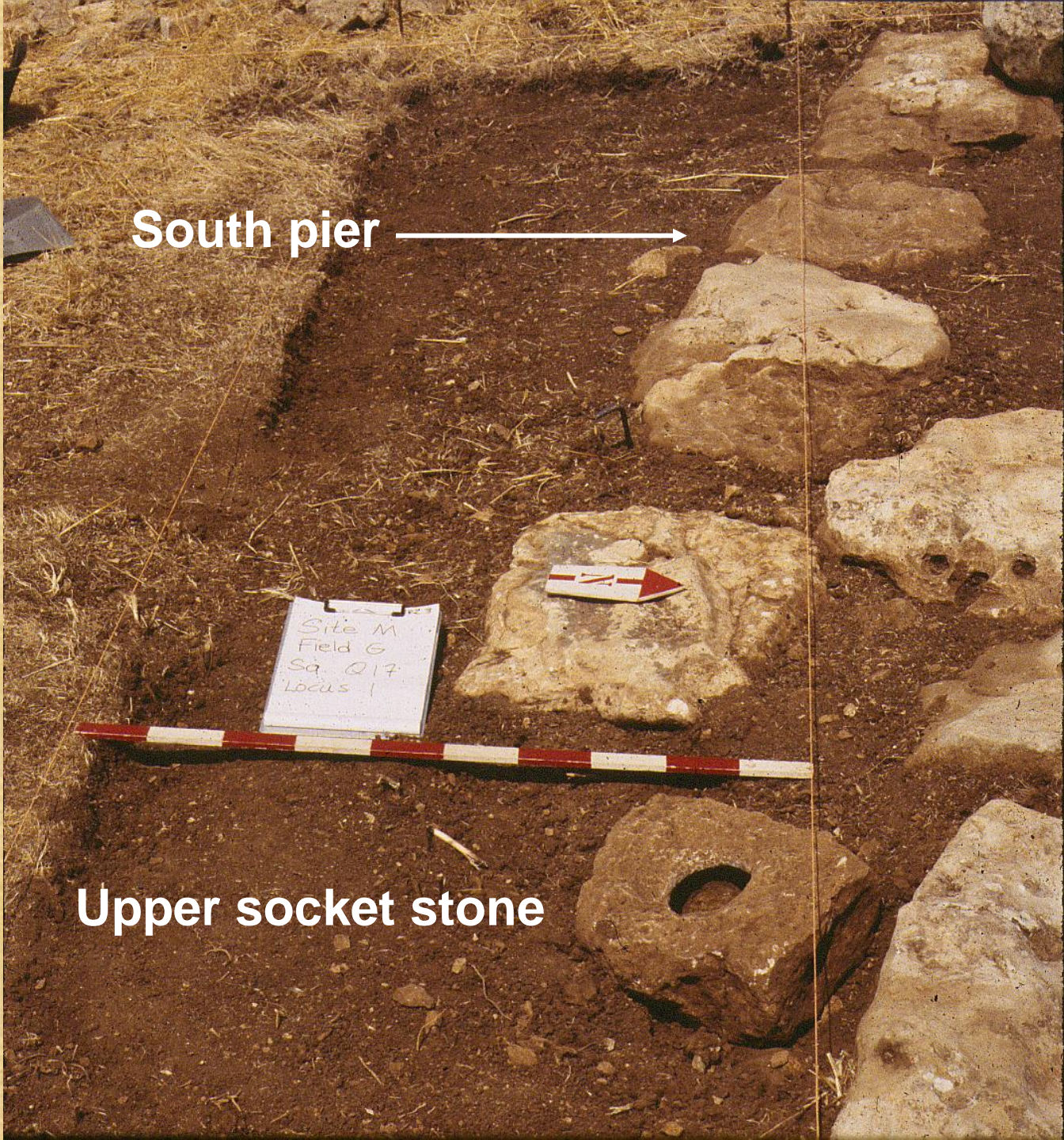


South pier →

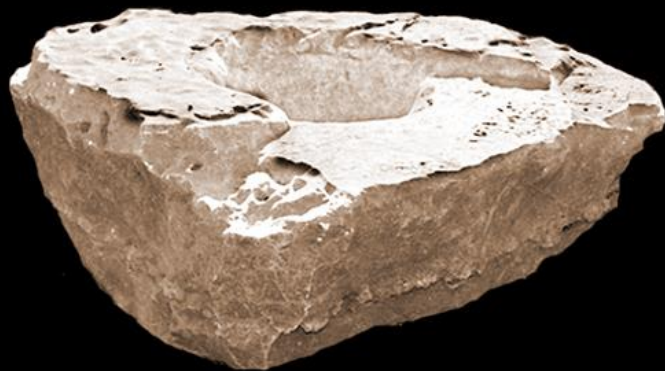
Site M
Field 6
Sq. Q17
Locus 1



Upper socket stone







An aerial photograph of an archaeological site. The site consists of several low, rectangular stone walls made of irregular, light-colored stones. The ground is a mix of dirt and scattered stones. A red and white striped measuring rod is placed vertically against one of the walls in the lower-left quadrant. A small red arrow points to a specific spot on the ground near the rod. The overall scene is a well-documented archaeological excavation.

4. DESTROYED BY FIRE

So Joshua burned Ai (Josh 8:28a)

16

17

18

19

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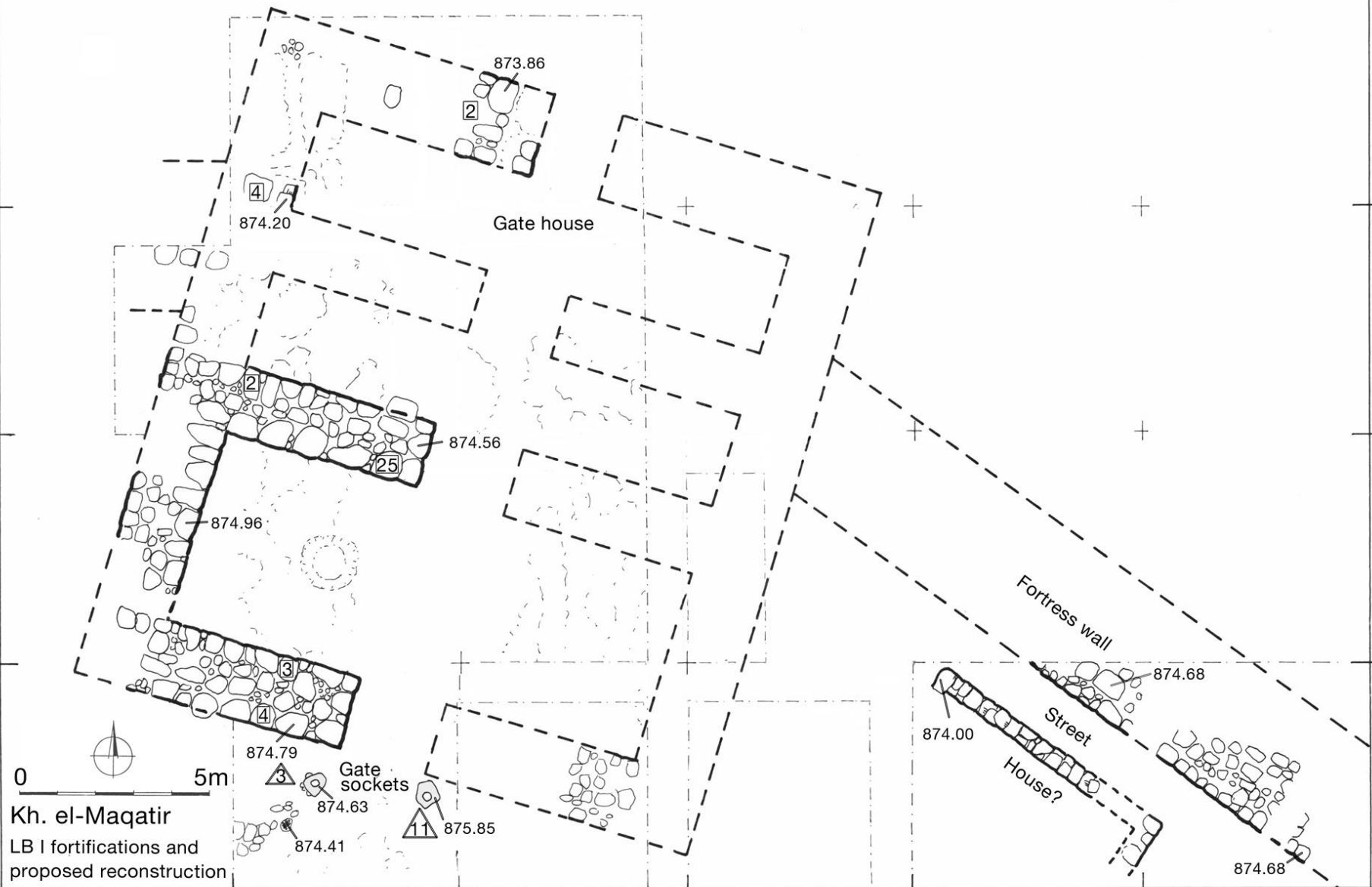
21

T

S

R

Q



Kh. el-Maqatir
 LB I fortifications and
 proposed reconstruction

L. Ritmeyer

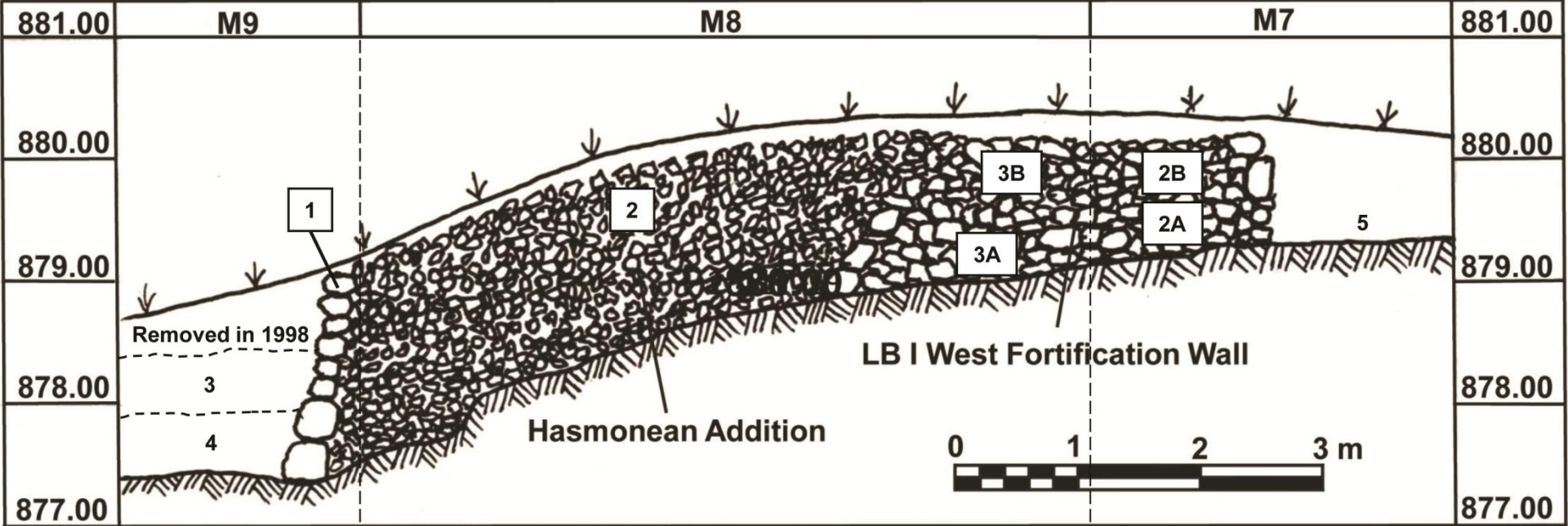


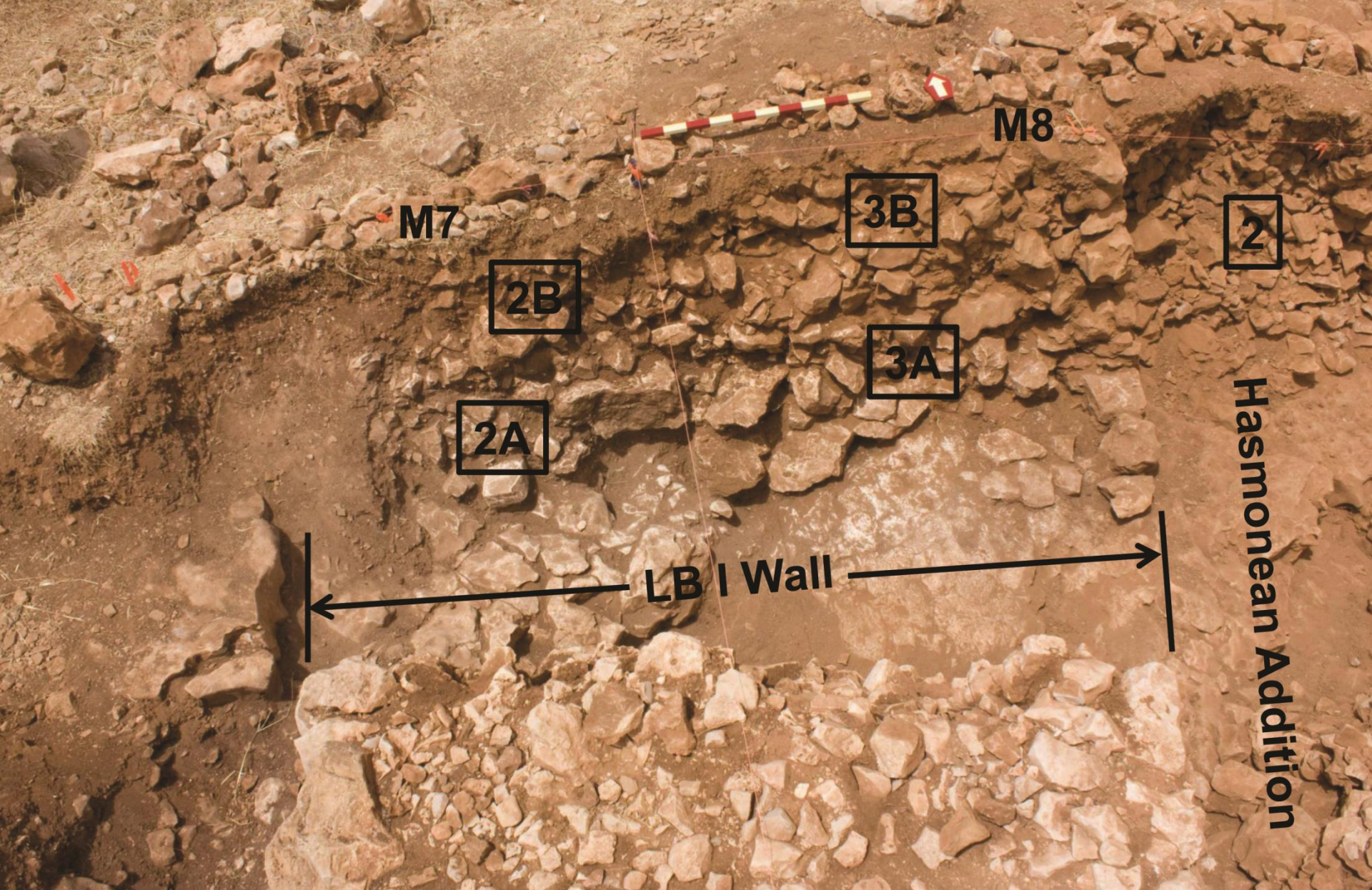
West Wall, M7–M8, 2009

A photograph of Oral Collins standing in an archaeological excavation site. He is wearing a light-colored checkered shirt, grey trousers, a tan hat, and sunglasses. He has his hands on his hips and is standing on a dirt path. In the foreground, there is a large, deep excavation pit filled with reddish-brown soil and numerous irregularly shaped stones. A red and white striped measuring pole is visible on the left side of the pit. In the background, there is a long, low stone wall made of similar stones, and a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. The sky is clear and blue.

Oral Collins

West Wall, M7–M8, 2009





M7-M8 LB I wall, view north, 2010



2nd-century BC addition, ca. 5 m wide

15th-century BC fortification wall, ca. 4 m wide

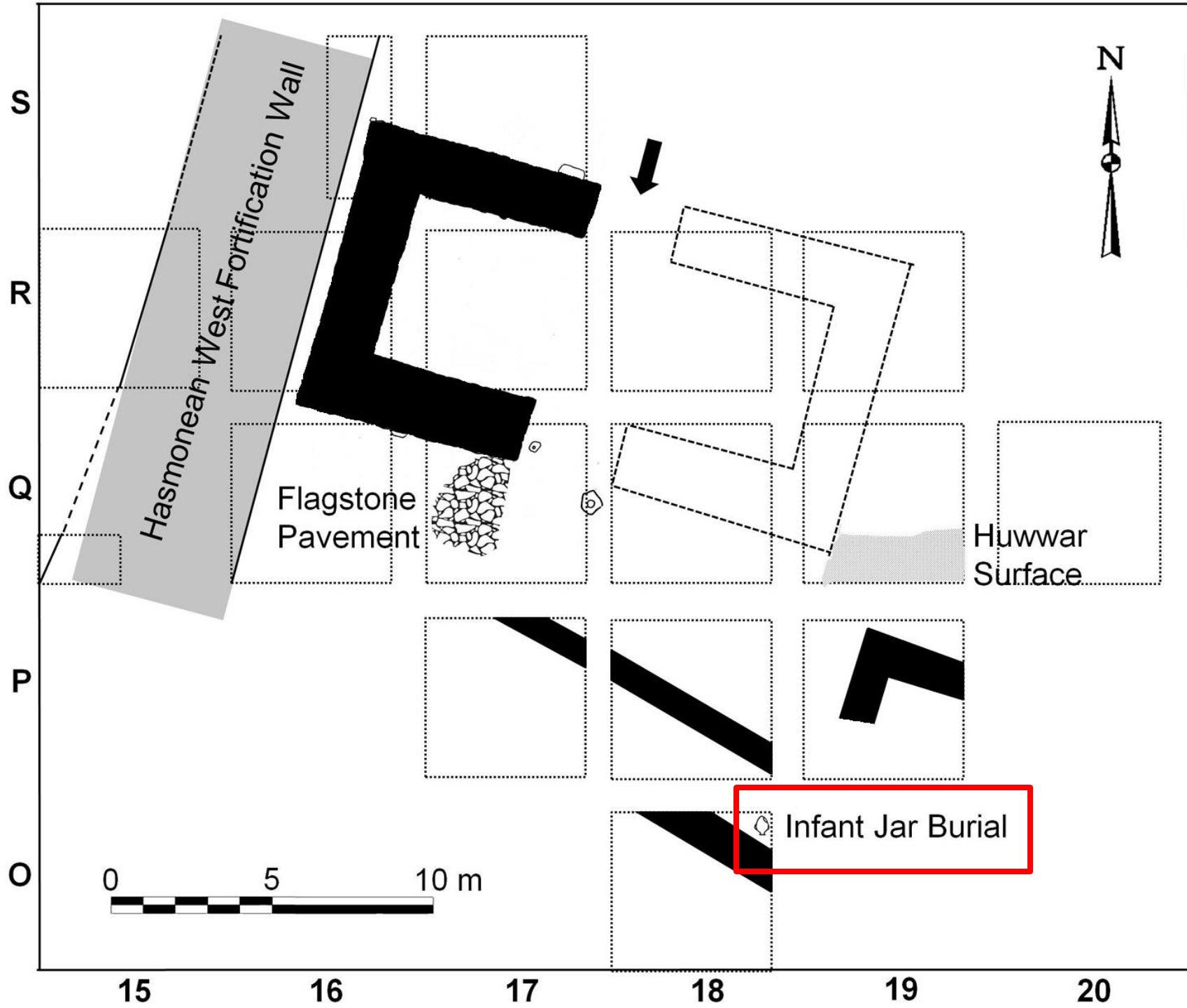
West wall, 2012

5. LEFT IN RUINS FOLLOWING THE DESTRUCTION

So Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanent heap of ruins, a desolate place to this day. (Josh 8:28)



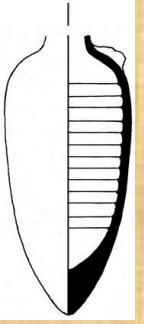
Kh. El-Maqatir, view northwest



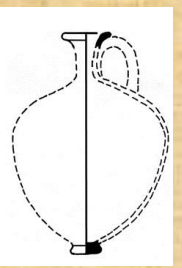


Square O18, start of 2009 excavation

Infant Jar Burial, O18

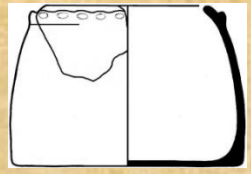


dipper
juglet

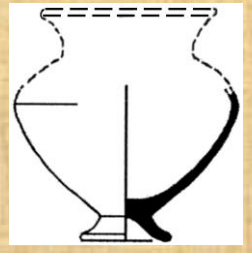


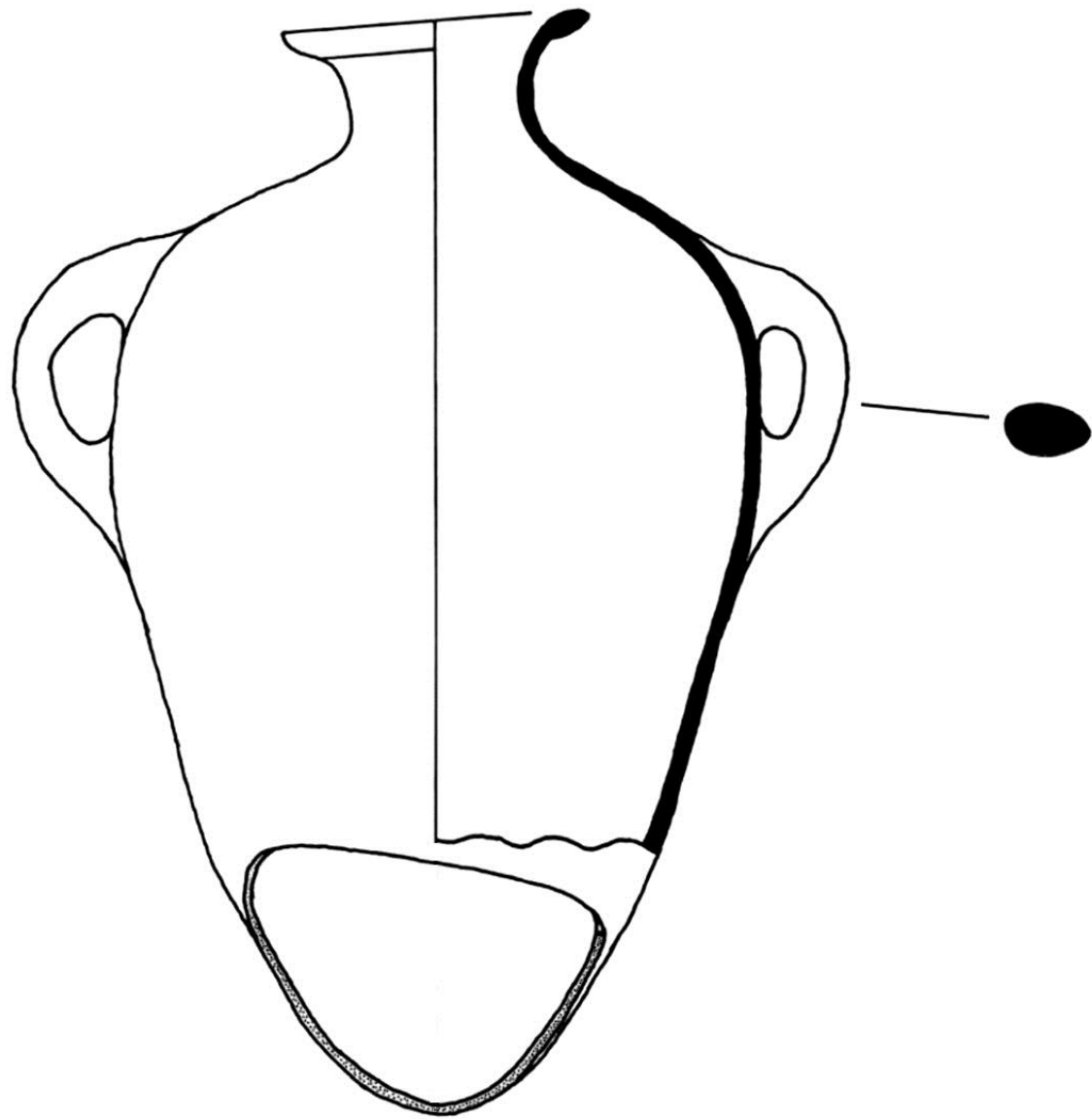
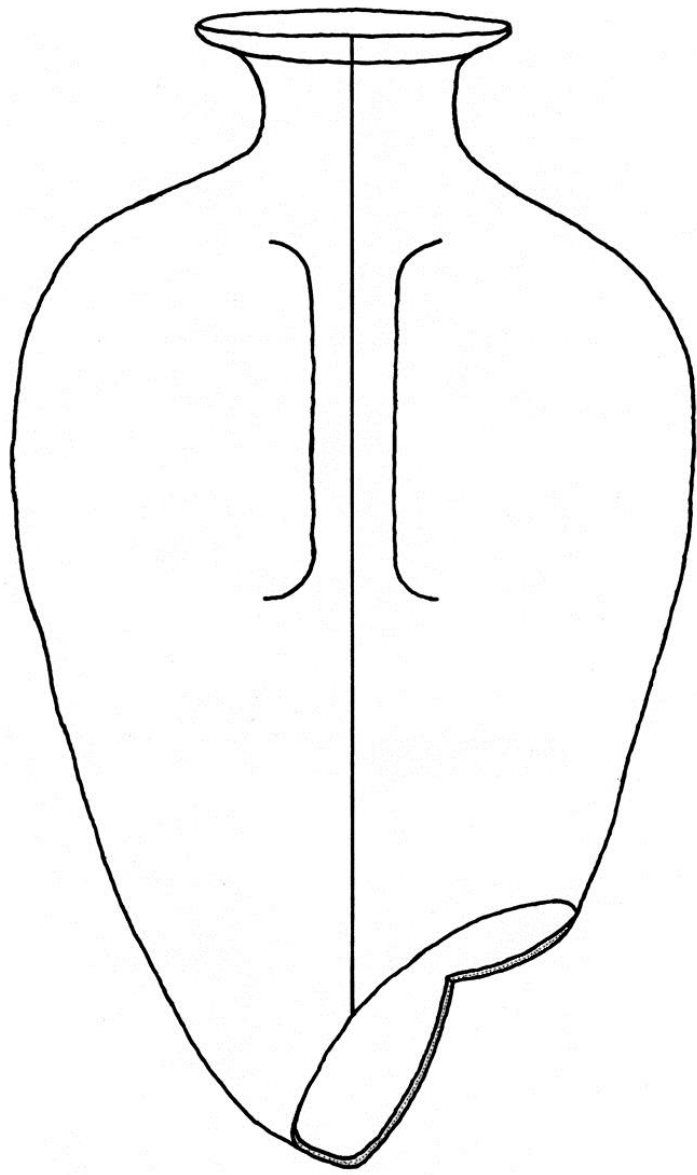
piriform
juglet
(fragmented)

small flat-
bottomed
cooking pot



pedestal
vase





Burial Jar



**Joel Kramer of SourceFlix Productions
filming Jackie Maestrado of Toronto, Canada,
excavating the infant jar burial in O18, 2009**



Dipper juglet from the infant jar burial in O18

**Marina Faerman, anthropologist
from the Hebrew University,**



arranging the Kh. el-Maqatir infant bones





**Bones of a neonate
(newborn) found in the
vicinity of the burial jar.
Arranged by Marina
Faerman of Hebrew
University.**

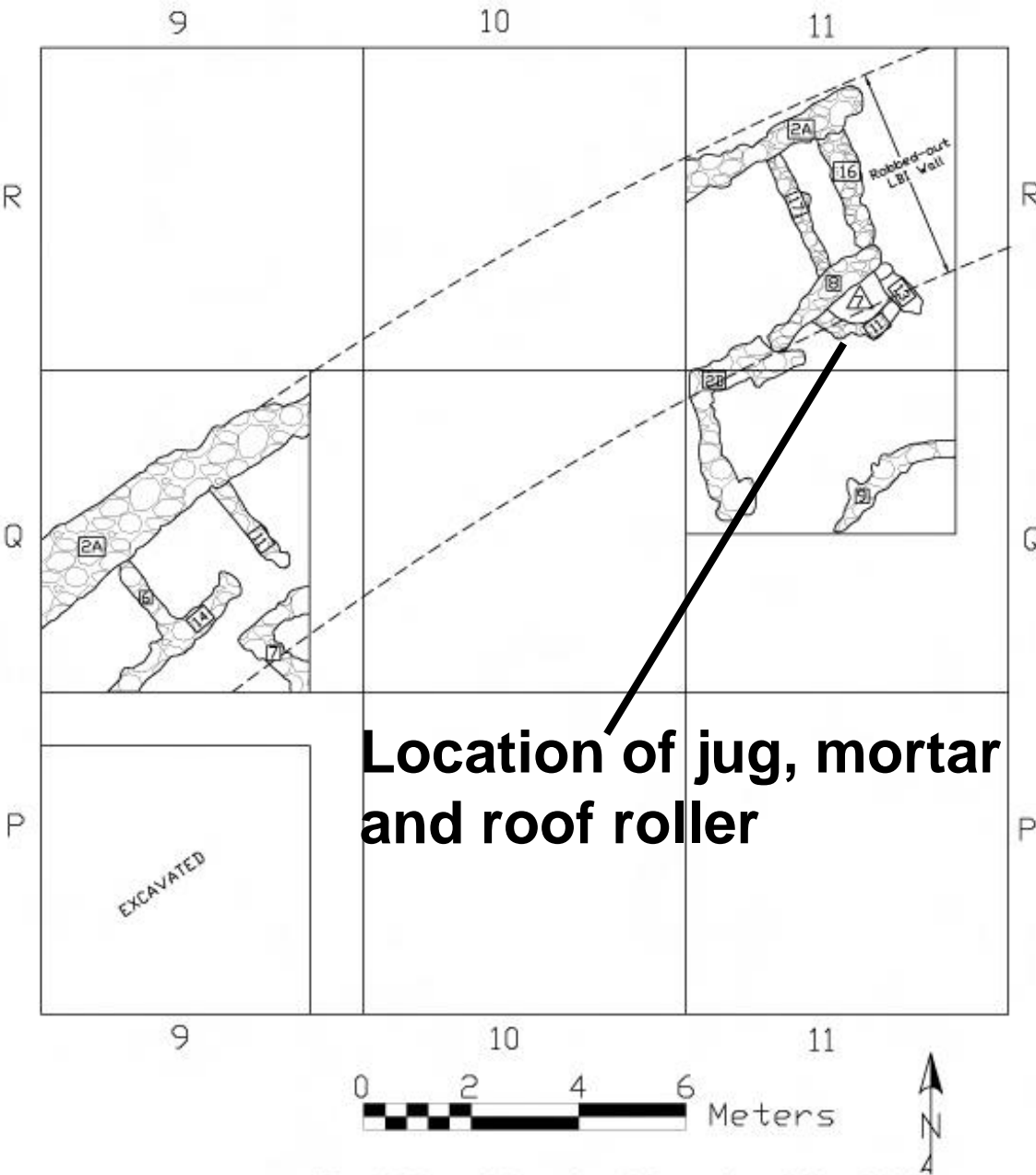


Women were living in the fortress of Ai:

Twelve *elephs* of men and **women fell that day—all the people of Ai (Josh. 8:25).**



12th-century BC remains from the Iron Age I period in Squares Q11 and R11, the time of the Judges, view west.



Location of jug, mortar and roof roller

Iron Age I remains from the 12th-century BC (1200-1100 BC). This was the time of the Judges **Gideon (Judges 6-8), **Abimelech** (Judges 9), **Tola** and **Jair** (Judges 10:1-5), as well as the migration of the tribe of **Dan** from Zorah to Dan (Judges 18) and **Ruth**.**

Kh. el-Maqatir Iron Age I Remains, 1995-2000
 Creation Date: 05-11-12
 Revision Date: 05-16-12
 Drawn By: J. Taylor



Square R11, jug, mortar, roof roller, 1999

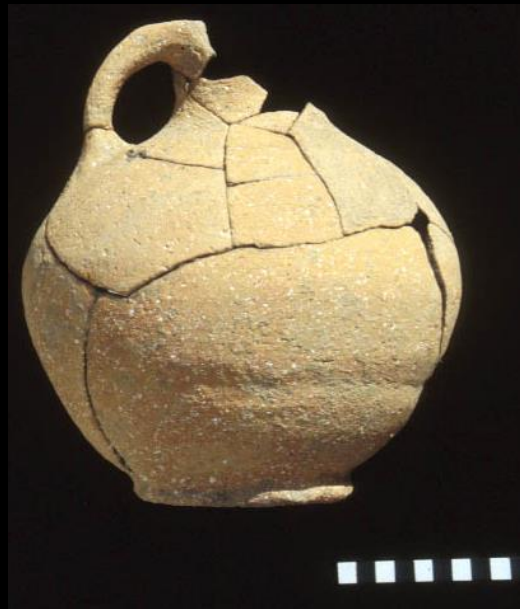
Roof Roller



Mortar



Jug



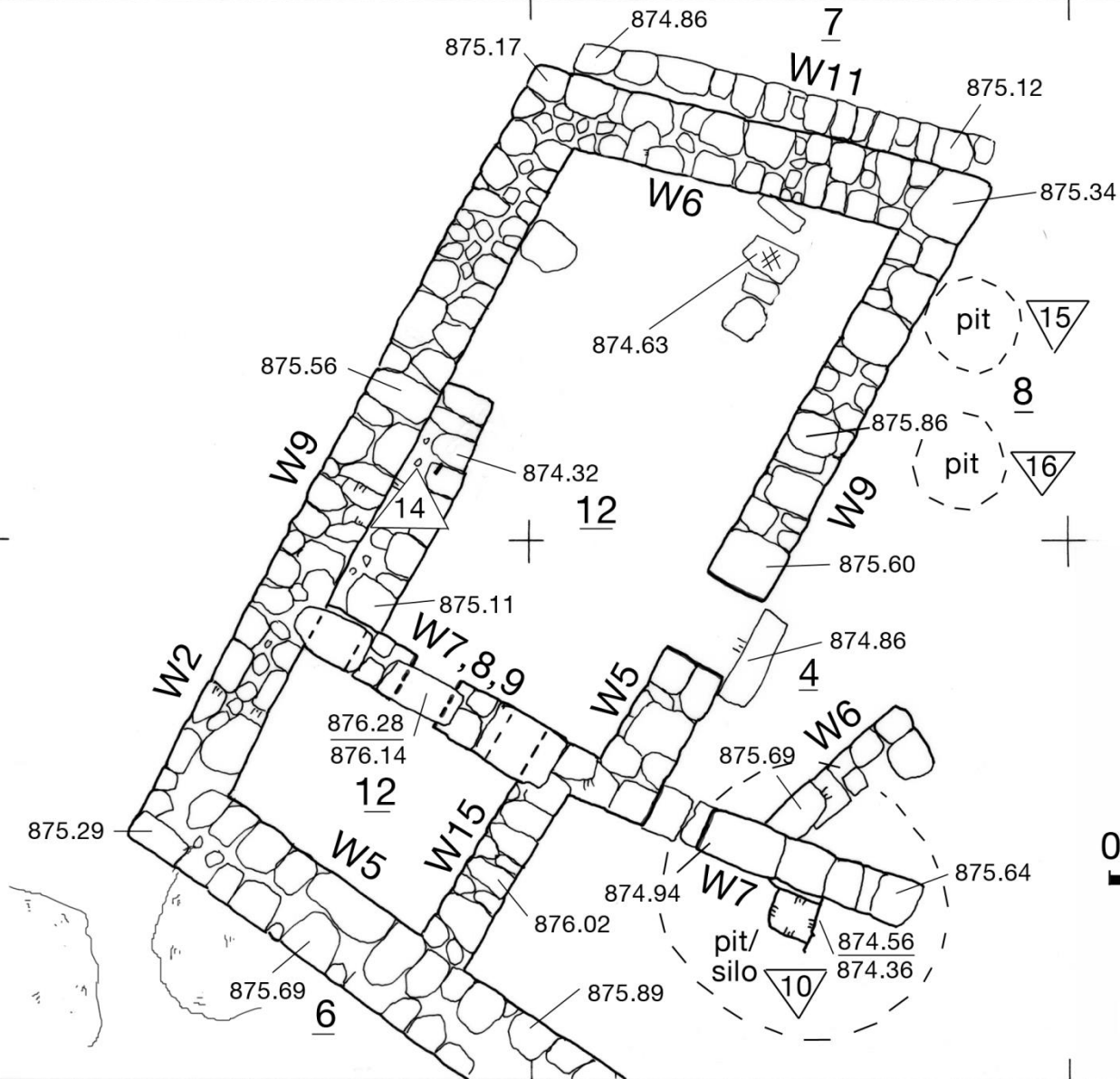
20

21

22

Q

P



0 5m

Kh. el-Maqatir

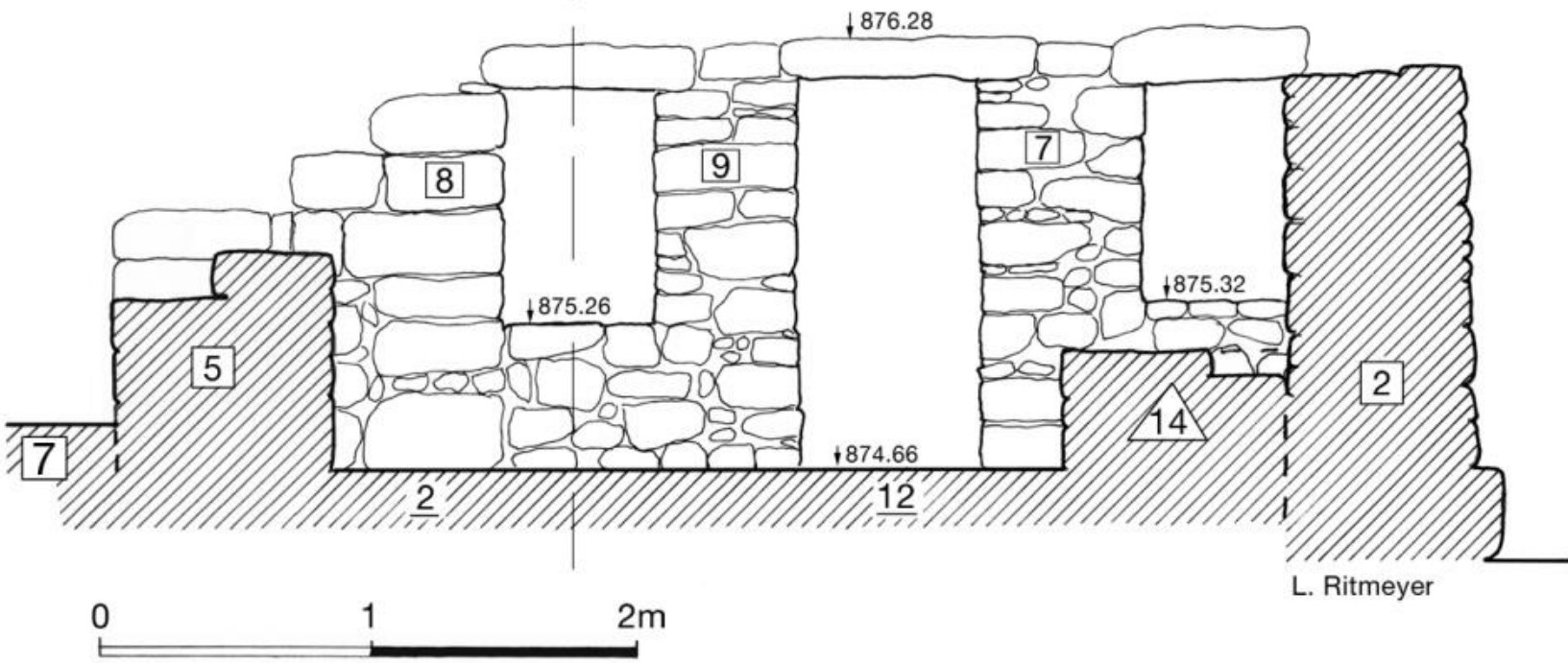
C1 remains in PQ20-21

L. Ritmeyer



P21

P20



877.00m

876.00m

875.00m

874.00m

0 1 2m

L. Ritmeyer

Kh. el-Maqatir

Elevation of Fenestrated Wall in P 20-21, looking SW

First-century coins found in the P-Q20-21 House, 2011 and 2012 seasons

Roman Governors

Marcus Ambibulus, AD 9-12 (2)

Valerius Gratus, AD 15-26 (4)

Pontius Pilate, AD 26-36 (2), who tried Jesus (Matthew 27, etc.)

Antonius **Felix**, AD 54-60 (2), who tried Paul (Acts 23:24-25:14)

Porcius Festus, AD 60-62 (3), who concluded the trial of Paul (Acts 24:27-26:32)



Puppet King

Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, AD 37-44 (3), who killed James the brother of John, imprisoned Peter and was struck down by an angel of the Lord (Acts 12:1-22).

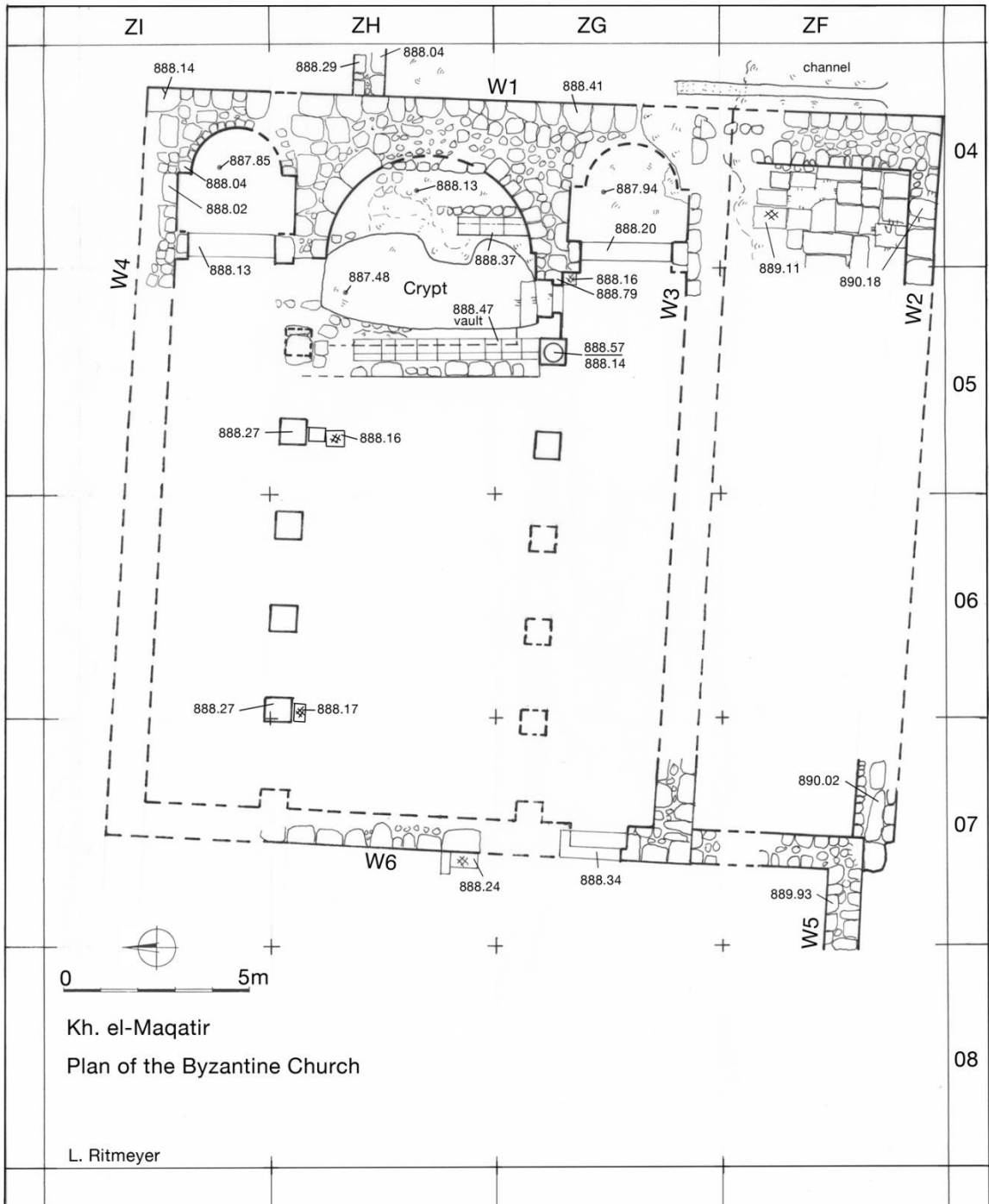


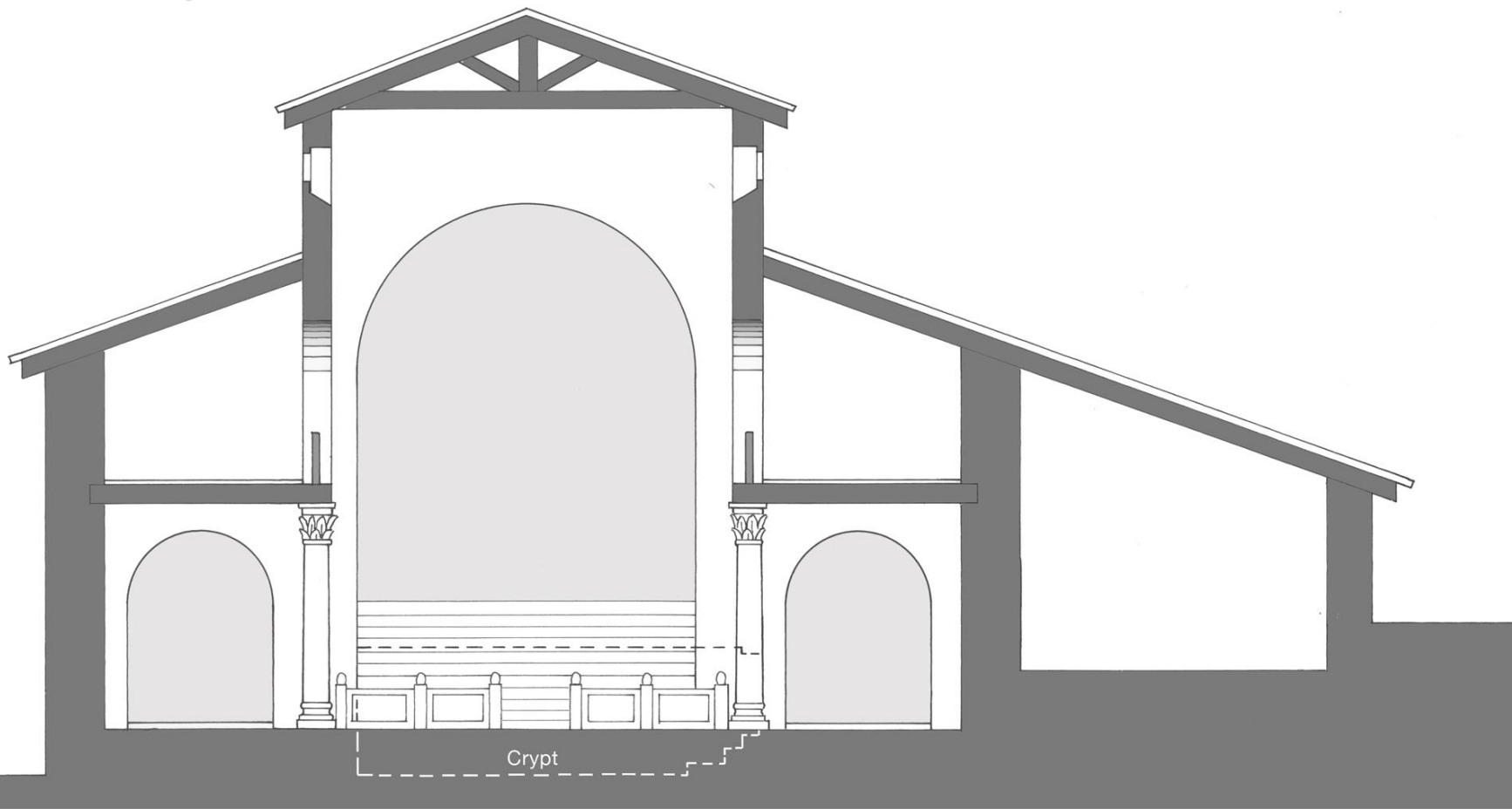
First Jewish War, AD 66-70

Year 2, AD 67/68 (18)

Year 2, AD 68/69 (2)

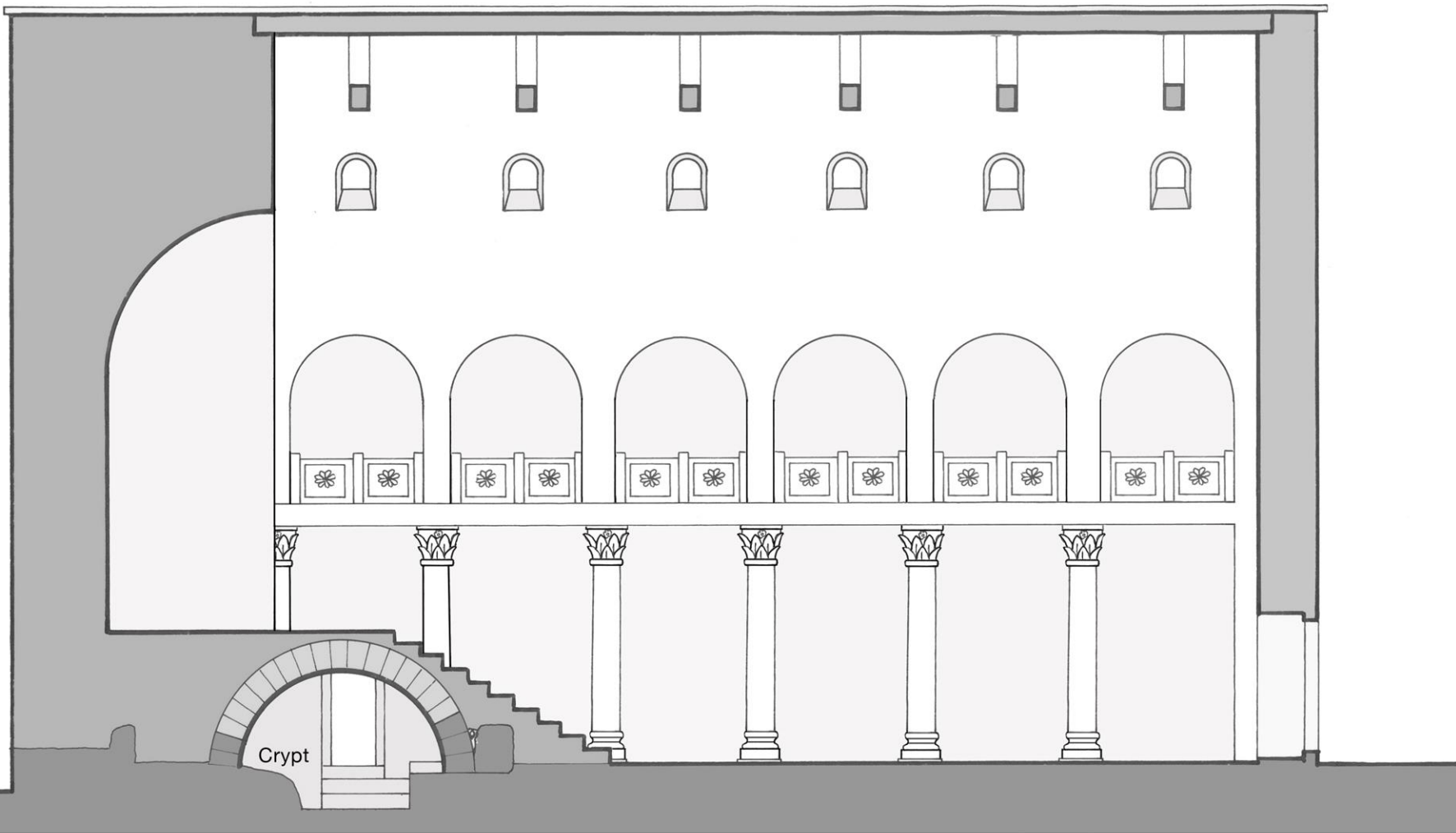






Kh. el-Maqatir
Monastery Church
Reconstruction of N-S section

0 5m
L. Ritmeyer



Kh. el-Maqatir
Monastery Church
Reconstruction of E-W section

0 5m

L. Ritmeyer







Contemporary coins found in the church, 2011–2012

Early Byzantine (5) late 4th century AD

Emperor Theodosius I (6) AD 379–395

Italian ruler Theodorich (?) (1) AD 493–526

Byzantine (2) 5th century AD

Byzantine (1) late 5th century AD

Byzantine (4) late 5th–early 6th century AD

Period the church was in use: late 4th–early 6th centuries AD



**Small radiated candlestick lamp,
second half of 4th century to the mid-6th century AD**



**Khirbet el-Maqatir Excavation 2012
Group 2**