CHAPTER 4

THE IRON AGE – POST 732 BCE DESTRUCTION

STRATUM IV

Late Iron Age remains post-dating the destruction of the site by 732 BCE were unearthed on both sides of the solid city wall in Area M. Some were located to the south of the solid wall (squares K-O/6-12; Plans 4.9-4.10) and some to the north of the wall, actually on the slope of the tell (K-O/14-16; Plan 4.11).

Stratum IV marks a profound change in the area’s plan and function. A few poorly constructed units of a domestic nature were discerned beside large courtyards and open spaces, in which agricultural activities took place. By contrast, the domestic buildings of the previous stratum had well-defined plans and were built in accordance with high standards. New walls in stratum IV were built on top of pre-existent ones in a reckless manner and, in some cases, made use of these earlier walls or incorporated monolithic stones of the previous stratum into their own walls (photo, see W06-006 in Plan 4.9).

THE AREA SOUTH of the SOLID WALL (Plans 4.9 and 4.10)

*Courtyard L07-324 and Unit L07-342*

There are two phases of stratum IV here: stratum IVa features parts of new units that seal most of the remains of the previous stratum (V), including a large courtyard (L07-324) and a small unit attached to it on the north (L07-342). Some of the previous walls (e.g. W.06-010, W07-315, W06M-310) were reused in both units, while some monolithic stones were incorporated on the inside of the walls.

The large courtyard (L07-324) located south and alongside W06-006 was bound on the east by W06-008. Its western and southern walls are still unearthed. The floor of the courtyard consists of packed earth (L07-324, L07-319, L07-348, Photo X) and contains numerous pottery sherds and bones (Fig. XX). Wall W06-012, which originated in the previous stratum and were incorporated into a bench attached to W06-006 (Photo). A separate area inside the courtyard located in the west was defined by walls W.06-010 and W07-315, both built in the previous stratum (photo). Installations constructed out of stones and slabs were found throughout the area. The most impressive of these is a round one lined with stones and set in the courtyard (L06-046). Another, somewhat rounded installation was attached to W07-308 (07-341). A smashed storage jar was found inside the installation (photo).

To the north of wall W07-308 were remains of two units from the previous stratum that continued being used with a few minor alterations, as well as raised, packed earth floors. The one on the east, known as “the kitchen” was re-arranged (See in Stratum V): its entrance was moved to the easternmost corner, between walls W07-314 and W07-330, and one of the monolithic stones served as a lintel over its opening (photo). A *tabun* (L07-378) covered with a flat stone slab was found inside the room. An opening in W07-308, adjacent to W07-324, led to another space to the north (L08-304). The entire area was bestrewn with mudbricks that probably came from the surrounding walls. This collapsed material lay on a packed earth floor that contained signs of burning. An installation (L07-320). constructed out of two rows of large but narrow carved limestones slabs, erected as walls attached to W07-308, was located on the room’s western end (photo). To the north of this area, a pavement composed of pebbles and packed earth was found on the same level (L07-339). Whether this western space was a room or another open space is unclear.

During the next phase (local stratum IVb) the area was fully covered with a large, open, paved area, “Courtyard L06-018” (plan 4.10, photo), which was topped with a thick layer rich in pottery sherds, bones (particularly large ones)[ send to appropriate chapters], and metal finds[ send to appropriate chapters]. Both the bones and the pottery sherds had a green patina, indicating that they had been in contact with a significant amount of water. The open space was bound on the north by the terrace wall W06-006, and on the east by W06-008. The bench (W06-012) which had been attached in phase Iva to wall W06-006, was now incorporated into the pavement (photo). The floor here slopes from south to north and from west to east. In some places, mostly on the south sides, signs of mending have been noted.

The most impressive feature of the stratum is the installation (L06-046) composed of a deep, stone-lined, bell-shaped pit (1.80 m deep) that had already been built in phase IVa (see plan 4.9. and discussion above). It has both a channel and a carved gutter leading to it (L06-040; photo), and is made of elongated basalt stones. By the time the pavement was laid, the rim of the installation had been modified so that it could fit into the pavement Photo). A huge clay basin was set at the bottom of the pit for a purpose unknown to us.

Another notable feature here are the basalt slabs integrated into the pavement of the northernmost area, behind W06-006 (Photo). Whether they constitute an installation or are part of another pavement is unclear.

*Building – L5099*

Another architectural unit, termed the “Standing Stone Building” (Plan 4.9), was built in the northern part of the area (squares K-O/10-12). A new set of walls was built over the destruction level of the previous phase’s (Stratum V) "Entrance-Room". This entire area slopes northwards. The nature and orientation of these walls are utterly different from those of the earlier phase and represent an entirely new phase of the area’s occupation.

Three walls define what remains of the Standing-Stone building, whose western boundary is unknown. These are **W.3022** on the south, **W.3024** on the north and **W.3038,** which contains the entrance to the room, on the east (*photo 71015 - 1991*). All three are oriented at something of a diagonal to the walls of the earlier phase: W.3024 sits on top and seals W.3025+W.3042, while W.3038 seals W.3047 (*photo 71013 - 1991*).

The walls are relatively thick and constructed from large stones, some of which are broken monoliths or flat stones. The single phase of occupation inside the building is represented by the packed earth floor (**L.5099**) and the remains of a paved area near the entrance (**L.5155**).

Other elements in the room worth mentioning are the "standing stone (Massebah)", the round stone, and the "offering table" incorporated in the floor (*photo 71015 - 1991*).

Few elements in the vicinity of Building 5099 can be attributed to this phase. W.3041, oriented north-south with respect to W.3038 and of similar height, is not physically connected to the other walls. A pavement of small stones may abut this wall (**L.5145**). **L.5135**, which consists of several small stones encircling a large one may mark another level in this area.

THE NORTHERN SLOPES OF THE TEL (Plan 4.11)

A series of pavements and meager walls were unearthed in squares N-O/15, N-16 (*photo 5094 - 1994*), sealing part of the earlier building (in Stratum V). The function of these pavements—regardless of whether they lay in domestic rooms or a working area—is unclear, as no coherent plan of the area has yet been drawn up. The walls in the area consist of one row of large, unworked stones laid out sporadically. However, four clearings are evident.

A terrace wall (W3236+W3240) oriented east-west split the area in two. Pavements made of small stones and flat slabs were attached to the wall on the north (L.5351 + L.5365). Meagre walls and pavements have been unearthed south of W3236 + W3240. These include the eastern space, L5366, defined by W3117 on the south, W3115 on the west and probably W3240 on the north. Pavements of flat stones are attached to these walls (L.5347 + L.5366 +L.5367 + L.5589 + L.5587). The pavements are not homogenous: some are built of small stones (**L.5348** #217.51/20), while others are composed of larger slabs (**L.5366** #217.39/22). The connection between the different pavements has often been disrupted, making interpretation difficult. The typical installations in this area are *tabuns* (L5594 and L5587) and grinding installation, made of flat stones surrounded by small stones.

 The two entrances in W3115 lead to two spaces on the west. The southern entrance connects the eastern area to a large space delimited on the north by W?????. This space is paved on the west (L.5562) but has a packed earth floor (L5346) on the east. The northern opening in wall W3115 leads to an elongated paved area (L.5348 + L.5587).

South of W3117, *tabun* **L.5321** *photo 4555 – 1994),* which issunken in the pavement (**L.5356),** cuts through the Late Bronze Age remains (*photo 4556 - 1994*).