

# BLISS AND MACALISTER'S EXCAVATIONS AT TELL ZAKARIYA (TEL AZEKAH) IN LIGHT OF PUBLISHED AND PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

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**T**HIS PAPER RE-EVALUATES both the published and unpublished data from the three seasons of excavations carried out by Bliss and Macalister at Tell Zakariya (biblical Azekah), during the years 1898–1899, under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF). Using this data, this study seeks to provide a more detailed account of the excavations at Tell Zakariya in order to expand our understanding of both the nature of nineteenth-century archaeology in Palestine, as well as exposing the potential for further study and excavations at the site.

## INTRODUCTION

In July 1898, R. A. S. Macalister was hired by the Palestine Exploration Fund to serve as the assistant of F. J. Bliss on the planned Shephelah project (PEF/DA/Bliss/50).<sup>1</sup> The two joined forces and in October 1898 set to the field and began a project of seventeen weeks of excavations at the site of Tell Zakariya, a site they erroneously identified with biblical Socho. The site's historical importance was first recognized by the PEF due to the remains found on the tell's surface during the Survey of Western Palestine and later in F. J. Bliss's preliminary survey of the site (Bliss 1899a: 11).

Tell Zakariya was the first site to be excavated as part of the Shephelah project, which also included Tell es-Safi (Tel Zafit), Tell Sandahannah (Tel Maresha) and Tell ej-Judeideh (Tel Goded). Due to the large size of the site, the excavations focused predominantly on three main areas: the lower plateau, the

large fortress which dominates the acropolis and the revetment towers on the south-western edge of the tell. Preliminary reports of the excavations were published in the PEF *Quarterly Statements* (Bliss 1899a; 1899b; 1899c; 1900), with an overall report on all excavated sites in 1902 (Bliss and Macalister 1902). However, Bliss and Macalister never published a comprehensive report of their excavations at Tell Zakariya, and the published summaries leave various questions unanswered. Fortunately, throughout their three short seasons at the site, Bliss and Macalister kept detailed records of their excavations in the form of field diaries, a notebook and finds list which are housed at the PEF offices in London.

The primary source about the excavations in this paper came from the unpublished field diaries themselves. Written by Macalister, they describe in varying detail, the operations carried out each day and the major discoveries made. In an MA thesis, written in Tel Aviv University under the supervision of Oded Lipschits, Sharon Napchan-Lavon had deciphered the diary entries in order to be able to understand the development of the excavation of each area (Napchan-Lavon 2014).

The notebook and finds list further illuminate aspects of the excavation's progress. The hitherto unpublished handwritten material uncovered at the PEF presented in this study is an important source for shedding light on the excavation and history of Azekah and constitutes a fascinating window into the archaeological practices of the time. From Bliss

and Macalister's records there is clear evidence of multi-period occupation in all the areas they excavated, while in-keeping with its geographic location on the border of the high and low Shephelah, the revetment towers and fortress are unambiguous signs of Azekah's strategic importance.

THE SITE OF AZEKAH

Azekah is situated at a height of *c.* 400 m above sea level on the northern edge of the hill range that forms the boundary between the high Shephelah to the east and the low Shephelah to the west. It lies 27 km south-west of Jerusalem, 6 km south of Beth Shemesh, 8 km east of Tell es-Safi/Gath and 17 km north of Lachish (grid reference 19400 62315).

The hill stands almost isolate, rising abruptly *c.* 120 m above the ravine of Elah, which coming from the Judean Hills in the west sweeps around the

eastern and northern sides of the tell, and continues west through the low hills of the Shephelah till it emerges into the coastal plain. The tell's western face is very steep, thus creating, together with the meandering of the Elah Valley, a natural fortification on three sides. To the south, the tell is joined to a hill range beyond.<sup>2</sup>

In Bliss's first report on the excavations at the site he states: 'Mounting the steep side of the summit I was at once struck by the natural strength of the site' (Bliss 1899a, 11). This emphasizes the strategic and central location of the site on the natural boundary between the high and low Shephelah, which for long periods in the history of Judah also served as the entity's natural western border.

The tell's summit is triangular in shape, inclining north-eastwards from its base, and covers an area of approximately 11 acres. The mound is flat topped

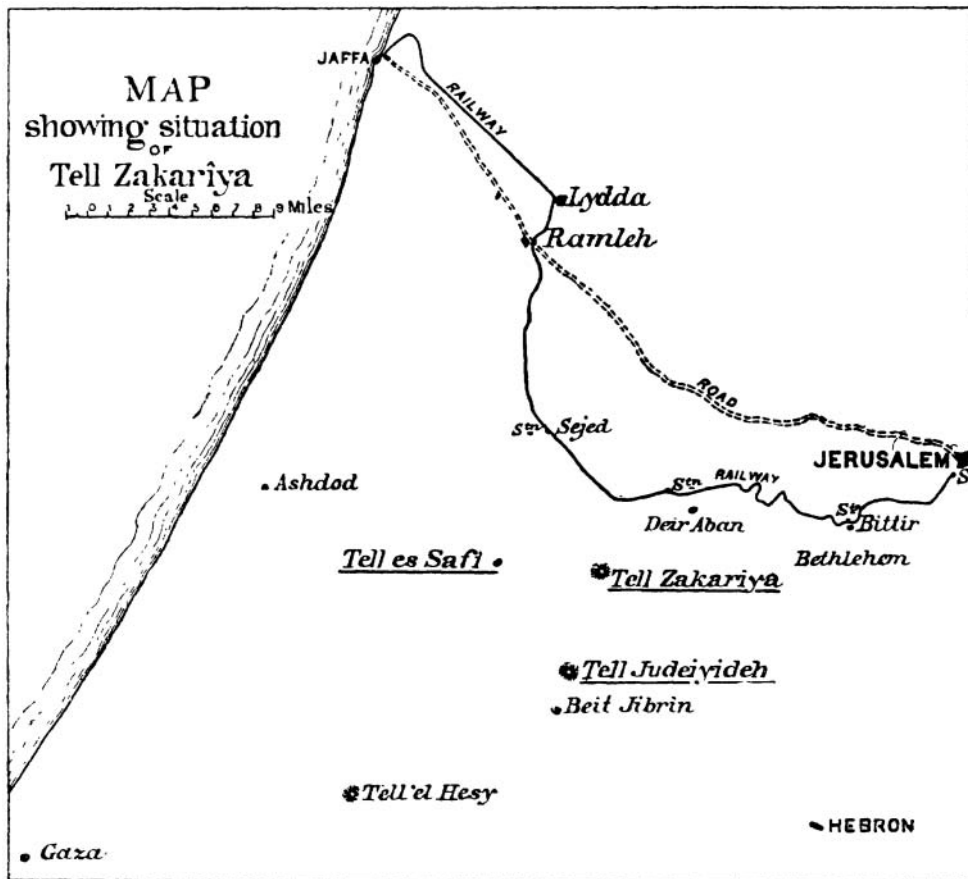


FIGURE 1. Map of the region showing the location of the sites excavated by Bliss and Macalister. (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 2, fig. 1)



FIGURE 2. Aerial photograph of Tel Azekah from 1945. (*Lipschits et al. 2012, 198*)

with only its south-eastern section rising approximately 6 m above the rest of the site, covering an area of approximately 1.5 acres. The southern and south-western slopes of the tell are surrounded by an artificial low terrace which Lipschits, Gadot and Oeming (2012, 196) argue is likely an integral part of it.

The name Azekah is not mentioned in second-millennium historical sources, but it does appear in both biblical and extra-biblical sources as a Judahite border town of the late eighth to early sixth century BCE. The earliest source it appears in is an Assyrian inscription (now at the British Museum in London, no. 81-3-23,131) that mentions Azekah in connection with a military campaign in the region (Na'aman 1974).<sup>3</sup> The first mention of Azekah in the Bible appears in the book of Joshua (10:10–11; 15:33–35),

and the site is also mentioned in the story of David's encounter with Goliath (I Samuel 17:1). In 2 Chr. 11:9 it states that king Rehoboam fortified Azekah and included it within the defensive system, and in Jeremiah 34:7, as part of the description of Nebuchadnezzar's campaign which finally subdued Judah, Azekah is identified together with Lachish as one of the last two fortresses on Judah's western border to withstand the Babylonian conquest. To this mention of the site we can connect Azekah's final downfall as is vividly depicted in an *ostrakon* known as Lachish Letter 4, found at the burned gate of Lachish and dated to the 586 BCE Babylonian destruction, which states: '... And let [my lord] know that we are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications that my lord has given, for we cannot see Azekah' (Torczyner 1938).

Modern research on the northern Judean Shephelah has its beginnings in the travels of E. Robinson in the Land of Israel in 1838 and 1852, together with his friend, the linguist and orientalist, E. Smith. The two toured the Judean Shephelah several times on their journey from Jerusalem to Gaza (Robinson and Smith 1856, II, 1–24). They visited Azekah and the village at its foot and identified it as Beit Zakariya, the place where Judas Maccabaeus was defeated (Robinson and Smith 1856, 283–284).

J. Schwarz was the first to identify Tell Zakariya as biblical Azekah based on written sources. His entry for Azekah reads as follows: 'Azekah אֶזְקָה. Three English miles east of the valley Saphia is the village Tell Ezakaria, which is probably the ancient Azekah, which was not far from Socho. (Com. 1 Sam. xvii. 1.)' (Schwarz 1850, 102). Tel Azekah was also described in Conder and Kitchener's survey of the region under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund, but they failed to give the site a biblical identification (1883, map XVI, 441). Following their work at the site, Bliss and Macalister came to the conclusion that it was most reasonable to identify Tell Zakariya with the biblical city of Socoh. In their opinion (1902, 66–67), the name had been transferred in the past to Khirbet Shuweikeh, located 6 km from Tel Azekah, in the southern part of the Elah Valley.

According to Bliss, the village and tell took their modern name of Tell Zakariya from the sacred building dedicated to Zakariya, the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:67–79), in the village (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 66). The Madaba map identifies the village, depicts this sacred building with the inscription 'The Monument of Saint Zacharias'. Stern (1993, 124) suggests that in the Byzantine period Christians may have confused the prophet Zechariah with the father of John the Baptist, explaining the impressive shrine dedicated to him, and thus Bliss and Macalister's later interpretation.

In the beginning of the twentieth century Albright conducted a survey at Khirbet Shuweikeh and contradicted the conclusions of Bliss and Macalister identifying that site with biblical Socoh according to ceramic finds that he dated to the first temple period

and the similarity between the names. Consequently, he identified Tell Zakariya as Azekah (Albright 1924, 9). Since then, the identification of Tell Zakariya as biblical Azekah has been accepted by most scholars.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND AND THE EXCAVATIONS AT TEL AZEKAH

In its early years the work of the Palestine Exploration Fund, established 'for the purpose of investigating the Archaeology, Geography, Geology, and Natural History of the Holy Land' (Conder and Kitchener 1881, 4), focused on the three main objectives: a detailed survey of both eastern and western Palestine; exploration and excavation of Jerusalem; and study of the geology, natural history, and meteorology of Palestine (Besant 1877; Watson 1915, 39–40; Ben Arieh 1972, 89). It was not until 1888 that it was decided that the Fund was ready to undertake its first excavation of a tell in Palestine. Tell el-Hesi was the site chosen and excavations were carried out there under the supervision of Sir Flinders Petrie between the years 1890–1893. It was as part of the Tell el-Hesi excavation project that Frederick Jones Bliss, the future lead excavator at Tel Azekah, began to work for the PEF.

Bliss was an American by birth, but lived a great part of his life in Beirut, where his father founded the college that was to become the American University of Beirut. Educated in Lebanon and New England, USA, he carried out independent research in Syria between 1888 and 1890. In 1890 the PEF approached Bliss and asked him to assist Petrie with his excavations at Tell el-Hesi. Petrie trained Bliss at Meydum in Egypt before he began two years of work at Tell el-Hesi. Bliss used Petrie's ceramic sequence and his pioneering concept of a mound (tell) being composed of a stratified sequence of small, successively superimposed 'cities' to establish not only the archaeology of this specific site, but a sequential framework for the archaeology of the whole region.

Upon completing his work at Tell el-Hesi in 1892, the PEF instructed Bliss to continue the work in Jerusalem, where he worked from 1894 to 1897. The original permit for the work in Jerusalem expired in May 1896, however, after a two-month hiatus in

operations, an extension for one year arrived in July. When it finally expired in June 1897 there was no possibility for an extension. The inability to continue working in Jerusalem was what made the PEF return to excavating tells. The Fund's Executive Committee did not view the excavations at Tell el-Hesi as a successful project, since it had drained so much of their resources with little significant results (Hallote 2006, 135). Accordingly, they were hesitant to choose a site, and when they eventually did, they pressured Bliss into excavating at more than one site at a time. Thus the 'four tells' project came about.

The historical and archaeological significance of the Shephelah was already understood following the survey in the region, conducted under the auspices of the PEF as part of the Survey of Western Palestine.<sup>5</sup> The idea of excavating in the southern Shephelah, with a focus on Tell es-Safi, was born in 1890 when Petrie was still working at Tell el-Hesi. At the time Petrie proposed a number of sites, including Tell Negilah and Umm Muarif, Beit Khalil, Ramah or Hebron, Tell Sandaanah, as well as Tell es-Safi, for future projects (PEF/DA/Bliss/1/36). At the time, Petrie pushed these sites to the PEF as hard as he could, mentioning that Tell es-Safi and Beit el-Khalil were the most inviting sites for excavation (PEF/DA/Executive Committee Minutes/1 July 1890). However, as work at Tell el-Hesi was continued, the idea was put to the side.

When Bliss himself travelled in the area during his first season at Tell el-Hesi in 1890, he also expressed an interest in the sites of the southern Shephelah. Bliss explored the region and produced a sketch map which he labelled 'Detailed map showing with red lines the area of the proposed excavations'. The sites included were Tell es-Safi, Khirbet Dhikern, Dudra, Khirbet Judeideh and Tell Judeideh, Khirbet Okbur, Khirbet Nuwetin, Khirbet Askalen (Ashkelon), and Tell Zakariya (PEF/DA/Bliss/1/54). This early sketch included three of the four sites that eight years later he would finally be given the permission to excavate.

It was in light of this early interest that the PEF applied for a permit to excavate at Tell es-Safi and sites within a 10 km radius of it. Bliss was sent in the

spring of 1897 to visit Tell es-Safi (Tel Safit), not to report on the site itself, but rather on the surrounding region. Following this inspection of the region it was decided to include the nearby mounds of Tell Zakariya, Tell ej-Judeiyideh and Tell Sandahanna in the expedition.

Bliss was very attracted to the prospect of excavating several sites in one region as the permit allowed. Such a concept of a regional study was very modern and Bliss was eager for the opportunity to study the region as a whole. The PEF Committee was also excited about the opportunity for multiple excavation sites since they believed it would uncover more finds and accordingly draw more interest and financial support from the public (Hallote 2006, 136).

While still in Jerusalem, in September 1898, Bliss was joined by R. A. S. Macalister who had been hired by the Fund in July of that year to serve as his assistant throughout the work on the Shephelah project (PEF/DA/Bliss/50). Macalister was born into a Scottish family in Dublin and was educated in Ireland, Germany and the University of Cambridge. Although his earliest interest was in the archaeology of Ireland, working with the PEF he soon developed a strong interest in biblical archaeology.

Once the permit was granted on 19 October 1898 (after a frustrating three-week delay), Bliss had to decide which site to excavate first. Although it was clear to him that Tell es-Safi was the most important site archaeologically, Bliss chose to begin with Tell Zakariya, as he believed the work conditions would be better there for a number of reasons (Bliss 1898, 224; Bliss and Macalister 1902, 3):

1. The village of Safi was known to suffer from malaria, because of the stagnant water of its stream;
2. On the tell itself was a modern village and cemetery, as well as a large Crusader castle, Blanche Garde, on its southern end;
3. The locals at the village of Safi had a reputation for being unwelcoming.

Accordingly, a large-scale excavation started at Tel Azekah on 27 October 1898.

Bliss and Macalister pitched their excavation camp on Monday, 24 October in the Wady es-Sunt, Vale

of Elah and work finally commenced on the Thursday after negotiations were held with the locals who were both the site landlords and their workmen. The locals agreed for the tell to be excavated, which that autumn was lying fallow, on condition that after the completion of the work the surface should be restored to its original condition to allow farming of the area to continue. It was agreed in the negotiations that the issue of compensation for use of the land would be deferred till the time of ploughing, as nothing was to be paid for the right to excavate. When the time eventually came for the tell to be planted, Bliss and Macalister hired the archaeologically important areas of the site, paying a certain ground rent, which they note was based on a considerably exaggerated estimate of the amount of barley the area was supposed to be capable of producing (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 3–4).

Bliss and Macalister further note that the question of wages was not easily settled. Since the site was in the heart of charcoal country, they had to compete with that trade, which provided the locals with year-round employment. The wages finally agreed upon averaged at about a franc per day according to age, sex and capacity of the labourer. In addition to their wages, the labourers also received a small bonus, *bakhshish*, for each find they found. The amount was determined by Bliss according to the apparent value of the object. Bliss notes that this method proved to be the best for securing the preservation of small objects which might have been overlooked by labourers working only for daily wages.

At first, they only employed men and boys, but later, as they gained the confidence of the whole village, the females also joined the workforce (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 5).

The excavating at Tell Zakariya spanned sixty-one working days, and was performed by a workforce which averaged about fifty a day. The workers were kept under close supervision, to see that no 'finds' were overlooked or smuggled away, and also to make sure that no false objects were introduced in order to benefit from the system of a monetary reward if they discovered something of value.

The three excavation seasons spanned the following dates:

Season One: 27 October–21 December 1898

Season Two: 20 March–22 April 1899

Season Three: 8 September–26 September 1899

In Bliss and Macalister's final summary of these excavation seasons, and the rest of the Mounds of the Shephelah project, they note that on a personal level the

welcome from the work-people, men and women, boys and girls, culminated at the village of Zakariya . . . We were simply old friends, honoured guests, bringing nothing, receiving unbounded hospitality . . . at least from the point of view of our relations with the people our campaign was a success. (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 11)

#### EVALUATION OF THE PUBLISHED AND THE UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

Bliss and Macalister conducted three seasons of excavation at Tell Zakariya over seventeen weeks between October 1898 and September 1899. In the first stage of the project, after surveying the tell, Bliss and Macalister (1902, 13–23) set for themselves four main aims:

1. Study of the towers at the edge of the plateau
2. Tracing the acropolis wall under the south-east mound
3. Excavations within the Fortress area
4. Large clearance pit on the plateau

While excavating at Tell Zakariya, Bliss and Macalister sent back to England four preliminary reports which were published in the PEF's *Quarterly Statements* (Bliss 1899a; 1899b; 1899c; 1900). In addition to these reports, on their return upon completing the excavations at all four sites, they published a summary of their findings in *Excavations in Palestine during the Years 1898–1900* also under the auspices of the Fund (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 12–27).

During their first of the three seasons Bliss and Macalister surveyed the site and dug sixteen test pits. These pits were dug along three parallel lines, producing sections in the tell from east to west: A–B (the northern most), C–D (the central section), and E–F (the southernmost). This was done to ascertain



FIGURE 3. Local workmen. (*Votaw 1899, 434*)

when the site was settled and to determine its features. Despite the fact that few architectural remains were uncovered, the excavators identified two main strata above the natural rock. The first was characterized by a hard, dark brown soil and was between 60 cm to 3 m thick. The strata above it had a light grey colour and ranged from 80 cm to 2.7 m in height. The lower stratum was identified by Bliss and Macalister as 'pre-Israelite' according to the soil colour and pottery sherds, while the upper strata was identified as 'Jewish'. The types of sherds found in each layer are indicated in the section drawings (Bliss 1899a, 17, pl. 1; Bliss and Macalister 1902, pl. 2).

Following the preliminary work on the tell the excavations focused on four main areas:

1. In the south-western part of the tell the excavators identified the remains of three towers of which one course was visible above the surface (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 13).
2. In the south-eastern part of the tell an asymmetrical rectangular fortress with a tower in each corner, as well as one in the centre of the north and west sides, was found covering an area of 1.4 acres.
3. Since it was determined that the fortress was simply a large enclosure for protecting houses built within it, two main areas were excavated inside its walls: the western section was excavated south from the northern wall between Towers III and IV, and the eastern section was excavated in the centre of the fortresses courtyard extending

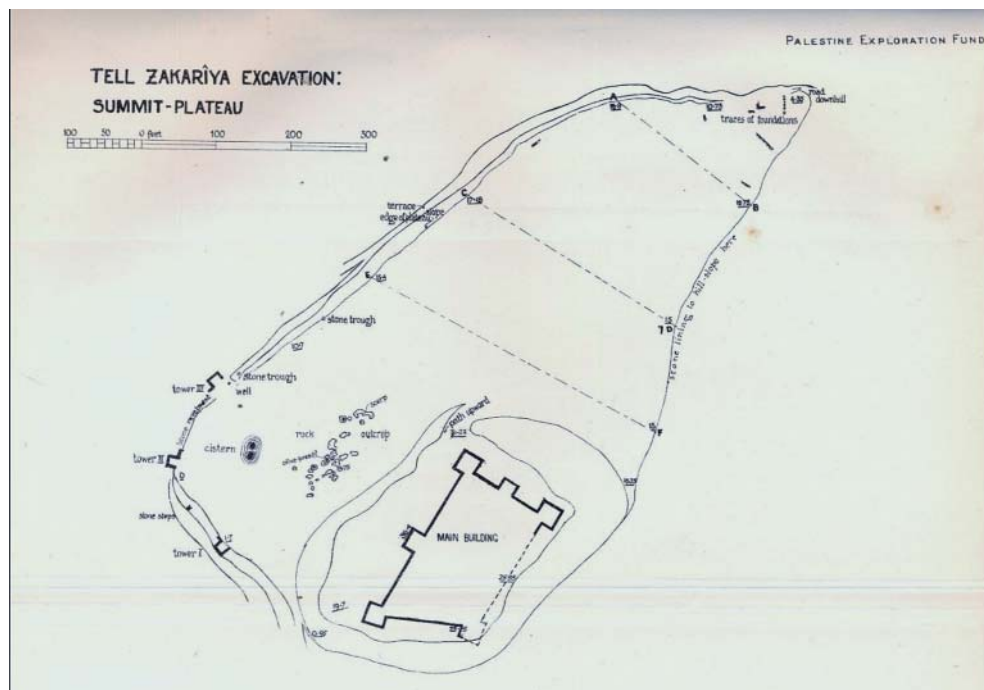


FIGURE 4. Plan of Tel Azekah showing areas excavated. (*Bliss and Macalister 1902, pl. 2*)

towards the east wall. Between the two sections a partition was left up.

4. In the north of the site an additional area was excavated, a trial pit approximately 30 by 20 m, reaching a depth of 3.5 m on average. This area was chosen due to the large quantity of early pottery which had been discovered in a trial shaft.

To these four main areas Bliss and Macalister decided to add a survey of subterranean rock-cut caves located at the northern perimeter of the tell.

Bliss and Macalister's publications of their excavations and finds lack a significant amount of details, and in many cases discoveries, particularly architectural, are described very briefly and exclude important information which would have assisted the modern day scholar. Pottery from all the sites excavated areas were published as part of the Shephelah project, and are grouped together in periods without clear reasoning and discussed in general chapters. Architecture and related features are assigned dates based on weak reasoning, while the lack of the ability to attribute finds to specific areas and levels hinders the readers ability to fully understand the excavation

results and reconstruct the history of Azekah. It is for this reason that this study turns to the unpublished field material to try and shed light on the architecture and small finds uncovered during the excavations.

The excavations exposed a great number of architectural features and interesting finds in all the site areas explored, inviting a deeper understanding of the site and its history. However, the significance of documentation that is missing has proven to be a severe hindrance to making progress in analysis of the site's architecture and finds. Bliss and Macalister registered the finds they found of most interest from their excavations in the finds list. Each find was classified by type: pottery, bronze, bone, and so on. In addition to the classification and description of each find, the entries indicate photos and plates related to the specific find. Unfortunately, the photos and plates referenced in the list have been lost, and their absence greatly limits our ability to analyse the finds listed and date the site accordingly. Furthermore, it is almost impossible to decipher from Bliss and Macalister's entries the find locations for items from the first two seasons. This in turn limits our ability to understand the important relationship between



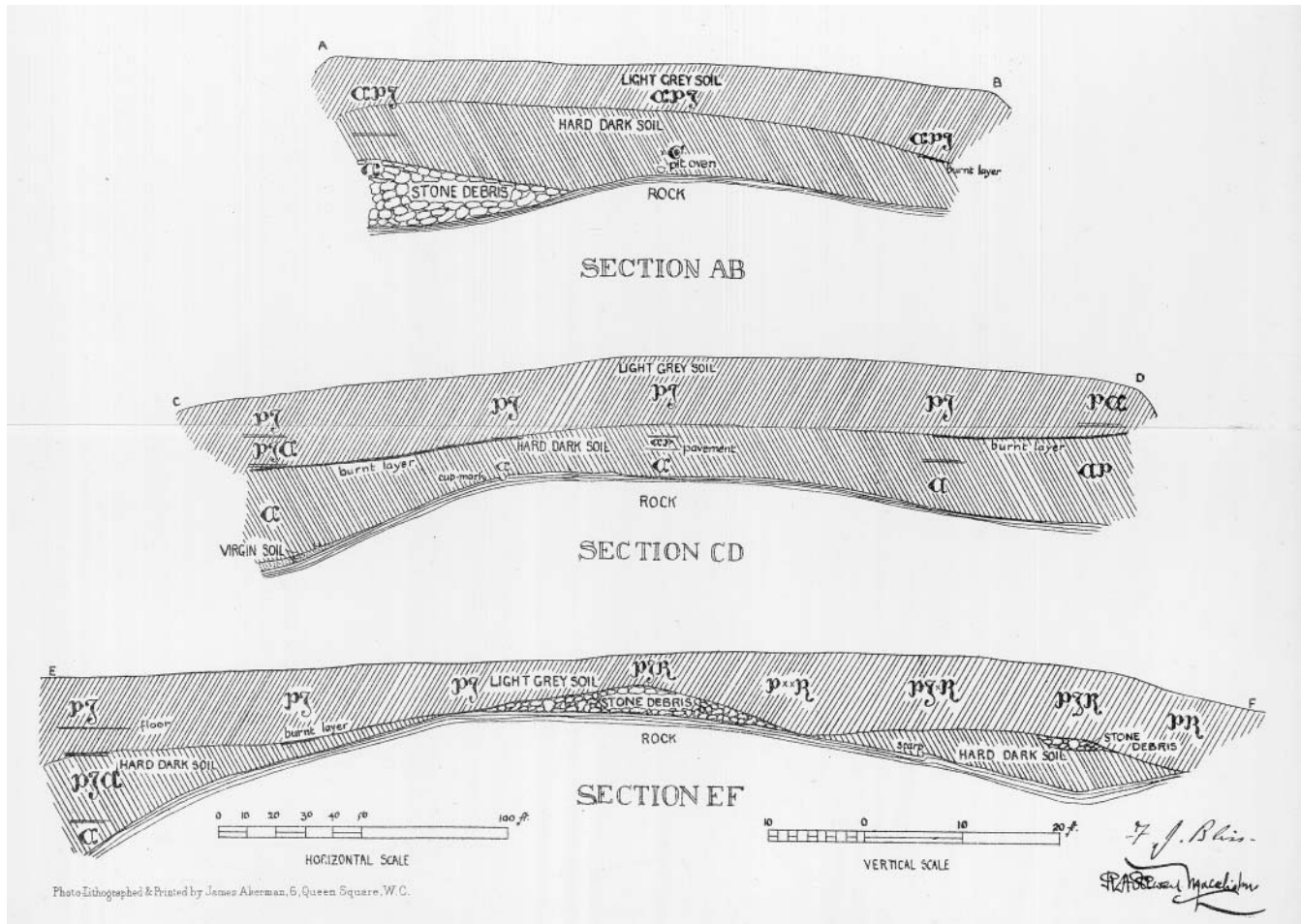


FIGURE 5. Detail of sections investigated in the north of the tell. (Bliss and Macalister 1902, pl. 2)

the architecture and the finds of the site. It is only in the last season that they began noting the find number in the field diary entries for each day.

The finds were classified and published by Bliss and Macalister under seven sub-categories:

- (1) Pottery: a variety of vessels from the various periods of the sites occupation, importantly including several stamped jar handles (Bliss 1889a, 21–23).<sup>6</sup>
- (2) Bronze objects: fibulas, spatulas, arrow-heads, knives, chisels, rings, bracelets, pins, needles and so on (Bliss 1889b, 100–101). One notable bronze object was a rude figurine, which seems to represent an amphibious creature, with a human head and body but with a tail of a fish (Bliss and
- (3) Iron objects: nails, bolts, a door-hinge, hasps, arrow-heads, rings, chisels, knives, a fibula etc (Bliss 1889b, 102). One notable iron object was a fragmented cuirass.
- (4) Bone objects: prickers, styli, a ring, spindle whorls, needles, scarabs, incised strips of bone etc. (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 146–147).
- (5) Stone objects: vats, troughs, roof-rollers, dishes, mortars, flat discs with holes in the centre,

Macalister 1902, 148–149). The figure appears to be holding something in its right arm, whose head is resting on the figures left arm. It was suggested at the time by Votaw (1899, 439), that it is an image of the goddess Atargatis, whose principle seat of worship was believed to be at nearby Ashkelon.

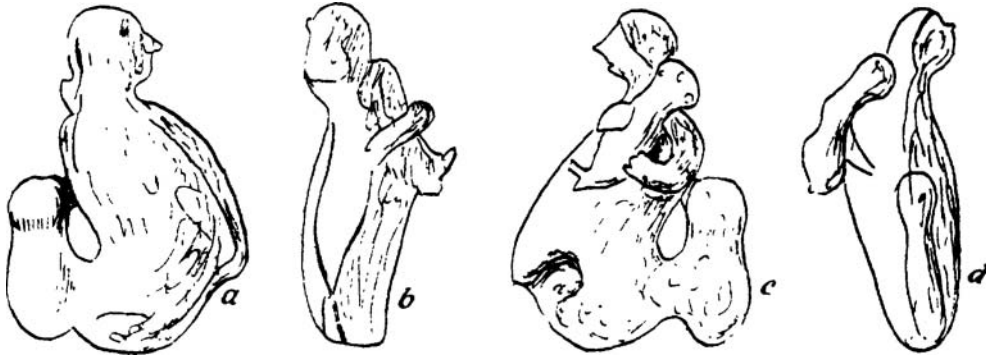


FIGURE 6. Bronze figurine.  
(Votaw 1899, 440)

corn-rubbers, etc. were among the larger objects. The smaller objects included hammer-stones, pestles, cups, catapult balls, bottle-stoppers, slate, spindle-whorls, and engraved cylinder seals, a mace-head, beads, weights, fragments of alabaster vessels, etc. (Bliss 1889b, 99). One notable stone object was slabs of soft limestone whose surfaces were crosschecked into small squares (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 144). The largest and most complete piece has 144 squares. Bliss and Macalister's interpretation of these slabs as being used for playing some kind of game similar to checkers remains valid today.<sup>7</sup>

- (6) Coins: none of the coins found on the site were published in the final report and only described as follows: 'The earliest coin was an Athenian piece of 10 drachmas, coated with silver. Obverse: Archaic helmeted head of Athena. Reverse: Owl with olive branch and Persian counter-sign. Date, 526–430 B.C.<sup>8</sup> The rest of the coins were: three small Ptolemaic coins, badly preserved, recognized by eagle and head of Jupiter; five Maccabean coins; one coin of the Procurator Annus Rufus, and one coin of the Constantine series' (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 26).
- (7) Paste objects: beads, scarabs and Egyptian amulets (Bliss and Macalister 1902, pls 83 and 84).

Since there are no surviving images associated with the unpublished finds list, an attempt was made to identify these finds with the 1902 published plates. However, since many of the finds catalogued in the finds lists were not published at all, and in some cases

it has not been possible to associate finds that appear in the 1902 published plates with the corresponding entry in the finds list, out of the 596 finds catalogued only 113 have been identified in the plates.

One very important piece of information missing from the finds list, and which greatly hinders our ability to date different features and levels in the site, is the find spot of the objects. During the first two seasons of excavation Bliss and Macalister, for the most part, gave no indication in which areas of the site or at what levels artefacts were discovered. There are a few exceptions, especially in the case of particularly exceptional finds, such as *lmk* stamped handles, in which case the find is noted in the day's diary entry and according to the description of the work carried out a possible location for the find may be ascertained. In the final excavation season this changed and Bliss and Macalister began noting, at the end of each diary entry, the current number of the finds discovered that day. Accordingly, utilizing the description of the work carried out on each day, it is possible to determine the area and height range at which the finds were uncovered. Nonetheless, out of the 596 finds, only 181 of them can be assigned an approximate find spot, while only 33 of these can also be associated to finds presented in the published plates.

According to the unpublished materials, these finds originate from two main areas of the excavation: the fortress and the lower plateau clearance pit. The majority of datable finds from the fortress come from the collection of small finds found together inside a vessel on the rock in fortress clearance pit

(see below a discussion on the find spot and its importance). The earliest of these dates to the first half of the fifteenth Dynasty (1630–1580 BCE), while the latest dates to the nineteenth–twentieth Dynasty (1292–1075 BCE). An additional Late Bronze Age find that can be assigned to the area of the fortress is the fragment of a scale armour cuirass (Bonn et al. 1993: 213–216), but its exact find spot in the fortress area is unclear.

The second area where these finds were found is in the lower plateau clearance pit. Here, due the larger number of finds which were listed with a find spot it is possible to build a small chronological table for the area according to the different levels excavated each day. However, unfortunately, the result of this analysis indicates that the entire context of this area was likely not a clean context. This is most significantly highlighted by the *Yrslm* stamp impression (dated to the second half of the second century BCE; see Bocher and Lipschits 2013) found here near the bedrock. Of the two personal stamp impressions which were also uncovered in this area of the excavation, one is a surface find found during the closing of the trial pits, while the other appears to be out of context close to the surface level of the clearance pit. It is worth noting that the strange chronology of finds excavated in this area may have been caused by Bliss and Macalister's system of giving workers *baksheesh* for handing in what they deemed significant finds. This probably resulted in several cases of finds being brought in from other areas of the tell or even other sites.

TABLE I

Lower plateau clearance pit excavation levels and dates of related finds

Surface level–1.5 m	Hellenistic Late Iron Age II End of seventh–early sixth century BCE Late Bronze Age II
0.6 m below surface	Late Bronze Age eighth-century BCE
1.5 m–2 m	Late Bronze Age II–Iron Age II Middle Bronze Age II
2 m–3 m	Middle Bronze Age II
3 m–3.6 m	tenth-century BCE
3.6 m–4 m	second-century BCE

From this modern analysis of the finds with identifiable figures and locations from Bliss and Macalister's excavations, it is clear that no accurate historical picture of the settlement of Azekah can be ascertained from the unpublished materials.

#### THE SOUTH-WEST TOWERS IN LIGHT OF PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

When the excavators first arrived at the tell, they identified the remains of three towers in the south-western part of the site, of which one course was visible above the surface. On 3 November 1898 work began on the revetment towers, but other than a single ceramic find (a diminutive vessel) nothing more was noted. In the preliminary report it was stated that the revetment towers were identified by the excavators due to a visible course of stones, described as being made of large well-squared stones. In the field diaries, however, in the 4 November entry, the towers are described as being of extremely bad masonry, slightly better on the east face but with no drafted stones.

While carrying out the trenching of the second tower on 5 November, an unsuccessful search was undertaken for a wall linking tower I to tower II, but no traces of walls were found connecting any of the towers. This led the excavators to conclude that the towers constituted individual forts intended to protect this side of the mound, which was more susceptible to attack than the other sides.

Regarding the construction style, the 7 November entry describes the first revetment tower as being solidly built and thus likely the foundation of a habitable superstructure. In contrast, on 8 November when the excavators decided to investigate the revetment walls on the east and west slopes, they were found to be of thin, poor masonry. Two sections were cut across the supposed revetment on the western side, but it was found to be merely a single thickness of large stones. Additional rubble walls were also found in the vicinity of the towers, but the excavators deduced that these were all retaining walls built to buttress the foundations of the towers themselves, since they were close to the sheer slope of the mound.

Between 10 and 23 November work at the site focused on the other areas. When work continued in the area of the revetment towers, a chamber with a stone staircase (Fig. 6a) leading to it was found between towers I and II on the south side. The steps are described as being 18.2 m west of the Tower I and the slope as continuing about 0.3 m below lower step. This is the only aspect of the revetment tower excavation that is referred to in the notebooks. It seems that the renewed excavations have re-exposed these stairs (Fig. 6b). When comparing the location and measurements of the stairs as they were documented by Bliss and Macalister and by us there are some inconsistencies, but still the number of stones and their position seems to indicate that they are one and the same. Bliss and Macalister concluded, in light of their interpretation of the towers use, that this house predates the towers.

The only finds that are listed in the diaries as coming from the work in and around the towers are a diminutive ceramic vessel, some flint knives, a saw, a corn-rubber, a flat plate of bronze about 1 inch

across, a large perforated boulder, and some stone weights and chips.

In their published reports, Bliss and Macalister assign the towers to the Roman-Byzantine period. The visible course of stones is described by the excavators as being made of large well-squared stones, while below the surface they were built of rough stones bound with mud (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 13–14). This seems to indicate that the rough course was always meant to be underground and that therefore the surface of the tell had remained at about the same level since the construction of the towers (*idem.*, 13). The towers measured 6–6.5 m in length.<sup>9</sup> However, from the unpublished material it is not clear how they came to such a conclusion, since no indicative ceramic finds are mentioned in the diaries or find lists as having come from this area.

In his re-analysis of the excavation results Dagan (2011) suggests, contrary to Bliss and Macalister, an Iron Age I–II date to these towers, since from the section drawings in the published reports it is clear to him that the foundations of these towers do not

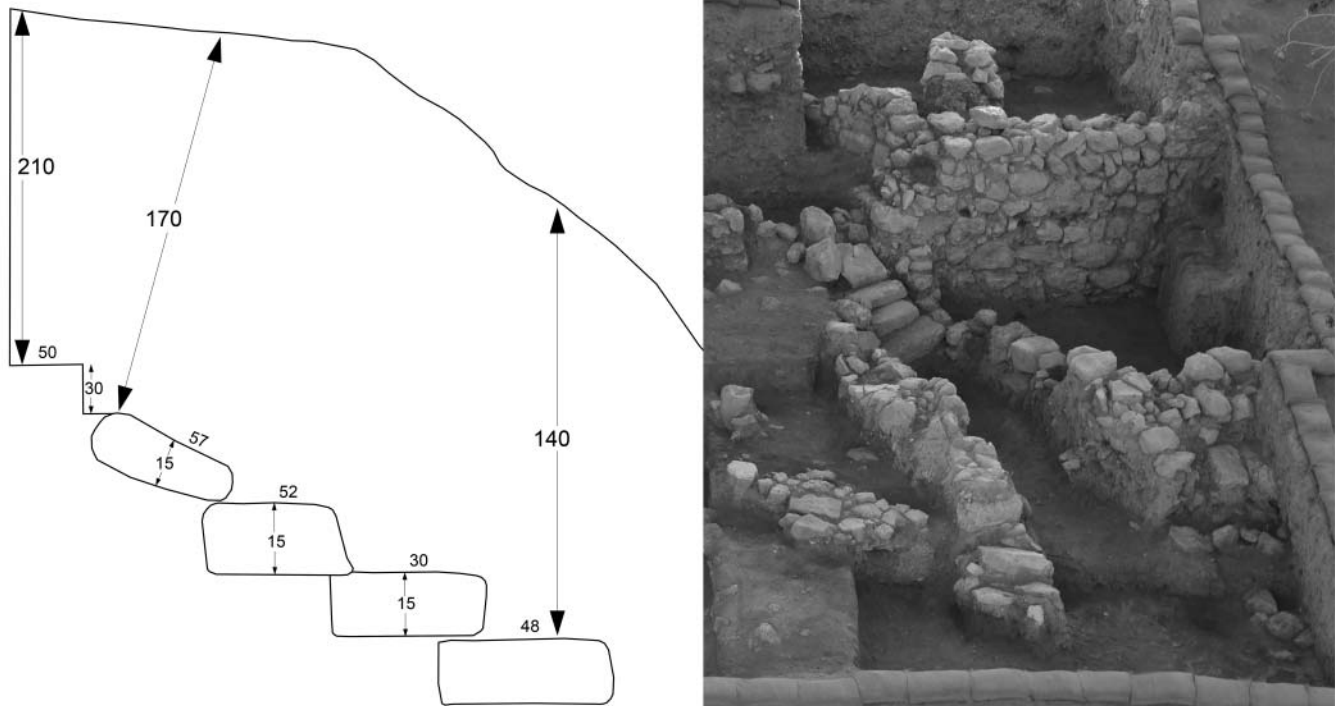


FIGURE 7. The steps found between revetment towers I and II: a) plan based on Macalister's notebook; b) following 2013 excavations. (*Sky-view*)

resemble those of the walls of the fortress (which he dates to the Hellenistic period, see below). However, there is no other indication to support this conclusion and the towers may be connected to the Hellenistic citadel or to its period.

#### THE TELL'S PLATEAU IN LIGHT OF PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

The excavation of the plateau began on 31 October 1898 with the opening of seven trial pits. The results of these are described very briefly in the field diaries, with more detailed information available in the notebook. Unfortunately, as in the published reports, there is no information in the unpublished material regarding the exact location of the pits.

The field diaries state that Roman remains were found in the lower level of these pits to a depth of 0.9 or 1.2 m but not below. In the pits in Row A there seems to be a clear distinction that below *c.* 2 m more pottery associated by Bliss and Macalister to the Jewish and Phoenician periods were discovered. No earlier types are mentioned in these pits. Bliss and Macalister note in their notebook that the pits in rows B and C unearthed a wider variety of older pottery types including, according to their analysis, Jewish, pre-Israelite, Phoenician and Amorite fragments.

On 2 November 1898 further pits were opened on the plateau. Again, there is no mention of their exact location. A large cup-marking on the surface of the rock was uncovered in one of the plateau pits under about 3 m of accumulation. As the excavation of the pits continued a fragment of pottery with herring-bone decoration was uncovered and identified as Archaic. On 7 November an apparent building at the north end of the plateau was uncovered and examined. It was founded in shallow debris and therefore the excavators concluded that it could not be associated with the earliest settlement period. A fragment of a diorite bowl was found in one of the plateau pits on the same day at a depth of almost 5 m. The following day, a head of a small figurine and a diminutive vessel were uncovered in the same area.

These trial pits began to be filled in towards the end of the first season and were completely filled in

during the few days prior to the starting of the third season. On both 8 and 9 September 1899, which were days dedicated to closing the pits, two stamped jar handles were found among the debris. One with what the excavators described as an illegible royal stamp, the other inscribed: **מעץ | לצפנא**. This stamp is described in great detail in the 1902 report (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 121; pl. 56: 29Z).

On 11 September 1899, with the start of the third season which focused solely on the lower plateau, a large clearance pit was opened and excavated to a depth of 1.5 m on the first day. Again, the unpublished material does not mention the exact location of the pit. From the published reports it is known that the area selected for this pit was along line C–D, in the centre of which a quantity of early pottery had been revealed by the trial pits of the first season. Many walls were found in the new pit immediately below the surface, as well as two floors also within half a metre of the surface. These, however, were not planned as the excavators suspected they were modern constructions.

Already from their first day of excavations it became clear that the area was well chosen and many finds were collected. The eleventh of September 1899 is the first time the finds are listed in the field diaries together with their number from the finds list. Accordingly, we know that certain pottery finds, bronze, iron and stone objects, as well as coins, all well listed in the finds list (numbered 740–758, 760–767 and 769–773, and cf. Napchan-Lavon 2014, 129–134), were found on this day and, most significantly, that they were found up to 1.5 m below the surface.

With the continuation of the clearance pit to 2 m more finds came up (774–781, 788–798 and 800, cf. Napchan-Lavon 2014, 134–136), one of which (774) was a scarab with a figure of Thoth, the Egyptian god of the moon, standing in front of a cartouche. A stamped jar handle (no. 776, Bliss and Macalister 1902, 121; pl. 56: 28Z) that reads **לעזר חרי**, came from a depth of 0.6 m. An interesting find of a lamp inside a bowl with another bowl over it positioned under a wall (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 151–152; pl. 82:2–3) was mentioned in the field journals but not catalogued in the finds list.

The clearance pit was further deepened to an average depth of 3 m and a series of crude walls enclosing a small chamber were uncovered. At this depth, a large number of flints (no. 54) were found in one hoard. The catalogued finds from this area and depth are numbered 801–819 in the finds list (Napchan-Lavon 2014, 136–137). Rock was finally struck at around 3.4 m on 14 September 1899 and the next day the clearance pit was finished with a maximum depth of 3.6 m. Some crude walls were found on the rock, as was a cup-mark similar to one found in the earlier trial pit. Under one of the walls they found on 15 September 1899 a jar and saucer (find 846) deposited together with a handle within the jar. A set of bone objects in the shape of labels with lines cut in them were also found, the excavators suggest that perhaps they were used as chips for a game like dominos.

On 16 September, a second clearance pit on the lower plateau was opened to 0.8 m. Some walls, eight stone vats and small chambers were uncovered, suggested by the excavators to be part of a wine-making establishment. In addition to pottery, bone and stone objects (finds 847–849, see Napchan-Lavon 2014, 140), two jar handles were also found, one recognized by the excavators as stamped למלך שוכה and the other identified as a rosette. The following day, as the pit was deepened to 1.9 m, a small figure of Bes made of paste was uncovered, along with different pottery (finds 850–859, 861 and 878, and see Napchan-Lavon 2014, 140–143).

As the clearance pit was deepened to 3 m, a brick oven of the double wall type containing bones was uncovered. In the 19–20 September entry, the incomplete nature of the surviving records becomes clear, with Macalister's reference to the 'other book' for more information. Unfortunately, this 'other book' was not found at the PEF, and is most likely lost. The finds associated with this area over these days were pottery, bone and stone objects (nos 862–865 and 867–877, see Napchan-Lavon 2014, 141–143). At a depth of 4 m rock was struck in several places. Another large rectangular vat cut in the rock surface was found with two smaller ones close by it. The finds found at this level included pottery, bone, bronze and

gold objects (nos 879–887, Napchan-Lavon 2014, 143).

After reaching the rock, a new pit was opened to the north. In this third pit architectural remains were reached at 1.8 m. The only significant find was a חברן למלך stamped jar handle and a figure of Sekhet. Finds discovered up to a depth of 0.6 m in this northern pit included mainly pottery (catalogued as 888–890 and up to 1.8 m as 891–899, and see Napchan-Lavon 2014, 143–144).

Re-analysis of the pottery plates published by Bliss and Macalister give modern scholars the ability to reclassify Bliss and Macalister's categories. Accordingly, it is possible to categorize the earliest ceramics from Row A found below 2 m depth, as Late Bronze I–II, while in Row B and C the earliest types can be categorized as from the Early Bronze II–III.

As the excavations in this area progressed, Bliss and Macalister uncovered different types of foundation deposits (bowl-lamp-bowl, jar-handle-bowl, etc.). From their descriptions it is clear that they already correctly identified them as a foundation deposit. Similar foundation deposits have been found at many other sites in the region and have been dated to the end of the Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age on the basis of the contexts they were found in (cf. to Bunimovitz and Zimhoni 1990, 46).

The most significant finds in this excavation area were several Iron II stamped jar handles uncovered. One with what the excavators described as an illegible royal stamp, another inscribed: לצפנא | מעין, one with לעזר חרי stamped on it (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 121; pl. 56: 28Z) came from a depth of 0.6 m. Two further stamped handles, one rosette and the other למלך שוכה were found above a depth of 0.8 m. The last to be found was a למלך חברן stamped jar handle in the third pit, but the height is unknown.

Summarizing these finds and combining it with the bit of details concerning the find's location and level, we may conclude from Bliss and Macalister's excavations on the upper plateau that there are clearly three different levels of occupation: Iron Age II, Late Bronze I–II and Early Bronze II–III. The presence of the Early Bronze material close to bedrock can be found in only one location; the

appearance of the Late Bronze material is clear, as is the Iron Age level on top, nearly in all the excavated pits, at a depth of between 0.6 and 1.8 m.

#### THE FORTRESS IN LIGHT OF PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

The fortress was the area excavated most thoroughly by Bliss and Macalister, and as a result is the most well documented in the unpublished material uncovered at the PEF, and also presented in most detail in the published reports. The work of the first two seasons at Tell Zakariya focused mainly on investigating the fortress. Its irregularly shaped quadrilateral layout already became clear to the excavators early in the first season (Bliss 1899a, pl. 2). The first few days of the excavation were occupied with trenching along the northern and western walls of the fortress. The masonry was found to be composed of random rubble and rather small stones almost throughout. In the north-west shaft two dressed stones were found, one of which was drafted. One of the stones in this shaft was also found covered in plaster and bearing a fragment of ornamental linking. An additional drafted stone, seemingly in secondary use, since one of its angles is described as being carved for a door, was found in a wall near the west tower. The excavators believed that the generally rough nature of the stonework indicated it was likely that these were foundations intended to be below ground level.

As the days of the first excavation season progressed, more of the fortress's walls and towers were trenched and a clearer picture of the outline of the building became apparent. Bliss and Macalister continue to note the type of masonry exposed, including indicating cases where dressed or drafted stones were found, seemingly in secondary use.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, the technique of trenches and tunnels, which they used to quickly discern the depths and paths of the fortress walls, disconnected the walls from occupation levels on both the internal and external sides, making it almost impossible to associate any floors with the fortress walls.

The masonry of the following towers was discussed in relative detail in the notebooks:

Tower II was examined down to 1.5 m and was, as stated in the final publication, found not to be bound to the north wall and no door was exposed (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 16). On the east side of this tower the stones are described as being barely squared and badly set. In contrast, the north-eastern wall consisted of well-squared stone down to the rock, some of them covered with a dense but irregular pattern of lines as illustrated in the notebook, but these stones are also badly and unevenly set.

Tower III is described only very briefly in the unpublished notebook as being bound to the north-western corner of the fortress. In one place the notebook states that this tower was examined down to the rock, while later on it states that the shaft at the north-west angle of this tower reached 3.4 m since it hit a cistern at this level. In addition, they describe this tower as being similar in style to the north-eastern corner of Tower II.

In Tower IV the notebook describes the uncovering of an internal wall, part of which was found resting on a rough pile of stones which the excavators suggest formed the sill of the door. This was also seen in the doorway to the main tower chamber. Bliss and Macalister recognized and recorded in the notebook that the main tools used by the builders of this tower were a hand chisel, a narrow chisel and a sharp-pointed pick. The shaft around this tower was excavated to a depth of 4.5 m.

Tower V appeared to the excavators to be bonded to the walls of the fortress. At its north-west, south-west and south-east corners eight 'good' or dressed stones were uncovered, while the west side was found to be composed of random rubble. The excavators presumed that the well-dressed stones found in this tower had likely fallen from above. The entry into the tower was not found in investigations up to 2.4 m down. At the corner of this tower the shaft was lowered to a depth of 5.5 m.

Tower VI is described in the notebook as built of large rough rubble set in mud with lime chippings. Only one of the stones, located in the south-eastern corner, was well squared, a fact which led the excavators to presume that everything they unearthed was originally intended to be underground.

Accordingly, a door of this tower was not searched for.

On 7 November three trial pits were sunk into the area inside of the fortress. The first clearance pit was opened on 10 November 1898, when its first quarter was sunk to 1.2 m. One stone cross wall was uncovered with some 'top drafted' stones. The following day, the clearance pit was deepened to about 1.5 m, and it was found that the internal walls discovered the day before rested on debris. A rock-cut cistern with its mouth reaching up to 1.5 m below the ground level and closed with a stone and covered with debris was also found.

The work continued inside the fortress for several days uncovering further partition walls and some relatively indistinct finds, until on 14 November, as the pit was lowered to 2.7 m, an arched substructure under a probable floor level was discovered. Two ovens appear from the diaries to be associated with this floor level which was covered with a layer of fine ash.

Over the next few days rock was reached in two or three places in the clearance pit. An exceptional find was a boxen jar containing a large quantity of carnelian and paste beads, stone and bone spindle whorls, inscribed carnelian scarabs, a bone scarab, two inscribed enamelled paste scarabs, polished and perforated shells, and Egyptian figurines. A large rock chamber found at the bottom of the clearance pit was worked out and discovered to have a stepped floor; an additional cistern at the corner of the Tower IV was also discovered.

The second quarter of the clearance pit commenced on 26 November and was soon cleared to about 3.2 m at which point part of a cistern was discovered. The third quarter of the clearance pit was deepened to 1.5 m and then 2.4 m, where a scarab inscribed Then-nub was found.

As the third quarter of the clearance pit was deepened to the rock, a rock-cut chamber and several quarry-scrapes were found at the bottom. The rock-cut chamber is described as having plastered walls and a visible waterline at the base of the shaft; accordingly it may be identified as a cistern. Many fragments of ribbed ware, identified by Bliss and

Macalister as Roman, were found here up to a level of about 2.4 m. Below this level several foundation deposits, painted fragments and pieces of two small Phoenician figures were also found.

Excavation of the fourth quarter of the clearance pit started on 19 December 1898 and continued into the second season. Several small walls and a flight of steps were found in it. As work on the fourth section of the clearance pit continued a plaster floor was reached at a depth of 4.3 m, with another immediately underneath it. The excavators noted in the notebook that the stratum of oldest pottery seems deeper at this point in the pit than elsewhere, and contains painted ware, thin bilbils, and wishbone handles.

On 1 April 1899 work commenced on a new clearance pit, west of that already opened. Large quantities of pottery were found in it, including two animal's heads, several perfect miniature vessels, one perfect bilbil, two stamped jar-handles (inscribed), and one fragment of Mycenaean pottery. Some walls and mud floors were uncovered near the rock, as well as a stone vat *in situ* in a floor.

An additional clearance pit, the third, was opened on 11 April 1899 in the north-west angle of the fortress. A part of the wall already found in the first quarter of the first clearance pit was found here too. The weight, identified by the excavators as inscribed  $\Sigma\Omega$  and described in detail in the published reports (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 145), was found here on 12 April.

The importance of this fortress was already clear to the excavators when they first visited the site prior to beginning the excavations. The scale of this building, its location at the highest point on the tell and position overlooking a considerable area are clear indications this fortress served as a symbol of the ruling regime.

To Bliss and Macalister, such a large defensive building fit well with the biblical list of Rehoboam's 'cities for defense in Judah' (2 Chr. 11: 5-12). Accordingly, they dated the first stage of the fortress to this period. The second stage — the addition of the towers — was dated by them to the Hellenistic period (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 23). Furthermore, Bliss



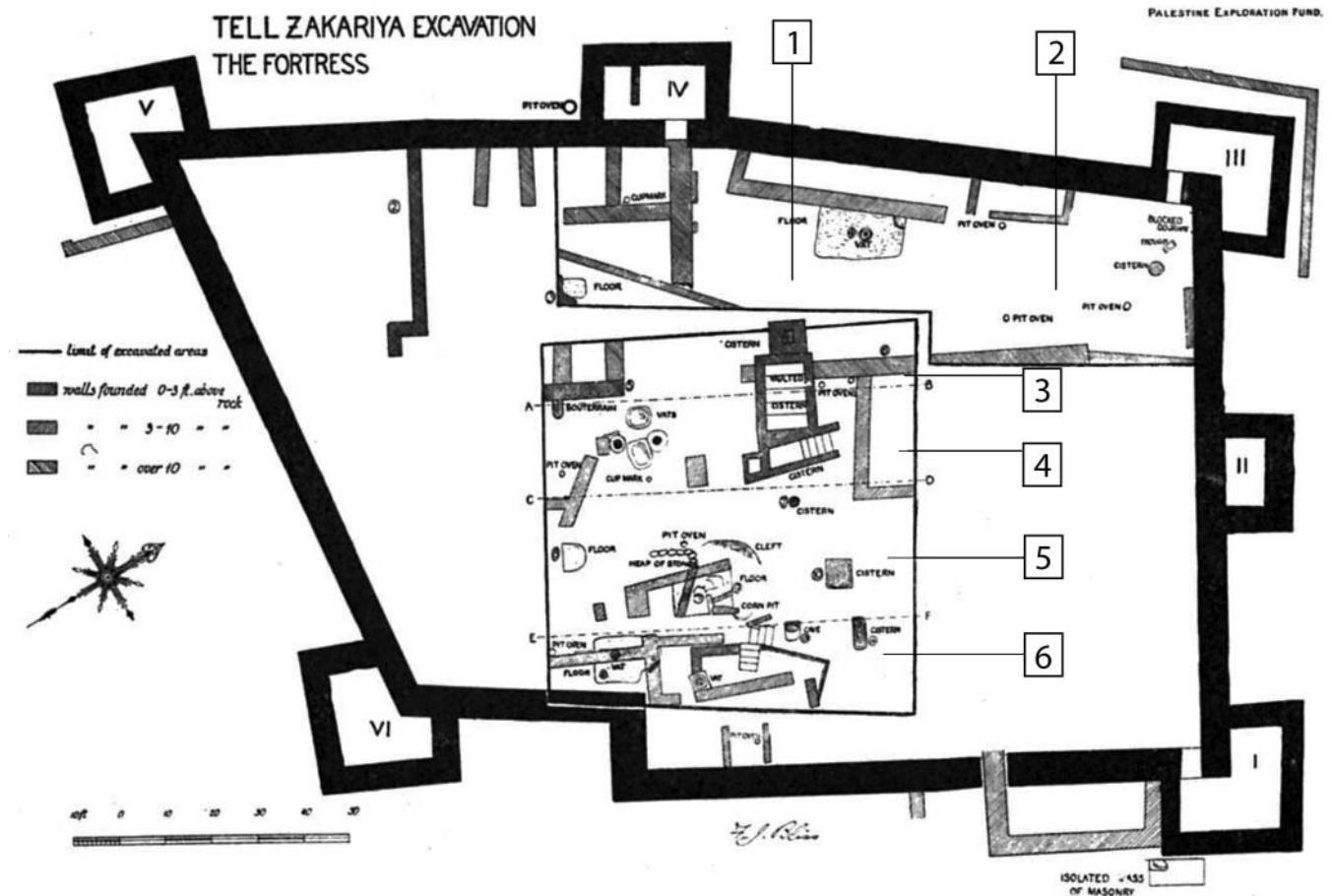


FIGURE 8. Plan of fortress showing excavation areas.

I – Second Clearance Pit; 2 – Third Clearance Pit; 3 – First Quarter First Clearance Pit; 4 – Second Quarter First Clearance Pit; 5 – Third Quarter First Clearance Pit; 6 – Fourth Quarter First Clearance Pit.

(Bliss and Macalister 1902, pl. 2, updated by Napchan-Lavon, Gadot and Lipschits)

and Macalister summarize the occupation of the tell according to the evidence from the fortress as follows:

Though not founded in the earliest period, it was already inhabited when Joshua entered the land, and was fortified in Jewish times, possibly by Rehoboam; during the Seleucid period the acropolis was strengthened by the addition of towers, and finally, after a brief occupation in Roman and Byzantine times, the place was deserted. (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 23)

For many years this dating was unanimously accepted by scholars.<sup>11</sup> However, it needs to be noted that, from the archaeological perspective, there is a difficulty to dating the fortress in general, and this rests to a considerable extent on the excavation technique and recording which did not make it possible

to definitively attribute any floor level to any stage of the fortress. From the descriptions of the masonry in the field diaries and the notebooks it is clear that the walls of the structure were not of homogenous construction: in certain places they rest on the bedrock, while in others they seem to rest on debris and remains of earlier buildings. The clearance pits opened in the centre of the fortress shed little light on the date of the fortress itself, as no internal walls were found to be joined to the fortress walls and no floors could be directly related to the outer walls. The large rock chambers found within the fortress have been recognized, through re-analysis of the evidence, as ritual baths or *miqveh* typical of the end of the Second Temple period, and thus, it is possible to date them

to 200 BCE onwards, a period when ritual baths were common in the region of Jerusalem and Judah (Reich 1990, 281–282; Zissu 2006: 88; Dagan 2011).

It is also important to note that the majority of *mlk* stamped handles found at Azekah were discovered here, as were several lamp in bowl and bowl in bowl foundation deposits which date to the Late Bronze or Early Iron Age. It is clear from levels indicated in the diaries and notebooks and in the limited data available in the published report, that there is a discrepancy between the occupation levels at which the *mlk* stamp impressions were found in the clearance pits within the fortress and the level of the fortresses foundations. Furthermore, the doorways that were found in the towers were found at a higher level than the Iron Age occupation within the fortress.

The only significant clue available to us in trying to date the fortress is its shape and the description of its masonry as it appears in the field diaries and notebook. The fortress and its towers are for the most part described as being built of rough stones and rubble, which led the excavators to conclude that what they uncovered were the building's foundations. However, in a number of places in the walls and towers drafted and bossed stones also appear, most clearly seen in the notebook sketch of the northern joint of the West Central tower. Modern archaeologists note that such worked stones are typical of the Hellenistic period (Geva 1985, 28, fig. 4; Sharon 1987, 21–42; Dagan 2011, 81–83). If this dating of the stone work is accepted, Dagan goes on to raise the question of how and when such stones ended up in the foundations of the fortress. He, like Bliss and Macalister, suggests that it could be indicative of two chronological construction phases, but unlike the excavators he dates both to the Hellenistic period. The first phase used well-dressed upper courses and the second, starting after the destruction of the building from the first phase, was a reconstruction using the same plan and foundations, incorporating the stones from the destroyed fortress. The second stage, he argues, would have been when the towers were added, thus explaining the increased appearance of the dressed stones in the tower foundations. This could be further evidenced from the mention in the

notebook of rollers also being found in secondary use built into the foundations as material as described in the diary (27.10.1898; 3.11.1898; 4.11.1898) and in even more detail in the notebook.

Dagan (2011, 82–83) further strengthens the argument to date the fortress to the Hellenistic period by presenting examples of Hellenistic fortifications built, like at Azekah, according to the topography of the site, with some towers incorporated into the walls and others attached to the exterior walls after its construction. The preliminary results of the renewed excavations which have been taking place at Azekah since 2012 further strengthen the dating of the fortress to the Hellenistic period (Lipschits et al. 2012, 202).

The fortress was an open courtyard surrounded by a wall, within which were found internal partitions and the remains of several taboos. Bedrock was found 6.7 m below the surface of the courtyard (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 19). The excavators managed to identify four main occupation levels within the fortress. The earliest level was dated by the excavators to 'the pre-Israelite period' on the sole basis of pottery, as no structures could be attributed to it. Among the objects found in this level was a vessel containing assorted Egyptian jewellery, including two scarabs, one with the name Thutmose III and the other with the name of Amenhotep II (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 22–23). Based on these finds and with the new understanding from the new excavations at the site we can date this phase to the Late Bronze II–III. The second level started with a crude plaster floor and was dated to Bliss and Macalister's 'late pre-Israelite period'. It contained handles with *mlk* stamp impressions with the two winged scarab. The level above this contained a second plaster floor which although broken was better made than the earlier one, and was also dated to 'the late pre-Israelite period' (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 22–23). This floor also had handles with four winged *mlk* stamp impressions on it. It seems that these two levels may be dated to the Iron Age II, and we cannot say more about the date of its different levels or about a better dating within this period. The latest level was attributed to 'the Jewish period' (Bliss and Macalister

1902, 20–22). As well as the different occupation levels, several hewn graves were found with a number of stairs descending into them. These graves were dated to the Roman period. In the level just below the surface additional graves were uncovered and were described by the excavators as Arab graves (Bliss and Macalister 1902, 23).

To these late periods in the history of the site (mainly to its history in the second temple period) we may add the work of Macalister on the subterranean caves. During the course of the excavations at Tel Azekah, Macalister also conducted and published a survey of subterranean chambers and rock-cuttings on the face of the tell and around it (Macalister 1899, 25–36; 1900, 39–63). Among the features he documented were cisterns, burial chambers, columbarium and other rooms with various purposes. Narrow connecting tunnels were also found connecting between the different systems. Alongside these tunnels were staircases providing entry into the different rooms. In his final report, Macalister describes eleven of the caves/features which he thought would be of particular interest (Macalister 1902, 213–223): a bell chamber oval in plan, an oval cistern, an oblique shaft descended by eight steps, a large bell-chamber columbarium over 5 m deep with two entrances, another columbarium comprising of several chambers, a dome and side entrance stepped bell-chamber, a composite passage-type cave consisting of a deep passage, a large circular cave, a large underground network of forty-nine chambers, and a stepped bell-chamber with a domed side entrance.

Modern studies and re-evaluation of Macalister's published reports have associated the underground caves and features at Azekah as an integral part of the settlement of the site from the period after the Babylonian exile to the end of the Bar Kochva revolts (Tepper and Shahar 1987, 184–185; Kloner and Zissu 2003; Zissu 2006).

### CONCLUSION

This paper brings to light and analyses unpublished data from the excavations carried out by Bliss and Macalister at Tell Zakariya between 1898–1899 under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund

(PEF). As has been shown in the analysis above, the unpublished materials, although fragmented and incomplete, nonetheless enable us to set out a more comprehensive account of the history of the site than was previously possible. This is made possible by the fact that when combined with the published material, as well as other scholarly work carried out later, we are able to assemble a more detailed chronological outline of the site's settlement history.

Accordingly, by joining together the published and unpublished material from the excavations as well as the results of later surveys of the site, it is possible to reconstruct the settlement history of Azekah. The settlement of Tel Azekah started in the Early Bronze Age II–III. During the Intermediate (Dagan 2011, 76–77, table II) and Middle Bronze Age (Emmanuilov 2012, 57, table I) there has been found evidence of a limited settlement. During the Late Bronze Age, on the other hand, there is evidence of a large and significant settlement as indicated by the many scarabs and Egyptian style artefacts found in the excavation and the many sherds of this period collected during the surveys. In the Early Iron Age the site again houses a relatively small occupation which grew significantly in the Iron II. The Hellenistic period is indicated by the large fortress, but it is not clear if and to what extent the occupation at that time extended beyond this central building (Emmanuilov 2012, 68, fig. 31).

The unpublished material sheds a great deal of light on the work that Bliss and Macalister carried out at Azekah, both in terms of the discoveries made and the excavation and recording techniques they used. By shedding light on the way that archaeology was carried out in the nineteenth century, and analysing their findings in light of the research subsequently available, we are able to make a judgement about what the shortcomings in their approach were and hopefully inform the modern day practice of archaeology in the process. The importance of using thorough, rigorous and detailed recording techniques during the excavations themselves is clear. The other important lesson is about the importance of storing this data in a form that will be easily and readily available for future researchers. This enables us to preserve the longevity and relevance of our own

contemporary work for generations to come, who should be able to use historical archaeology as the basis for further excavations and analysis of their

own. Digitizing the data, and converting it into an accessible and secure format, is a key part of that process.

## NOTES

1. See at the end of this paper a list of primary sources from the Palestine Exploration Funds documentary archive.

2. The southern range sits 30 m below the tell itself, a geographical position which has led Dagan (1992, 28) to suggest the range's height was artificially lowered in earlier periods in order to protect it. Dagan (2011, 72–73) also assumed that since the site can only be approached from the southern slope, the city gate was most likely located there and that the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests of Azekah, as indicated by historical documents, also came from this direction.

3. It has been suggested by Tadmor (1958, 80–81) that this inscription refers to the expedition of Sargon II against Iamani, the ruler of Ashdod in 712 BCE. Na'aman (1974), however, suggests the text should be dated to Sannacherib's campaign to Judah in 701 BCE.

4. See, e.g., Rainey (1983, 89); Aharoni (1979, 214, 345, 353, 431); Ahlström (1982, 19).

5. The Survey of Western Palestine was an extensive survey of the region covering approximately 6,000 square miles, which was carried out between 1871–1877, under the direction of R. W. Stewart, C. F. Tyrwhitt Drake, C. R. Conder and H. H. Kitchener at different times.

6. The main disappointment among archaeologists of the time in terms of the excavation finds was the lack of any inscriptions. Votaw (1899, 436) seems to complain that the only writing found was on jar handles, 'the meaning of which is uncertain and unimportant'. Counter to this view, Fowler (1900, 248) notes the 13 royal stamped jar-handles as the excavations most valuable discovery. For a modern discussion of stamped jar handles, see Lipschits et al. 2010 and 2011 where there are detailed discussions of the stamp impressions found at Azekah.

7. Board games are amongst the earliest and most frequently found games in ancient times; playing boards, gaming pieces and throw sticks have been found in archaeological excavations throughout the ancient Near East (e.g., Peterson 1975, 853–835; Weippert 1977, 310–311; Decker 1984, 1150–1152; Hallo 1993; Sebbane 2000). Little is known of the actual games played with the objects found, but it seems likely that the majority were 'move games' for two or more players, who were supposed to move counters on a defined board. Boards similar to the one uncovered at Azekah have been found at Arad, the majority of which came from contexts dated to the Early Bronze Age (Sebbane 2001, 213–230). Other similar boards coming from Late Bronze and Iron Age contexts have been found at several sites, including Hazor (Yadin et al. 1960, pl. 78:6) and Gezer (Macalister 1912a, 299–302; 1912b, pl. CCI:8).

8. An identical coin was uncovered in Emmanuilov's survey of Tel Azekah in 2011 (Emmanuilov 2012, 52; fig. 13). Coins of this type were common in the province of Judah between the middle of the fifth century to the fourth century BCE (Gitler and Tal 2006, 23–30).

9. Bliss and Macalister in their publications use a combination of metric and imperial units for measurement. For the purpose of this paper all measurements have been converted to metric units.

10. See, e.g., journal entries from 3 November 1898, 4 November 1898, 10 November 1898, Napchan-Lavon 2014, 86–91.

11. See, e.g., Avi-Yonah and Yeivin (1955, 289–290); Stern (1971, 133–137; 1993, 124); Aharoni (1987, 266); Seger (1997, 243); Negev and Gibson (2001, 64).

12. All the primary sources used in this study come from the Palestine Exploration Funds documentary archive housed at the PEF headquarters at 2 Hinde Mews, London.

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