

ARCHITECTURAL REMAINS AT BARSĪNYĀ RESULTS OF TWO SEASONS OF EXCAVATIONS (2006 AND 2007)

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Abstract

This paper aims at presenting the results of the architectural remains discovered during the first two seasons (2006 and 2007) of excavation at the archaeological site of Barsinyā. The archaeological project clarified the importance of the site through different ages, particularly, in the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Umayyad periods. The uncovered architectural remains that were of domestic nature gave a clear idea of the agricultural occupation in the region of northwest Jordan and its development through the mentioned periods.

The architectural remains showed a number of houses (rooms and courtyards) some of which had paved floors of irregular cut stones. The excavated walls were of a medium quality built mostly with large hewn and un-hewn stones. Those walls have been rebuilt in different phases evidenced by many observable changes. The amended architectural remains at the site were good evidence of a long domestic architectural tradition that continued from the Hellenistic throughout the Late-Umayyad Periods. Using the same architectural spaces throughout a long period of time could be also an indication to similar social structure and daily activities.

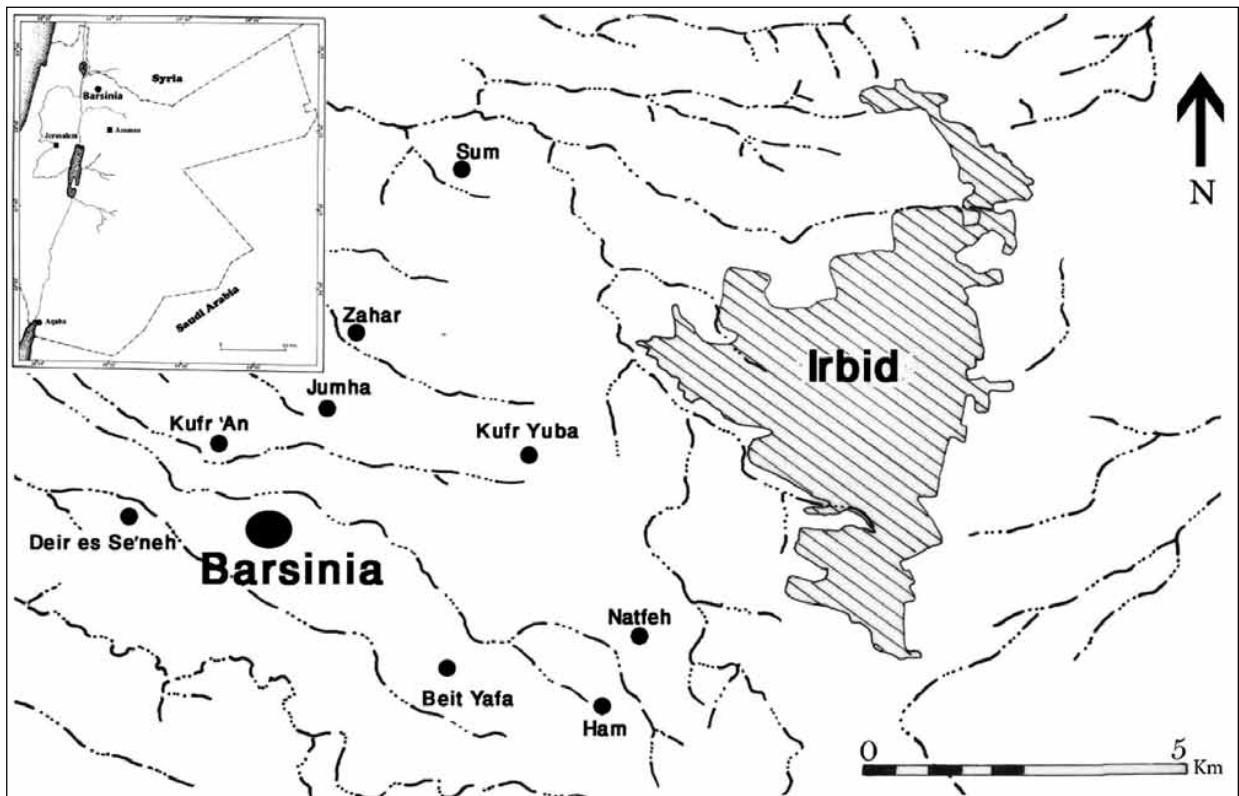
Location and History of Archaeological Activities

Barsinyā (Barsina JADIS 2221030) is located in the northwestern part of Jordan (**Fig. 1**), 15km west of the modern city of Irbid and 1.5 km east of the small village of Dayr as-Si'nah. The site is a good example of an agricultural settlement in the region that was flourished during the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Umayyad periods. The whole settlement that measures *ca.* 11200 sq meters contains domestic architecture

and different types of tombs (Khourī el- 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Bader and Khourī el- 2009; Shorman al-, and Khourī el- 2011). With mean annual precipitations of *ca.* 400 mm the area belongs to the Mediterranean climate type and offers good conditions for seasonal agriculture.

The name of the site could be derived from the Greek name Barsine (βάρσινη). It was the name of the oldest daughter of Dareios Kodomannos, married to Alexander the Great (Pauli Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft, Fünfter Halbband (Barbarus bis Campanus), column 29 (Barsine) (Kaerst)). Basine is also the daughter of Artabazos, wife of Mantor of Rohdos, beloved of Alexander the Great, and mother of his son Herakles (Der Neue Pauly, Enzyklopädie der Antike, Band 2 (Ark-Ci), Column 456 (E. B.)). Or Byrsa, also is a site's name in Syria, between Apameia and Bata (Geogr. Rav. II 15 p. 87), maybe identifies Bersera that locates in (Tab. Peut.) between Apameia and Hierapolis (Pauli Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft, Fünfter Halbband (Barbarus bis Campanus), (Byrsa) column 1107 (Benzinger)). Byrsa in Latin and Greek (βυρσα) means "beef skin", the name of the Acropolis of Karthago. (Bi'r-ša) in Phoenician is "sheep fountain" (Der Neue Pauly, Enzyklopädie der Antike, Band 2 (Ark-Ci), Column 866 (H.G.N)). Also Bersima (βερσίμα) a site in Mesopotamia on Euphrates (Ptol. V 18, 5) (Pauli Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft, Fünfter Halbband (Barbarus bis Campanus), column 318, (Bersima) (Fraenkel.)).

The site is situated on a flat hilltop of calcareous rock, and is surrounded by modern agricultural areas used mostly for olive plantings and husbandry. The northern part of the hill



1. Map, location of Barsinyā.

has been flattened for construction of a modern farmstead.

The site has been visited and surveyed by various scholars since the mid 19th century, such as Robinson and Smith (1842: 918), G. Schumacher (1890: 127-129), Abel (1938: 438-9), N. Glueck (1951: 176-7, site no.117), and Simons (1959: 335-6, no. 784). It has been identified by G. Schumacher (1890: 127-129) and Abel (1938: 438-9) with the biblical Rogelim (II Sam. XVII, 27; XIX, 32), both scholars connected the name Rogelim with Wadi Rugeili that passes by the site in its northeastern side.

Barsinyā has been recently visited during conducting the West-Irbid Archaeological Survey in September 2005 (Khouri *et al.* 2006, Site 18). The primary results of the survey indicated that Barsinyā was one of the most prominent archaeological sites in the region of West-Irbid, it was remarkable for its building remains and other surface finds. Traces of building remains were visible only a little above the ground, it has a number of rock-cut and shaft tombs, cisterns, underground tunnels, as well as natural caves partly built up and partly hewn out

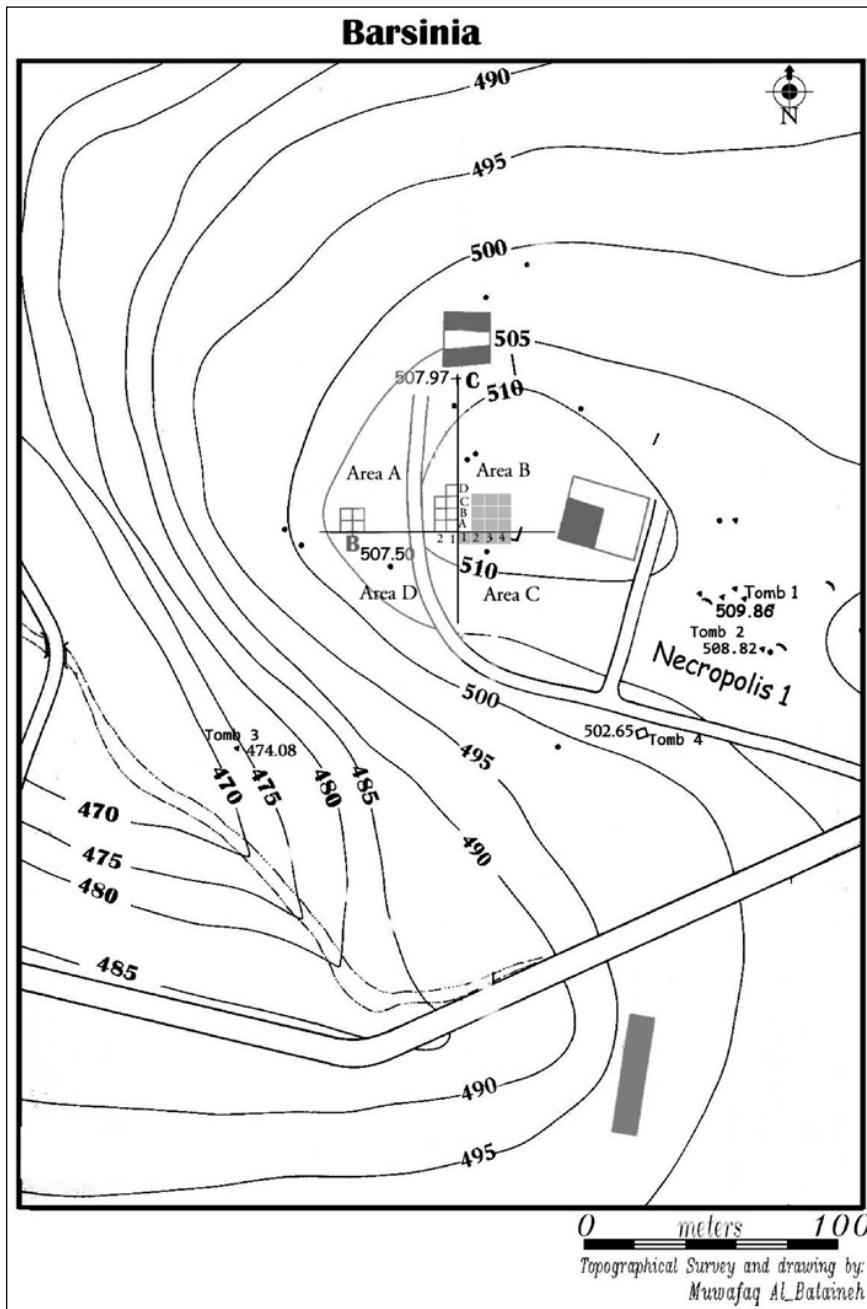
of the rock.

With its residential area, tombs and agricultural installations Barsinyā can be considered a well-preserved example of an ancient settlement complex in northwest Jordan. On occasion of the West-Irbid survey, however, traces of illegal digging activities were observed both in the settlement and in the burial ground of Barsinyā. As these activities posed a serious threat to the antiquities it was decided to start a rescue excavation, which took place in 2006 and 2007. Research of the site is important, as there are few rural settlements in northwest Jordan that have been excavated thoroughly.

This archaeological project has been designed to serve as training course in the field archaeology at the Department of Archaeology, Yarmouk University, and was directed by the author.

Architectural Remains

The archeological site, Barsinyā, measures approximately 11200 sq meters in area; it consists of a residential district and burial quarters (Fig. 2). Two monuments were distinguished at

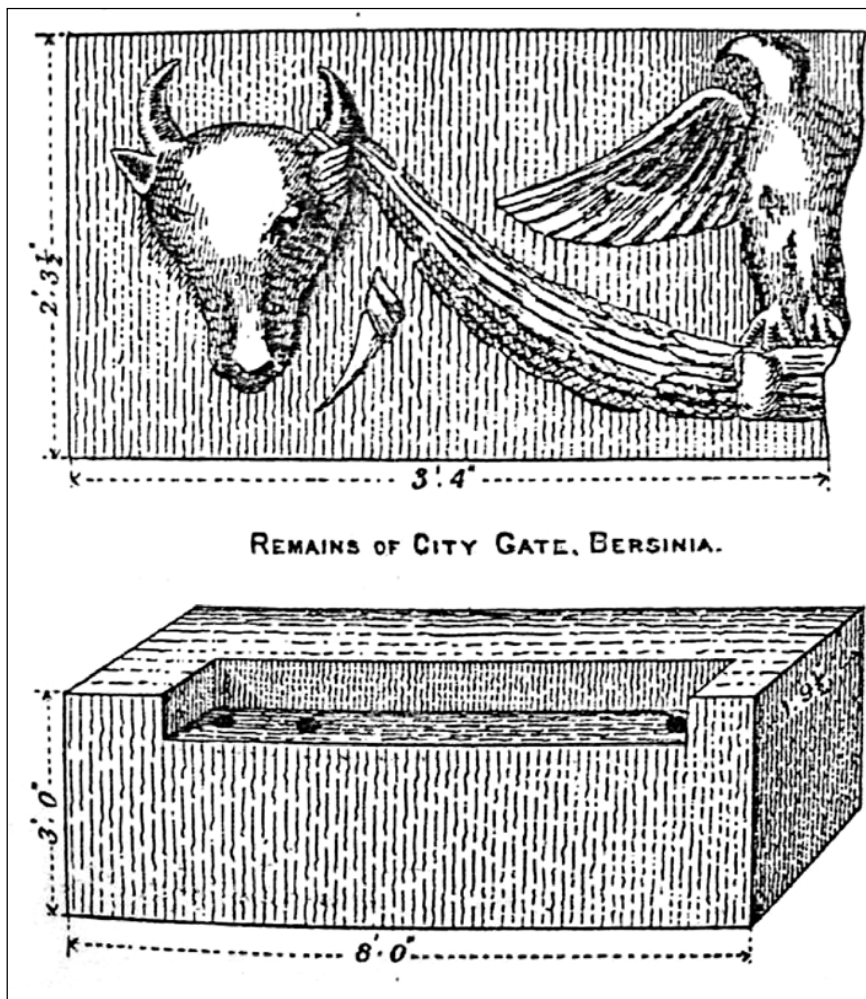


2. Topographical map of Barsinyā showing the two seasons of excavations.

the site, the first seems to be a Byzantine church evidenced by the large number of *tesserae* around, a number of building stones decorated with cross shapes, and a fragment of a marble chancel screen. The second monument is a bath, evidenced by the water system around and the big number of roof tiles found in many places on the site (one of the land owners described cylindrical brick pieces and a luxury types of marble floor tiles, which were usually used in Roman and Byzantine baths). Remarkable remains of

decorated stones were reported by G. Schumacher by the end of the 19th century (Fig. 3).

“At the extreme east, where the ground, which has its highest point in the center, slopes down of the plateau, I found distinct remains of a city gate. Several limestone lintels were lying here, measuring each 8 feet in length, and 3 feet in height, with holes in them to receive the hinges of a stone gate. A square stone, broken across, had cut on it the head of an ox, much defaced a wreath and an eagle with outspread wings in



3. Decorated building stones published by Schumacher (1890: 127-8).

the center, next to which was a kind of torch". (Schumacher 1890: 127-8).

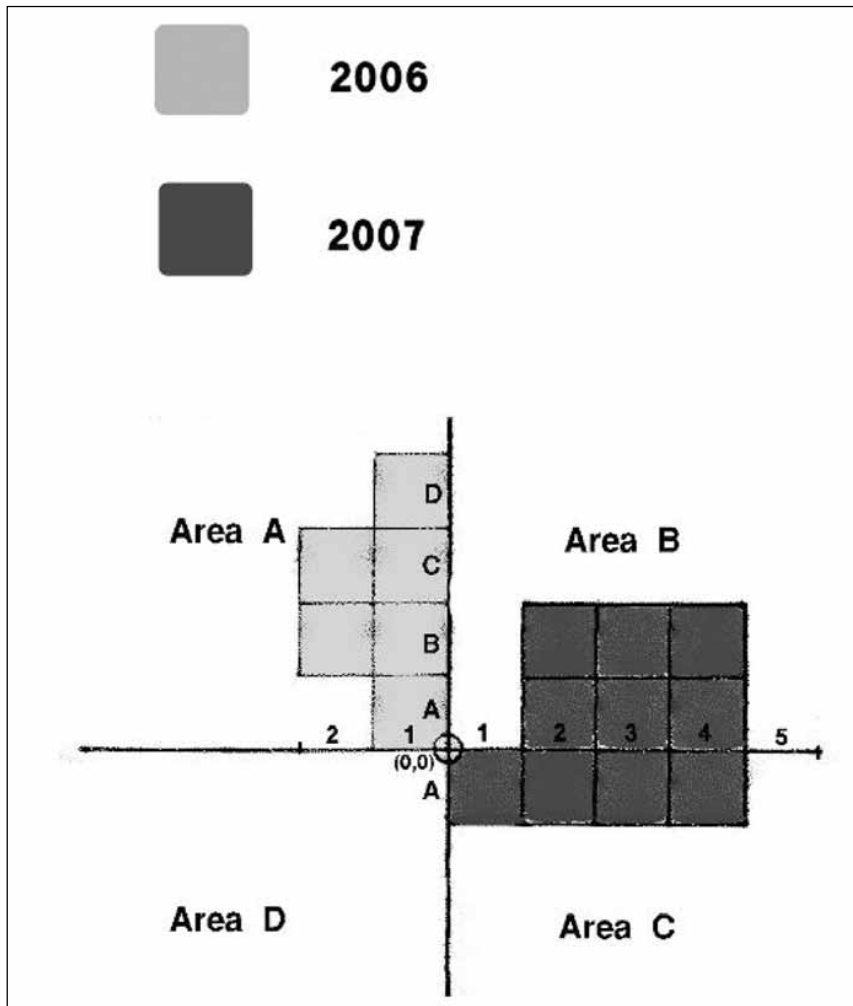
A modern house has been erected on the described area above, and all the previously defined lintels have been completely disappeared.

Architectural Remains of the First Season of Excavations, 2006

The first season of excavations has been undertaken in the period from July 9 and August 25, 2006. The work was carried out at various places of the site, in Area A that situated at the western side of the site and Necropolis (1) at the eastern and southern parts (Fig. 2). The main goal of this season of excavation was to expose as much of the architectural remains as possible and to collect as much data as possible, in order to achieve the maximal stratigraphic information about the settlement. A series of plots, each of 5 meter, was laid out in the western part of

the site, numbered in continuous alphabet and numeric sequence; A-A1, A-B1, A-C1, A-D1, A-B2, A-C2 (Fig. 4). Another series of plots was laid out west of the previous mentioned plots, at the far western edge of the site; A-A9, A-B9, A-B10 (Fig. 4).

The main architectural remains encountered in the excavated squares (A-A1, A-B1, A-C1, A-D1, A-B2, A-C2) are of domestic nature (Figs. 5, 6), dating mainly to the Iron Age II until the Late-Umayyad/Early-Abbasid periods. The uncovered walls are of a medium quality built mostly with large hewn and un-hewn stones. These walls have been rebuilt in different phases evidenced by many observable changes; the blocked opening of some entrances, the upper most levels of the walls that were built of different kinds of reused stones, and the variant quality in building stones and techniques using well-cut stones sometimes and rubble stones in



4. Sketch of the excavated squares (2006 and 2007 seasons).

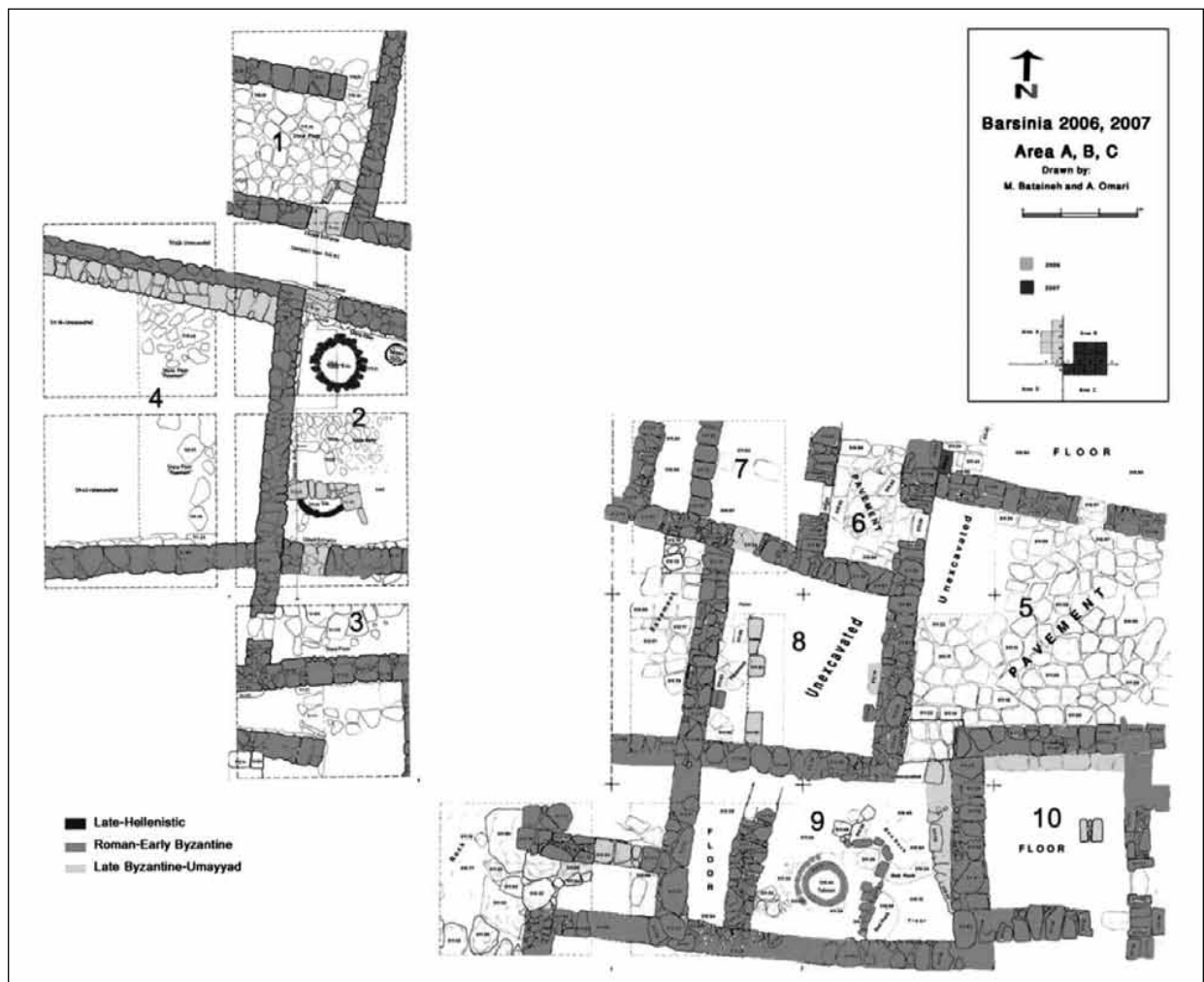
other times.

The excavated pottery sherds at all plots indicating the predominance of the Late-Byzantine. Nevertheless a big number of Umayyad and Late-Roman, in addition to few Early-Roman sherds were also found. Among the collected potsherds individual Abbasid, Ayyubid/Mamluk, Fatimid, and Ottoman potsherds were also found. These few pieces were good evidence of the later phases of occupation in the site. As two test pits are dug in the lower levels in squares A-B1 and A-C1 the Hellenistic and Iron Age levels have been encountered (Fig. 7). In these squares that have been partly excavated down to the bedrock there was considerable evidence of disruption by earlier deposits by damaging the paved floors and reusing the stones in building the upper levels of some walls and blocking some entrances. A consequence of this dis-

turbance is that the Late-Byzantine/Umayyad stratum contained few admixture of earlier potsherds, including a few Early-Roman and a somewhat larger number of Late-Roman and Early-Byzantine sherds. There were evidences of disturbance the lower levels, in particular, the Roman phase. Some paved floors which were constructed in the Late-Roman period have been destroyed in the Late Byzantine and Umayyad periods. Traces of the damaged floors are still seen protruding from the walls, only the paved floor in square D1 remained in a good condition and reused without interruption in the Early Islamic periods (Fig. 8) (Table 1).

Room 1

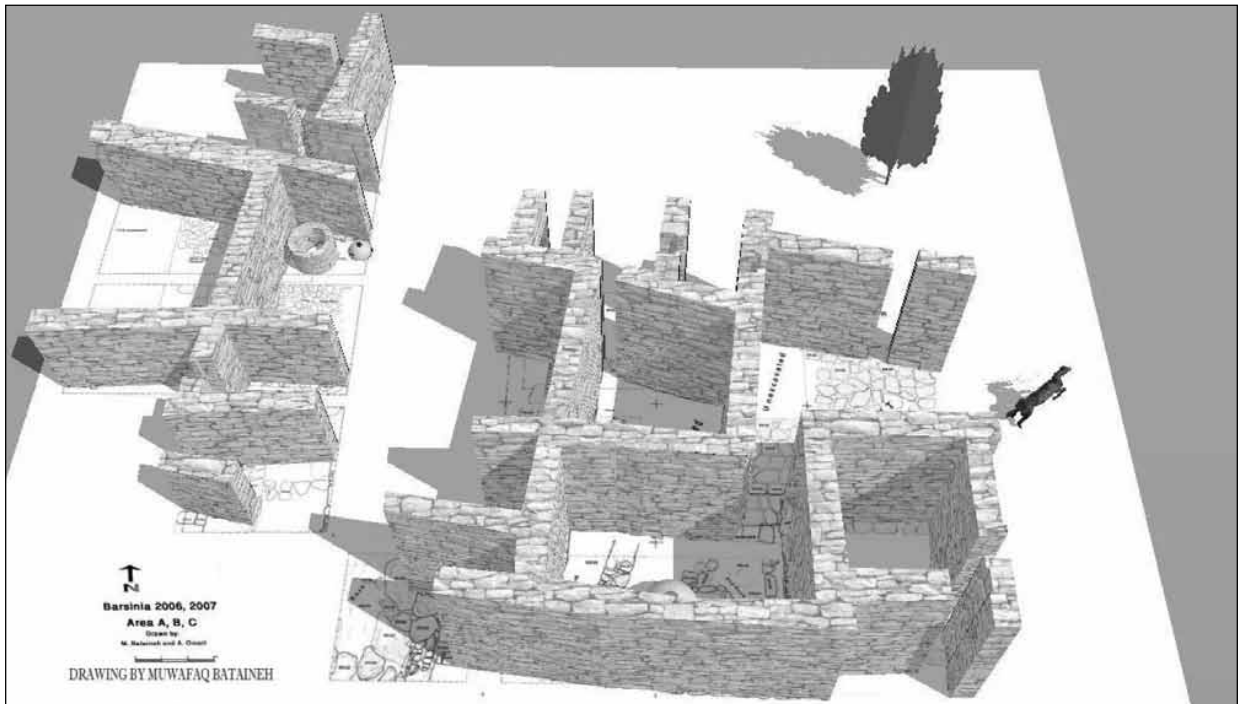
This room covers partially square A-D1 (Figs. 4, 5), located in the northern part of the excavated area. It presents a room with a fasci-



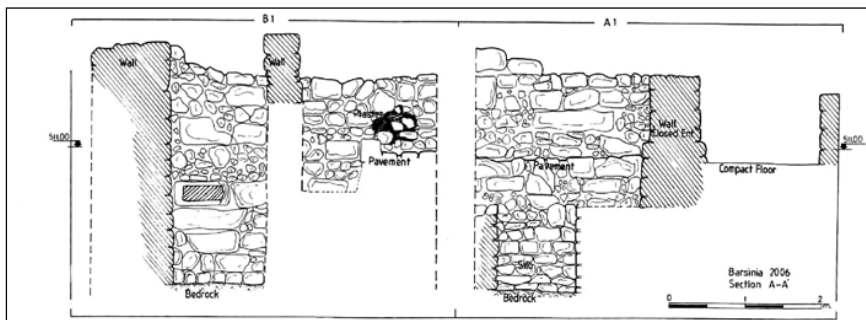
5. Top plan of architectural remains uncovered in 2006 and 2007.

nating intact paved floor (A-D1, 010 and A-D1, 012). The most western part of the room still unexcavated. The floor was made of irregular flagstone paving appeared in all parts of the room and in the northern area outside the room. This paving probably represents the original flooring of the room in the Byzantine period (Fig. 8). It is sunk about 70 cm below the level of the outer passageway and Room (2), shown in square A-C1. In its southern wall the room had an entrance and steps lead down from the passageway to the room, in a later phase this entrance had been blocked, the steps had been removed and upper courses were added to the wall. In the northern wall of this room there is an entrance and a wide window, its threshold is about 2 meters wide, and 1.2 m above the room pavement. On the paved floor domestic installa-

tions, containing a small basalt mortar or basin or limestone quern and a small marble column, were uncovered. The marble column seems to be reused from earlier building; it is similar in shape to chancel screen columns or altar parts found usually in Byzantine churches. It seems that this room was being devoted to daily activities while the southeastern corner of the room was provided by a small place bounded by two long stones. The Pottery and stone objects found on the paving floor are dating mostly to the Byzantine and Late-Umayyad periods. The fill over the paving floor outside the room also yielded some typical seventh century black cutware (Fig. 9). It seems that the pavement in this room had been constructed in the Early-Byzantine period and reused later until the Late-Umayyad period.



6. Reconstruction of architectural remains (2006 and 2007 seasons).



7. Section of architectural remains uncovered in 2006 season (squares A-B1 and A-C1), looking west.



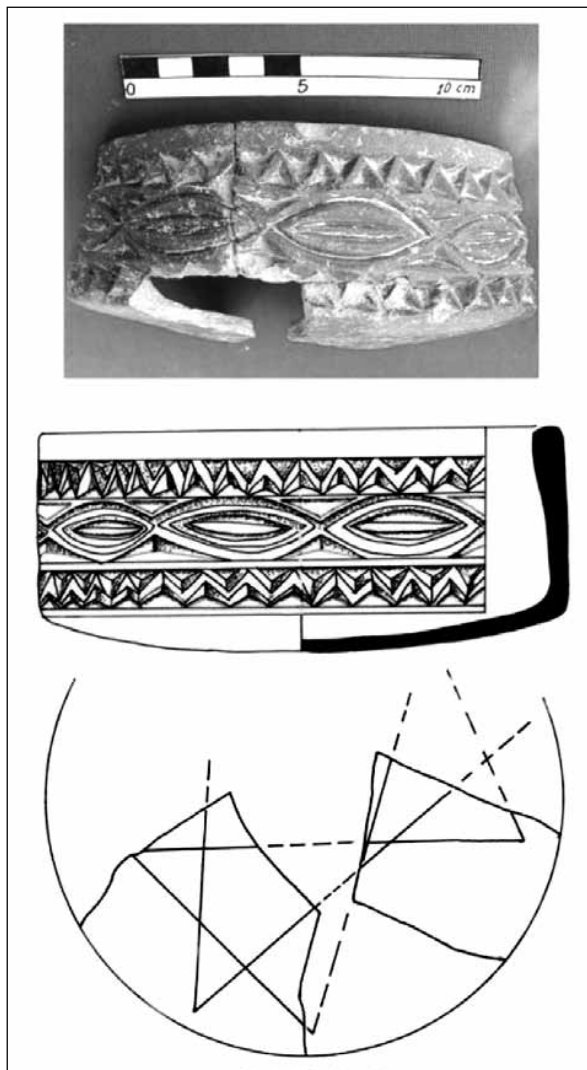
8. Room (1) with impact paved floor, square A-D1.

Table 1: Diagram, showing the Loci in squares A1, B1, C1, D1, B2, C2, arranged according to their levels, and phases of occupation.

Level	square A1	square B1	square B2	square C1	square C2	Date	square D1	
512.42						Late-Byz/ Early-Islamic Periods		
512.4		L.002 (w-e wall)						
512.3		L.001 (light grey loose soil)						
		L.007 (w-e wall)						
512.2	L.000 (top soil)	L.006 (light grey loose soil)						
512.1			L.000 (dry loose soil)					
512	L.001 (grey soil) (L-Byz-Umm Pottery 6th-8th c)	L.004 (n-s wall)		L.003 (n-s wall)				
	L.007 (large flint stones)			L.004 (w-e wall)				
511.9	L.004 (loose grey soil)			L.001 (loose dry soil)				
	L.005 (hard yellowish soil)							
511.8	L.002 (n-s wall) (L-Byz-Umm pottery 6th-8th c)	L. 005 (light brown loose soil) (L-Byz-Umm pottery 6th-8th c)	L.001 (w-e wall)	L.006 (w-e wall)			L.001 (loose soil)	
	L.003 (loose brown soil)		B2.3= Byz-Umm pottery					
	L.006 (compact mud floor)					Byz. Period 4th-6th c AD	L.002 (stone layer)	
511.7	L.009 (e-w wall)				L.001 (w-e wall)			
	L.010 (tabun and ash fragments)							
	L.011 (losse yellowish soil) (L-Byz-Umm Pottery, 5th c AD)			L.012 (loose soil mixed with large stones)				
511.6				L.002 (soil mixed with large stones)	L.002 Byz-Umm			L.003 (n-s wall)
511.5		L.008 (light brown loose soil) (L-Byz-Umm pottery, 5th c AD)		L.009 (compact floor mixed with pebbles) base of a mosaic floor!!				
		L.009 (lime mortar and paved floor) base of a mosaic floor!!		L.010 (dark brown soil)				
511.4	L.016 (large unshaped stones) (HELLER Pottery 2nd c BC-1st c AD, as fill)	L.010 (entrance)		L.007 (dark brown loose soil mixed with small stones)	L.003 (L-Byz-E-Umm 5th-7th c)			
511.3		L.012 (basalt mortar)		L.008 (light brown compact soil)				
511.2	L.008 (hard yellowish soil mixed with stones)			L.005 (light brown loose soil)				
	L.013 (loose yellowish soil)							

L. El-Khourī: Architectural Remains at Barsīnyā

Level	square A1	square B1	square B2	square C1	square C2	Date	square D1	
	L.018 (paved floor) (Roman Pottery 3rd-4th c)					Roman/Early Byz (3rd-4th c AD)		
511.1	L.012 (broken jar)	L.011 (dark brown soil)						
	L.014 (paved floor) (Roman floor 3rd-4thc)				C2.5= Byz pottery, 4th-5th c			
	L.015 (loose grey soil)			L.013 (dark brown loose soil) (Byz pottery, 4th-5th c)				
511	L.017 (3 large limestones), Umm coin	L.016 (plaster floor) (Roman floor 3rd 4th c)		L.011 (compact lime floor) (Roman floor, 3rd-4th c)				L.004 (w-e wall)
510.9		L.013 (paved floor) (Roman floor 3rd-4th c)		L.014 (compact floor) (Roman floor 3rd-4th c)				
510.8								
510.7			L.004 (paved floor) (Roman floor 3rd-4th c)	L.018 (stone layer with loose soil)	L.006 (paved floor) (Roman floor 3rd-4thc)			
510.6		L.014 (semi circular pit)						
510.5				L.020 (tabun fragments)				
510.4				L.021 (soil inside tabun) (Roman pottery 2nd-3rd c)				
510.3							L.010 (paved floor) L-Byz-Umm Pottery	
510.2				L.019 (silo) (Hell, Iron II-III)				
510.1								
510		L.017 (dark brown compact soil) (Hell-ER Pottery 2nd c BC-1st c AD, Iron II-III)	B2.8= Hell-ER pottery				L.012 (paved floor)	
509.9		L.018 (tabun fragments, with ashy layer)					L.011 (compact layer)	
		L.019 (compact brown floor)		L.016 (compact floor)				
509.8		L.020 (silo)		L.017 (compact layer)				
509.7								
509.6								
509.5								
509.4								
509.3		L.021 (compact vergin mud soil over bedrock)						
509.2								
509.1								
509								



9. Late Umayyad-Early Abbasid black cut ware cup, found in Room (1).

Room 2

This room covers square A-B1 and the southern part of square A-C1. The bedrock is reached in the southwestern corner of the room at a level of about 3 meters down from the top soil. In this corner different phases could be distinguished dated from the Iron-Age II to the Late Umayyad periods. Three main walls and a number of floors pointed to different phases from the Hellenistic to the Umayyad periods. The upper levels of the walls were built of reused stones. Parts of the walls were built with roughly dressed limestone blocks of poor quality.

The western wall of the room (A-C1, 003, and A-B1, 004) was ca. 6 m long and 2.50-2.80m deep. A well-cut framed stone of a typical Hel-

lenistic masonry (70 x 36 cm) (**Fig. 10**) found at the lower levels of the wall (Bessac 1995: 393-401), it seems that it was removed from a monumental Hellenistic building at the site. The northern wall (A-C1, 004) has a blocked entrance in its western side. This entrance was accessing the room with a narrow corridor or a long path, which separate this room from Room (1). The southern wall of the room (A-B1, 002) has a blocked entrance in its upper levels too. This entrance was opposite to the entrance in the northern wall.

A paved floor was visible in the central part of the room. Traces of pavement are still seen protruding from the walls, this paving is related both to the north and east walls (A-C1, 003 and A-C1, 004) and most probably represents the original flooring of the room in the third century A.D. There are traces of restoring the floor in later periods by adding kinds of compact lime mortar. It seems that the paved floor in this room was contemporary to the pavement in Room (1), shown in square A-D1, but its elevation is about 60 cm higher.

In the southeastern corner of the room a small room was constructed, in a later phase, by adding a small wall running E-W (A-B1, 007). This wall was crude of moderate workmanship and built of reused stones, some of them not well suited to the purpose. The entrance of the room is in the east side. Inside this room a basalt mortar (33 x 25 x 15 cm) was laying (**Fig. 11**). This small structure was used according to pottery in the Byzantine and Umayyad periods. Adding this small room might be con-

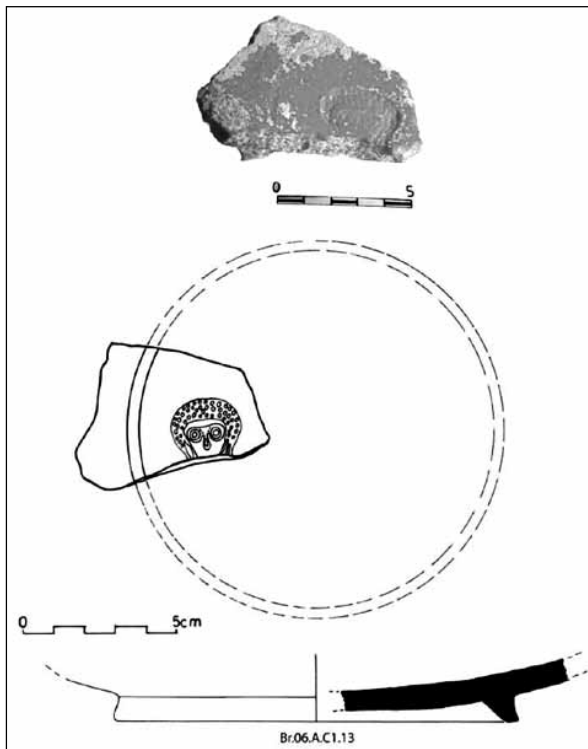


10. Well-cut building stone, western wall of Room (2), square A-B1.



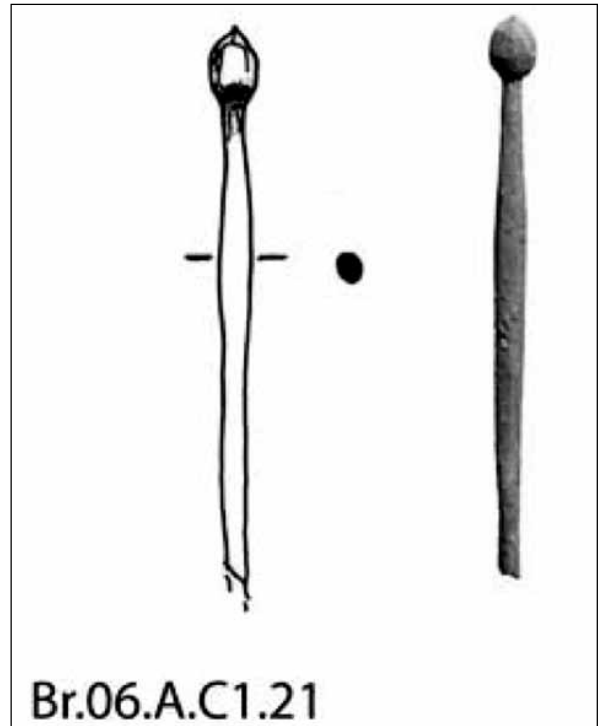
11. Stone Mortar found in the small room inside Room (2), square A-B1.

temporary to blocking the entrance of the main structure, which appears in the east-west wall (A-B1, 002). Underneath the level of the removed pavement clarified the earlier phases of occupation. Roman levels were encountered since Early- and Late-Roman pottery sherds started to appear, but mixed with few Byzantine and Umayyad sherds. A fragment of African red-slip bowl stamped with a human figure was found (Fig. 12). An ashy layer and a *ṭābūn* in fragmentary form were lying over a com-



12. African Red-slip pottery sherd stamped with a human figure, found in Room (2), square A-C1.

pact brown soil floor; this floor could be dated originally to the Early Roman period. An ivory kohl stick was found mixed with soil inside the *ṭābūn* (Fig. 13) (cf. parallels in Clark 1986: 265, pl. XXVI:1). Further down Hellenistic pottery began to appear. One of the fascinating discoveries was a Rhodian amphora handle stamped with a Greek inscription dating to the first half of the second century B.C. (Fig. 14)



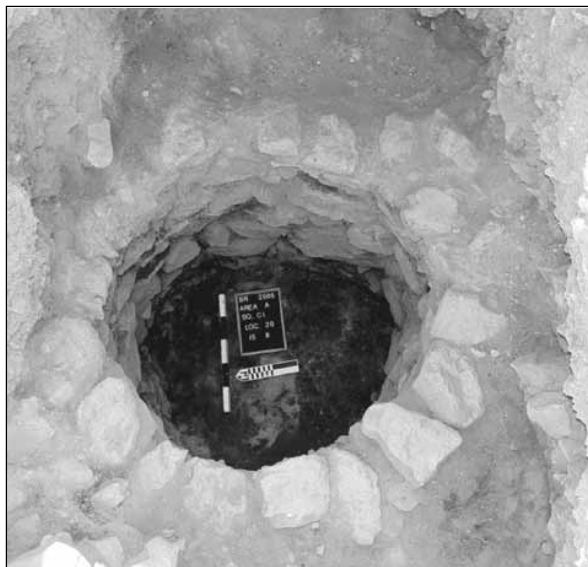
13. Ivory Spatula, found in the lower levels of Room (2), square A-C1, Locus 21.



14. Rhodian amphora handle stamped with a Greek inscription, found in the lower levels of Room (2), square A-B1, Locus 17.

(Bader and Khouri el- 2009).

In the lower levels of this room, underneath the pavement level, part of a *ṭābūn* rested on a thin 2 cm layer of lime mortar has been encountered (A-C1, 020), it is ca. 80 cm in diameter and 50 cm high, its walls are 3-4 cm thick. Approximately 50% of the *ṭābūn* remained *in situ*, the upper portion having been destroyed. The most fascinating discoveries in this room were two large silos, one of which is located in the northern part of the room measures 110 cm deep, 100 cm in diameter and 27 cm thick (Fig. 15), it was constructed of 8 courses of medium sized un-hewn stones with kind of mud mixed with straw used as mortar between its stones. The potsherds found in its deposit are dating to the Iron II, Iron III and Hellenistic periods. The second silo located 2 m south of the first one, only parts of it was preserved, the deposit inside this structure was mixed with Hellenistic potsherds. The structure might be similar in shape and size to the first complete silo. South of this spot the foundation of the wall was reached; it stands directly on the bedrock. It would appear that the walls of this room represent structures beginning with the Iron II, Iron III, Hellenistic, Roman, and certainly continuing into the Byzantine and Umayyad periods. Along with the numerous pottery sherds and stone objects, a number of iron knife, hook and nails were found in different phases in this room (Figs. 24, 25, 26).



15. Silo in square A-C1.

Room 3

A small room, ca. 2.00 m wide and ca. 3.00 m long, covers the northern part of square A-A1 and the southern part of square A-B1. The northern, western and southern parts of the room were excavated. It was paved with unshaped flat large stones, most parts of the pavement are still *in situ*. The room had two blocked entrances in its northern and southern walls, and one more recent entrance in its western wall. The threshold of this entrance is still visible and found in higher levels than the other blocked entrances. It may be, therefore, reused from an earlier building. In the lower levels of the square few Roman pottery potsherds were found. An Umayyad coin (Fig. 16) dated to 695 A.D. was found stuck to the western wall.

Room 4

It is located in the western part of the excavated area and covers two squares A-B2 and A-C2 and the western parts of squares A-B1, and A-C1. A large room measures ca. 6 m long and exceeds 6 meters wide. The western part of the room is not excavated. The room is wider in its western side. The northern wall (A-B2, 001 and A-B1, 002) was ca. 1.00 m thick, it seemed to be two walls parallel to each others and thicker than the other excavated walls. The eastern wall (A-C1, 003, and A-B1, 004) separates Room (2) from Room (4). A paved floor (A-B2, 004 and A-C2, 006) at a similar level of the destroyed pavement of Room (2) has been uncovered. Parts of the pavement floor have been destroyed. The levels over the floor present soft soil layers mixed with a large amount of pottery sherds. Part of these levels was heavily striated with irregular carbon deposits (mixed with carbonized olive seeds). The levels immediately below the layer of ash contained large amount of pottery in fragmentary state, dated mostly to the Late-Byzantine and Umayyad periods mixed



16. Umayyad coin found in Room (3), Square A-A1.

with few Hellenistic and Roman sherds. Most of the potsherds belong to vessels of local undecorated wares in general use such as cooking pots and storage gars.

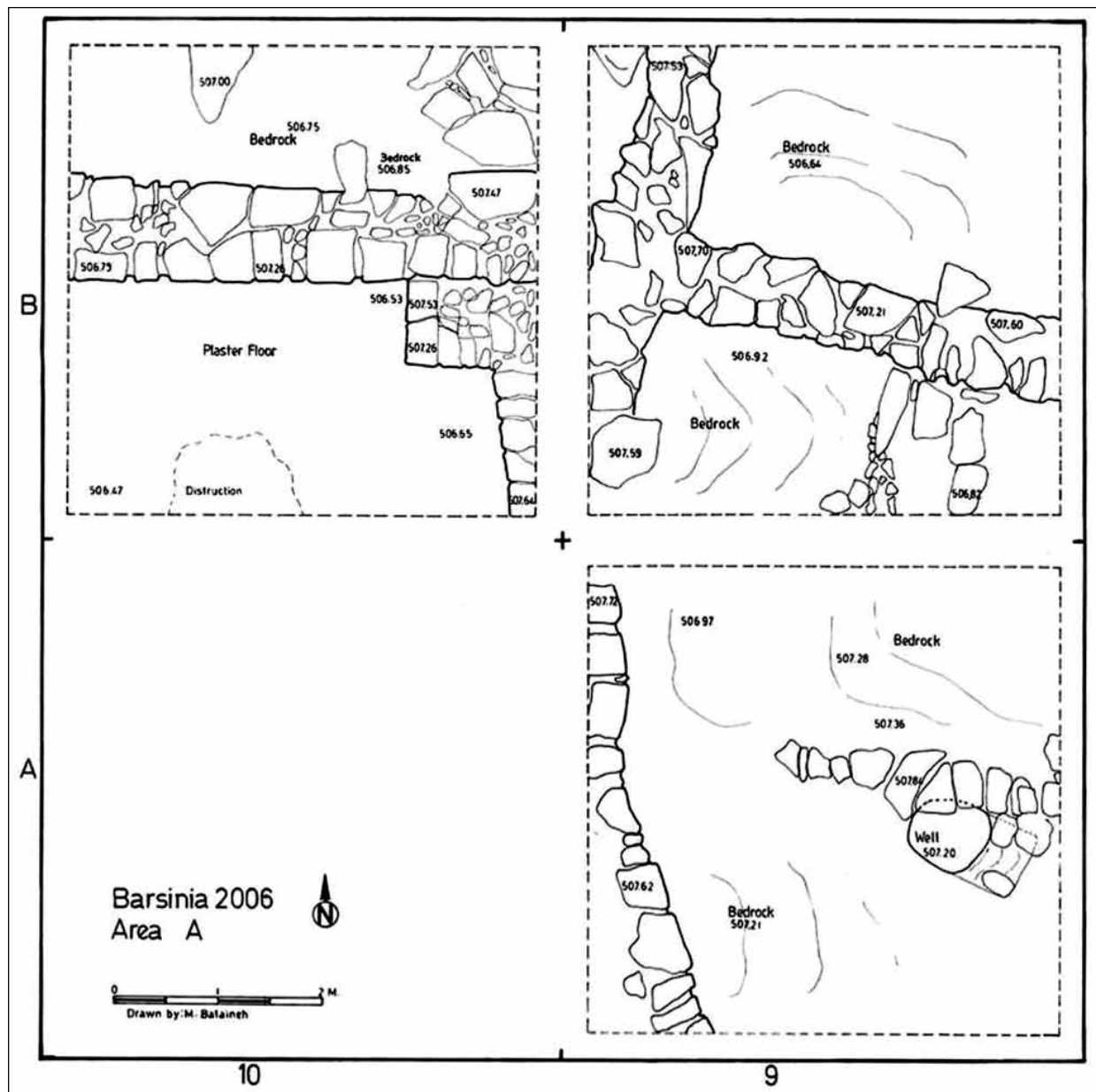
Passage 1

This passage locates in the northern part of squares A-C1 and A-C2. It presents a long narrow path way, measures more than 10.00 m long and 1.30 m wide, and running in the east west direction. It separates most probably one residential unit from another. The upper levels of

the path were only excavated, and a compact lime floor was encountered. Two entrances were recognized in this passage, one is opened in the north wall, which leads into Room (1). The other one is visible in the southern wall leading into Room (2). It seems that both entrances were blocked in later phases.

The Western Plots

The western plots (A-A9, A-B9, A-B10) (Fig. 17) which locate about 30 meters west of the previous squares (A-A1, A-B1, A-C1, A-D1,



17. Top plan of the architectural remains in the western part of the site, squares A-A9, A-B9 and A-B10.

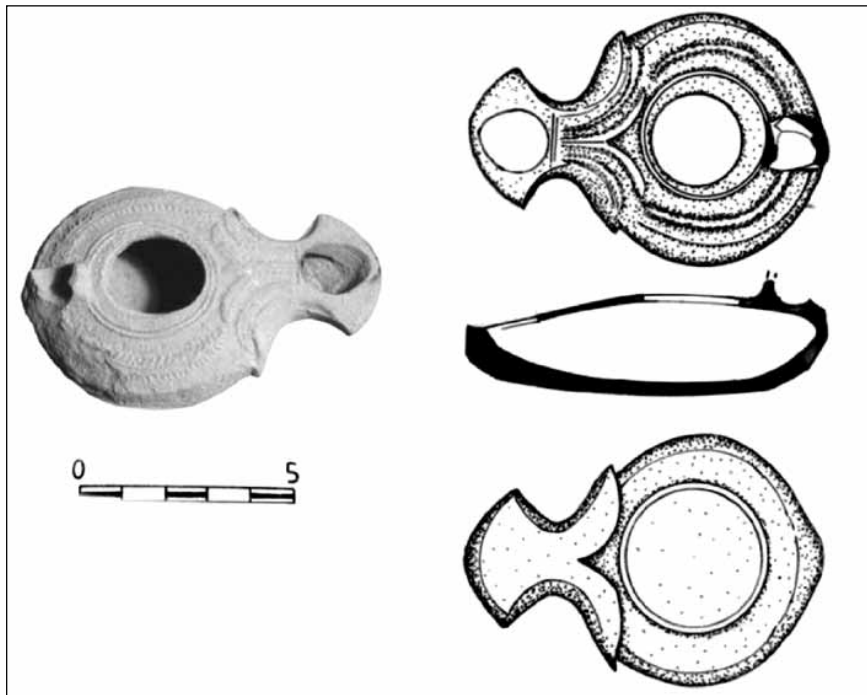
A-C2, A-D2) (Fig. 2) present a domestic area dated to the Roman through the Late-Byzantine/Early-Umayyad periods. Only parts of at least three rooms were uncovered. The bedrock has been reached rapidly in this area. The walls were built directly on the bedrock, however only two or three courses were still preserved. Two impressive finds were encountered in these plots; an intact second century Roman pottery lamp (Fig. 18), and a small cistern cut into the bedrock. The lamp was found leaning to a wall, while the cistern walls were plastered by a lime plaster (A-A9, 007a), of 2.11 cm deep, and 1.7cm wide, carved in the bedrock (Fig. 19). The fill inside this cistern was a mixture of large and medium sized stones, a large number of potsherds, individual animal bones, and *tābūn* fragments. The cistern has a small plastered tunnel in the eastern side of its opening. All the pottery sherds found in the cistern was more mixed, predominantly Late Hellenistic (second-first centuries B.C.), and Early-Roman (first-second centuries A.D.) (Khoury, el- 2011). This quantity of pottery sherds are good evidence of earlier phases of occupation at the site, they also could be a good evidence of exposing some places in the site from earlier occupations and reusing the structures in later periods. It seems that the cistern had been blocked after it has been filled



19. Cistern carved in the bed-rock, in square A-A9.

with earlier pottery vessels, *tābūn* fragments, and bone pieces.

The walls in plot (square A-B10) forms part of a vaulted chamber. The vault had completely collapsed refilled with soil and debris, only the first three or four courses of the vaulting base were intact (Fig. 20). It was 0.80 m high, 1.00 m long and 1.00 m wide, built of well-cut large and medium sized stones, with small size stones in between. Small part of the nearby wall (A-B10, 001) is covered by red 3 cm thick layer of plaster (A-B10, 005) (Fig. 20). The fallen stones of the vault were aligned on the upper levels of the western part of the plot.



18. Roman pottery lamp found in square A-A9.



20. A square vault base in square A-B10.

Architectural Remains of the Second Season of Excavations, 2007

The second season of excavation started on June 17 and continued up to August 2, 2007. The main objective of this season was to explore the rest of the 2006 discovered remains, to try to get a sense and extension of the larger complex that had been found in 2006 season. This objective required laying out excavation squares east of the structure uncovered in 2006, following the alignment of its stone walls.

This season of excavation took place in the central part of the site. Ten 5x5 meter squares were excavated in two areas B and C (B-B2, B-B3, B-B4, B-A2, B-A3, B-A4, C-A1, C-A2, C-A3, C-A4) (Figs. 4, 5, 6). Architectural remains consist of a number of rooms were uncovered. Some walls show that the whole complex continues further in all directions, therefore, the whole structure extends on a larger area.

The top courses of some walls were clearly visible, even before excavating the area. Some walls were robbed out almost down to the lowest one or two courses in some places. The walls constructed of reused earlier blocks with the spaces between filled with rubble and debris. These earlier blocks were originally belonging to a Roman-Byzantine significant structure, for instance, a temple or a church. Among these items to be noted are two decorated lime stones with carved cross in the middle, a small marble column, marble fragments of a slab, mostly belonging to the furniture of a church, a large number of (mostly white, pink and black) *tesserae*, the majority are lime-stones and some are white marble. Notably are the large number of terra-

cotta roof tiles. Traces of plaster covering parts of wall (Locus 001) in square B-A2 indicate that the walls were originally encrusted with a thick coat of plaster.

At least three of the uncovered rooms were furnished with hearths (*tābūns*). The largest *tābūn* is located in square C-A3, ca. 1.00-1.20 m in diameter and 1.00 m deep (Fig. 21). Four other fire-installations in fragmentary form, two in square B-A3, one in square C-A4 and one in square B-A2 were also uncovered. They belonged to the later phases of occupation at the site, as they appeared on the upper layers of the squares, they left a charcoal ashy deposits and fragments of their outer hedges. The *tābūns* in square B-A3, however, were more intact than the other *tābūns* in squares C-A4 and B-A2. The presence of that number of hearths are evidence for large scale cooking process, especially by finding a fair amount of fragile animal bones and sherds of cooking pots dated mainly to the Late-Byzantine and Umayyad periods.

Most floors were paved with uneven stone slabs, pavements were preserved only partly in some rooms (Fig. 22). Worthy of attention is the existence of *tesserae* stones almost in every *locus*, this is an evidence of destroyed mosaic floors that were most probably used as floors in some rooms. Most of the walls were much deeper than the pavements. Big changes were made to the uppermost levels of the walls. The pavement floors are contemporary to the doorways. The paved floors in the western part of the excavated area were reached in a higher level than the eastern part. The pavement in squares B-A2 and C-A1 was running on top of some walls es-



21. A *tābūn* in Room (9), square C-A3.



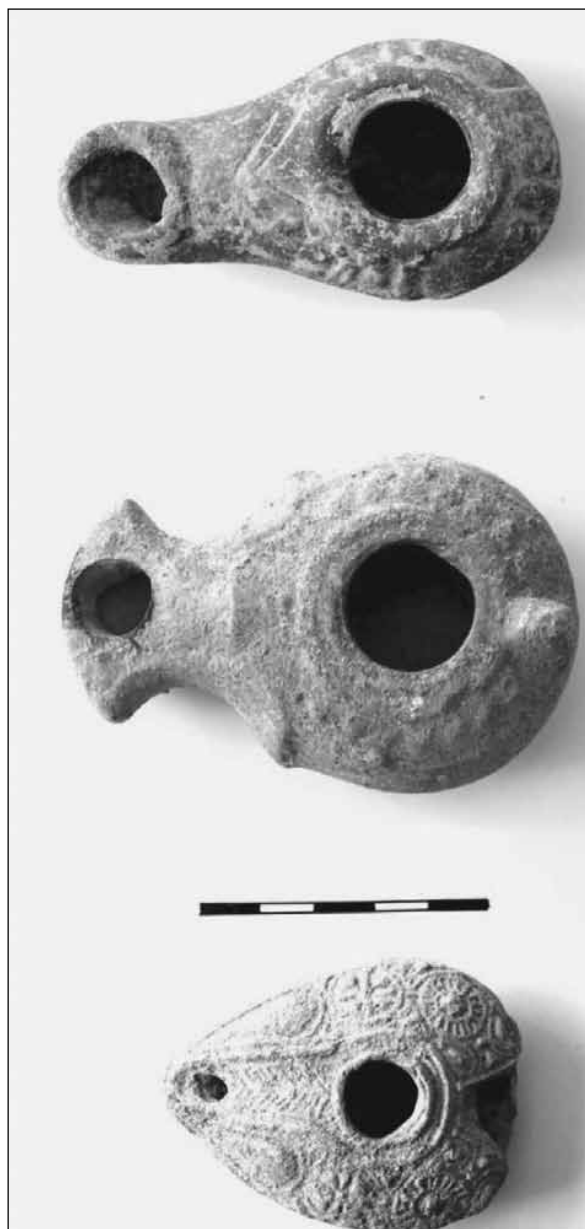
22. Room (5) with impact paved floor.

pecially, it was more visible in square C-A1. In this square the bedrock was reached also at a high level (510.77 m), while this square locates mostly at the highest point of the site. In the eastern part of our excavated area the pavement floor was about 1 meter lower than the western part, it was reached at a level of *ca.* 511.00 in squares B-A4 and B-B4.

The latest pottery sherds found at the excavated squares belonged to the Abbasid period. The earliest however were dated to the Late Byzantine, except for some few sherds from the Early-Byzantine and individual pieces from the Roman periods, as well as two intact Roman (first-second centuries A.D.) and Hellenistic (second-first century B.C.) pottery lamps (**Fig. 23**) (cf. parallels at Pella (Edwards *et al.* 1990: Pl.III,3)).

Room 5

It covers squares B-B4, B-A4 and the eastern parts of squares B-B3, and B-A3. The eastern wall of the room is unexcavated. The room is *ca.* 6 m long (N-S) and more than 6 m wide (E-W). It was paved with irregular slab stones, all the paved floor was intact and well preserved. The room is most probably a courtyard and has two entrances, one in the northern wall and one in the northern part of the western wall. The northern wall (B-B4, 003 and B-B3, 007) has a doorway nearly at the middle of it (door sockets), this wall, however, is much deeper than the doorway level. The western wall (B-B3, 003 and B-A3, 003) separates the room from two nearby rooms, it has however an access only to one room through a doorway in its northern side.



23. Pottery lamps found in season 2007.

The room has an access also to another room in the south through an opening path by two steps leading down to it.

Room 6

It covers square B-B3. A small rectangular room *ca.* 1.70 m wide and more than 3.00 m long, with paved floor (B-B3, 005). It served most probably as an entrance hall to another larger Room (7) in the west side. Only the eastern (B-B3, 003), western (B-B3, 006) and southern (B-B3, 002) walls of the room have been exca-



24. Iron nails, Left – right – Br.06.A.C2.2, Br.06.A.B9.1, Br.06.A.C1.21, Br.06.A.C1.9, Br.06.A.C1.12, Br.06.A.B1.8, Br.06.A.B2.3.



25. Iron hooks, Left-right – Br.06.A.A1.8, Br.06.A.B1.9.

vated. Access to this room from Room (5) was afforded by a doorway opened in its eastern wall (B-B3, 003). There is a second doorway opened in its western wall leads to another larger Room (7).

Room 7

It covers square B-B2 and the western part of square B-B3. Only the southern part of the room has been excavated. The room has access from Room (6) through a doorway in its eastern wall (B-B3, 006). Three walls of the room were excavated, the eastern, southern (B-B2, 006) and western (B-B2, 005) walls. At the western part of the room a row of well-shaped stones (B-



26. Iron knives, Left-right – Br.06.A.B10.3, Br.06.A.C1.5.

B2, 013) was laid parallel to the western wall of the room, and ca. 1 m away from it. The room has another blocked doorway (B-B2, 017) in the southern wall (B-B2, 006), the only access to Room (8). No visible pavement was reached in this room.

Room 8

It covers the eastern half of square B-A2 and the western half of square B-A3. The room is almost square 4.50 X 4.50 m, its only access is through a blocked doorway (B-B2, 017) in its northern wall (B-B3, 002) that divides it from rooms 6 and 7. The room was paved, traces of the pavement (B-A2, 018) is still visible in the western part of it. A row of well-cut lime stones appeared in the western part of the room parallel to the western wall (B-A3, 001). Two small square pillars were found attached to the western (B-A3, 001) and the eastern (B-A3, 003) walls, they served perhaps as bases of an arch supporting the ceiling of the room. Two *ṭābūns* were dug above the pavement floor. The first one (B-A2, 008) was found in the south western corner of the room, the second one locates beside the southern wall (B-A3, 007) at the middle part of

it. The western wall of the room was covered with a *ca.* 3 cm thick layer of plaster.

Room 9

Rectangular room covers squares C-A2 and C-A3. The only access to it is through a narrow opening from Room (5). The most distinguished object in the room is a large *ṭābūn* (C-A3, 005) *ca.* 1.00 m deep, its diameter ranges from 1.00 m in the top and 1.20 m in the middle. The rim of the *ṭābūn* was surrounded with a row of stones. The *ṭābūn*'s body was supported by a number of stones and compact soil layers surrounding it all around. The presence of this large *ṭābūn* indicates that it was used either as a large family cooking installation or as a commercial cooking installation, perhaps a bakery for the large domestic complex adjacent to the room. The nearby Room (10) was used as an ash depository for the *ṭābūn* cleanout. A second wall in the western part of the room was built parallel to it. The area between these two walls was deeper than the *ṭābūn* unit. It seems that this area was serving as a storage unit. The bedrock was reaches in parts of this room.

Room 10

Covers square C-A4 and the southern part of square B-A4. A nearly square room *ca.* 3.50 sq.m. It has access through doorways in its southern and eastern walls to other rooms. The eastern wall (C-A4, 005) is 0.90 m high; it has a doorway in its southern end. The southern wall is *ca.* 0.50 m high; it has an entrance in its eastern end. A close to each others, one doorway is blocked. The blocking doorway was cut by the southern wall. The room contained deposits of gray soil, charcoal fragments and carbonized olive seeds, along with *ṭābūn* fragments, and two metal spoons (Fig. 27) have been found. No visible floor has been uncovered.

Phases of Occupation

The results of the first season of excavations clarified the history of occupation in the site that started at least in the Iron Age II and continued to the Ottoman period with almost no visible interruption (Table I). Even the surface collection played an important role to confirm the flourishing history of the site Barsīnyā as well. As a result, the paved floors that have been exca-



27. Two metal spoons were found in Room (10), above: Br.07.C.A4.2, below: Br.07.C.A4.1.

vated in 2006 season have been constructed and used in the Late Roman period (*ca.* third-fourth centuries). The earlier walls were used as foundations of the later structures. In the Late-Byzantine/Early-Umayyad period the Roman and Early-Byzantine structures have been reused with some changes in the arrangement of the rooms. Some paved floors were removed and the lower phases of occupation that locate immediately under the Late-Roman paved floors were disturbed. The pavement stones in squares (A-B1 and A-B2) were reused in blocking the earlier entrances and rebuilding the upper levels of the walls, the reason why the levels under the removed paving floors in the mentioned squares still contains Late-Byzantine and Umayyad potsherds. However, the Early Byzantine paved floor in square A-D1 remained in use until the Umayyad period, it seems that this floor remained in a good condition after the earthquake of 363 A.D.

It seems clear, due to archaeological collected materials especially pottery sherds, that the excavated structure was used over a long period of time. This made interpreting the phases of occupation difficult. The results of 2006 season of excavation, particularly in squares A-B1 and A-C1 were helpful in defining the phases of this structure, while that excavation gone through deeper levels and earlier phases were more obvious. Such “vertical exposures” are important for understanding the history of the site, the different layers, floors, and the periods during which

walls were built, abandoned, and destroyed. To summarize, the rebuilding of the stone walls in the whole structure gives evidence of later occupation phases. The structure would definitely be affected by several earthquakes, as the region was affected by at least the 10 earthquakes between the second and the mid-eighth century A.D., the most destructive and disastrous appear to have been in 363, 551 and 748 A.D. (Russell 1985: 38-59).

As indicated by the largest quantity of the pottery sherds over the paved floors, the upper phases over those floors were dated to the Late-Roman (third century A.D.), Byzantine and Umayyad periods. The lower phases beneath the paved floors are dated to the Iron II, Iron III, Hellenistic and Early-Roman periods. Our evidence from the 2006 season of excavation, in the layers underneath the paved floors showed that the excavated architectural remains were built over older structures. Verifying this assumption and illuminating the underneath phases is another high priority target for our next excavation season.

The following stratigraphy of the occupational phases at the site was based mostly on the collected pottery analysis, given especially by excavating squares A-B1 and A-C1, as follows (Matrix ?):-

- The earlier phases of occupation could be reached in the first season of excavation, in the lower levels of squares A-B1, A-C1, are dated to the Iron II, Iron III (Persian), and Hellenistic (mostly second century B.C.) periods. The pottery fragments inside the silo of square A-C1 are dated to the Iron II, Iron III and Hellenistic periods. These periods of occupation were not investigated sufficiently, but they could be attested through the pottery assemblage, they could be also attested during the second season of excavation by the reused intact Hellenistic lamp found in square C-A1.
- The phase above the silo level was obvious in square A-B1, especially Locus 17. Hellenistic and Early-Roman pottery was found, dated to the second century B.C. - first century A.D. The cistern in the western plots (A-A9.7a) is dated to this phase. Some Eastern Sigillata A wares were dated to this period and scattered in many places in the site as well.
- Exactly beneath the paved floors in square (A-

B1 and A-C1) pottery sherds were dated to the late Roman period (second – third century).

- The layers over the paved floors are dated to the fourth and mostly fifth centuries A.D. The paved floor accordingly was constructed somewhere at the end of the third or early fourth century A.D. The site has been probably affected by the earthquake of the Early Byzantine period (A.D. 363), however, the paved floor continued to be used until the 5th century.
 - A second phase of occupation throughout the Byzantine period was dated to the Late-Byzantine period. A mosaic floor, built of large cubes of mosaic could be traced. This floor might be used throughout the Late-Byzantine period (probably late fifth -early sixth century A.D.). This floor was destroyed and only the foundations and a large number of *tesserae* were found.
 - The next period of occupation could be assigned to the Late-Byzantine and Early-Umayyad periods (sixth-eighth century A.D.). Dates of the major earthquakes could be taken into consideration to limit this period of occupation (551 to 748 A.D.). Earlier walls and some intact Byzantine pavement floors (especially in square A-D1) were reused, some walls were added, and some door openings were blocked. The site during this phase was densely occupied, attested by the great number of potsherds. At the end of this phase the buildings were most probably affected by the earthquake of 748 A.D.
 - The last phase of occupation is dated to the Late-Umayyad/Early-Abbasid period. It started most probably after 748 A.D. Destroyed floors were removed and the large *tābūn* was reused (at square C-A2). Walls were rebuilt using earlier blocks, new *tābūns* were constructed (at squares B-A2 and B-A3).
- The architectural structures in Barsinyā (rooms and courtyards) are topologically adjacent forming an irregular plan. Such spatial organization characterizes the rural building technique and arrangement, which was very common in northern Jordan (Khoury el- 2008: 80-82; Muheisen al- 2006: 91-95; Sari 1991, 2004; Najjar *et al.* 2001) and northern Palestine (Wiegand 1920: 1-35; Kuhnen 1989: 167, 234-251; Safrai 1994: 4; Hirschfeld 1995: 21-

103; Horsley 1996: 89; Meyer *et al.* 1978; Galor 2003). The main features of the rural plan include houses that were closely adjacent, courtyards and rooms of different sizes, rarely forming an isometric plan. The floors were either paved, mosaic, plastered or compacted. The walls were built of either hewn or un-hewn stones. The structures illustrate a long tradition of domestic architecture that had been probably developed from the Hellenistic to the Early-Islamic periods. For example, Duḥalah (Sari 1991), Ṣaʿad (Sari 2004), Yaʿmūn (Najjar *et al.* 2001), and al-Badiyya (Muheisen al- 2006: 91-95) showed similarities in their building techniques and architectural features.

The people of Barsīnyā during the Roman period reused and re-planned previous structures to pertain a new function. Partition walls, for instance, were added in some rooms, some entrances were blocked, and cut stones and thresholds were placed on top of the earlier walls. Both well-cut and un-hewn stones were used in construction and covered by plaster as shown by some traces of plaster pieces in a number of rooms. Although the population number may have triggered architectural expansion throughout the consecutive occupation periods, building reuse at the site may still indicate a similar social structure and possibly subsistence economy.

The presence of considerable buildings during the classical periods coupled with precious pottery, glass, and metal objects may indicate a prosperous rural settlement. The subsistence economy (agriculture and animal husbandry) put the community in the level of self sufficiency or even wealth accumulation that might have been given off to the nearby cities. Consequently, Barsīnyā achieved the survival requirements throughout the very long period of occupation.

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