

# The Stratigraphy of Tell Balatah ( Ancient Shechem )

by  
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The Joint Expedition to ancient Shechem (originally known as the Drew-McCormick Expedition) was in the field for a total of eight seasons. The Tell, which defended the pass between Mt. Ebal on the north and Mt. Gerizim on the south, was explored by a system of fields(2) so placed as to gather data from the various social and cultural zones within the city. Three such fields were sited over the fortification system. These were Field I at the East Gate of the city, Field III over the walls on the east of the defense system, and Field IV at the city's Northwest Gate.(3) Three fields were laid out in areas which could be expected to contain dwellings and streets. These were Field VII near the center of the mound on the site occupied by the camp of the earlier German excavators, Field IX on the northern edge of the modern village of Balâṭah, and Field XIII north-northeast of the northern limits of the Temenos area.(4) The sacred enclosure itself was explored by means of

two fields contiguous with one another (Fields V and VI). A small field (Field II), situated just east of the Temenos enclosure, was designed to investigate the connections between the sacred area and the residential part of the city lying between the summit of the mound and the spring. Two minor stratigraphic excavations (Field VI. 2 and Field VIII) were placed at the edges of former German excavations in order to tie in the stratigraphy of the Joint Expedition with that of the earlier excavators.(5)

In the attempt to determine the overall stratification of the site certain difficulties were faced. In the first place, the German expeditions, which were in the field in 1912-1914, and between 1926 and 1934, had removed extensive portions of the mound, particularly in the Temenos area, in the region of the Northwest Gate, and at the East Gate. This situation means that in most fields excavation began, not with the last phase of the city's life, but at some

1. The manuscript for this report and the accompanying stratigraphic chart were prepared by the author. Both were revised and numerous suggestions and improvements were made by G. Ernest Wright, Director of the Joint Expedition, and by Edward F. Campbell, Jr., Associate Director.

2. The basic units of excavation, usually 5x5-meter squares, were called Areas. Systems of contiguous or closely related Areas were known as Fields. Each Area has its Area Supervisor, and each Field was under the overall direction of an exper-

rienced staff member.

3. Three exploratory trenches against the inside of Wall A on the north side of the site are not reported in this stratigraphic summary. The results obtained from them are covered by parallel data from other Fields. The trenches referred to were included in Field IV.

4. The Roman numeral is the Field, the Arabic the Area number.

5. The location of these Fields is shown on the General Plan (Fig. 1) and air photo (Fig. 8).

point within its history.(6) Thus the starting point was not stratigraphically the same in all fields; indeed, with the exception of Fields VII and IX it was different in every field. Consequently, the local phase numbers in any given field do not correspond with their stratigraphic equivalents in other fields.

The second complication in determining the overall stratigraphy of Tell Balâtah is the fact that only in a few instances were the major fields connected directly with one another. Fields V and VI were essentially a single Field, and were connected with one another and with Field XIII and VI. 2 by actual excavation. The remaining fields were isolated units.

A third problem affecting the determination of the strata within the mound is the variety of terminology used in the excavation of the various fields. The field supervisors assigned phase numbers to the structural phases which they uncovered in the field under their direction. These numbers were sometimes assigned in numerical order from the top to the bottom of the excavation.(7) This system takes account of the local architectural changes in each individual field, but the numbers are not necessarily coordinated with the phase numbers assigned in any other field. In Field I the phases were designated by the numbers assigned to the most prominent wall in that phase. Fields III and XIII were stratified according to the standard archaeological periods (e.g., MB, LB) and phases were assigned to each period, thus, LB, Phase 1; LB, Phase 2, etc. Field VII

was reported by stratum numbers, using Roman numerals down to and including Stratum X, at which point stratum numbers in Arabic numerals were assigned to indicate a more tentative judgement concerning these levels.(8)

In view of the difficulties just described it is necessary to be precise about the principles used to determine the stratification of the mound.(9) Major breaks in occupation, affecting the site as a whole, were employed as the chief control in determining how the various fields should be coordinated. These breaks, usually occasioned by the destruction of the city owing to military activity, occur in every field where excavation reached the appropriate level. Each of the breaks has its own distinctive characteristics, which include both the ceramic horizon associated with the break and the content and composition of the debris layers.

The earliest of these occupational lacunae separates the thin deposits of Chalcolithic remains (Strata XXII and XXIV) and from the beginning of Middle Bronze Age occupation (Stratum XXII). The soil layers consist, not of destruction debris, but of field soil accumulated over a considerable period of time. The second major break in occupation occurs at the end of Middle Bronze (Stratum XV). It was the result of the destruction of the city by Egyptian troops at the beginning of the XVIIth Dynasty.

The associated soil layers constitute a massive accumulation of destruc-

6. See the Stratification Chart (Fig. 2), especially Fields IV, V-VI, VI.2, VIII, and XIII. The author expresses his thanks to Patricia Dutton of Waterloo Lutheran University for her assistance in drawing up this chart. After many suggestions for revision had been worked through with the aid of the actual pottery loci in the Late Bronze Age, the final draft, here published, was the work of Diana Propas of

Boston, to whose industry and artistry we are greatly in debt.

7. This applies to VI.2, VIII and IX.

8. The Stratification Chart (Fig. 2) employs, wherever possible, the terminology used in the preliminary reports, published in **BASOR**.

9. The sequence of strata referred to in the following paragraphs is summarized in Fig. 2.

tion debris marked by calcined bricks, burned beams, and much pottery. The upper levels of this debris show much weathering and smoothing out by the action of wind and water, indicating the abandonment of the site as an occupied area for a considerable number of years. The third lacuna occurs at the end of Iron I A (Stratum XI), and is to be associated with the destruction of the city by Abimelek followed by a period of inoccupancy.<sup>(10)</sup> During the time when the city was abandoned as an urban center it would appear that the mound was used for agricultural purposes, since the chief characteristic of the soil layers is a series of black bands, separated by compact layers of wind-deposited soil.<sup>(11)</sup> The fourth destruction level involving the whole site falls between Strata X and IX and is probably to be associated with the invasion of the territory by Pharaoh Shishak (ca. 918 B.C., minimal chronology). This level is thinner and less spectacular than the massive destruction layers of the earlier periods. The fifth catastrophic destruction of the city took place between Strata VII and VI. Its characteristics closely resemble those of the Egyptian destruction at the end of the Middle Bronze Age. The same jumble of fallen brickwork, burned beams and overthrown masonry occurs everywhere on the site at this level. This destruction layer is overlaid by the occupation of the seventh century, the period of Assyrian control (Stratum VI).

Using the five destruction layers as stratigraphic keys a system of twenty-four strata has been developed, covering the entire history of the site. For the strata down to and including Stratum X, Field VII, the largest single excavated area, provided the basic stratigraphy.<sup>(12)</sup> This was checked and coordinated with the stratification of Field IX, the only Field in which the entire stratigraphic sequence from Stratum I to bedrock was excavated. From Stratum XI to XIV the key was provided by Field XIII where the Late Bronze Age sequence was most clearly delineated in the successive phases of a monumental building located in the eastern part of the Field.<sup>(13)</sup> Fields VII and IX provide a check on this stratigraphy. Unfortunately, in the acropolis area (Fields V-VI) most of the relevant evidence had been removed by the German excavators. For the Middle Bronze Age, however, the acropolis area became the stratigraphic key (Strata XV-XXII), with the results in Field IX providing a valuable control. Chalcolithic A (Ghassulian, Stratum XXIII) occurs only in Field V-VI, and Chalcolithic B (Pre-Ghassulian, Stratum XXIV) only in Field IX. The stratification of the remaining Fields was worked out by coordinating them with the key fields at the appropriate levels, paying careful attention both to the ceramic horizons and to the soil characteristics of the layers in question.

The overall history of the site will now

10. No consistent destruction level is found at the end of the Late Bronze Age. For the Biblical account of the destruction of Shechem by Abimelek see Judges 9, especially 9:25. Chronologically, the next reference to Shechem indicates that Rehoboam went there to be crowned (I Kings 12:1). The reference does not necessarily imply that the city had been rebuilt at that time (ca. 922 B.C.). It is stated in I Kings 12:25 that Jeroboam I built Shechem and established it as his first capital (ca. 920 B.C.). On our evidence Stratum X represents a gradual rebuilding of the city during the 10th century B.C.

11. These layers are found in Fields I, VII and

XIII. They resemble striations found at Gezer and at Tell el-Hesi, which in both cases are probably of agricultural origin. The alternative explanation, viz. that the layers are distributed destruction debris is unlikely, since the light and dark layers alternate in too regular a way.

12. The stratification to this point was developed for and is included in G. E. Wright's *Shechem: The Biography of a Biblical City* — with appendices on various topics by other members of the staff.

13. Preliminary report in *BASOR* 204 (December, 1971), pp. 2-16.

be described in terms of the twenty-four strata which have been identified.

#### CHALCOLITHIC (STRATA XXIV-XXIII)

The bedrock underlying the site was reached in Fields V, VI, and IX. It is very soft limestone. The soil overlying this rock is formed by the natural disintegration of the limestone, and it is in this soil that the earliest evidence of occupation at Tell Balâtah is found. This evidence in Field IX consisted of round huts with cobbled floors.<sup>(14)</sup> The associated pottery was Pre-Ghassulian. In Field V-VI the round huts had beaten earth floors, and the pottery was Ghassulian.<sup>(15)</sup> On the basis of this pottery differentiation two strata have been assigned to the Chalcolithic Period. In both cases the superstructures of the houses were probably of hides or earth. Listing of two Chalcolithic strata for two mound horizons suggests squatters in local areas rather than all-over mound phenomena, as the other strata are intended to suggest.

#### MIDDLE BRONZE (STRATA XXII-XV)

##### Middle Bronze II A (Strata XXII-XXI)

Stratum XXII is marked by a vast earth leveling and moving operation along the edge of what later became the sacred area. In Field VI the major feature of the stratum was a large earthen platform, protected by battered stone retaining walls.<sup>(16)</sup> In Field IX substantial house construction, with evidence of one rebuilding, has been assigned to Stratum XXII. Stratum XXI in Field IX is represented also by house construction, but this building phase intro-

duced new walls and significant modifications in the building plan. The remaining evidence for Stratum XXI is part of a rectangular building in Field VI,<sup>(17)</sup> and a good cobbled pavement in VI. 2. No defensive system belonging to MB II A has been found.

##### Middle Bronze II B (Strata XX-XVII)

The essential continuity of these Strata is best illustrated from Field IX, where the building tradition which began in a small way in Phase 18 ended in Phase 15.<sup>(18)</sup> Field IX, taken by itself, might, therefore, be interpreted as having a single MB II B stratum in which there was a continuity of building tradition, reaching a peak of prosperity in Phase 15. Consideration of the other fields, however, leads to the conclusion that MB II B must be subdivided into four strata.

During the first major period of MB II B (Stratum XX) the fortification system of the city consisted of a mud-brick wall set on a stone socket about 2.75 meters in width (Wall D). This wall, which has been uncovered only on the north side of the city, was a free-standing wall, continuing the tradition which had prevailed in the Early Bronze Age at Tirzah, only six miles to the northeast.<sup>(19)</sup> Within the Wall D system on the north side, a sacred enclosure was marked off from the rest of the city by a huge wall (Wall 900); see (Pl. III.) Fig. 3. Within this enclosure a simple courtyard temple was erected.<sup>(20)</sup>

in Stratum XIX the concept of defense altered radically. The city was now sur-

14. BASOR 180 (December, 1965), p. 16.

15. BASOR 161 (February, 1961), p. 22, and notes 14 and 15 in BASOR 180 (December, 1965), pp. 16-17.

16. BASOR 169 (February, 1963), p. 7. This Stratum is called the 968 Phase in the preliminary report.

17. Called the 959 building in the preliminary report.

18. Professor Joseph Callaway in an unpublished

Field Report. Note that the Phase numbers are those locally applicable to Field IX, and are not Stratum numbers. See Fig. 2.

19. See Wright, Shechem, (London, Duckworth, 1965), pp. 112-114.

20. For a fuller description of the stratum see Wright, Shechem, pp. 112-114

rounded by an earthen embankment of the type commonly associated with the Hyksos.(21) On its inner side this bank was retained by old Wall D. On its outer side a new construction (Wall C) served as its revetment. The sacred precinct remained basically as it had been in Stratum XX, except that the courtyard temple was rebuilt with casemated outer walls. A layer of destruction debris indicated that Stratum XIX came to a violent end.(22)

In Stratum XVIII the general layout of the city follows closely that of Stratum XIX. The Hyksos embankment still constituted the main element of the defensive system. It was, however, extended so as to cover the deteriorated inner face of Wall D. The sacred area retained its basic plan, but the wall separating it from the city proper (Wall 900) was completely rebuilt and a pillared room was constructed within the temple.(23)

Stratum XVII saw a further extension of the embankment, this time covering Wall C and putting it out of use. Buildings were also constructed on the slope of the embankment within the city. The courtyard temple, within its sacred precinct, was enlarged, see (Pl. III)(24)

#### Middle Bronze II C (Strata XVI and XV)

The division of Middle Bronze II C into two strata is dictated by the alterations undergone by the defensive system. At the beginning of Stratum XVI the Hyksos embankment was abandoned in favor of a Cyclopean wall (Wall A), the base of which was laid at the outer edge of the Stratum XVII embankment. The top of the

bank was cut down and the earth thus obtained was used to fill the space between the new wall and the lower slope of the embankment (pl. V). Wall A constituted the outer element of the defense system (pl. VIII). It was backed by a less deeply-founded wall, dug into the outer slope of the disused embankment. The space between the two walls was divided into chambers, giving the defense system a casemate effect. The chambers were occupied as store rooms and living quarters, possibly by the military garrison. One of the chambers in Field I displays a succession of beaten floors, testifying to a rather lengthy period of use. Two of the floors were associated with oven installations, demonstrating that the occupation of this room at least was domestic.(25)

In Stratum XVI there was no gateway on the east side of the city in the position later occupied by the East Gate. The principal entrance was on the north-west, and took the form of a monumental three-toothed gate with huge stone orthostats. The gateway had been uncovered by the German excavators, but was restudied and re-planned by the Joint Expedition.(26)

Stratigraphic excavation in Field III indicated two sub-strata within Stratum XVI. In Field I the rooms built against Wall A had three phases of floor buildup.

The Temenos underwent radical change at the beginning of Stratum XVI. Temenos Wall 900 went out of use, and the entire courtyard temple was buried beneath a deep layer of fill, which in places reached a depth of 5.00 meters. On this fill and on the remains of the embankment, the first

21. See Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 65-66.

22. For further details see Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 114-118.

23. For further details see Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 118-119.

24. For further details see Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 120-121. The stratification of the successive phases

of MB II B is illustrated in the section shown in Fig. 3.

25. For further details, see Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 57-62.

26. See Wright, *Shechem*, *loc. cit.*

of a series of fortress temples was erected. The surface of the fill, which served as the forecourt of the temple, was consolidated with a thick layer of lime plaster, but the furnishings of the forecourt were destroyed by the later builders (pl. IV)(27)

A significant, but archaeologically isolated, feature of Stratum XVI is a large stone drain and associated stairway in Field XIII. The drain was built directly on the remains of the Hyksos embankment, and the installation functioned to conduct the runoff from the high ground near the northwest gate to a sump at the foot of the disused embankment, so as to prevent flooding of the lower levels of the city. The buildings associated with this drain were dug out by the Late Bronze Age founders of Stratum XIV.(28)

The major change between Stratum XVI and Stratum XV was the complete rebuilding of the defenses. Casemate Wall A, which had protected the city during Stratum XVI, was now supplemented on the north and east sides of the mound by a single wall of mud-brick set on a foundation of very large, roughly-faced field stones (Wall B) (29) Into this wall on its east side (Field I) an imposing gateway with towers, guard rooms and four sets of stone orthostats was set.(30) The method of construction of this gateway is of some interest. The walls of the gate structures were not laid in separate foundation trenches, but near the edges of a single large pit. Working westward from the inner wall of the casemate system of Stratum XVI, the builders dug a deep, rectangular ex-

cavation into the old Hyksos embankment. In this pit they laid the foundations of the gate towers, filling in the space between them and the back of the Wall A system with stones and rubble as each course was laid.(31) Back of the new defense system chambers for the storage of food and military supplies were constructed.

The Northwest Gate, built in Stratum XVI, remained in use in Stratum XV. This is proven by the fact that the Wall B system on the north side of the city is so constructed as to accommodate itself to the gate, the newly-constructed wall being spliced into it on its east side.

In the Temenos area (Field V-VI) little change took place between Strata XVI and XV. The fortress temple continued to dominate the sacred area. Some structural changes, such as the erection of two small standing stones on either side of the entrance and the refurnishing of the forecourt surfacing, and the erection of a new altar, took place.(32)

Examples of house construction in Stratum XV are available in Fields VII (cf. Pl. X) and VIII, but the best example of the housing of the period comes from Field XIII. Along the east side of the Field a portion of a large house was uncovered. The destruction debris covering this building yielded a wealth of ceramic items, two scarabs and the remains of two boxes inlaid with ivory.(33)

The complex history of Stratum XV is illustrated in Field III where four sub-strata were isolated.

27. For further details see Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 95-100.

28. *BASOR* 204 (December, 1971), p. 8.

29. A major fill was dumped only over the casemate chambers, the outer face of Wall A proper being exposed. This provided a formidable vertical barrier against attackers approaching the new wall.

30. For a complete description of the East Gate and the Wall B system see Wright, *Shechem*, pp.

66-75.

31. These stone and rubble layers were for some time regarded as a sequence of cobbled road surfaces, and are so reported in Wright, *Shechem*, p. 68. See also Fig. 25.

32. See Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 95-100.

33. *BASOR* 204 (December, 1971), p. 8; 205 (February, 1972), pp. 26-35.

The end of the Middle Bronze Age is marked by a heavy accumulation of destruction debris over the site. Wall B on the east and north was destroyed in such a way that it fell inward with its burning timbers interlaced in the brickwork. The accumulation of debris over the Field XIII house reached a depth of 2.50 meters, and a similar picture prevails in other fields. This total destruction of the city is surely to be attributed to Egyptian armies, and is to be dated ca. 1550 B.C. From that time until approximately 1450 B.C. the city lay abandoned. Consequently, LB I A occupation is not found on the site.

#### LATE BRONZE (STRATA XIV-XII)

There is some question whether two or three strata should be assigned to the Late Bronze Age. A house of this period in distinct floor levels. It seems best to assign the two latest phases of the house are closely related in plan. The earliest phase has two Field XIII has three distinct phases. A separate Stratum number to the three phases recognized in Field XIII, and to regard the two floorings of the first phase as rebuilding, insufficiently extensive to merit identification as a separate stratum. Historically, the three strata appear to correspond to the pre-Amarna, Amarna and post-Amarna Periods (pl. VI). The same three strata occur in Fields I, VI. 2, VII (pl. IX), VIII, and IX.<sup>(34)</sup>

#### Late Bronze I B (Stratum XIV)

After a period of abandonment of almost a century, Shechem was rebuilt at the beginning of Late Bronze I B. In Field I the Middle Bronze II C gateway was reconstructed with important modifications. Two

new guard rooms were built on the south side of the gateway, and, presumably a paved road passed north of these.<sup>(35)</sup> The main defensive wall was moved back to the line of the inner wall of the Wall B system. It was found in this location in both Fields I and III.

In the acropolis area (Field V-VI) the tradition of fortress temple construction, begun in MB II C, continued in the Late Bronze Age. Because of earlier German excavation it was impossible to determine the phases of the fortress temple during Strata XIV-XII. Consequently, the stratigraphic chart (pl. II) assigns Temenos 8 to all three phases. The walls of this building are slighter than those of its Middle Bronze Age predecessor, and its axis has shifted five degrees to the south. The forecourt contained an altar.<sup>(36)</sup>

Field IX contained a smaller sacred place, probably a satellite of the main temple. This building was founded in Stratum XIV and continued in use until the Iron I destruction at the end of Stratum XI.<sup>(37)</sup> The shrine contained a brick altar and a sacred standing stone.

Very considerable evidence for house construction was found in Fields III, VI. 2, VII, VIII, and XIII. In Field III an imposing building stood behind the line of old Wall B.<sup>(38)</sup> Partial ground plans of houses of substantial construction were recovered in local Stratum 16b of Field VII (cf. Pls. II & IV). Field XIII contained the western side of a large house. Its large size and the excellent construction of its walls give an impression of the prosperity of the city during an era when it was an important unit in the Asiatic Empire of Egypt.<sup>(39)</sup>

34. See Stratigraphic Chart, Fig. 2.

35. See Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 76-77. The corresponding guard rooms on the north side, if they existed, were removed by the German excavators.

36. For a more complete description of the temple, see Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 95-100, where the structure

is called Fortress Temple 2a.

37. *BASOR* 180 (December, 1965), pp. 11-15.

38. This structure, excavated in 1966, has not yet been published.

39. *BASOR* 204 (December, 1971), pp. 10-15.

### *Late Bronze II A (Stratum XIII)*

With Stratum XIII we enter the age of Lab'ayu, when Shechem was the capital of a small empire, extending from just north of Jerusalem to the vicinity of Megiddo, and with Gezer allied with it for a time. The stratum is the apex of Late Bronze Age culture at Shechem, and the rising level of prosperity is best seen at the East Gate. The guard rooms of Stratum XIV were strengthened and furnished with well-laid flagstone floors. Back of the city wall to the south of the gateway a courtyard, surfaced with flagstones, was laid down, presumably for the mustering of troops, but possibly also for public assemblies.<sup>(40)</sup>

The fortress temple continued in use on the acropolis, and the smaller shrine in Field IX. The large house in Field XIII and the housing units in Field VII continued to be used. An extensive modification of the courtyard north of the Field XIII house took place, and a basement room, which yielded an unrivalled collection of Late Bronze Age pottery, was constructed under the house itself. In Field III a large Late Bronze Age building with very thick walls was uncovered. Although its stratigraphic context is not absolutely certain, it most probably belongs to this Stratum. It may, however, have been founded in Stratum XIV.<sup>(41)</sup>

### *Late Bronze II B (Stratum XII)*

The defensive system and housing structures underwent little modification between Stratum XIII and Stratum XII. The same is true of the fortress temple on the acropolis and the satellite shrine in Field IX. The major feature of Stratum XII is the evident decline in the prosperity of the

city, evidenced by the shoddy construction of walls founded in the period. This phenomenon undoubtedly reflects the diminished status of the city after the fall of the house of Lab'ayu.

### *IRON I (STRATUM XI)*

The transition from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age at Shechem is not marked by the presence of a destruction layer consistent over the site. Consequently, the beginning of Stratum XI is difficult to determine. In Field VII it falls between local Strata 13 and 12. In Field XIII the large Late Bronze Age house went out of use and was replaced by a poorer quality building. On the Acropolis (Fields V-VI) the fortress temple, with some repair and rebuilding, continued in use. No clear evidence of the fortifications of Iron I is available. It is known that the guardrooms at the East Gate (Field I) continued in use. The cobbled square was, however, filled over and a structure with relatively poor quality stone work was put up close to the rear wall of the guardroom (Structure 178-179).<sup>(42)</sup>

The city of Stratum XI is the city of Abimelek (Judges 9). It came to a violent end in the latter part of the 12th century B.C., as did also Late Bronze Age Megiddo and a 12th century settlement at Taanach.

After the destruction of the Stratum XI city, the interior of the temple and the whole area adjacent to it was pitted with a series of unlined and unplastered bag- and cylindrical-shaped pits. They are so close to one another that in Field XIII five of them were present in a single 5x5-meter square. They were not dug for the

40. The details of this structure have not been published.

41. *BASOR* 148 (December, 1957), pp. 17-18. See Fig. 2, where the building in question is referred to

as «the Palace,» succeeding and rebuilding on foundations of Stratum XV.

42. This building, dug in 1966, has not yet been published.



robbery of stone, since they deliberately avoided older wall lines, and their structure makes them unsuitable for storage. They were dug into and through layer after layer of the almost sterile chalk and *terra rosa*, which was the make-up of the three floors of the temple which were recovered, and below them the sterile chalk of the earthen C embankment dug from the side of Mt. Ebal. The purpose of this digging is hard to fathom. Yet each pit was filled in almost immediately with dark-earth humus and destruction debris filled with pottery of the 12th century B.C. There is no evidence of buildings associated with these pits. In Field I the 178-179 building of Iron I is covered by a layering of black bands of very fine composition and rich in organic matter, alternating with light gray layers of compact earth, apparently deposited by the action of the wind.<sup>(43)</sup> These layers have not been analyzed as yet, but at Gezer, where a similar layering occurred, so much charred grain was present as to suggest a threshing floor, periodically burned over to get rid of insects and rodents. The layers in question were broken here and there by the remains of insubstantial buildings. In Field VII a similar layering is present, but here the building remains are more frequent and represent a better quality of construction.<sup>(44)</sup> In the light of this evidence the period of abandonment, shown on the stratigraphic chart between Strata XI and X B, should not be

interpreted as a total neglect of the site, but rather as a reversion to the status of an agricultural village centered on the eastern and southern slope of the mound and not reaching to the former Temenos area.<sup>(45)</sup>

#### IRON II (STRATA X-VI)<sup>(46)</sup>

The reestablishment of Shechem as an urban center was evidently a gradual affair. The rebuilding of the city is represented by Stratum X,<sup>(47)</sup> the evidence for which comes mainly from Local Strata XA and XB in Field VII and from Phase 10 in Field IX. Other evidence is provided by surfaces, scarred and broken by German excavation, in Field XIII, by the foundations of a building in Field II, and by a single wall and an associated floor in Field I. The evidence is, thus, entirely from housing areas and most of the buildings are partially destroyed by the foundation trenches of Stratum IX. It can be said, however, that Shechem had just returned to prosperity toward the end of the 10th century B.C. when the armies of Pharaoh Shishak attacked and destroyed the city.

Strata IX-VI are fully discussed in Wright, *Shechem: The Biography of a Biblical City*, Chapter 9. It is unnecessary, therefore, to go into detail concerning them in this paper. New data, developed during the 1964 and 1966 seasons in Field I and, hence, not included in Wright's book, will be summarized.

43. Similar layering occurs in the Persian Strata at Tell el-Hesi, where the black layering has been identified as oxidized agricultural residues.

44. For a description of the banded layers in Field VII, see *BASOR* 180 (December, 1965), pp. 21-22; for the pits see *BASOR* 161 (February, 1961), pp. 11-28.

45. A fill, dominantly composed of chalk, could not have been dug, as were so many pits, for garden humus because chalk does not contain the food nutrients, as I was informed so many times when paying higher prices to owners wherever we asked to dump that kind of debris. On the other hand, a refugee, building a temporary shack next to our East Gate in 1956, went precisely for soil dumped from the temple area, mixed it with some ashes and let

it dry for a day after adding a bit of water. This proved to be the best part of the shack because it had all the qualities of a hard cement floor. Yet did the inhabitants of the area of Balâtah dig frantically all over the cella different types of unlined pits to get floor chalk which abounded on the mountain sides and indeed almost wherever they looked? We have a puzzle here for which there is no certain solution - G. E. Wright.]

46. Stratum VI, the impoverished reoccupation of the city after the Assyrian destruction of Stratum VII, is included under this heading for convenience in presentation.

47. See Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 125-128.

The line of the Late Bronze Age fortifications appears to have provided the base for the Iron II defenses, although this is difficult to prove stratigraphically because of the depredations of the Hellenistic builders. Back of the defensive wall a well-constructed building (Structure 175) existed in Field I during Stratum IX. This was succeeded by another structure (412), which continued in three phases to the end of Stratum VI.(48)

The stratigraphic data bearing upon Strata VIII and VII may be summarized as follows. The city was defended by a mud-brick wall set on a stone foundation and built along the line of the earlier Late Bronze Age defenses. The houses, which are consistent in plan, were terraced down the slope from the Acropolis area to the East Gate. They are pretentious enough to suggest a relatively high level of prosperity. A granary, the foundations of which were laid over the Late Bronze/Iron I fortress temple, testifies further to the economic status of the city. Unfortunately, earlier excavation makes it impossible to establish precisely when the granary was founded and when it ceased to exist. In the Stratigraphic Chart it is assigned to Strata VIII-VII, its most probable context. The prosperity of the city during these strata is probably due to its position as a provincial capital within the Northern Kingdom.

One of the most spectacular dividing points in the stratification of Tell Balâtah occurs at the end of Stratum VII. Heaps of destruction debris cover the site and completely bury the remains of Stratum VII. This savage destruction was the work

of the Assyrian armies in their invasion of 724 B.C.

An impoverished reoccupation (Stratum VI) marks the end of the Israelite period at Shechem. In Field VII some Stratum VII structures were rebuilt and reused. In Field IX flimsy structures of yellow mud-brick set on a single course of smallish stones were erected. In Field I there is some evidence of reuse of the Iron II defensive system, but the rebuilding is shoddy. A wine press set up close to the defenses, and a few flimsy houses are also found in Field I. The decline in architecture and artifacts is remarkable, but the economic and political influence of Assyrian overlords is indicated by many imitations in local clay of Assyrian vessels. The division of Stratum VI into two substrata is dictated by the presence within it of two burned layers.

#### *THE PERSIAN PERIOD (STRATUM V)*

The house structures of Stratum V in Fields VII and IX are poor in the extreme, consisting of small mud-brick buildings, founded on a single course of stones. The Stratum is marked by the presence of imported black- and red-figured vases, which may be dated between ca. 525 and 475 B.C. Shechem during the Persian Period was, thus, an economically and culturally deprived community.(49)

#### *THE SAMARITAN PERIOD (STRATA IV-I)(50)*

At the beginning of Stratum IV Shechem seems to have been rebuilt in a single well-planned operation. The line of the Middle Bronze Age Wall B was select-

48. Cf. the Stratification Chart (Fig. 2).

49. For further details see Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 165-169. For date see Nancy R. Lapp, *ibid.*, pp. 238-241.

50. For further details on the stratigraphy and his

torical associations, see Wright, *Shechem*, pp. 170-184; and «The Samaritans at Shechem,» *HTR*, Vol. LV, 1962, pp. 357-366; further *BASOR* 180 (December, 1965), pp. 37-41.

ed as the limit of the defensive system, and a new wall was constructed using Wall B as its foundation. The slope in front of the wall was leveled and consolidated with cement to form a glacis-like structure. The East Gate remained in use. The orthostats were covered and the gateway was approached along a sunken roadway between them. The houses of Stratum IV are of excellent quality. They have wide foundations, consisting of an inner and outer face of dressed stone with a rubble core between. The superstructures are of mudbricks of standard size. The division of Stratum IV into two sub-strata is based on the history of the glacis in front of the defense system. Over the original surface a layer of orange-red brick debris, with many fragments of brick and charcoal, accumulated, indicating a destruction of the defenses during the late fourth or early third century. A new glacis surface was subsequently laid over the debris layer.

The planned rebuilding of Shechem at the beginning of Stratum IV is probably related to the expulsion of the Samaritans from Samaria by Alexander the Great, and the establishment of the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim.<sup>(51)</sup>

Stratum III is a rebuilding of Stratum IV with complete refurbishing of the East Gate and the laying down of a new glacis surface there. The concept of defense and the principles of house construction remained as they had been in Stratum IV. A fine Hellenistic house in Field II was founded in this Stratum.<sup>(52)</sup>

At the end of Stratum III all efforts to use the city as a fortified strong point ceased. The fortifications were abandoned and their stone work robbed for building operations elsewhere. A tower was constructed at the foot of the slope directly

east of the East Gate (Field I). It probably served more as a check point than as a serious defensive position. Elsewhere on the site Stratum II is represented by fragmentary walls with floor levels dug out by later agricultural activity.

The separation between Stratum II and Stratum I is based primarily on ceramic analysis, with the assistance of some stratigraphy in Fields II and VII

The destruction of Stratum III, which ended the last period of prosperity in the history of ancient Shechem, may have been associated with the struggle of Ptolemy V and Antiochus II for control of Palestine. The destruction of Stratum and the end of Shechem as an urban center was probably brought about by John Hyrcanus as part of his attempt to subdue the Samaritans and to end their religious and political rivalry with his own kingdom.

#### CONSTRUCTION PHASES

An interesting feature of the stratigraphy of Tell Balâtah, which does not appear in the stratification chart (Pl. II), is the existence at two points in the history of the mound of structures which seem to be stratigraphic «orphans», i.e., to belong *between* two of the recognized strata. These were buildings and installations erected for the use of the builders during periods of extensive change in the general plan of the city.

The first construction phase occurs between Stratum XVII, and Stratum XVIII, that is, between Middle Bronze II B and Middle Bronze II C. Buried in the fill of the forecourt of the fortress temple in Field V are the remains of two small buildings, little more than shacks. These structures are later than the last use of the courtyard temple of Middle Bronze B, but ear-

51. *Ibid.*

52. *BASOR* 148 (December, 1958), pp. 11-28.

lier than the first use of the forecourt of the fortress temple. In one of these an oven installation was found. The buildings probably housed workers engaged in constructing the Wall A system in the neighborhood of the Northwest Gate.<sup>(53)</sup>

The second construction phase appears at the end of the period of abandonment between the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, i.e., between Strata XV and XIV. In Field XIII a workman's shack with a fireplace was built on the slope of the Hyksos embankment, and was covered by the make-up and fill for the earliest Late Bronze Age buildings. The most impres-

sive installation belonging to this construction phase was a kiln for firing bricks, uncovered in Field XIII. The firing oven

proper was associated with a substantial building to the south. The kiln was dug into the mounds of Middle Bronze II B destruction debris, and was overlaid by the floors and walls of the Late Bronze Age house.<sup>(54)</sup> Consequently, it must have been in use only at the very beginning of the Late Bronze Age settlement, before major residential construction took place. It was probably a factory for the production of the vast quantities of brick which would have been necessary for the complete rebuilding of the city walls.

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[53. This interpretation has been much debated by the Shechem staff and contrary opinions held by certain other staff members will be noted in the final publication - G. E. Wright.]

54. *BASOR* 204 (Dec. 1971), pp. 9-10; 205 (Feb. 1972), pp. 23-25.