

# Pre-Second Millennium Dwellings in Palestine

by  
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The first human dwelling places were presumably caves and other natural shelters. These were probably supplemented by artificial shelters of brushwood, stones and skin, by simple huts, and by pits dug in open-air sites. Such habitations continued in use side-by-side with more sophisticated dwellings long after man had acquired the technique of building houses and permanent settlements.

In Palestine, we find ancient man dwelling in caves as early as the Epi-Paleolithic period.<sup>1</sup> The el-Wad Cave on Mount Carmel is, in fact, the type-site for cave dwellings,<sup>2</sup> and numerous other cave sites have been found throughout the land. In the Mesolithic, Neolithic and chalcolithic periods, ancient Palestinians were living in what seem to have been semi-curved structures. Some seventy such sites have been found in the Mediterranean coastal plain: fifteen in Wadi Kharatun, and others at Jerusalem, Einan, Jericho, Shaar ha-Golan, Wadi Shallale and Tell el-Farah.<sup>3</sup>

Other types of dwellings came later. The increase in population imposed the need for a stable food supply in greater quantity, or vice versa. The areas with the most favorable conditions were sought. From this "quest" of security evolved the house in its simplest and crudest form--man's first architectural effort.

The most spectacular development in this line was first noticed at Jericho, in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A period. This settlement reveals plano-convex mud-brick houses, built in a rounded shape,<sup>4</sup> with semi-subterranean floors reached by descending steps.

The shape of these houses was presumably taken from the rounded hut and this subterranean cave dwelling. Wadi Falleh (Nahel Oren), in the Carmel Mountains, contained fourteen rounded houses, built on a series of terraces.<sup>5</sup> Garstang, in his Jericho excavations, also found many circular constructions,<sup>6</sup> and this same type was found in Megiddo as well (Stratum XX),<sup>7</sup> Rounded structures, such as those found at Horvat Beter,<sup>8</sup> and at Jericho in the Chalcolithic

and Early Bronze periods, should not be confused with these rounded houses, as they seem to have been silos rather than domiciles.<sup>9</sup>

Rounded houses (with great variety), ranging from the Neolithic to the Early Cypriot Age, are quite prevalent in Cyprus.<sup>10</sup> Kent Flannery, who has traced this type of dwelling, found a wide range of distribution in both the Old and New Worlds.<sup>11</sup>

Rounded walls are found in later periods, but these can usually be explained by the dictates of available space, or even by the need for greater ease in construction.

A step in architecture is demonstrated by the change from a complete circular plan to that of a horseshoe, which may have occurred when a wide entrance was cut through a rounded house. In the early excavations of Garstang at Jericho, the circular and horseshoe types appear side-by-side.<sup>12</sup>

## Rectangular House

In the following period (PPNB), the tendency was to build houses not completely rounded but, rather, ovoid (rectangular with slightly rounded corners), and rectangular.

The houses of PPNB in Jericho are described as follows:

The rooms were mostly larger with wide doorways, sometimes flanked by timber posts. The plan of these rooms was rectangular, with slightly rounded corners, and the walls were straight and solid...The main rooms were flanked by small chambers, some of them apparently used for storage.<sup>13</sup>

The first truly rectangular houses to appear were in Jericho, side-by-side with the ovoid house,<sup>14</sup> but the rectangular plan did not become the dominant form until a later period.<sup>15</sup>

There are not enough exposed levels in the early Neolithic period to make any conclusions; however, during the Chalcolithic period the rectangular house had reached a further stage of development,<sup>16</sup> with a good deal of variety and experimentation. Some examples of these modifications were houses with porches, or sub-

divided rooms, as found in Teleilat Ghassul, Level IV,<sup>17</sup> and Beth-Shan, Level XVI.<sup>18</sup> In Meser, Stratum III,<sup>19</sup> we see small rooms alongside the main room.

The houses also vary as to size of rooms. Some of these houses are crudely constructed, while others are well-built. Two stages of development can be observed: A. Internal (the ante-room constructed inside the main room) and B. External (a room externally added to the main room). In general, the External House is "L"-shaped, with the subsidiary room added to either a long-room or to a broad-room.

A. The Internal House (referred to herein as the long-room house), is found in Teleilat Ghassul, where five small tells form a full sedentary village. Upon each tell is a cluster of buildings (some of which were constructed with common walls) that formed irregular blocks, and were surrounded by narrow streets. In the areas excavated, a group of seventeen rather homogeneous houses was found clustered in a circular arrangement. Each house seems to have been comprised of an open courtyard leading to a long-room, which has an inner room. The house plan seems to be an elaboration of a long, rectangular-type room. Each house has one or more fireplaces, usually located in the open courtyard, and several storage pits and silos. The outside walls of the houses form a fortification wall. These walls are sometimes built of stones, but generally of brick, and often set on a stone foundation. This same type of house was found in Meşer, Rooms B 13 and B 15 in Area B, Level III. The building is rectangular and consists of two rooms. Built in the fashion of a broad-house,<sup>20</sup> the entrance, eighty centimeters wide, is located in the northern, long side leading into the main room. At one side of the main room is a partition wall with a middle entrance leading to the small room. The arrangement of these houses looks somewhat similar to those of Teleilat Ghassul, Level III, and is compared to the final stage at Ghassul, Level IV, or thirty-fourth century B.C.<sup>21</sup>

B. The other type, External, or what is called here the Two - Room House (Main Room and Subsidiary Room), is a style which appeared at the end of the Chalcolithic period and one which

was to become a popular architectural feature of the Proto-Urban and Early Bronze I period. In the building found at Horvaṭ Beṭer<sup>22</sup> the rooms of Loci 3 and 4 form a single house. (The rooms of Loci 5 and 9, however, do not. The walls are very thin, and the planning here does not match the rest.) In general, the house seems to be formed from a big and a small room set at right angles to each other (see Plate I:1). In front of the house is a courtyard, and the rooms are entered by way of an opening near the end of a long wall. The house of the same type found in Stratum I at Meşer<sup>23</sup> is dated to the Proto-Urban period. Rooms B 8 and B 2 are attached to each other, forming an "L" shape (B 8 measures seven by three meters; B 2 measures four by three meters) (see Plate I:2). We find the same type of structure as those of Meşer Horvaṭ Beṭer in Stratum XX of Megiddo, dated to the end of the Chalcolithic period<sup>24</sup> (see Plate I:5).

To summarize, these houses of two rooms arranged in an "L" shape (set at right angles to each other) had no consistent entrance location (long-room or broad-room). The smaller room probably had another entrance leading to the outside yard, and was used, perhaps, as a workshop, since silos and copper slags were found in some instances. It could also have been used to shelter animals.

The assumption is that these houses were those of peasant families who owned a small flock of sheep or goats, made their own bread, and spun cloth for their own clothes. The frequency of this type of house indicates that by that time man had developed an ideal standard form for a particular function. Materials found in the subsidiary room show it had been used as a kitchen and an industrial quarter. Long-room material remains indicate that it was used for sleeping.

#### The Apsidal House

The apsidal house appears at the end of the Chalcolithic-EB I. Meser, Strata II and I,<sup>25</sup> has three examples dated to the end of the Chalcolithic period. Buildings B 1, B 14, and D 6 are built of rubble with some walls still standing to two meters high. Since no walls were found on the end opposite the apse, it might well have been an apsidal house with an open porch.

This type of house was found in Beisan (Beth-Shan) in EB Level XVI,<sup>26</sup> which has

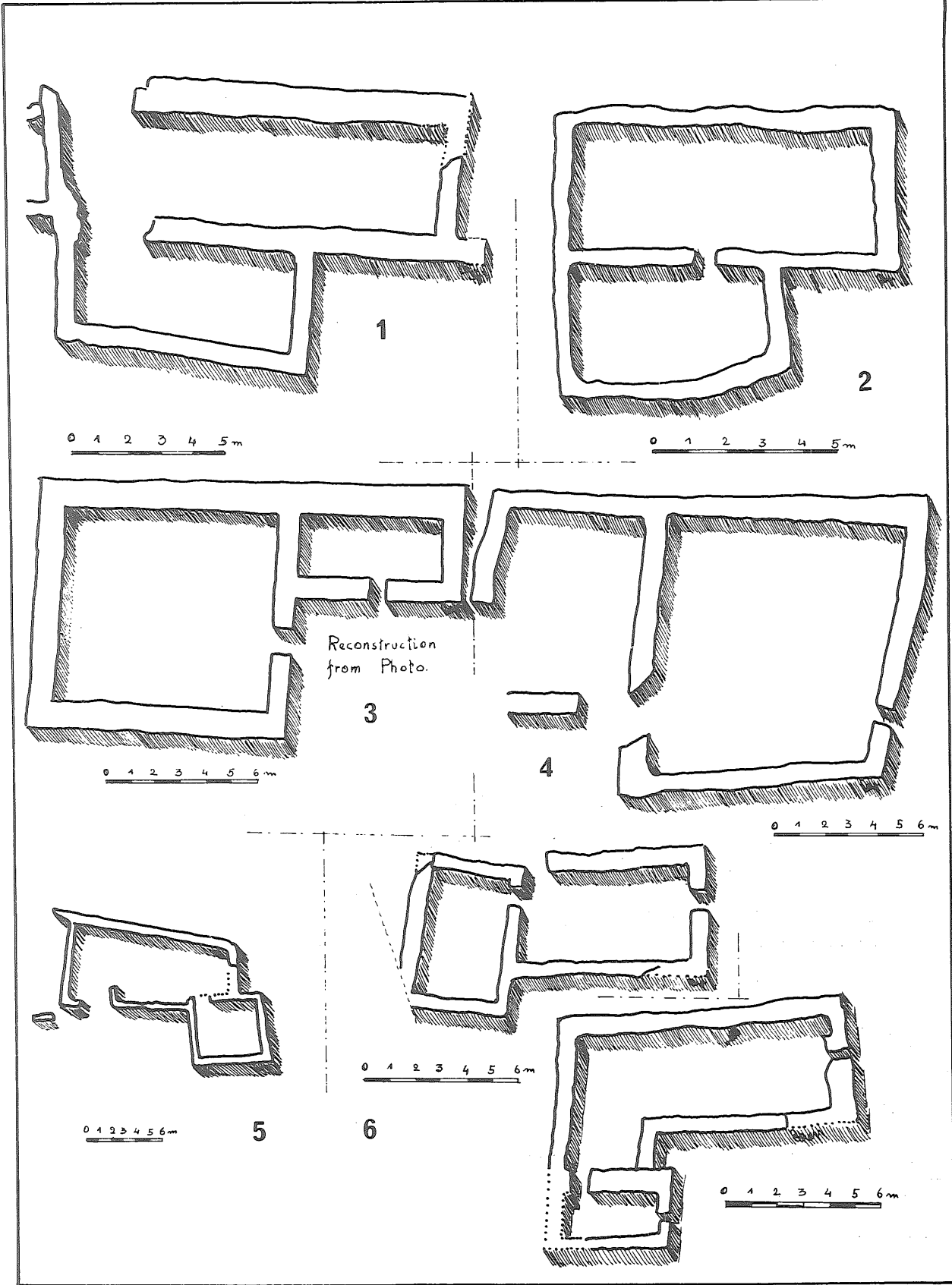


Fig. 1

been recently (1961) dated to ca. 3150 B.C.<sup>27</sup> The building measures four by three meters within. The northern end was partly separated from the southern room by a cross wall. The outside wall is semicircular, giving the whole building its apsidal form. It seems that this type differs from the one found at Meşer, for, instead of a porch, it has an ante-room opposite the apse.

At Megiddo, in Stage V,<sup>28</sup> this same type was found, but in a more complex form. The house has three rooms: the apse room, a middle room, and an ante-room (similar plans continue to appear in later periods).

In the Proto-Urban and EB I periods, apsidal architecture is found in Jericho E, III-IV, phase Q.<sup>29</sup>

In the Early Bronze period, the feature that characterized all the structures uncovered in Stratum I at Rosh Hanniqra was the rounded walls, indicating the existence of apsidal houses.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, plans were not published on these, so we are unable to conclude that these were like the ones preceding.

Room 97 at ʿAi (dated to the Early Bronze II period)<sup>31</sup> is a small, apse-like house and is the latest example found in this area. From this point on, the rectangular house is dominant here; however, apsidal architecture is found in the Chalcolithic, Early Bronze and Middle Helladic periods in the Aegean,<sup>32</sup> from Eutresis, Korakou, Thermos, and Troy.<sup>33</sup>

To summarize, we have three different subtypes of apsidal architecture: (1) apsidal room with a front porch; (2) apsidal room with an ante-room; (3) apsidal room with a middle room and an ante-room.

It is clear that the house went through sequential development: from cave to tent, to hut, to circular, to ovoid, and, finally, to rectangular. Variety and experimentation were clearly in evidence, and standardization had not yet taken place.

### Early Bronze Period

There is a general scarcity of information concerning domestic architecture during the Early Bronze age in Palestine.<sup>34</sup> Our objective is to trace the continuity and to study the new development in the formation of the house plan in this period. This task, however, meets with many difficulties. First, most sites of the EB

period continued to have several habitational levels, so that not enough digging has been done into the early EB levels. The plan of a building is very difficult to use, because normally a mere examination of the plan is not sufficient to determine which traits are culturally preferred and which are the result of individual needs or whims of the builder.<sup>35</sup>

Those sites which revealed substantial material, such as Jericho, ʿAi, Tell el-Farah and ʿArad,<sup>36</sup> are still mainly in preliminary reports. Few plans have been published, and consequently our illustration is incomplete and our speculation is based on few examples. Some conclusions, however, may yet be drawn from the data available from various sites.

The general situation, as it has been traced, shows that most of the sites, with only a few exceptions, were occupied before fortification walls were erected. In other words, the same site changed from village to town.

In Jericho, Kenyon noted that two major phases in Early Bronze Age housing were evident prior to the building of the city wall.<sup>36</sup> At ʿArad, there also appears to be a pre-wall occupation phase (Strata IV-V),<sup>37</sup> and at Tell el-Farah there are three occupation levels, dated by de Vaux as EB I-II,<sup>38</sup> which predate the city wall. A similar situation exists at ʿAi, where Callaway found tombs near the site dated to the pre-urban settlement on the tell,<sup>39</sup> but was unable to find any architectural feature belonging to this date. Megiddo, Stratum XIX (stages VII-IV), appears to represent an unwalled settlement.<sup>40</sup>

As previously mentioned, the apsidal house survived a bit later than Early Bronze I, and the "L"-shaped two-room house continued and became a characteristic architectural feature. Great variety was made possible by different internal arrangements, namely, by division of the two rooms, the relationship between the big main room and the subsidiary small room, and the location of the doors.

At ʿArad, the smallest unit is one room of the type earlier described with one subsidiary room which sometimes functioned as a cooking area, and at other times as a storage room<sup>41</sup> (see Plate I:3). The two rooms did not have direct connection, but were perpendicular to each other, both opening onto the courtyard, which

was probably enclosed on the other two sides by a thorn fence (like the modern sheepfolds), and used for domesticated animals.

At 'Ai, a house was found at the eastern end of the Lower City, adjacent to City Wall A, comprised of three rooms arranged in an "L" shape. Rooms 104, 102 and 106<sup>42</sup> are relatively small. It is difficult to recognize the relationship between these rooms, since no doors are shown in the plan. Our speculation, based on the previous example, is that they fall in the same category. In Phase III (Wall A), another complex was found which also would be characterized as a two-room house arranged in an "L" shape. Rooms 229 and 227 form a large house<sup>43</sup> (Room 229 measures eight by eight and one-half meters, while room 227 measures four and one-half by six and one-half meters). The house (slightly restored in Plate I:4) shows close similarity to the one found in 'Arad. Room 229 seems to have another door on the west side.

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1. A. Anati, *Palestine Before the Hebrews* (New York, 1963), p. 127.

2. D. A. E. Garrod and D. M. A. Bate, *The Stone Age of Mount Carmel* (Oxford, 1937), p. 1-15. It was found that the dwellings have habitational deposits showing continuous occupation; Miss Garrod divides the Natufian level into two phases, upper and lower Natufian.

Along the Dead Sea, inhabited caves were found dating to the Chalcolithic period. In the Beer-Sheba area, subterranean caves have also been dated to Chalcolithic, but these are man-made imitations of natural caves.

2. These excavations have been reported as follows: (1) At Jerusalem, by Anati, *Palestine Before the Hebrews*, p. 146. (2) At Einan, by J. Perrot, "Excavations at Einan," *IEJ* 10 (1960), p. 17. The Einan huts and pits are arranged as hamlets of roughly circular huts with stone foundations. The habitations are between seven and eight meters in diameter, surrounding an area into which plastered pits had been dug. (3) At Jericho, by K. Kenyon, *Archaeology of the Holy Land* (New York, 1970), p. 41. In the Mesolithic period there was still no sign of solid architecture at Jericho, but an earth platform was cut by pits. (4) At Shaar ha-Golan, by M. Stekelis, "The New Neolithic Industry," *IEJ* 1 (1951): 17. At this site a single level yielded many finds of domestic use over a gray earth and broken pebbles, but no buildings were found. (5) At Wadi Shallale, by M. Dothan, "Excavations at Horvat Beter (Beer-Sheba)," *Atiqot* 1 (1955): Fig. 475. Also, J. Perrot, "The Excavations at Tell Abu Mater near Beer-Sheba," *IEJ* 5 (1955), pp. 17-40. These were found as small aggregations of rough, round and oval hut floors. (6) At Tell el-Farah, by E. Macdonald et al., *Prehistoric Fara, Beth Pelet*, 2 (London, 1932), p. 2-20.

3. Kenyon, *AHL*, p. 44, Jericho experienced an excep-

One major variant in the "two-room, 'L'-shaped" type of house was discovered at Tell el-Farah (North).<sup>44</sup> Instead of the doorways being at the long side of the house, they now appear on the short side, forming a long-room rather than a broad-room type (see Plate I:6). In general, the fundamental arrangement consists of two rooms adjoining each other. In the Early Bronze II period, Room 276 adjoins the subsidiary Room 277 from the south side,<sup>45</sup> in the Early Bronze III, the subsidiary Room 274 joins the main long-room (269) from the east side.<sup>46</sup>

The continuity of the two-room house from the end of the Chalcolithic period to the end of the Early Bronze II period is an indication of stability of the people.<sup>47</sup>

Our knowledge of house types of the EB period is very limited, and will require an independent study in the future, when recently excavated sites reach final publication.

tionally highly developed settlement in the PPN A period, unlike the rest of the country. The settlement was surrounded by a massive wall and assumes an urban character. (A great stone tower was built against the inside of the surrounding wall.)

4. M. Stekelis, "Excavations at Nahel Oren," *IEJ* 13 (1955), p. 15. They had stone walls preserved to a height of up to one meter. Floors were of rammed earth and occasionally of pebbles.

5. J. Garstang, "L'art neolithique a Jericho," *Syria* 16 (1935), p. 354.

6. G. Loud, *Megiddo*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1948), p. 2: p. 60, Fig. 390. This one is six meters in diameter and goes back to the Chalcolithic period.

7. M. Dothan, "Excavations at Horvat Beter," *Atiqot* 2 (1956), p. 6.

8. R. de Vaux, "Palestine During the Neolithic and Chalcolithic Period," *CAH*<sup>2</sup>, I fasc. p. 46.

9. E. Gjerstad, *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition*, 5 vols. (Stockholm, 1936), 1: pp. 1-26.

10. Kent V. Flannery, "The Origins of the Village as a Settlement Type in Mesoamerica and the Near East," in *Man, Settlement and Urbanism*, eds. P. J. Ucko, R. Tringham and G. W. Dimbleby (London, 1971), pp. 22-58.

Also, in the basal levels at Muraybit (on the middle Euphrates) Van Loon found round-house foundations (M. Van Loon, "The Oriental Institute Excavations at Muraybit, Syria. Preliminary Report on the 1955 Campaign: Part I, Architecture and General Finds," *JNES* 27 (1968), pp. 265-82).

11. Garstang, *Syria* 16 (1935): p. 354, plate LXII-1.

12. Kenyon, *AHL*, p. 48, Plate II.

13. K. Kenyon, "Oldest Walled Town," in *Archaeological*

- Discovery in the Holy Land**, compiler, Archaeological Institute of America (New York, 1967), p. 119.
14. J. Perrot, "Le neolithique d'Abu Gosh," *Syria* 29 (1957), p.119.
15. A. Mallon, R. Koepfel, and R. Neuville, **Teleilat Ghasul**, 2 vols. (Rome, 1934-40), 1: Fig. p.12.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
17. G. M. Fitzgerald, "Excavation at Beth-Shan in 1933," *PEF* (1934-35), p.123, Plate IV.
18. M. Dothan "Excavations at Meser, 1957 Preliminary Report of the Second Season," *IEJ* 9(1959), Fig. 14. The dating of this stratum is in some doubt. It may be BB I.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 15
20. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
21. M. Dothan, "Excavations at Horvat Beter," *cAtiqot* 1 (1959), 4, Fig.3.
22. Dothan *IEJ* 9 (1959), p.16.
23. K. Kenyon, "Some Notes on the Early and Middle Bronze Age Strata of Megiddo," *Eretz Israel* 5 (1958):p.52.
24. Dothan, *IEJ* 9(1959), p. 13.
25. Fitzgerald, *PEQ* (1934-35): p. 126.
26. G. E. Wright, "The Archaeology of Palestine," in **The Bible in the Ancient Near East**, ed. G. E. Wright (New York, 1960), pp. 81-83.
27. R. M. Engberg and C. M. Shipton, **Notes on the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age Pottery of Megiddo** (Chicago, 1930), p. 3, Fig.2.
28. J. B. Hennessey, **The Foreign Relations of Palestine During the Early Bronze Age** (London, 1967), pp. 6-7.
29. M. Tadmor and M. Prausnitz, "Excavations at Rosh Hanniqra," *'Atiqot* 2 (1959), p.79.
30. Judith Marquet-Krause, **Les fouilles de cAy (Et-Tell) 1933-1935** (Paris, 1949), main plan.
31. H. O. Thompson, "Apsidal Construction in the Ancient Near East," *PEQ* 101 (1969):p. 77,
32. V. Muller, "Development of Megaron in Greece," *AJA* 48 (1944):p. 345.
33. Because the exposed area of this period is not enough to give architectural details.
34. The more sophisticated the tradition of architecture and the plans, the more deviations from the norms can be seen.
35. More than nineteen sites have revealed occupation levels from the EB period. From north to south these are: Rosh Hanniqra, Hazor, Kh. Kerak, Megiddo, Ta 'annek, Beth-Shan, Dothan, Tell el-Farah, Afeq, Tel Aviv, 'Ai, Nasbeh, Jericho, Gezer, Jerusalem, 'Askalan, 'Erani, Lachish, Hesi, Nagila and 'Arad.
36. K. Kenyon, "Excavations at Jericho, 1956," *PEQ* 87 (1956):77, and *AHL*, pp. 108-8.
37. Y. Aharoni and R. Amiran, "Notes and News, Tell cArad," *IEJ* 14 (1964): 221, and **Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century**, ed. J. Sanders (New York, 1970), p.95.
38. R. de Vaux, "The Excavations at Tell el-Far'ah and the Site of Ancient Tirzah," *PEQ* 87 (1966), 128-29
39. J. Gallaway, "The cAi (et-Tell) Excavations," *BASOR* 178 (1965), pp. 13-40.
40. Kenyon, *Eretz Israel* 5 (1958). p.52.
41. R. Amiran, "The Beginning of Urbanization in Canaan," in **Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century**, ed. J. Sanders (New York. 1970), p.95.
42. Marquet-Krause, **Les fouilles de 'Ay (Et-Tell)**, Plan I.
43. *Ibid.*
44. R. de Vaux, "Les fouilles de Tell el-Far'ah pres de Naplouse," *RB* 62 (1955), 559.
45. *Ibid.*, Fig.7.
46. *Ibid.* Fig.8.
47. "L"-shaped houses were found in later context at Hama (Buildings 3 and 6) (E. Fugmann, **Hamma, Fouilles et Recherches 1931-1938: L'Architecture des Perodes pre-Hellenistiques** (Copenhagen: 1948) ,p.49).

