Tell Balata Archaeological Park

Guidebook

Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities – Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage

Ramallah, 2014
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Ramallah, 2014
Publications of the Tell Balata Archaeological Park Project
Tell Balata Archaeological Park: Guidebook

This publication is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and its Representative office in Ramallah, through UNESCO, within the framework of the Tell Balata Archaeological Park project, and it is produced by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage (MOTA-DACH) and the University of Leiden (UL).

This document was produced by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage (MOTA-DACH) and Leiden University. The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the organization.

This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage (MOTA-DACH) and Leiden University. The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

ISBN 978-9950-351-08-0
Preface and acknowledgements

This Guidebook is a product of the Tell Balata Archaeological Park project (2010-2014), which is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and its Representative office in Ramallah, through UNESCO. It is a joint effort of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities with its Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage of the State of Palestine, the Faculty of Archaeology of the University of Leiden, and UNESCO Ramallah Office.

The Park project had heritage management goals. This means that measures had to be developed to sustainably deal with the remains from past societies represented in the site and keep them available for the future. It also means that knowledge about these societies, gained through archaeological study of these remains, should become known to the public. Through this the local and other public would become in a way connected with that past and develop responsibility for its heritage.

One way of understanding past societies is to know about their geographical context, which generally changed less than the cultural or political contexts. A part of the geographical situation is nature; flora and fauna. In fact an archaeological park gives a rare opportunity in modern urban society to pay freely attention to some aspects of landscape and nature.

Consequently this guide to the Park consists of three parts:

A. An introduction to local and regional history from an archaeological point of view and to the methods of archaeological work and of understanding the remains from the past.
B. Some description of the remains from the past as found in the Park, including the ‘Interpretation Centre’.
C. Some of the flora and fauna that may be seen in the Park.

Most of Part A and nearly all of Part C have the same text as is used in the project’s Teachers Handbook, chapters 7-3 and 9. Part B was used as a hand-out for the visitors on the occasion of the start of the project’s fieldwork in July 2010.

All of the Guidebook was drafted by Gerrit van der Kooij. An informal English version was made on the occasion of the inauguration of the Visitors Centre and Trail on Tell Balata, June 2013. This first official edition received several changes and additions in Part A and some in Part C. However Part B has been considerably rewritten with many additions and changes also as to illustrations – all in order to better fit its purpose. An Arabic version is being published as well. Final editing is done by the undersigned.

This background of the product gives us the opportunity to express our gratitude to several people and institutions.
For Parts A and C we are grateful to Mrs Barbara Layzell for English editing of the original chapters in the Teachers Handbook and to Mrs Lubna Taha, with adaptations by Mr Khadir Khanfer, for the Arabic translation of them. Part B is written from research for the project, including study of archives. The many illustrations are based on publications and archival material of the German and American expeditions, as well as on the documentation of the Park-project’s research, about which a scholarly publication is being produced as well.

For this reason we specifically mention here the following institutions and persons:
The Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem.
The National Museum of Antiquities (RMO), Leiden.
The Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO), Leiden.
Professor Edward Campbell for his encouraging help to have access to all documentation of the American Joint Expedition and for his final publication of the American work, with Mr G.R.H. Wright. 

For the Tell Balata Archaeological Park project thanks go to the whole team and to the cooperative local people and authorities. And also to:

Mrs Rula Ma'ay'a the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities for her continuous support;
Mr Derek Elias, Head and Representative of UNESCO Ramallah Office, Mr Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Head of Culture Unit and his team at UNESCO for their cooperation and support;
Prof Corinne Hofman, Dean of the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, for her support.

We are most grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and its Representative office in Ramallah for funding the Tell Balata Archaeological Park project and the production of this Guidebook.

Dr Hamdan Taha and Dr Gerrit van der Kooij, 
Directors of the Tell Balata Archaeological Park project
Abbreviations and references

EB Early Bronze (Age)
MB/MBA Middle Bronze (Age)
LB/LBA Late Bronze (Age)
NINO Netherlands Institute for the Near East, Leiden
RMO National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden
TBAP/Park Tell Balata Archaeological Park project

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Part A  Introduction

Chapter 1 The history of excavations at Tell Balata and their results.

Interest in Tell Balata
Research interest in Tell Balata started in 1903 with the proposal of the German scholar Thiersch to identify the ruins of the site with the remains of Shechem, a city known from historical and religious stories and thought up until then to be at Nablus. In fact, from the beginning of the 19th century it was an intensive scholarly task internationally to identify ruins and sites in Palestine with place names in historical sources. Such identifications had already been made in the early Christian periods so that pilgrims could visit holy sites, places where events had occurred of significance in their religion. The renewed study of identifications in the 19th and 20th century centred on historical sources. On the maps of Palestine historical identities were placed besides the current local name of a village, town or ruin. Archaeological interest for Tell Balata had further increased since the discovery of a hoard of bronze tools and weapons by a local builder (preparing to build the house of Salim) in 1908 (Area 21, see below).

Archaeological excavation: Method 1, long trenches
Archaeologists also became active in Palestine in the late 19th century. They saw that identification might be tested by excavating long trenches through the site to see whether it had the same character, for example, a town as mentioned in historical and biblical texts, and of the same period. The pioneer German scholar Ernst Sellin excavated at Tell es-Sultan (Jericho) and Tell Ta’innek between 1900 and 1910. He came to Tell Balata in 1913 and 1914 to expose more of the long curved city wall (Area 1) that had been described by Thiersch; to excavate parts of the discovered NW gate and some buildings nearby (between Areas 4 and 11); and to dig one of his long 5 m wide trenches (Area 13; see also fig. A1). He confirmed Thiersch’s identification. The long narrow trench method allows a quick view of what the Tell contains: does it have a town wall? Small or large buildings? Are these features at different depths, therefore from different periods? At the same time all kinds of objects, such as pottery and metal tools can be found. Added advantages are that only a narrow strip of land needs to be rented from the owner and many workers can be hired who do not need much supervision or staff.

Archaeological excavation: Method 2, complete exposure of building remains
Sellin continued excavations in 1926, but now with the Dutch orientalist Böhl and later the German archaeologist Welter (fig. A2, with the local staff in front). He again used some long 5 m wide trenches (for example Trench K in Area 21, fig. A1), and again many important objects were found such as clay tablets with ancient writing on them, but also large quantities of pottery sherds. However, it became clear that the narrow trenching method also had its disadvantages. Using that method exposed only small parts of building remains and these were often not well recorded before removing them so as to dig down further. Objects
discovered were removed from their context, making it unclear to what building or level they originally belonged. Architect-archaeologists were particularly critical of this and chose an architectural method which had already been practised by the American archaeologist Reisner at Sebastiya. This method involved enlarging a test trench (this was done in Area 13) or starting with a large surface right away, and exposing the remains of buildings completely. These remains were also drawn in detail before being removed to enable excavation further down – if going deeper was actually necessary. In this way objects could be kept in context; so pottery found in a specific room was recorded as that. This method demanded more attention and precision while digging, so more staff was needed, with 100-150 workers loosening and removing soil and identifying objects (fig. A3: Men and women working on Tell Balata in 1927).

Archaeological excavation: Method 3, more stratigraphic information
The Joint American expedition, led by G. Ernest Wright, started in 1956 and 1957 with an advanced version of the architectural method, giving more attention to detail while digging and recording (Wright 1965). The expedition was also more aware of the value of pottery (including odd sherds) as a means of dating, as demonstrated by the American scholar Albright. However the British archaeologist Wheeler had shown that the ‘stratigraphic’ method is much more reliable for dating materials and buildings. This method involves the careful recording of layers of soil and debris revealed with walls and pits, and in which objects are embedded. This method was used in Palestine by another British archaeologist Miss Kathleen Kenyon at Tell es-Sultan, Jericho, from 1952 to 1958, and was adapted for tell-
by the Joint American team in its work at Balata from 1960 to 1973 (fig. A4, 1964), including making drawings of the sides of the pits dug through the layers of soil and debris to provide a vertical section. Fig. A5 shows some of the local workers in 1957. A narrow ‘wall’ (called a baulk) was left between adjacent pits, until the sections had been drawn (for examples, see fig. A6, see also at Area 15). Of course this method demanded an even larger and more qualified staff, to ‘read’ and draw these sections in combination with detailed architectural plans. It also demanded rigorous recording of the objects in their context, being the layer in which they were found. The ‘reading’ of pottery sherds, attributing them to a certain cultural period, remained necessary to confirm the dating in the stratigraphic chronology.

The Palestinian-Dutch excavations of 2011 for the ‘Park project’ used this “Wheeler-Kenyon” method also, including the test-trench inside the 5x5m square (see fig. A7 and fig. A8, Area 23).

History of Interpretation
The excavation methods changed as a direct result of scholars studying the past asking new questions which demanded a more precise answer from excavating archaeologists; for example, about the time and context of a specific recorded object. The interpretation of the remains of what people made in the past, the ‘discoveries’, depended on those questions and their answers. The questions and answers were an integral part of the research framework, all directly related to the purpose of the research. Most of the changes in archaeological methods used in Palestine during a century of research can be seen at Tell Balata.

Where the primary questions involved the identification of a site with a biblical or historical place the framework was the study of theology, rather than that of past cultural systems. The excavation method was accordingly based upon a few criteria for identification (other than the
history of the place name), such as site character (walled or not; was there a palace, etc.) and period. Other discoveries, such as objects and house remains, did not get enough attention to allow more than a very general interpretation, and were used mainly for chronological purposes. Archaeologists, however, wanted to understand those discoveries better, focussing first on those involving architecture and the function of a building - an approach and framework already practised in the so-called classical archaeology of the Greek and Roman world and subsequently in Egypt.

Although this approach made the archaeologist potentially independent of historical sources and questions, the main framework and paradigm for interpretation remained the historical view of the past. This tension is tangible at Balata in the conflict between the theologian Sellin and the classical archaeologist Welter, who was considered to be a more objective archaeologist. The conflict concerned the interpretation of the “fortress temple” and the vertical stones in front of it as religious features or not. The ‘remains’ were described quite precisely, but the interpretation of what they were, why they were made, and their use, caused a great conflict.

Such conflicts among scholars occurred throughout the history of archaeology, even to this day. They are caused by two approaches of the archaeological past. One approach has its background in history writing, by which written sources were taken as primary ones and archaeological data had to fit the historical picture. The other approach came from geology and started archaeological work in Palestine in the mid-19th century. These archaeologists discovered remains from ancient men, such as hand axes, especially in caves, and wanted to know how these pre-historic people lived. Since no written sources existed, they needed other data to understand the remains they found. Thus this ‘pre-historic archaeology’ developed methods to interpret the remains, and find out how tools were made and used, what kind of economic and even social life the remains reflected, for example. For such interpretations more archaeological data are needed, which means more careful excavation methods. Also use is made of comparisons of human behaviour and culture from anthropological studies. In this way archaeology became able to ‘reconstruct’ human societies, independent from written records. This also occurred in Palestine.

During the 1950s archaeology in Palestine became potentially more scientific, using excavation methods and goals from European prehistory archaeology, where there are no written sources to be considered. The stratigraphic method of excavation and recording, as used in geology, gave the archaeologist an independent tool to fix relative chronology (‘this is older than that’). For fixing points of absolute chronology (‘so many years ago’) the scientific device of carbon-14 analysis was soon added, enabling further ‘independence’. It was not only architectural remains and all sorts of mobile artefacts that were collected; in addition evidence of people’s diet, namely animal bones and (carbonised) plant remains, was identified and this made possible an interpretation of a population’s basic economy.

These methods were first used in Palestine by Kathleen Kenyon in her work at Tell es-Sultan in the 1950s, but it took another 20 years (and more) to make use of the new approach of anthropological archaeology; this ensured that all aspects of human life and culture, as known from anthropology, were considered in the collection and interpretation of remains. Thus the discipline of archaeology was able – to some extent – to put forward (re-) constructions of both the economic and social life of past societies.

At Tell Balata the American expedition gradually took on these changes and recognised archaeology’s primary task to interpret discoveries objectively, independent of historical and biblical paradigms. For scholars like Campbell a dialogue between archaeological views and historical views is therefore required – in his words: archaeological ‘conversations with texts’.
In our current approach to assessing the results of archaeological research at Tell Balata, and their presentation to the public, we give priority to archaeological interpretation, and are hesitant to have ‘a conversation with’ historical views and data, especially when these are difficult to assess as historical sources. At the same time we are aware it is impossible to be absolutely certain about the historical values in our ‘constructions’ of the past, given the influence of fashions and incompleteness in our view of past societies.

This relativism in our view of the past has an important effect on how we look at the archaeological data resources, the archaeological heritage from past societies. Since our answers and views on past societies are not the final ones, the archaeological remains should be protected against further deterioration. This recognition and our wish not to patronise the public with a particular view about the past underpin the ‘heritage-site management plan’ within the Tell Balata Archeological Park project (2010–2014). This should be evident in the Visitor’s Centre where interpretations of the archaeological remains of the site are discussed.

**Chapter 2 Heritage Management**

It is a multisided task to manage archaeological heritage. The heritage that people or societies from the past left to us could be just a single object (such as a pot or a sickle), or a building with its rooms, or even (as in the case of Tell Balata) a complete mound of ruins with remains from towns from different periods excavated and visible. Basically managing this heritage means two things:

a. Prevent the heritage ‘object’ from further deterioration – to preserve it for the future.

b. Make the heritage object accessible to people (local and from outside), because they are in principle the heirs, and should get to know the ‘object’ and preferably should feel connected and responsible for it. Of course the value of the object may differ among people or public institutions.

Let us apply this to Tell Balata. In fact this had started with the Tell Balata Archaeological Park project (2010–2014), funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands through UNESCO and implemented by MOTA-DACH and the UL.

*The site has to be protected* for the future, so erosion has to be prevented; digging holes has to be prevented. Although excavations may be necessary for archaeology-historical reasons, but then it should be done in a responsible way with full documentation of what has been removed. Often protective measures have to be taken at places: consolidation of a terrace or of the side of an excavation square. Destructing animals, digging barrows or jumping on edges or baulks, may have to be banned from the place. For that reason a fence could be necessary. Also some plants, especially trees, may be destructive with the mechanical strength of their roots, so they have to be removed from walls and sections of excavation squares. People may also be a bit destructive by walking on unstable parts, along edges or on baulks, which easily occurs when a large group is visiting the site. This is a reason to regulate the stream of visitors. All sorts of conserving measures may be needed to prevent quick or...
slow destruction. “Preventive conservation” became a common concept. A clear example of this is the retaining wall built by the American expedition in 1960 around three sides of the forecourt east of the ‘fortress temple’. The court’s surface (more or less as used during Middle or Late Bronze Age times) was kept by the German expedition but had to be consolidated against erosion, because excavations had continued around it till a depth of some 4 m. The court is now also safe for the heavy stele and a group of visitors. In fact the eastern part of this retaining wall had collapsed and was restored by the Park project (fig. A9).

The site should be accessible to people, although a fee may be needed to make it possible for the public ‘owner’ to protect it and provide access facilities. There should be also facilities to inform the people about the site. However ‘information’ may be subjective, so different interpretations of what is found have to be made possible by adding data or discussions. Otherwise any group might interpret in one direction only where other directions are also possible, as if that group is allowed to write history according to its own wish! Thus the concept of an “interpretation centre” became regularly used. Basically it means that everything found is placed in its context, not only the context of its original archaeological-historical setting, but also in the context of discovery. If for example an altar was found, but the archaeological context was not well established by poor methods of excavation, than the interpretation of that object by the archaeologist could easily be influenced by a preconceived idea. For this reason it is important to know about what the local people think of the site, how it (or some of its ruins) plays a role in their family life for example. Is there a view that has not been influenced by foreign excavators? The study of the local ‘oral history’ about the site has been part of the Balata Park project. At Balata the excavations (especially the American ones) had quite an impact on the opinion of many people about the site, apart from largely introducing wage-labour in the local society!

Practically this means that many facilities have to be made available for the visitor, such as external signage to easily find the Tell, and signage on site to be guided to some of the specific parts of the ruins. Also booklets or brochures and a documentary film, or educational material for school children, combined with practical education methods. Such educational material was developed for Tell Balata and tested during the Balata Park project, and ended up in a “Teachers Handbook” for further use. For external visitors often a very specific religious view on the past of the site is guiding the interest for what the heritage-site has to offer. This is site promotion with a narrow view.

However the Park has to offer the visitor a less biased view on the past with different means. Also audio-visual material and digital means are to be provided to learn about the past in a nuanced way. The “Interpretation Centre” at Tell Balata (fig. A10) is gradually facilitating these goals.

Tell Balata is considered of very high importance and was included in the ‘Tentative list of Palestine’ as a key component of the site: ‘Old Town of Nablus and its environs’ (Taha, 2009 37f.). In accordance with the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, a Tentative List is an inventory of those properties situated on the State
Chapter 3 History of Tell Balata in its surroundings

a. Timeline of the history of Palestine through its archaeology

Palestine is part of the land “bridge” between Eurasia and Africa: a narrow stretch of fertile land between the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the desert to the east and south-east. In the remote past this bridge was used by many animals to migrate in both directions, and also by early man to move out of Africa into Asia and Europe. In later times it was a connecting, but also contested, region and a buffer zone between empires in Asia and Egypt (table p. 14) and again during the period of Western Colonialism. This complicated position is clearly reflected in the timeline.

In order to understand what people did in the past we should start with the geographical landscape of the region they lived in and used. Within Palestine not all the land is fertile, nor is there enough rainfall or available water everywhere for pasture and crops. There are also mountains or hills and low valleys with their varying soils. These differences within the region have inevitably led to migrations and conflicts.

Archaeological research has revealed something of how people lived in this area, how they built their homes, took care of their children, hunted and gathered food; and later how they produced food, made tools, and exchanged or traded their products, even over long distances; how they migrated seasonally with their flocks and herds, or settled to cultivate the land. Also how they managed to live together in small or large groups; but sometimes how there was conflict and even war. People have left not only archaeological remains, but also written records; historical research and archaeological evidence together provide a view of people in the past, what they thought, how they acted, and what they created: their ‘culture’.

The timeline of the history of Palestine, through its archaeology, is summarized in the table below. In this table the following ‘rules’ are used.

- Earliest times in the timeline table appear at the bottom; as do the archaeological remains in a Tell!
- The first column shows time in years BC and AD, and the second the archaeological or cultural ages. The earlier periods take their names from the materials developed at the time to make tools: at first stone (lithic material); then stone and copper (chalco-) together; then bronze; followed by iron. For later periods, from Hellenistic times onwards, the predominant cultural influence provides the names: such as ‘Roman’. Each period is generally divided into Early, Middle and Late sub-periods.
- The third column shows the developments in the case of Tell Balata.
- The fourth column gives an idea about the economy and crafts; what the local people did in the way of trading, as suggested by the archaeological evidence.
- The social culture column is also based mainly on archaeological finds, but associated written records can add to the picture of society as well.
- The last column shows the empires which ruled the region, and is almost entirely based on written records; however a ruling empire often influences cultural elements, such as housing and weapons, and this is reflected in archaeological remains. In this column appear the names of a ‘people’ mentioned in written records. However mostly such names do not appear, because they cannot be matched to the specific remains. This is especially true if the written
record is not from that particular archaeological site, or if it concerns a legendary story. Furthermore the named people may be only a very small part of the population living in a region or town – and not typical of the anonymous mass. The ‘cultural heritage’ of the Iron Age at Tell Balata is almost entirely anonymous!

Looking at the different periods in the rows of the table clear-cut time-limits are suggested, but in reality a society is continuously changing, slowly or quickly. Yet a pattern of change may be seen, for example in the social culture column. It appears that in one period society grows in complexity; then in the following period the greater ‘state’ gradually disappears, apparently because it is no longer needed. Later, complexity may increase again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Age/period</th>
<th>Tell Balata</th>
<th>Economy, crafts</th>
<th>Social culture</th>
<th>Ruling ‘empire’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Modern times</td>
<td>excavations</td>
<td>local states</td>
<td>villages + towns</td>
<td>Ottoman Turkish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>global market</td>
<td>villages + castles</td>
<td>Egyptian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>Ottoman P.</td>
<td>Balata village</td>
<td>local &amp; tribute economy</td>
<td>villages + towns</td>
<td>Ottoman Turkish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1516</td>
<td>Mameluk Period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>villages + castles</td>
<td>Egyptian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Crusader Period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 AD</td>
<td>638 Omayyad P.</td>
<td>farmland ruins</td>
<td>local &amp; tribute economy</td>
<td>towns + villages cities: dense with estates/villas</td>
<td>Arab-Islamic Byzantine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>324</td>
<td>324 Byzantine P.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Roman</td>
</tr>
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<td>Roman Period</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>Hellenistic P.</td>
<td>town</td>
<td>local &amp; tribute economy</td>
<td>towns, villages</td>
<td>Greek /Persian Babylonian</td>
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<td>586</td>
<td>586 Iron Age III</td>
<td>town</td>
<td></td>
<td>regional states towns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron Age II</td>
<td></td>
<td>village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>1200: Iron Age</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>iron work trade with Egypt</td>
<td>villages/nomadism city states</td>
<td>Egyptian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Bronze Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>large walls growing city</td>
<td>local writing trade with N-Syria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Middle Bronze II</td>
<td>city</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>large walls growing city</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2500</td>
<td>Early Bronze III</td>
<td>trade with Egypt</td>
<td>villages/nomadism city states?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000</td>
<td>Early Bronze II</td>
<td>trade with Egypt</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3500</td>
<td>Early Bronze I</td>
<td>1st habitation</td>
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<td>Chalcolithic Age</td>
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<td>copper work</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4000</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9000 BC</td>
<td>Neolithic Age</td>
<td>pottery planting/animal keeping flint tools</td>
<td>villages/nomadism villages</td>
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<tr>
<td>before</td>
<td>Palaeolithic Age</td>
<td>hunting, gathering</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Tell Balata and its cultural landscape: other sites

People living in a landscape leave traces of what they do there. Most of these traces wear away, or become covered and invisible; but many may remain visible. This is so in the landscape around Tell Balata where many traces of past human presence have remained visible. Some have been studied and are mentioned in the table.

When a settlement site is studied intensively, as Tell Balata has been, it is also necessary to study any remains of human activity in the surrounding area. In this way the settlement site can be seen in its economic and social context. The surrounding land was used for crops and
herding; and often the settlement’s cemeteries and some of the religious sites were nearby. Through such a study it is also possible to see the village, town or central city (Tell Balata was all these over its life-time) in the context of other villages, towns and cities, with their mutual relationships. During the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze I periods all villages had similar status, and were generally self-sufficient; although some had a special role. When towns developed during the Early Bronze II and III periods, and again during the Middle Bronze Age, this changed, because in towns more people live together and need organisation and some social stratification. The townspeople have to be supplied with food by the surrounding villages; villagers have to produce a surplus above what they need themselves. A market or tax system develops. The organisation becomes more complex as the central town grows into a city, needing more territory to develop, and more people both to produce a surplus and to work for the central government. In turn the city may become a city state, in competition or cooperation with other city states. The American archaeological expedition did a “survey” of the area around Tell Balata up to a distance of ca. 10 km, except to the north, where a distance of ca. 4 km was covered. The purpose of the survey was to describe tombs, fortresses, settlements and other sites, and date them. Others have provided additional information. In the table below some of the ‘sites’ (such as settlements, tombs etc.) found in the area around Tell Balata (fig. A11) are ordered according to time periods and thus synchronised with the development of Balata itself. The table clearly shows, for example, that several other villages existed during the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze I times; that some Early Bronze III towns developed; but that in this early period Tell Balata did not urbanise. On the other hand it is apparent that other villages existed during the Middle and Late Bronze Age when Tell Balata was a city; and that there was another important town, Tell el-Farah, further away. The same applies to the Iron Age, when another town, Sebastiya-Samaria, was the capital of the region. In Roman times, however, when city life in general was booming, Tell Balata was not part of that. It should also be noted that the lower slope at the foot of Mount Ebal has been attractive as a cemetery during many periods: the rock was suitable for this, but in addition the mountain may have had a special religious value in the minds of the people of the different periods.
c. The history of Tell Balata

The site and its location

Tell Balata consists mainly of the remains of what people built in the past and which then collapsed, like houses. People lived there as families, in their houses and in common areas; many of them worked in agriculture and animal husbandry on the land near the village or town. For annual crops like wheat and barley the soil needs to be rather wet during the growing season, in winter. And that is, and was, generally the case. For other agricultural products more water is necessary; or water is needed in summer as well. In that case the fields have to be watered. Water is also essential for animals to drink and for people to drink and wash. Close to Balata were (and are) several springs at the foot of Mount Gerizim. Their water was often channelled into a cistern or trough, from where it could be taken for household, flock or land use. During the two main periods of archaeological excavation in the 20th century no study was made of the plant and animal remains usually found near or inside the remains of houses, so the diets and land-use of the inhabitants are not known in detail. Tell Balata is also located at a spot from where its people could use and keep watch over a large fertile valley to the east (the Askar Valley – see the regional map of the 1940s, fig. A12). The position of the site is very favourable as well because the Askar Valley could only be reached...
from the west by passing through the narrow valley between Mount Gerizim to the south and Mount Ebal to the north, with Balata guarding its eastern end. Thus when people lived at Tell Balata they could control access to the valley, and through that also control access to the routes further north and east as far as the Jordan Valley, and further south towards Jerusalem. They had a view of the north-south routes through the hill country.

It is not surprising therefore that the place became important during some periods; and, indeed, between roughly 1700 and 1200 BC grew into a city, the capital of a city-state; with the wish to expand further, as is known from written sources (the el-Amarna archive, see below).

Fig. A12

History of the site
The general history of the site shows a very dynamic character: there were periods of intensive habitation (the Middle Bronze Age, part of the Late Bronze Age, parts of the Iron Age and in Hellenistic times) alternated with small scale use when it was uninhabited, with probably only some grazing or other agricultural land use.
Starting with the oldest period the following historical picture appears. The earliest remains of habitation on the site date from around 3500-3000 BC; these clearly indicate village life with local agriculture, probably using additional water sources for the fields. Several tools of flint and pottery were in use, characteristic of the prehistoric Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze I periods.
At the beginning of the urban Middle Bronze Age (MB IIA) the town becomes archaeologically visible with domestic and public structures that can be combined with Egyptian written sources. The Egyptian Middle Kingdom considers the ‘land of Shikmu’ as a threat in the 16th century BC.
However the study of the archaeological evidence from the MB IIB-C period shows the strength of the Middle Bronze Age city, with magnificent buildings for defence and religion. The city shared the characteristic pottery and metal artefacts of the widespread culture of the period, as well as luxury objects of many kinds. These demonstrate the excellent craftsmanship available at the time, and indicate a network of exchange with other people in the Near East and eastern Mediterranean regions. Archaeological study does not tell us (yet)
who the people were that brought this urban culture, but written sources suggest an answer. It may be that the Middle Bronze people were those the Egyptians called Hyksos (“rulers from a foreign land”), who became the rulers of northern Egypt, and had probably come from south-west Asia. However it is difficult to be certain of this.

The picture of an important city is repeated in the Late Bronze Age; although the archaeological remains are less impressive for that period, there are strong written sources. Chief among these are the 14th century BC Amarna letters which form part of an archive of the Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaton, who lived in El-Amarna city. They include letters from local rulers in Palestine-Syria to their Egyptian overlord. These letters were written in Akkadian cuneiform script, because this was the international diplomatic language and script of the time. The rulers are mainly asking the Pharaoh for help in dealing with invaders. A particular enemy is mentioned: Labaya, king of “Sha-ak-mi”/ Shikmu, who is actively trying to form an alliance with other city states in order to rebel against Egyptian imperial rule. Sha-ak-mi is the same as Shechem, a town located where Tell Balata presently lies. For this reason the Tell Balata site is now generally identified with historical Shechem and a direct link can cautiously be assumed between the historical evidence of the letters and the archaeological remains of Late Bronze Age Balata; even though the letters were not actually discovered at Tell Balata. However, some clay tablets from about the same time, with the same form of writing, were found there; these deal with local issues. One letter is from a teacher to the father of some of his school children, complaining he has not yet paid him!

The excavated Iron Age remains tell their own story, particularly about the 8th and 7th centuries BC. They reveal a new defence system, but also some housing, with facilities and accommodation. They show tools and jewellery that were used. It is not possible to give the people living there a general group name, although this is often done based on historical narratives. These narratives however need to be historically understood first. Also found were some seals, originally used to make an imprint on a piece of clay (forming a bulla) to secure a letter. Some of the seals have a very specific Assyrian (Mesopotamian) or Persian figure carved on them, or even a name. The owners may indeed have had those ‘population group’ backgrounds, but the seals may also have been used by other local dignitaries – it is difficult to say.

Similarly, although a particular group of people may have used a certain house plan or other artefact, such as pottery, quite a different group may have produced them. An example of this is the pottery used during the period of the Persian Empire. Some pottery found in Tell Balata from that period was made in Greece, and brought to Palestine. A possible reason for this is that Greeks coming to the region as soldiers preferred their home type of pottery. However non-Greek people living there may have used it as well. Thus the discovery of Greek pottery does not necessarily mean that Greek people were using it!

After Hellenistic times little use is made of the site. Some remains from Roman and Byzantine time were found. Later historical sources mention a village called Balata, but there is no clear archaeological evidence at Tell Balata, except for some Mameluk material. However the current village of Balata, near and on the southern edge of the ancient site, exists since the 19th century. In the early 20th century archaeological activities started on the site (fig. A13, general view of site, village and surroundings in 1927) and soon a glass factory begins production at its northern edge (fig. A14, with site, village and camp in 1956). Social study and oral history are combined with local and external documents, as well as old buildings.
The following chronological table follows the same timeline as used above, but now discusses what happened on the site, with reference to the location where remains have been found and where they are visible today (see a plan of the site, fig. A15, on the back-cover). Occasional reference is made to the American strata system. Some of the remains are illustrated below in
Part B. The last column refers to events as well, but through the objects or artefacts that have been found. Some of these are illustrated in Part B or can be seen in the exhibition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period / Features</th>
<th>What happened?</th>
<th>Objects/artefacts found</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20th cent</td>
<td>Glass factory (at NW-edge); garage to north. American excavations and dumps. German excavations and dumps.</td>
<td>Glass samples (2); garage waste (2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.1850 Ottoman Mameluk Umayyad</td>
<td>New village of Balata; agricultural use of site Cemetery (22)</td>
<td>Some Mameluk material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman/Byzantine Post 100 BC</td>
<td>Some inhabitation at S-edge of site; graves</td>
<td>Lamps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellenistic Ptolemaic/Seleucid ca. 325 BC</td>
<td>Destroyed c. 100 BC. City: rebuilding of fortifications (16), with tower addition (20); housing (9, 15, 16, 23 reused)</td>
<td>Ptolemaic and Seleucid coins (15); lamp (23); column base (15); many tools in rooms (15); jars (9).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Age III Str. V (Persian period)</td>
<td>Town, with housing (9, 23)</td>
<td>Attic pottery; handles with Judaic, Persian seal impressions, Persian bulla, Greek coin (15); bottle /lamp /handle with 3 indentations (2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 600 BC</td>
<td>Revealed by German excavations (17, 18, 21). 8th century 4-room house 1727, yard (15-sect) (9). House with vat &amp; platter installation (15). Buildings all over the site, casemate wall (4), granary (6), planned housing (terraces at 15, 22). Some housing, e.g. with bin &amp; vat (15).</td>
<td>Many 7th century BC objects. Assyrian palace ware; Hebrew seal (15); Assyrian seal (from 4-room house, 15); grinding tools; house ‘altar’ (17); Samaria-ware (6); stamp seal (11); flint sickles (11); fibula (23).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Bronze Age till c. 1150 BC</td>
<td>Two fire destructions towards end of period. City with reuse of city walls and gates (3 and 19 with new tower) after rebuilding. Fortress temple rebuilt (smaller, 5° turned), with altar, stele in forecourt; sanctuary in (22), stele. Levelling and new housing, with cellar (11, 14, 15, 16, 21); kiln (11) for bricks?</td>
<td>Str. XI pottery (11). Cylinder seal (Mid-Assyrian). Varied pottery (11+11, 14); bronze figure (15), cuneiform tablets (21, 11), clay weapon mould (21); bullae in kiln (11); bone point /stone hanger /hammer stone /drill stone (14).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1450 BC</td>
<td>Ending by massive general destruction (by Egyptians?), burnt (for example at 16). City with walls A (cyclopean, 1) and B (18, 16, 17, 21?); NW-gate (3) with to W (4) 1st a plaza +altar, then ‘rooms’, and to E (5) rooms; E-gate (19); chalk rampart (2 SE-end); fortress temple with stelae (6); housing (11, 15, 12, 23?).</td>
<td>Near steps of E-gate (19) pottery, with human and animal bones on cobbled floor. Cooking pot, and basalt tripod on floor (16); chocolate-on-white pottery. House (11) with bone inlay box, scarab-seals, dagger, and astragali (game pieces).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Bronze IIIC c. 1550 BC</td>
<td>City with wall C-rampart (4, 5, 6, 23?), temple on platform, holy enclosure (8) with tannur, street and walls D and 900; jar burials (8); housing (11, 22).</td>
<td>Bowls, store jars (8), beads (with jar burial); store jar with stamp impression (22).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1650 BC Str. Xv</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Bronze IIB Str. XVII-XX c. 1750 BC</td>
<td>City to town with platform (6, 7, 8) and domestic housing (22).</td>
<td>Bronze weapons (21).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Bronze II-III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Br. I Str. XXIV Late Chalcolithic 3500 BC</td>
<td>Village alongside the bottom of the valley, near the spring ‘ain balata: areas 6, 8, 22, 23.</td>
<td>Flint adze (11), sickle blades, knives; pottery sherds (23).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedrock</td>
<td>Reached in areas 2 (NW-part), 4, 5, 6, 8, 13, 22.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part B: Visit Areas

The Areas of interest are indicated on the site-plan and numbered in a certain order, starting in the W/NW-part after entering the Park with Areas 1-11 (see fig. B1), continuing in the N-part with Areas 12-15 and the E/SE-part of the site with Areas 16-21, and returning to the W-end with Areas 21-23 at the entrance to the Park.

Areas 1 & 2; cf. Areas 4-6
City wall A was not the first defence system of the Middle Bronze Age city. It was preceded by a rampart system (2-sided slope) of Wall C during MB II B, which is not visible on the site. Wall C was preceded by the free standing wall D. See the drawings of plan fig. B2, and the partly reconstructed ‘section’ through the temple and surroundings on fig. B3, showing the stratigraphic sequence of city walls. The Wall A system is found back at several other locations in the northern part of the site, and probably also in the eastern edge of the site. Possibly also in the southern part near the “house of Salim”. The original connection between Wall A (or “Cyclopean wall” after Greek walls made of huge stones) and the sloping layers of chalk and earth outside (a glacis, one-sided slope) has long been uncertain. Some take it that those layers were put up against the wall directly after its construction, like many rampart or glacis systems in the Levant during MB IIB-C times. Others expect that the wall was kept visible, but got a glacis in later times: for example as a Hellenistic siege method. However our 2011 excavations gave clarity (see Area 2).
Area 2
A long trench outside the city wall was partly excavated by the Park project in 2011 in order to explore the archaeological value of this part west of the city wall and gate, before building the Visitors Centre at that spot. The north-western part showed no habitation remains, so the Centre could be built there. Interestingly this part showed how soil from the site, and refuse from the expeditions, from the glass workshop (fig. B4) and from the car garage had accumulated there on bed-rock. The eastern part however cut through the remaining original earth works (‘glacis’) and made clear that this was sloping up against Wall A, at a maximum angle of 25° (fig. B5 and fig. B6).

The pre-Hellenistic date of these earth-works is indicated by walls built on top of the lower western end of the glacis during late Iron Age. A more precise date was found by a carbon-14 analysis of the right humerus of a pig (*Sus domesticus*) (fig. B7). It was found on an intermediate sloping surface in the accumulation of lime-flakes. The bone (with butchering marks) dates from around 1640 BC or around 1550 BC. So the glacis was made in the MB IIB or IIC period, probably during and for the construction of Wall A, and kept as a means of defense.

Area 3
The NW-gate, with a stone plan of 17x19 m, had a mud-brick superstructure. Some 10 courses were left on the W-corners when excavated in 1914 (see fig. B8), of which a
little bit is still preserved. The MB IIB-C gate has been reconstructed on paper by several architects, among them the Australian Mr G.R.H. Wright of the American team (fig. B9).

Area 4 & 5
The two “wings” of the NW gate (fig. B10) have a complex architectural building history, and rooms with disputed functions. The Eastern wing was a palace for the Germans (see fig. B11). In the Western wing one room (with two pillar bases – one being overbuilt by a later wall: grey in the drawing) is interpreted as a ‘temple’ or shrine, belonging to a ‘palace’.

Areas 6 and 7
The massive “fortress” temple (building no. 5600; outside surface c. 21x27m, inside c.11x13.5m) replaced a probable sanctuary, connected with the platform in area 8. It is built on top of the earlier C-rampart and additional fill (see fig. B2). This temple had originally ‘fluted’ columns (with facetted sides) of Egyptian Middle Kingdom design. These columns were reused in the Late Bronze Age square building constructed over the ruins of the fortress temple and interpreted as a temple (fig. B14). The American expedition placed the columns inside the MBA temple for display purposes; their original position would have been different. Two of the three steles at the entrance and in the courtyard are put back in their sockets and placed about where found, the spot of their last use. Originally they too may have been part of the MBA temple.

A detailed architectural drawing (fig. B12) is made by Welter for the German expedition and shows
also the later wall remains on top of the fortress-temple, as well as the courtyard with presumed altar (not preserved) and stele further east. The reconstruction drawing is made by G.R.H. Wright (fig. B13).

During the Iron Age II period the square LB-building was restructured to be used as a granary (fig. B14) – to store and redistribute a vital commodity, as was usually done by a power-holder in such an urban society.

**Area 8 (cf. plan fig. B2)**

From Area 7 (the partly modern platform) one has a clear view to the east and south-east, where the architectural remains of the earliest MB Age city are visible (fig. B15, cf. fig. B2), unearthed by the German expedition and supplemented by American excavations (cf. fig. A6). These are the lowest strata excavated in this area, dating from before the fortress temple. The higher strata, dating from the MB IIC period, Late Bronze Age and Iron Age were removed by the German excavations. The architectural complexes were separated from the Eastern parts of the city by a large wall, wall 900 (c. 2 m wide), making an *acropolis* (upper town) or *temenos* (holy ground) area. The Western-wall (wall D – now hardly visible) was the earliest city wall (see above Areas 1 & 2). To the north wall 943 was connected with walls D and 900 later on. Alongside wall 900 a street with drainage is visible, as well as a cross-street. Both border with wall D, an architectural complex (fig. B15, showing American stratum XIX) that is
interpreted as a palace (partly still under the Area 7 platform), with room 9 as a kitchen with bread ovens (tannur type). To the NE of this complex are the remains of an Entrance Hall, with seven pillar bases, providing access to a number of “courtyards”, thought to be holy places. In some of the MB IIB rooms children had been secondarily buried in large storage jars under the floor, together with funeral objects such as pots and jewellery. The German excavations in this area, and also in Area 10, discovered many objects from the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, like human and animal figurines (fig. B16).

**Area 9**
The excavations were done by the American expedition as Field II. Its work revealed some well-preserved remains from Hellenistic times and some domestic rooms from the Iron Age underneath. Interestingly remains of Rhodian (Greek) wine jars, with Greek-stamped handles were found here (end elsewhere). The Hellenistic walls had largely collapsed since then, but the American documentation shows how they were discovered (fig. B17). Restoration may bring back that condition.

**Area 10**
The depression in the surface makes clear that excavation took place there, in fact done by the German expedition in 1927 mainly (see fig. A3), and much LBA and Iron Age material came from this area.

**Area 11**
This area, east of the NW-gate, includes three interesting excavations. The German expedition of 1934 excavated stone plans of Hellenistic and Iron Age buildings (some are still visible on the surface, see fig. B1). At the same level further west, bordering the eastern wing of the NW-gate, some MB Age rooms were excavated. In one of them MB IIB-C pottery was found together with a small fragment of a limestone stele with the lower part of a ‘human’ figure. This stele was secondarily carved with alphabetic pictograms, making it a fragmentary example of the earliest alphabetic writing, but not yet fully understood (fig. B18).
The American expedition worked here in Field XIII. The bottom of the SE-part of this set of four 10x10 m squares (fig. B19) still shows domestic architecture from the Middle Bronze Age, with a cellar of a later house (Stratum XIII), dating to the Late Bronze Age. Beautiful bone inlay (fig. B20) to decorate a wooden box was found in room A, to the north (MBA). The cellar was used for storage (grain), but had clearly a water problem, and was filled with a large amount of debris including pottery sherds, such as from Cypriote bowls. On the floor above the cellar also much pottery was found, including a bi-conical jar (fig. B21) on a collar stand.

To the west of this Field further excavations were done in 2011 for the Park-project, in order to clarify some stratigraphic issues, in a 10x10 m area, with 4 squares. The upper houses (previously excavated by the German expedition) are from the Iron Age II period, with Late Bronze Age remains underneath. Remarkable objects retrieved are a double stamp (Iron Age IIB, fig. B22), a Late Bronze Age Cypriote bowl (fig. B23), a bone game piece (fig. B24), a flint adze (Chalcolithic type, fig. B25), and a toothed flint segment of an Iron Age sickle (fig. B26).
**Areas 12 & 13**
The east-west trench (Area 12) was made by the German expedition searching for the northern part of the city wall. Some inner parts of the defence system were found, but not the major Middle Bronze Age outer wall. This expedition also made the long test trench (Area 13) going south (backfilled), and widened its northern part. There the American expedition has added some excavations.

**Area 14**
In the eastern part of the German trench (Area 12) a large block of burnt mud brick debris had rolled down, broken from the southern edge of the trench, and can still be seen there. That ‘block’ came from a 2 m thick layer of burnt rubble. In order to date the fire destruction a N-S row of two 5x5 m squares was excavated in 2011. The fire destruction of the buildings (with mud-brick size 55x37.5x13 cm – one of these mud-bricks was preserved for exhibition) turns out to be from final LB-times (ca. 1200 BC). A rebuilding had followed (see the stone foundations in the southern square), which is still LB-age according to the pottery types, such as a type of *collared-rim* jar and a small *pyx* (fig. B27). Also a bone awl was found here (fig. B28).

**Area 15**
This deeply excavated American Field VII reached the top of Middle Bronze Age layers. Remains of some baulks can still be seen; they are an early witness of stratigraphic excavation (cf. fig. B29, cf. Part A, Ch. 1). A bronze figurine of a ‘Canaanite’ deity was discovered from the Late Bronze Age (fig. B30).

The trench shows little of the excavated remains, just a bit in the outer sections (sides) of the total square, although quite damaged by erosion. Yet one building and some objects should be mentioned here.
The Iron Age mainly had domestic architecture in this area, built on terraced surfaces. A nice example is the large house no 1727 (Stratum VII and later – 8th - 7th cent BC). It is a so-called four-room house, with some extensions. Fig. B31 (looking down, to south) shows the excavated situation some 3 m below the surface. Fig. B32 combines drawings of the house plan with the N-section. In this section two of its walls and the house-floor with debris on top can still be discerned. Note the central room with the hearth, a grinding installation and bin; several rooms have a cobbled floor. Inside this large house some nice red-burnished pottery and an Assyrian stamp seal (fig. B33 with an impression) were found. A 7th century BC seal with Ancient Hebrew script (fig. B34) was found elsewhere in this Field.
During the Persian period some imported 5th century BC luxury Greek pottery was used (fig. B35, sherds of an Attic black-figured krater). Also a Persian seal impression on clay was found, originally sealing an official papyrus document (fig. B36). The jars with a stamped symbol on the handles (fig. B37) indicate an economic organisation.

The Hellenistic period gives some proof of monumental architecture in this area by the pillar-base found (fig. B38, now at the Visitors Centre). The hoard of 35 silver Ptolemaic tetradrachmen had been hidden in a jar c. 193 BC, just before the change to Seleucid rule in this region (fig. B39 shows one of them, both sides).

Area 16
This trench, Field III, by the American expedition still shows parts of Wall B, which is the renewal of the upper city wall in the last part of the MB-period with inset-offset system, and a mudbrick superstructure (see fig. B40 with end of MBA and early LBA remains). The S-section in the trench shows clear stratigraphic layers, with walls and debris.
Areas 18 & 17
From the German expedition trench L (see fig. B41 for a part of it), now backfilled, some remarkable objects were retrieved in 1926, such as this Iron Age ‘horned’ lime stone ‘altar’ (fig. B42, side- and top view, with shallow cup; now in Leiden RMO).
The extension of Wall B to south was excavated by the German expedition, reaching the E-gate.

Area 20 & 19
The Eastern gate (fig. B43 with a multi-period plan and fig. B44 for Wright’s reconstruction) is directly connected with the inner city wall B. To the east of the gate, is the deeply sitting retaining wall A. The gate had two building phases during the last part of the MB Age (indicated with thicker lines in the drawing). In the second phase the large well-dressed rectangular standing stones (orthostats) were placed on top of the earlier stone foundation (partly visible on site) to form two gate doorways. In this phase
steps were made to get down to the cobbled street into the city. With the final destruction, with fire (inflicted by enemies?) several people were killed of which two complete skeletons were found under the 2 m high gate tumble on the steps.

The gate got a new tower on the SE corner in the Late Bronze Age, and another ‘tower’ further east in Hellenistic times.

**Area 21**

This area comprises the German excavations of trench K (with several extensions at the southern end; all backfilled) and at the house of Salim (fig. B41, showing the 1926 situation). It

**Fig. B44**

represents the earliest discoveries from the site, in 1903, while a foundation trench was made for the house of Salim, the ‘blind sheikh’. It was a group of 16 bronze tools and weapons, which came on the market and ended up in a museum in Munich. **Fig. B45** shows this tomb-group, including spearheads, daggers, swords, a fenestrated axe, a brand for animals (lower right), two mountings (for on leather?) and an exceptionally well decorated ‘sickle’ sword, with a lotus at the top, dating from mid-18th cent BC (**fig. B46**). The sickle sword was made with highly sophisticated techniques and is comparable with one found in a dated royal tomb in Byblos, where the Balata weapon probably was made as well. Also at Balata metal
work was done for which several tools were found, such as the pottery mould (31x12x11cm) for bronze objects (fig. B47; a photo and Praschniker’s description in the object register of 1926).

Another remarkable discovery are the two clay tablets from Late Bronze Age (14th century BC), with the international cuneiform writing. Both have several names of probably local people. The illustrated one (fig. B48, 5x3cm)

Fig. B48

is a request for delivery of agricultural products, wheat and best oil, apparently to pay a teacher.

Also found in this area is a group of MB IIB-C pottery of which a part is shown in fig. B49 (now in Leiden): wheel thrown bowls (upper left), saucer lamps, jugs and a burnished juglet (lower left).

Area 22
This concerns the American Field IX of 11x11 m, excavated partly 13 m deep till bedrock in 1960 and ‘62, but backfilled and no longer visible. The Field was known for its detailed stratigraphic recording and provided clear remains from the Late Chalcolithic to Early Bronze I periods. All the site’s inhabitation periods are represented, mainly by domestic structures and use of space, with some ‘heavy’ architecture in MB IIB.

Area 23
This area has two major archaeological features.

The first feature is the trench excavated in 2011, placed 4 m north of the road section to better understand that section (see fig. A8 and fig. B50, view down to south). This also shows heavy Late MB walls, with Iron Age ones to the east, reused in Hellenistic times, and with the German dump right on top. At the western bottom of this trench Chalcolithic-EB IA remains were found. Together with the data from the American expedition this provides clear proof of a small village alongside the bottom of the valley in the 4th millennium BC.
The second feature is the long stratigraphic section cutting through the site alongside the road towards the village parking place. The long middle part of this section shows a 2-3 m high dump (in two main layers with a line of gravel in between) by the German expedition, but below it are original tell layers. The western part, near the entrance to the Park, is of special interest as an example of stratigraphy reading (see fig. B51 and fig. B52, with layers numbered in proposed deposition order). It shows an accumulation of red and white earth sloping up against a thick stone wall. This was part of the MB defence system. The cobble stones on the sloping top are remains of a land-dividing dry stone wall from before the road-cut.
Part C: Nature on Tell Balata

A tell, such as Tell Balata, is a small microcosm of nature. If the site is quiet and not (or hardly) inhabited or cultivated it can provide a home for many species of wild plants and animals, which visitors may come across. Visitors to an ancient site can find the nature of extra interest knowing that people living there in the past saw more or less the same animals and plants.

The species or varieties of plants and animals in a place are mainly determined by the general conditions of soil and climate. So let us consider these general conditions in Palestine first, and then take the case of Tell Balata in its specific ‘bioclimatic’ zone. We are now talking biogeography!

The map (fig. C1) roughly shows the four bioclimatic zones of Palestine:

- Mediterranean zone
- Steppe zone (Irano-Turanian)
- Desert zone (Saharo-Arabian)
- Tropical zone (Sudanian) penetrating the steppe and desert zones, where wet

Tell Balata lies at the eastern end of a narrow valley in the mountains, facing a large plain to the east. This region has a Mediterranean bioclimate and (originally!) there was good red soil in the area. The site itself also has some particular mineral content from the clays brought to the site for buildings, from burnt remains and waste material from the past; these may enable some specific plants to grow there. As to the general climatic situation: the site lies at 500 m above sea level, not very far from the Mediterranean Sea, just east of the watershed and close to the rain shadow further east.

Thus on the site some of the wild flora are typically ‘Mediterranean’, although associated bushes and trees are missing. The few small almond trees, spread by nature over the archaeological site, have been removed for site protection reasons. However the privately owned parts of the site have orchards, mainly of olive trees, but also of fig trees and cactus; or are used as agricultural land to grow cereal crops. Following the first rains of winter, from February to April the site is carpeted with
flowers. But soon, in May, this green and vibrant colour-scheme turns predominantly brown
and yellow, with only a few colourful plants blooming, such as the Persian cyclamen (pink:
Cyclamen persicum), red corn poppy (red: Papaver umbonatum), large flowered sage (blue:
Salvia indica), the common or viscous globe thistle (purple: Echinops adenocaulos/viscosus,
fig. C2), spotted golden thistle (yellow: Scolymus maculatus, fig. C3) and especially the wild
carrot (white: Daucus carota, fig. C4 and fig. C5; ancestor of the edible carrot), the scallop
leaved mullein (yellow: Verbascum sinuatum), the spiky Syrian eryngo (blue-purple, also the
leaves and stems: Eryngium creticum, fig. C6) and the caper shrub (white with violet: Capparis
spinosa, fig. C7). Conspicuous is also the red fruit of the regional ‘lords-and-ladies’ (Arum
palaestinum, fig. C8).

The seasons also have their effect on animal life, especially on breeding cycles and feeding opportunities. However quite a variety of animals may be seen at any time. Some are mentioned below, using a simple classification:

Insects, spiders, millipedes, and other arthropods.
Many species of these will be visible, although some stay hidden in the soil and rubble. The oriental hornet (Vespa orientalis, fig. C9), notorious among the bees and wasps
with its very poisonous sting may be found nesting on the site! Ants (fig. C10) are evident with their tracks and waste areas around their nest-holes (fig. C11). Several kinds of bees may be spotted on the flowers, and many colourful butterflies will be found as well, such as the blue (Celastrina argiolus, fig. C12) and the brownish female blue (possibly Lysandra bellargus, fig. C13). Among the beetles the fast running black pitted beetle (Adesmia cancellata, fig. C14) is often seen. One may prefer to be careful with the camel spider (fig. C15), but it is certainly necessary to be cautious with the scorpion (fig. C16).

Amphibians and reptiles.
Amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders) are rarely seen, but some reptiles are regularly seen in daylight, such as the Greek tortoise (Testudo graeca, fig. C17), the roughtail rock agama (Laudakia stellio), the common chameleon (Chamaeleon chamaeleon, cf. fig. C9), some skinks such as the eyed skink (Chalcides ocellatus), and a lizard, the snake-eyed lizard (Ophisops elegans). Other reptiles (geckos and snakes) are more active at night, and hide during the day, though some may be seen, such as the Turkish gecko (Hemidactylus turcicus, fig. C18 – also active in houses), and some non-venomous snakes, such as the Ghamchen snake (Coluber rubriceps - also climbs on shrubs and trees!), and the large black fire racer (Coluber jugularis, with brown eyes). When digging, the subterranean Eurasian worm-snake...
(Typhlops vermicularis, fig. C19), pink and very thin, may be seen. The venomous snakes in Palestine are all vipers, with one cobra, the black desert cobra (Walterinnesia aegyptia, with black eyes) in the Jordan Valley. Most vipers live in the steppe and desert zones, but the very poisonous Palestinian viper (Vipera palaestinae, with a blocked brown zigzag line on its back) occurs in the Mediterranean zone, even in village areas, looking for mice, rats and birds.

Birds
Birds are often more easily heard than seen, but one can expect to spot several common species, including those in villages, like the house sparrow (Passer domesticus), the spectacled bulbul (Pycnonotus xanthopygos, with yellow under-tail), and the goldfinch (Carduelis carduelis), feeding on thistle seeds. The hoopoe (Upupa epops, fig. C20) is also regularly seen on the site, as is the collared dove (Streptopelia decaocto). The common myna (Acridotheres tristis, fig. C21 – from India/Iran) nests in a building at the western edge of the site and has become a local resident. Among the many other birds that may be seen on the site is the great white egret (Egretta alba) flying individually (fig. C22) or in small groups passing over in an E-W direction, apparently on the way to wet feeding areas and back again.

Mammals
Apart from some dogs (fig. C23) from the village, which have their dens in holes on the site (fig. C24), one may see a few other mammals such as the insect eating Eastern European hedgehog (Erinaceus concolor, fig. C25), and the mouse-like sharp-nosed Lesser white-toothed shrew, feeding on insects. A rodent, the Egyptian spiny mouse, may also be seen in the stony parts, or even the red fox (Vulpes vulpes).
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Note: If no source is mentioned the figure originates from the TBAP-project.

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02 (back cover) Archaeological site plan, with numbered areas of interest; those in red are signposted (as fig. A15).
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C25 Hedgehog.
Human activities at the site: different socio-economic stages, from village to town and city, with periods of abandonment: time line (from bottom up).

Around 72 AD the city of Neapolis was founded 2 km west of the abandoned site, and in the medieval period the village of Balata was established south of the tell.

325 BC – large town with some new fortifications in Hellenistic period (area 20); several houses are discovered (area 9). Destroyed ca 100 BC.

950 BC - new small town growing into a large town during the 8th century BC (Assyrian rule); domestic quarters are excavated (areas 11, 15). Continues under Persian rule ca 500 BC (areas 15, 23).

1450 BC - fortified city (Late Bronze Age); struggle for independence from Egypt (Amarna letters). Burning destruction ca 1150 BC (area 14).

1650 BC - large fortified city (Middle Bronze Age IIC) with ‘cyclopean’ wall and NW and East gates (areas 1, 3, 19). Temple, ‘palace’ (areas 6 and 4) and other buildings (23). Important town in wide region with much trade. Burning destruction ca 1550 BC.

1900 BC - new village growing into town and city (area 8).

3500 BC - first village along the bottom of the valley, with pottery and flint tools (areas 22-23).