

Migdal – 2015

Marcela Zapata-Meza and Andrea Garza Díaz-Barriga

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Preliminary Report

In June–July 2015, the seventh season of excavations was conducted at Migdal (License No. G-9/2015; map ref. 2484/7480) in collaboration with the Magdala Centre, Universidad Anáhuac Mexico Sur (UAMS), Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA). The excavation was directed by M. Zapata-Meza, with the assistance of A. Garza Díaz-Barriga (numismatics; area supervisor) and R. Sanz-Rincón (UAMS; area supervisor), M. Avshalomov (aerial photography), R. Jackson-Tal (glass) and D. Avshalom-Gorni (pottery). Archaeology students from the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia and the Universidad Veracruzana and conservation students from the Escuela Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museografía participated in the excavation. Administrative support was provided by Arke New Gate LTD Company, UAMS and E. Stern and B. Hanna (IAA).

The excavations carried out in 2010–2015 (Areas A–E; License Nos. G-64/2010, G-2/2011, G-28/2012) established the limits and probable urban layout of the port town of Migdal (Fig. 1). During the 2015 season, Area F was opened to the west of Area A and to the south of Area E (Fig. 2) in order to investigate whether the north–south street (Str 8), which seems to have served as the main thoroughway leading to Migdal and its western border, connected the synagogue with the rest of the structures south of Area E. Another objective was to assess the limits of the building (E3) in the northwest corner of Area A (Fig. 3). Area F was also chosen with the objective of exposing a larger part of the ancient city for tourists and pilgrims.

The excavation in Area F exposed a section of Street 8, a building (E19C1), a room in building E3 (E3C9) and a Ritual Bath (*Miqveh*; Mk4). The finds date from the

first century CE (Stratum IIIa in the preliminary stratigraphy of the UAMS excavations). The orientation of the structures unearthed in Area F matches that of the structures in Areas E (E19C1) and A (E3C9 and Mkv4), excluding Street 8.

Street 8 is a north–south street located on the western edge of Area F, and it probably continues to the north, toward the synagogue (Fig. 4). Unlike Street 1, Street 8 is irregular in width (2–4 m)—widening in places, possibly due to reuse or some modification in nearby spaces—and is not flanked by parallel walls throughout. Furthermore, differences in construction materials and stonework could be discerned along the street: the wall flanking the street on the west in Area E (W184) is built mostly of unworked fieldstones, of both basalt and limestone, and seems like a defense wall; whereas the wall flanking the street on the west in Area F (W215) is built of perfectly crafted and regularly placed basalt blocks. The lower part of a Pompeian flourmill (Fig. 5) was found on the street, near the outer northwest corner of Building E19C1, probably not *in situ*.

Building E19C1 (Fig. 6) is a rectangular building, which appears—judging by its orientation—to be the continuation of the market in Area E. The building is also connected with Area A with a wall extending to the south (W65). An entrance set in its western wall allowed access from Street 8, but it was later blocked. A row of eleven long basalt slabs (RF2) found along the outside face of its northern wall (W212), seem to have been roof beams of some structure, possibly of a small purification bath (*miqveh*) similar to the ones discovered in past seasons.

Room E3C9 (Fig. 7) has a perfectly cut and assembled floor of basalt pavers, with benches along the four walls. Traces of white plaster were found on several sections of the walls. Two possible windows were identified in the east and the west walls

(W42, W217); the one in W42, which separates the room from Ritual Bath Mkv2, was blocked.

Ritual Bath (*Miqveh*) Mkv4. This ritual purification bath is the fourth discovered at Migdal, and together with Bath Mkv2 it forms a double ritual bath, as do Baths Mkv1 and Mkv3 in Area A. The two baths in each of these pairs are separated by a wall, with a channel running through it to allow the circulation of water (Fig. 8). Furthermore, this bath has the same architectural traits as the other three: it was constructed of well-dressed basalt blocks, has seven steps and was treated with white plaster, some of which is still found on the upper parts of the walls. Like the other baths, this one also utilized the natural water table of the Sea of Galilee. With their floor dug down to an elevation of c. 208 m below sea level—approximately 2 m below the elevation of floors of the surrounding buildings—water that seeps through the cracks in the floor and the lower steps feeds the four baths. The water circulates through the channel system under Street 1 back into the lake. This bath, like the other three, also received water from the Mount Arbel and Naḥal Arbel (Wadi el-Ḥamam) springs. Unlike the other baths, this one shows evidence of destruction: the two upper steps are not complete, and numerous stones were scattered throughout its upper levels. Also, it was not sealed with soil fills containing pottery fragments as did the other baths.

Later Remains. Area F revealed evidence of a later settlement: evidence of destruction was observed in the eastern part of the area; some of the rooms in the area were blocked with walls; and the floor made of basalt slabs in room E3C9 was covered with a layer of white plaster (Fig. 9).

The excavation results in Area F reinforce the conclusion that the architecture and urban layout of the western and southern limits of the town of Migdal vary between the areas excavated by the IAA, UAMS and the Franciscan Custody. Area F is a continuation of the market in Area E and of the buildings housing the ritual baths in Area A. The excavation revealed several pottery and glass fragments, coins and metal artifacts dating from the first century CE. In contrast to previously excavated areas, Area F contained a large number of collapsed building blocks, both worked and unworked. At this point it cannot be determined if this collapse was caused by human agency or natural causes.

[1. General plan of Migdal.](#)

[2. Areas A, E and F \(excavated by UAMS\), aerial view to the north.](#)

[3. Area F, plan.](#)

[4. The excavation areas, including Street 8, looking east.](#)

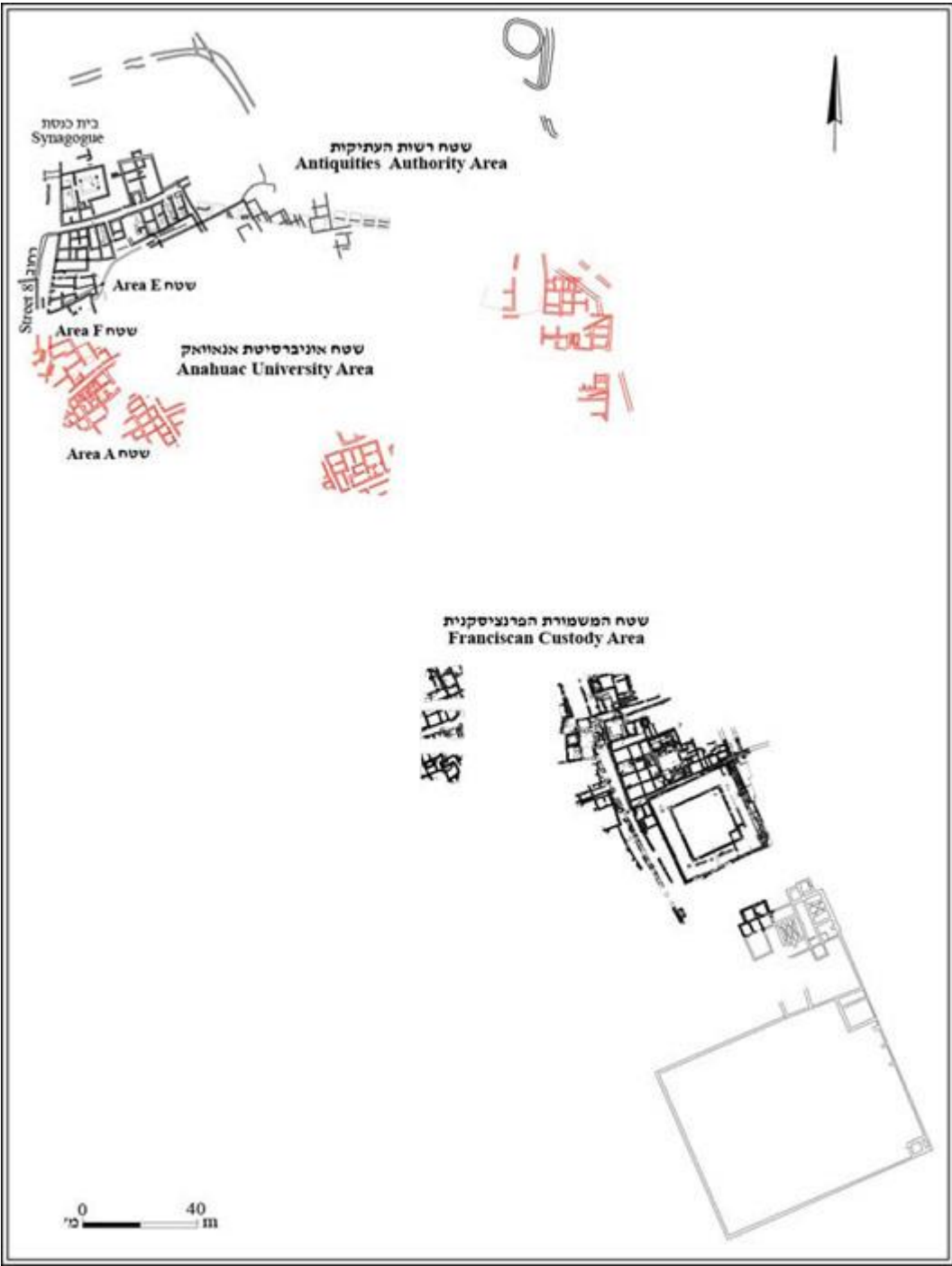
[5. A Pompeian flourmill on Street 8, looking south.](#)

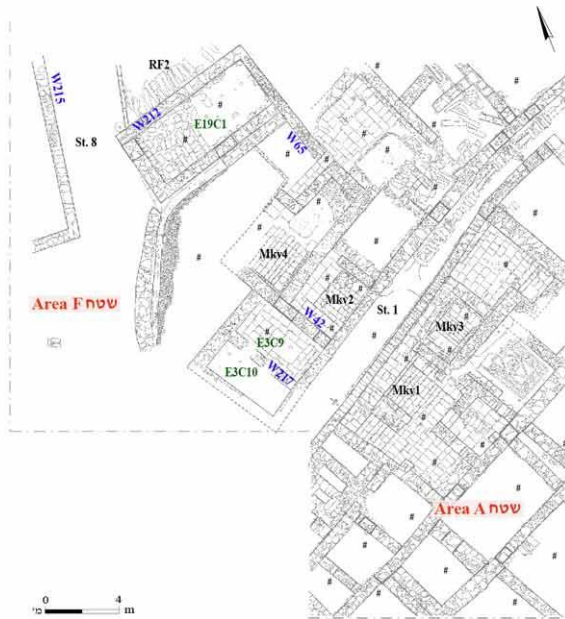
[6. Building E19C1 and the basalt slabs along W212, looking northeast.](#)

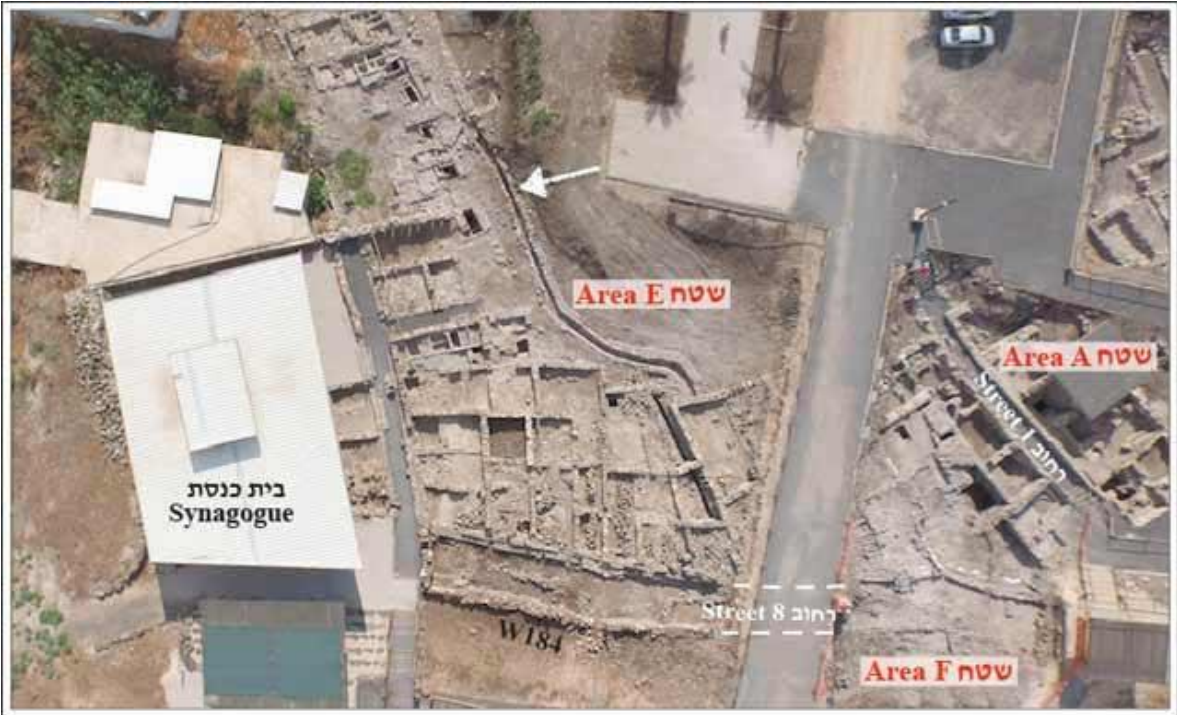
[7. Room E3C9 and Ritual Baths Mkv2 and Mkv4, looking south.](#)

[8. The two pairs of Ritual Baths in Areas A and F, looking south.](#)

[9. A layer of white plaster covering the basalt floor in Room E3C9, looking northwest.](#)















MIGDAL G-9-2015
N996-1000
E 896-900 P38 / P39
AREA F WALL 229
06-08-2015