

North-East Church Complex (NEC)

(Supervisor: Prof. Mark Schuler)

In 2006, excavation continued work on areas surrounding the *domus* of the North-East Church complex, completed work on the masonry tomb, and continued conservation and cleaning of the earlier nave mosaic (F544). This report will address work done in the following areas (Figures 1-2):

- The North Gate Area
- The Southern Street
- The South Hall and Related Chambers
- The Chambers West of the Portico
- Cistern D
- The Masonry Tomb
- The Nave Mosaic

The North Gate Area

In the 2004 season, a gate had been identified at the north end of the portico. The relationship of the gate to surrounding structures was clarified in 2006 with work done in squares E0, E1, and D0. The gate itself is approximately 1.4 m wide and was closed by two doors on pivots. About 1 meter was exposed to the north of the gate, but there was no evidence of a paved street as at the south gate.

The west end of the gate was bounded by a column base and a substantive Byzantine wall (W553) to the west (0.8 m wide). That column base sits on the north end of the stylobate that forms the western border of the church's portico (Plate 1). To date, no indications of a presumed atrium have yet to be unearthed. To the north of this column base is a later wall of poor quality (W594) that floats above the level of the stylobate. It is probably contemporaneous with other floating walls (W513, W541, W586, W592, W593, W1209) that were removed in the course of excavation (Figure 3).

The full extent of the stylobate can now be documented (Plate 2). It is a single course of basalt stones 18 m from north to south and varying between 0.9 and 1.1 m in width. The stylobate pre-existed the *domus*, the south-west corner of which was aligned the

southern end of the stylobate. Six of a presumed eight column bases are still in-situ with an average intercolumniation of 1.96 m.¹

A column base protruding from W540 at an approximate right angle (93°) to the north end of the stylobate motivated excavation of a narrow area (1 m) north of W540 is square D0. The column base is in secondary use as part of the construction of the wall, as it does not sit on a stylobate. Column drums are also used in the wall. The base sits on a crudely paved stone floor of a room to the north of the north lateral chamber. A bench abuts the west wall of the room (0.40 m wide and 0.28 m high). A broken but relatively complete cooking pot was recovered on the bench. Complete excavation of this room is restricted by an access road to the north.

The Southern Street

Work in 2006 continued the exposure of the small street proceeding from the south gate of the North-East Church complex toward the Decumanus Maximus. A 5 m section was exposed to the level of the street (Plate 3) and significant surface fill was cleared in preparation for exposure of the remaining 25 meters. A junction with the decumanus had been previously identified. Comparative elevations indicate a slope of about 8 cm per meter.

The street is 2.2-2.4 m wide and is surfaced with basalt pavers in rows 0.3 to 0.5 m wide. Most pavers are 0.6 to 1 m in length. To the east, the street is bounded by W585. The wall is constructed with basalt ashlar on its western face that survive to three and four courses in height. The street abuts the wall and was laid subsequently to the wall's construction. To the west, the edge of the street is less clearly defined. A threshold of a doorway is visible south of W569 and west of the street. The rest of the wall of which the threshold may be a part awaits exposure.

The South Hall and Related Chambers

Initial work in squares C4 and D4 exposed three crudely built walls floating above the ruins of the North-East Church complex (W592, W593, W1209; Figure 3). These walls were likely part of later agrarian use of the site and were removed. Below were portions of two chambers, a hall, and an antechamber.

¹ Column diameters and intercolumniations are listed from south to north. Those measurements in parentheses represent missing column bases and assumed intercolumniations. 0.52, 1.74, 0.54, (2.1, 0.53, 2.1), 0.55, 1.94, 0.53, 2.05, 0.52, (1.92, 0.53, 1.92), 0.53.

The antechamber is 2 x 5 m and provides access to the street from the other rooms. It consists of two sections separated by a low wall (W1219; 0.24 m tall and 0.6 m wide). The outer section next to the street is 2 x 1.2 m. In the north-east corner of W510 and W1210 and in the south-east corner of W1210 and W1201 are two basins of hard plaster (Plate 4) similar to the one in the north lateral chamber. As with the later example, these basins collected water from the roof and channeled it under the street to another channel running under the western edge of the street to cistern C. The channels confirm the use of cistern C during the active phases of the North-East Church complex.²

The inner section of the antechamber is 2 x 3.3 m and has a stone surface (F1213) overlaying an earlier floor of soft ceramic tiles. At its east end is a threshold leading to a chamber (2 x 2.6m). A lacuna in W510 indicates that the wall (W1217) of which the threshold is a part was constructed at the same time as the south wall of the *domus* (W510). The door for the chamber locked from the inside, suggesting that the chamber served as sleeping quarters for an individual. It is one of three such chambers identified this season. Some fill remain to be excavated before reaching its floor.

In the south-east corner of the antechamber is a threshold providing access to a large hall. The hall is bounded on the north by W1201. W1201 runs from the street to W559 of the south vaulted chamber. Again a lacuna in W559 indicates that W1201 and W559 were constructed at the same time. The lacunae in W559 and W510 are significant, for they confirm that these southerly chambers were part of the original construction of the church. From the beginning, the *domus* was part of a significantly larger complex.

The hall to the south of W1201 has only been partially excavated (Plate 5). But a seam in W585 at 6.1m from the north line of W1201 suggests that the hall's internal dimension is 4.5 m north-south. The hall is bounded to the east by W1218 yielding an internal dimension east to west of 5.4 m. The hall is only slightly smaller than the south vaulted chamber, but the hall lacks any piers to support such vaulting. Other than destruction fill, the hall was empty. Its floor was packed mud and plaster. A probe next to W1201 traced the cruder foundation stones to a depth of approximately 1 meter.

A threshold in W1218 provides access to another inner chamber between W1218 and W559. The threshold is of poorer quality than those previously mentioned in this section. But this threshold also would hold a door that locks from inside the small

² The drainage channel leading to cistern C on the surface of the street has no apparent function, although it terminates at the mouth of the cistern. While it may have provided a means of catching overflow and runoff from the street, it seems more likely that the pavers here were reused and the channel had an earlier use now unknown due to relocation.

chamber. The chamber is 1.5 m wide with an uncertain dimension north-south. It too seems to be a chamber that served as sleeping quarters for an individual. Further excavation to the south will be necessary to clarify the full extent of the complex. The discovery of such quarters may support that theory that the North-East Church complex was an urban monastic compound. Rooms of similar small dimensions can be seen in the plans of the Kyria Maria Monastery at Scythopolis³ and in the plan of the Monastery of St. Martyrius.⁴ Y. Hirschfeld points to an internal dimension of about 7 m² for cells in the cenobia at Khirbet et-Tina and Khirbet ed-Deir.⁵

The Chambers West of the Portico

In 2005, easterly entrances to two rooms were discovered on the line of the portico's stylobate. The entrance to the southerly room is south of the gate. The internal width of the room is 3.2 m. Just inside the south gate is the entrance to a second larger room 3.9 m wide. The doors from both rooms could be closed and locked from the inside. In 2006 the western extent of both rooms was exposed. A common wall (W591) serves as the westerly demarcation for both rooms, yielding in internal east-west dimension of 5.2 m. The common wall allows us to conclude that the southerly room is part of the North-East Church complex and not merely abutting it. The southerly room had a 20-25 cm plaster floor (F568) overlaying a stone floor (F571) of basalt and limestone pieces (Plate 6). The chamber inside the gate had a similar plaster floor but in poorer condition. Of note is a bench along the western wall of this larger room (40 cm wide and 25 cm tall; Plate 7).

The North-East Church complex has benches of similar proportions in a large number of its rooms. In the *domus* benches line both aisles. The south vaulted chamber has benches on three walls. The west chamber inside the gate and a partially excavated chamber on the north side of the church have benches on their western walls. Small benches have been found in the north medial chamber and in the *skeuophylakion*. Lacunae for several benches can be seen along the east edge of the portico on the west side of W511. We suspect that the benches may be indicative of the memorial nature of the complex. The entrance hall for the church (L200) of the Monastery of St. Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim has benches on three sides. At the center of the hall is a tombstone

³ G. M. Fitzgerald, *A Sixth Century Monastery at Beth-Shan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939) Plate 2.

⁴ Yitzhak Magen, "The Monastery of St. Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim," in *Ancient Churches Revealed*, edited by Yoram Tsafrir (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993) 171.

⁵ Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1992) 177.

with the inscription, “Tomb of Paul, the priest and archimandrite.”⁶ Likewise, the mortuary church at Jerash has benches on three sides.⁷

We further suggest that the large room inside the south gate had a particular function. We note, in addition to its size, that this room stands opposite the only entrance to the church kept open after other usage ceased. This entrance provided access to the tomb of the elderly woman, whose ongoing veneration has been previously discussed. Last year we posited that the large *diakonicon* with its cistern may have been part of a healing cult centered at the tomb of the woman. We therefore speculate that this western chamber served as a place for *incubatio* – prayer, fasting and even deprivation of sleep prior to participation in healing rites.⁸

A least one wall has been identified going west from W591. A large pot (45-50 cm) containing several cooking pots and egg shells was retrieved from the area west of W591. To the north of the putative incubation chamber is a north-south wall (W1207) tied in to W574. It is the eastern wall of a small chamber (1.6 x 2.2 m) with a threshold facing west. The door closed from inside this cell and provided access to a paved surface where a hand mill was recovered. To the east of W1207 is a partially exposed fixture of uncertain usage approached by a plaster floor at a level slightly higher than the stylobate. A limestone block that may have been part of a protruding shelf was recovered from the fill. The shelf was inscribed with a flaired cross (17 x 17 cm; Plate 8). The full extent of the chambers west of the portico has yet to be revealed.

Cistern D (with contributions by Kristina Naumann)

The cistern in the north-east corner of the south vaulted chamber was excavated and documented in 2006. It is the smallest of the four cisterns so far identified in the North-East Church complex, measuring approximately 4.77 m³ (Figure 4).⁹ It was constructed by digging a pit down and slightly into the bedrock. Crudely worked stone blocks were stacked in layers to construct the cavity and neck of the cistern. The cistern was then sealed with two layers of plaster, the second perhaps being applied later. The initial

⁶ Magen 178.

⁷ H. C. Butler, *Early Churches of Syria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1929) 213.

⁸For a parallel example of a place of incubation, see the discussion of the basilica at Dor along with pertinent citations from Greek and early Christian healing sources in Claudine Dauphin, “On the Pilgrim’s Way to the Holy City of Jerusalem: The Basilica of Dor in Israel,” in *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*, edited by John R. Bartlett (New York: Routledge, 1997) 159-160.

⁹ The other cisterns of the NEC are larger: Cistern A is about 15 m³, Cistern B is about 13 m³, and Cistern C is about 29 m³.

layer was hard grayish plaster with fine agate particles (1-2 mm; medium sand No. 10-40). The secondary layer was softer and lighter with larger agate (4-7 mm; fine gravel).

Recovered from the top layer of destruction fill in the cistern was a gold belt element likely from the same hoard recovered last year. However its shape and patterning are distinctly different. The shape of the obverse is similar to a tulip flower (2.12 x 2.21 cm; Plate 9). The metal is 0.1 cm thick. The bent edges yield a thickness of 0.36 cm. The obverse has an outer decorative border interspersed with squares and half moons. Tiny jewels seem to be impressed into the border. Within the border are outlines of two tears with their upper points turned outwards. Inside each tear are stylistic representations of a young plant coming forth from a bulb. On the reverse are two eyehooks protruding 1.1 cm from the metal. A small repair to one of the tear drops is also visible, marked with a cruciform jeweler's stamp. A dating to the late 6th or early 7th century seems plausible.¹⁰

The topmost part of the fill contained many large pieces of crumbling limestone and basalt. The thinner pieces of basalt (under 10 cm) may be from the broken cistern cover, as the 2005 excavation found no lid. A large concentration of bones was uncovered in the southeast section of the floor. Several pieces of skull, a canine molar and numerous ribs and leg bones were among the pieces removed. Considering the size and shape of the bones, they may come from a dog or jackal. Other pieces of animal bones were found in the upper fill, including a large tooth (bovine?), several rat or small mammal skulls and some vertebrae (possibly goat or sheep).

Numerous pieces of a roof tile were removed from the southwest section of the cistern. Several large pieces and numerous small pieces of pottery were also taken from the floor. A field reading placed these as Byzantine/Umayyad. As the excavation continued downward, the soil became finer. Fewer pieces of pottery were unearthed, but more pieces of tesserae (some in clusters) were found. The number of bones also decreased, although many tiny bones from a rat or mouse were still brought up. In this middle layer a heavily oxidized, circular coin was discovered (elevation 128.46 m; see coin report for NEC #169). Several two-to-three inch narrow pieces of rusted metal were removed from this lower fill layer. At elevation 128.44 m, a layer of highly-compact, grayish silt was found (L 1204), likely formed during the cistern's use as a collector of water in Byzantine times. The silt layer was no more than 20-25 cm thick.

¹⁰ For a fuller discussion, see Arthur Segal et al., *Hippos-Sussita: Sixth Season of Excavations July 2005* (Haifa, Israel: Zinman Institute of Archaeology, 2005) 69-70.

Central Masonry Tomb

After work on the masonry tomb in the 2004 season, we speculated that the sarcophagus inside the chamber was perched above an earlier burial. This season, we removed the sarcophagus in order to excavate the rest of the chamber (Plate 10). The sarcophagus had been placed on rough stones that lined the north, west, and south edges of the masonry chamber (Figure 5). Discoloration of the remaining soil (2.5 YR 5/1) indicates the outline of a decayed wooden box (Plate 11). Twenty six fragments of iron nails are supportive of this proposal, as is a lead corner bracket (7 x 6 cm) recovered from the fill. Other flat fragments of lead were also recovered, one as large as 20 x 8 cm. However, this lead was not from any identifiable item. It is smooth on one side, and speckled with soil and fine to medium sand on the other side, as if it were poured out on soil. We speculate that this lead may have come from the manufacture of the lead pipe used to convey liquid offerings into the sarcophagus.

Numerous bone fragments were recovered in the area beside and under the sarcophagus.¹¹ In the collection are three lunate bones of which there are only two in a

¹¹ The following field catalogue is courtesy of Drs. Jay Anders and Susan Pratt:

Square/Locus	Date	Basket	
B2 L543	3-Jul-06	2033	Left temporal bone
			8cm distal tibia
B2 L543	4-Jul-06	2039	4cm distal radius
			4cm of ? Scapula
			metatarsal bone
			distal metatarsal
			? Upper extremity articular surface
			2cm rib fragment
			fibula fragment ? Juvenile
			fibula fragment ? Juvenile
			skull fragment 3cm x 2cm
			24 bone fragments
B2 L543	5-Jul-06	2044	Meta tarsal complete?adult
			5 cm rib fragment
			6 cm clavicle fragment
			?navicular bone complete
			19 bone fragments
B2 L590	5-Jul-06	2047	10 cm long bone fragment
			distal metatarsal
			6 metatarsal bones
			? Cuneiform bone
			skull fragment
			2 vertebral body fragments

human body. The bones also seem to represent both an adult and a juvenile. A large metatarsal bone likely belongs to a male. So we have remains from an adult male and a juvenile of indeterminate sex.

We recovered no major bones, so we surmise that the two burials were removed leaving only fragments and the above listed items. Nevertheless, those who inserted the sarcophagus on top of the remains of a coffin intentionally raised the sarcophagus above the coffin about 20-25cm. That which was below was too revered to be crushed or to be

			metarsal bone large most likely male
			?fibula
			distal fibula
			? First cuneiform
			? Cunieform bone
			3 teeth
			45 bone fragments
B2 L590	6-Jul-06	2051	7 upper extremity phalanges mixture of adult and juvenile
			1 adult metacarpal
			2 lower extremity metatarsal
			1 lower extremity distal metatarsal
			1 upper extremity distal phalange ? Juvenile
			6 teeth
			2 partial teeth
			1 first metatarsal
			2 navicular bones
			3 lunate bones of differing sizes ? Adult and juvenile
			3 caral bones type unknown
			? partial talus
			56 bone fragments
B2 L590	9-Jul-06	2057	5 metatarsels
			2 distal metatarsals
			7 metacarpals
			3 distal metacarpals
			5 teeth
			2 partial teeth
			1 navicular bone
			1 partial vertebra
			9 bone fragments
B2 L596	10-Jul-06	2064	2 metacarpals
			1 partial metacarpal
			1 distal metacarpal
			1 fragment of a metacarpal
			1 rib fragment
			9 bone fragments

swept away. It is possible that the removal reflect the practice of extracting relics, already observed in the tomb of the elderly women. But we also have to consider the possibility that the bodies interred below were mostly exhumed and placed into the sarcophagus along with the last burial. These final burials in the sarcophagus were revered with oil/wine through a lead pipe and no provision was made for ongoing reverence of what was below.

Complete excavation of the chamber also allowed for clarification of its relationship to the North-East Church complex. Cross sections (Fig. 6) and measurements¹² show that the gap between F516 and the plaster layer of F517 is 18-20cm. The gap between the plaster layer of F517 and the top course of masonry stones is 13-17cm. The plaster of F517 covers over the top course of the masonry tomb. The thickness of the covering stones is 18-20 cm, the middle surviving stone of which has a piece of *opus sectile* paving adhering to its upper side. So the masonry tomb was constructed prior to the laying of the original chancel floor (F517). Subsequently, when the sarcophagus was inserted, a later floor (F516) was placed over the top of the tomb, likely reusing some of the *opus sectile* tiles and holding in place the lead pipe used to reverence the burials below. As no previous construction has been discovered around the masonry tomb, we conclude that the masonry tomb is contemporaneous with the original floor of the chancel. As the tomb of the elderly woman in the south section of the chancel is also contemporaneous with F517, the church must have been built to house both tombs. Seemly over time the cult of the woman overshadowed the primacy of position of the masonry tomb.

Nave Mosaic

Major conservation and cleaning of the nave mosaic was conducted under the direction of Ewa Radziejowska.

¹² Elevations:

Plaster floor of the chamber east end	129.227
Plaster floor of the chamber west end	129.151
Bedrock lowest exposed level	129.053
Cross section examining floors on west end:	
F516	130.854
Plaster layer of F517	130.650
Top course of masonry tomb	130.521
Cross section examining floors on east end	
F516	130.941
Plaster layer of F517	130.760
Top course of masonry tomb	130.596

Only small fragments of the upper F589 remain. It seems to have been entirely geometric in design. At the east end along the chancel screen base and next to the southern stylobate was a border of crosswise arrangements (Avi-Yonah patterns F4 and F9¹³) framed by a white field with random tesserae in orange and yellow and by a black square border two tesserae wide with decorative corners (Plate 12). Other major portions of the eastern part were covered with geometric patterns (Plate 13). The square-in-square pattern is similar to the one previously observed in the north aisle of the NEC and in intercolumnar panel 2 at Kursi.¹⁴ Western portions of the nave were apparently covered with Avi-Yonah pattern J3¹⁵ beginning at about 6.8 m west of the base of the chancel screen. A white field some 14 tesserae in width abutted W510 (Plate 14). The field is interspersed with randomly placed colored tesserae. A border of two bands of single rows of black tesserae separated by five rows of white tesserae initiate a field of diamond geometrics bordered by black tesserae. Portions of this F589 were lifted to reveal the lower F544.

The late sixth-century date of the mosaics at Kursi suggests a similar date for the geometric floor of the North-East Church complex. As Karen Britt has discussed in her recent dissertation, geometric compositions and uniform carpet patterns are part of a “stylistic shift in the pavements of the fifth and sixth centuries. The compositional arrangement of fifth century mosaics displays a degree of spontaneity and liveliness that gave way to predictability and repetitiveness during the sixth century.”¹⁶ The geometric patterns of F589 covered over the complexity and beauty of F544.

Only fragments of the western five meters of F544 remain (Plate 15; Fig. 7). A complex series of borders surround two rows of six overlapping medallions on the east, south, and west. The outermost border is a band of three black tesserae. Inside is a double band of swastikas, the arms of which are composed of a double row of black tesserae. Fourteen such swastikas would have spanned the width of the nave. A double row of eight swastikas separate the easterly and westerly bands. The swastikas alternate between left- and right-facing, some of which are more complex than others. Lacunae make it difficult to determine a precise pattern of alternation between the four forms

¹³ M. Avi-Yonah, “Mosaic Pavements in Palestine,” *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine* 2 (1933): 139.

¹⁴ Vassilios Tzaferis, “The Excavations of Kursi-Gerasa,” *Antiqot* (English Series) volume 16 (Ministry of Education and Culture: Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums, 1983) Plate 8.5.

¹⁵ Avi-Yonah 141.

¹⁶ Karen Britt, *Mosaics in the Byzantine Churches of Palestine: Innovation or Replication?* (Bloomington, Indiana: unpublished PhD dissertation at Indiana University, 2003) 251.

(right-facing, left-facing, right-facing complex, and left-facing complex). The corners of each swastika and the outer borders are linked by diagonals composed of two by two clusters of black tesserae. In the center of the hexagonal spaces created by the diagonals and the edges of the swastikas are crosswise arrangements in Avi-Yonah pattern F2.¹⁷ This border is somewhat reminiscent of the field of the south aisle at Shavei Zion which was dated by Avi-Yonah to the beginning of the fifth century.¹⁸

Inside the band of mosaics are three plain bands: the first consisting of three black tesserae, the second of five white tesserae, and the third of three black tesserae. Moving inward, the next band is Avi-Yonah B8 in red, separated by a band of four white tesserae from a guilloche (Avi-Yonah B4) with alternating strands of five tesserae.¹⁹ One strand is black, white, pink, red, black; the other is black, white, yellow, orange, black. A single row of white tesserae separate the guilloche from a band of red triangles (Avi-Yonah A6²⁰). Two rows of white tesserae and two rows of black tesserae complete the border.

Only fragments of the medallions remain. Each medallion was surrounded by a border of eleven tesserae. The borders overlap neighboring medallions. Some borders were a spectrum of colors (black to blues to whites to pinks to reds to black). Others are a background spectrum (black to pink to red to pink to black) overlain by alternating half circles (white to gray to blue to white). Still others show gold and brown fish on a field of red.

The spaces between the medallions and the external border are filled with birds. Visible between easterly medallions are a duck with raised wings (Plate 16) and a walking bird (Plate 17). Between the two southerly medallions, a head of another duck may be detected (Plate 18). These birds are strikingly similar to the birds adorning the floor of the Kyria Maria memorial chapel in a monastery at Scythopolis.²¹ Karen Britt writes that the birds confirm the commemorative function of the space and “should be interpreted as the blessed who take flight to heaven.”²²

¹⁷ Avi-Yonah 139.

¹⁸ M. Prausnitz, *Excavations at Shavei Zion: The Early Christian Church* (Rome: Centro per le antichità e la storia dell'arte del Vicino Oriente, 1967) 51-53. See also the Portico of the Rivers in the House of Porticos in D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1971) vol.2, plate 98c.

¹⁹ Avi-Yonah 138.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ G. M. Fitzgerald, *A Sixth Century Monastery at Beth-Shan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), Plate XIV.

²² Britt 315.

In the center of the mosaic, the fragmentary borders of four medallions overlap leaving a field of thirteen by nineteen white tesserae bounded by a row of single black tesserae. In the center of the field is a crosswise arrangement (Avi-Yonah F11²³). The cross is a single row of black tesserae with a white center. Each corner arrangement begins with a white tesserae and proceeds outward through yellow to brown. We presume similar crosswise arrangements between other overlapping medallions.

The two southerly medallions are partially intact. The westerly medallion seems to be a feline creature, perhaps a young lion, as suggested by the claws in the feet. In the background of the medallion is a palm tree with three branches (Plate 19). The easterly animal has small hoofs. It may be a gazelle. In the background is a palm tree of five or more branches (Plate 20). Likely, the other medallions displayed similar animals. Some calendric function may be implied by the presence of twelve medallions.

While the cleaning of F544 did not reveal inscriptional insight into the church's function, the beauty of the remaining fragments is significant and suggestive of an early fifth century date for the floor. Perhaps future probes under the floor will provide sought-for confirmation.

Conservation

Conservation efforts during the 2006 season focused exclusively on the stabilization and cleaning of the floors in the nave of the North-East Church complex. The work was supervised by Ewa Radziejowska. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the second Lebanon War led to the departure of many volunteers including the conservation supervisor. The floor was recovered with layers of plastic, fine dirt and fabric. Conservation work will resume in 2007.

²³ Avi-Yonah 139.