

THE EXCAVATION OF GEZER: SUPPLEMENTARY
DETAILS.¹

By R. A. S. MACALISTER, M.A., F.S.A.

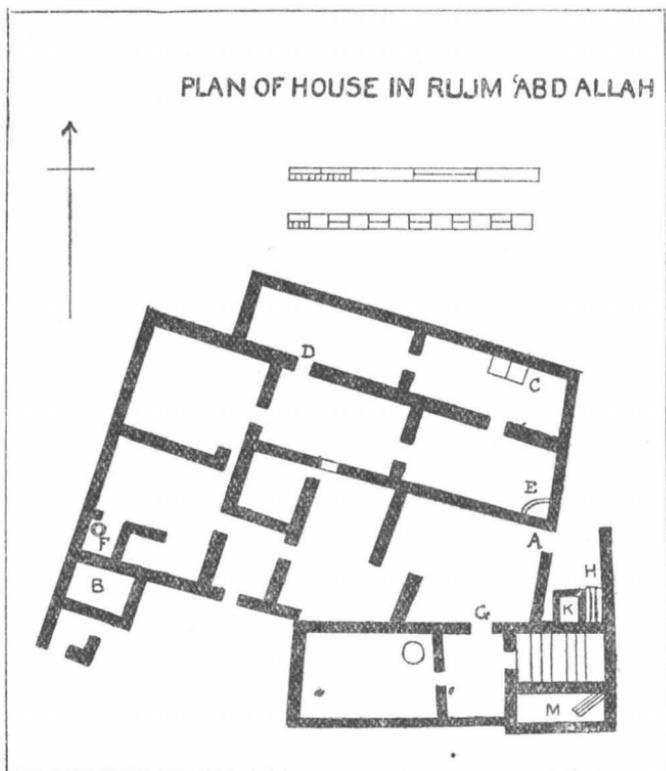
§ I.—BUILDINGS.

IN the Nineteenth Report on the excavation of Gezer I mentioned that an important house of the Hellenistic period was under examination (*Q.S.*, 1908, p. 280). This has now been finished and I am enabled to present its plan (Plate I). It is, with one important exception,² the most complete residential building that has been found, and must have belonged to some person of note. Unfortunately nothing of special interest was found within its precincts. The ruins made a small mound on the surface of the hill: this mound was known as *Rujm 'Abd Allah*, or "‘Abd Allah's Cairn," after a certain ‘Abd Allah who, a generation ago, died from the bite of a snake which he received on this spot. As an unusually complete example of an early Palestinian house this plan is worthy of careful study.

The main entrance is at A. This entrance gives admission to a space which, from its breadth, was probably an open courtyard. It will be noticed that in general the covered chambers are long and narrow. This is a characteristic of Gezerite rooms almost from the first, and is evidently due to the difficulty of roofing wide spaces without the use of an arch. The irregularity of the setting out of the angles will also be noticed: from this I infer that no safe deductions as to cubital lengths can be drawn from the measurements of the structure.

¹ [Held over from the previous reports.—*Ed.*]

² The exception is a large and early palace on the Western Hill, which has already been partly described, and in the courtyard of which the great tunnel was excavated.



On the left-hand side of the courtyard is a doorway which admits to a building that was evidently independent of the main dwelling. To this building, which contained the domestic cistern, we shall return later. Passing through an opening between the ends of two overlapping walls, we enter a second court, out of which open the entrances to the house-rooms. These rooms are in all twelve in number. They communicate with one another by door-

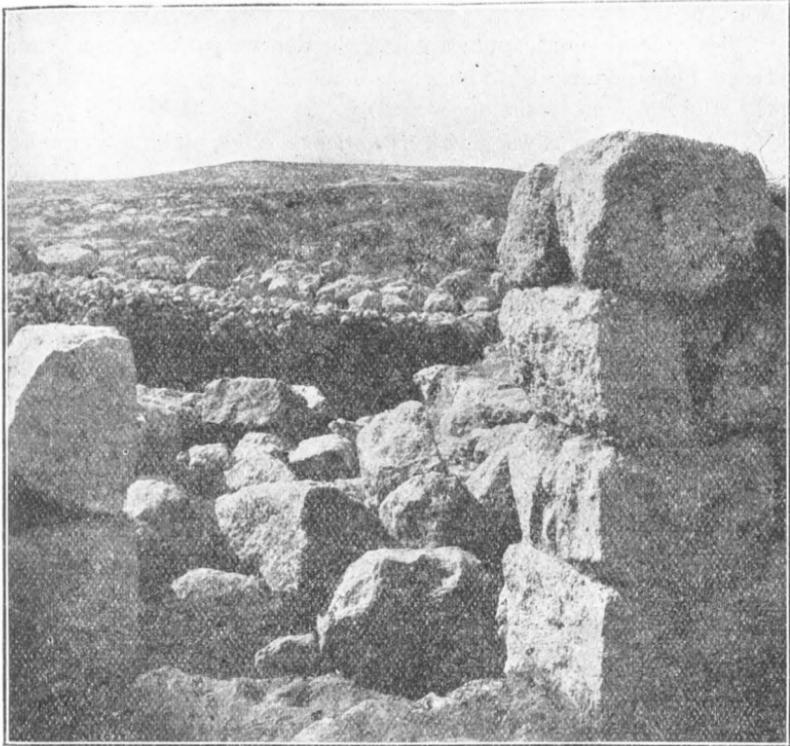


Fig. 1.—House in Rujm 'Abd Allah: Entrance to Cistern and Granary.

ways—the entrance to the chamber marked B is lost owing to the destruction of the walls, but otherwise the inter-relation of the rooms is obvious from the plan. As usual, the walls are built of rough field-stones, set in mud. A small fragment of plaster was found loose in one of the chambers, about the size of the palm of a man's hand, adorned with green and red stripes. This gave a hint of painted mural decoration masking the bare stone walls; but all

other trace of ornament had perished. The walls were standing to a maximum height of 3 feet, except in one place where about 6 feet remained.

At C were two masonry steps, apparently the lowest steps of a staircase leading either to the flat roof of the house or else to an upper story. The latter is the more likely, as steps to the roof would probably be outside the house, or at least in the courtyard. If so, this is the only indication of a second storey found in any house at Gezer.

There is nothing to indicate how the doorways were closed, save that a hole, possibly for a bolt, was drilled in the face of a stone in the western jamb of the doorway D.

The structure E was a row of stones on edge, making a circular quadrant that filled the corner in which it was erected. It was possibly a hearth. F was a brick oven, or *tannār*, of the common type.

Returning now to the entrance courtyard, we pass through the doorway G, which is shown in the photographic view, Fig. 1. This and Fig. 2 are the most successful of several photographs taken of details of this house, and they give a good idea of its masonry. The unusual number of four courses remained standing of the western jamb of the doorway G. It opened into a plain chamber, with doors to the right and left. That to the right (west) admitted to a room, the only noticeable feature in which was a cylindrical pit in the floor, 3 feet 7 inches in diameter, 6 feet 11 inches deep, cemented—probably meant for the storage of grain. The left-hand doorway admitted to the cistern, shewn in Fig. 2, to which I would call special attention.

The water was evidently collected from the roof by a conduit, the lower end of which remains (marked H in both plan and photograph). At the point where the existing fragment begins the water would fall into the small square cemented receptacle K, through a narrow hole in its corner that will be seen indicated in the plan. This served the purpose of a refining-vat, the washings from the roof being collected in it and prevented from falling into the cistern itself. The water, when the sediment had sunk to the bottom, was allowed to run into the cistern through the hole marked L in the photograph. The small opening into the vat K could be closed at pleasure with a stone or pad, in which case the water would continue to run along the conduit H, through the wall of the cistern, and finally escape in the cess-pool M.

The cistern itself measures 13 feet 2 inches in length, 8 feet 9 inches in breadth, and 7 feet 3½ inches deep below the level of the topmost step. It is built of square blocks and cemented. Six steps lead down to the bottom, with a rise ranging from 9 to

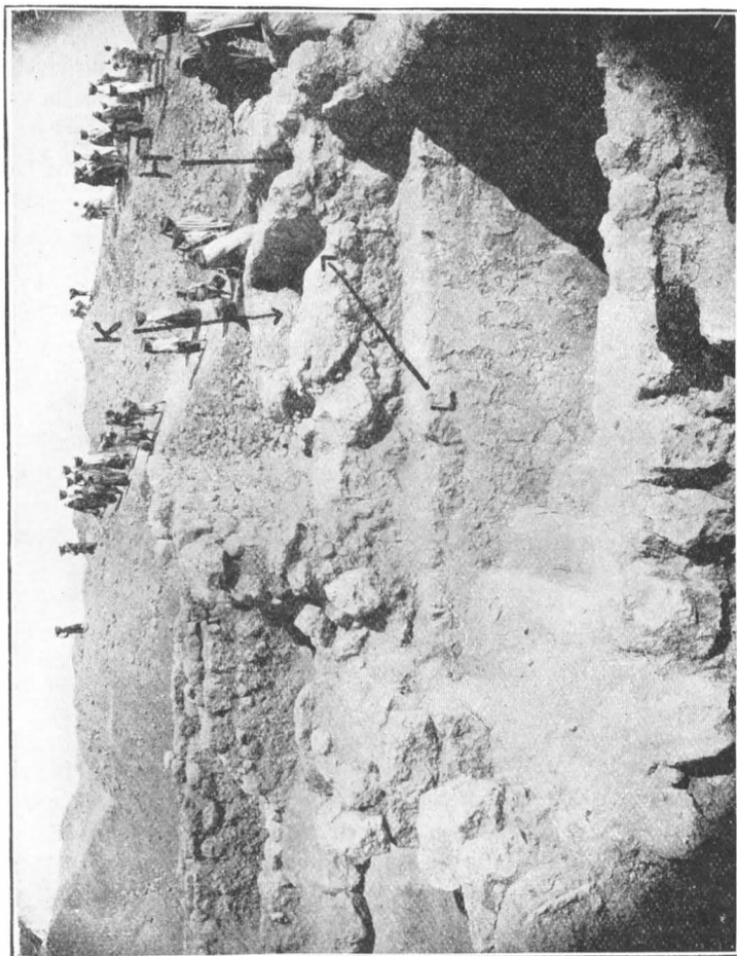


Fig. 2.—Cistern of House in Rujm 'Abd Allah.

12 inches (except the lowest step, which is 2 feet high), and a tread of 1 foot 3 inches to 2 feet 7 inches, leaving 3 feet 3 inches clear of steps at the lower end. It will be noticed that the steps are arranged in threes, one broad and two narrow. Several other

cisterns like this have been found from time to time, but none so complete and so clearly a part of the structure with which it is associated.

§ II.—AN OLIVE PRESS.

One of the most complete of the early olive presses discovered in the excavation was found in the course of the work described in the Eighteenth Report. It is represented, in plan and section, in Fig. 3. A circular disc of stone, AA, was surrounded by a dwarf wall: the outer diameter of this wall was 7 feet 4 inches, the height

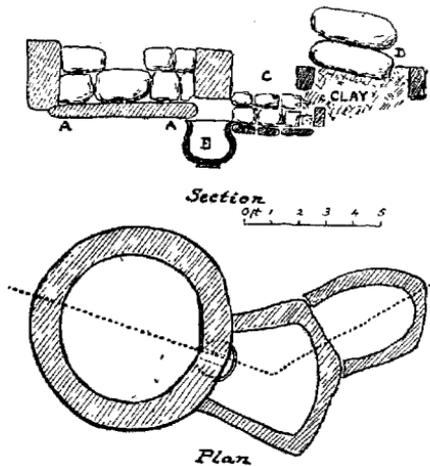


Fig. 3.—Olive Press.

2 feet 3 inches. A channel was left open under one side of this wall, communicating directly with a large bowl, B: this bowl was a specimen of the common type, of Mycenaean origin, frequently found ornamented with a painted frieze of birds and other patterns. This example, however, had only two or three red lines encircling the side. Behind was a smaller enclosure, C, of irregular shape, and at a lower level: the floor of which was paved with small stones. Behind this again was another enclosure, D, yet smaller, and at a higher level. This was full of clay, on which rested three large stones 2 feet 4 inches in length, and of a rounded section.¹ It is

¹ Only two are shown in the drawing, because the third was behind and hidden by them in the aspect from which the drawing is taken.

evident that the layer of clay on which these stones rest indicate the original surface of the ground, in which the press is sunk.

The mode of operation is obvious. The olives being piled on the flat stone A, were crushed with the rolling stones that, when not in use, were piled up in D. The expressed juice ran into the bowl, B—which actually contained a number of olive-stones—and was collected by an operator standing in the space C.

The only important “find” since the last report was written was a small bronze weight, bearing two marks thus || and the word לִמְלֶךְ in characters similar to those in which the same word is used on the jar-handles. The standard is evidently the same as that of the weights inscribed Q. Probably we have here a *government* standard, distinguished from more or less unauthorised local standards; an exact analogy is offered by the local and government currencies in modern Turkey. This weight is of interest and may be of importance in discussing the problem of the jar-handles with “royal stamps.”

THE GEZER INSCRIPTION.

By the Rev. G. B. GRAY, D.D., D.Litt.

MY notes, which accompanied the first publication of this inscription, had to be put together more hastily than I could have wished, and I gladly take the opportunity afforded me by the Editor of explaining how far subsequent discussion has modified views which I then expressed.

Father Vincent, who has discussed this inscription most fully and with great acuteness (see *Revue Biblique*, April, 1909), has had the advantage of seeing the stone. I fully recognize that an examination of the stone might bring me into greater or more decisive agreement with him on some points on which, with only the facsimile before me, I cannot see reason for abandoning my first conclusions.

1. I maintain my opinion that the calendar inscription is complete. It is true that Prof. Lidzbarski thought an original