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Jerusalem, the Garden Tomb

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Final Report

During August 2006, an excavation was conducted in the Garden Tomb, north of the Damascus Gate (Permit No. A-4873*; map ref. NIG 22193/63232; OIG 17193/13232). The excavation, on behalf of the Antiquities Authority and with financial support of the Wyatt Archaeological Research Foundation (WAR) of Tennessee in the United States, was directed by Y. Zelinger, with the assistance of V. Essman and V. Pirsky (surveying), T. Sagiv (field photography), I. Berin (final plans) and C. Hersch (pottery drawing).

The excavation was conducted south of the natural bedrock outcrop that was identified by General C. Gordon in 1883 as Golgotha, located within the precincts of the Garden Tomb, north of the Damascus Gate (Fig. 1). R. Wyatt conducted an excavation in the 1980s, which revealed a number of subterranean cavities. In the wake of the excavation carried out in 2005, which cleaned and documented the cavities ([HA-ESI 118](http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.asp?id=327&mag_id=111) (http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.asp?id=327&mag_id=111)), a square (5 × 7 m) was opened for the purpose of exposing the remains from surface to the underground cavities. Meager remains of agricultural installations that dated to the Roman and Byzantine periods were exposed.

Stratum 1

A wall (W502; 0.35 × 4.50 m, height 1.2 m; Figs. 2, 3), built of ashlar stones and a core of small stones, was exposed in the southern side of the square, at a depth of c. 0.4 m below surface. It seems that the wall was part of a building from the Islamic period, which extended beyond the limits of the excavation. The foundation (depth 0.7 m) of W502 was wider than its upper part and a foundation trench (1.2 m) that reached bedrock contained

bonding material mixed with stones and plaster. The foundation trench had cut through the remains of a tamped-chalk floor that was bonded with lime and charcoal. It was impossible to date the floor due to the absence of any diagnostic potsherds below it.

Stratum 2

A wall (W510; height 1.2 m; see Fig. 3), built of small stones and founded on bedrock, was exposed some 4.2 m below surface. It delimited a staircase (0.8 × 0.9 m) of which three steps survived; the stratigraphic context of the staircase was unclear. It seems that the region was disturbed by the Wyatt excavation that had apparently damaged the continuation of the staircase. Evidence of this excavation could be seen in the remains of ropes, tools and refuse that were found inside the tunnel that was cleared close to bedrock surface. The upper part of an oval-shaped room was exposed in the 2005 season south of the staircase.

The curved side of a plastered water cistern (diam. 5 m) was exposed in the western part of the square. The fill in the cistern (L514) contained fragments of pottery vessels from the first–second centuries CE, including a jar (Fig. 4:1), a jug (Fig. 4:2) and a juglet (Fig. 4:3); the third to sixth centuries CE, including bowls (Fig. 4:4–8) and a jar (Fig. 4:9), as well as an intact lamp (Fig. 4:10), dating to the third–fourth centuries CE, which is characteristic of the group of lamps with a piriform body and a lug handle whose provenance is the Jerusalem region. Other artifacts included a bone implement, notched and worked on its broad side (Fig. 4:11), which was probably used to decorate pottery vessels or to make thread and spin fabric, and a shell with two holes (Fig. 4:12) that was most likely strung on a necklace. Most of the cistern was situated beyond the limits of the square and due to safety constraints its excavation was not completed.

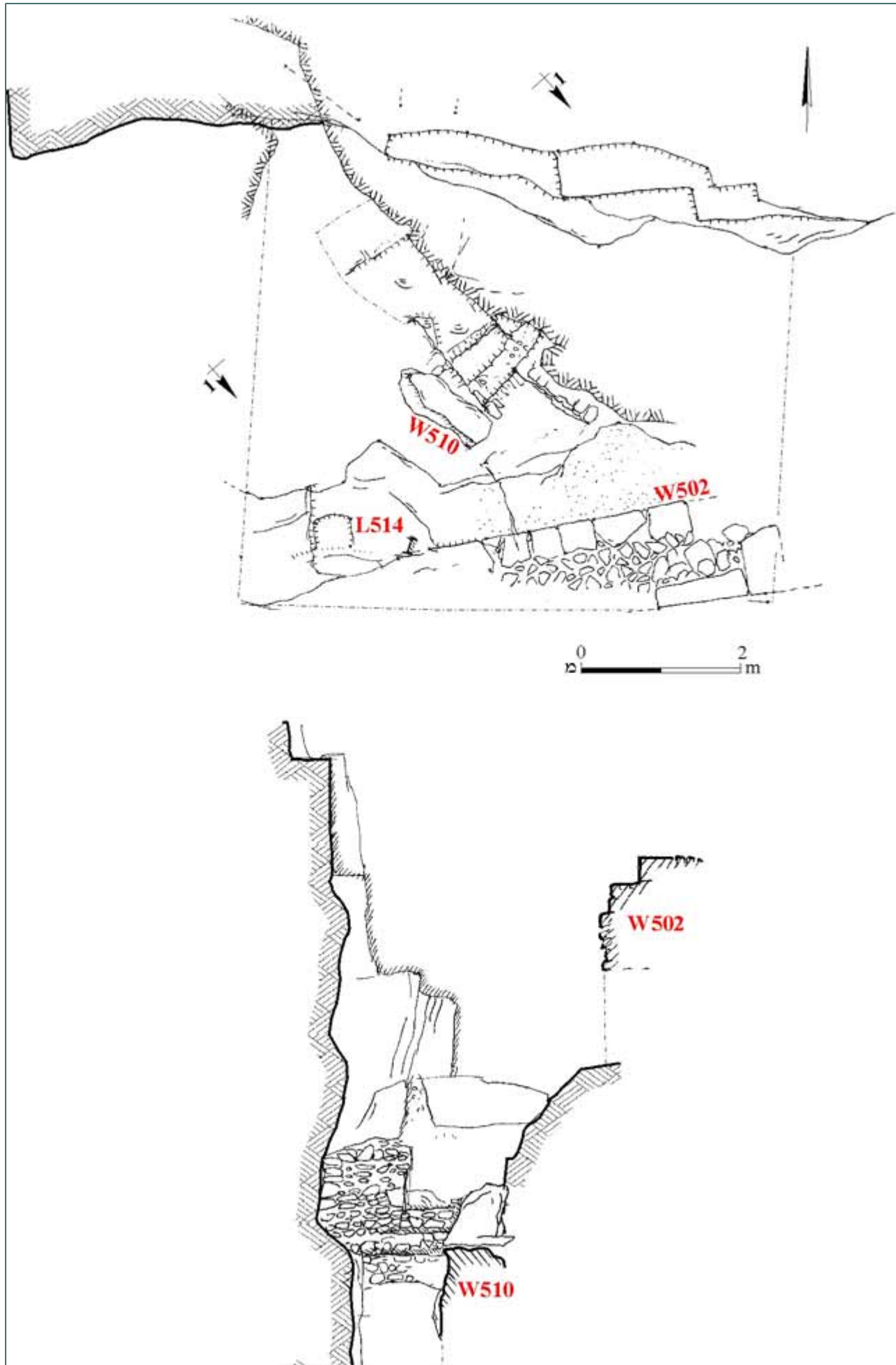
The remains probably represented installations that were built outside the city walls during the Late Roman and Byzantine periods. A building was constructed above the installations in a later period. One of the building's walls was exposed; however, ground penetrating

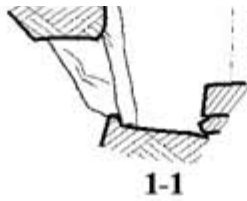
radar (GPR) tests indicated that the continuation of the structure was located south of the excavation's boundaries.

1. [Location map. \(Images//4873-1.jpg\)](#)
2. [Plan and section. \(Images//4873-2.jpg\)](#)
3. [Wall 502 and the foundation trench, looking southeast. \(Images//4873-3.jpg\)](#)
4. [Pottery and other artifacts. \(Images//4873-4.jpg\)](#)



1. [Location map. \(Images//4873-1.jpg\)](#)

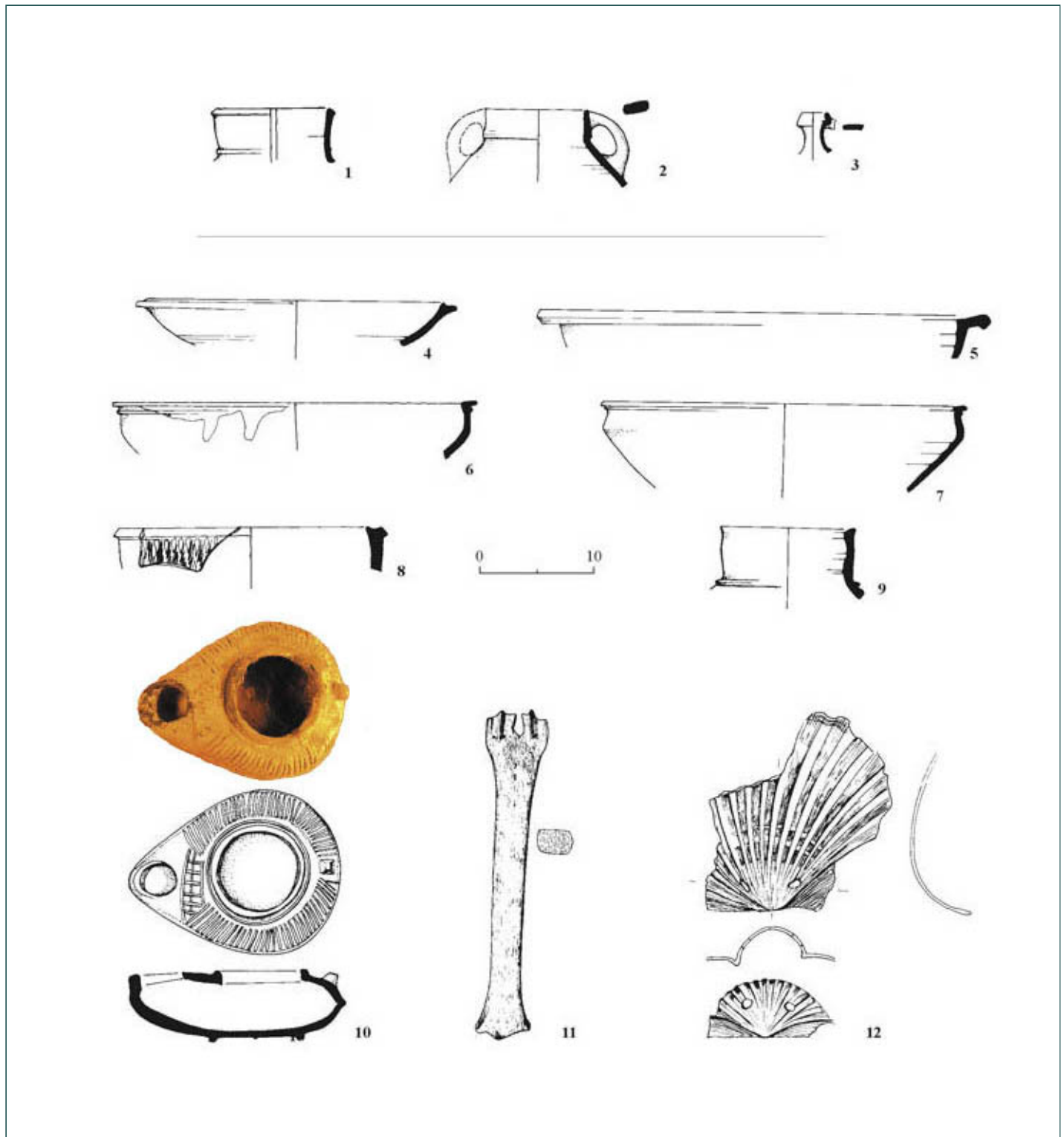




2. Plan and section.
(Images//4873-2.jpg)



3. Wall 502 and the foundation trench, looking southeast.
(Images//4873-3.jpg)



4. Pottery and other artifacts.
 (Images//4873-4.jpg)