Introduction:

The main goal of the 2000 excavation season for CB 2.4 was to further explore the series of rooms unearthed last season in the hopes of determining the serial dates of the walls, to better understand the wall’s relationships to each other, and to better understand the function of the walls within the context of the larger building. The decision was made to concentrate in the northeast and northwest quadrants, since work in these areas was already underway last season, however the northernmost 5x2m of the southwest quadrant were also excavated. 117 units of soil were removed and grouped into 25 distinct loci, including three “.1” sealed contexts numbered after their overlying loci. No new architectural loci were added, however 007 and 010 have been much better defined. The loci in turn suggest several distinct phases of activity, six in all, which take place within the context of CB 2.4. These phases are:

1. Wall Construction (Persian?)
2. Outside Fill and Floor Construction (Early Hellenistic)
3. Plaster Floors and Fill (Late Hellenistic)
4. Cleansing/Dumping Episode (Early Roman)
5. Robbing Episode (Byzantine?)
6. Modern Fill

This report will examine these six distinct phases and the loci which constitute them.

Phase 1: Wall Construction

The walls of the northwest room which were first exposed in the 1999 season of excavation, 007, and 010, were cleared and bottomed out this season. 007 appears to be constructed in two courses, perhaps during different phases. The upper course is composed mainly of large column drums, about a half meter in diameter. This upper course stops abruptly where 007 joins with 010. The lower course of 007 is of pier and rubble construction, and contains no columns. The lower course of 007 clearly joins with 010.

010 is a low wall, about 60cm in height. It runs into the southeast quadrant where it takes the designation of 035. It is built in one course, however it most likely had a higher course, perhaps of later date, which was robbed out in the disturbance of 042. It too is constructed with column drums with rubble fill in between.

These walls were originally believed to have been of a later construction within the confines of the larger building. The reused column drums were believed to have been from this earlier building, perhaps originally located in the courtyard of the building. However, it appears that the founding levels of 007 and 010 are in a Persian period fills (051). This fill covers the lower 30-50cm of both walls, and continues at least that far
below the bases. Approximately 15 cm above the base of the walls an ash layer, also
Persian in date, runs across most of the bisected quadrant. This ash layer might signify a
floor, as mudbrick also occurred in a higher frequency. No foundation trenches were
apparent, so no firm dates on the walls could be established. But it appears that these
walls could have been founded as early as the Persian period.

Phase 2: Outside Fill and Floor Construction (Early Hellenistic)

Locus 050, located on top of the Persian layer in the northwest quadrant, as well
as 049 in the southwest quadrant, begin an entirely new phase. Both loci are packed with
vast amounts of pottery, mostly unidentified or pre-Persian. There is also a fair amount
of rubble throughout these loci. It appears that these loci are fill brought in from an
outside area in order to raise the level of the floor (048, and 037). With this fill, the level
is raised to the top of 010. Unfortunately, the few diagnostic pieces obtained from these
loci may be contamination. 050 actually cuts into the later pit area of 035 in the northwest
quadrant. 049 contained one small piece of Cypriot Sigillata, although it bordered on and
was under the area of the later ribbet's trench (042).

Above this fill in the northwest quadrant is approximately 10 cm of a fine, loose,
sandy soil, yellowish brown in color, which extends across the whole of the room. The
LDM of this layer is a Hellenistic painted lopacite. This deposit lies directly below a
floor layer (047, 038). 037 is a patch of plaster in the northwest quadrant, while 038 is
the earth surrounding the plaster and extending across the whole room. 038 contains
patchy plaster and lots of rubble, the remnants of a plaster floor seen in 037. The LDM of
038 is Local Fine, while 037 has no firm dates. However, it seems clear that this is an
early Hellenistic floor.

In the southwest quadrant another plaster floor is preserved (048), which abuts
one large stone placed on top of 010, perhaps part of the second course of the wall. 048
and 048.1 both contain pottery no later than the Persian period, however not much pottery
was retrieved. 048.1 rests on top of the layer of outside fill (049) and 048 is near the
level of the plaster patch in the northwest room, making the floors to appear to coincide.
Aho, adjacent to 048 is 047, a small reddish patch of earth which contained an
amphoriskos handle, dating it to the Hellenistic period.

Phase 3: Plaster Floors and Fill (Late Hellenistic)

Set above the early Hellenistic level in the Southwest quadrant is a series of
plaster floors. These highest floors, 044, is a thick, crumbly floor, in line with the plaster
divide which was taken up in the northwest quadrant during the 1999 season. Neither this
floor nor 044.1 contained any pottery later than Persian era, however the date of
this floor was pushed up by the patchy plaster underneath (045) which contained local
fine ware. 045 appears to actually consist of several floors packed tightly together, yet
they are so decayed that the underlying earth (046) could not be considered sealed. 045
also contained late Hellenistic material.

In the northwest quadrant this phase appears in the form of a floor layer, 034,
which was taken up in the cleaning pass, and a fill (036). This fill lies above 037.
Diagnostic pottery includes a Pompeian redware pan fragment and semifine biggy jar fragments. This fill and floor layer are clearly later than the below loci.

Phase 4: Cleaning/Dumping Episode (Early Roman)

In the northeast, the northwest, and the southwest rooms, disturbances dating to the early Roman period have been excavated. These disturbances are in the form of pits, dug through the previous layers of occupation and filled with debris. They are clearly the result of some type of cleanup operation which took place on the Tel at that time, perhaps after some sort of destruction phase. The contents of the pits in the northeast (033) and the northwest (035) are the same. They contain large boulders, rubble, and broken fragments of painted plaster. Also mixed in is a vast amount of coin and coarse ware dating to the late Hellenistic-Early Roman period and several coins. Joins between pottery from these two pits have been established, placing them contemporary to each other.

043, a pit cut through the plaster floors in the southwest quadrant has not produced this same assemblage, yet there is reason to suspect that it is contemporaneous. The last pass made across this pit revealed Roman coinage. Until then, the pit had only produced pottery with an LDM of late Hellenistic. However, the pit in the northwest quadrant followed the same pattern, and the level where the Roman coinage began to appear in the northwest quadrant is almost the same as the level of the last pass of 043. Therefore, if the 043 is dug further, it may produce the same sort of assemblage as 033 and 035.

Phase 5: Robbing Episode (Byzantine)

Although Byzantine occupation occurs on the western side of the Tel, the eastern side appears to be free of this phase of occupation. CB 2-4 has no clear Byzantine occupation layers. However, CB 2-4 has been affected by this occupation of the western Tel. A robber's trench was located along the border of the Northwest and Southwest quadrants, following the course of the underlying wall, CB 240.10. The robbering which occurred was either of the higher levels of CB 240.10 or, what seems more likely, a later phase of the wall built on top of CB 240.10, coinciding with the later wall which was removed in the 1999 season in the southeast quadrant.

The robber's trench itself (042) is made up of piles of rubble and larger rocks interspersed throughout the earth at different levels and in no perceptible arrangement. In the lower levels of the robber's trench just above 010, sherds of Roman jar and a Byzantine cockspur handle were unearthed, pushing the date of the disturbance up to the Byzantine period. One sherd of Ras al-Fukhrah was also found in the robber's trench, but this has been attributed to contamination as it was from a unit directly underlying the topsoil.

Phase 6: Modern Fill

Lying just above the latest Hellenistic floor in the southeast quadrant, modern fill had accumulated (Loc 040). This fill consisted of dark earth containing a fair quantity of pottery and stone inclusions. The LDM of this fill was Ras al-Fukhrah ware.
Locus 03.1 in the northeast quadrant could also be placed into this phase. Although the topsoil of the northeast quadrant had been removed in the 1999 season, this locus is, in actuality, the first pass in the underlying soil, clearing any possible contamination from either the topsoil layer or from accumulation since the previous season. The LDM is Ras al-Fukrah. This locus lies directly atop a Hellenistic layer.

Conclusion:

The function of the four rooms remains a mystery. No objects or architecture have been found to suggest a specific function. Likewise, the pottery assemblage contains a wide range of ceramics. No vessels have been excavated from CB 2.4 with the exception of the pits. Other than excavating the pit and removing one Hellenistic layer, no work was done in the northeast quadrant. Thus it sheds little light on the room's history. What is evident is that the northwest and southwest rooms were in use through the Hellenistic period. Layer after layer of plaster floors were put down in these rooms, attesting to their importance. In the southwest quadrant several consecutive floors were laid down in the late Hellenistic period, but since only the northern edge of the floors have been excavated, it is difficult to put them into any frame of context within that room.

The architecture in CB 2.4 most likely dates to the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic period based on the fill in the northwest quadrant which surrounds their founding levels. However, because the northwest quadrant was bisected and such a small area was excavated, it is difficult to determine the relationship of 007 and 010 to the entire room. Since no foundation trenches were evident, the surrounding fill (051) is the best evidence available at the moment to date 007 and 010. Placing the date of the walls within the Persian period however greatly pushes back the date of the structure in which the column drums were originally used. Further excavation of the northeast and southwest quadrants will provide a more complete picture, although deconstructing the walls will be necessary in order to gain a firm date.