When Sir Leonard Woolley decided in 1935 to launch a field project in the northern Levant he surveyed forty mounds along the Amuq and the Orontes Delta. Having selected four sites, he received permission to excavate one of them (al-Mina) and to dig sondages at three others including at Tell Atchana (Woolley 1937: 3–4). In the following year he conducted the first season at the site of Tell Atchana, a short ten-day mission in which two trenches were excavated. It was during that period of time that Woolley gave attention to the name of the site, noting that “on the French maps the mound is named Marouche and the tiny hamlet on its eastern end is called Atchana; Marouche is the name of a somewhat larger village half a mile away. Local use is divided between the two names, but on the whole Atchana seems the more generally employed” (Woolley 1936: 128, Note 2).1 Given the proximity of the site to the Orontes River it is surprising that the word Atchana literally means “ parched with thirst,” “thirsty,” or even “desirous.” Furthermore, “thirsty” Atchana is just 800 meters away from Tell Ta’yinat, a site whose name possibly derives from the Arabic word for spring or water source, perhaps reflecting a pre-modern notion

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1 The spelling of the name Atchana is French. The original Arabic name is transliterated as ´Aṭšāna, now commonly written in Turkish as Açıana or Açana. The Arabic name is the feminine singular form of ﻋﻄْﺸﺎن. Many of the sites in the Amuq (Amik in Turkish) carry both Turkish and Arabic names. Some of the names are translations from Arabic or Turkish names, homophonic to the Arabic name. I believe that this is the case with the Turkish name Varsişl, used today to denote the Atchana village as well as a larger village across the main road, north of the Antakya-Aleppo highway. It is most probable that Varsişl stands for the Arabic Marouche.
of how widely divergent the nature of these two nearby large mounds was.² Yet, there is reason to believe that not only were the inhabitants of ancient Alalakh far from thirsty, they were also confident in the constant supply of water; so much so that they included bathrooms and restrooms, equipped with flush toilets, in many of their residences, more so than in any other excavated Levantine site.

The vast majority of these Late Bronze Age restrooms were excavated by Woolley during the 1930s and 1940s, and he provided short descriptions of them, as well as related general plans (including some photos) in his final excavation report (Woolley 1955; see Appendix for detailed references). What may well be an additional restroom was unearthed in 2003 by the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago Tell Atchana (Alalakh) Expedition (Yener et al. 2004a: 2; 2004b: 28–29; 2005: 48, Fig. 4).³ With the exception of the Level IV palace bathrooms and restrooms, all of the restrooms excavated by Woolley were either removed or destroyed when a farmhouse was built on the excavation site following the completion of Woolley’s project, hence the unique significance of the recently excavated restroom. This restroom sheds further light on the ones previously excavated, and serves as an excellent point of departure for discussing these rooms and their function. Following a brief review of restrooms and toilets excavated throughout the Near East, I discuss the blueprint and structure of these facilities as they pertain to Tell Atchana, and especially the restroom excavated there during the 2003 season.⁴ At the center of my paper are restrooms,