

## Tel Beth-Shemesh Report, 2010

Number 3

As of today (June 27), we have lost three members of our team who have had to return home, but we had four others come in who will assist in the work. We will miss those who have left, but look forward to yet another productive week. In some ways it is hard to believe that we have only this week left (other ways—the 4:15 a.m. wake up I will learn to live without, but this is archaeology and I will tolerate the inconvenience).

This week has been very productive, multiplying our information about what we have labeled Levels 4 and 5 by factors. Having said that, you must understand that we did not have much information for those levels before, but this has been exciting. Levels 4-5 date to around 1100 BC and can be associated with the period of the Judges. The area we are working is rather narrow (i.e., about 15 feet) joining two other areas that were excavated years ago; it has been an interesting exercise to integrate the finds to the two earlier operations.



We have discovered what is likely the corner of a house, which had a pillar serving as the junction of the two walls. The round pillar has fallen down and you can see it leaning to the right in the picture. The house preserved a number of ovens (tabuns) one on top of the other—makes you wonder if the homemaker was trying to keep up with the “Samsons.”

In the square next door to the east the diggers discovered a fairly unique kernos head of a horse. The horse’s head shows a bridle very clearly and the head it pierced through the neck into the nose and was designed to pour liquids. These were usually attached to a hollow



ring with other representations around the top like the one to the left (although this sample is a photo of one in the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv). We really do not know what was their purpose, but they are usually assumed to have been for ritual of some kind.



Given the destructive nature of archaeology (i.e., we destroy the evidence that we find in order to descend to other data below) it is essential to keep careful records of what we find. Of course, one of those means is through photography. Many of our photos are taken with a very tall mast that raises a camera about 60 feet above the site. The camera is controlled with a cable to focus and rotate and then a wireless



signal trips the shutter to take the photo. This ritual occurs at least every other day and often daily depending on what we find. Sadly it is a rather time consuming effort, but well worth the effort. We would love to have a helium balloon to use which would permit better photos with less distortion, but at this point we lack the funding to do so.

One of the surprising finds from last year was a collection of broken sherds of some very decorative cups. These were taken to the restorers at Tel Aviv University who

worked through the year to glue them back together. Upon their restoration, we discovered that we have the only restorable examples of these vessels known from the ancient world—even the site where they originated (Knossos in Crete) has no restorable examples. We were shocked to discover this as was the scholar who works on the site in Knossos. The examples there are from a small area of Knossos and from a very narrow chronological window in the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC.



On the weekend, we traveled to Galilee and enjoyed an incredibly clear day driving around and seeing the geography. I do not remember any clearer day than we enjoyed and it was so cool, we were able to drive all the way down the Jordan Valley at the beginning of summer in the afternoon without turning on the air conditioner in the car! It was a fabulous day to travel. On the way we saw this herd of sheep and goats along the road. If you look carefully in the background you can see the Arab shepherds sitting around a campfire, probably drinking their Turkish coffee!

I hope all is well with you. Our excavation ends this coming Thursday, then it is time to rest a little and then begin processing the finds and trying to fit all this information together.

Dale