

Excavations at Tel Beth-Shemesh -- 2014 and Other Musings -- 3

Dale W. Manor

Field Director of the Excavations, Tel Beth-Shemesh
Professor of Archaeology and Bible, Harding University



The third weekend's tour was a little more relaxed. Not only were we tired, but we needed to address a good bit of paper work, which is always a big issue. Record keeping is vital in archaeology since it is necessary to remove what we have discovered to descend into levels below. Hence, photographs, descriptions, drawings, records of layers and features and details of micro finds are always necessary.



On Friday, we went to Jerusalem as we customarily do, but in the afternoon we went to the cenotaph of Samson and his father, Manoah. The cenotaph is at Tel Zorah on the hill north of Beth-Shemesh (above left). According to Judges 13:2 Zorah was Samson's home, but Judges 16:31 states that he was buried in his father's tomb between Zorah and Eshtaol. These kinds of details do not deter early tradition from "identifying" locations of events in the Bible—

regretfully tradition does not always allow facts to interfere!

The site of Zorah used to be a settlement, but Zvi tells me that it was bull-dozed a number



of years ago. It is no longer occupied, but remains of various periods still appear, among which is a wine press installation with a mosaic floor. With some maneuvering, we could see Beth-Shemesh from the site (above mid-left). From Beth-Shemesh, the site of Zorah is identified by a lack of trees on the horizon of the hills to the north (left).



We later visited the site of Azekah, which served as geographic reference point in the battle between the Philistines and Israelites in which David killed Goliath. We had caught a beautiful view of the sunset behind Azekah on an earlier occasion (left). On a clear day, the view from Azekah is breathtaking and takes in a number of sites mentioned in the Bible. The photo (left middle) shows (from left

to right) the sites of Jarmuth, Qeiyafa, valley of Elah, and Socoh. Qeiyafa is not mentioned in the Bible, but likely is the remains of an Israelite fortress which monitored the activities of the Philistines who threatened Israel's existence from the west. The Elah Valley had become a point of contention since apparently the Philistines were seeking to penetrate to

the interior of Canaan eastward through the valley. Azekah blocks the view from Qeiyafa in the middle of the photograph to that of Gath (now known generally as Tel es-Safi), the imposing Philistine site immediately to the west (bottom left).



On Saturday, Frank and I went on one of our forays to new sites. Apollonia was the first. It is on the coast north of Tel Aviv and began as a port for the Phoenicians. The site is roughly half way between ancient Joppa and Caesarea Maritima. Since there was a Hellenistic and later Roman settlement at the site and it was a town of reasonable wealth and influence, Roll suggests that the emissaries whom Cornelius sent to fetch Peter (Acts 10) may have spent the night there as they travelled in each direction.¹



¹ Israel Roll, "Apollonia," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (NY: Doubleday, 1992),

The wealth of the site is inferred not just from the remains, but the fact that harvesting of murex shellfish was a major activity for the site. Murex shellfish are the fish from which the highly prized purple dye was derived. King and Stager indicate that it required 8000 of these fish to yield one cubic centimeter of dye;² that would roughly equate to a size slightly smaller than a typical game dice. The labor-intensity to harvest the shellfish and to extract the dye contributed to its expense and fairly exclusive use by the elite of antiquity (including the Romans). We did not see evidence of the Phoenician activity, except perhaps the origins of the harbor, remains of which appear in the photo (above right).



The bulk of the remains were of a Crusader castle resting on the strata of the earlier cities. The site changed names a number of times through its history, beginning apparently in the 6th century BC as Ashuf, which is thought to preserve the name of Reshef (a god of the Phoenicians); in the Persian period it is thought to have been corrupted to Arshoph. With the Hellenistic influence, the name shifted to Apollonia,³ since Apollo was identified with Reshef. Eventually, the name reverted to another corruption of its original to become Arsuf during the Islamic period.⁴ The Crusader name was Arsour. This sequence of naming is often a key to identifying sites through history.



The town's southern moat is fairly well preserved (above right) and domestic remains have been excavated including some from the early Roman and Byzantine periods.

² Philip King and Lawrence Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 161.

³ Josephus refers to the site as Apollonia (Antiquities 13.395; Wars 1.166).

⁴ See the web site at Tel Aviv University, Institute of Archaeology, Apollonia-Arsuf Excavation Project (archaeology.tau.ac.il).

By far, the most impressive remains were the main fortress of the Crusaders (right). A sign at the site describes the heat of the battle: “Crusader Arsour fell in 1265 CE, in a land-battle against the Mameluke Sultan Balbars. The Mameluke army was well-organized: its soldiers filled the moat with wooden logs (a tactic that enabled them to bring siege machines close to the walls), dug tunnels under the walls and shot ballista missiles and arrows into the fortress. The Crusader defenders retaliated by burning the logs, digging tunnels and firing arrows and missiles at their attackers. The Mameluke armies far outnumbered the Crusaders; the town fell after forty days of siege, and three days later the fortress fell to the Mamelukes.”



A second moat separated the main part of the town from the citadel in which were piles of stone ballista graphically implying the intensity of the battle. I wonder how many times the stones flew back and forth before their final rest inside the citadel. The photo shows three stacks of the ballista (left).

Leaving Apollonia, we searched for the site of Adullam, one of the places to which David retreated in his flight from Saul (1 Sam 22:1). The text states that David fled to a cave near Adullam and that David’s brothers got word that David was there and came to him as well—likely fearing for their own lives at the hands of Saul. David then negotiated his parents’ safety into the custody of the king of Moab (1 Sam 22:3-4).⁵ The site is difficult to access, but offers a fantastic view of the valleys around it, thus affording a good watch. On the way into the site, we passed a tent dwelling of a Bedouin (left and right). In addition there were herds of sheep/goat grazing and migrating from place to place.



⁵ This avenue of safety is not as unusual as it might initially appear. David’s great-grandmother, Ruth, was a Moabite who had moved to Judah (cf. Ruth and especially 4:20-21). Perhaps helping in this negotiation would be the fact that Saul fought against the Moabites (1 Sam 14:47) and the Moabite king and David hence shared the same enemy in Saul. This alliance apparently fell apart after David became king when Moab became an object of David’s campaigns (2 Sam 8:2), but it is likely another person reigned in Moab by this time.

Adullam's strategic sentinel location likely explains Rehoboam's fortification of the site (2 Chr 11:7). Micah later lamented the fall of the site in a prophetic tirade, which likely occurred in Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BC during Hezekiah's reign.



While some evidence of excavation appears, I have not located any reports on those results. There was evidence of significantly thick walls, but it is unclear from what period they date.

We did, however, discover a "cave" (right). I cannot claim that it is *the* cave of Adullam mentioned in 1 Samuel 22:1, but it is *a* cave!

It may appear from this report that we only traveled, but be assured, the bulk of our time involved excavation and corollary issues. In actuality, the time involved in the



excavation/processing/lectures/et c. runs close to 15 hours a day for five days a week!

The week's finds included the discovery of a stem tube of a cult stand (left). We were unable to locate the other pieces of the stand. It was designed to have a flared base (which was totally missing) and the other end was finished to receive probably a bowl



with a stem protrusion to insert into the upper opening (neither did we find this, in spite of the best efforts of the excavators; the photo shows a more elaborate example from the Israel Museum similar to the type of vessel ours would have been; right).

The same square also yielded the rim of what is known as a "collar rim store jar" (bottom left), which often characterized early Israelite settlements. Our example, however, only preserved the entire rim, which apparently had been reshaped to serve as a jar holder to



support another jar upright in the opening. Complete examples of these vessels are huge and very heavy, clearly not intended for casual transportation (photo right from Eretz Israel Museum). When the excavators removed the jar rim one imagined it as a crown



(Nicole's and Jessica's work with the rim and cult stand stem was worthy of reward! photo right).



A major discovery was the identification and excavation of a fully intact olive press installation! It consisted of a large, well-built pit lined with stones and plaster (left middle). The bottom tilted toward the west into a sort of sump to facilitate removal of the last bit of oil. The large stones in the installation were to press the olives to extract the oil. The stones are very large and heavy, certainly implying a labor-intensive operation. One of the advantages of the quadricopter was the opportunity to see at a glance the development through time of the olive press

industry to a more efficient operation.⁶



Another surprising find was a scarab seal (bottom right). Our scarab specialist, Baruch Brandl, gave a preliminary date of the scarab from the 19th dynasty, middle of the 13th century (the Egyptian kings of the 19th dynasty included Seti I, Ramses II and Merneptah; the middle of the 13th century would have been the period likely of Ramses II). He indicated he needed more

information to be more certain, however. If this read is correct, it implies that the scarab was likely an heirloom preserved into the next century or two. Alternatively, it is possible that the scarab was simply part of the mudbrick matrix which had deteriorated and dissolved in the eventual destruction of the site during the next century.



⁶ That discussion, however, will have to wait. Again, we express our thanks to Mark and Becky Lanier of Houston, Texas for their generous contribution to our project to permit us to purchase the quadricopter to use in our work. We constantly try to be on the cutting edge of recording and technology and the quadricopter has helped us maintain that advance.



One event that occurred for which I was envious was the opportunity to visit the bedouin's tent at the base of the tel where Mohammed's wife demonstrated baking Bedouin pita bread.⁷ The bread is cooked on a convex tray over an open flame and the finished product looks very much like a large tortilla. Occasionally, we find similar baking trays, but made of ceramic, in our excavations dating to the Iron Age I (photo left). Because of the etiquette issues, the men of the group were not permitted to go (middle right). Several years ago, however, Mohammed's father and mother invited all of us to a similar

demonstration when they had lived at the base of the tel.

The last item to note is an up-close example of hyssop (bottom left). Not only is hyssop a spice, it has medicinal value as well. While not necessarily medicinal, the Bible prescribed that the Israelites used hyssop dipped in lamb's blood to smear on the posts and lintels of their houses to avoid the death of their firstborn (Ex 12:22). An additional ceremonial use was to cleanse lepers (see Lev



14:4, 6, 49, 51-52). It was also used in other, more generic purification procedures dealing with corpses (Num 19:6, 18). The Bible additionally reveals that a branch of the hyssop plant was used to convey the sour wine to Jesus at his crucifixion (Jn 19:29). The plant otherwise was used as a digestive aid and to reduce flatulence.



Hopefully, there will be a fourth (and last) installment. Thank you for your interest.

As the Psalmist pleads: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (122:6) as well as the region in general.

Shalom—Sala'am

⁷ For several years Mohammed has been our guard at the site. This year, Mohammed assigned his son, Hasan, to be the on-site guard. Mohammed's father, also named Hasan, had been our guard before. This role has now passed into three generations. There is a tradition in Arabic families for the son to be named after the grandfather, hence the names alternate with the passing generations.