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2009 Bethsaida Field Report

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Bethsaida City Gate Model, Stratum V, made by Duane Pieper

BETHSAIDA EXCAVATIONS PROJECT
REPORT ON THE 2009 SEASON
LICENSE NUMBER: G-45/2009

Rami Arav

THE CONSORTIUM FOR THE EXCAVATIONS OF BETHSAIDA
บท יזהר
הכית בחלקית
THE EXPEDITION

Two sessions of excavations were carried out in 2009. About one hundred faculty and students took part in two sessions which lasted from May 23rd to June 19th. Following are the faculty and students participating in the dig:

Co-Directors and Staff

Dr. Rami Arav, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Senior Fellow, Zinnman Institute of Archaeology, Haifa University, Director

Dr. Richard Freund, University of Hartford, Project Director

Dr. Carl Savage, Drew University, Assistant Director

Dr. Elizabeth McNamer, Rocky Mountain College, co-Director, Area Supervisor,

Dr. Mark Appold, Truman State University, co-Director, Area Supervisor

Dr. Walter Bouzard, Wartburg College, co-Director, Area Supervisor

Dr. Frederick Strickert, Wartburg College, co-Director

Dr. Mark Smith, College of Idaho, co-Director

Dr. Denny Clark, College of Idaho, co-Director
Dr. Toni Fisher, co-director, Engineering Corps, Zooarchaeology
Dr. Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, University of Munich, co-Director
Dr. Kate Raphael, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Area Supervisor
Dr. Aron Gale, West Virginia State University, Area Supervisor
Dr. Philip Reeder, University of South Florida, Cartography
Hanan Shafir, Photography
Orna Cohen, Conservator
Aliza Rapoport, Architect
Christina Etzrodt, Land Surveying, AutoCad Technician
Stephen Reynolds, Coordinator
Shai Schwarzt, Recorder
DreAnna Hadash, Artist
Charlene Green, Pottery Reconstruction
Dr. Donald Ariel, Numismatist

Visiting Faculty

Dr. Alan D. Hix, Chair, Department of Religion and Philosophy, Associate Professor of Religion,
   Shorter College, Rome Georgia
The Rev. Dr. Gregory C. Jenks, Academic Dean, St Francis Theological College, Academic Associate,
   School of Theology, Charles Sturt University, Brisbane, Australia
Jacqui Lloyd, Senior Lecturer, School of Theology, Auckland, New Zealand
Maha Darawsha, University of Connecticut

Students from the Following Institutions

Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa
Shorter College, Rome, Georgia
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Rocky Mountains College Montana
West Virginia State University
Truman State University
College of Idaho
University of Hartford

Consortium Members, Class of 2009

Truman State University
Wartburg College
University of Munich
Drew University
Rocky Mountain College
Grace University
Hartford University

Sponsors

Natan Schwalb Foundation
Mike Harper Family Foundation
Clifton Batchelder Family Foundation
Nebraska Foundation
Jewish National Fund

Accommodations

The expedition was lodged at Kibbutz Ginosar Inn. We would like to thank them for their gracious hospitality and for attending to our special needs.
Storage and Lab

The storage and labs of the Bethsaida expedition is located at the Beit Yigal Allon Kibbutz Ginosar. We are grateful for Beit Allon staff for their support for the Bethsaida Excavations and housing our excavated material.

CONSERVATION

Two weeks of conservation course was conducted in 2009 by Orna Cohen. The students were from Wartburg College under Prof. Walter Bouzard, and for several days the students of Shorter College under Prof. Allan Hix. The students continued the conservation program outlined by Orna Cohen which aimed to conserve the Stratum V City Gate, and to open it up for tourism.

Architecture and field conservation were followed by afternoon and evening sessions with conservation of small finds such as metals, coins, glass and pottery, and presentations on elements of conservation. A complete report on the conservation of 2009 was submitted by Orna Cohen to the Israel Antiquities Authority.

PUBLICATION

During this year the fourth volume of the Bethsaida series was published. The title is: Bethsaida, A City by the North Shores of the Sea of Galilee, Truman State University Press, this publication was reviewed in Review of Biblical Literature 2009.
THE EXCAVATIONS

AREA A

Bethsaida - Area A West
Stratum VI

Iron Age IIA 950 – 850 BCE

The probes in the chambers ended in 2008 with interesting results. The main problem is to find out how the city was accessed during Stratum VI. The outer city gate and the courtyard following it were already excavated years ago and this year they were covered up. The courtyard was found to be 3 meters under Stratum V. A north-south wall under the threshold of Stratum V city gate was detected using Ground Penetrating Radar. That wall was parallel to a segment of a wall that was excavated under Chamber 1 and continued to Chamber 3. It is abundantly clear that the entrance to the city was not under the entrance to the city in Stratum V.

LOCUS 2185
SQ. 58J

As part of our efforts to understand Stratum VI we excavated a locus under the storage house in square 58J south west of the city gate. The locus is a space between two walls, W 1026 and W1027 and was sealed under the floor of the storage house of Stratum V. Both walls date from Stratum VI. Traces of white plaster were found covering W 1027, meaning that this wall was built earlier and W 1026 added later to the east. The width of W. 1026 is slightly wider than one meter. The space between the two walls is 60 cm. The purpose of these walls and is still unknown.

Few shards of pottery were found in this locus. They include shards of three Iron Age II A jars of thick rounded rims and long neck, cooking pots, red slip and burnished shard, jugs, bones and flint.
STRATUM V

Iron Age IIB 850 – 732 BCE

The Cobblestone Road Approaching Bethsaida

This road leading to the Iron Age II city gate has two main construction layers. The earliest was made of beaten earth clay floor. It approaches Stratum VI city gate and dates from the 10th century BCE. In the middle of the 9th century BCE this road was replaced by a new road which was made of several layers and topped by cobble stones. This cobblestone road leads to Stratum V city gate and therefore dates from this period (Iron Age IIB). The city gate was destroyed by the Assyrian king Tiglath Pileser III, but the road and the city walls remain untouched and were reused in later period. The city walls finally collapsed and covered the cobblestone road as a result of a severe earthquake during the first half of the fourth century CE.

The area in front of the city gate widens up to accommodate a spacious extra mural plaza. This suggests that this place served as an extra mural market place. A similar extra mural large plaza was excavated at the city of Dan. We expanded the excavations in this area in the season of 2008, and discovered that the plaza is supported by two stone terraces. Further excavations were carried out in 2009 and revealed that part of it was heavily destroyed by a 20th century Syrian bunker in squares P, Q, 49, 50. These areas were excavated under loci 2090, 2092, 2093, 2095. Very few remnants of the original Iron Age pavement were discerned. However, within this heavily disturbed area there came an almost complete, very fine small basalt bowl.
BASALT BOWL

LOCUS 2093
GRID Q 49
ELEVATION: 172.0

This locus signifies the removing of dirt and modern debris from the remains of the road leading to the Iron Age IIB city gate. The road was paved during the Iron Age but was in service until the Roman period. Most of the pottery shards date to the Roman period.
LOCUS 2094
GRID: P49
ELEVATION: 172.0

Similar to locus 2093, this locus deals with the removal of modern fill above a modern Syrian military bunker. All the pottery shards from this locus were mixed when the bunker was excavated and then covered back again. The significant of this mixed locus is that most of the shards date from the Roman period, which would indicate the date of the final use of the road.

LOCUS 2095
GRID: P 49
ELEVATION: 170.0

This locus is located on top of the modern Syrian bunker. The bunker is covered with a level of small stones and dirt and flanked by larger stones. The pottery shards collected from this fill and mixed locus were predominantly Roman and include Galilean bowls, Roman cooking pots with lid device, as well as Iron Age pottery. Noteworthy is a quartz bead.
LOCUS 2096
GRID: O, P 48
ELEVATION: 171.86

The top layers included recent fill of dirt and boulders that were poured over the heavier boulders and debris that collapsed from the city walls. In elevation of 172.12 the continuation of the cobblestones were found, however destroyed in a few segments.

All the finds date Iron Age to the Late Roman period. They include shards from an Iron Age IIB bar handle of a bowl, Early Hellenistic large crater, Rhodian wine jars, thick Hellenistic amphoriskes, Early Roman oil lamps, Hellenistic Roman jars, jugs, bowls, and cooking pot. Noteworthy is a large fragment of a Roman globular cooking pot in situ which would indicate the date of the destruction.

Among the metal discoveries are: a blade of an iron knife with a pin attached to it and bronze bracelet.
This pit is 1.3 meters in diameter and 3 meters deep. It was excavated in 1997 and was reported in the final report on Stratum V city gate (Bethsaida 4). It was found filled with ashes and bones. Dr. Fisher, who examined the bones, found that they are all bovine, sheep, goat cows and a small percentage of fallow deer. This year we cleared up the entire contents of the pit before filling it up again with dirt for safety purposes. The remains of the pit contained a few more bones, Iron Age IIB pottery shards, a bronze pendant earring and a bead.
The Plaza near the Sacrificial High Place

LOCUS 2160
GRID: I, 54
ELEVATION: 169.06

A segment (3 X2 meters) of the plaza that flanked the city gate inside the city was continued to be unearthed this year. The plaza is made of a compressed clay floor. It covers the remains of the granary of Stratum VI and therefore belongs to Stratum V.

The finds include shards of pottery from all the periods starting in the Iron Age II B, Persian period deep bowl, Hellenistic Rhodian wine amphora and red ETS. Among the special finds was a bone implement.

The Storage House

The storage house is situated at the southwest of the Stratum V city gate and shares with it its northern wall. Therefore it was constructed together with this city gate and dates likewise to Iron Age IIB. It was excavated in 1993 to 2000 and contained a few variants of “hippo jars“ as well as very large vats and small vessels. At the time of the dig, a wall that belongs to stratum II crossed the remains of the building from north to south and was left unexcavated. Since this wall caused safety problems and in the course of reconstruction of the pottery vessels from this building, parts of pottery were missing and thought to be under the wall, we decided to remove it and to dig to the floor of the storage building.

LOCUS 2172
GRID: J 58
ELEVATION: 167.76

The Stratum II wall that crossed the storage house from north to south was removed and excavations to the floor of the storage house took place. Below the debris of the storage house a few vessels were discovered smashed on the ground. The picture was not different from the one retrieved in the excavations of 1994.
LOCUS 2179
GRID: J 58
ELEVATION: 168.87, CLOSING LEVEL: 169.39

This locus contains the debris sitting on the floor of the storage house. The debris contains burnt bricks and stones of all sizes. The floor was made of reddish clay and made use of the top of the walls of Stratum VI. Shards of “hippo jars” were found scattered on the floor. On a reconstruction of one jar it is possible to see the marks of impact on the shoulder and the body of the jar.
STRATUM II (HELLENISTIC – ROMAN PERIODS)

The excavations in the past two years concentrated directly west of the city gate in order to learn more about the immediate environment of the city gate. This area was found to be a large beaten clay and limestone plaza. Upon the destruction of the city and the plaza in 732 BCE the area was filled small structures without distinctive discernable architecture. In the Hellenistic period a small Phoenician temple was built on Chamber 3 of the city gate and it extended west. A few auxiliary structures were added to it. At the south of the temple there is a prominent strong structure dating to the Early Roman period. This structure revealed thus far two rooms and a solid beaten earth floor. The following loci were excavated in this area.

LOCUS 2080
GRID: I 54
ELEVATION: 168.00

Twelve baskets were collected from this locus.
The finds include, large shards of Roman cooking pots, casseroles with everted rim, fishing lead net weight, shards of Hellenistic –Roman jugs, red slip fine ware, spatter washed ware, Roman Apulian ware, Hellenistic Roman large jars, a white and blue glass bead, and a bronze bracelet.
L. 2080 small striped blue/white bead
B. 21610
LOCUS 2082
GRID: E 54
ELEVATION: 169.38

This locus contains removal of a thick balk between squares E and F. It is a rather disturbed locus and contains shards of pottery from the Roman period, medieval glazed pottery and finds from the 20th century. The Roman period shards include, jars with everted rims, casseroles with everted rims, cooking pots with triple grooves on rim and juglets.
Noteworthy is a Philip Herod’s coin minted in the 34th year of his reign.
LOCUS 2083
GRID: F 54
ELEVATION: 168.01

This locus is located east of W 906. It contains a Roman period smashed large jug *in situ*, Hellenistic and Early Roman pottery and a complete glass bead with ribs along it and a white line running horizontally in the center.
LOCUS 2084
GRID: F 54
ELEVATION: 168.04

This locus was designated for leveling a small mound. The finds include Roman period pottery shards, glass and particularly important were two pieces of a limestone vessel, perhaps a vat or a large deep bowl.
LOCUS 2089
GRID: F 54
ELEVATION: 168.59

This locus is located above and east of the remains of a massive Roman period wall W 1020. The finds include Hellenistic twisted Tyrian jar handle, Roman period shards of pottery and a bronze ring.

LOCUS 2150
GRID: D 54
ELEVATION: 168.34

This locus was designated to the removal of a balk. The top soil was disturbed in modern period but under this an authentic Roman period stratum was discovered. The locus was closed when the top of a wall W1025 was discovered.

The finds include Roman period shards of pottery, casseroles, cooking pots with triple grooves on rim, two beaks of “Herodian” oil lamps, a few Iron Age shards, and three first-century coins found in one cluster. One belongs to Herod Antipas and two to Claudius. Slightly north in this locus was a coin belonging to Otacilia 244 – 249 CE.
LOCUS 2151
GRID: J 54
ELEVATION: 168.59

This locus is located on top of a thick Roman period wall (W 1020). Finds include Roman shards of pottery.

LOCUS 2152
GRID: H 54
ELEVATION: 168.29

This locus is confined by thick and strong Roman walls, W 906 in the west, and W 1020 in the east. A smashed jar was found in situ on the floor. Noteworthy is a white quartz bead.
LOCUS 2153
GRID: E 54
ELEVATION: 169.85

This locus is a paved segment of an uncertain purpose. It is possible that it is connected to another segment of cobblestone floor located also in grid E54. Most of finds are Roman period pottery shards. They include bowls with triple grooves on rim, casseroles with everted rim, cooking pots, jars and Galilean bowls. Noteworthy is a Roman provincial coin dating from the 1st – 3rd centuries.
LOCUS 2157
GRID: I 54
ELEVATION: 168.63

This locus is located east of the massive Roman period wall W 1020. The finds from this locus include Roman period shards of pottery such as Galilean bowls, deep bowls with triple grooves on rim, casseroles with everted rim. Noteworthy is a segment of a glass bracelet and a bronze fibula in the shape of an arm.
LOCUS 2158
GRID: D 54
ELEVATION: 168.23

This locus is located above a compact floor and above the top of two walls, W 1022 and W 1023. The finds are mostly Roman shards of pottery and include, casseroles with everted rim, Galilean bowls, jars with everted rim, spatter wash ware, and cooking pots. Noteworthy is a fragment of a Hellenistic Erotes oil lamp, and fragment of a blue glass vessel, basalt weight, a coin of Antony Pius (153-154 CE), “Herodian” oil lamp, and a bronze needle.
Bethsaida 2009

Area: A-west

Square: 54/6

Locus: 2158

Bucket: 2168
LOCUS 2161
GRID: H 54
ELEVATION: 168.42

This locus consists of fill above floor of white packed earth between two massive walls, W 1020 in the east and W 906 at the west and W 1021 at the south. There is an installation in the corner of the eastern and the southern wall. A pit was excavated in the center of the floor, isolated and excavated separately and given a different locus number (L. 2183). The finds of this locus included Hellenistic and Roman period shards of pottery. Among the pottery shards there were oil lamps, cooking pots, a single Hellenistic pyramidal loom weight and a blue glass bead.
Bethsaida
A-west 16/6/09
54/H
L. 2161 Blue Glass Bead
B. 21684
This locus is surrounded by walls all around and there is no entry to the room. Therefore, it seems that it served as a basement to an upper structure of which nothing is preserved. Despite its small size the locus included many interesting finds. The shards of pottery consisted of Roman pottery, a jug, and many shards of medieval glazed pottery. Noteworthy are the following finds: a complete iron axe in an excellent state of preservation. Last year a similar axe was discovered but without the segment attaching the axe to the handle. In addition to this the locus yielded an iron arrowhead and an iron needle.

An Iron Axe
LOCUS 2166
GRID: F 54
ELEVATION: 168.82
This locus is situated above the remains of wall W 1022 and belongs, presumably to the debris of the structure that contained this wall. The finds include Roman period shards such as Galilean bowl with triple ridge on rim, red slip ETS, “Herodian” spouted oil lamp and remains of a limestone vessel.
LOCUS 2168
GRID: H 54
ELEVATION: 167.50

This locus is situated west of wall W 1020. It contains breaking through the Roman floor of the structure that the wall W 1020 is part of it. There is an ash layer that goes under this floor and belongs perhaps to Hellenistic period. Digging below this ash layer revealed shards dating from the Hellenistic period such as deep bowls on thick ring base, Tyrian twisted amphora handles, red slip ETS, Apulian ware, and an iron arrowhead.
LOCUS 2169
GRID: G 54
ELEVATION: 168.01

This locus marks the space between W 1022 and W 1023. The floor is made of packed earth with many small stones embedded into it. The finds include Hellenistic shards such as a handle of Rhodian wine amphora and Galilean bowl with triple ridges on rim.
LOCUS 2171
GRID: E 54
ELEVATION: 169.75

This is a subterranean small chamber below L. 2162. The finds include Hellenistic Roman period shards of pottery and a fragment of a first century oil lamp.
LOCUS 2173
GRID: G 54, 55
ELEVATION: 168.63

This locus marks the approach to the compact dirt and small stones floor between walls W 1023 and W 1022. Finds include shards of pottery of a cooking pot with lid device, Rhodian jar, red slip ETS, Apulian ware and a glass fragment.
LOCUS 2177
GRID: G 54
ELEVATION 168.27

This locus is a pit excavated in the compact dirt floor. It contains finds from the Hellenistic and Roman period such as Apulian ware, a large piece of a casserole with everted rim, red slip and decorated ETS bowls, Rhodian wine amphora, Tyrian amphora, clinkers, and Iron Age II shards of jugs.
LOCUS 2178
GRID: F 54 55
ELEVATION: 168.67

This locus is situated between walls W 1022 and W. 1023 and below loci 2158, 2169, 2173. It constitutes of removing the hard-packed floor west of W 1023, by digging and breaking through it.

The finds include a large jaw bone imbedded in the floor, and pottery shards such as an early Roman oil lamp, black glazed Athenian oil lamp, glass, globular cooking pot, red slip ETS. Noteworthy are a coin of Antiochus III (198-187 BCE), and an outstanding shard of West Slope Ware depicting ivy leaves and three white dots.

Similar ware was found in this area in the previous season of 2008.
LOCUS 2180
GRID: F 54 55
ELEVATION: 168.71

This locus replaces loci 2158, 2165 and consists of breaking through hard-packed floor west of wall W 1023. The finds include Hellenistic globular cooking pots, deep large bowls with thick rim, Iron Age II bowls and jars. Noteworthy is a blue and white glass bead and a pendant made out of a murex shell.
LOCUS 2183
GRID: G H 54
ELEVATION: 169.17

This locus replaces locus 2177 and is situated in between walls W 1020 in the east and W 906 at the west. The locus marks an ash pit that was below locus 2177. Large stones were discovered at the bottom of the pit. The finds include shards of pottery such as deep bowl with thick rims, Iron Age jars, Hellenistic juglet, Spatter Washed ware Rhodian wine amphora, basalt grinding stone and a leg of three legged basalt bowl, lead fishing net weight. Noteworthy are a few beads one is nicely preserved blue and white glass bead.
LOCUS 2189

GRID: F, G, 54, 55

ELEVATIONS: 168.8

This locus replaces L. 2180 and is the final clearing of the plastered floor. This floor reaches W 906 and seems to belong to it. The finds on this floor included Hellenistic globular cooking pots, Iron Age II B jar, and a large
fragment of Phoenician blue and yellow glass amphorisque poured on core. A similar fragment was found in Area C locus 5714, basket 21611.
LOCUS 2190
GRID: F 54, 55
ELEVATION: 168.92

This locus replaces locus 2186. It consists of the same compact plastered floor that was seen in L. 2189 and presumably belongs to the same massive structure. A Roman period jug, almost complete, was found in situ on the floor together with an Early Roman oil lamp.
LOCUS 5715
GRID: 25 E
ELEVATION: 167.0

This locus consists of removing dirt from debris of wall W 668. This wall which was found in locus 5714 continues north five more meters and is in right angle with wall W 666. It may well be that area between these two walls is a courtyard. The space south of W 666 is perhaps a paved lane and wall W 668 would mark the right angle curve of the lane. Finds include Hellenistic pottery shards such as everted rim casseroles, jars, and about 200 shards of Hellenistic cooking pots in addition to Iron Age II shards of cooking pots.
LOCUS 5714
GRID: 26 F
ELEVATION: 167.0
This locus consists of debris of wall W 668. A small buttress was found built against W 668. Finds included Iron Age pottery shards and a fragment of a blue and yellow Phoenician glass amphorisque similar to the one found in Area A L.2189.
L. 8080
B. 21611
MULT. COLORED
GLASS PIECE
PHTHONICIAN AMPHORA
Area A: West Slope Ware
Area A, Dolabra
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