

Summary of the Results of the – 2008 Excavation Season at Tel Rehov

The ninth season of excavations at Tel Rehov was conducted between June 29 and July 18, 2008 on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University, and supported by Mr. John Camp, from Minnesota, USA. The staff included Amihai Mazar (director and photographer), Nava Panitz-Cohen (field director, Area C), Ido Wachtel (assistant, Area C); Yael Rotem (field director of Area D1 and registrar), Uri Davidovich (field director, Area D2) Hai Ashkenazi (assistant, Area D2). Jay Rosenberg prepared the plans. Two student groups participated as volunteers in the excavation: from Asbury Seminary, Kentucky led by Dr. Sandra Richter and from Azusa Pacific University, California, led by Dr. Robert Mullins.

Area C: The goal of the excavation in Area C was to extend the excavation area at the south-eastern corner of Area C in order to locate the eastern and southern limits of the apiary revealed in 2007 (see now Amihai Mazar and Nava Panitz-Cohen, 2007, "It Is the Land of Honey: Beekeeping in Iron Age IIA Tel Rehov - Culture, Cult and Economy". *Near Eastern Archaeology* 70:4, pp. 202-219). In the upper levels of the extension, structural remains of Stratum C-1a (general Stratum IV) were revealed. This extension uncovered the eastern boundary wall of Stratum IV Building L, a major structure which was exposed in the past in the south-eastern part of Area C. East of this wall, two small chambers were excavated, connected by openings to one another, as well as to additional unexcavated rooms on the east, and possibly to a partly excavated room on the north. The southern room included a square corner bin which contained an intact Hippo storage jar full of grain, as well as other vessels. The northern room included a plastered bench that adjoined the northern wall of the room. The two chambers were destroyed abruptly by a fierce fire, and the destruction debris included a large amount of restorable pottery and other finds. Among the finds were two restorable pottery horned altars: one in the southern room and the other in a room to its east. These two altars are an interesting addition to the variants of horned altars found previously at Tel Rehov (See A.Mazar and N. Panitz-Cohen, 2008, *Biblical Archaeology Review* 34:4, 40–47). They are tower-shaped, with apertures in the front and sides and an upper tray with four corner horns. One is decorated with a frieze of clay petals, while the other has an intricate pattern composed of small impressed circles and foliage motifs incised with a sharp tool. Fragments of several additional altars were also found. Two seals and one seal impression, as well as amulets, figurines, iron, bone and stone objects, were also found in the excavation of these rooms.

In Stratum C-1b (general Stratum V) the wall of the apiary uncovered in 2007 was revealed directly below the eastern boundary wall of Stratum IV Building L mentioned above. It is found about 2 m east of the eastern line of beehives. In the southern part of Area C, five additional hives were found that continued the line of the central row of hives in the apiary, although ca. 4.5 m to the south of the southernmost hive known previously in this row. This

discovery indicates that the apiary was much larger than previously known and continues to the south rather than to the east.

North and west of the apiary, structural remains and occupation debris of Stratum C-2 (general Stratum VI) were excavated.

Area D. The large building of Stratum D-10 which was discovered in previous seasons close to the bottom of the mound was the focus of the excavation in this area. The part of the building known so far includes a corner of two walls with three inner pilasters and parts of an additional room on the south. A thick layer of *tufa* located in the area enclosed by the two walls mentioned above was previously thought to pre-date the building. However, a narrow trench cut through the *tufa* layer up to one of the walls of the building indicated that the wall is preserved to a height of 2.5 m and that the *tufa* layer abuts it. In a southern room of the building, a burnt layer of fallen ceiling(?) was found above a burnt floor surface. The latter sealed a deep fill of brick debris and clay, attached to the walls which stand to a height of over 2 m. It thus seems that the building had very deep foundations and constructional fills. In a previous study of the *tufa* layer, it was understood as a natural accumulation in body of water that had existed here. This conclusion was re-examined this season by the excavation staff together with E. Zilberman of the Israel Geological Institute, and requires further research.

The *tufa* layer covered an earlier layer of occupation debris (Stratum D-11) that was up to 1 m deep, accumulated above the natural bedrock. The pottery in this debris can be dated to Late Bronze I, and the finds included a fragment of an unusual female plaque figurine. The level of the bedrock was found to be more than 1 m lower than the fields surrounding the mound, and a step in the bedrock indicates the existence of a geological fault in this area. This situation raised the question of the level of the natural field and bedrock around the mound in the Late Bronze Age. In order to resolve this question, a backhoe trench was cut in the alluvial field west of the mound. Roman-Byzantine pottery was uncovered in the alluvial soil down to a depth of at least 4.5 m (and still continuing below that level), thus indicating that the area surrounding the mound was much lower during the Late Bronze Age than it is today. These substantial environmental changes need further exploration.

Further east up the slope, Stratum D-9 of 13th century BCE was explored, revealing stone foundations of poorly preserved walls that were sometimes constructed just above the walls of the Stratum D-10 building, indicating that the 14th century BCE building was destroyed and rebuilt on a general similar layout during the 13th century. Stratum D-8 marks a poor occupation layer probably from the end of the 13th century. In Stratum D-7 of the 12th century BCE, a large area was paved with a cobble floor that related to architectural features uncovered from this period in previous seasons.

In Area D1, the upper eastern part of Area D, work concentrated on exposure and clarification of Stratum D-5 of the 11th century BCE. Street layers of this level were excavated and walls flanking the street were examined. The excavation of substantial architectural units east of the street that were revealed in 2007 was completed. Some of the rooms are very large, with brick floors abutting brick walls, indicating the existence of a well-planned and

substantially constructed urban quarter in this part of the mound during the 11th century BCE. This suits the finds from Stratum VII (local C-3–C-4) in Area C just to the east of Area D1.