

2017 Report on TEL BETH-SHEMESH EXCAVATION TRIP Report #2

by Dale W. Manor

Our weekend trip found us in Jerusalem two days. One of the highlights is go to a local cafe for a wonderful breakfast. As it turns out we had two days with great breakfasts. Si Cafe is one where we like to go; I usually order a muesli entree consisting of granola and fruit in Greek yogurt with a dose of honey on top—Great Stuff. Our night Friday night, however, posed major hurdles for us. We stayed in the Israeli section of Jerusalem in a facility that was not a bed and breakfast, hence we did not have breakfast on Saturday morning. We went into the Old City, hoping to find somewhere to eat that would not be too expensive. Immediately inside of Jaffa Gate we found Samara Restaurant where we had scrambled eggs and BACON!!!! Generally a real rarity!

Our Friday tour took us to the Herodian Family tomb (right) tucked between the walls on the western side of the Old City and the King David hotel. The inference that it is the tomb for Herod's family is drawn 1) on the basis of Josephus' remarks about its location (*War* 1.581; 2.228; 5.108, 507), and 2) the elegance of its design and decorations.



Usually the interior of the tomb has been inaccessible, but one year we were able to enter it and find that the decorations and fine detail are indeed commensurate with what one would expect of the Herodian family. Regretfully, the door has almost always been locked shut and this visit implied a long duration since it was last opened inferred by the debris that had accumulated at the base of the door (left). As with most identifications of sites and their significance, some are skeptical of this association with the Herodian family. It is important to differentiate the Herod "family" tomb from Herod's tomb itself. Ehud Netzer has argued (I

think persuasively) that the tomb of Herod himself was indeed at the Herodium about which I have written in some earlier reports (we have not gone there this year, and likely will not, but...).



We also walked down from the tomb through the earliest Jewish settlement outside of the walled city of Jerusalem in modern times (dating from the 1890s). It is now a quaint and picturesque neighborhood with beautiful gardens and artists' quarters (photo left). The name of the area was originally Mishkenot Shaananim, but now is generally known as Yemin Moshe.

On Saturday, after our great breakfast, we went to the viewing area over the Western Wall. While we could visit the wall on Saturday, we would not have been permitted to take photos. From the viewing area, we could take photos. One of the traditions that many of the observant Jews do when leaving the wall is to walk backwards in respect and honor of God. It is the idea that it is inappropriate to turn your back to one who is your superior. It was interesting to see the variations on this. Many of the worshipers simply turned around and walked out; only a few walked

backwards and the distance they would go varied profoundly. I would not argue that the distance that they might walk implies more devotion, but regardless the variations were significant.

While we were in the Old City, we saw the group from Harding School of Theology who had worked with us for the first two weeks. They were under the immediate leadership of Lance Hawley and Evertt Huffard. They did a wonderful job working at the excavation and they, in turn, were enjoying their last weekend in Israel. They were scheduled to leave on Sunday morning VERY early.

Our final visit of the afternoon was to the Tomb of the Prophet Samuel north of Jerusalem (photo left). It provides a beautiful 360 degree panoramic view of Jerusalem and points elsewhere. The site's identification as the tomb of Samuel seems to date only to



the 6th century AD (according to Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land* (Oxford), 370) when it was identified as Ramah, Samuel's home. It is a suitable location, but the likelihood that Samuel was specifically buried here is slim. Murphy-O'Connor indicates that it was from this vantage that the Crusaders in 1099, had their first look at Jerusalem, which they proceeded to conquer and rule for a



few decades. Jerusalem was eventually recaptured by the Muslims and eventually Richard the Lion-Heart managed to see Jerusalem from this perspective in 1192, but was unable to mount an attack because of lack of reinforcements. It is possible to see just the top of the Golden Dome of the Dome of the Rock from the roof of the site. It would have been fairly clear in ancient times when there were no structures outside the walled city. The photo (above right) shows fairly clearly the Seven Arches Hotel (formerly the Jerusalem Intercontinental Hotel) on the top of the Mount of Olives. The Dome of the Rock is to the right, but hard to see in the photograph.

To the north is a wonderful view of Gibeon (below; the hill with the trees on top), which was home of the Gibeonites who made the pact with the newly arrived Israelites (Jsh 9). It later



became the scene of God's
communique with Solomon when
Solomon asked for wisdom to
lead Israel (1 Kgs 3:3-14). The
site has been excavated and
preserves two fascinating water
systems that date to the early
Israelite occupation.



As we were leaving the site, we
saw some of the classic terracing
walls that came to characterize
Israel in its occupation and
cultivation of the central hills (above right). These were essential to Israel's livelihood
permitting them to form relatively narrow bands of soil on which to sow grain and to plant olive
trees and vineyards.

EXCAVATION DATA



The second week of excavation saw the visit to the site by my major professor, Dr. William G. Dever (2-7). It is always good to see him, but he is constantly in a high energy mode. I had little opportunity to visit with him since work demanded my attention. When I was approached to join the excavation in 2000, Dr. Dever encouraged me to become part of this team. On the same day, Monte Cox also came with his group of 59; the guide for Dr. Cox's group was Yossi Paz—one of the best guides you could ever have! Thus far, Cox's group was one of the largest to visit. There were a number of people in his group that I know; it was an honor to have them all come by. (One aspect of my job description is to guide groups that come

by to visit. I am not always able to do that, but generally do.)

Our investigation continued to try to make sense of the channel in the square immediately to the north of the Temple (next page upper right). Regretfully, at this point we are still mystified. We have been able to trace the outline of the temple to the south a bit more, but it remains still obscured by overburden and later levels of occupation. Our effort in the third week is to concentrate more on that effort.

Other squares have brought to light some fascinating finds—and as usual, ceramics. One square yielded a very nice dipper juglet (below); its neck and loop handle were broken off, but they were still there to permit full restoration of the vessel.



As indicated above, we had a group working with us from Harding School of Theology under the guidance of Lance Hawley and Evertt Huffard. They were very valuable assets to the work force and we thoroughly enjoyed their enthusiasm and contribution. Dr. Hawley, who is the Hebrew Bible teacher at HST, was fortunate to be in a square where over a dozen vessels came to light. The photo (2-10) shows him and one of my former students, Rachel Lewis, excavating a splay of broken pottery. They both discovered that it is a challenge not to pull the pieces directly out of the soil, but carefully to articulate and expose as much of the items as possible so we can photograph them in their original locations of discovery. This contextual consideration is a significant aspect of how we begin to infer the activity areas of the excavations. Part of what was unusual about this discovery was that the project had worked here in the 1990s (before I became a part of the project) and had stopped the excavation just inches above this collection of pottery—you never know what you might discover!

I will apprise you of further developments in the next report. Until then, shalom!

Dale W. Manor
Professor of Archaeology and
Bible
Harding University
Field Director of Tel Beth-Shemesh

