

TEL GEZER EXCAVATIONS 2006

Directors: Dr. Steven M. Ortiz and Dr. Samuel Wolff

FIELD A: PRELIMINARY FIELD REPORT

By Dr. Gary P. Arbino, Field Archaeologist

General Introduction

The renewed excavations of Tel Gezer were conducted from June 4, 2006 to July 6, 2006. The team was under the direction of Co-Directors Dr. Samuel Wolff of the Israel Antiquities Authority and Dr. Steven M. Ortiz of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. An area west of the "Solomonic Gate" along the casemate (Field A) was excavated under the direct supervision of Dr. Gary Arbino (Marian Eakins Archaeological Museum) as Field Archaeologist.

In addition to excavation, the Tel Gezer Excavation team participated with the National Parks Authority in several Conservation efforts. The team cleaned both the "Solomonic" and Middle Bronze Gate complexes from vegetal overgrowth and assisted with trail construction and restoration. Appreciation was expressed by the National Parks Authority. As a part of the overall conservation of the site, sandbags were positioned to shore up the south face of walls (to their founding levels) excavated in the 2006 season. These sandbags were placed in Squares A9, B9, C9, D9, and E9. A fence was constructed around Squares Y8 and Z8.

Several "trenches" from previous excavations in the "Solomonic" Gate area were filled in to a depth which allowed for more safe access to the site. These are marked on the plan of the excavation area and levels were taken for future information (Guardroom 9: 211.16; Guardroom 8: 212.68; Casemate 12: 212.16). Modern items were placed at the bottom of these trenches to assist future excavators.

Previous excavations left their marks on this area of the Tel. The current excavators located and marked on the plans the trenches left by the HUC excavations of 1984 and 1990 which are still visible. The two closest to the current excavation square E8 have been backfilled. In addition, a recent bulldozer cut along the south extant of the current excavation grid was also plotted.



Figure 1: Aerial Photo (PICT0040) showing previous HUC excavation trenching north of current excavation squares.

In the initial week of excavation a total of eleven squares of 5x5 meters were opened. These were, from east to west: E8 and E9, supervised by Dr. Robin Knauth, D8 and D9, supervised by Dr. Eric Mitchell, C8 and C9, supervised by Dr. Steven Andrews, B8 and B9, supervised by Madeline Pruitt, A8, supervised by Stephen Rives, and Z8 and Y8, supervised by Daniel Warner. Throughout the season three addition squares were opened (Y9, Z9, A9); bringing the total to 14.

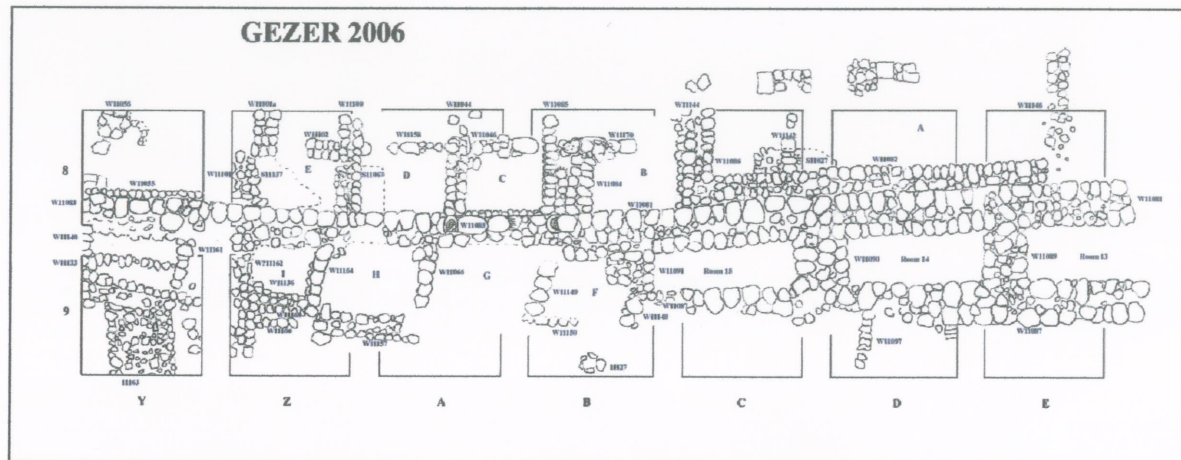


Figure 2: Plan of Gezer 2006 excavation squares and architectural features.

Owing to the unique situation of the research goals, the topography of the field and the lack of precise information regarding previous excavations and their dumps, much of the first part of the season was spent in cleanup. The methodology employed by the Gezer excavation, was modified from the Rehov and Madaba Plains methods that called for supervisors to work in squares with an awareness and intentional connection to the material around them. Thus, loci were at times shared by more than one supervisor (with a single number) and architectural units were usually dug by only one supervisor even when the unit extended into another square.

A total of 13 phases were uncovered. These are discussed in order below.

PHASE 1: TOPSOIL

Loci: 11001; 11002; 11003; 11004; 11005; 11006; 11007; 11008; 11010; 11012 = 11013; 11014; 11019; 11048; 11051; 11053; 11058; 11059; 11064; 11093; 11110

All squares cleared the uppermost topsoil and weed debris (L 11001: Cleanup) and articulated around the stones of the wall which were already visible. After this initial cleaning, supervisors changed loci to "fill" and continued to articulate around the walls which were visible. This proved somewhat difficult because the north-south slope caused by the difference between the two sides of the casemate wall system. The pottery, as expected, was largely mixed. These "topsoil" and "cleanup" fills graded into the material of Phase 2 and were often indistinguishable from the earlier material.

PHASE 2: MODERN

General, mixed loci:

11015; 11021; 11022; 11023; 11024; 11025; 11031; 11032; 11033; 11034; 11035; 11036; 11037; 11038=11061; 11039; 11040; 11041; 11042; 11043; 11060; 11062; 11071= 11092; 11107; 11121; 11126; 11141; 11145; 11151; 11153; 11154; W?11162 (possibly phase 3)