

# REVELATIONS FROM MEGIDDO

The Newsletter of The Megiddo Expedition

## Egyptians at Early Bronze Age Megiddo

Analytical Study of Early Bronze Egyptian Pottery Assemblage from the Temple Compound

**A**n intriguing assemblage of Early Bronze Age pottery from Megiddo, discovered during the 1996 excavation season, has been subjected to an analytical petrographic study in order to ascertain its provenance. Petrographic analysis aims to identify the geographic region from which a given object comes by identifying its mineral content, then matching the results to the known geological composition of likely regions of origin.

The assemblage represents some type of squatter activity within the abandoned monumental EBI (fourth millennium B.C.E.) temple compound. The approximately 20 vessels were found bunched together in an area of about one square metre, indicating that they were deliberately placed there, likely as offerings.

The Early Bronze Age I is a period that witnessed an increasing Egyptian interest in Canaan. Egyptian architecture and artifacts, including mainly pottery, but also flint and stone tools, have been found at many sites dating



to this period, especially in the southern part of the country (the northern Negev and the Shephela).

The nature and motives for the interaction between Egypt and Canaan are the subjects of a long-lasting debate. There are basically two interpre-

tery from sites in southern Canaan, such as Tel Erani, En Besor and Arad, were made during the 1980s by Naomi Porat, then with the Geology Department of Hebrew University. These investigations revealed that some of the more common Egyptian pottery shapes were produced in southern Canaan using techniques that imitated those employed in Egypt. As a result of her conclusions, Porat coined the term 'Egyptianizing pottery' for those vessels which apparently had been made by Egyptian potters who had settled in southern Canaan, together



Photo by Pavel Shrago

Rachel Paletta of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University carefully restores the 'Egyptianizing' pottery vessels found in the EBI temple complex.

tations of the phenomenon. One attempts to relate the Egyptian aspects of material culture to physical Egyptian presence in southern Canaan by way of military conquest. The other attributes the remnants to peaceful trade relations between them.

Analytical examinations of the Egyptian pot-

with traders or administrators.

So far, Egyptianizing pottery has been found only in the southern parts of the country, as far north as Azor, near Tel Aviv. The finds at Megiddo push this limit a further 100 kilometres northward.

Our examinations of the Egyptian pottery from Megiddo, carried out in the laboratory of Tel Aviv University's Institute of Archaeology, revealed that it too was made in Canaan

See *Egyptians*, Page 2

### Inside

	Page
• Egyptians at Early Bronze Megiddo	1
• Thutmose III & the Aruna Pass Survey	2
• Faunal Remains from Megiddo	2
• Megiddo's Chariots Capture Student	4

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## Egyptians, from Page 1

rather than Egypt. However, many minerals and rock fragments that were found in its clay (e.g. basalt) indicate that it was produced locally at Megiddo, not in southern Canaan. In terms of technology, this pottery also attempts to imitate Egyptian techniques and raw materials. Thus, it is easily distinguishable from the common Early Bronze Age local wares.

This unexpected data opens new possibilities for interpretation of the Egyptian presence in Canaan. First, if the initial interpretation of the Egyptianizing pottery is acceptable, it means that Egyptian settlers colonized some locations in the more northern parts of the country as well, perhaps within the Canaanite populations of the larger settlements. Second, it shows that, contra the popular view that the initial Bronze Age urbanization process in Canaan arose under the impetus of Egyptian stimulation, Canaan, or at least Megiddo, was already fully urbanized, or even declining from its first urban cycle, when the first Egyptian civilization, as shown in the material remains of Megiddo, was influencing Canaan. Finally, if indeed the vessels were brought to the temple as some type of offering, it shows an, until now, undetected cultural syncretism between the Egyptian element and their Canaanite hosts.

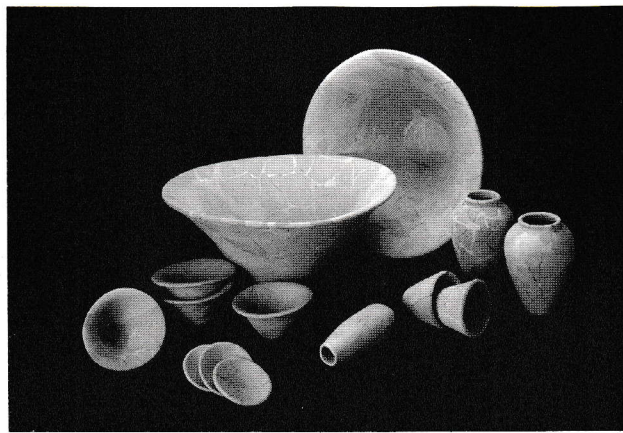


Photo by Pavel Shrago

The 'Egyptianizing' pottery from Megiddo's EBI temple complex.

Yuval Goren, Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University

## Thutmose III and the 'Aruna Pass Survey

**N**ow two (other) roads are here. One of the roads — behold, it is [to the east of] us, so that it comes out at Taanach. The other — behold, it is to the north side of Djefiti, and we will come out to the north of Megiddo. Let our victorious lord proceed on the one of [them] which is [satisfactory to] his heart, (but) do not make us go on that difficult road!' (J. B. Pritchard. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. 1969: p. 234).

This inscription from the Temple of Amun at Karnak in Upper Egypt relates the advice of the Egyptian King Thutmose III's generals during the campaign of his 23rd year (1479 B.C.E.), as his armies marched to meet a coalition of Canaanite forces at Megiddo, led by the Prince of Kadesh on the Orontes. His officers express their fears about the narrow main

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highway as it crosses the hills separating the Sharon Plain from the Jezreel Valley, worrying that they might have to proceed 'horse... after horse', or single file, leaving 'the vanguard... fighting while the [rear guard] is awaiting... in Aruna, unable to fight.'

From these words of military council to Thutmose III we learn of three of the four passes from which a traveler may choose in order to cross the central mountain range on his way from Egypt, along the coastal plain, through the Jezreel Valley and on to Syria. Of the four, the southernmost, the Ta'anach Pass, traverses from Baqa al-Gharbiya to the mound of Ta'anach; the northernmost, the Yokne'am Pass, leads into the Jezreel Valley at Yokne'am, biblical Jokneam. A fourth option, not mentioned by Thutmose III, is to continue along the coast up to modern-day Haifa.

The central pass, called 'Aruna in Thutmose III's inscriptions, is the most important of the four. Many

See 'Aruna Pass, Page 3

## Faunal Remains from Megiddo

**B**ones! Precious few of the human variety, fortunately, but a veritable 'apocalypse' of those from our four-legged friends are found at sites in Israel. So where can a harried zooarchaeologist go for a bit of renewal and mental refreshment amidst this ubiquitous debris from ancient carnage? Since our zooarchaeological credo is 'The More Bones the Better,' there can be no greater spiritual balm than to go to one of the very centres of the investigation, the Mother Lode of faunal remains from sacred contexts, the Megiddo Early Bronze cultic complex, better known as 'Area J'. Two seasons of excavation (1994 and 1996) have recovered many thousands of bones from the extensive sacrifices made in the compound.

Most of the bones are of domestic sheep and goats, with cattle a distant third; pig was used every now and then, as were, very rarely, gazelle and fallow deer, both wild species.

Scattered among the chopped and fragmented specimens are many articulations — whole lower leg and toe bones in correct anatomical position. These are portions of the animal with little meat value that are usually removed as a unit during butchery. Their presence tells us that the Area J accumulations are relatively undisturbed; that is, we are digging up bones that have stayed where they were first discarded, rather than the more common discovery of garbage that has been moved around and repeatedly reburied, a complexity that makes our task of interpretation much tougher.

The bones represent the slaughter, butcher and dismemberment, cooking, eating and discarding of animals; in other words, evidence of the whole process of animal use that ended with remains of meals eaten within the sacred precinct, probably by cultic personnel and worshippers.

Why do all these bones, which actually represent a mountain of work, provide such soul-calming relief? Because they represent, for me at least, a goldmine of research potential. For the first time in the research of

See Fauna, Page 3

## ‘Aruna Pass, from Page 2

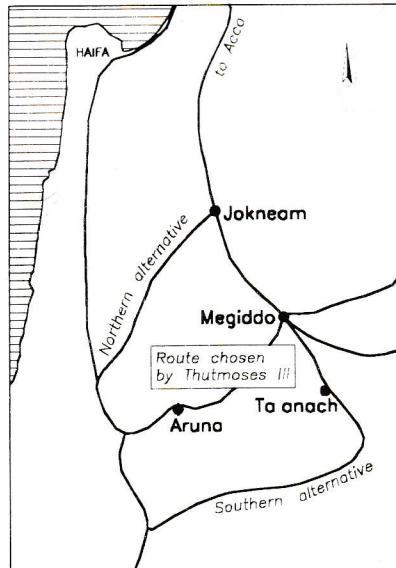
kings and generals have used this pass on their way from Egypt to Syria, from Pharaohs Thutmose III and Sheshonk I to General Allenby, who led an Australian light horse division and the Tenth Indian Infantry *en route* to meet the World War I Ottoman forces.

‘Aruna is the name which appears in the Egyptian sources, such as the annals of Thutmose III and Sheshonk I, and is preserved in the name of the modern village of ‘Ara, which helped in identifying the route — still the main road from the coast to Megiddo and the north today.

The area of these passes is the focus of my M.A. thesis. The work includes field survey, which aims to study the changing settlement patterns along ‘Aruna Pass, and analysis of previous surveys of the other three. The intent is to shed light on differences in settlement pattern among the four routes. Combined with the historical records of their use, the research may reveal which of the roads were more popular during each period.

The current survey of the ‘Aruna Pass area consists of one link in the Megiddo Expedition’s larger, wide area survey in the western Jezreel Valley. It aims at a better understanding of the economy, society and demography of the surrounding Megiddo countryside in each period in relation to the information gathered from the mound.

Within the framework of the study, several colleagues and fellow students and myself conducted field survey which focused on the Wadi ‘Ara area, including a corridor of three kilometers on either side of ‘Aruna Pass. The intent is to map all the sites



Map drawn by Judith Dekel

Map of the ‘Aruna Pass area near Megiddo.

within the designated area from the Bronze, Iron and Persian Periods. The information concerning the settlement patterns of the northern and southern passes will be collected from previous surveys and excavations conducted by other institutions.

The survey work consists of a systematic pedestrian search for archaeological features, such as pottery sherds, agricultural installations or building remains. The team members spread out at a distance of 20 to 30 metres from one another, then comb the site for any datable finds, usually pottery. The site is measured and, if need be, photographed, and a description of the site, including all features visible from the surface, is written.

Our hope is to discover unknown sites and to better study those for which an identification has already been suggested. There have already been some intriguing results. A total of 24 sites from the relevant periods have been investigated along ‘Aruna

Pass. Of them, some were unknown from previous surveys and were dated according to pottery sherds found by our team.

Judging from the number of sites (not accounting for size or estimated population), Wadi ‘Ara was the least settled of the four passes. Is it possi-

ble that the situation on the hectic highway which traverses the wadi, used time and time again for military expeditions, was such that settlers were forced to concentrate at large defensible towns or to build their homes away from the road?

Students from the Department of Archaeological of TAU participated in the survey, some of whom also participated in the educational program at Tel Megiddo in 1996, making it their second involvement in the Megiddo Expedition.

**Yuval Gadot**  
The Megiddo Expedition Staff

## Fauna, from Page 2

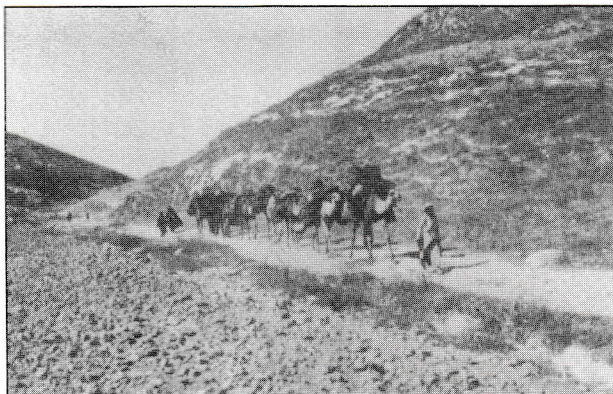
Levantine sacrifice — sacrifice being indisputably the most important form of ancient worship — we have a chance to get it right, to put sacrificial activity and behaviour in context and understand the social dynamics that allowed the Megiddo temples and their cultic institutions to command animal resources from what must have been a considerable distance.

Until our work at Megiddo, not a single early sacred/temple area in all the excavations in Israel had been systematically investigated in a way that would allow scholars to understand the sacrificial system INDEPENDENTLY of textual descriptions. Reconstructions of Canaanite sacrifice have been largely retrojections of, or contrasts with, Israelite sacrifice found in the Hebrew Bible.

Because we don’t know how complete, accurate or precise those descriptions are, as we possess scant comparative evidence from other sources, it is doubly precarious to reconstruct Canaanite sacrifice from such an incomplete base. Our Megiddo material comes from the earliest stages of the Early Bronze period, which precedes any Israelite entity by more than a millennium and a half. Israelite sacrifice developed against the background of a diverse Canaanite system (as well as that of other peoples), and it makes more sense to study it in that context.

The Megiddo faunal material makes this more logical approach possible for the first time.

**Paula Wapnish**  
University of Alabama



A camel caravan, from C.A. Fisher’s 1929 report, *The Excavations of Armageddon*, making its way through Wadi ‘Ara.

## Megiddo's Charms Capture Student

**I**t was December, 1993, and as a student at a small private college in eastern North Carolina, I had papers to write and exams to study for. So, being a typical student, I was wandering around bored and wondering how I should spend my summer vacation, when I noticed an advertisement for an archaeological dig at Tel Megiddo, Israel. OK, so all I knew about archaeology I had learned from Indiana Jones, but six weeks in Israel sounded like lots of fun to me.

I applied and was accepted as a member of the Megiddo Expedition, and in mid-June of 1994, I hopped on a plane with a suitcase stuffed with clothes and a stomach full of excitement. I didn't know any of the other team members, but I figured that just made me like everybody else, so I strapped in and headed for the land of milk and honey.

If I were a poet, maybe I'd know the words to describe all the fun we had that season, but any description I could give would probably have to end with the statement, 'You had to be there'. However, I can tell you I returned from Israel with a suitcase full of souvenirs, my head crammed full of memories and lots of e-mail addresses of new friends. More than anything else though, I had a yearning to get back to Israel as soon as possible.

During the next two years I finished my B.A. degree and went on to

graduate school. I also dreamed about Israel and applied to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where I was accepted into a one-year program for the 1996-97 school year.

This couldn't have worked any better, because the Megiddo Expedition was digging again in the summer of 1996. So, come June, I was once again on a plane to Israel, but this time, I had no ticket for a return flight. A lot of members from the 1994 season returned, and we renewed friendships, made new friends, did some fruitful digging, and had loads of fun doing it. Israel Finkelstein, one of the directors of the Expedition, said that this was the best season of digging he had ever experienced.

After the season, I moved to Jerusalem and began my studies at Hebrew University. Though the demands of my courses keep me busy, I have been known to take a week off and travel, for example, to the Sinai Peninsula. But that's really part of the education I'm getting studying in a foreign country, and I have to experience all I can while I'm here, right?

Living in Jerusalem and going to a university means I meet lots of new people, and quite often I tell them about the Megiddo Expedition and they ask how much it cost me. Now, I guess I could just give a dollar figure and be done with it, and it might seem pretty cheap for a six-week stay in a foreign country (including some expensive weekends in Tiberias...).

However, there's more to the story than that, so I tell people about when I printed T-shirts for a living. A customer would place an order and I might have to buy \$1,000 worth of

shirts. Of course, it doesn't matter how much I spent, because after the shirts were printed and delivered, I got paid and made a profit. The same investment principle is true of digging with the Megiddo Expedition — I've definitely profited more than could ever be summed up in dollars.

Now, I'm not an old man, but I've been around for awhile. I take life seriously, but it 'ain't worth it if you're not having fun', as the saying goes. I don't know where I'll be after this school year, but whatever plans I make will include being in Megiddo for the next dig.

**Peter Carter,**  
Megiddo Expedition  
Team Member

### New Publications from The Megiddo Expedition staff:

**Eric Cline's** new book, *Battles of Armageddon* (University of Michigan Press, Upcoming), looks at Megiddo's unique military history, discussing the battles of, among others, Pharaoh Thutmose III, Joshua, Saladin and Napoleon.

**Israel Finkelstein**, one of the Megiddo Expedition Directors, has published his two volume work, along with Zvi Lederman and Shlomo Bunimovitz, the product of over a decade of field survey and research in the Samarian hills, *Highlands of Many Cultures: The Southern Samaria Survey: The Sites*. (Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University, 1997).

**David Ilan** has published, with A. Biran and R. Greenberg, his book, *Dan I: A Chronicle of the Excavations, the Pottery Neolithic, the Early Bronze Age and the Middle Bronze Age Tombs*. (Nelson Gleuck School of Archaeology, 1996).

**Benjamin Sass**, the Megiddo Expedition's small finds expert, has published, with Nahman Avigad, a book called *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals*. (Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. Hebrew University, 1997)

**Orna Zimhoni**, the Megiddo Expedition's Iron Age pottery expert, who died shortly after the 1996 excavation season, has had a collection of her studies published as *Studies in the Iron Age Pottery of Israel: Typological, Archaeological and Chronological Aspects*. (Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University, 1997).

### Megiddo in Cyberspace

- You can send your comments, ideas, news related to Megiddo, request for publication information, etc., on e-mail to the Editor, Jared Miller, at: [archpubs@post.tau.ac.il](mailto:archpubs@post.tau.ac.il)
- You can access the continuously updated Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University web site, which includes *Revelations* with color illustrations, at: [www.tau.ac.il/~archpubs/index.html](http://www.tau.ac.il/~archpubs/index.html)
- Of course, if you are still writing with a stylus and clay tablets, you can

### Megiddo Expedition Up-and Comers:

**Ann Killebrew** has received a half position as lecturer in the Department of Archaeology at Haifa University in Israel

**Gunnar Lehmann** was appointed to a full position as Lecturer in the Department of Archaeology at Ben-Gurion University in Beer-Sheba, Israel

**Jennifer Peersmann** of the University of Leiden in Holland received a one year grant from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work on her pre-doctoral studies at Tel Aviv University

**Benjamin Sass** was appointed as tenure Associate Professor in the Department of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University.

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Revelations from Megiddo

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