Tell en-Nasbeh: The Ceramic Dating of Strata 1 to 5

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My project has its roots in my previous time at the Albright in 1991-1992 when, as the Samuel H. Kress Fellow, I completed the bulk of the text for my Ph.D. dissertation, "Tell en-Nasbeh: A Re-evaluation of the Architecture and Stratigraphy of the Early Bronze Age, Iron Age and Later Periods." The wide exposure of the site achieved by

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with important figures in Israeli archaeology were quite special. I joined other fellows in attending another important forum for meeting with Israeli colleagues, the seminar series at the Institute for Advanced Studies, which focussed this year on the topic of "Acculturation in the Graeco-Roman Period."

Finally, I found the staff of the Albright to be gracious, hard working and generous with their assistance, particularly during the stressful period of the "closure." We all enjoyed being part of the great tradition of Omar's cooking, and—no less—Wald's interpretations and new introductions. The fellows all appreciate how a served meal allows for unbroken dinner table discussions; however, during the "closure", Nawal awed us with her wonderful pastries and delicious meals (prepared after a full day of work at Schmidt's College and her cleaning chores at the Albright) and we became closer as a group by pitching in to help. Nadia, Edna, Muneira, and Said also contributed greatly to the comfort of my stay, helping me to locate necessary equipment and facilities. Final thanks go to Albright Director, Sy Gitin, as well as the Annual Professor, Oded Borowski, to whom I am thankful for good advice on many matters of conducting archaeological research in Israel, as well as for offering explanations, translations, and context as many dramatic events unfolded during this difficult and dramatic year in the history of Israel. For me personally, it has been a productive and memorable sabbatical year, and a pleasant prelude to my new academic position at Cornell.

W. F. Badè between 1926 and 1935 makes Tell en-Nasbeh one of the most important sites in Palestine for understanding ancient settlement planning. Due to the immense amount of material excavated at Tell en-Nasbeh, the dating of the revised stratigraphy I worked out then was based on correlations with the known history of Biblical Mizpah of Benjamin, the town with which Tell en-Nasbeh is identified. This historical model suggested that there should be a settlement on the site from

cording to the Reisner-Fisher method, i.e. before the introduction of more sophisticated field and recording methodologies. All debris coming from the level of the top course of the walls of a room down to the floor of the room (and down to the base of the walls if no floor could be discerned) was assigned the same provenance number. Thus the great mass of pottery recorded from the site was not valuable for dating purposes. Prior to taking up residence at the Albright I was able to determine the types of deposits that would be most useful for my attempts to date the site's revised stratigraphy, and was then able to isolate the most likely loci from among those types. These deposits include sealed cisterns, in situ deposits seen in photos or implied by whole vessels, dismantled walls, bedrock installations cut by walls of later strata, other relatively homogenous deposits from unsealed cisterns and from rooms in an area of clear super-imposed stratigraphy in the southwest corner of the site.

The dating of Stratum 1 is difficult as it consists of isolated features just below topsoil apparently of the Hellenistic to Roman periods, though with some remains into the Ottoman Period. The most significant result achieved to date has been the identification of half a dozen deposits of different types with ceramics which conclusively demonstrate the existence of a Babylonian to Persian Period phase at Tell en-Nasbeh, known as Stratum 2 in the revised site stratigraphy. Materials from sealed cisterns demonstrate a late seventh to early sixth century date for the end of Stratum 3. The dating of Stratum 4 (and thus the dating of the beginning phase of Stratum 3) is problematic as relatively little ceramic material was recorded from the scores of rock-cut installations assigned to this phase. However, the several dozen Philistine sherd of local manufacture, the collar rim pithoi and the Iron I cooking pots found in fills, clearly indicate that Tell en Nasbeh was settled in the Iron I Period, which is the assumed date for Stratum 4. It was also possible to isolate deposits of Early Bronze Ib to date Stratum 5.

Not only was I able to bring the above

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Samuel H. Kress Fellow’s Report
The Military Interaction of Egypt with the Southern Levant During the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age Transition

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The privilege of holding the appointment as the Samuel H. Kress Fellow at the Albright Institute made possible the completion of a significant portion of dissertation research and writing. My topic, which I plan to submit in 1996 to the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Arizona, deals with the military interaction of Egypt with the southern Levant during the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age transition. Military activity continues to be a major focus in recent scholarly models of the cultural development of societies in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and archaeology. This is particularly true for periods of widespread discontinuities or destructions or deconstructions or destructions, often attributed to the military activity of various ethnic groups. However, little research has gone into the military tactics and policies of these groups. My interest is to focus on Egyptian military activity. What was the military policy of Egypt? Did they completely destroy cities or were only parts of them destroyed? What was the extent, nature, and focus of destruction? What were the effects of Egyptian military activity on specific sites and local cultures? These questions are addressed in a synthetic way that encompasses textual, iconographic, and archaeological data in an attempt to synthesize all the evidence available for this period. The expected result is a paradigm of Egyptian military policy as it may appear in the textual and iconographic data and that may be inferred from the archaeological correlates of destruction at various sites.

Egyptian presence and military activity in the southern Levant is established in a brief analysis of architectural (“governors”’ residences, forts, temples, naval bases) and material culture elements (weapons, ivory, doorjams and lintels, stelae, statues and plaques, pottery and alabaster, anthropoid coffins, scarabs and cylinder seals, and ostraca), including an overview of how this data has been interpreted through several different models (imperialism, peer-polity interaction/elite emulation). This work is preliminary to the main goal of the dissertation, the investigation of textual, iconographic, and archaeological correlates for Egyptian military activity and tactics. A chapter in...