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Madaba Plains Project

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The first major season of excavation at Tell Nimrin (Shuna South) was undertaken in May and June, 1989. The objectives were to determine the occupation sequence of the site from surface and stratified material, to recover floral, faunal and ceramic assemblages for analysis, to conduct a geological study of the site and to assess the potential of the site for future work.

A thorough surface survey yielded some 41,000 sherds that indicate that Tell Nimrin has been continuously occupied from the Early Bronze IV period up to the present, with the possible exceptions of the Late Bronze and early Iron Ages. The sherd distribution confirmed that bulldozing has altered the surface layers of the tell.

Three areas of excavation were chosen to extract as much diachronic information as possible in a single season by a small staff. The excavation areas were placed in such a way that they can be linked in future seasons to provide long sections through the site.

The third season of excavations at Tell el-'Umeiri was conducted from June to August 1989. On the southern shelf remains from EB III were uncovered, including streets, blocks of houses and a store-room with 28 storage vessels. On the western slope a Middle Bronze rampart was discovered. The pottery seems to date to MB IIC. LB earth layers were found on the eastern shelf.

Work on the western slope outlined a coherent Iron I casemate fortification system. It included a casemate wall, a beaten-earth rampart and a moat. Iron I pottery was in the rampart, while pithoi found within the casemate room indicates a date in the 11th or early 10th century for its destruction attested by an almost 2m deep destruction layer.

Three large buildings from the late Iron II period were excavated at the western edge of the acropolis. The southern building may have been an administrative center. At the eastern edge remains dating well into the Persian period were uncovered.

The foundation of a small plastered pool contained two early Roman sherds. The well at the bottom of the northern slope

Area I provided the best stratigraphic evidence for the earliest occupation with approximately six meters of *in situ* stratified Middle Bronze material. Area II confirmed the extensive nature of the Middle Bronze occupation. Area III produced architectural remains and large quantities of pottery from the Iron II period, as well as a three line Aramaic ostrakon.

The 1989 excavation showed that the tell is composed almost totally of human occupational debris and not, as Glueck thought, of natural geological deposits. It also documented substantial pre-Roman occupation, especially during the Middle Bronze Age and Iron II period. The conclusion of Phase I of the project will be achieved by a 1990 excavation season.



Six meters of Middle Bronze material at Tell Nimrin

was in use in EB, Iron I, Iron II, Roman and Byzantine times.

Excavation at el-Dreijat, 2.8 km southwest of 'Umeiri suggested that the site was originally occupied in the Iron II period, perhaps as a rectangular fortress. In the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods the site underwent radical changes. New walls were built and floor levels were lowered.

Excavations at Tell Jawa revealed three city walls. The earliest remains came from early Iron II domestic surfaces. More domestic dwellings came from the middle Iron II and late Iron II periods. There is no evidence of significant occupation following the Iron Age.

Five survey teams worked within a five kilometer radius of 'Umeiri. A subsurface mapping team used ground-penetrating radar. The random survey team completed an intensive survey of 5% of the survey area. The environmental survey studied water retention facilities in Wadi Bishara south of 'Umeiri. The farmstead documentation team studied 14 rural agricultural facilities. The ethnoarchaeological team concentrated on late Ottoman cave villages.

**David McCreery &
James Flanagan:
Tell Nimrin
Excavation**

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Madaba Plains
Project**