

Chapter Title: History of Investigations and Excavations at Tel Bet Yerah

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Book Title: Bet Yerah

Book Subtitle: the Early Bronze Age mound I :excavation reports, 1933-1986

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Published by: Israel Antiquities Authority / תוקיִתעה תושר. (2006)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1fzhdbg.5>

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CHAPTER 1

HISTORY OF INVESTIGATIONS AND EXCAVATIONS AT TEL BET YERAH

RAPHAEL GREENBERG AND SARIT PAZ

More than any other major mound in Israel, the history of the archaeological study of Tel Bet Yerah (Khirbet el-Kerak) in the Kinrot Valley is closely bound up—for better or worse—with the history of modern Jewish settlement. Unoccupied for centuries, the mound was the focus of an early twentieth century unrealized Zionist initiative for real-estate development. The earliest archaeological investigations of the mound were carried out in conjunction with the first road-building effort of the Jewish Labor Corps in 1920–1921. The first excavations (in 1944–1946) were funded by the Jewish Labor Union (Histadrut). Virtually all subsequent study of the mound took place either as a result of damage incurred during construction and agricultural activities by the settlers of the Kinrot Valley or in anticipation of such damage. In the entire, complex history of excavation only one expedition—that fielded by the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute—operated independently of such considerations.

The fact that the greater part of the mound, including a number of the most significant excavated structures, has remained intact is a tribute to the perseverance of a handful of devoted archaeologists and local enthusiasts who negotiated with government administrators, pleaded with local developers, and eventually impressed upon the surrounding communities the realization that the mound contains remains of a past significant enough to constrain further construction and development.

The chronicle of excavations that follows provides a setting for the excavation reports contained in the present volume; the manifold implications of the excavation history for the interpretation and publication (or non-publication) of the results will be discussed in greater detail in Volume II. A thematic bibliography for each stage in the study of the site appears at the end of this chapter.

EARLY RESEARCH

While the ruins of ancient buildings preserved on the surface of the mound of el-Kerak long attracted the attention of travelers and scholars, visits to the site from medieval times through the early twentieth century resulted in little more than cursory descriptions and half-hearted attempts to provide a historical identification for the site. One of the more lively and detailed descriptions was provided by J. MacGregor (1869:412–415) who, while accepting the popular misidentification of the mound with Tarichaea, described some of the antiquities visible on the surface and the “mine of relics to be dug out”, including “the figure of a little donkey with water jars, wrought in terra



Fig. 1.1. Detail of the Survey of Western Palestine map, showing Tel Bet Yerah (Kh. el-Kerak) at the southwest outlet of the Sea of Galilee (after Conder and Kitchener 1881: Sheet VI).

cotta”—perhaps the first of this characteristic Early Bronze Age type ever recorded! The main importance of the early observations was geographical—especially with regard to the existence of an ancient channel of the Jordan River running west of the mound, rather than south of it (see detailed discussion in Volume II). The map published as Sheet VI in the Palestine Exploration Fund’s survey of Western Palestine (Fig. 1.1, above) clearly shows this early bed, separated from the Sea of Galilee (Lake Kinneret) by the silted-up arches of an ancient bridge, later identified as an aqueduct carrying water to the late Classical period structures at the northern extremity of the mound.

In 1908 the mound was acquired by Arthur Ruppin, head of the Palestine Office of the World Zionist Organization, and ceded to the nearby communal settlement at Kinneret. In 1911, however, Ruppin hatched the first scheme for settlement on the mound: he envisioned the establishment of a winter resort village for wealthy European Jews, in fulfillment of one of Theodore Herzl’s utopian concepts of Jewish settlement in Palestine (Fig. 1.2). Although as many as twelve plots were actually sold to prospective settlers (out of a total of thirty), the plan never materialized, and the land remained under cultivation. The Kerak, as it was known to the farmers of Kinneret, figures prominently in the folklore of early Jewish communal settlement in Palestine as a place of natural beauty and inspiring scenery (Fig. 1.3). Nonetheless, the die was cast, and the real-estate principle established. Economic interest in the mound in the early twentieth century was to have a significant effect on its future, as settlement emphasis gradually shifted from the agricultural to other realms.

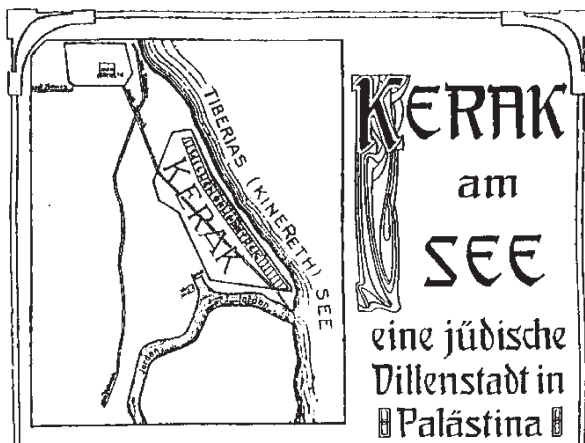


Fig. 1.2. Advertisement for the sale of building plots on the Kerak, 1911 (after Vinogradov 1994).

Modern archaeological research on the mound may be said to have begun in 1920–1921 when the Jewish Labor Corps (גדוד העבודה), under its first contract from the British Mandatory government, built the road between Samak and Tiberias. The road traversed the mound of Khirbet el-Kerak along its entire length (Fig. 1.4) and when E.L. Sukenik, at that time a geography teacher in Jerusalem, was invited by the laborers to lecture on local history in late summer 1921, he examined the debris seen in the section and published his findings in the *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* (Sukenik 1922). Sukenik discussed the identification of the site as Talmudic Beth Yerah and as Philoteria and described the pottery he found, dating it to the Islamic, Roman–Byzantine, and ‘earlier’ periods. Among the finds were fragments of Arabic inscriptions, a Jewish tombstone and a marble head of Tyche, patron goddess of the Hellenistic city. Sukenik noted that only an archaeological excavation could establish whether a Canaanite city lay buried beneath the later ruins (1922:108).

At about the same time W.F. Albright conducted his own investigation of the site, in the course of his survey of Bronze Age settlements in the Jordan Valley (Albright 1923; 1925; 1926). He was the first to identify and define the pottery known as Khirbet Kerak Ware, incorrectly—although plausibly—attributing it to the Middle Bronze Age. In Albright’s words, Khirbet Kerak was “perhaps the most remarkable Bronze Age site in all Palestine” (Albright 1926:27).

The year 1927 saw the publication of Saarisalo’s landmark volume of historical-geographic investigations, which includes a description of his finds at Khirbet el-Kerak (Saarisalo 1927:76–81). Saarisalo describes the mound and its surroundings, noting the ruined Roman bridge spanning the old channel of the Jordan, and brings testimony to the effect that 18 years earlier (1909) the channel had been almost completely full of water. Saarisalo too examined the road-section and noted the accumulation was higher at either end of the mound. This led him to assume the existence of a city wall. Further evidence for the fortification emerged on the “especially stony” western slope (Saarisalo 1927:76–77), where the Jewish settlers had exposed ancient masonry. In a trench over 4 m deep excavated by the settlers to quarry soil for their fields, some 15 m of an ancient city wall of unhewn stones were exposed, preserved up to 1.5 m high. Under this wall there was an ash layer containing ‘MB’ potsherds



Fig. 1.3. The Kerak in the early twentieth century, viewed from the north (courtesy, Zalmaniyat Pri-Or).

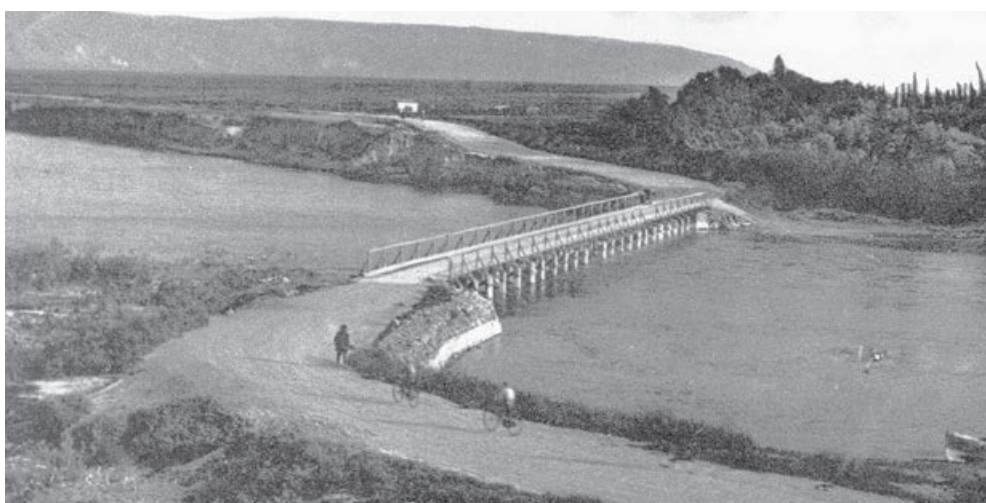


Fig. 1.4. Two views of the Labor Corps road and wooden bridge, crossing the mouth of the Jordan just south of Tel Bet Yeraḥ (courtesy, the Central Zionist Archives).

(presumably Khirbet Kerak Ware). Saarisalo was able to trace the course of the wall along the western edge of the mound for several hundreds of meters. He describes other architectural features as well as many typical Early Bronze Age potsherds; following Albright's lead, however, he attributed the red-slipped and highly burnished Khirbet Kerak Ware pieces to the Middle Bronze Age.

THE 1930S–1940S

The meticulously arranged British Mandate Department of Antiquities scientific and administrative (ATQ) files provide details of the circumstances surrounding the earliest excavations on the mound. These files contain dated inspectors' reports concerning licit and illicit activities on the site itself, as well as detailed correspondence between the staff and Director of the Department of Antiquities, and between the Director and external agencies and individuals.

In June 1930 the Mandatory Department of Antiquities issued the first license to excavate at Tel Bet Yerah, No. T-100/1930, to Reverend S.J. Mallon (excavator of Teleilat Ghassul) of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Jerusalem. The license was issued at the request of S.T. Brogdon, engineer and emissary of the Protestant Bible Society in Fort Worth, Texas. Correspondence preserved in the Israel Antiquities Authority archives reveals Brogdon's intent to conduct a survey of the outlet of the Jordan River in order to establish the water level of the Sea of Galilee in the days of Jesus. Following a preliminary survey, permission was sought to excavate—under the nominal supervision of Mallon—a stone cairn located in the middle of the

old river channel as well as other features found in the survey. The files indicate that no work was done under the terms of the license. Brogdon himself, however, excavated elsewhere without a permit, collecting pottery from the road-section.

Brogdon's work, reported in an unidentified Fort Worth newsletter under the title "Survey of the Jordan River Outlet—at the Sea of Galilee", describes the ruins seen on the surface of Kh. el-Kerak. Its main contribution, however, is the curious suggestion that the present channel of the river is a result of an artificial channel or moat cut south of the Kerak, and that the ridge along the southern edge of the mound represents the spoil of this moat. This idea eventually made its way into the professional literature as an explanation of the shift that occurred in the location of the outlet of the Jordan River (Ben-Arieh 1965).

In 1933, British Mandate Antiquities Inspector Na'im Makhoully reported extensive damage inflicted on the mound by Pinhas Rutenberg's Palestine Electric Company (Figs. 1.5, 1.6). Mechanical excavators placed near the southeastern tip of the mound quarried soil from the banks of a small cleft in the mound (visible in early photos and later dubbed 'the wadi'). The soil was carted off in boxcars to serve as fill for the Deganya barrage, located about one hundred meters west of the cleft. The barrage, built in order to regulate the flow of the Jordan River southward to Rutenberg's hydroelectric plant at Naharayim, served as the foundation for the new Samak–Tiberias highway.

The first licensed excavations on the mound were in fact carried out by Makhoully in October 1933 (License No. W-17/1933; Area MK, see Chapter 9, below), in conjunction with the construction of the selfsame



Fig. 1.5. Earth-quarrying by the Palestine Electric Company in April 1933.

way to Tiberias, it was found that the southern part of this important artificial mound is attacked by Rutenberg people who are installing there a mechanical excavator to supply earth for raising up the banks of the Jordan river at its outlet from the Lake of Tiberias.

Fig. 1.6. An excerpt from Makhoully's report of the damage.

highway. This salvage excavation consisted mainly of *ex post facto* recording of remains found by the road-builders in the bed and sections of the road-cut. A brief unpublished report in the Mandatory Department of Antiquities ATQ file includes a schematic plan and section as well as a few photographs (Fig. 1.7). Makhoul reported the existence of six levels, from the Early Bronze Age to the Hellenistic and Roman periods, including parts of buildings, a stone-paved Early Bronze Age street and a large, well-built stone drain. Complete pots and a few flint artifacts from this excavation remain in the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) storerooms in the Palestine Archaeological (Rockefeller) Museum.

In 1936 a large hoard of Hellenistic silver coins surfaced in the Tiberias market and was attributed to Khirbet el-Kerak; however, no details regarding the discovery ever came to light.

Following the fortuitous discovery in July 1940 of the rich Early Bronze Age tomb at Kinneret, only 1250 m west of the mound (excavated by Maisler [Mazar], Kellner [Amiran] and Haas), Clarence S. Fisher, on behalf of the American Schools of Oriental Research, applied for permission to conduct trial excavations on the mound itself (April 1941). Fisher intended to excavate Early Bronze Age remains in the northern part of the mound and to establish the existence and nature of the city wall at two points. Administrative

files (ATQ/93/6) reveal that a license was indeed issued by Director of Antiquities R.W. Hamilton, following consultation with the members of the Archaeological Advisory Board (Professors Sukenik and Mayer), but in early May 1941 Fisher wrote that the military authorities refused to allow photography or survey on the site (hardly surprising in view of Rommel's advance into Egypt in April 1941 and British operations vis-à-vis Vichy-ruled Syria in May), and the excavations were put off indefinitely. Fisher died a short time later.

The first major excavation on Tel Bet Yerah was undertaken in the wake of an elaborate maneuver by Jewish labor and Jordan Valley settlement leaders, intended to enable the construction of educational institutions on the mound (Fig. 1.8). Anticipating the reluctance of the Department of Antiquities to approve such construction, the instigators ensured academic and political support for their cause by contacting, in advance, Prof. Benjamin Mazar and the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society and offering that they conduct a trial excavation—to be funded by the Jewish Labor federation. Since the JPES board included highly placed political figures, such as Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and David Remez, respectively president and chairman of the (Jewish) National Council, as well as the leading Jewish scholars of the day, its approval of the projected construction on the mound carried considerable weight. Following token resistance by the Director,



Fig. 1.7. Early Bronze Age remains in the road-bed, 1933.



Fig. 1.8. Laying the cornerstone for Ohalo Seminary, 1944/1945 (courtesy, Kinneret archives).

the Department of Antiquities agreed to construction, with the proviso that structures of special importance would be preserved, and that building would take place only where excavations showed that there were no significant remains. Thus it came about that in 1944 the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society initiated a major excavation in advance of the construction of an agricultural secondary school on the southern part of the mound and the Ohalo seminary on its northern part. The dig—a rare example of stratigraphic excavation by local archaeologists in Palestine prior to 1948—was sponsored by the General Federation of Jewish Labor (Histadrut) and the Jewish National Fund as a memorial to Jewish labor leader Berl Katznelson, and supported by the council of the Jordan Valley Jewish settlement bloc.

The expedition conducted two seasons of excavations at the site:

The first season (License No. T-329/1945; Area MS, see Chapter 2, below), from December 1944 to June 1945, was headed by Benjamin Maisler (Mazar) and Moshe Stekelis. Other members of the expedition were Pesach Bar-Adon, Immanuel Dunayevsky and photographer J. Schweig. They opened a large trench, 100 m long by about 7 m wide, perpendicular to the southern edge of the mound (Fig. 1.9); this was expanded subsequently to allow the exposure of a large Hellenistic complex. The excavation also recovered parts of the Early Bronze Age fortification systems and

several Early Bronze Age houses. Another part of the city wall was examined some 40 m to the east of the trench.

The second season (License No. T-331/1945; Area SA, see Chapter 3, below), headed by Stekelis and Michael Avi-Yonah, took place between December 1945 and June 1946. Members of the expedition included Trude Krakauer (Dothan) and Ruth Hestrin as assistants, and Yigael Sukenik (Yadin) as an ‘honorary assistant’. They continued the work in the southern trench, reaching virgin soil in several soundings along the trench. In the northern part of the mound, a large and unique Early Bronze Age public building known as the ‘Circles Building’ or ‘Granary’, was found. A small sounding to virgin soil (‘the deep cut’) was made to the west of the granary. A late-period bathhouse built on the northeast corner of the granary and parts of a late-Classical fortified structure were also excavated.

The excavators identified four Early Bronze Age strata (in their terminology, Beth-Yerah I–IV), a Hellenistic stratum (Beth-Yerah V), a stratum from the Roman–Byzantine period (Beth-Yerah VI) and an Early Islamic stratum (Beth-Yerah VII). Following the excavation, the Mandate authorities released three-fourths of the mound for development and the southern trench was back-filled; the northeastern quadrant, however, was reserved for future excavation.

Only a preliminary report of the JPES excavation was ever published (Maisler, Stekelis, and Avi-Yonah

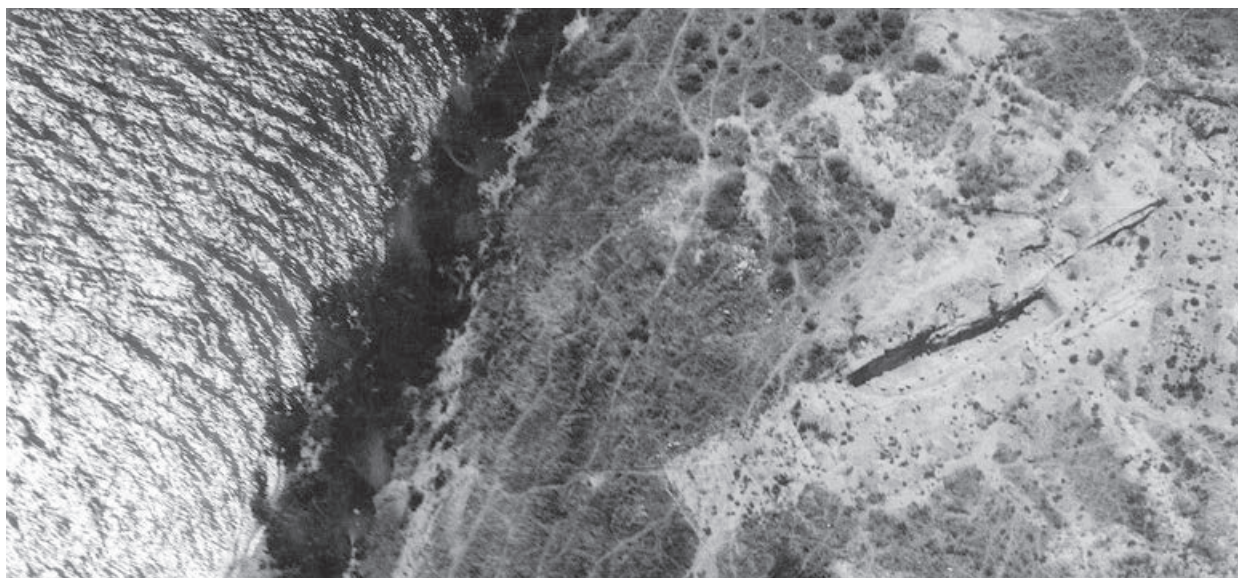


Fig. 1.9. Aerial view (1946) of the back-filled JPES excavation trench of 1944–1945 (R.A.F. photograph, from the files of P. Bar-Adon).

1952), partly due to the fact that the excavated material, in the basements of the Palestine Archaeological (Rockefeller) Museum, was unavailable to the excavators between 1947 and 1967.

POST-1948 EXCAVATIONS

Work was renewed at the site shortly after Israel's independence. Most of the excavations were necessitated by the continuous building and expansion of the agricultural school in the south and the Ohalo seminary

in the central part of the mound, as well as by the construction of several docks and approaches to the lake shore (Figs. 1.10, 1.11). Despite the preliminary agreement between the Mandatory government and the settlers, no formal release of the excavated areas had ever been made and there was no clear delineation of the extent of construction to be permitted (R. Amiran, in IAA archive file פ/בית ירה). Thus, while most building activities were based on plans approved by the Mandatory government during the 1940s and revised as time went by, the seminary and school also engaged in widespread



Fig. 1.10. Construction work at Ohalo, 1949 (courtesy, Kinneret archives).



Fig. 1.11. View of the Ohalo buildings from the sea, soon after construction; note extensive dumps (courtesy, Kinneret archives).

planting and landscaping. A considerable part of the archaeological work conducted at the site may therefore be labeled ‘salvage excavation’, even when carried out at some distance from permanent structures.

The Bar-Adon Years

Excavations in 1949 and 1950 (License Nos. 12/1949, 1/1950; Area GB, see Chapter 4, below) were carried out by Pesach Bar-Adon, under the supervision of Philip Langstaffe Ord Guy, the sole British administrator to remain in the Antiquities Department after the dissolution of the Mandate and the establishment of the State of Israel. At first, Bar-Adon inspected the foundations of the main building of Ohalo just south of the 1946 excavations (see Figs. 1.10, 1.11). Later, Guy and Bar-Adon initiated work further to the north, where a large open-air theater was planned. There they discovered a large fortified compound dated by them to the Roman period and what they thought to be a synagogue. Bar-Adon continued excavation of this complex in 1952–1953.

From 1951 on, under Bar-Adon (License Nos. 2/1951, 23/1952, 23/1954, 34/1955), excavations continued mainly at the southeast tip of the mound and along the fortifications girding the mound on the south and west (Areas BS, BF; see Chapters 5 and 6, below). The latter included a stretch of some 700 m of a stone city wall

with towers and parts of an earlier Early Bronze Age mud-brick wall and city-gate. The former revealed, in addition to eleven Early Bronze Age strata in a deep 10×10 m sounding to virgin soil excavated in 1951, Middle Bronze Age, Persian and Hellenistic remains excavated in 1951–1953. In 1955 Bar-Adon opened many small probes all over the site. Some of these were necessitated by new construction and the erection of power lines, others appear to have been intended to stake a claim to the central part of the mound, in view of the arrival of an expedition from the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute (see below) in 1952. Bar-Adon’s excavations were all sponsored by the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (IDAM) and were often only one step ahead of ‘beautification’ operations undertaken by the agricultural school, such as the planting of a stand of eucalyptus trees along the top of the Early Bronze Age fortifications on the southern side of the mound. He excavated for up to six months at a stretch with five to twenty workmen, spending an aggregate of about 20 months in the field. Although working solo for the most part, with a full-time surveyor on hand (this task was split between Shlomo Mu’alem and Y. Shema‘ya), as well as a local photographer and a finds registrar (Varda Sussmann and later Elisheva Belhorn), Bar-Adon was occasionally assisted by students and members of the Department of Antiquities, among them Yohanan Aharoni, Ora Negbi

and Ze'ev Yeivin. Benjamin Mazar was consulted often, as were the numerous visitors to the site: Shmuel Yeivin (then Head of the Department of Antiquities), Ruth and David Amiran, William Foxwell Albright, and others (Figs. 1.12, 1.13).

Guy and Bar-Adon published only preliminary notices of their excavations. In the late 1950s Bar-Adon prepared a detailed report on the stratigraphic sounding excavated in 1951, but due to professional and personal disagreements with the IDAM publications staff it was never published. In addition to this manuscript, the archives of the IAA contain detailed written reports, diaries, plans and photos that shed light on this important excavation.



Fig. 1.12. Three excavators of Tel Bet Yerah: from right B. Mazar, P. Delougaz, and P. Bar-Adon, during visit to the site in 1952. Nelson Glueck is at left (courtesy, Central Zionist Archives).



Fig. 1.13. Israel Exploration Society members visiting the Circles Building and the late-period fortified complex excavated by Bar-Adon, 1952 (courtesy, Central Zionist Archives).

The Oriental Institute Excavations

In 1952–1953 Pierre Pinhas Delougaz headed an expedition sponsored by the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute (OI). Not all of the details leading up to the fielding of this expedition are clear, and there are elements in the puzzle that appear to be linked more to the biography of the excavator—a Near Eastern archaeologist with a long record of excavations in Mesopotamia—than to scientific matters. Documents from the Oriental Institute archives indicate that the idea of the renewal of the OI's activities in Israel was broached in 1951 by the head of the Israel Department of Antiquities, Shmuel Yeivin, on the occasion of a visit to Israel by the director of the OI, Carl Kraeling. Touring several possible excavation sites in Israel, Yeivin apparently suggested that monetary assets left by the Megiddo expedition in the defunct Ottoman Bank in Haifa could serve as seed money for a new excavation; the Israel Government, on its part, would be willing to contribute matching funds for labor—two dollars for every dollar paid by the OI. On his return to Chicago, Kraeling discussed the offer with Delougaz, who had a strong personal and ideological interest in returning to the Jewish state and prior acquaintance with Bet Yerah itself (R. Amiran, in IAA file פ/בית ירה). There appears to have been, however, a condition attached to Kraeling's offer—that Delougaz excavate at a site with both Classical and early historic remains; thus was the site of Bet Yerah chosen (we have no direct evidence of this clause, but there is no other way of understanding the fact that the bulk of Delougaz' first season was devoted to the excavation of a Byzantine church in the north of the mound—a task for which he had no scholarly inclination).

After some negotiation, a license to excavate at Bet Yerah was issued to Delougaz in October 1952—the first excavation license issued to a foreign expedition in Israel—and excavations began almost immediately thereafter. The ten-month long season (License No. C-14/1953; Area DK) was devoted for the most part to the excavation of the Byzantine church at the northern end of the mound. In addition, a few trial trenches were opened nearby. In 1963–1964 Delougaz and Helene Kantor headed a follow-up expedition (License Nos. C-76/1963, C-76/1964). In these seasons a series of soundings and trenches were opened all over the central and northern part of the site in order to establish the Early Bronze Age sequence.

As in the case of the other excavations on the mound, the Oriental Institute excavations never achieved full publication. A final report on the church was published by Delougaz and Haines in 1960. In 1982 Douglas Esse completed his Ph.D. dissertation, in which a partial ceramic typology of the Delougaz–Kantor excavations played a central part. However, Esse's intention of preparing a full publication of the excavation was cut short by his death in 1992. A brief version of his typological study on the ceramics of EB II and III Bet Yerah, as well as a synopsis of the finds in the trial trenches, was published in his synthetic study of Early Bronze Age urbanization in 1991. The Chicago excavations are currently being prepared for publication by Gabrielle Novacek of the Oriental Institute.

Salvage Excavations, 1967–1995

During the years following Bar-Adon's and Delougaz' excavations, as construction and development continued in the Bet Yerah agricultural high school and the Ohalo teachers' seminary and along the main road, a number of salvage excavations took place, none of which achieved publication beyond the preliminary notice.

1. Between January and April 1967 David Ussishkin and Ehud Netzer headed two seasons of salvage excavations at the edge of the sea-scarp near the middle of the mound (Permit No. A-127/1967; Area UN, see Chapter 7, below). The excavations were initiated after the discovery of four Early Bronze Age copper implements in a modern trench, apparently related in some way to the construction of a boathouse at the foot of the scarp. Domestic remains—a number of houses and a paved street—were uncovered in these excavations.

2. In 1976 Ruth Amiran and Carmela Cohen directed excavations on the grounds of Ohalo (Permit No. A-606/1976, issued under the name of Z. Yeivin; Area AC). The excavation revealed ten stratigraphic phases of Early Bronze Age and Hellenistic date, described in a very brief report. Although all the ceramic material from this excavation was retrieved and is extant in the IAA stores, we were not able to locate the records of this excavation and it remains unpublished. In the same year Dan Bahat conducted the first of two seasons of excavations at a nearby location (Permit No. A-632/1976; Area BH, see Chapter 9, below). Three Early Bronze Age strata with remains of domestic

buildings were uncovered, and above them, remains of Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods.

3. In 1981–1982 Emanuel Eisenberg conducted salvage excavations among the school buildings in the southern part of the mound (Permit No. A-1069/1981; Area EY, see Chapter 8, below). The excavations revealed ten main strata: eight of the Early Bronze Age and two of the Hellenistic period. The earlier finds comprised part of a well-preserved domestic area, and include houses, a street, and many complete pottery vessels. In 1985–1986 Ora Yogev (Permit Nos. A-1399/1985, A-1448/1986) enlarged the 1982 excavation area to a total of 250 sq m. As it happens, the area excavated by Eisenberg and Yogev straddled the middle of the backfilled 1944–1945 trench, the location of which had been long forgotten. In fact, one of the deep soundings of the earlier season was identified in the later excavations as the remains of a deep pit, cutting all the ancient strata. The three excavation seasons thus form a unique case of concentric excavation, with the Eisenberg excavations partly enveloping the JPES excavations, and the Yogev excavations enveloping both earlier soundings. The result is a robust stratigraphic sequence, reinforced by finds of three independent excavators.

4. Between December 1994 and March 1995 Nimrod Getzov of the IAA undertook a salvage excavation along the Zemaḥ–Tiberias highway (Permit No. A-2211/1994; Area GE). In a long and narrow trench (95 × 4 m), he revealed different phases of the Early Bronze Age mudbrick and stone fortifications. He also excavated domestic remains lying north of the wall (Getzov 2006). Several elements identified by Getzov can be matched with features observed by Makhoully in his 1933 excavation.

Inspectors' Excavations

Many reports on archaeological finds recovered by the IAA inspectors over the past 50 years reside in the archives. In some cases it is clear that the inspection included excavation. Some of the more obvious cases of non-licensed inspectors' excavations are the following:

Between 1950 and 1958 Bezalel Ravani, the Tiberias-based IDAM inspector, visited the site often, recording various incursions made into the site during construction and development of infrastructure. In at least two cases he conducted limited excavations—both necessitated by the cutting of cesspits (see Chapter 9, below). His

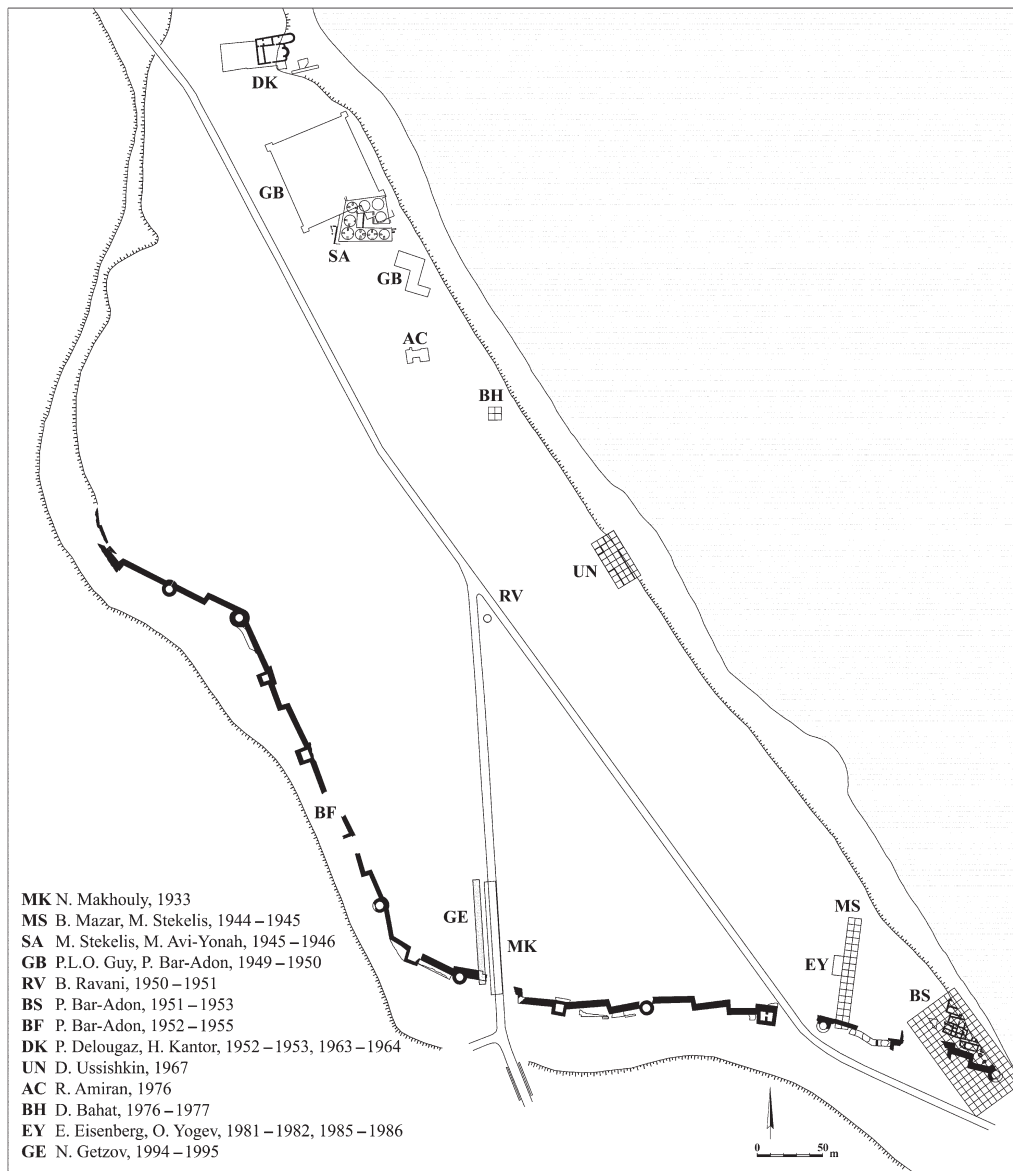
discovery of an infant jar-burial down-slope from the Ohalo dining room in October 1950 eventually led to an excavation by Bar-Adon at the same location (it is not entirely clear whether the 1950 burial is the same burial mentioned by Bar-Adon in conjunction with the excavation of 'Section 10', in 1955; see Chapter 4, below).

In May 1971 Vassilios Tzaferis oversaw mechanical excavation of trenches, apparently in the south-central part of the mound. Three trenches (1.5 m wide, total length of over 30 m) were excavated to a depth of 3 to 3.5 m below the surface. A thin Early Bronze Age layer was found under about 3 m of what was described as erosive fill. Unfortunately, there is no clear record of the location of these trenches, which could point to a significant feature in the formation process of the mound.

Among the many brief inspection reports from the 1970s–1980s found in the IAA files, some of which include reports of substantial remains (architecture, complete vessels, etc.), we may point out a cache of complete EB III vessels retrieved by Claire Epstein in 1971. These included an unusual Khirbet Kerak Ware pot, described in Volume II. Lastly, mention may be made of two Intermediate Bronze Age tombs excavated in 1971 by Moshe Kochavi and in 1984 by O. Yogev at Deganya A, just across the river from Bet Yerah. While they lie outside the mound proper, they were apparently constructed of materials obtained in antiquity from the abandoned site.

SUMMARY

All told, 20 excavation licenses have been issued for Tel Bet Yerah, and approximately 15,000 sq m have been excavated, most of them in Early Bronze Age strata (Plan 1.1; Table 1.1). The exposures have tended to emphasize the vertical rather than horizontal aspect. Thus, there are several detailed sequences from the surface to virgin soil—in Areas MS, SA, DK, EY, BS, and GE—containing between five and eleven Early Bronze Age strata and several post-Early Bronze Age strata that reflect different occupational histories for various parts of the mound (Table 1.2). Contiguous horizontal exposures of Early Bronze Age occupation strata (as opposed to fortifications) rarely exceed a few hundred square meters, leaving the broad architecturally-oriented excavation as the main desideratum for future work.



Plan 1.1. Map of the principal excavation areas.

The salvage status of many of the excavations has also had a great impact on the methodology and resolution of the excavations. Long excavation seasons and the endless succession of different excavators have led almost inescapably to the adoption of rather basic excavation standards and, perhaps more significantly, to the absence of a consistent interpretative focus. Excavators were usually unaware of the detailed results of previous excavations and had little opportunity to establish their own research strategy. While the implications of this situation for the place Tel Bet

Yerah occupies in Early Bronze Age research will be taken up in a separate study, the history of excavation described above serves as justification for the structure of the present volume: each excavation is presented independently of the others, with few cross-references, reflecting the state of understanding reached in the field. A synthetic view of all the excavation results—site formation, architecture, material culture, and environmental remains—is reserved for the second volume of reports.

Table 1.1. Conspectus of Major Archaeological Campaigns at Tel Bet Yerah, 1933–1995

	<i>Excavator(s)</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Area Code</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Principal Finds</i>
1*	Makhoully	1933	MK	Samak (Zemah)–Tiberias roadbed	Stone drain; paved EBA street
2*	Mazar and Stekelis	1944–1945	MS	7 × 100 m section at south of mound	Fortifications, EBA and Hellenistic houses
3*	Stekelis and Avi-Yonah	1945–1946	SA	Northern acropolis	Circles Building; late-antique bath and fort
4*	Bar-Adon	1949	GB	Ohalo seminary	Badly disturbed EBA remains
5	Guy and Bar-Adon	1950	GB	North of Circles Building	Late-antique fortified complex
6*	Bar-Adon	1951	BS	Southeastern tip of mound	10 × 10 m sounding to virgin soil; EB I to Late Islamic remains
7*	Bar-Adon	1952–1953	BS	Southeastern tip of mound	Extensive remains abutting late EBA fortification
8*	Bar-Adon	1953–1955	BF	Southern and western edges of mound	Extensive clearance of late EBA fortifications; early EBA wall and gate
9	Delougaz and Haines	1953	DK	Northern tip of mound	Byzantine church
10	Delougaz and Kantor	1963–1964	DK	Various soundings in northern half of mound	‘Olive oil factory’
11*	Ussishkin and Netzer	1967	UN	Middle of eastern scarp	Alley, houses
12	Amiran and Cohen	1976	AC	Ohalo	
13*	Bahat	1976	BH	Ohalo	EB I round structures
14*	Eisenberg	1981–1982	EY	Bet Yerah school	EBA domestic structures rich in finds
15*	Yogev	1985–1986	EY	Bet Yerah school (expansion of Eisenberg)	EBA domestic structures rich in finds
16	Getzov	1994–1995	GE	Zemah–Tiberias highway	EB I–III fortifications

* Final report included in this volume

Table 1.2. Summary Table of Local Strata and Archaeological Periods in Principal Excavation Areas

<i>Bet Yerah Period*</i>	<i>Chronological Period</i>	<i>Area SA (Deep Cut)</i>	<i>Area MS (Sounding I)</i>	<i>Area BS</i>	<i>Area UN</i>	<i>Area EY/MS (Sounding II)</i>
A	EB IA	10–9			Early 6?	
B	EB IB	8–6	11–9	15–14	6–5	11–10
C	EB II	5–early 3	8–5	13–12	4	9–7
D	EB III	Late 3–2	4–3	11–7	3–2	6–3
E	Final EB			6		Late 3?
F	MB I			5		
G	Persian			4		
H	Hellenistic	1	2	3	1	2
J	Roman/Byzantine		1	2		1
K	Islamic			1		

* The periodization introduced here supersedes earlier schemes

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