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Gezer V: The Field I Caves, by Joe D. Seger. Annual of the Hebrew Union College/Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, vol. 5, edited by J. D. Seger and H. D. Lance. Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College/Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 1988. xv + 170 pp. 17 figs., 82 pls., 5 plans.

This volume is the last in the series of final reports on Field I at Gezer, which was excavated by Hebrew Union College and the Harvard Semitic Museum between 1964 and 1974. It reports on two major burial caves, denoted I.3A and I.10A, that date respectively to Early Bronze IA–B and Late Bronze IB–IIA. Their investigation and the subsequent follow-up research leading to the publication were carried out under the direction of Joe D. Seger.

In accord with the nature of archeological materials and modern scientific inquiry in general, this “field report” is to be commended for its range of specialist studies. Moreover, rather than relegate such studies exclusively to appendixes, the author/primary editor has sought to integrate the findings of this postexcavation research by cross-referencing throughout the text and, particularly, in the synthetic “Cultural and Historical Summary” for each cave. Sound archaeological methodology and data presentation are evident in the detailed locus and pottery descriptions, together with top and section plans.

The stratigraphy of each cave is bolstered by R. G. Bullard’s discussions of geomorphology and sedimentation, whether by natural or human agencies. Better correlation of the complementary discussions and definition of geological terms (Parts I.E.1 and II.E.1) would have helped to guide the reader through a difficult but important component of archaeological research and interpretation. For example, on pp. 37 and 127 (also see pl. 80B), regional jointing and stress directions of the Maresha Member of the Zor’a formation, dating to the Middle Eocene, are described in relation to evidence for human excavation and modification of the caves (e.g., chisel marks). When one consults fig. 14 (“Regional correlation of the Upper Cretaceous-Tertiary stratigraphy of the Shephelah of Israel”), however, the Zor’a formation is shown as belonging to the Lower Eocene. Further confusing matters, the Zor’a formation is not mentioned on p. 37, where Eocene strata are implicitly associated with Mesozoic and early Cenozoic incursions of the Tethyan Sea but whose relative dating is not provided in the text or in fig. 14. A modified version of fig. 14, placed at the beginning of Part I.E.1 and clearly readable and consistent with the text, would have improved the presentation.

This example highlights a problem that is all too evident throughout the geological discussions and illustrations. If a major goal of an archeological field report is to be comprehensible and accessible to specialist and non-specialist alike, writers and their editors must strive for clarity at several levels of presentation. Where technical terminology is essential, brief explanatory phrases will usually enable the nonspecialist to follow the discussion

and apply the general findings to his/her own research. A phrase, such as “thanatacoenocic benthonic foraminiferal detritus” (caption to pl. 80B), may be obvious to the palaeontologically astute, but it conveys little to others, including those who are scientifically literate in a general sense.

One particularly difficult, yet crucial section of the Cave I.10A geological discussion is the special study of sedimentation (Part II.E.1.c.1–4; pp. 125–27). The reader is directed to specific sedimentation layers on Plan V for clarification and support of the interpretations presented; the plan is provided as one of the large, unbound sheets in a pocket at the front of the book. One is obliged to use a magnifying glass to find many of the layers, which are unexplainably labeled as units according to sequential numbers and/or layers according to sequential small letters (large letters on pl. 56C) and superscripts. This reader was unable to locate layers c2 and d2 on Section 12 of Plan V. The goal of this exercise is to understand how Bullard’s interpretation of the sedimentation layers related to Seger’s general synthesis in the cultural and historical summary (Part II.A). Bullard presents no definitive evidence that the cave was first used as a cistern and subsequently adapted to be a burial cave. Any water-borne sediments in Sump 10095 presumably can be explained as having been deposited there in the natural course of dissolution of the limestone at the lowest point in the cave and the washing in of surrounding materials by groundwater percolation. Seger, however, envisions a cistern phase (pp. 60–64) based on cuts in the walls of a central shaft, which might have provided access for periodic cleaning, and especially because of the pottery in the lowest sediments, including cooking pots, that are said to predate pottery associated with the burial phases (p. 73). An alternative interpretation is that a natural solution cavity in the Gezer bedrock was enlarged to be a burial cave from its inception. Secondary entrances into tombs through vertical shafts are attested: for example, this reviewer excavated an early Iron Age burial cave (A4) in the Baq’ah Valley of Jordan that had a rear entrance with steps cut into the bedrock (McGovern 1986: 59, pl. 15:a, b), and there is little likelihood that this tomb was ever used as a cistern. In excavating such a cave in antiquity and preparing level surfaces for burials, it is also to be expected that some earlier pottery would be introduced by natural or human agencies. The important point is that the lowest sedimentation layers in Cave I.10A also yielded Late Bronze I pottery, which thus provide a *terminus post quem* (not a *terminus ad quem*, *apud* Seger) for dating the layers and the human activities and/or the geologic processes associated with them.

Pottery typology and dating are the main staples of archaeological field reports, and this monograph is no exception. Additionally and in hopes of providing independent, absolute chronological markers for the burial deposits, three radiocarbon samples—one from Cave I.3A and two from Cave I.10A—were run. The dates, which are succinctly detailed by J. M. Weinstein (Parts I.E.3 and II.E.4), are clearly too early, because all the samples in-

cluded charcoal that probably derived from the inner cores of long-lived trees.

The relative dating of the Early Bronze IA–B pottery from Cave I.3A, as discussed by W. G. Dever in Part I.C, is fraught with difficulties, because of the lack of well-defined stratigraphic sequences for the period, few synchronisms with Egypt, and uncertainty about the degree to which the subphases (IA–C) of the Early Bronze Age are geographic and/or chronological variants. It is doubtful, however, that this discussion will “cut the Gordion knot,” as the writer confidently asserts (p. 28). The main problem here is that the pottery types are not well enough defined to support the proposed theoretical reconstruction. Type 4 is denoted as amphorae in the text (p. 22) and as mugs and amphorae(?) in the plate captions (cf. pls. 1:34, 36; 2:34). Indeed, the Type 13 mugs have few if any features that distinguish them from the “amphorae.” Type 8 pitchers are described as jugs in the captions; but, since they are represented only by bases, they might well belong to some other type. The description of the rim types of holemouth jars, holemouth kraters, and globular kraters (Types 5–7, of very similar shape and size) is confusing and inconsistent; what, for example, is a “cut rim” or an “everted flanged rim”? The drawings provide little help in sorting out the terminology. If the main categories and subtypes are not clearly defined, the citation of parallels has little value and the case for equating Early Bronze IC with the first ca. 50 to 75 years of EB II is highly speculative. Moreover, if there were a natural “cultural lag” before the “first truly urban developments” took place in Palestine, why, as one example, should hundreds of jars of Palestinian type be found in a tomb of a Dynasty 0 ruler at Abydos in Egypt (Dreyer 1993)? It is also very confusing to speak of an “EB IA/B” culture at Gezer (p. 28) and yet show no overlap of the subphases on the chronological chart (fig. 8).

The discussion of the Late Bronze IB–IIA corpus of pottery from Cave I.10A (Part II.C) by J. D. Seger, in contrast to that for Early Bronze IA–B, is more consistent and tightly argued. Some slight inconsistencies may be noted here and there—e.g., the vessels in pl. 31:4, 11, and 24 are described differently in the text (p. 74) than in the plate captions; the pyxis in pl. 21:14 is also referred to as a vase and a bowl (p. 76); the bichrome painted sherd in pl. 11:15 is inexplicably classified as imitation Mycenaean ware (p. 84); and so forth. Drawing conventions can also be equivocal, as, for instance, by always placing painted decoration to the left of the cross-section, even if it is on the exterior of the vessel. The plate numbering of pottery is highly irregular, and it is often difficult to locate a particular example. The preliminary numbering is visible on pl. 33, which is also missing the drawing for no. 34. Such minor problems aside, the discussion of the local assemblage, imported Cypriot, and other types provides an important benchmark study.

The technology of Early Bronze IA–B and Late Bronze IB–IIA pottery receives only passing mention in this volume. Two short reports on a small group of pottery from Cave I.3A and Sarcophagus 10071 from Cave I.10A, for

which clay proveniences were determined by neutron activation analysis, were submitted as letters by A. Bieber, Jr., and edited by J. D. Seger as Parts I.E.4 and II.E.5, respectively. No data or statistical evaluation are presented to substantiate the local origin of five Early Bronze IA–B bowls and a jar, as well as the unique LB IB sarcophagus; but the Brookhaven National Laboratory, where these analyses were carried out, has a large Palestinian data base and these results would probably hold up under closer scrutiny. An Early Bronze IA–B storage jar, decorated with a reserve slip, appears to have been imported from el-Jib (Gibeon) in the central Hill Country region.

Details of levigation, tempering, vessel manufacture, firing, and surface decoration (slips, paints, washes, etc.) can be gleaned to some degree from the plate captions and brief mentions in the text, but are not systematically treated. Munsell color readings are rarely cited in the text, where subjective terms, such as “dusky red,” are used. Munsell readings in the plate captions and one of the locus indexes (Appendix A) curiously insert the descriptive color names (“reddish brown,” “olive grey,” etc.), which are provided in the Munsell charts, between the hue and the value and chroma values; only Appendix B follows the recommended conventions. There is also no indication in the “plate and description section” (pp. 169–70) of where on the freshly broken cross-section the Munsell reading was taken, nor of what the lighting conditions were. If one is to go to the trouble of recording such a vast quantity of data, the exact procedure needs to be outlined. Only then can inferences be made about original firing temperatures, based on the known properties of red field and yellow limestone clays and the colors of the fired pastes. Similarly, without knowing how manufacturing techniques were determined, inclusions identified and quantitatively measured (apparently without any petrographic controls), or type of paint established, such data cannot confidently be used. For example, many of the paints are said to be “organic.” To this reviewer’s knowledge, however, inorganic paints applied before firing are the rule in Bronze Age Palestine, and, lacking compelling evidence, I would reserve judgment. If organic paints were employed at Gezer, they would probably have been applied after firing, and should easily wash off with water. A subsidiary point related to the Early Bronze IA–B pottery (above) is that some vessels are said to be painted (e.g., a mug, cited on p. 24 and illustrated in pl. 3:18) or burnished (Type 11 Globular Bowls, pp. 23–24), but this information is not provided in the plate captions or shown on the drawings. By reverse calculation, the percentages of painted, slipped, and slipped and burnished pottery from Cave I.3A, as cited in fig. 7 are based on a total of 120 Early Bronze IA–B pottery examples. Yet, 130 examples are illustrated in the plates (note also that the number of slipped examples in fig. 7 is incorrect).

Cave I.10A yielded a marvelous array of special objects, attesting to the international trade and high standard of living in the 15th and 14th centuries B.C. Of the six scarabs described by J. M. Weinstein in Part II.D.1, two bore

the name of Thutmose III, one that of Amenhotep II, and one that of Amenhotep III, in accord with the pottery dating. R. Mersereau (Part II.D.2) catalogues and discusses three seals with incised motifs that are relatively common in Late Bronze Age Palestine. A complete core-formed glass jar, with a yellow and turquoise blue scalloped design on its neck over a dark blue base glass, was associated with the last burial in the cave (nicknamed Sarah), and is an Egyptian import of early Dynasty 18 date according to D. Barag (Part II.D.3). Numerous weapons, jewelry items, and single examples of armor scale and a fish hook are detailed by K. E. Seger in Part II.D.4. As clearly outlined by C. Clamer in II.D.5, two alabaster vessels in the tomb—one a two-part *tazza* and the other a probable jar shape—were made of Egyptian calcite and imported into Gezer; a bowl fragment was made of locally available gypsum. Two limestone kohl tubes, which show finely carved baboons holding wicker baskets, have good parallels at el-Amarna and might well have been made there, according to J. D. Seger in Part II.D.8. Rounding out the discussion of the objects from Cave I.10A are several probable weights (A. Eran in Part II.D.6), a corroded silver frontlet, an ivory comb, bone inlay from disintegrated wooden boxes, faience and frit beads, and the unique sarcophagus (J. D. Seger in Parts II.D.7 and II.D.9). The latter artifact, which contained the remains of at least 12 humans of which 11 were infants and children, might well have been inspired by Minoan prototypes. However, the proposal (pp. 52 and 114) that Minoans actually settled at Gezer ca. 1500 B.C., as a result of the Thera volcanic eruption, is belied by the physical anthropological data, succinctly and clearly summarized by D. J. Frankel in Part II.E.2, and by the absence of distinctive jewelry or other special artifacts that would have been carried by the newcomers and deposited with them in the tomb. More likely, Canaanite seafarers and merchants from southern Palestinian ports to the Aegean brought back the conceptual model of such a sarcophagus; coffins were also familiar from Egyptian funerary practice.

The finding of fish (A. J. Legge and M. Zeder in Part II.E.3.a), even the skin of a Mediterranean fish (L. David in Part II.E.3.b), as probable food offerings in Cave I.10A, points to the familiarity of the Gezer inhabitants with the sea. Long bones of sheep also suggest that they were intentionally slaughtered for offerings, or, perhaps, sacrificed (cf. pp. 67–68). The several fresh-water pelecypods (L. H. Feldman in Part II.E.3.c) were often collected for their own sake, rather than being food or nacre sources.

The final report of a major archaeological and scientific investigation is a signal achievement, and one that is to be welcomed by all students of Palestinian archaeology. The author, editors, and contributors to this volume are to be congratulated on bringing together and coherently presenting a wealth of data that shed new light on the Early Bronze I and Late Bronze IB–IIA periods of southern Palestine. One can always ask for more, and the various lapses and problems alluded to above are intended in the spirit of fostering even better reports. We are yet to de-

velop a totally effective, workable format for integrating the multidisciplinary evidence that comprises modern archaeological investigation, but we are headed in the right direction.

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***The Late Bronze Egyptian Garrison at Beth Shan: A Study of Levels VII and VIII*, by Frances W. James and Patrick E. McGovern. University Museum Monograph 85, Philadelphia: The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania in cooperation with the University of Mississippi, 1993. Volume 1, Text xxxii + 372 pp.; Volume 2, Illustrations 168 figures, 63 plates. \$115.00.**

Levels VII and VIII, the major Late Bronze Age strata at Beth Shan, were excavated by Allan Rowe and Gerald FitzGerald for the University Museum (Philadelphia) between 1921 and 1934. Although they published their findings promptly, the reports were very incomplete. Many of their conclusions were drawn subjectively and presented with insufficient supporting material. Coupled with the method of excavation and recording of the day, these early excavations have produced a legacy of confusion for the many Syro-Palestinian, Egyptian, Cypriot, and Aegean archaeologists who have attempted to utilize this important site in their research. Fortunately, the clarification of the stratigraphy at Beth Shan became one of the driving elements in the research of Frances James. Her early work (James 1966) had already brought order to the Iron Age sequence at the site, and she was deeply involved in a similar clarification of the Late Bronze Age strata at the time of her unexpected death in December 1985. Subsequently, the project was taken over by McGovern with the help and support of a variety of scholars (pp. xxvii–xxviii). The result of their work is a pair of handsome volumes that offer a very complete presentation of Beth Shan Levels VII and VIII, with the more enigmatic (and decidedly mixed) Level IX only slightly touched upon in places (p. xxvii).