

Highlights of the 2005 Season of Excavations at Tel Dan

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Our main purpose in going back to Tel Dan this year was to do our part in making the site's Middle Bronze Age mudbrick gate a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Excavation was required before the National Parks Authority and the Israel Antiquities Authority conservation team could continue conservation and reconstruction of the 3700-year-old gate. Students and volunteers from Israel and abroad participated for varying lengths of time, but the expedition's core was comprised of HUC Cincinnati graduate students: Greg Snyder, Kristine Garraway, Don Carlson, Andrew Riley and Russ Mack. They were excellent in every way (thanks gang!).



Restoration work begun on the northeastern gate tower

Our mission was accomplished and the conservators are now busy repairing and renovating the ancient architectural masterpiece. In the coming year or two, the gate will once again astonish visitors to Tel Dan. But we accomplished something else too, something more immediate, if more abstract.

We have made it axiomatic that any NGSBA excavation will have a social action element. Archaeology lends itself to getting people together and getting them to communicate. With this in mind, we invited 20 junior high school students from four villages in the Galilee: Shfar'am, Kabul (both Arab), Harduf and Hanita (both Jewish) to dig with us and to engage in an ongoing discussion about the political implications of archaeology in Israel. Many of the Arab teens are also scouts.



Students and scouts hard at work clearing a 3700-year-old path to the gate

Three group leaders worked with the young people: Omar Asfour, a high school teacher and archaeologist from Kabul, Ali Ayoub, director of the Islamic Scouts of Shfaram, and Leor Klass, a youth leader from Harduf.

This week-long program was a resounding success, mostly because both the teens and our HUC students had a great time. Beyond this, we all learned vocabulary in languages not our own; we learned to talk with each other as people, one on one. The “other” became more familiar, more benign, and then...a friend. The Galilee youths were amazing workers too, enduring long hours swinging picks and heaving shovels, without complaining. The unanimous conclusion of all concerned is that we want to do this again next year, but with even more students and scouts, over a longer period of time. We think this is *tikkun olam* at its finest.

