

**TALL MĀDABĀ ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT, 2007**  
**PRESS RELEASE**

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| <b>SITE NAME / DISTRICT</b>    | Tall Mādabā / Mādabā   |
| <b>PROJECT NAME</b>            | Tall Mādabā Archaeological Project   |
| <b>SEASON</b>                  | 2007   |
| <b>DURATION</b>                | June 11 to July 19, 2007 (39 days)   |
| <b>AUTHOR</b>                  | Debra Foran  |
| <b>DIRECTOR OF THE PROJECT</b> | Debra Foran  |
| <b>SENIOR DIRECTOR</b>         | Timothy P. Harrison  |
| <b>NUMBER OF WORKERS</b>       | 11   |
| <b>COST OF THE PROJECT</b>     | 5,090 JD   |
| <b>SPONSOR</b>                 | University of Toronto<br>Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations |
| <b>DOA REPRESENTATIVE</b>      | Isa Suriani  |

The 2007 field season of the Tall Mādabā Archaeological Project concentrated solely on excavations in Field B. The primary objectives of this season were to reopen two units in order to complete the exposure of the Iron Age levels first encountered in 1998, explore more of the Early Roman/Nabatean and Hellenistic structures in a new unit adjacent to the main excavation area, and open two new units on the eastern edge of the site to expose remains closest to the centre of the tall. The past seven seasons of excavation at Tall Mādabā have revealed a complex occupational sequence inside the city's fortification wall spanning the Late Ottoman period through to the Iron Age.

Excavation efforts in Field B have succeeded in clarifying the nature of the Iron Age settlement at Mādabā. A large pillared-building dating to the Iron IIB period was uncovered during the 2006 season. This structure was completely cleared and removed at the beginning of the 2007 season. An earlier Iron I/IIA monumental structure, partially excavated in 2006, lies underneath it. Only the south-western corner of the building could be excavated, but two substantial double-row walls were exposed (Figure 1). A large single-row wall to the south of this structure dates to an earlier period, possibly some time during the Late Bronze or early Iron I periods based on the ceramic assemblage. Excavations beneath the foundation levels of these structures revealed a plaster surface that extends eastward from the city's fortification wall. It appears that, once the massive wall had been founded directly on top of the bedrock, the area was leveled off with soil and paved with plaster. The wall built of single boulders, representing the earliest occupation phase, lies above this surface and may be associated with the construction of the fortification wall's superstructure.

Iron Age levels were also reached in the two easternmost units that were newly opened in 2007 (Figure 2). The deepest soil layers in this area produced solely Iron II pottery and a portion of a pillared wall was exposed in one of the units. Excavation had to be halted due to time constraints and safety issues, but plans are underway to reopen these areas in future seasons.

Previous work at Tall Mādabā revealed the remains of structures dating to the Early Roman/Nabatean period that have been severely damaged by building activity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and

early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Excavations in three new units during the 2007 season have exposed more of these structures and confirmed the extensive nature of the later disturbance (Figure 3). The known artifact assemblage for this cultural period at Mādabā has also been expanded to include several restorable vessels, a number of stamped Rhodian amphora handles, and a collection of over 40 clay loom weights.

Although the importance of Mādabā during the Byzantine period is indisputable, until the 2007 season no architectural remains from this phase of occupation had been found in Field B. The heavy rainfall during the winter months exposed the fragile remnants of an in situ mosaic floor in the eastern baulk of the principal excavation area. The polychrome pavement, decorated with a grid and lozenge pattern, is extensively damaged. The fragment that remains, however, seals against a stone-built threshold equipped with a large door-post hole (Figure 4). This architecture clearly indicates the existence of a monumental structure on this part of the tell, unfortunately later occupation seems to have destroyed most of it. Future excavations to the east of this area will hopefully expose more of the structure.

An unexpected result of the opening of two units on the eastern edge of the site was the exposure of several more rooms of the Late Ottoman house that occupies the north-eastern corner of the excavation area. A series of small rooms flanked the entrance to the building. The presence of a substantial cement floor suggests that at least one of these rooms was used until modern times.

The location of this site within the urban core of the city of Mādabā, within walking distance of the Mādabā Museum and Archaeological Park, increases the need to consider its tourism potential. The site maintenance and presentation effort that has accompanied the excavation project has begun preparing the site for future use as public space, for both the local population and the many tourists who visit the city each year.

The 2007 field season was conducted in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, which provided guidance and access to field equipment. The season's results would not have been possible without the dedicated help of Dr. Fawwaz al-Khraysheh, Director General of the Department of Antiquities, and Mr. Ali al-Khayyat, Director of the Department of Antiquities Office in Mādabā.

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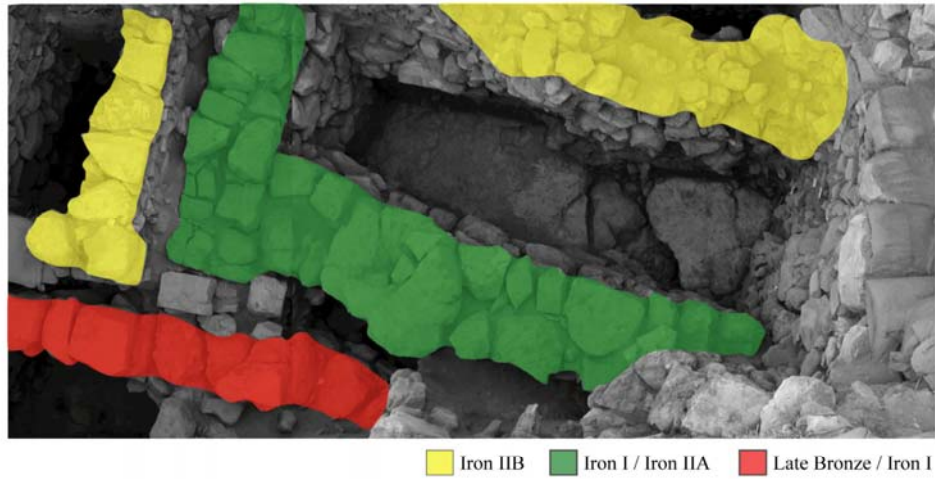


Figure 1 Earliest Iron and Late Bronze Levels



Figure 2 Easternmost Excavation Units



Figure 3 Early Roman/Nabatean Structures



Figure 4 Byzantine Mosaic and Architecture