

## RESEARCH

**David Schloen**

**David Schloen** spent two months doing archaeological fieldwork in Israel during June and July 1996. He participated in the twelfth annual field season of the Harvard-sponsored Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon, one of the largest long-term excavation projects in the Near East, of which he is the associate director. The 1996 expedition team of excavators and specialists consisted of approximately thirty professional archaeologists and graduate students, ninety volunteer diggers of all ages, and twenty hired workers. Highlights of the 1996 season include the discovery of a series of interconnected Middle and Late Bronze Age tombs cut into the bedrock, rich with imported Cypriot pottery, and the excavation of the earliest architectural phase of a massive Middle Bronze Age gate system, built of mudbrick and stone shortly after 2000 BC.

In addition to overseeing current operations in the field and planning future excavation strategy (in conjunction with expedition director Lawrence Stager), Schloen continued his work at Ashkelon on the description and analysis of the important discoveries of the past few seasons that date to the latter part of the seventh century BC and were fortuitously preserved by the catastrophic destruction of the entire 150-acre city by the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar in 604 BC. Nearly 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> of destruction debris and occupational debris from this precisely dated stratum have been excavated since 1992, in two separate areas of the site, providing a large sample of well-dated material, including more than 2,800 baskets of late seventh-century pottery. At this stage, the "604" publication project requires the study of primary plans and field notes describing hundreds of architectural and stratigraphic loci, the management of the process of photographing and drawing all of the necessary items, and the description and quantification of thousands of artifacts — especially the imported and locally produced pottery. Ashkelon now provides an independent absolute date for the ceramic chronology of seventh-century "East Greek" imported pottery, in particular, as well as a detailed picture of the coastal, late Iron Age Philistine assemblage, which has hitherto been poorly known.

Description of this material continued during the summer of 1997 with the aid of student assistants, and Schloen intends to complete the current data-collection phase of the Ashkelon "604" publication project in an intensive four-month effort in Israel during September–December 1997, thanks to a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship that he has been awarded for that purpose under the auspices of the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem. The seventh-century discoveries will be published in a major volume of the Ashkelon final report series, the manuscript for which should be completed by the end of 1998 or early 1999. An important and innovative aspect of this publication project involves the electronic publication of the complete archive of excavation data, including plans and photographs, on a CD-ROM disk that will accompany the printed publication (which itself will necessarily be more interpretive and selective) and thus will permit other researchers to explore and analyze the data for themselves in an efficient manner. This is made possible through the use of specially designed archaeologically oriented computer software that Schloen has written over the past few years for just this purpose. The principles underlying this software were presented in a paper in November 1996 at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Re-

search and have since been described in full detail in a lengthy article entitled "Computer Database Design and the Electronic Publication of Archaeological Information."

While he was in Israel in the summer of 1996, Schloen was able to visit other major excavations in progress, including those at the famous sites of Megiddo and Hazor, where important new discoveries were made that year. In 1996 Schloen was also awarded a Junior Faculty Fellowship from the University of Chicago Humanities Division, which made possible a two-week study tour of Turkey and Syria in early October. He visited a number of Bronze and Iron Age sites and viewed museum collections related to his research on northwestern Syria in the second millennium BC, particularly the coastal kingdom of Ugarit (the subject of a forthcoming book based on his 1995 doctoral dissertation). Just to the north of Ugarit during the Late Bronze Age was the rival kingdom of Mukish, ruled from the city of Alalakh on the Orontes River in the Amuq Valley (the Hatay province of modern-day Turkey). Accordingly, in the course of his travels Schloen made a point of stopping to visit the Oriental Institute team that was then doing survey and excavation work in the Amuq under the direction of K. Aslihan Yener and Tony J. Wilkinson, and he was impressed by the potential for future archaeological work in that region at its numerous unexplored Middle and Late Bronze Age sites (among others), especially in light of their important Canaanite and Mycenaean connections. This view was reinforced by the issues raised during a stimulating seminar led by Yener and Wilkinson during the winter quarter of 1997 on the archaeology of the Amuq in the second millennium BC, and also during a conference that Schloen attended at the University of Cincinnati in April 1997 entitled "The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium BC."

In addition to regular teaching and committee work during the 1996/97 academic year, Schloen devoted as much time as possible to the further research and writing necessary to complete the major task of revising and expanding his 1995 doctoral dissertation on *The Patrimonial Household in Ugarit*. The parts of this dissertation dealing with Iron Age households will now appear in a lengthy separate article entitled "Demography and Domestic Space in Ancient Israel," and the remainder will appear, with substantial additions, in a book devoted to Bronze Age (especially second-millennium) houses and households — viewed as both "material" and "symbolic" phenomena, and from the perspective of both textual and archaeological evidence. Especially important for this project has been an in-depth study of the theoretical and methodological issues raised by this kind of sociohistorical reconstruction, in light of current archaeological and historical practice, and in light of ongoing debates in sociology, anthropology, and the philosophy of history.

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