Tall Jalul
Project Name: Tall Jalul Excavation/ Madaba Plains Project (MPP)
Duration: May 31 – July 9
Sponsor: Institute of Archaeology, Andrews University / USA
Director: Randall W. Younker, Constance Gane, Reem Shqour
Representative: Hanadi Taher

Excavations were conducted at Tall Jalul, east of Madaba, by Andrews University in consortium with the Madaba Plains Project (MPP).

The goals of the project have been, in part, to illuminate the cultural and political history of both the site of Jalul and its immediate region during the last 5000 years. This season excavations were conducted in six different fields, A, C, D, E, G , and H. In Field A, walls of a late Iron II/Persian period building were uncovered, about half a meter below the surface.

In Field C, the south wall of a large building was exposed, as well as two walls of a second building to the south of the first building. Both buildings date to the Late Iron II/Persian period, although earlier phases are possible for the south building. Between the two buildings was an alley way or small street that had been resurfaced several times.

In Field D, work continued in the large Late Iron II/Persian period building uncovered in previous seasons. Specifically work continued in three rooms on the west side of the building complex. Different floor levels were reached in the northwestern most room. A significant number of complete (though broken) pots were found as well as several human and animal figurines in this and the other two rooms that were excavated. The staff was unable to reach the base of any of the walls in these rooms this season, so it is possible that there are phases preceding the Late Iron II/Persian period. The most significant find in Field D this season was an ostraca found in a fill on the north west part of the building. It contained five lines of text. A preliminary reading suggests that it is a list of Ammonite family names dating to the late 7th early 6th century BC. This is slightly earlier than the ceramic evidence found in the building, suggesting earlier occupational phases existed in this area that have not yet been reached.

In Field E, on the west side of the tall, work continued around the mud brick wall exposed last season (2005). The base of the wall was not reached and stone wall fragments were located to the west of the mud brick wall. No definite dates could be determined for either wall, but the fills associated with them contained pottery from the Late Iron II/Persian and the Late Iron II periods.

Two new fields, G and H, were opened on the south side of the tall in hopes of locating a city wall. The locations of the squares were selected because of large, hewn stones protruding through the surface of the tall in a line that looked like they might be large wall stones. Excavation in Field H uncovered three large stones in a line, but they turned out to appear as flat, flagstones normally used for a road or approach ramp. Unfortunately, they were isolated and their exact function or purpose is unknown at this time. Ceramics found in association with these stones dated to the Late Iron II period. Several ballista (sling stones) were found near these stones.

In Field G, on the southeast corner of the tall, a 3 meter stretch of a large stone wall was excavated in Square G2. It is possible that this wall is part of a tower for the city’s fortification system, although more excavation is needed to verify this supposition. Although at least 4 courses of the wall were exposed, the base of the wall was not reached leaving its exact date uncertain. Fills associated with the wall dated to Late Iron II/Persian, Late Iron II and Iron I. A curious structure found along the north face of the “tower” wall was a plastered channel that seemed to drain water to the outside of the city wall. It seems to cut into the earlier wall system, and thus dates to a later phase, perhaps Iron II/Persian. A wall with some plaster on it was found in Square G4 just north of the water channel and is probably associated with it. A second wall fragment was found further north. It also dates to the Late Iron II/Persian period.