Bible Conference Meets

Two hundred-fifty archaeologists, Bible teachers, church leaders, and laity gathered in Jerusalem from June 8-14 for the First International Jerusalem Bible Conference sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. Meetings were held at the Ramat Rachel Hotel located on a hill between Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

The keynote speaker was Robert S. Folkenberg, President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Other church leaders who attended the conference included Alfred C. McClure, President of the North American Division; William G. Johnson, Editor of Adventist Review; and Gerry D. Karst, Administrative Assistant to the President of the General Conference.

Four days of morning and evening meetings focused on Theology, Archaeology, Church History, Missions, Ministries, New Testament, and Old Testament topics. The rest of the time was filled with touring biblically-related sites in Israel.

The Institute of Archaeology (IA) was one of the principal sponsors of the event in conjunction with the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) and the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) of the General Conference. Randall W. Younker, Director of the IA, served on the organizing committee, presided at one of the sessions, and led some of the daily tours. David Merling, Associate Director of the IA, arranged the tours. Richard M. Davidson, President of the ATS, served as principal coordinator for the conference, arranging accommodations and developing the program. George Reid, director of the BRI, processed all the applications of the participants and served as liaison with world SDA church leaders.

ATS has voted to organize another Jerusalem Bible Conference for the year 2003. See you in Jerusalem! (David Merling)
Area M was opened on the northeastern summit of the tell and supervised by Lael O. Caesar, Andrews University. Bedrock was reached in one of the squares revealing more of the Hellenistic fortification system also uncovered in Area L.

An underground structure was located underneath the walls and tower of the fortification system. This structure consisted of two vertical shafts, one directly beneath the Hellenistic tower. The latter shaft functioned as a cistern and was later modified into a tomb with benches and a sloping entrance during the Iron Age. (Paul J. Ray, Jr.)

‘Umayri 1998

This summer over 100 people took part in excavations at Tall ‘Umayri. Aside from the 30 workers from the nearby village of Bunayat, foreign excavators and specialists came from 20 countries and all six inhabited continents to work at this excavation.

Tall ‘Umayri is unique in Jordan because its most important and best preserved remains date to the Bronze and Iron Ages (3000-500 BC) instead of the more common Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic eras. Work is presently underway to make the site presentable to visitors.

The most impressive new discoveries include the remains of a building made with very large stones from the Middle Bronze Age (about 1600 BC). Also from that period are tower foundations atop a great earthen rampart, a well-plastered water pool (which may be unique from this time in Jordan), and a large building made of massive stones inside the fortification system. The Middle Bronze Age is a time when very few settlements existed south of Amman on the Jordanian plateau. To find such substantial remains from such a rare period was unexpected.

Excavations this summer also uncovered more earthen floors surrounding a dolmen (a large stone burial monument). This is the first dolmen in all the Mediterranean basin to produce quantities of burials (20), complete pottery vessels (20), and surfaces indicating patterns of use. The burial site dates to the Early Bronze Age (about 3000 BC). (cont’d. on p. 3)
The Late Bronze Age building at Tall al-'Umayri. (photo courtesy of Douglas R. Clark)