Khaled Douglas

Jneneh is located in the north-western periphery of the city of Zarqa (grid ref. 250.88E 165.25N), in North Central Jordan. The site was first discovered in 1993 during the Upper Wadi az-Zarqa survey conducted by G. Palumbo where he identified it as, JRS 45, large open village⁴. It is situated on a natural and flat hell on the western bank of Zarqa River. It is surrounded by gentle slopes. The east side is protected by the very sharp cliff of Wadi al-Zarqa which it raises ca. 40 m above the bed of Wadi az-Zarqa (Fig. 1).

The site has a rectangular shape extending N-S with a total size of ca 4.5 ha. Jneneh located at the fringes of the semi-arid zone, between the later and the Black Basalt Desert to the east, and the central Transjordanian hills to the west.

Figure 1: Topographic map of Jneneh.

⁴ Palumbo 1996, 388.
The preliminary results of the intensive survey that was carried out in 2011 by The Hashemite University team shows that the site was occupied during two major phases EBI and Iron II. During the EBIV the site was reoccupied in the form of a small seasonal camp where few pottery sherds of this period have been found on the surface.

The first excavation campaign was conducted from 3 April to 12 May 2011 by a team from The Hashemite University under the direction of Khaled Douglas with the contribution of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan represented by Ibrahim al-Zibin.

The primary goals of excavating the site are as follows: First, to explore the origin of urban culture in the Early Bronze Age in the Upper Wadi az-Zarqa by understanding the connection between Jneneh and the EBII-III fortified settlement of Khirbet al-Batrawy that are located, 1.50 km east of Jneneh, across Wadi al-Zarqa. Secondly, to explain the nature of Iron Age culture north of Ammon (Amman).

Excavations in the first season concentrated on the highest area of the site where traces of buildings and fortification walls still appear from the surfaces even before excavations began on the north east side of the site (Fig. 1). Five areas (I, II, IV, V and VI), which cover a total of 248 square meters, were excavated partially or completely.

Excavations during this season focused on the latest occupational phase in the settlement. In most of the excavated squares, work stopped after reaching the latest surface floor, which was exposed in most of the areas.

Two buildings were exposed partially in Area I: Building B1 was excavated in squares IA, IB, IC and ID. The excavated part was composed of a rectangular (5.5x3 m) opened courtyard (B1:R1) enclosed by four walls (80 cm wide each) with a mud surface floor and a big fireplace situated in

the north east corner. This courtyard leads through a (75 cm) wide entrance to a narrow (5.75x1.75 m) room (B1:R2) with a thick white plaster floor. It was rich with artifacts, primarily small basalt plates and grinding stones. On both narrow sides this room was connected to two other rooms. The one on the northeast side is a narrow (4x1.5 m) room (B1:R3). It has a white plaster floor and connected to B1:R2 in a T form. It has one entrance (L013; 75 cm wide). Both rooms (B1:R2 and R3) were covered with thick ash and destruction layers. On the southwest side of the narrow room (B1:R2) there is another room (B1:R4) connected to room (B1:R2) by a (85 cm) wide entrance (L014) with a threshold (L021) consisting of three large stones lined up on the inner side of the entrance. A small part of this room was excavated.

The second building of Area I (B2) is located to the south of building B1. A small part of this building was exposed where parts of two rooms (B2:R1 and R2) have been excavated. This building will be excavated more in the second season.

Area III is situated 10 m to the east of Area I. Two squares have been excavated (IIIB and IIC). A building (B3) with two rooms (B3:R1 and R2) was exposed. Room (B3:R1) is built in (L) form its widest side is 4.25 m while its longest side is not fully excavated and just 4.25 m long part was excavated. In the northwest corner of the room there is a rectangular (2.1x1.2 m) platform (L009) attached to the north and west walls of the room. Its outer sides lined with large and good cut stones. The platform itself was covered with a layer of mud. It rises up ca. 15 cm from the surrounding mud surface floor (L014). On the east side of the room there were two installations (L013 and L010) built onto the east wall. They built from one row of stones. The entrance of this room is not exposed. The second room of this building (B3:R2) is not fully uncovered.
A fourth building (Pillared Building) (B4) with two main rooms is attached to building (B3) on its northeastern side. Both buildings are sharing the same wall. The main room in building (B4:R1) is almost rectangular in shape (3.6x 4.2 m) with a mud floor (L015). In the center of the room there are two rectangular pillar bases (50x50 x50; 50x35x50 cm) with a space ca. 1.1 m in between built from large hewn limestones (Fig. 2). Although their foundations are still not uncovered, their upper part is still standing ca. 50 cm (2-3 courses).

![Figure 2: Pillared building in Area IV.](image)

In the northeastern corner of this room there is a 1.25 m deep and 60 cm wide niche. However, on the northwestern side there is an (1.35 m) wide entrance leading to a smaller rectangular room (2.25x3.25 m). This room is divided into two smaller rooms (B4:R2 and R3) through a (40 cm) wide wall built from one row of stones. This wall left a 50 cm wide space on the east side of the room that served as a doorway leading to the two small rooms. Room (B4:R2) is paved with small slab stones. Although all walls of this building were uncovered no outer entrance was found. The pillar bases indicate this building might have had two floors. To the east there is a
large building (B5) connected directly to building (B4). Parts of the southern side of this building were excavated. It consists of a wide room/courtyard, ca. 6.25 m long (B5:R2). Its connected through a 1 m wide entrance to a smaller room, ca. 2.25 m wide (B5:R1). This small room might be used as a storage room since remains of three collard rim jars were found in situ. More than 6 m long segment of a 2 m wide fortification wall was uncovered to the south east of buildings (B4) and (B5). This solid wall was built from large stones. Parts of its lower courses were excavated in room (B5:R1). It is clear that the foundations of this wall were wider than its upper part. Through the surface observation the extension of this wall can be easily followed, especially form the east. It is running towards the east to the edge of the cliff of Wad az-Zarqa, then turns north–northwest along the Wadi, and at the north eastern corner of the site it turns towards the west where it’s extension gets lost. This fortification wall might enclose the upper area of the site while the rest of settlement was unfortified.

Different pottery wares such as cocking pots, jugs, plates, storage jars and lamps were found. Some of them were painted with brown or black or white bands on red slip. Loom weights, basalt grinding stones and fragment of feminine clay figurines were found. This diversity of pottery ware and the other finds shows that the site was used for domestic purposes. The existence of a fortified area in the upper part of the settlement might be an indicator of the existence of an important area that could include important public buildings.

C14 dates, as well as the pottery, shows that the last occupational phase in Jneneh dates back to the eighth century B.C. E.
Figure 3: General architectural plan of the first season 2011.

Figure 4: Location of Jneneh in the NW part of the Zarqa City.
Figure 5: Jneneh and other Iron Age sites.
Figure 6: Jneneh and the surrounding Ammonite sites along Wadi az-Zarqa.

Bibliography


