# Khirbat Safra

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The third season of excavations at Khirbat Safra, directed by Paul Gregor and Paul Ray of Andrews University, took place between May 30–July 9, 2021. Khirbat Safra is a ca. 2.6-acre site overlooking the Dead Sea. A casemate wall system surrounds the perimeter; its freestanding walls are built directly on bedrock, and the crevices were leveled with a densely packed, bricky material. The initial construction of the wall system dates to Early Iron Age I. This season excavations took place in four fields (B–E).

Excavations in field B, on the southwest side of the site, have concentrated on tracing two buildings with a shared wall, consisting of long-room structures and broad-room casemates, with their entrances on the north side. These structures are uneven, having been built over three bedrock terraces. The removal of a baulk in building 1 this season helped to clarify the nature of northernmost of these terraces. In building 2, which is a typical "three-room house," the removal of baulks exposed additional architecture; the western long room had been subdivided into three smaller units.

Excavation of a third building began this season. Its eastern wall is freestanding, not shared with its neighbor (building 1). The western wall, visible above the current surface, is outside of the square and awaits future excavation. The northern wall is cut by its entrance, but unlike buildings 1 and 2, it is in the middle, rather than in the corner. As in building 2, the long room is subdivided, but its partition wall is placed on an oblique angle, making the structure somewhat narrower than the others excavated so far. The reason for the deviation from the pattern of the other buildings would seem to be the truncation of the triangular-shaped topography at this point on the site. As in the other buildings, there is a beaten-earth surface, just above bedrock.

In field C, on the northeastern corner of the site, excavation has focused on two structures incorporated into the fortification system, similar to those in field B. Operations this season concentrated on exposing parts of building 2. In addition to its broad-room casemate, building 2 is subdivided by a short wall and two pillars into two long rooms. The southern long room was further subdivided to create two rooms in a second phase. The northern long room was likely an unroofed courtyard; a *tabun* and cooking area support this hypothesis. Two use layers were discovered, the first dating to Early Iron Age I, the later to the Early Iron Age II. The earlier floor was covered with a thick ash layer that is sealed under the second occupational floor. Above this surface, wall tumble and fill indicate destruction, possibly by an earthquake. North of building 2 are a few surviving walls, remnants of bulldozed "building 3."



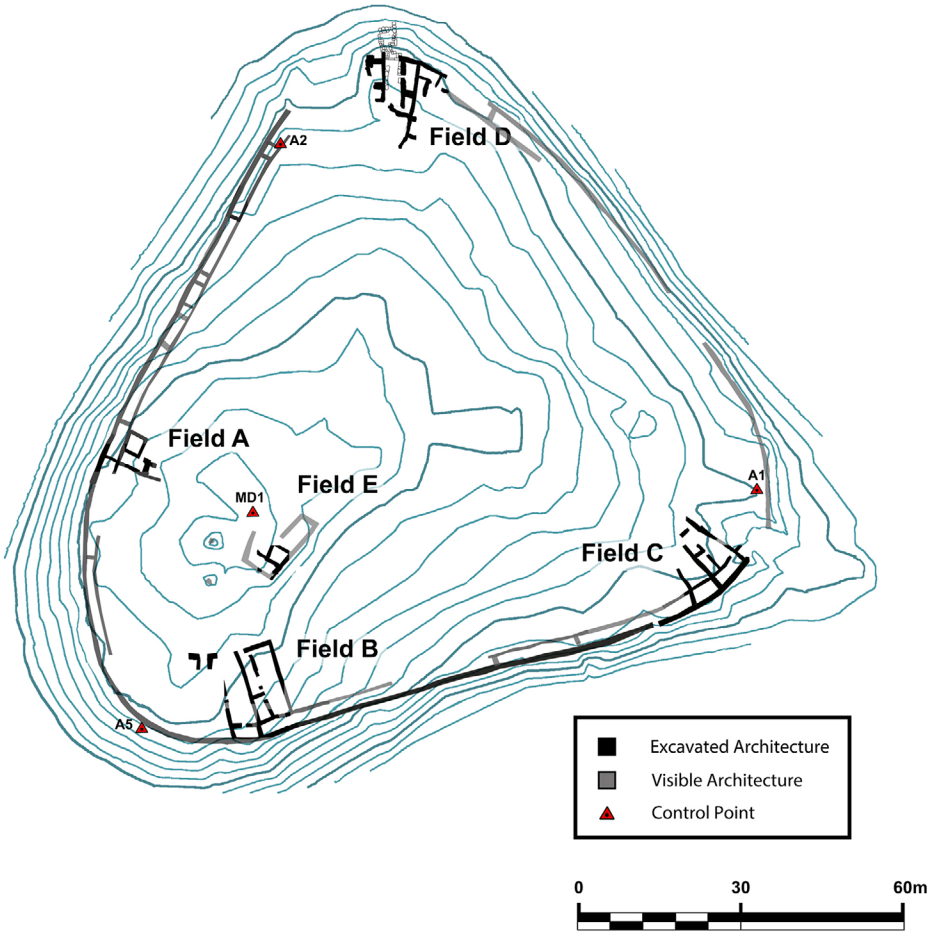



Fig. 1. Khirbat Safra topographical map, 2021. (Map by Bob Bates; modified from Department of Antiquities survey, 2017.)

In 2019, part of a gateway complex was found in field D, on the northern edge of site. Additional exposure in 2021 showed a southern extension of the western gate chamber: two ephemeral walls and a "threshold," possibly remnants of an outer gate chamber.

Field E, located at the highest point of the site, was opened this season, and part of a building with three Iron Age I phases was excavated. Its earliest phase contained a long room with extant walls on three sides. Several artifacts were found on its floor. It was subdivided into two rooms during a second phase. In the last phase, a doorway was built on top of the dividing wall, with raised floors on either side. Several Egyptian-style artifacts were found in this building, including a scarab, cosmetic rod, and mace head.