

Massive 5,000-Year-Old Canaanite City Unearthed in Holy Land

A sprawling 5,000-year-old Canaanite city has been discovered in the Sharon region, north of the Tel Aviv area, says the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA).

En-Esur is said to be the largest city from the early Bronze Age ever to be uncovered in Israel.

The Canaanite city covers approximately 650,000 square meters and housed roughly 6,000 people at the time, according to an IAA statement. The massive city is adjacent to a much smaller 7,000-year-old Chalcolithic settlement, said the authority.

The excavation was directed by IAA archaeologists Itai Elad, Dr. Yitzhak Paz and Dr. Dina Shalem. It took 5,000 volunteers to excavate the site. The archaeologists believe that they have still only uncovered 10% of it.

"This was an exciting time in the history of the land, which was then Canaan, and whose populations underwent changes that changed the face of [the land] entirely. The rural population gave way to a complex society, most of whom lived in urban settings," they said in a statement.

"This is a huge city ... a megalopolis in relation to the Early Bronze Age, where thousands of inhabitants, who made their living from agriculture, lived and traded with different regions and even with different cultures and kingdoms in the area. This is the Early Bronze Age New York of our region, a cosmopolitan and planned city," the archaeologists added.

The dig revealed a cemetery, a fortified wall and the remains of public and private buildings, says the IAA.

“You really have the complete package of early urbanized settlements, with all the components: streets, burial caves, domestic structures, walls, public buildings,” said Elad.

Dozens of primitive tools, pottery fragments and basalt stone vessels were unearthed. Some interesting figurines were found as well, such as the one of a human head and the one with a man with his hands up high with an animal by his side.

In the center of En-Esur, the remains of a large temple, including a large stone basin and burnt animal bones, were discovered.

According to the Israel National Roads Company, it is a standard procedure to call in the IAA before the construction of a new road or highway. Due to the significant nature of this particular find, the planned highway will have an overpass over the site in order to preserve the ancient city.