

DIGSIGHT

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY LYNN H. WOOD ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

ASOR HIGHLIGHTS KHIRBET QEYAF A



Last November the American Schools of Oriental Research, the premier organization for the study of Near Eastern archaeology in the United States, held its annual meeting in New Orleans. Scholars from all over the world come together every year to share and discuss the latest archaeological discoveries in the Middle East. This year, the excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa, a joint project of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Southern Adventist University, were featured in two sessions.

Eight papers were presented dealing with various topics, including the reading of the Qeiyafa Ostrakon. Yosef Garfinkel (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), director, gave the opening remarks and



Hasel presenting paper at ASOR session

presented the first paper. His presentation, "The 2009 Excavation Season at Khirbet Qeiyafa," briefly summarized the results of the 2009 season and addressed current issues in the archaeology of Iron Age Judah. Garfinkel argued that the finds of the 2009 season confirmed his interpretation regarding the periods of occupation and ethnicity of the site. He also compared urban planning at Qeiyafa with other Judean sites

like Beersheba, Tell en-Nasbeh, and Tell Beit Mirsim, concluding that there is a discernable pattern of casemate walls abutted by domestic housing. This urban design is distinctly Judean.

Next Paul Bauman (WorleyParsons) presented the results of "Geophysical and Aerial Photographic Investigations at Khirbet Qeiyafa" from survey work done in the spring of 2009. Bauman and his team applied various surveying techniques including aerial photography, GPS mapping, magnetic gradiometry, terrain conductivity mapping, ground penetrating radar, and electrical resistivity tomography.

Bauman was able to map important features with GPS and georeference aerial photographs into a basemap. Other geophysical techniques yielded mixed results, and future seasons will determine how effective they will be as predictive tools for archaeological fieldwork.

Michael Hasel (Southern Adventist University), associate director, presented a paper entitled "Area D: Excavating the Fortifications South of the West Gate." Southern's involvement in the Khirbet Qeiyafa Archaeological Project began with the 2009 season. Hasel took a team of 20 participants to work in Area D, the area south of the West gate. In

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**Institute of Archaeology
Lynn H. Wood
Archaeological Museum
4960 Industrial Drive
P.O. Box 370
Collegedale, TN 37315
Ph: 423.236.2030
museum@southern.edu
archaeology.southern.edu**



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Power for Mind & Soul

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ASOR HIGHLIGHTS QEIYafa, CONT.

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half a season the Southern team was able to open four squares and uncover two sets of casemates, both yielding Iron Age IIA pottery from floors and fills. Hasel's plan for next season is to finish excavating the casemates and open an additional 8-10 squares running south along the city wall.

The last paper of the first session, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: A Two-Gate City from the Early 10th Century BC," was presented by Saar Ganor (Israel Antiquities Authority), co-director. Ganor oversaw the excavations of the South gate in the 2009 season. The existence of two contemporaneous gates at Qeiyafa makes this site unique among Iron Age Judean cities. Ganor gave an overview of the excavation of both gates and presented the evidence for their dating.

David Adams (Concordia Theological Seminary) opened the second session by addressing the question of the biblical identification of Khirbet Qeiyafa. In his paper, "Between Socoh and Azekah: The Biblical Identity of Khirbet Qeiyafa," Adams listed a number of possible identifications of Qeiyafa in the Bible (as proposed by other scholars) and evaluated them according to biblical and archaeological considerations. Based on his study of the biblical text and archaeo-

logical evidence uncovered thus far, Adams concluded that Qeiyafa is most likely the city of Sha'arayim. Sha'arayim is especially fitting because it is most often associated with the period of David's reign.

Hoo Goo Kang's (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) presentation was entitled "The Pottery Assemblage of Khirbet Qeiyafa in Early Iron Age IIA." Kang systematically reviewed all the different Iron Age pottery types found in Khirbet Qeiyafa in the 2007 and 2008 seasons. Kang compared Qeiyafa's pottery assemblage with early Iron Age IIA pottery found at other sites in ancient Israel. Special emphasis was given to the Decorated Philistine Pottery found at Qeiyafa.

David Ben-Shlomo (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) presented a related paper on the "Petrographic Analysis of Iron Age Pottery from Khirbet Qeiyafa." The main purpose of Ben-Shlomo's study was to examine the provenance and manufacturing techniques of the Iron Age pottery at Qeiyafa. Of special interest were the finger-impressed

jar handles of which 20 samples were analyzed. The ostrakon (a jar fragment) was made of local clay like most pottery found at the site.

The last and most anticipated paper of the two sessions was Haggai Misgav's (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) "The Ostrakon from Khirbet Qeiyafa: Paleographical and Historical Implications." Misgav is the epigrapher tasked with the decipherment of the ostrakon's inscription. His study also dealt with the development of alphabetic writing systems and a survey of Canaanite inscriptions. Misgav established that the inscription had a meaningful message and was not a scribal exercise. Moreover, the verbs indicate that this was indeed Hebrew and not some other language. Misgav was unable to attend, and his paper was read in absentia.

The last speaker and respondent was William Dever (University of Arizona, Emeritus). Dever congratulated the excavators for producing important evidence needed to address the challenges to the historicity of the United Monarchy. He

made several important suggestions for future comparisons, including the excavations at Tel Gezer which he directed. Dever predicted that Khirbet Qeiyafa would be one of the key sites in firmly establishing the core of Judah's early history.

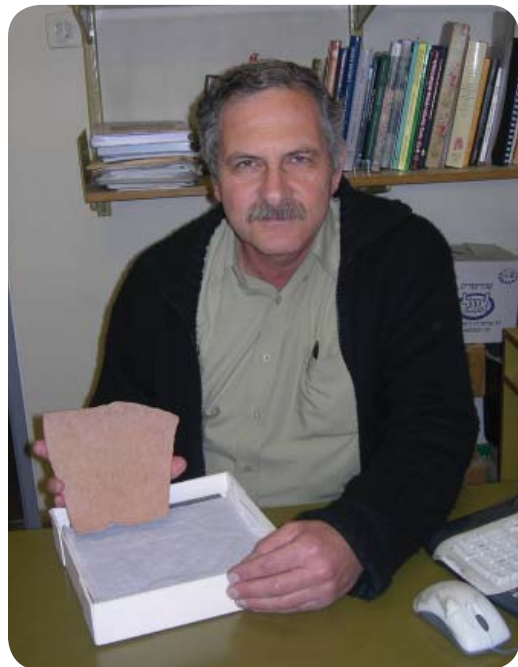


Aerial view of the South Gate at Khirbet Qeiyafa

SCHOLARS DEBATE THE QEYAF A OSTRACON

Since the official reading of the Khirbet Qeiyafa ostracon was released last October, scholars have wasted no time in debating its significance. The ostracon (a potsherd inscribed with ink) was uncovered in July 2008 by the Hebrew University team excavating at Khirbet Qeiyafa. The 6- by 6.5-inch potsherd contains five lines of text, each about ten letters in length, the longest inscription of its type. Epigrapher Haggai Misgav presented his analysis of the text at a conference at the Hebrew University campus in Jerusalem. Misgav's paper was reviewed by three leading experts in the field of Northwest Semitic epigraphy: Ada Yardeni, Aaron Demsky, and Shmuel Ahituv.

Misgav admits that "the inscription was difficult to read." Many letters are illegible and some that can be read don't have a clear meaning. It is also probable that



Haggai Misgav and the KQ Ostracon

one or two lines are missing from the beginning of the text. Nevertheless, Misgav was able to produce a translation from which the following can be ascertained: (1) the inscription has continuity of meaning, i.e., it's not an abecedary (list of letters) or a scribal exercise; (2) the writer of the text was a professional scribe; (3) the message "may be judicial or ethical in content," and the words "may relate to the area of politics or government"; (4) the text "is phrased as a message from one person to another," i.e., it is probably a letter; and (5) Misgav's reading of the first line suggests that the language of the text is Hebrew, making this the oldest Hebrew inscription to date.

In January of this year the University of Haifa announced in a [press release](#) that "Prof. Gershon Galil of the Department of Biblical Studies . . . has deciphered an inscription dating from the 10th century BCE . . . and has shown that this is a Hebrew inscription." Following Misgav's observations, Galil states his case for why the inscription is an early example of Hebrew. He asserts that "this text is a social statement, relating to slaves, widows and orphans . . . [it] provides social elements similar to those found in the biblical prophecies." Galil also points out that if a small border town like Qeiyafa had such skillful scribes, it stands to reason that those in Jerusalem, the capital, would be even more proficient. The inscrip-

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

Misgav, H., Y. Garfinkel, and S. Ganor, 2009. "The Ostracon." In Garfinkel, Y. and S. Ganor, 2009. *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 1. Excavation Report 2007-2008*, pp. 243-257. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.

tion, therefore, demonstrates that "there were scribes in Israel who were able to write literary texts and complex historiographies such as the books of Judges and Samuel."

While Galil's statements regarding literacy in tenth-century Judah may have some validity, some experts have questioned his reconstruction of the text. In an [open letter](#) to Galil, Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, directors of the Khirbet Qeiyafa Archaeological Project, criticize Galil for his lack of academic rigor and integrity. Haifa's press release makes no mention of Misgav's work and only credits Garfinkel with having found the ostracon. Many unique insights in Galil's reading are borrowed from other scholars, including some readings advanced by Dr. Yardeni. More importantly, some key words in Galil's translation are not found in the inscription at all. "Your contribution consists not of reading or deciphering the inscription, but rather of speculative reconstruction of 'missing' letters and words," charge Garfinkel and Ganor. "The main words that support your

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SCHOLARS DEBATE OSTRACON, CONT.

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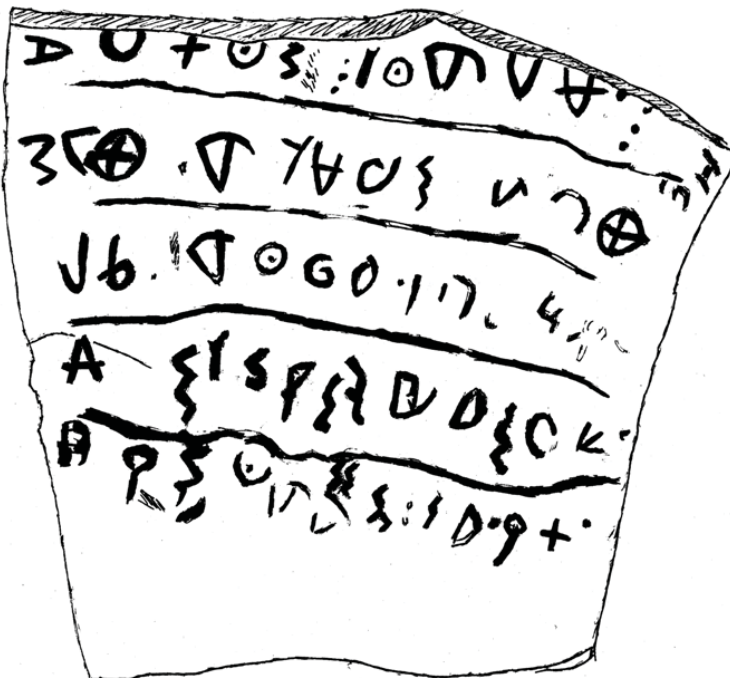
thesis . . . are reconstructed and do not appear as such in the legible parts of the ostracon.”

Other scholars have also criticized Galil for his highly speculative reconstruction. In a recent *Christianity Today* [article](#) (“Archaeology: What an Ancient Hebrew Note Might Mean”), Seth Sanders, professor of religion at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, explains that “the problem is not that his [Galil’s] readings are impossible It’s just that none of the most exciting parts of his readings are clearly there in the text.” Chris Rollston, professor of Old Testament and Semitic studies at Emmanuel School of Religion in Johnson City, Tennessee, also feels that Galil’s imagination should not be the basis on which this text is reconstructed. In a personal [blog](#) (“Reflections on the Qeiyafa Ostracon”), Rollston cautions that “rather than accepting some reading as absolutely decisive . . . it is prudent simply to state that at this time the interpretation of this inscription is at a preliminary stage.”

Rollston has his own theory regarding the identification of the ostracon’s language. He challenges Misgav’s assessment that the inscription is written in Hebrew. Rollston claims that some of the words cited

as language markers (i.e., linguistic isoglosses) are not decisively Hebrew and their usage is attested in other Northwest Semitic languages. However, he does agree that the inscription is evidence of literacy in Israel and “the discovery of a 10th century BCE Old Hebrew epigraph would not be surprising.” Rollston promises to present his reading of the ostracon at the upcoming ASOR meetings in Atlanta in November, 2010

Varying interpretations notwithstanding, all scholars agree that the Qeiyafa Ostracon is an important find that will greatly contribute to our understanding of the distribution of literacy in ancient Israel. “This ostracon, because of its dating, when combined with the fort itself in this strategic location on Judah’s frontier with Philistia, is very significant,” said James Hoffmeier, professor of Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern history and archaeology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (see *Christianity Today* article). Michael Hasel, associate director of the Khirbet Qeiyafa Archaeological Project, agrees: “now that the ostracon has been published, many scholars will have the opportunity to try to reconstruct the text and figure out what it might have said. We hope that future excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa will produce additional evidence for early literacy in ancient Judah.”



Compare Misgav’s drawing of the text (left) with Galil’s rendering (right). Reconstructed letters are outlined.

WHAT ABOUT ARK-EOLOGY?



Michael G. Hasel

For the past several weeks I have been inundated with letters from around the world asking about a circulating e-mail that purportedly shows archaeologists excavating the remains of giants, the “Nephilim” of the Bible, or so the e-mail claims. Well-meaning people want to know whether there is any credibility to these images of giant skeletons. As I travel around the world to speak on archaeology I frequently encounter questions that sound like this, “I saw this video and so-and-so claims to have found the []! Isn’t it wonderful? What do you think?” The pictures and arguments seem so convincing that people believe what they’re told. They accept one untrained person’s word that this or that artifact or tomb or site has been “discovered” and place their faith on its validity. Sensible scholarship is replaced with sensational “ark-eology.”

Take the ark of the covenant, for example. There are currently at least a dozen suggested locations for it – from a church in Ethiopia, to Mount Nebo in Jordan, to a cave in Jerusalem. Three of the people or organizations who claim to have

discovered it have stated in print

that God led them to its location. Yet all three locations are different. The fact that little evidence has been produced seems irrelevant. Videos, images, and books continue to circulate, but in the end, when you look at the evidence, there is very little there. If a professional academic would operate in this way they would be without a job in no time. You cannot make claims without publishing the data and remain credible.

Think about it this way. If an archaeologist told me that he had found the cure for cancer and produced a drug treatment, three questions would come to mind: (1) How did the archaeologist find the cure and know he had found it without any medical training? (2) What evidence does he have (lab results, statistical studies of patients cured, etc.)? And (3) can other medical professionals (e.g., the American Cancer Society) verify his claim? Unless these questions are adequately answered, I would not risk my life trying a “cure” based on one person’s claim.

Yet somehow when it comes to archaeology, there are individuals with no academic training in archaeology who claim they have found something sensational – Noah’s ark, Sodom and Gomorrah, chariot wheels in the Red Sea, Mt. Sinai – but have produced very little evidence. Faith without any evidence is blind faith. Don’t misunderstand me, anyone regardless of their level of training can find something important. But at some point experts need to verify the authenticity of the find.

Take the Bedouin shepherd boy who discovered the Dead Sea scrolls. The boy could not read them or understand their significance. It was up to the scholars to examine the scrolls and translate their texts. For many sensational claims there is often dissemination of the story, but there is no publication of



Giant skeletons: amazing discovery or internet hoax?

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WHAT ABOUT ARK-EOLOGY? CONT.

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the data or verification by professionals. Until there is evidence and authentication, we can only look at the ‘discovery’ as someone’s claim.

Let us return to the question of the giant skeleton e-mails: Are there any institutions or organizations cited? Who are the archaeologists excavating the bones? Where has this information been scientifically published? The e-mail answers none of these questions. Not a single name or authority is cited. It turns out that this e-mail about the “Nephilim” is not new at all. Internet research shows that some years ago a similar discovery was attributed to a National Geographic excavation. National Geographic has since **refuted** the claim and Snopes has an **article** exposing this as an internet hoax and confirms that the pictures have all been digitally altered.



Clay prism describing Sennacherib's siege of Lachish in 701 BC.

There is no doubt that many credible discoveries have been found that pertain to biblical peoples, places, and events. The names of over sixty individuals mentioned in the Old Testament have been discovered through archaeological research: kings like Nebuchadnezzar, Tiglath-Pileser III, David, and Cyrus the Great. Some appear on seals and others on monuments commemorating battles. Some confirm what many Christians already accept by faith in Scripture but do not determine belief or unbelief.

Archaeology remains a limited enterprise. Through records found at Nineveh and excavations at Lachish, archaeology may demonstrate that Sennacherib did indeed destroy the city of Lachish in 701 BC. But archaeology cannot prove that the Angel of the Lord destroyed Sennacherib's army based on the prophecy of Isaiah. This information comes from the inspired word of God. Archaeology cannot prove a miraculous event. In the end the Bible must stand on its own as a book of faith on these matters.

Archaeology's role is to illuminate the world of the Bible by providing information about how people lived, the buildings they built, the languages they spoke, the religious, social and political institutions they established. Sensational “ark-eology” often requires only short excursions and a few pictures to excite the public. But responsible archaeology has an obligation to work with trained experts in various fields to better understand the past. This takes time and careful investigation.

Thank you for your continued support of the long-range planning and research of the Institute of Archaeology, Southern Adventist University. We want to continue to provide reasoned and balanced correlations between Near Eastern archaeology and the world of the Bible.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael H. Hesel". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

Director, Institute of Archaeology

RECENT SIGHTINGS

UNCOVERING SECRETS OF THE SPHINX

(Smithsonian)

For thousands of years, sand buried the colossus up to its shoulders, creating a vast disembodied head atop the eastern edge of the Sahara. Then, in 1817, a Genoese adventurer, Capt. Giovanni Battista Caviglia, led 160 men in the first modern attempt to dig out the Sphinx.

[Click here to read more](#)



UNEARTHING THE SPLENDOR OF UR *(Telegraph)*

The buried antiquities of Ur could one day outshine those of ancient Egypt, archaeologists at a large-scale excavation in Iraq believe . . . Archaeologically, the most astonishing find of Ur has been a remarkably well-preserved stepped platform, or ziggurat, which dates back to the 3rd millennium BC, when it was part of a temple complex that served as the administrative centre of the Sumerian capital.

[Click here to read more](#)

ANCIENT WALL POSSIBLY BUILT BY SOLOMON

(LiveScience)

“The city wall that has been uncovered testifies to a ruling presence,” said Eilat Mazar, a researcher at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. “Its strength and form of construction indicate a high level of engineering . . . this is the first time that a structure from that time has been found that may correlate with written descriptions of Solomon’s building in Jerusalem,” she said.

[Click here to read more](#)



LAMINATED LINEN PROTECTED ALEXANDER THE GREAT

(DiscoveryNews)

A Kevlar-like armor might have helped Alexander the Great conquer nearly the entirety of the known world in little more than two decades, according to new reconstructive archaeology research . . . the study suggests that Alexander and his soldiers protected themselves with linothorax, a type of body armor made by laminating together layers of linen.

[Click here to read more](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

MUSEUM HOURS

Sunday, 2 – 5 p.m.

Monday, closed

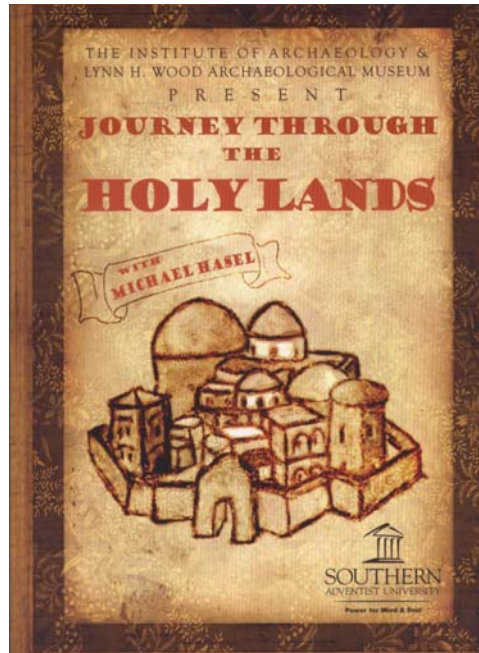
Tuesday – Thursday, 9 a.m. – 12 noon and 1 – 5 p.m.

Friday, 9 a.m. – 12 noon

Saturday, 2 – 5 p.m.

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SUMMER EVENTS

Archaeological Fieldwork Middle East Study Tour

June 16 – July 29, 2010
Khirbet Qeiyafa, Israel



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Managing Editor: Justo E. Morales
Content Editor: Michael G. Hasel
Layout & Design: Marcella Morales

To subscribe/unsubscribe contact Justo at 423.236.2027 or <jmorales@southern.edu>

Institute of Archaeology
Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum
P.O. Box 370
Collegedale, TN 37315
<archaeology.southern.edu>