

# DIG



# NEWSLETTER



## SOUTHERN TO EXCAVATE BIBLICAL LACHISH

This summer the Institute of Archaeology, Southern Adventist University, will join the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in launching a new archaeological expedition to the biblical site of Tel Lachish in southern Israel.

After the capital Jerusalem, Lachish was the most prominent city of ancient Judah. "We want to investigate the continuing expansion of Judah after the time of David," explained Michael G. Hasel, Institute of Archaeology director and co-director of the project. "Very little is known from this early period. After excavating Khirbet Qeiyafa (biblical Sha'arayim, 1 Sam 17:52), a fortress that dates to the time of Saul and David over the last four years, the next question is, how did the kingdom develop further?"

Previous excavations at Lachish were conducted by the British in the 1930s, and Tel Aviv University in 1966-68, and again in 1974-1994 under the direction of David Ussishkin. These earlier excavations produced

some of the richest remains ever found in the archaeology of Israel. From the Late Bronze Age, the time of the Egyptian empire in Canaan, Lachish is mentioned in the Amarna letters sent from the king of Lachish to Pharaoh. Two temples from this period (fourteenth-twelfth century BC) were discovered, one in the valley, west of the site, and the other on the Tel itself. An inscription from Ramses III helped date the temple.

Over four hundred LMLK storage jar handles were uncovered at Lachish, some dating specifically to King Hezekiah's reign. More LMLK handles come from Lachish than any other city in Judah. The term LMLK in Hebrew means "for the king." Two plausible theories for the function of these

storage jars exist: (1) that they were used to collect government taxes for the king; and (2) that they contained emergency military rations during the short time leading to the sieges of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. This attack by the Assyrian king is one of the best illustrated events in biblical history.

In 701 BC Hezekiah was king of Judah when the country was attacked by Sennacherib (2 Kgs 18; Isaiah 36-37). The northern kingdom of Israel had been destroyed and its people removed in another Assyrian campaign in 722 BC. Only Judah remained between the expanding military power of Assyria and Egypt. According to Martin G. Klingbeil, Associate Director of the Institute of Archaeology, who is also a co-director of the project, "the British

Museum has on display the extensive reliefs from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh showing in detail the attack against Lachish. These reliefs show a siege ramp built against the city while it is attacked by Assyrian battering rams." The detail of the reliefs has been analyzed and compared with the archaeological evidence uncovered in Level III of Lachish itself where the actual siege mound was uncovered. Here hundreds of arrowheads



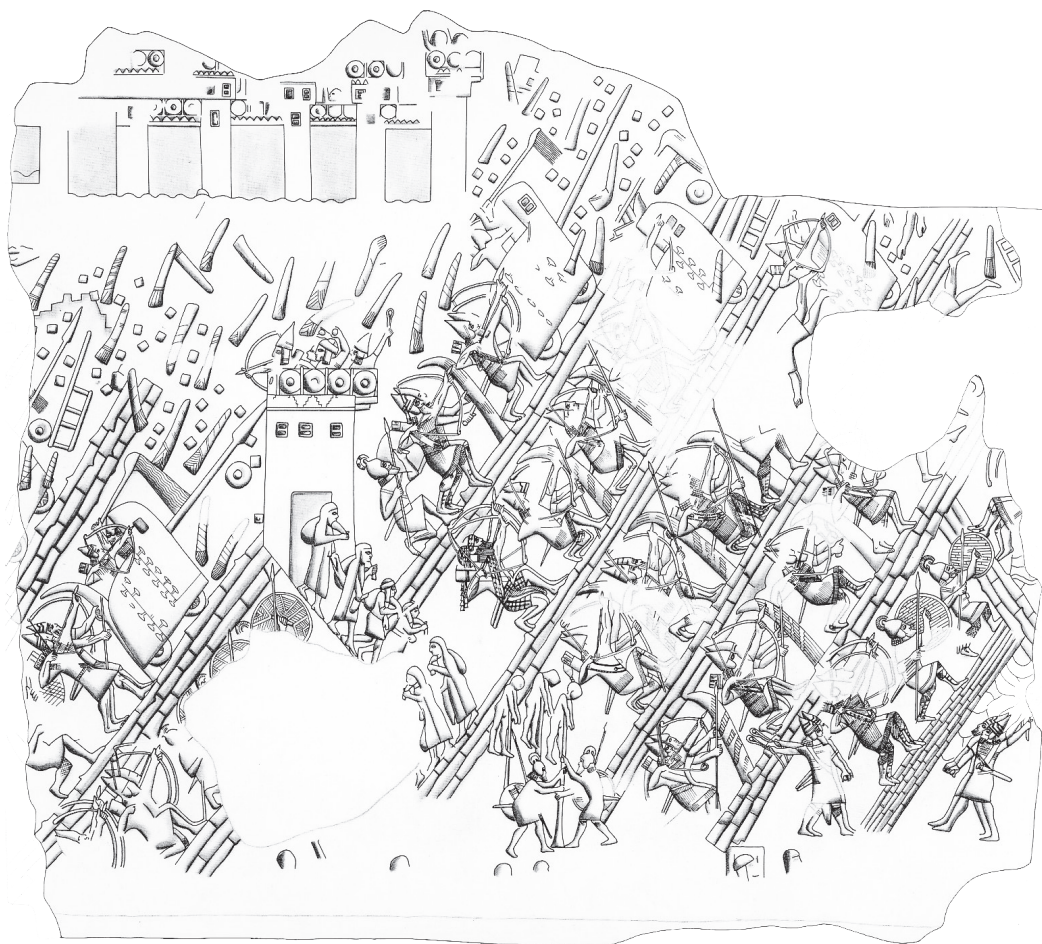
Aerial photograph of Tel Lachish (a.k.a. Tell ed-Duweir) from the Northwest.

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and sling stones and a mass burial, date to this biblical event showing a clear convergence of archaeology and Bible history.

In a nearby cave 1,500 skulls were found, perhaps a mass burial of this event. According to the reliefs, Sennacherib is camped outside Lachish watching the preparations, the siege itself, and receiving the spoils of war after the victory. In his annals he records his victory over 46 of Judah's walled cities and innumerable villages. Sennacherib's ultimate goal was Jerusalem, Judah's capital. In his annals he writes, "As for Hezekiah the Judean, I shut him up like a bird in a cage." But the Bible records a miraculous victory over the Assyrians in Jerusalem. Hezekiah prays to the Lord and is told by the prophet Isaiah, "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor build a siege mound against it." That same night the Assyrian army was destroyed at the hand of God and Sennacherib returned to Nineveh. "There are no images on the siege and defeat of Jerusalem on the walls of his palace, only on Lachish, the second most important city in Judah," said Hasel, "The silence concerning Jerusalem is deafening when compared to the pompous boasts in Assyrian annals."

Some 115 years later, in 586 BC, another campaign took place against Lachish, this time by Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon. Because Lachish was the major fortress in this period guarding the way to



Detail from the Assyrian reliefs of Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh depicting the Assyrian victory over Judah during the siege of Lachish in 701 BC.

Jerusalem, all armies needed to deal with her first. In the massive destruction debris of the gate area of Level II were found the famous Lachish Letters. Written on broken pieces of pottery (ostraca) are the final written evidence documenting the city's demise. One of the letters states, "We are watching for the signal fires of Lachish according to all the signs which my lord has given, because we cannot see Azekah." It must have been written after Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Azekah for its signal fires were no longer seen and could have been sent as a warning to Lachish that the armies could be approaching next. According to Jeremiah, Lachish and Azekah were the only two fortified cities remaining besides Jerusalem (Jer 34:7).

The pilot excavations at Lachish this summer will be probing for earlier evidence from the time of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, and its relationship to events in the rest of the region. Levels IV and V remain largely unknown except for a few small exposed areas. "Finding and documenting Levels IV and V in a larger

exposure will give us the missing link to the earlier history of Judah in the region. If we have promising results this summer, we will be launching a long-term project at the site beginning in 2014," said Hasel. "It is thrilling to be excavating such a prominent biblical city with so much history. It will give an incredible opportunity to students and staff from Southern Adventist University and make a lasting contribution to our understanding of the formative period of Judah's monarchy."



The Lachish letters (ostraca), written shortly before Lachish fell to Nebuchadnezzar's army in 586 BC, offer testimony to the final moments of the Kingdom of Judah.

# SPECIAL EXHIBITION WINS AWARD

On March of this year the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum received an Award of Excellence for The Battle Over King David exhibition from the Tennessee Association of Museums (TAM). TAM grants awards in three degrees, the “Award of Excellence,” “Commendation,” and “Special Mention.” The category was small museum/temporary exhibit. The last time the museum received a TAM award was in 2009 for its temporary exhibition, “Faces of Power: Ancient Coins of the Biblical World.” According to their website, TAM has 116 institutional (museum) members.

The special exhibition, “**The Battle Over King David: Excavating the Fortress,**” highlights the archaeological discoveries from the biblical site of Khirbet Qeiyafa in Israel, a fortified city from the time of King David. These discoveries

shed light on the historical reliability of the Bible, in particular the narratives concerning Saul, David, and the early Kingdom of Judah.

The exhibition has drawn hundreds of visitors from all over the country to see the first museum display on the finds from Khirbet Qeiyafa. “We are very pleased with how well the exhibit has been received,” remarked Justo Morales, Museum Coordinator for the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum.

Exhibition highlights include a collection of stamped and finger-impressed jar handles, stamp and scarab seals, and bronze and silver coins from the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. Replicas of famous artifacts like the potsherd with the Hebrew inscription (the Qeiyafa Ostrakon) and a limestone shrine found in 2011 that were not available for loan, have been included in the exhibit. The exhibition opened in November of last year and will be on display through April 2014. 🪄



Museum Coordinator Justo Morales proudly holding the 2013 TAM Award of Excellence.

# EXCELLENCE IN ARCHAEOLOGY



Jonathan Gardner at Khirbet Qeiyafa in 2011.

Every year the Institute of Archaeology recognizes a graduating archaeology major with the “Excellence in Archaeology” award. This award is granted to students who have shown exceptional academic achievement, performed well in the field, and shown significant promise for future growth in the field of archaeology. This year’s recipient was Jonathan Gardner from Clarkson, WA. Gardner graduated with degrees in Archaeology and Theology, and spent this academic year studying at the Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen in Austria where he earned a minor in German.

As an archaeology major, Gardner had the opportunity to participate at the Khirbet Qeiyafa excavations in 2011. In the summer of 2012 he joined the Harvard University-sponsored archaeological project at Ashkelon in Israel. The decades-long

project at Ashkelon is co-directed by Wheaton College professor Daniel Master. These excavation experiences, combined with his education at Southern, prompted Gardner into pursuing archaeology at the graduate level. After being accepted into two graduate programs he decided to enroll in the M.A. program in Biblical Archaeology at Wheaton College where he will continue his studies with Master. The program is one of the finest in the country, and one of only a few in the United States that sponsors excavations in Israel. Gardner will be excavating at Ashkelon again this summer followed by a semester at Jerusalem University College in Israel.

“We are always pleased to see our graduates succeed and move on to well-established graduate programs in archaeology,” said Michael Hasel, director of Southern’s archaeology programs. “They are the future of the discipline and with them rests the hope for the future of biblical archaeology.” 🪄

# WINTER SEMESTER MUSEUM LECTURES

This winter semester the museum staff invited two well-known scholars in the archaeology of ancient Israel to speak for the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum Lecture Series. Below is a brief synopsis of their presentations.

## SANCTUARIES AND CULT AT KHIRBET QEYAJA

The biblical site of Khirbet Qeiyafa has yielded important finds over the past six seasons of excavation. From the ‘Qeiyafa Ostrakon’—possibly the earliest sample of Hebrew writing—to the massive fortifications and two city gates that testify to the government or authority that constructed them. Just as significant for understanding the early history of Judah was the discovery of three cultic sanctuaries, dated radiometrically to ca. 1020-980 BC. On February 12, professor Yosef Garfinkel (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), co-director of the Khirbet Qeiyafa excavations, visited Southern Adventist University to share his conclusions on the significance of these discoveries. The presentation, titled “Sanctuaries and Cult at Khirbet Qeiyafa,” focused on the archaeological context, architectural features, and the cultic objects uncovered in these sanctuaries.

Two of the sanctuaries were uncovered near a gate *piazza*, a large open area adjacent to the city gate (there are two gates). The location of these cultic rooms—next to an open area—demonstrates how the sanctuaries were not places of worship like we have today and people would have needed a place to congregate outside the cultic area. These rooms were next to domestic buildings, which is an unusual configuration in the ancient world. Canaanite or Philistine places of worship were usually isolated from people’s houses.

Some of the cultic objects found in these rooms include standing stones, basalt altars, stone basins, pottery libation vessels, and two portable shrines, one made of pottery

and the other of stone. The cultic shrines are boxes that would hold representations of gods (figurines) or other religious objects inside. The shrines are made to look like temples and may provide a clue to what Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem looked like. As important what was found in these rooms is what was *not* found. Sanctuaries in sites in northern Israel have yielded a large number of figurines while in Khirbet Qeiyafa only recently has part of one figurine been found. This may be an indication that the people of Qeiyafa obeyed the biblical ban on cultic images.

The lecture was well attended, drawing hundreds of visitors from the community as well as the university’s faculty and student body. Prior to his presentation, Garfinkel met with visitors at the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum where the new special exhibition, “The Battle Over King David: Excavating the Fortress of Elah,” currently showcases artifacts from Garfinkel’s archaeological project. The last time Garfinkel lectured at Southern was the fall of 2009, when his topic was “Excavating the Biblical City of Sha’arayim.”

## THE DISCOVERY OF THE LOST FORTRESS OF AI

The location of the biblical city of Ai has been a matter of debate since the beginning of archaeological research in Israel. Most scholars have concluded that the location of Ai is at the site of et-Tell, located about 3 km east of the village of Beitin (Bethel). However, according to the archaeological finds, there is no evidence of occupation at et-Tell during the time of Joshua’s conquest. This discovery has been used to cast doubt on the accuracy of the biblical account of Joshua since there was no Ai at this time for the Israelites to conquer.

There are two possible solutions to this dilemma, (1) the Bible is wrong and/or not historical, or (2) the site of Ai has been incorrectly identified with et-Tell. At least one scholar, Dr. Bryant G. Wood, director of the Associates for Biblical Research (ABR), believes et-Tell is not Ai. On March 20, Wood delivered a lecture on the archaeological finds of Khirbet el-Maqatir,



ABR director Bryant Wood at lecture.

the site he believes to be biblical Ai. Since 1995, Wood, with the support of the ABR team, has been directing excavations at this archaeological site that is located just 0.6 miles (1 km) west of et-Tell and 9 miles north of Jerusalem.

According to nineteenth century accounts, the local people originally identified Khirbet el-Maqatir with the ruins of biblical Ai. However, William F. Albright, the so-called father of biblical archaeology, firmly believed that et-Tell was Ai and that settled the issue for most scholars. In his lecture, Wood demonstrated how Khirbet el-Maqatir was a better candidate for Ai in terms of historical geography and topography. But the most important argument for identifying Maqatir with Ai is the archaeological evidence. These discoveries include a city gate and fortifications, large amounts of pottery from the time of Joshua, and vast evidence of destruction by fire.

Wood received international attention in the 1990s for his proposed redating of the pottery from Jericho City IV, another ancient city destroyed by Joshua during the conquest. Kathleen Kenyon’s excavations in 1950s concluded that Jericho City IV was destroyed much earlier than the period of the Israelite Conquest, and was subsequently abandoned. Wood’s analysis of the pottery effectively redated this destruction during the time of Joshua, although not everyone is convinced. ✍️

# DIRECTOR'S LETTER: MOVING FORWARD



License G-5/2013  
– Tel Lachish. It is  
official. When we  
learned this semester  
that we had been  
granted an excavation  
license for Lachish  
from the Israel  
Antiquities Authority in  
partnership with the

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, we experienced  
a rush of different emotions; excitement,  
overwhelmed anticipation and hope.

This has been a long process of years involving multiple meetings at the highest levels, negotiations, and trying to think about strategic goals. But Tel Lachish? – fourteen years ago we would never have dreamed of this site. Why is this so amazing? There are three major reasons:

**1. Education and Training:** An archaeology program without an excavation is like a medical program without a hospital. This is where students get their hands on training. It has been a major goal since our founding the Institute of Archaeology, to direct our own archaeological project in the heartland of the Bible. In the summer, 2000 we spent considerable time searching throughout Israel for a possible site, only to have a new wave of intifada break out in September of that year, closing down that possibility. In 2003 we were scheduled to begin excavating with Amnon Ben-Tor at Hazor, but then the Gulf War began and we headed to the safety of the Mediterranean island of Cyprus to excavate at Idalion. From 2004 we began to train students at Hazor until 2007. That same year, Yossi Garfinkel approached me at our professional meetings in San Diego and invited Southern to become the senior partner with the Hebrew University at Khirbet Qeiyafa. We now had a prepared staff trained and ready to direct our own area and produce publications. That has been an outstanding partnership producing significant new evidence for the early kingdom of Judah during the time of Saul and David. Throughout these years Southern students and staff have received the training needed to advance in archaeology through these excavation field schools. They have gone on to MA and PhD programs excavating other sites in Albania, Israel, Jordan, the United States, and Uzbekistan.

**2. Research and Publication:** An academic institute without an active research and publication program will not have an

international impact in the discipline. Excavations produce new data and provide significant avenues to influence and change the thinking on key historical and archaeological issues. As senior partner at Khirbet Qeiyafa Archaeological Project our work has contributed to a major shift in the thinking concerning the early kingdom of Judah, the history of Saul and David. Tel Lachish, we hope, will give us a site where we can see how the kingdom of Judah subsequently developed.

**3. Illuminating Biblical History:** Few sites have provided more data for the history of Judah than Tel Lachish in the later periods. The pilot excavations this summer will be probing for earlier evidence at Lachish from the time of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon and the relationship of Lachish to events in the rest of the region. Levels IV and V remain largely unknown except for a few small exposed areas. Finding and documenting Levels IV and V in a larger exposure will give us the missing link to the earlier history of Judah in the region. How was the city developed in this period? Were there fortifications and was there a major city gate at the northern part of the site? These are all questions that remain unanswered. After this long journey could it be that the Institute of Archaeology has been positioned for such a moment in history to continue to focus on the world of the Bible with the challenges we face in today's world? We solicit your support as we begin this project from July 14-July 29, 2013 and look forward to what awaits us under the sands of time. ✍



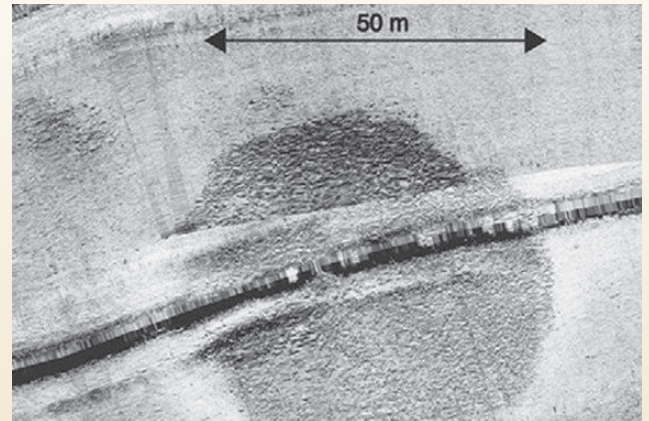
View of the city gate of Lachish. Lachish was one of principal fortified cities of Judah in the Iron Age. The city was famously besieged and destroyed by the Assyrians in 701 BC.

# RECENT SIGHTINGS

## MYSTERIOUS STONE STRUCTURE FOUND BENEATH SEA OF GALILEE *(NBC News)*

A giant “monumental” stone structure discovered beneath the waters of the Sea of Galilee in Israel has archaeologists puzzled as to its purpose and even how long ago it was built. The mysterious structure is cone shaped, made of “unhewn basalt cobbles and boulders,” and weighs an estimated 60,000 tons, the researchers said. That makes it heavier than most modern-day warships. Rising nearly 32 feet (10 meters) high, it has a diameter of about 230 feet (70 meters) . . .

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## ANCIENT IRAQ YIELDS FRESH FINDS FOR RETURNING ARCHAEOLOGISTS

*(Christian Science Monitor)*

British archaeologists have discovered a previously unknown palace or temple near the ancient city of Ur in the first foreign excavation at the site in southern Iraq since the 1930s. A small team of archaeologists working from satellite images hinting at a buried structure have uncovered the corner of a monumental complex with rows of rooms around a large courtyard, believed to be about 4,000 years old . . .

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## MARITIME TRADE THRIVED IN EGYPT, EVEN BEFORE ALEXANDRIA *(University of Oxford)*

New research into Thonis-Heracleion, a sunken port-city that served as the gateway to Egypt in the first millennium BC, is being examined at an international conference at the University of Oxford. The port city, situated 6.5 kilometres off today’s coastline, was one of the biggest commercial hubs in the Mediterranean before the founding of Alexandria. The Oxford Centre for Maritime Archaeology at the University of Oxford is collaborating on the project with the European Institute for Underwater Archaeology . . .

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## TEMPLE AND RITUAL VESSELS OF CULT FROM KING DAVID ERA FOUND NEAR JERUSALEM

*(Huffington Post)*

Evidence of religious practices dating back to the early days of King David and the Kingdom of Judah have been discovered at excavations run by the Israel Antiquities Authority in Tel Motza, west of Jerusalem. According to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the finds, which include 2,750-year-old pottery figurines of men and horses, provide rare evidence of a ritual cult at the beginning of the period of the monarchy. “The ritual building at Tel Motza is an unusual . . .

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK

July 14-29, 2013

Tel Lachish Excavations, Israel

### LYNN H. WOOD ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM LECTURE SERIES

September 24, 2013, 7 pm

TBA

P. Kyle McCarter, PhD (Johns Hopkins University)

October 22, 2013, 7 pm

"Excavating the City of Lachish, 2012"

Michael G. Hasel, PhD (Southern Adventist University)

February 11, 2014, 7 pm

"The Search for Sihon's Heshbon"

Randall W. Younker, PhD (Andrews University)

March 11, 2014, 7 pm

"Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls"

Jodi Magness, PhD (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

The museum lecture series is free and open to the public. For more information, visit our website at <https://www.southern.edu/archaeology/lectureseries/Pages/lectureseriesprogram.aspx>

### SPECIAL EXHIBITION NOW OPEN

See authentic archaeological finds from the "Fortress of Elah" excavations. Call 423.236.2030 or email [museum@southern.edu](mailto:museum@southern.edu) to schedule your tour (appointment required during summer).

**THE BATTLE OVER KING DAVID**  
EXCAVATING THE FORTRESS OF ELAH

Special Exhibition Open  
**November 7, 2012 - April 30, 2014**

LYNN H. WOOD  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM  
Southern Adventist University

## DIG SIGHT

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