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Newsletter

February 2009

No 15

Petrie Lecture 2009

The 2009 Petrie Lecture will be given by Dr Bruce Winter on 7th August 2009. He will speak on *Archaeological Solutions to 1 Corinthians Engimas*.

Apart from being Principal of Queensland Theological College, Dr Winter is a Senior Research Fellow of University of Queensland as well as having membership of British Epigraphic Society and the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas. He is Director of the Institute for Early Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World and former Fellow of St Edmund's College, University of Cambridge. At Cambridge Bruce was Warden of Tyndale House and lectured in the University. He has visited Corinth annually over the past 15 years.

Archaeology and the Bible

The Institute in conjunction with Ridley College is planning to offer a subject for tertiary students entitled *Archaeology and the Bible*. The subject will cover the development of archaeology in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean from the time of Napoleon and the way it has influenced the study of the biblical text. It is planned to present the subject on the Ridley College distance education platform from 2010.

New Journals

Journals with which the Institute has recently agreed to exchange include *Biblical Archaeology Review*, *Tel Aviv* and *Archaeology International*.

Buried History Volume 44

Buried History Vol 44 has been published. We have immediately begun preparing BH 45 and have the draft of one paper already.

History of the Institute

The Director is researching the origins of the Institute and the life and work of the founder, Walter Beasley. I would be pleased to hear from anyone who has memories of Walter Beasley or the Institute prior to 1970.

The site of Jericho was particularly important to Beasley and his understanding of archaeology. As part of this research the Director visited the Palestine Exploration Fund in London and looked at the records of Prof John Garstang's excavations of Jericho. Beasley visited Garstang at Jericho and provided a certain amount of funding to him. A lecture on Beasley's relationship with Garstang is being prepared.

Volunteers

Hammer and Paperknife: A Volunteer's Progress by Henry Huggins

I started as a volunteer sometime in 2005 in a building that needed a lot of tender loving care! I have fitted locks and door handles, toilet fittings and disabled bars, done a lot of painting, sometimes alone but often with other volunteers and students. Later I helped unpack the artefacts and set up a studio to photograph them. I have now graduated to the office, opening mail and sorting the membership lists.

It has been a very interesting time. I have learnt a lot, met a lot of remarkable people and attended some fascinating talks. The Institute still needs volunteers who can commit to a regular attendance say once a week or fortnight or month. This would mean we could put work aside knowing that someone will be there on a particular day to attend to it. **HOW ABOUT YOU?**

Seminars

Institute volunteers and graduate students from La Trobe University have enjoyed a number of Thursday night seminars at the Institute. David Thomas spoke on *Digging in Afghanistan*, Geoff Hewitt on the *Old Goal excavations and prison reform*, Coral Montero Lopez on *Digging the past with a tooth pick: Interpreting human remains from the Sonoran Desert in Mexico* and myself on *Old Kingdom metal working*. We will be continuing the program this year.

Overseas Visits

In November 2008 the Director travelled to United States and England to inspect archives associated with the Institute's collection, visit museums and present a paper at the AOSR Annual Meeting in Boston. The contacts made and relationships re-established were many and will prove invaluable.

Incantation Bowl

Some may remember Dr Erica Hunter's lecture on the incantation bowl a couple of years ago. Recently Neil Holland, who specialises in imaging took some infra-red and incidence light photographs of the bowl's inscription. We are grateful to him and Henry Huggins for arranging the work and hope that the images will help Dr Hunter and her imminent publication of the text.

The Ossuary inscribed James brother of Jesus

After some four years the legal case mounted by the Israel Antiquities Authority against those accused of forging the inscription has collapsed. It seems that there is a reasonable likelihood that the inscription is genuine, although it is unlikely to ever be accepted that the people referred to are the Jesus and James of the New Testament given the popularity of these names at that time.

Prof Lemaire of the Sorbonne was satisfied that the inscription dated from the First Century. He is also satisfied with the authenticity of the pomegranate inscription, which may come from the Jerusalem temple (BAR Jan/Feb 2009).

As some will know, Jerusalem continues to be the centre of the Middle Eastern antiquities market, a matter of great distaste to the Israel Antiquities Authority and professional archaeologists everywhere. As a result more questionable objects are likely to come to light. Sadly without provenance and context, such items will be peripheral to historical research as will this ossuary and pomegranate.

Seal of King Zedekiah's minister found in Jerusalem dig

A seal impression belonging to a minister of the Biblical King Zedekiah has recently been uncovered completely intact during an archaeological dig in Jerusalem. The seal impression, or bulla, with the name Gedalyahu ben Pashur, who served as minister to King Zedekiah (597-586 BCE) according to the Book of Jeremiah, was found just meters away from where a separate seal impression of another of Zedekiah's ministers, Yehukial ben Shelemiyahu was uncovered three years ago.

The excavation is located just outside the walls of the Old City near Dung Gate. The first bulla was uncovered inside an impressive stone structure, which Mazar, the excavator, believes is the Palace of David, while the second bulla was found at the foot of the external wall of the same structure and under a tower that was built in the days of Nehemiah.

The bullae with the names of the two ministers are each 1 cm. in diameter and were found among debris from the First Temple period. Both ministers are mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah (38:1-4) when they and two others came to King Zedekiah demanding the death of the prophet Jeremiah for saying publicly that the besieged city of Jerusalem should surrender.

In 1982, the Israeli archaeologist Yigal Shiloh discovered a cache of bullae in a nearby site, including one with the name of Gemaryahu ben Shaphan - mentioned in the Bible as a minister and scribe during the reign of King Jehoiakim (608-597 BCE).

The current dig is being conducted on behalf of the Shalem center, a Jerusalem research institute, and the right-wing City of David Foundation, and was carried out under the academic auspices of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Adapted from Etgar Lefkovits <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1215331162371&pagename=JPost/JP/Article/ShowFull>

Hippos- Sussita, the horse-shaped city

Hippos was a city east of the lake of Galilee in Hellenistic and Roman times. In Byzantine times it was called Sussita and was the seat of the bishop of the See of Palaestina Secunda. Both names mean "horse" or "horse-shaped" in Greek and Aramaic and refer to the outline of the 350 meter high hill on which the city was situated. The city is a contender for 'the city set on a hill'.

Because of the civil strife between Jannai's sons, Aristobulos and Hyrcanus, in 63 BC Rome sent its general Pompey to impose direct rule over the whole area and consequently Hippos became one of the Roman cities of the Decapolis. Hippos prospered and was allowed to mint its own coinage, with the emblem of a horse on the reverse. According to Josephus, Hippos had a mixed population of Jews, pagans and Christians. The city continued after the Muslim conquest, but was destroyed by the powerful earthquake of 749 CE and not rebuilt.

Following earlier surveys and excavations, dating back to the work done in the late 19th century by Gottlieb Schumacher (of Haifa) and that of archaeologist Claire Epstein in the 1950s, a large-scale expedition was started at Sussita in 1999, under the direction of Prof. Arthur Segal of the

University of Haifa. He was later joined by teams from the Polish Academy of Sciences, the National Museum of Warsaw and Concordia University of Minnesota. Their excavations, which are planned to continue for two more seasons, have uncovered rich data of the history of Sussita-Hippos.

The ruins of the city include gates, a Roman Forum, underground cisterns, a triumphal arch, monumental buildings, an industrial area, temples and eight churches. The central temple was originally built in limestone, and Roman times, was rebuilt with basalt stonework. That in turn was dismantled by the Byzantine Christians, who built their church on top of the pagan cult centre in the late fourth century using much of the limestone and basalt of the earlier temples.

Those who have read Sue Balderstone's monograph will be interested to know that the church is in the standard basilica form of a nave with columns to the aisles each side, and a semicircular apse at the east end. It was repaved in the sixth century in coloured geometric patterns of white, red, black and yellow mosaics, which have survived well in the aisles but less so in the nave. There are two inscriptions recording the generosity of donors.

The excavators thought that they had found a synagogue, but after further digging, according to Michael Eisenberg, the deputy director, it turned out to be 'just another church'. A number of churches continue to be excavated.

Hippos, being situated on top of a mountain, had a water problem when it expanded in Roman times. An aqueduct was constructed from Nahal El-AI, 20 kilometres away. The Romans applied siphon action for the first time in this region, using interlocking stone pipe rings, made airtight with caulking, which brought the water down into the valley and up again into the city. Pieces of the pipe are still visible by the east gate, where the water entered a cistern. No doubt it was the destruction of this system that made the city unsuitable for rebuilding after the earthquake.

Adapted from Stephen G. Rosenberg W.F. Albright Institute - Jerusalem in The Jerusalem Post Online Edition Feb 5, 2009 <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1233304692969&pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull>

King Solomon's mines?

The term "King Solomon's Mines" was made famous by a 19th century novel of the same name by H. Rider Haggard - although, until now, no such mines were known to exist and there is no explicit biblical statement about the origin of Solomon's copper resources.

Prof. Thomas Levy of University of California San Diego has reported the findings of an international team of archaeologists he heads in an issue of *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (US) late last year and at conferences such as the ASOR Annual meeting in Boston last November.

Working with Mohammad Najjar of Jordan's Friends of Archaeology and others, has Levy excavated an ancient copper-production centre at Khirbat en-Nahas ("ruins of copper" in Arabic) down to virgin soil, through more than six meters of industrial smelting debris (slag). The 2006 dig uncovered new artefacts and with them a new set of radiocarbon dates placing the bulk of industrial-scale production at Khirbat en-Nahas in the 10th century BC - in line with biblical narrative on the rule of David and Solomon. The research also documents a spike in metallurgic activity at the site during the 9th century BC, which may also support the history of the Edomites as related by the Bible.

Khirbat en-Nahas is in the lowlands of a desolate, arid region south of the Dead Sea in what was once Edom and is today Jordan's Faynan district. For decades, scholars have argued over whether the Edomites were sufficiently organized by the 10th to 9th centuries BC to seriously threaten the neighbouring Israelite Kingdom. While Nelson Glueck asserted that he had found King Solomon's mines in Faynan/Edom in the 1930's, nobody believed him and British excavations on the Edomite highlands in the 1970s and 80s suggested the Iron Age did not come to Edom until the 7th century BC.

"Now," says Levy, "with data from the first large-scale stratified and systematic excavation of a site in the southern Levant to focus specifically on the role of metallurgy in Edom, we have evidence that complex societies were indeed active in 10th and 9th centuries BC". Khirbat en-Nahas comprises some 100 ancient buildings including a fortress and is situated in the midst of a large area covered by black slag that can be viewed clearly on Google Earth's satellite imagery.

Additional evidence comes from ancient Egyptian artefacts found at the site. A scarab and an amulet, were in a layer associated with a serious disruption in production at the end of the 10th century BCE - possibly tying Khirbat en-Nahas to the well-documented military campaign of Pharaoh Sheshonq I (known in the Bible as Shishak, 1 Kings 14:25; 2 Chronicles 12:1-12), who sought to control economic activity in the area after Solomon's death.

In the future, Levy intends to focus on the identity of those who controlled the copper industry there - David, Solomon or perhaps regional Edomite leaders - and also on the environmental impacts of the ancient smelting.

At the 2008 ASOR Annual meeting Levy took umbrage at Israel Finkelstein who believes that David and Solomon did not exist and who misquoted Levy in his book on David and Solomon to suggest that the activity in the Wadi Faynan was later than the 10th Century. When scholars start adjusting the evidence to support their theories you know the game is up.

Adapted from Judy Siegel-Itzkovich , The Jerusalem Post, Jan. 29, 2009 <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1233050211901>

Tablet Ignites Debate on Messiah and Resurrection

A three-foot-tall tablet with 87 lines of Hebrew that scholars believe dates from the decades just before the birth of Jesus is causing a quiet stir in biblical and archaeological circles, especially because it may speak of a messiah who will rise from the dead after three days. It has become known as “Gabriel’s Revelation”.

The tablet, probably found near the Dead Sea in Jordan according to some scholars who have studied it, is a rare example of a stone with ink writings from that era. It is written, not engraved, across two neat columns, similar to columns in a Torah. But the stone is broken, and some of the text is faded, meaning that much of what it says is open to debate.

In fact the stone was found about a decade ago and bought from a Jordanian antiquities dealer by an Israeli-Swiss collector who kept it in his Zurich home. When an Israeli scholar examined it closely a few years ago and wrote a paper on it last year, interest began to rise. There is now a spate of scholarly articles on the stone, with several due to be published in the coming months.

Like most Jesus-era artefacts and writings, it has become the centre of controversy. Israel Knohl, professor of Bible studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, has argued that the messianic figure could be a man named Simon who was slain by a commander in the Herodian army, according to the first-century historian Josephus.

The slaying of Simon, or any case of the suffering messiah, is seen as a necessary step toward national salvation, he says, pointing to lines 19 through 21 of the tablet — “In three days you will know that evil will be defeated by justice” — and other lines that speak of blood and slaughter as pathways to justice. Kohl’s translation seems to be gaining acceptance, but his interpretation has been seen by many to be speculative.

Kohl has argued (BAR Sept/Oct 2008) that the vision foretells the appearance of a suffering Messiah, son of Joseph, and that Jesus adopted that

role. But as Craig Evans points out (BAR Jan/Feb 2009) the name ‘Joseph’ is not mentioned in the surviving text! It would seem that Kohl is interpreting the text to support a theory that he put forward in 2000 and not as it would appear at face value.

The controversies about its significance will probably last longer. Daniel Boyarin, a professor of Talmudic culture at the University of California at Berkeley, said that “Some Christians will find it shocking — a challenge to the uniqueness of their theology — while others will be comforted by the idea of it being a traditional part of Judaism.”

The fact is that Jesus came in a religious, political and social context and was accepted by some and rejected by others. We can deduce some of that context, such as the suffering servant tradition of Isaiah and the ‘three days’ of Hosea, from the Gospels and the Old Testament and maybe understand the grounds on which people made their decisions. This tablet may add to our understanding of the time, but it is drawing a long bow to suggest that any New Testament person knew about it and tried to live it out.

Adapted from Ethan Bronner, July 6, 2008 http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/06/world/middleeast/06stone.html?_r=2&hp&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

Excavations lead to new discoveries in Sardis

After 154 years of excavations in the ancient city of Sardis, where the first gold coins were made, work continues. Sardis, the present day Salihli district of western Manisa province, was the capital of the Lydian kingdom. The city is believed to have prospered under the Persians and Romans as it was the endpoint of the Royal Road, which stretched from Persia to Anatolia. It was also the site of one of the seven churches of the Book of Revelation.

Excavation first began in 1854 and were conducted by Spiegelthal. Operations continued systematically until the breakout of World War I and resumed after 1958. Studies carried out between 1910 and 1914 by Harold Butler of Princeton University produced more than 1,230 tombs. Upon Butler's death in 1921, a joint initiative by Harvard University and Cornell University, headed by Professor George M. A. Hanfman and subsequently by Professor Crawford H. Greenewalt, Jr., continued his work.

The excavations have also led to the discovery of the Artemis Temple, the biggest known ancient synagogue of the world, a gymnasium and a gold refinery. Professor Nicholas Dunlop, the current head of the excavations, said many Lydian and Roman remains have been uncovered and restored, including a Roman bath and a gymnasium.

Dunlop cited the unearthing of the city walls during Greenewalt's tenure in 1976 as one of the most important achievements of the excavation. The professor said a one-piece structure, 20 meters wide and 11 meters high, of the 3-3.5-kilometer-long wall unearthed so far is the biggest archaeological structure from the Lydian kingdom to be found in western Anatolia. Currently the team is digging under this wall to find more information to be able to date it better.

The excavations have also led to the discovery of Roman houses which had been constructed on the city walls in addition to many painted pieces, coins and pottery as well as Lydian houses under a Roman theatre. "The discovery of the remains of Lydian houses, believed to have been burned down by the Persians, is very exciting because it gives us an insight into daily life at the time. In fact, we have used information gleaned from the houses to add to the knowledge of the late history of Sardis. We also concluded that the Lydians were very rich."

The professor then spoke about Sardis and money. Sardis was the first city in the world to use coins as money. Professor Hanfman discovered a shop full of gold and silver coins which gave new insight into the beginning stages of minting.

Ongoing excavations are concentrating on the region where the Roman theatre and acropolis as well as the city walls are located, Dunlop noted. "We feel as if we were at the beginning of the excavation process. Many important finds have been discovered in the last 50 years of work, but another 50 are needed. Many sites are intact, and we have been unable to decipher everything we've found. The work completed so far has produced only 0.6 percent of all historical artefacts in the area," he said, adding that workers do their best to complete their tasks without harming the historical structures.

<http://www.todayszaman.com/tzweb/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=147956&bolum=100>

Russian archaeologists find long-lost Jewish capital

Russian archaeologists have found the long-lost capital of the Khazar kingdom in southern Russia, a breakthrough for research on the ancient Jewish state. The excavation is organised by Dmitry Vasilyev of Astrakhan State University. "We can now shed light on one of the most intriguing mysteries of that period -- how the Khazars actually lived. We know very little about the Khazars -- about their traditions, their funerary rites, their culture," he said.

The city was the capital of the Khazars, a semi-nomadic Turkic people, who adopted Judaism as a state religion, from between the 8th and the 10th centuries. Some believe that Ashkenazi (European) Jews descend from the Khazars and there is evidence to support the idea.

At its height, the Khazar state and its tributaries controlled much of what is now southern Russia, western Kazakhstan, eastern Ukraine, Azerbaijan and large parts of Russia's North Caucasus region. The capital is referred to as Itil in Arab chronicles. Itil was said to be a multi-ethnic place with houses of worship and judges for Christians, Jews, Muslims and pagans.

Its remains have until now never been identified and were said to have been washed away by the Caspian Sea. Within the fortress there are huts similar to yurts, which are characteristics of Khazar cities. The fortress had a triangular shape and was made with bricks.

Around 10 university archaeologists and some 50 students took part in excavations in the region this summer, which are partly financed by the Jewish University in Moscow and the Russian Jewish Congress.

From: Adapted from http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080903/afp_russiahistory_culturearchaeology_080903160809_vlt=AuUH5VrPKr9zmYD2Lu0MU3BFeQoB

New Alphabetic Inscription From Zincirli

On July 21, 2008, the Neubauer Expedition to Zincirli, directed by Prof. David Schloen of the University of Chicago and by associate director Amir Fink, found an inscribed basalt stele at the site of Zincirli (pronounced "Zin-jeer-lee") in Gaziantep province in south-eastern Turkey.

The remarkably well-preserved stele, 70 centimetres wide and 95 centimetres tall, was found intact in its original location. It was set into a stone wall with its protruding tenon still inserted into the stone-paved floor. The alphabetic inscription on the stele is written in Sam'alian, the language spoken in the region of Zincirli (ancient Sam'al) during the Iron Age.

It commemorates the life of "Kattammuwa servant of Panamuwa," probably a high official of King Panamuwa, who reigned during the eighth century BC. A bearded figure is depicted on the stele, seated in a chair in front of a table laden with food. Beside him is a thirteen-line inscription, elegantly carved in raised relief and preserved in almost pristine condition nearly three millennia after it was inscribed. It describes the establishment of the memorial stele and associated mortuary rites. This stele is unique in its combination of pictorial and textual features and thus is an important addition to our knowledge of ancient language and culture.

Zincirli is the site of the ancient walled city of Sam'al, capital of an Iron Age kingdom that inherited both West Semitic and Neo-Hittite (Luwian) cultural traditions. The 40-hectare (100-acre) site was first excavated more than a hundred years ago and produced a number of royal inscriptions and other fascinating finds that are on display in various museums. Since 2006, Zincirli has been excavated annually by a team from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago—the Neubauer Expedition, a large-scale and long-term project of archaeological research at this important site.

From Foy Scalfff scalffd@uchicago.edu

Egyptian Mummies Yield Earliest Evidence of Malaria

Two Egyptian mummies who died more than 3,500 years ago have provided clear evidence for the earliest known cases of malaria. Pathologist Andreas Nerlich and colleagues at the Academic Teaching Hospital München-Bogenhausen in Munich, Germany, studied 91 bone tissue samples from ancient Egyptian mummies and skeletons dating from 3500 to 500 B.C.

Using special techniques from molecular biology, such as DNA amplification and gene sequencing, the researchers identified ancient DNA for the malaria parasite Plasmodium falciparum in tissues from two mummies. "We now know for sure that malaria was endemic in ancient Egypt. This was only been speculated on the basis reports by [the 5th century B.C. Greek historian] Herodotus and some very faint evidence from ancient Egyptian papyri," Nerlich told Discovery News.

Four different kinds of parasites belonging to the Plasmodium family cause Malaria, falciparum, malariae, ovale and vivax. P. falciparum is the most common and the most deadly.

The Greek physician Hippocrates wrote the first clinical description of the disease in 400 BC. An earlier study found P. falciparum in a Roman infant dating to the 5th century A.D. In this study positive cases came from two different tomb complexes at Thebes-West, dating from the New Kingdom until Late Period (1500 to 500 BC). The location of the tombs in the necropolis strongly suggests that the infected people were of members of the upper class.

From <http://dsc.discovery.com/news/2008/10/23/mummies-malaria.html>

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