

BIBLE and SPADE

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***"For your servants take
pleasure in her stones, and
show favor to her dust"***

(Psalm 102:14 NKJV)

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Front cover: The Associates for Biblical Research Temple Mount Sifting Project team, gathered together in front of the sifting tent. Photo by Heather Pollard

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Beneath the Surface: The Temple Mount Sifting Project

By Gordon Franz

This issue of *Bible and Spade* is devoted to the 2008 ABR Temple Mount Sifting Project (hereafter TMSP) study tour. When the ABR Board of Directors decided that the TMSP was a worthy project to participate in, they asked me to put together a program for the study tour. As I was driving home from the board meeting, my mind was going a mile a minute thinking about and planning this opportunity to do something I have always wanted to do: teach a class on Jerusalem, in Jerusalem, and combine it with a worthwhile archaeological project. I have lived and worked in Jerusalem for a number of years, so this was a dream come true, to teach about the city that I love.

The Lord blessed our group with 19 wonderful people from all walks of life. You will meet each one of them in the pages of this issue.

Our “home away from home” was the Gloria Hotel, just inside the Jaffa Gate of the Old City. This was the ideal location for our group. Unlike most tours of Israel where you are living out of your suitcase and sleeping in a different bed every other night, the Gloria was home for us. We unpacked our bags on the first night that we arrived, slept in the same bed for two weeks, and did not repack our bags until we left for home. The hotel staff was friendly and helpful. The rooms were neat and cleaned daily. George and his staff prepared outstanding meals. And on our last night, we had a whole roasted lamb with all the trimmings for our farewell dinner. It doesn’t get any better than that!

One of the sifters, Heather Pollard, commented:

I had been to Israel once before, but this time it was different. We spent two weeks living in Jerusalem and walked everywhere. The city and the culture became a part of daily life, and I no longer felt like a tourist. Storeowners were friendly faces that I waved and said hello to just like we had been neighbors for years. I felt like I was at home instead of living on a bus.

The TMSP staff helped make this a truly educational experience. When we first arrived, the co-director, Zachi Zweig, gave us an introductory lecture on the project and how it relates to the Temple Mount. During the two weeks we were sifting, the staff taught us about pottery, mosaics, metals, glass, bones, and even shepherding! The on-site archaeologist, Tali Cohen, would explain each special find to the sifter as she registered the object for processing. The day-to-day director, Assaf Avraham, gave us a very interesting presentation on the *opus sectile* (inlaid design)

discovered by the project and how it might relate to a passage in Josephus and the Temple platform that Herod the Great built. One evening the other co-director, Dr. Gabriel (Goby) Barkay, gave us an outstanding lecture on the history of the Temple Mount and discussed the small finds that have been discovered so far in the sifting.

In This Issue of *Bible and Spade*

I always tell my students,

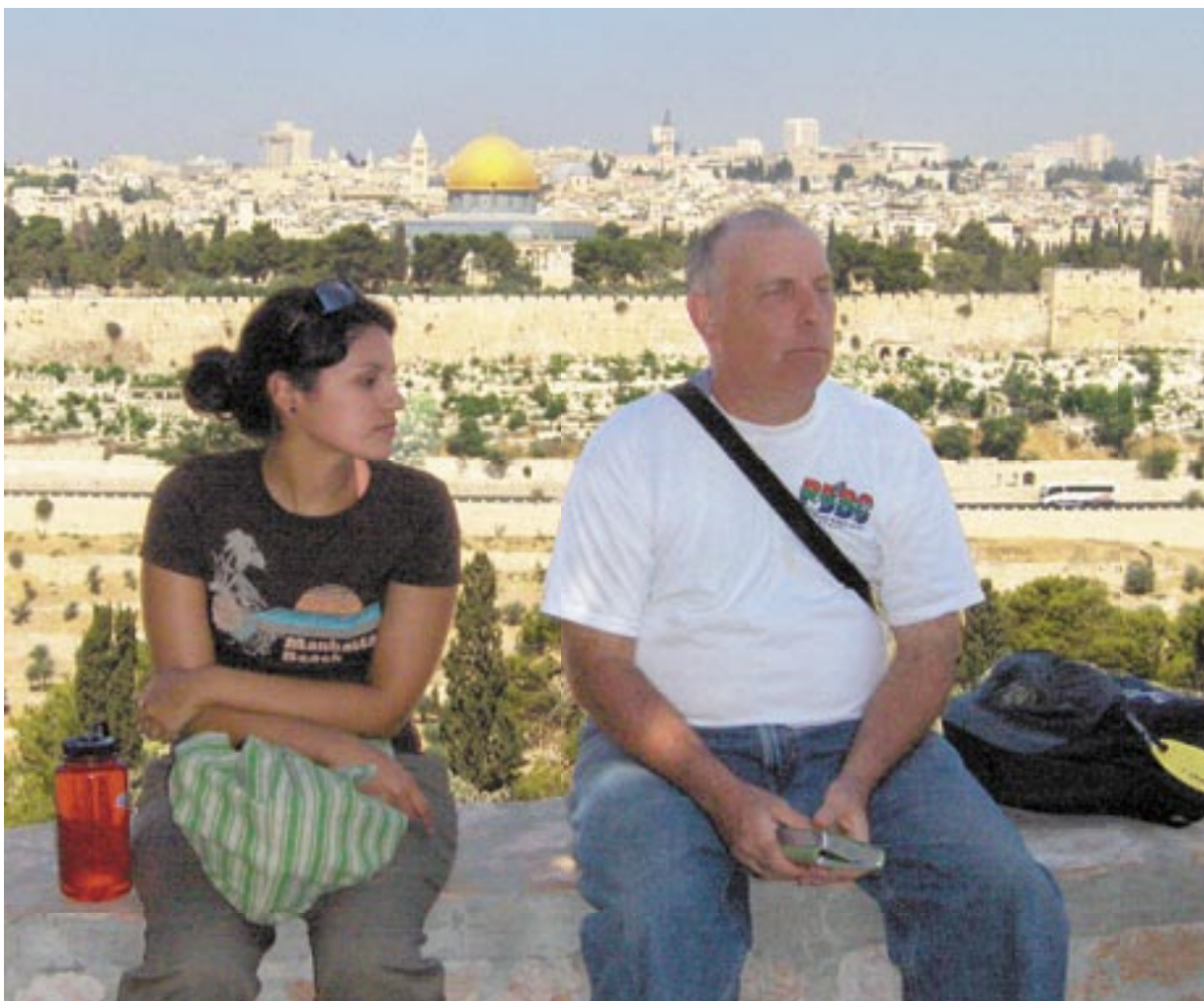
There are four rules to follow while touring in Israel. If you memorize and internalize them, you will have a great trip. The first rule is, expect the unexpected; the second, the only thing certain is uncertainty; the third, be flexible; and finally, smile!

All these rules were put to the test on this trip.

Each day we toured different areas of Jerusalem as well as worked on the sifting project. Our schedule was flexible (rule #3) and we had a nice balance between working, touring, exploring Jerusalem on our own, meeting different people, shopping, and just relaxing. My assistant and the ABR hostess, Stephanie Hernandez, describes the sifting aspects of the study tour in her article, “The Pleasure of Dust.” We also have an interview with one of the co-directors, Goby, which will help explain this project, its importance, and the contribution it makes to the archaeology of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.

One night some of the sifters were sitting in the courtyard of the Gloria Hotel sharing stories and doing a lot of laughing (remember rule #4: Smile!). Listening in on our conversation was a Greek Orthodox priest named Father Michael, from Thessaloniki in Greece. Mike Caba invited him to join the group, and he laughed along with the rest of us. He thought we might be interested in meeting the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, so he arranged a visit for us. Mike’s article is about this experience and how it relates to John 1:1 and the cults. The audience with the Patriarch was totally unexpected—but then again, rule #1!

We had two study tours outside Jerusalem. The first was to the Shephelah (“lowlands”) where we visited Nebi Samuel, Beth Shemesh, the Elah Valley, an overview of Adullam, and Lachish. The second study tour was to the Dead Sea.



Heather Pollard

ABR hostess Stephanie Hernandez and group leader Gordon Franz at Dominus Flevit on the Mount of Olives. The Dome of the Rock, the site of Solomon's and Herod's Temple, is behind them.

Unfortunately this trip did not go as planned. The bus never showed up. Oh yeah, rule #2: The only thing certain is uncertainty. But the Lord was gracious and provided another bus for us, and we had a fascinating trip to Masada, the Dead Sea and Ein Gedi.

The purpose of our touring was to understand Jerusalem and Solomon's and Herod's Temples. Part of Temple worship was singing the psalms. As we toured, I tried to point out the word pictures used by the psalmists as they composed their beloved songs. Some of these word pictures are presented in my article, "Picture Postcards from the Psalmists."

One of our sifters, Greg Gulbrandsen, is a credentialed reporter. He was able to visit a Christian Palestinian village to the north of Jerusalem. In his article on "Parables from the Taybeh House," he illustrates the word pictures from the parables of Jesus as well as the birth narratives of the Baby Jesus.

There are also three articles written as personal reflections by Debra Kreider, Scott Astbury and Richard Marymee on some of the lessons they learned on the trip.

a pleasure working with them. They shared with us their wealth of knowledge and their love for Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. We wish them well in the years ahead as they continue with this worthy project. There is at least fifteen more years of material left to sift!

Henry Smith, ABR Director of Outreach, did a lot of behind-the-scenes work in the ABR office before the group left for Israel, and I thank him for all his efforts. Thanks are also in order to Heather Pollard, Debra Kreider and Greg Gulbrandsen for their great pictures that grace the pages of this issue. For the sifters that contributed ideas, quotes and information for this issue, my thanks to you. This is *your* issue! Special thanks also go to Stephanie Hernandez for all her help with the group while in Israel, as well as helping me with this issue of *Bible and Spade* since we returned home.

Finally, to all the sifters in the group, thank you for coming and being part of this wonderful educational experience. Perhaps we can do it again sometime...soon.

Thanks for a Great Trip

I am very grateful to the TMSP staff for their patience and help in explaining to us what we found and why it was important. It was



"The Most Important Discovery was the People": An Interview with Dr. Gabriel Barkay



By Gordon Franz and Stephanie Hernandez

Raised in the ghettos of Budapest, Hungary, Israeli archaeologist Gabriel Barkay has had an accomplished career in the archaeology of the Bible Lands. Barkay holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Hebrew University and a PhD from Tel Aviv University. His doctoral dissertation, completed in 1985, was on "Northern and Western Jerusalem at the End of the Iron Age."

Gordon Franz: Thank you for doing this interview for us, Goby. In which schools have you taught?

Gabriel "Goby" Barkay: I taught for 27 years at Tel Aviv University in their Institute of Archaeology. Since 1997 I have taught at different schools, mainly Bar-Ilan University, the Hebrew University Rothberg School for Overseas Studies, and for more than 30 years I've been teaching at the American Institute of Holy Land Studies, better known today as the Jerusalem University College.

Gordon: Where have you excavated?

Goby: I started my excavations at Tel Arad in 1963. In 1964 I participated in a short excavation in Jerusalem on the road going up to Mount Zion, known as the Pope's Road. In 1965 I participated in a dig as a student with Yigael Yadin at Megiddo. That same year I started for several seasons excavating in the Negev with Avraham Negev, including Beersheva and Tel Masos for eleven seasons. I also

spent fifteen years at Lachish. Since the 1970s I concentrated my efforts on Jerusalem and its immediate vicinity. For seven seasons I directed the excavations at Ketef Hinnom below the St. Andrew's Church of Scotland, as well as several burial caves in the Hinnom Valley. To the west of Jerusalem I dug one of the tumuli, and also spent a short season at Ramat Rachel. I dug for two seasons at Jezreel. I dug one season at Susa in Iran during the winter of 1969. In the last seven years I have been involved in a project in the Shephelah at Tel Zayit, digging with Professor Ron Tappy from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Gordon: How did you become involved in the Temple Mount Sifting Project?

Goby: A violation of the law took place on the Temple Mount when a gigantic mosque was built inside Solomon's Stables in 1996. In 1999 there was a removal of an enormous quantity



Zachi Zweig

The Moslem authorities illegally removing dirt with heavy machinery from in front of "Solomon's Stables" in order to construct an entrance for a new mosque.



Zachi Zweig

Zachi Zweig is co-director of the Temple Mount Sifting Project.

interviewed by different television stations on the subject. I was very much enraged by the fact that the Temple Mount, being the most important archaeological site in the country, is a black hole in the archaeology of Jerusalem.

We actually know nothing about the Temple Mount archaeologically. We know it is more than twice the size of the City of David and was the center of activity in ancient times in Jerusalem, yet not a single sherd has been published from the Temple Mount. Not one survey has been carried out on the Temple Mount, and that is something that is almost unthinkable.

In 2000 two of my former students, Zachi Zweig and Aran Yardeni, showed up at this very place we are sitting right now. They were very upset, and they emptied onto the dining room table here two plastic bags that included much mud, but also potsherds of different periods that I could identify. They covered a wide range of the history of Jerusalem, starting with the Iron Age and ending with the Ottoman-Turkish period. Even earlier than that, I collected pieces of pottery on the piles removed from the Temple Mount which showed that the piles embodied in them a potential for archaeological studies. The two students and their enthusiasm convinced me that something had to be done.

I negotiated in 2000 with different authorities in an attempt to organize a systematic sifting of the material, but the damage was done. The destructive act of the Islamic Waqf was done, the corpse was lying there. The question was now, how to get something positive out of this tragedy. In any case, I was encouraged by Zachi and eventually, after long deliberations, denials and negotiations, and even threats, we managed to get a license, in the beginning in my name only and later in Zachi's name as well. We managed to get a license for sifting through the material in 2004.

of soil saturated with archaeological material from inside the Temple Mount. We were all enraged.

I remember myself, in December 1999 or January 2000, participating in a demonstration that took place near the piles of dirt removed from the Temple Mount, and remember being

Gordon: Some archaeologists have suggested that the project is not "real" archaeology. What can we learn from the sifting project that will help in our knowledge of Jerusalem in general and the Temple Mount in particular?



Zachi Zweig

A Scytho-Iranian arrowhead like those of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army that destroyed the First Temple in 586 BC.

Goby: I would prefer to have real archaeology on the Temple Mount, if it were possible. That would be great. But because of political and religious reasons, one cannot dig on the Temple Mount. I do not see in the coming future any possibility of carrying out any normal pre-initiated excavations on the Temple Mount. We have to suffice with what we can do. It is always like that in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, you do not dig wherever you want to dig, but wherever it is possible. So this is in line with Jerusalem's archaeology.

Of course, it is much easier to stand on Mount Olympus, dig some site in Greece or in Turkey, or in Hazor or Megiddo or any other place, and criticize people working in Jerusalem.



Zachi Zweig

Rare Yehud tiny silver coin (Persian period).

is under totally different conditions than any other sites. And in Jerusalem, the archaeology and politics—what can we do? They go hand in hand. They go together and there is much influence on the archaeological activities in Jerusalem by all kinds of political and other

interventions.

If I am interested in knowing about the Temple Mount, then I am directed by my interests, my motivations. I am interested in the Temple Mount and so is the scholarly world in general. Everyone does what everyone can. This is how I can learn something about the Temple Mount. Of course, I would prefer to have normal excavations on the Temple Mount, but that is impossible, so we have to go in the possible ways and not criticize the conditions, but get the advantages of whatever we can do.

Eventually at the end of this sifting project, or even before the end, we are going to have a kind of graph showing the intensiveness of human activity upon the Temple Mount in different periods, the statistics of pottery found on the Temple Mount from each and every one of the archaeological periods. The type of pottery and the amounts of pottery will eventually show the history of occupation upon the Temple Mount. I am well aware of the fact that we work with material which does not have any context. It does not come from the floors, it does not come from stratigraphy, and it does not come from the ideal conditions that an archaeologist would prefer.

Our project is comparable to a surface survey. If you go to a site which has not yet been studied, the first thing you do is collect the pottery from the surface, assuming that upon the surface there is a proper representation of all periods and all the civilizations that once were active on the site. The activity throughout the years brought things up to the surface from the activity on that certain site. The archaeological survey is a legitimate and common archaeological activity. That is also without any context to the finds. You collect the pottery and draw conclusions without having any floors, any architecture, any stratigraphy, and so forth. Nevertheless, you come to historical, geographical conclusions. So our work is comparable to a surface survey of any archaeological site. When we know nothing, it is better to know a little than to despair and give it all up.

Gordon: You have studied what has been sifted so far. Is there any aspect of our understanding of the history of Jerusalem, and specifically the Temple Mount, that the sifting project would change?

Goby: The answer is yes, very much so. We have already some preliminary results which have changed our understanding of the history of Jerusalem on the whole, and even the Temple Mount itself. For example, we have a group of flint implements from the prehistoric Epi-paleolithic Period, approximately 15,000 years before our time. This was a period previously unknown in Jerusalem. We have some implements and nice arrowheads of the Neolithic Period which is hardly known in Jerusalem. So, these are by themselves very important contributions. We have some Bronze Age pottery, but it is hard to tell if the Temple Mount was a site of human activity in Jerusalem in the fourth, third or second millennia BC. But nevertheless, we have some Chalcolithic pottery, Bronze Age pottery, and second millennium pottery from the time of the Canaanites. We have scarabs of the general Egyptian times, one of which is probably from the Middle Bronze Age and the other from the Late Bronze Age, which is a welcome addition to the scarce knowledge we have of Jerusalem in the second millennium BC.



Young Israeli school boys carefully sifting through debris from the Temple Mount.

Heather Pollard

Concerning the Iron Age, it is very interesting we do not have any pottery that we can clearly say is part of Iron Age I. On the other hand, Iron Age 2A, from the tenth century BC, is where we have some material, not of quantitative value, but still we have some pieces that can be clearly dated, and burnished pieces which are of the tenth century BC.

Concerning the later periods we have a large number of coins, and that is one specialty of the Sifting Project. We have many thousands of coins and we have, for example, one Yehud coin of the Persian Period in the fourth century BC. This type of coin has been rare and is important to have. We have several coins of the early Hellenistic Period from the rule of the Ptolemies, the late fourth and third centuries BC. We have some coins from the Seleucid rule in Jerusalem, and that period is quite enigmatic in the archaeology of Jerusalem, since we do not have many finds in other digs from that time. So we can draw a nice picture of the history of Jerusalem from the coins.

Concerning other periods, such as the Byzantine Period and the Christian Period, we do not have too many good sources



Zachi Zweig

Byzantine oil lamp.

from the Temple Mount. In the account of pilgrims coming to the Holy City of Jerusalem, the Temple Mount is entirely ignored. It does not play any important role in the early Christian Period.



Heather Pollard

Over 40,000 volunteers have participated in the Temple Mount Sifting Project. Individuals and groups have come from all walks of life and from the four corners of the earth.

From the written sources one could surmise the Temple Mount was either empty, not active, or was a garbage heap at the time. The results of the sifting project show a totally different picture. It shows much activity. We have a large number of objects dating back to the early Christian Period, drawing a totally different picture than what was known before. We have a large number of coins from the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries AD. We have a large number of weights from weighing gold, showing that there was economic activity on the Temple Mount.

We have a large amount of pottery of the Byzantine Period: oil lamps and household ware, as well as coarse ware of different kinds and types. In addition, we have architectural fragments of Corinthian capitals, which evidentially belonged to ecclesiastical structures. I think that the whole role of the Temple Mount in the early Christian Period should be reevaluated, which means that in a densely built up city, which Christian Jerusalem was in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, I cannot imagine a large, vast area of 145,000 square meters [about 1,560,800 sq ft] in the heart of the city being totally

abandoned and totally unused, while in the vicinity of the city, just outside Jaffa Gate, on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, on the hills surrounding the city on the north up to St. Etienne on the north and even further than that, there was much activity. There was an overflow of human activity on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

So why did the inside of Jerusalem remain empty? On the one hand such a vast area was left unused, yet on the other hand we have an abundance of material. That does not make sense.

Among the material we have are a large number of pieces of jewelry, which at the moment are understudied, but typologically they could be related to the early Christian Period. Among these finds we have about ten or so cruciform C-shaped pendants which were left by the pilgrims or Christians who were active on the Temple Mount. These indicate perhaps the existence of a nunnery, maybe even an ecclesiastical building; a pinnacle church. So all this hints of a possibility that we will have in the future the ability to change what is known about the Temple Mount in the history books.

Now, another period which is interesting is the Early Roman Period. The Temple



Zachi Zweig

A bulla with the writing, "Belonging to Gaalyahu son of Immer."



Zachi Zweig

First Temple Period seal with the design of a horned gazelle.

Mount was destroyed by Titus [AD 70]. We again know something about the Temple Mount seventy years later, when Hadrian rebuilt the city of Aelia-Capitaline. The question is what happened in-between. What happened towards the end of the first century AD and the second century AD? I believe that our finds will enable us to draw a picture of the Temple Mount history of that enigmatic period of time.

Gordon: What do you think are the most important objects found during the Sifting Project so far, and why are they important?

Goby: First of all, the most important discovery we have is not the finds themselves. I discovered that people are more important than finds. We work with a very, very fine team of people who are very sensitive, very helpful, very good-natured people, and I've witnessed the arrival of 40,000 volunteers who participated in this project. The greatest discovery is the immense interest of the people in archaeology, and also that they come from circles which would not come to any other archaeological project, but who are drawn by a connection to the Temple Mount. In any case, very devout Christian evangelicals, the Jewish ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox circles come and participate and sift. They are thrilled to have their hands upon the objects that were in the immediate vicinity or area of the Temple Mount itself and were part of the worship of the Temple. So watching the people, watching their excitement, watching their emotional involvement in our project is one of the greatest discoveries.

We collect in the project everything that was either made by man or used by man or testifies about man's environment. So we collect seashells and we have them in abundance. We collect animal bones and we have them in abundance, and eventually those parts of a general assemblage of materials will be of great importance. Among the bones we have several pig bones, several foxes, and we have all kinds and types of wild animals as well as household animals. We have a large number of burnt bones, especially of sheep and goats. Eventually, in the future, we are not only going to identify the bones but also date them with advanced techniques, such as C-14. We are going to have some knowledge about the sacrificial activity upon the Temple Mount.

We have much information about the Islamic periods on the Temple Mount and I would like to stress that. We deal with all the periods of the Temple Mount, from the earliest involvement

of mankind in the past of the country until our own days. We have rich finds from the Arabic Period, from the time of the Umayyad Dynasty, the time of the Abbasid Dynasty, the time of the Fatimid Dynasty, the time of the Crusaders. We have an abundance and rich collection of Crusader coins minted in Jerusalem, and we ought not to forget that the headquarters of the Knights Templar was in the southern quadrant of the Temple Mount where the soil was removed. We have a rich collection of Mamluk and Turkish-Ottoman finds, including art objects, gaming pieces, glass objects, coins, jewelry, and an abundance of all kinds of types and finds.

If we go to the most touching piece that we have, I would say that I was very much touched by a small piece, about 10 cm [3.9 in] in size, of stone which is sculpted in the Herodian style. It has a remnant of a floral or vegetal design, very beautifully and artistically carved out of hard limestone. The piece itself got exfoliated or unpeeled from a building as a result of conflagration at a high temperature. The piece is in the style of the Jewish art of the Herodian Dynasty's time and is close in style to the facades of sculpted burial caves, and in the style of the decorated ceilings of the Huldah Gate passages underneath the present day Al-Aqsa Mosque. It is beyond any doubt belonging to the time of Herod the Great. At the edge of the object there is a remnant of black soot from the conflagration. Actually, this is a piece which enables us to visualize the great fire in which the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD. So this is in touch with the destruction of the Temple. I can even suggest that the stone could have come from the Temple itself.

Another piece which is very touching is a piece dating back to the First Temple Period, to the time of the prophet Jeremiah. It is a bulla, a tiny lump of clay which has on the back side of it an imprint of some fabric. It probably was the imprint of a satchel that was tied with a string, and upon the knot they put a sealing in order to ensure the contents of the satchel which included silver scraps, the hoard of silver of somebody. The other face of the bulla has the impression of the seal of the owner. The bulla itself was made in the negative, and the impression is made in the positive. Eventually someone opened the satchel and the seal got



Zachi Zweig

A fragment of a sculpted stone engraved with an acanthus leaf in Herodian style. It comes from a very important structure (maybe from the Temple itself!).

broken. Nevertheless we have two lines of writing upon it. It says the name “[Ga’]alyahu” and in the second line, which is well preserved, we have the name “[son of] Immer.” The Immer priestly family and another son of the family by the name Pashhur, son of Immer, is mentioned in the book of Jeremiah, chapter 20, being the man in charge of the Temple. He was the chief clerk in the Temple. He is the man who arrested and tortured the prophet Jeremiah. The Immer family continues to exist in Jerusalem, and we find them mentioned in the Post-Exilic Period in the book of Nehemiah (7:40; Ezr 2:37). So through this tiny bulla we have direct regards from the First Temple, from Solomon’s Temple. This is of great importance.



Zachi Zweig

Some other finds which made me especially **Coin of the First Revolt** inscribed with “for the freedom of Zion.”



Zachi Zweig

Fragments of stone vessels from the Second Temple Period.

enthusiastic were some of the coins from the First Revolt against the Romans. Some of the coins of the late First Revolt are found burned, twisted and defaced from the fire, from the conflagration. On the first coin that we found we had the slogan of the Zealots and the people who fought the Romans: “for the freedom of Zion.” It is very touching to see after 2,000 years. Actually, each and every one of the objects that we find—beads, a piece from the early Arabic Period, or a piece from Turkish-Ottoman decoration that surrounded the Dome of the Rock, the glazed tiles that we have pieces of, a bead remnant that was left by Christian pilgrims in the past, or some Bronze Age or Iron Age pottery—all is very significant for the history of the Temple Mount.

Gordon: You mentioned earlier that you found some bones from foxes. What is the significant of that?

Goby: The prophet Micah prophesized that the Temple Mount would be destroyed (3:12), and that was in the eighth century BC. In the eighth century there was a corruption of the priesthood that calls the prophet to make a prophecy, and he prophesized that the Temple Mount would be desolate and that foxes would walk upon it. In the book of Lamentations we have also the fact of foxes upon the Temple Mount (5:18). This of

course symbolizes the fact that human activity was not there anymore, and the place was desolate. In Talmudic literature we have a semi-legendary story of Rabbi Akiva, one of the most influential people in Judaism in general (Tractate *Makkoth* 24b). Akiva, the son of Joseph, one of the greatest among the sages, is said to have visited Jerusalem after its destruction. He lived in the second century AD and was executed by the Romans in Caesarea. He is said to have visited the Temple and there he watched a fox come out of the place where the Holy of Holies stood. Of course, he regarded it as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Micah—and maybe the fox we have is the very one he had seen when he came there in the second century.



Gordon: Thank you very much, Goby.



Heather Pollard

Dr. Gabriel Barkay (left) and Gordon Franz (right) after a lecture on the Temple Mount Sifting Project to the ABR sifters.

THE PLEASURE OF DUST!

By Stephanie Hernandez

Nineteen people, most of them strangers to each other, descended on Jerusalem in the last two weeks of June 2008. Most met at Newark Airport in New Jersey, while others joined the group in the coming days. There were the usual questions: “Where are you from?” “Is this your first trip to Israel?” “What do you do for a living?” and the occasional “What was your name again?” But by the end of our two-week journey, friendships were forged that are sure to last a lifetime, with the common bond of Israel and the Lord at their center.

The Associates for Biblical Research’s Temple Mount Sifting Project group participants came from all over America, and even all over the world. But we all shared one common desire: to know the city of Jerusalem where the Lord chose to set His capital, a place where the grace, wrath, love, hope, and faithfulness of the Lord was revealed to mankind in the past and will continue well into the future. It was the chance to hold Bible-related history in our hands that interested many in the program. With the exception of a few people, most of the group members had no experience in archaeology or even sifting. Yet by the time they left, each person had a firm grasp of the immense importance of the very soil of the Temple Mount and the land of Israel. “My personal discovery about archaeology,” participant Scott Astbury remarked, “was that it first and foremost provides you with undeniable evidence of existence.”

Our typical day would begin around 7AM with a great breakfast prepared by the kitchen staff at the comfortable and welcoming Gloria Hotel, situated just inside the Jaffa Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem. Gathered around the table, we would talk about the previous day’s events and speak with excitement of what was to take place that day. Most days we toured the city of Jerusalem in the morning and then proceeded to the Temple Mount sifting site in the eastern part of Jerusalem, but there were a few days when we went first to the sifting site, and then explored the city in the afternoon. Although

the option of a taxi was available to anyone who needed it, almost all of the participants chose to walk to the sifting site every day, through the winding and sometimes confusing streets of the Old City. Once outside the gates, we walked along the walls of the Old City, passing people who live in the midst of this multi-religious center, those who have made their homes in the most contentious city in the world. The last stretch of the walk to the site was a difficult one, with a steep climb to the Zurim Valley National Park, where the Temple Mount Sifting Project is established.

No doubt a few were surprised when we were greeted by the sight of an armed guard standing watch over the Palestinian section of eastern Jerusalem, himself responsible for guarding the contentious soil from the Temple Mount, which was at the center of an intense legal battle beginning in 1999. On our arrival we were greeted by Zachy Zweig, who in 1999 called a press conference to bring to light the illegal removal of soil from the Temple Mount by the Islamic Waqf and the subsequent dumping of the soil in the Kidron Valley and elsewhere.



Heather Pollard

Zachy Zweig giving the introductory lecture in the Sifting Project to the ABR sifters.



I believe that it was during the sifting, bent over dripping screens, that the group members began to get to know each other a little better. Be it religion, politics, music, movies or personal experiences, there was no topic that did not help us to become better acquainted with those whom we shared this amazing experience. Participant Sandy Souza observed,

I agree heartily with [archaeologist] Gabriel Barkay that the best discovery was the people, the ABR team in particular, and also the old and new friends we met in Jerusalem.

Heather Pollard

Assaf Avraham explaining to the sifters the importance of the *opus sectile* which paved the floor of the Temple Mount.

We were given an introductory presentation in which the history of the project and some interesting finds were revealed. On another day Assaf Avraham, the day-to-day supervisor, gave us a brief lecture on one of the most interesting finds, various-size stone fragments that were used as pavement on the Temple Mount called *opus sectile*, mentioned by the Jewish historian Josephus in his epic work *The Jewish Wars*.

Afterwards, with the help of the Temple Mount Sifting Project staff, we delved into the archaeological matrix that hid millennia-old history in its dust.

Sifting the dirt involved dumping a bucket of water-soaked dirt onto a screen, then spraying the dirt with water in order to remove the dirt from the materials, which is often referred to as wet-sifting. Others helped with the dry screening, or the sifting of dry dirt through mesh screens, while others worked the “T-4” pile, a large pile of oversized rocks and debris taken from the Temple Mount. It was in this pile that the pieces of *opus sectile* were found. After we were finished sifting a bucket, a staff member would check the screen to make sure nothing was missed. By the second week, the staff felt we had a firm grasp of sifting and no longer checked our screens for overlooked artifacts. On several occasions the members would find more uncommon artifacts, such as coins, Roman jewelry, and even a die. These special finds were then given to Tali, one of the staff members, who would tag and register the artifact. Materials such as mosaic tiles, small pieces of ceramics and bone, and pieces of glass were found on a regular basis. Yet, although the common sight of broken pottery was not an extraordinary find, it reminded us of the words of Isaiah the prophet, who, in Isaiah 30:14, spoke of a time when Israel’s sin would

break into pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern.

Our talks would continue outside the sifting site, usually on the strenuous walk back to our hotel, up the ancient hills of Jerusalem, back through the winding corridors of the Old City. We often stopped along the way, with Gordon pointing out a historical part of Jerusalem and discussing its always-important relation to the Bible. Participant Paula Owen stated,

Gordon successfully created both picturesque and cherished lessons and memories that ultimately left an unforgettable impact on us all!

Weekends were a little more relaxed than the weekdays. On Shabbat, a bus would be chartered that took us around to the different sites outside Jerusalem—to Lachish, the Elah Valley, Masada and the Dead Sea.

Taking in the passing Israeli countryside was met with awe and wonder. The mixture of beauty and peace and glimpses of the wall separating Jerusalem from the West Bank reminded us all that the time has not yet come for Divine peace in this region. But with this realization came the excitement and assurance of knowing the final outcome, where there will be no more tears, no more death or mourning or crying or pain. With that, we sat back and enjoyed the ride.

But there was always time to sit and reflect. Whether it was walking silently through the Muslim Quarter, staring off into the distance on the shore of the Dead Sea, taking in the bustling of Ben Yehuda Street, or listening to the bells from the churches in the Christian Quarter, we came to see the rarity of the city of Jerusalem and the frustration of an imperfect world where the City of Peace does not yet exist. The true Jerusalem, the true Israel, with all its spiritual connections, is something that must be experienced for oneself. Words cannot do it justice, and pictures do even less. Through this project we agreed with the Psalmist that “her stones are dear to your servants; her very dust moves them to pity” (Ps 102:14).



Heather Pollard

Gordon explaining the importance of the ostraca that was found in the gate of Lachish.



Heather Pollard

Zachi Zweig thanking the ABR sifters on the last day for a job well done on behalf of the TMSP. Goby Barkay sits to his right.

The Temple Mount Sifting Project and tour of the land of Israel made every single participant come away from the experience with a new, profound understanding and appreciation for the words of the prophets, the kings, and the Lord Himself concerning Jerusalem and Israel, as well as the very stones of Israel itself. It almost leaves me, well, speechless.

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Stephanie Hernandez recently graduated with a BA in archaeology and anthropology from Biola University. She has done field archaeology in California and was the ABR hostess for the Temple Mount Sifting Project. She has also participated in the Hazor excavations.

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND



The piles of debris are dry sifted and the dirt is funneled into buckets. (Photo: Greg Gulbrandsen)



The buckets are set out to soak. (Photo: Heather Pollard)



The wet content of the bucket is dump on the sifting screen before spraying. (Photo: Heather Pollard)



Zachi spraying the mud off to reveal the small stones and artifacts. (Photo: Greg Gulbrandsen)



Mike sifting through the material. (Photo: Greg Gulbrandsen)



The TMSP staff checks all our work after we have sifted the debris. (Photo: Heather Pollard)

WORDS - THE SIFTING PROCESS



The small finds are sort by mosaics, pottery, glass, special rocks, metals, glass and bones into bigger buckets. (Photo: Debra Kreider)



Kathryn's coin, a "special find," is examined by Goby. (Photo: Heather Pollard)



Karin registering a special find, a small coin, with Tali the registrar. (Photo: Heather Pollard)



Each "special find" is recorded and given a special number. (Photo: Heather Pollard)



Several ABR sifters sorting mosaics. (Photo: Heather Pollard)



Abigail (center) and Richard (left) sorting through the larger rocks on T-4. (Photo: Heather Pollard)

Picture Postcards from the Psalmists



By Gordon Franz

Introduction

Most Bible believers who live outside the Land of Israel may read Psalm 125:2, “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people from this time forth and forever,”¹ and think, “Humm, that’s a comforting and encouraging passage. The Lord surrounds His people. He protects us and watches over us forever.” Yet they may not fully appreciate the word picture used by the psalmist in the first part of the verse.

The ABR volunteers who worked on the Temple Mount Sifting Project in 2008 had the privilege of being guided through the City of David excavations by Aran Yardeni, an archaeological staff member of the TMSP and a graduate of Bar Ilan University. We started at an overview of the City of David on the top of a house situated only meters from where David’s palace once stood (Mazar 2007: 52–66). As we read Psalm 125 we looked to the east and saw the range of the Mount of Olives (Zec 14:4), the southern spur being called the Hill of Corruption (2 Kgs 23:13). To the north, we observed Mount Zion, also called Mount Moriah or the Mountain of the LORD (Ps 48:1, 2; 2 Chr 3:1;

Mi 4:2). To the west was the Western Hill called the *Mishnah* in the Hebrew Bible, and usually translated into English as the “Second Quarter” (Zep 1:10; Jer 31:39; 2 Kgs 22:14). Finally, to the south of the city, off in the distance, was the Hill of Evil Counsel. Today the United Nations headquarters for the Middle East is situated on this ridge!

The psalmist composed this psalm in the City of David and literally saw the mountains surrounding Jerusalem and used this word picture to convey a dynamic and powerful spiritual truth; the Lord surrounds His people forever! What an impact that had on each of us who sifted debris from the Temple Mount.

Hebrew Hymnbook for the Temple

The book of Psalms was the Hebrew Hymnbook for both the First and Second Temple and is still used in the synagogues today. Each psalm was composed by real people, who were experiencing real events in real places. This article will present some of those places and put the psalm in its historical context.

Beautiful in Elevation—Psalm 48:2

A popular song in evangelical circles is based on Psalm 48. You know the one: “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised...” After touring the City of David, a person will never sing this song the same way again. On the tours of the City of David that I guide, after walking through Hezekiah’s tunnel and visiting the Pool of Siloam, I usually start walking back up the steep road to the Dung Gate at a very brisk pace. I wait until somebody in the group “complains” and says, “Stop, slow down, this is such a steep hill to climb!” At that point I stop and read Psalm 48 to the group. Verse 2 says, “Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth; Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the Great King.” From the Pool of Siloam to the top of the Temple Mount is a 348 ft [106 m] elevation change. Mount Zion was on the north side of the City of David.



Greg Gulbrandsen

Aran Yardeni pointing out the hills surrounding the City of David.



Todd Bolen

The psalmist, one of the “Sons of Korah,” probably lived in the City of David. He would, on occasion, walk up the hill from his house to Mount Zion, the City of the Great King, in order to minister in the Temple. It was with joy that he took this strenuous walk because he knew he was going to the place where the LORD resided. Thus he described this elevation as “beautiful.” Fortunately for the ABR sifters, Aran arranged for a bus to drive us up the beautiful elevation!

A City Compact Together—Psalm 122:3

The City of David looks like an elongated tongue protruding from the Temple Mount. In antiquity, there were houses built on terraces on the slopes of the city. It seems that houses were practically built one on

top of the other. This is reflected in the words of Psalm 122: “Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together” (v. 3). Dr. Yigael Shiloh, the former excavator of the City of David, used to tell his volunteers that excavated with him, “If you want to know what the City of David looked like “compact together,” look across the Kidron Valley to the Silwan Village. It too is built on a slope and the houses appear to be built one on top of the other.

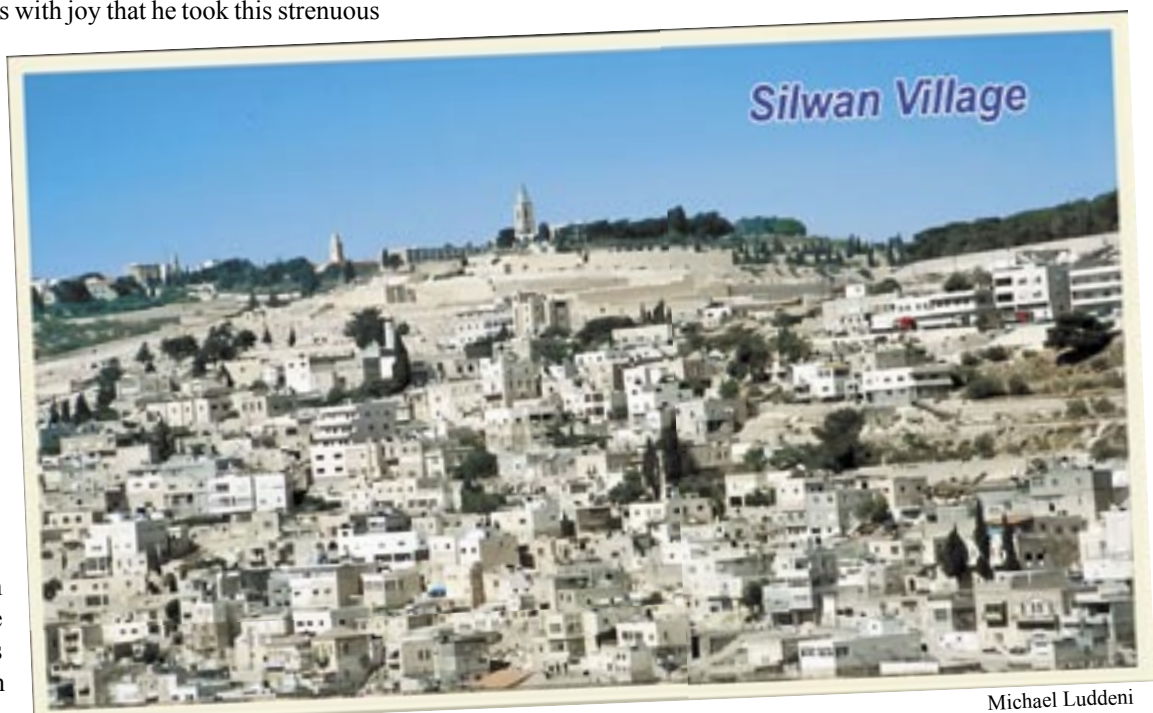
At Home in Death—Psalm 49:11

One afternoon we visited the excavations at Ketef Hinnom below the St. Andrew’s Scottish Presbyterian Church. Here we studied a series of burial caves from the time of the Judean Monarchy. One cave in particular was of interest because the two oldest Biblical texts were discovered there in 1979 (Franz 2005: 53–59). When we visited the City of David two days before, we noticed a house in Area G that was built following the pattern of typical Israel four-room house. Interestingly, the pattern of the burial cave is similar. After I pointed out the similarities between the house and the burial cave, I read Psalm 49:11: “Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever, Their dwelling places to all generations.”

In this psalm, the wealthy materialistic person at the end of the eighth century BC knew that their earthly dwelling place would one-day collapse because it was made of stone, mudbrick, wooden beams and a dried mud roof with grass on top. This person desired to “live eternally” in his earthly body (Ps 49:9), yet reality told him otherwise. Desiring a more permanent dwelling, knowing that one-day death would be the end results, a burial cave was hewn out of the rocky escarpment outside the city and was patterned after his earthly house. He wanted to feel “at home in death!” (Franz 2005: 59).

By contrast, the psalmist puts materialism in its proper perspective when he concludes the psalm by saying,

But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave (Sheol), for He shall receive me. Selah. Do not be afraid when



Michael Luddeni



The entrance of the cave of Adullam.

Gordon Franz

one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lives he blesses himself (for men will praise you when you do well for yourself), he shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man who is in honor, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish" (Ps 49:15–20).

Cave of Adullam—Psalm 57

After David feigned madness in Gath of the Philistines and fled through the Elah Valley, he hid in a cave at Adullam with 400 of his family and friends (1 Sm 22:1, 2). On another occasion, David was in the cave while the Philistines were occupying his hometown of Bethlehem. David wanted a drink of water from the well of the city, so three of his mighty men fetched him some water. When they returned, David poured out the water before the Lord (1 Chr 11:15–19). Perhaps on one of these occasions David composed Psalm 57. While the superscription of the psalm does not say when this occurred or which cave David was in, the psalm follows Psalm 56 which was written when David was captured in Gath (1 Sm 21:10–15). The order of the psalms seems to hint that it was written when David fled from Saul and hid in the cave of Adullam.

Green Grass in the Wilderness—Psalm 103:15–18

David composed a beautiful psalm extolling the character and attributes of God (Ps 103) in which he contrasts the unchangeable and eternal God with humans that are like grass and flowers. In verses 15–18 David draws on his experiences in the Judean Desert. During the winter months, the desert is green with grass and there are an abundance of flowers if it was a good rainy season. Soon after Passover, the hot, dry *hamsin* winds come off the Arabian Desert and scorch the grass and flowers so they wither away. David sang,

As for man, his days are like grass, as a flower of the field, so



Inside the cave, looking out the entrance.

Gordon Franz

he flourishes. For the [*hamsin*] wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting.

The prophet Isaiah makes a similar analogy, but he contrasts the shortness of life with the eternality of the Word of God (40:6–8).

When we went on our Dead Sea Field Trip in June, the Judean Desert was dry, brown and desolate. There was not a blade of green grass, or a single flower to be seen! Some of the sifters questioned what I said about the grass and flowers. Fortunately our tour hostess, Stephanie, had visited Israel in the springtime a few years earlier, and was able to vouch for this phenomenon.

The summer months are the setting for another psalm composed by David when he was in the Wilderness of Judah. He wrote:

O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water" (63:1).

Masada and the Psalms

I should preface my comments about the passages on Masada in the psalms by recounting a story. While teaching at the Institute of Holy Land Studies in Jerusalem, I was invited to speak to a Christian tour group in one of the local hotels. The tour host never took his groups to Masada because, as he put it, "The site is post-resurrection [of Jesus], thus unimportant." One elderly lady in the group asked me quite piously and condescendingly, "You don't take your groups to Masada, do you?" I knew where that question was coming from. I smiled and said, "Of course I do, it's a very important Biblical site. King David visited the site on at least three occasions and composed several psalms that mention Masada!" The shocked look on her face was one of those priceless "Kodak moments"! She told the group leader of our conversation. He examined the passages and from that point on, he took his groups to Masada.



Gordon Franz

Grass and flowers in the Judean Desert during the springtime.

The word “Masada” in the Hebrew Bible is generally translated “stronghold” or “fortress” in English Bibles. David visited the site on at least three occasions. The first time he saw it was when he was fleeing from Saul. After his family joined him in the cave of Adullam (1 Sm 22:1, 2), David decided to take them to the Land of Moab and ask the king of Moab to let them stay under his protection in his land. David and his entourage would have gone past Masada as they forded the Dead Sea at the Lisan (“tongue”).

As David passed by, he would have noted the strategic and military value of Masada. The mountain plateau was situated 1181 ft [360 m] above the plain floor on the southeastern edge of the Wilderness of Judah, opposite the Lisan of the Dead Sea. Strategically, from the top of the site, David would have a commanding view of the Dead Sea



Gordon Franz

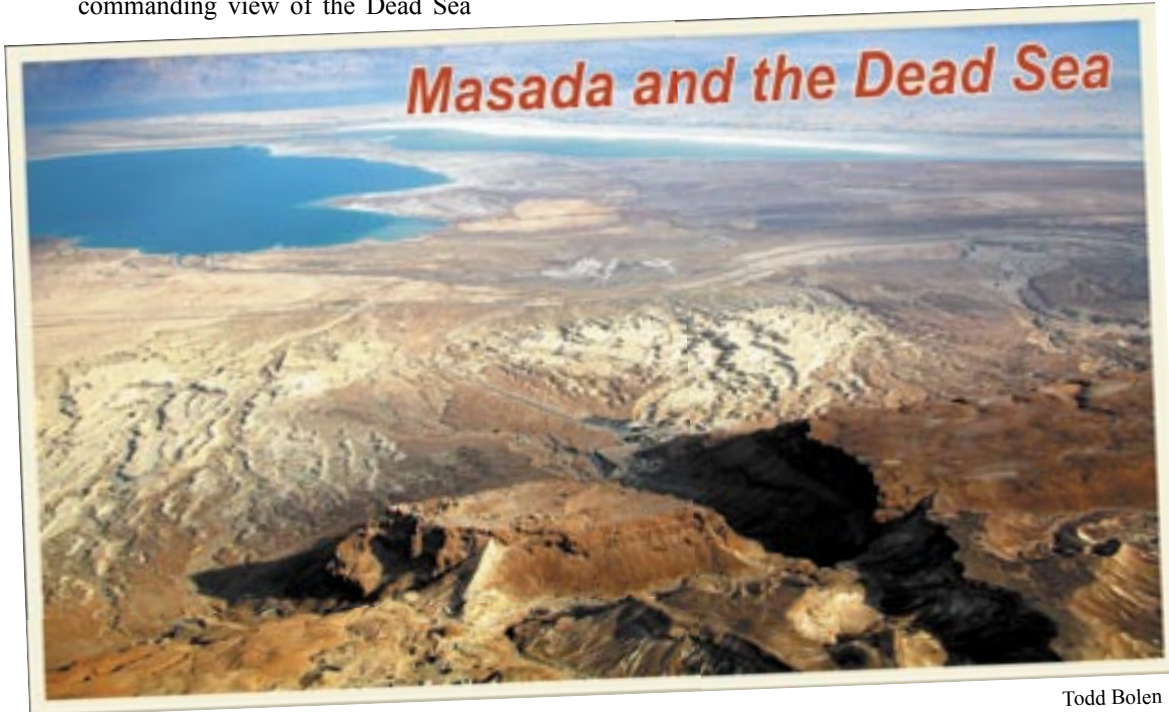
After the hamsin winds scorch the desert, it is dry and barren.

region and the eastern slopes of the Wilderness of Judah. If there was any large troop movement by Saul, or even the Philistines, he could quickly escape across the Lisan to Moab. Militarily, he also noticed the site had steep sides all around it with only one accessible path to the top on the eastern side of the mountain, today called the “Snake Path.” It was easily defensible from any attackers because of its elevation and the single path to the top. The defenders on top could easily roll down boulders of rocks to stop any attackers.

David made good on his observations and stayed at the “stronghold” (Masada) after he left his parents in Moab. As long as there was water on top of the mountain, David felt safe and secure and did not want to leave. It was not until the prophet Gad came and told David to leave, that he left for the Forest of Hereth in the Land of Judah (1 Sm 22:4, 5).

The second time David and his men went to Masada was after he spared Saul’s life at Ein Gedi. The Bible says, “And Saul went home, and David and his men went up to the stronghold” (1 Sm 24:22). Here was the “parting of the ways” between Saul and David. Saul goes northwest, back to his palace at Gibeah of Saul, and David goes south to the stronghold situated 11 mi [18 km] to the south of Ein Gedi.

The third time we know of David at Masada is after he was anointed king of all



Todd Bolen



Todd Bolen

Israel in Hebron. The Bible says, “All the Philistines went up to search for David. And David heard of it and went down to the stronghold” (2 Sm 5:17). Notice the topographical indicators in this passage. Hebron (Tel Rumeida) is situated 3097 ft [944 m] above sea level. The base of Masada is 984 ft [300 m] below sea level. David literally went down to Masada.

Masada was extensively excavated by Professor Yigael Yadin in the early 1960s. Most of the excavations concentrated on the Early Roman period remains built by Herod the Great and used by the defenders at the end of the First Jewish Revolt in AD 73. Yadin, however, also found tenth century BC Iron Age pottery scattered on the surface (1966: 202). Perhaps some of that pottery was left by David and his men.

David composed at least four psalms in which he mentions Masada. The first psalm is Psalm 18. This psalm was written on the “day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul” (superscription). In it he sings,

I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress [Masada] and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold [lit. “high tower”] (18:1, 2).

The second psalm is Psalm 31. Again David sings,

In You, O LORD, I put my trust; Let me never be ashamed; Deliver me in your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me, Deliver me speedily; Be my rock of refuge, a fortress [Masada] of defense to save me. For you are my rock and my fortress [Masada]; Therefore, for Your name’s sake, Lead me and guide me (31:1–3).

The Hebrew word “Masada” is also used in Psalm 66:11 and is translated into English as “net” (NKJV; NASB) or “prison” (NIV).

The third psalm that uses Masada is Psalm 71. It is uninscribed, but most likely written by David. In it he sings:

In You, O LORD, I put my trust; Let me never be put to shame...Be my strong refuge, To which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, For you are my rock and my fortress [Masada] 71:1, 3.

The fourth psalm composed by David that mentioned Masada is Psalm 144. In this psalm he sang:

Blessed be the LORD my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, and

my fingers for battle—My loving-kindness and my fortress [Masada], My high tower and my deliverer, My shield and the One in whom I take refuge, Who subdues my people under me (144:1–2).

One other psalm mentions a “stronghold.” Psalm 91 is uninscribed, but some commentators attribute it to Moses and suggest it is a continuation of Psalm 90. The superscription of that psalm says: “A Prayer of Moses the man of God.” Psalm 91 starts out:

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress [Masada], My God, in Him I will trust” (91:1–2).

This would have been a psalm David knew by heart. He understood theologically that the LORD was his fortress/stronghold and his trust was in God. Perhaps when he saw Masada for the first time, it reminded him of the Lord. After staying there on several occasions, he came to realize, as secure as this rocky plateau may seem, the Lord truly was his Masada!

The Ein Gedi Cave and Ibex

Another stop on our Dead Sea Field Trip was the overlook at the Ein Gedi Field School. There was a great view of the waterfall in the Nahal David, the spring and tel of Ein Gedi and the ancient terraces on the slopes of the mountains. Somewhere in the area, David hid in a cave when he fled from King Saul (1 Sm 24). Psalm 142 was composed “in a cave.” This might have been the context of this psalm.

The name Ein Gedi means the “spring of the young goat.” Whether it is the domesticated goat or the ibex, the mountain goat, is unclear. David mentions them in Psalm 104:18, as does Job (39:1). Ein Gedi is a nature reserve so the animals are protected. We were fortunate to see a few ibex “up close and personal”.



Todd Bolen

Casting Our Sins into the Dead Sea

The prophet Micah admonished the people of Israel to “cast all our sins into the depth of the sea” (7:19–20). The word-picture that Micah has in view is the sacrifice in the Temple. The priest would offer a sacrifice for a person, but the blood of the sacrifice could only “atone” (cover) for the sins of the offerer. It could never take the sins away. From the Temple Mount, the blood was washed down a pipe into the Kidron Valley and this blood mingled with the water as it flowed through the Wilderness of Judah to the Dead Sea. This sea is the deepest surface of water anywhere on the face of the earth, some 1300 ft [400] meters below sea level. It is also the saltiest body of water and nothing lives in it.

In the Temple economy, sins were covered (“atoned for”) but never taken away. That is why the offerer had to offer a new offering each time he fell into sin. Yet when the Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in human flesh, died on the Cross, He paid for all the sins of all humanity (1 Jn 2:2) and there is no need for any more sacrifices (Heb 10:1–18). God has forgiven, and forgotten, all the sins of those who put their trust in His Son. The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed the New Covenant that was made with the House of Israel and Judah, and by extension, those in the Church. In it, God proclaimed that the “sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Jer 31:34; quoted also in Heb 8:12 and 10:17).

What the prophet Micah is saying is this: based on the mercy of God, our sins are cast into the depth of the [Dead] Sea. What God has forgiven, God has forgotten. God does not want His children to go fishing for something that does not exist (our sins)! We can thank the Lord Jesus for paying for all our sins and be assured of the promise of God, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to [continually] cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:9).

Summing Up the Field Trips

One of the sifters, Paula Owen, commented that this trip was:

Bible and Spade 22.1 (2009)

An incredible journey of a lifetime—that would be the bottom line description of the TMSF! I can truly say that never have I learned so many valuable Biblical facts at one time, as I did on this trip! By Day 2 my brain went to the overload mode in the pure excitement and pleasure of this archaeological adventure. It was so overwhelming!

The history, archaeology and geography of the Land

of the Bible can enrich one’s reading of the Word of God. The psalms were written by real people, experiencing real events in real places. To see the psalms in their context can enhance our worship of the Lord God.

We took the words of Psalm 48 to heart and acted upon them. “Walk about Zion, and go all around her. Count her towers; mark well her bulwarks; consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generation following” (48:12–13). I trust the background information and the spiritual truths learned by each sifter will be passed on to other people, and thus, another generation.

Notes

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Bible.



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Gordon Franz was the ABR team leader for the Temple Mount Sifting Project. He is an instructor at New York School of the Bible and Evangelical Seminary and Missions International, as well as co-teaches the Talbot School of Theology’s Bible Lands program. Gordon has worked on a number of excavations in Israel, including Keth Hinnom, Lachish, Jezreel and Hazor.

Parables from the Taybeh House

By Greg Gulbrandsen

“That’s a wrap,” I shouted to my friend Mike Caba as he walked out of frame of my camera’s viewfinder. We had just concluded videotaping the opening segment of our short program, “John 1:1, The Patriarch of Jerusalem Speaks.”

As I was putting away my camera, a middle-aged Palestinian walked up and asked what we were doing. After I explained the project, he introduced himself as Butros Abu Shanab, the director of an organization called “The Holylanders” (Association for the Preservation of Christian Heritage), a non-profit group dedicated to helping Palestinian Christians. When he understood what we were doing, he asked us to stop by his office for coffee and conversation.



Michael Luddeni

The front door of the “Arab House.”

During the visit, he invited me to Taybeh, formerly known as the city Ephraim in John 11:54, to see the plight of these Christians living in a sea of Islam. Taybeh is located 14 mi (22 km) northeast of Jerusalem in the West Bank, and is part of the Ramallah District. It is the only remaining all-Christian village in the West Bank. When Gordon Franz, our ABR team leader, heard about my trip, he mentioned the “Arab House” located there. Gordon explained that this house is representative of what a first-century home might have looked like, and asked if I could shoot some pictures of it. Butros, the perfect host, kindly complied and was my tour guide.

Many times Jesus taught by using parables—short stories wrapped around a moral or religious lesson. When I visited the house, I realized it is a veritable plethora of parable content. One of the best ways to describe the house is to relate it to some of the parables found in the Bible. Let’s start by looking at the Parable of the Persistent Friend as found in Luke 11.

Then he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’ Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs” (11:5–8).

Sleeping in bed with his children? It seems strange to us living in America today in multiple-bedroom homes, but in the time of Christ, the main room served both as the living and sleeping areas. Understandably, it would have been a great inconvenience to get out of bed and possibly wake his wife and children to get his friend the loaves of bread. However, because of the friend’s persistence, the householder arose and did what is right. That is what our Father in Heaven does for us. Our persistent prayers are heard by God—He hears, listens, and answers.

The Parable of the Lost Coin speaks of a woman who lost one of ten silver coins and the trouble she went through to find that one lost coin. In Luke 15 we read Jesus’ words:

“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ In the same way, I tell you, there is



Michael Luddeni

The dirt floor of the main room served as both living and sleeping areas.

rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (15:8–10).”

For most of us, the loss of a single coin would not necessitate the need to light a lamp or sweep the floor. At worst, we might need to move a piece of furniture or two. But what of a house from the time of Jesus? As can be seen, the floor is dirt. A lost coin would be difficult to find without the assistance of both a lamp and a broom. With no electricity and the room’s tiny windows, a lamp would be needed. The light would illuminate the floor and possibly reflect the coin’s silver shine and the broom would help in this endeavor by removing the dirt. In context, Christ’s words struck a familiar chord with the listeners.

A wineskin hanging on the wall brings to mind the Parable of the Wineskin. In this parable, Christ speaks to our difficulty in accepting new ideas. Matthew 9 states,

“Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved” (9:17).

Many find this parable both puzzling and difficult to understand. But think about it. Jesus is telling everyone that He is the new—the New Covenant. He realizes that He is teaching something new which cannot be easily received and understood by the old. That is why Christ sought His disciples not so much from the Pharisees, but rather from the regular folks. He did so in order to preserve the new Good News.

We continue with the Parable of the Lamp as found in Luke 8:

“No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him (8:16–18).”

These houses typically contained three rooms. After entering, this particular house has a room directly to the left and down a few steps. This is the stable area where the animals were kept



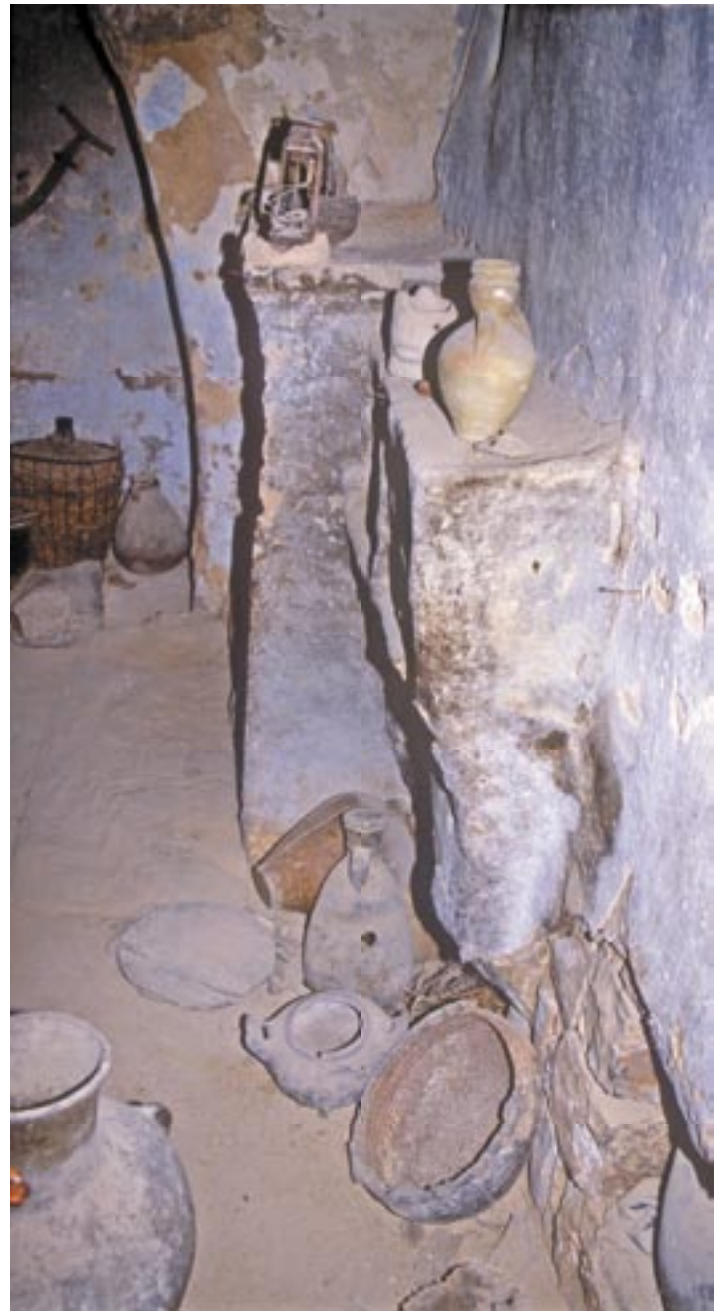
Michael Luddeni

Stairs leading from the door up to the living space of the one-room. The stable is underneath (lower left). On the wall (upper right) hangs a wineskin.

during the cold months. On the left and up a few steps is the main living/sleeping area. The only windows are a couple of very small openings—less than a square foot each. Even during the day, not much light reaches the interiors of the house. Thus, lighting a lamp would be a very ordinary situation. And when a lamp is on, there is no darkness in the room and all corners can be seen. Also, the Jewish people of Jesus’ day knew that “light” was an expression of the inner beauty, truth, and goodness of God. Psalm 36 tells us “In His light we see light,” and Psalm 119 states, “His word is a lamp that lights our steps.” We also know that Jesus is our light and in His light we see the truth.

Remember, these parables hinge on the understanding of the listener. That is, if metaphors are used, they are useless if they do not relate somehow to the receiver of the lesson. So far, the house has been a virtual repository of examples for His disciples and other recipients. We have seen Jesus use a door, a coin, a wineskin, and a lamp. He also uses a tool, the farmer’s plow.

Again in Luke 9, Christ reprimands some of His disciples for their excuses for not following Him directly by saying, “No one who puts his hand to the plow, and looks back is fit for the service in the kingdom of God” (9:62). By using the plow as a



Michael Luddeni

The “modern” kerosene lamp rests high on the shelf in order to cast its light to all corners. Jesus referred to a Herodian oil lamp, like the one below.



Michael Luddeni



Greg Gulbrandsen

The plow, along with other farm tools, is stored on the wall for easy access.

metaphor, He is saying, “If, while tilling a field, you let things distract you from your duty by looking backwards, you will not plow a straight course.” In other words, you won’t get the job done!

Finally, the old house has one more example with which to teach. However, it is not a parable, but rather an historical occurrence. We learn of Jesus’ birth from the Gospels. The Gospel of Luke tells us:

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (2:6–7).

Many feel this may be a mistranslation due to a misunderstanding of the word “inn,” and the sentence should really read, “because there was no place for them in the ‘guest room.’” This makes more sense since hotels and inns were not that common, especially in a little town like Bethlehem. It is much more likely to be a reference to a normal and ordinary situation—relatives or friends are in town and the home’s guest room is already occupied. There still was an unoccupied room in

the house—unoccupied, that is, by people (Bailey 2007).

Remember, when entering this house, the very first room encountered is the room on the left (down the three steps), the stable with a manger. This would be the winter quartering area for the owner’s animals. Thus, if there is no room in the “guest room,” then the stable would be utilized. In this house, the cellar stable looks very much like a cave. Most likely, Christ was born in a similar room.

Dr. Lawrence Sinclair excavated a stone manger from the Early Roman period in a house on the eastern slopes of Gibeah of Saul (1964: 64). More than likely Mary would have placed the baby Jesus in a stone manger like this one, rather than a wooden one like those usually depicted on our Christmas cards!

In conclusion, visiting Taybeh was very enlightening, not only from the perspective of the plight of the Arab Christians, but also from the insight it gave to understanding Biblical context. I will no longer read these parables without seeing the setting that I was privileged to visit.





Michael Luddeni

The cellar stable.



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A first century AD stone manger found at Gibeah of Saul, 9 mi (14.5 km) north of Bethlehem.

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Greg Gulbrandsen holds an MA in communications from the State University of New York (Saratoga). He took early retirement from the SUNY-New Paltz where he was the director of the media center. Greg now owns CascadeCreative Media, a small independent video production house.

Holding History in My Hand



By Scott Astbury

It struck me, when I was looking through bits of dusty rock at the Temple Mount Sifting Project, that I was sorting through history. Perhaps the fragments of bone that I was picking through had come from a temple sacrifice? Maybe they even belonged to a person who had been killed during any number of wars in Jerusalem. It was fascinating to find a shard of pottery or a piece of glass and try to discern its original usage. A few times I came

the most during my time sifting was how those pieces, those stories from Scripture, became alive in my hands. Those people that I had spent so much time in church reading about lived many normal and uneventful days here on this Earth. Seeing bits and pieces of these past worlds made me think about what their homes were like, their clothes. Did children play with toys? What would a family have for dinner?



Heather Pollard

Scott Astbury literally holding history in his hands!

across pieces that were explained to me as earlier pieces of the Dome of the Rock. I knew that the Dome of the Rock has stood on the Temple Mount since about AD 690. So, I couldn't help but wonder how old was the piece I was holding. Now, it could just be that the Sifting Project is a special case, since the rock layers that were unearthed have all been jumbled together, but archaeology seems to me to be like uncovering a vast puzzle.

Through Scripture we get a sense of what life was like for the ancient peoples who lived in the land. Through the words of prophets and poets we have inklings about the customs and behaviors of their world. But, isn't that still just part of the puzzle, part of a better understanding of a deeply rich culture, a culture that could shed a lot of light on how we may view and interpret the words of God that so many people across the world hinge their very existence on? What I think I was enamored with

When I embarked on the trip to Israel, I was looking for a better understanding of archaeology and whether or not it was worthwhile to pursue study in that field for my own interests. I came away not so much with a wealth of experience, but I think a greater inclination toward the noble pursuit of truth that archaeology provides. For archaeology seems to me to be like finding facts hidden in the dirt. I found many facts at the Temple Mount: bones, glass, coins, pottery and nails. Archaeology demonstrates the existence of such items, and afterwards a lot of painstaking work goes into uncovering the why and how behind the items found.

My personal discovery about archaeology was that it, first and foremost, provides you with undeniable evidence of existence. That, wherever someone is digging, for whatever culture, what is unearthed

once existed there in that place, and it once served a purpose. Holding pieces of history from the Temple Mount in my hands made me more inquisitive about its history, and certainly got me interested in uncovering evidence of truth that lies buried underground.



Scott Astbury graduated from Word of Life Bible Institute and also Baptist Bible College (PA) with a degree in Bible and a major in communications and writing. He has taught English in South Korea and is considering graduate studies in archaeology.

Sifters



that have controlled this important region.”

Scott Astbury taught English in Korea. He commented: “Learning about the Temple Mount history by sifting through its ancient remains was fascinating. Uncovering Roman nails, Byzantine glass, and pottery shards from all eras was a great way to learn about the many peoples and cultures



Mike Caba is a real estate appraiser and college teacher from Oregon. He found a jar handle with a thumbprint on it. He observed that “the piece of pottery we found may be significant due to the thumb notch in the handle. The archaeologist on site had not seen one like it before.”



history—the five coins I found—in my hands. The last coin, last day, last bucket, with its particular clarity was especially memorable.”

Kathryn Crutcher A humanities major at Columbia International University, Kathryn found a Roman nail and five coins. Kathryn reminisced, “The Temple Mount Sifting Project and tour was a stupendous experience that made the history and geography of Israel come alive. I loved being able to actually hold

Jennifer Dion resides in California and is an Outreach employee. She commented, “What touched me the most about this trip was being able to live in Old Jerusalem for the whole two weeks. We were able to work alongside the residents and even feel a little at home in the nation of Israel. Come back from the last day trip, I remembered looking up at the Jaffa Gate and thinking, “We’re almost home...”!



Carolyn Dunaway is a retired librarian from Virginia. She stated, “This trip was fantastic! Not only was I able to participate in an archaeological project, but I learned so much about the history of Jerusalem, correcting the misinformation I had received from a previous trip.”



Greg Gulbrandsen is a documentary producer, photographer and writer living in Oregon. He found a jar handle with a thumbprint on it.



Stephanie Hernandez is an archaeologist from California. She was the hostess for the ABR group at the Temple Mount Sifting Project. She found a coin, an Ottoman weight and a Roman glass ring. She reflected that, “The Temple Mount Sifting Project experience allowed me to develop a firmer grasp on the importance of the land of Israel, and Jerusalem specifically, in God’s great plan. Along the way I met amazing people, went to timeless places, and was in awe and wonder of the Lord and His work.”



Richard Hess is from Ohio and noted: “I was working in the big rock pile, T-4, and came across two Herodian stones unknown to me at the time. A staff member informed me that these were important stones (*opus sectile*). I was very pleased with the finds.”



Ellen Jackson found three coins, an *opus sectile* and a Roman coin. She is an international language and learning coordinator in Texas.

Profiles



Kenneth Jeanes joined us from South Africa where he works at the Eastern Cape Bible Institute. He found two coins.

Debra Kreider is an accountant in Pennsylvania. She commented that the Bible became more meaningful for her and the trip was a rewarding experience that will help her in the future. She found a die.



Lynne Larson joined us from Spain where she is a counselor. She commented: "Working on the Temple Mount Sifting Project was an incredible opportunity to experience Jerusalem, Israeli culture and people, and part of Biblical history. It was exciting to find an ancient coin, but mostly I enjoyed knowing that we were able to contribute to this important project."



Abigail Leavitt is a librarian from Idaho. She noted that, "Working on the Temple Mount Sifting Project was a wonderful experience! I really enjoyed it." She found a marble piece from a capital, an *opus sectile*, as well as a Roman nail.

Karin Lovik works at Clearwater Christian College in Florida. Her observation of the trip was: "The first week at the Temple Mount Sifting Project I found a turquoise round bead and I was excited. The second week I found a bronze coin in excellent condition and I was ecstatic. The best thing, though, that happened was understanding how massive the Herodian Temple was and how integrated its images were in the Gospels. This trip was definitely a once-in-a-lifetime experience."



Richard Marymee is a rocket scientist (literally) in California. While most of the sifters found ancient artifacts, he found a modern Hot Wheels car, probably lost by a child while visiting the Temple Mount!

Paula Owen works in customer relations in Michigan and also volunteers for the Red Cross. She described her trip as: "'An Incredible Journey of a Lifetime'—that would be the bottom line description of the TMSP! I can truly say that NEVER have I learned so many valuable Biblical facts at one time, and did on this trip!"



Heather Pollard is a professional photographer from Texas. She found a piece of ceramics with a cross on it, as well as a Roman nail and two coins. She commented: "When sifting we found many pieces of pottery so I was ecstatic when I hosed off a piece and discovered a cross. It was dated as Byzantine. Another day I discovered two coins and am looking forward to hearing the history and time period."

Sandy is a medical transcriber from California and has also participated in ABR excavations at Khirbet el-Maqatir and Hazor. She found three coins, a coral bead and a possible figurine.



People, Places, Psalmists and a Hot Wheels Car

By Richard Marymee

My trip to Israel started out the same way most of my best trips began, with me in a hotel room far from home on the first day there, asking myself, “What in the world was I thinking!?”



Heather Pollard

Richard Marymee.

Several months earlier, when I’d first heard of this trip in the safety and comfort of my home, I remember thinking it was just the kind of way I’d like to make a trip to Israel: getting to do something extraordinary and in a serving capacity (of sorts). Most of my big trips in recent years had all been serving trips of some kind, like going to Honduras to build a home with Habitat for Humanity, or to Sri Lanka to work on relief efforts after the tsunami.

Also, the realization was kicking in that I was, for the next two weeks, going to be spending a LOT of time with 19 people who were almost complete strangers, working 4–5 hours a day on what seemed at first glance a most mind-numbing experience of sorting through tiny rocks and other debris. How was I ever going to get through this?

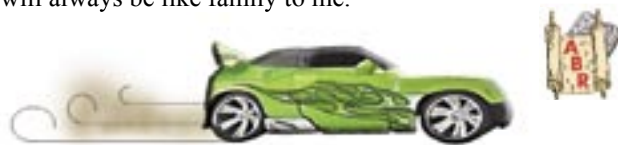
Yet as it turned out, God knew just what He was doing by putting it on my heart to go on this trip in the first place, and

I was not going to be disappointed. Although I never did find any exciting artifacts—unless you consider a toy Hot Wheels car exciting!—I did, however, find other kinds of treasures instead: an appreciation for the geography of the city that has been the center of faith to Judaism and Christianity for thousands of years, and visits to sites where historic battles took place, where Roman legions marched and conquered, as well as the many other armies of the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and others who preceded them. This was a place of incredible history, as well as a place of future events.

As Gordon led us from one site to another, we had a chance to appreciate the connections between this city and the books of the Bible most of us were so familiar with, such as Proverbs, Psalms, Song of Solomon, Jeremiah, and so many others that had been composed in the very location where I now was. As we stood on the ridge above the City of David, Gordon quoted the book of Psalms, “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people.” Suddenly I could look at the map of the city of Jerusalem in the back of my Bible I’d carried for 15 years and recognize the layout of this city personally. And this made it come alive so much more.

We looked out on the Mount of Olives from the east side of the city. Here was the place where Jesus paid the price as He agonized over His coming ordeal, concluding, “Not My will but Your will be done” to the Father. How could I not be awed, knowing that I was now looking at the same place where Jesus once stood and looked out? Where the Lord Himself—the Maker of the earth, of the universe, of subatomic particles and the four forces of nature themselves—once stood and saw His own creation personally!

It was an experience that made the Bible come alive for me as a real place, with real people, more than ever. And I also found the greatest treasure of all on this trip—a great group of friends who will always be like family to me.



Richard Marymee is a rocket scientist (literally) with the Boeing Company in California and has a degree in mechanical engineering from U.C. San Diego. He is working on a masters degree in Christian apologetics at Talbot School of Theology. While most of the sifters found ancient artifacts, he found a modern Hot Wheels car, probably lost by a child while visiting the Temple Mount!

Jerusalem Journey

By Debra Kreider

I can say my first trip to Jerusalem began on October 20, 2007, the moment I heard it announced at ABR's Biblical Archaeology Conference in Pennsylvania. I was excited to be able to sift rubble from the Temple Mount, and looked at the rest of the

trip as an added bonus. This was my first trip to Israel, and I'm still a little overwhelmed and unsure where to begin when someone asks me about the trip. However, I can break the experience into three basic areas: the "modern" city, the Biblical city, and the Temple Mount Sifting Project.

We spent two weeks living in the Old City, and during that time we saw many groups come and go in our hotel. How exciting to spend two weeks in one of the great cities of the world! We

got to explore the uniqueness of the four quarters of the Old City: the Jewish Quarter, Christian Quarter, Armenian Quarter and Muslim Quarter. How wonderful it was to experience the beginning of Shabbat at the Western Wall in the Jewish Quarter, to walk through the narrow lanes of the Muslim quarter with its distinctive sights, to go to vespers at the Cathedral of St James in the Armenian Quarter, and to try to bargain in the shops of the Christian Quarter.

Each day we explored a different area of the city while our leader, Gordon Franz, gave us the background of the area and relevant Scriptures. Seeing the various areas and hearing the explanations has given me a new perspective on the Bible. My Sunday School class has begun the study of Acts, and I taught chapters 1 and 2 before leaving on this trip. Now I have so much more to add—I know the distance between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem (Acts 1:12), and better understand the length of a Sabbath-day walk without having to look at the study notes. I may have stood on the steps where Peter addressed the crowd at Pentecost. Acts 3:1 states that Peter and John went up to the Temple; "up" is easily overlooked, but a very accurate description of the approach to the Temple. We also had two Saturday field trips. Our first trip included a stop in the Elah Valley, site of the

battle between David and Goliath (1 Sm 17). I now have five stones taken from the stream bed where David took his sling stones. And we had a hilltop view of the area, and I could picture the Israelite and Philistine forces gathered for the conflict.



Heather Pollard

Debra Kreider.

I counted it a great privilege to participate in the Temple Mount Sifting Project and help recover the history of the Temple Mount. Before leaving, my pastor said, "You never know who may have touched the things you will hold in your hand." Imagine being able to hold a Roman nail, a Roman die, coins from several time periods, pieces of the Second Temple pavement, burned bones of animals most likely sacrificed in the Temple, and so on.

I've held each one of those! One outstanding memory is the lecture Assaf Avraham gave us about *opus sectile*. Josephus states in one of his books, "The open court was from end to end variegated with paving of all manner of stones (*Wars* 5.5.2). No one really understood Josephus' description, but the project has uncovered many pavement tiles which are assumed to be pieces of the Second Temple pavement and have made Josephus' words come alive.

Even though the physical journey to Jerusalem has ended, the journey of processing and applying all I have learned has just begun.

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Debra Kreider is an accountant in Pennsylvania. She commented that the Bible became more meaningful for her and the trip was a rewarding experience that will help her in the future. She found a die (see photo above).

Assorted



Richard “the less,” Richard “the great” and Carolyn working on the rock pile, T-4. (Photo: Heather Pollard)



The close proximity between the Temple Mount Sifting Project (left) and the Dome of the Rock (right) where the debris originated from. (Photo: Heather Pollard)



The sifters emerging out of Hezekiah’s Tunnel. (Photo: Heather Pollard)



“Want a ride?” Young boy on the Mount of Olives offering a ride on his donkey. (Photo: Heather Pollard)

Pictures



Some of the ABR sifters at the Western Wall. (Photo: Heather Pollard)



Fragment of a Byzantine pottery vessel with a cross on it found by Heather. (Photo: Heather Pollard)



George, the head chef at the Gloria Hotel in Jerusalem, prepared a delicious farewell dinner for the sifters. (Photo: Debra Kreider)



“The End.” (Photo: Debra Kreider)

The Logos: God or “a” god?

By Michael J. Caba

It was a pleasant evening in the Old City of Jerusalem as the ABR group sat in the courtyard of the Gloria Hotel. We talked about our adventures on the Temple Mount Sifting Project, and laughed at our experiences in a foreign culture. As we enjoyed the fellowship we noticed an elderly gentleman, attired in the priestly garb of the Greek Orthodox Church, sitting across the courtyard and chuckling along with our group. So began the adventure that eventually led to a friendly meeting with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the further clarification of a certain theological point.

After more laughter and discussion, our friendly priest, Michael, assured us that we would enjoy a meeting with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch. Accordingly, arrangements were made and about a week later we were politely ushered into the elegant but simple audience room of the Patriarch. The man himself, Theophilos III by name, is an elderly gentleman of rather modest stature, but possessing an acute and highly educated mind. He seated himself at floor level—away from his elevated presiding chair—and bid us to come close for the interview. What, he wanted to know, could he do for this bunch of foreign archaeologists?



Heather Pollard

Father Michael (left), a Greek Orthodox priest from Thessaloniki, Greece, made arrangements for the ABR sifters to meet the Jerusalem Patriarch of his church.

One thing of special importance was on our minds for this courtesy call, namely, what was his understanding of the Bible verse identified as John 1:1. In particular, was the *Logos* (i.e. the Word) fully God as is indicated in nearly all English translations, or simply “a” god as is the case in certain cult literature? It only seemed right to ask this of the Patriarch for several reasons. First of all, his church traces its roots to the time of the apostles in Jerusalem, and is even referred to by other Orthodox churches as the “mother” church of all Christendom. In addition, the very liturgy of the church is conducted in *Koine*, (common) Greek, the actual ancient language of the New Testament Scriptures. Further still, the Patriarch himself is Greek and is highly trained in theology and church history. Certainly there are Bible experts all over the world who can reliably translate this verse, but it also seemed to us that the Patriarch could be another important

witness on this matter due to his unique credentials. We were very curious about his thoughts on the subject, and anxiously awaited his responses as the discussion started.

We gingerly began the interview by asking him about his



Heather Pollard

ABR sifters visiting with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, at the Patriarchal Residence.

church, and he responded warmly by recounting the history of his fellowship and its important role in the spiritual and political landscape of Palestine, an immensely fascinating story in itself. When the discussion eventually turned to John 1:1, he noted his church’s historic belief in the Trinity as clarified by the Council of Nicea, and that his church’s theology was based upon revelation from God, not philosophy or human speculation. And then, towards the end of the interview, one of our group—Greg Gulbrandsen—specifically asked the Patriarch about the later portion of John 1:1, namely, was the *Logos* “a” god as was represented in a certain unnamed translation? Without batting an eye the Patriarch hit the ball out of the park with a simple but certain and unmistakable response, “this is wrong.”

On that note the interview ended with pleasant smiles all around. We said our thanks, shook hands and received some courtesy gifts. Yet the greatest gift was the clear reaffirmation from a modern spokesman of an ancient communion that one of the cornerstones of our Christian faith stands strong: “and the Word was God.”



Michael J. Caba holds a BS in Biblical Education, an MA in Philosophy and Religion, and is currently working on his Doctorate in Philosophy and Religion at Harrison-Middleton University. He teaches at Kilns College in Bend, Oregon, and has been married to his wife Kathy for 28 years.

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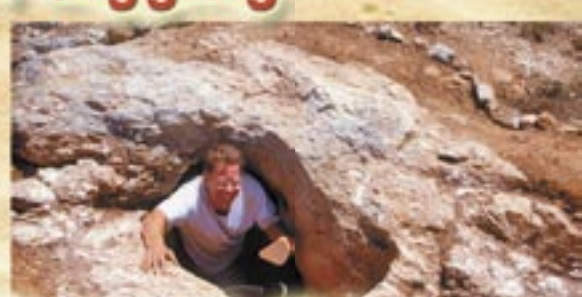
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