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Messianic Perspectives

God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.

TOP TEN RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN ISRAEL

BY DR. GARY HEDRICK



Spectacular discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) often dominate conversations about archaeology in the Middle East. This is understandable, of course, due to the scrolls' antiquity (originating from as far back as the 4th century BC) and their scope (800 or so scrolls and fragments with texts of and commentaries on much of the Tanakh). The historical value of the DSS (discovered in the 1940s and 50s) cannot be overestimated.

Nonetheless, the archaeologists didn't hang up their spades and fedoras in the 1950s. Their work is ongoing. Here's a list of ten more recent developments in biblical archaeology.

1. The Temple Mount Sifting Project

In 1999, Palestinian workers began quietly working on an area of the Temple Mount where they needed to dig up and remove approximately 9,000 tons of dirt and rubble, some of it from deep underground. They knew what they were doing was illegal, so they worked quietly and surreptitiously to keep it under the radar. But their suspicious movements eventually drew the attention of our friend Dr. Gabriel Barkay, one of Israel's leading archaeologists, and his colleague Zachi Dvira.

One day as the Palestinian trucks left the Temple Mount loaded with dirt and debris containing (potentially) the remnants of 4,000 years or more of Mideast history, some curious Israelis secretly followed them. They couldn't believe their eyes when they saw the mountain of rubble near the Kidron Valley where the workers were dumping

their loads out onto the ground like garbage. The Israelis, however, stayed back and didn't let on that they knew what the Palestinians were doing. They allowed them to continue the project until 2004, when they obtained permission from the government to remove the rubble and begin sifting through it for artifacts. Thus, the Temple Mount Sifting Project (TMSF) was born.¹

It's humorous, in a way, because it would have been illegal for the Israelis themselves to excavate those areas deep beneath the surface of the Temple Mount (which the Palestinians call *Haram esh-Sharif*, or "the Noble Sanctuary"). So, the Lord arranged for the Palestinians themselves to do the heavy digging—and they delivered the tons of dirt right to the doorstep of the Israelis! Who says God doesn't have a sense of humor?

That mountain of "garbage" has produced a treasure trove of priceless finds from both the First and Second Temple periods, including thousands of coins, lots of pottery fragments, pieces of ancient figurines, stone weights, tiles from mosaic floors, as well as arrowheads and other weapons, including even an ancient sling-shot, perhaps like the one David used when he killed Goliath.

The Palestinian Authority has been claiming in recent years that there was never a Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount; however, Dr. Barkay's sifting project has effectively destroyed their narrative by placing many Temple-related artifacts directly on the Temple Mount.²

More information: tmsifting.org



Sifting Project directors meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in December 2016. From left to right: Zachi Dvira, Gabriel Barkay, Edward Baumstein, PM Netanyahu, and Ram Baratz (former PM Office media adviser).

© Temple Mount Sifting Project



© zachi dvira

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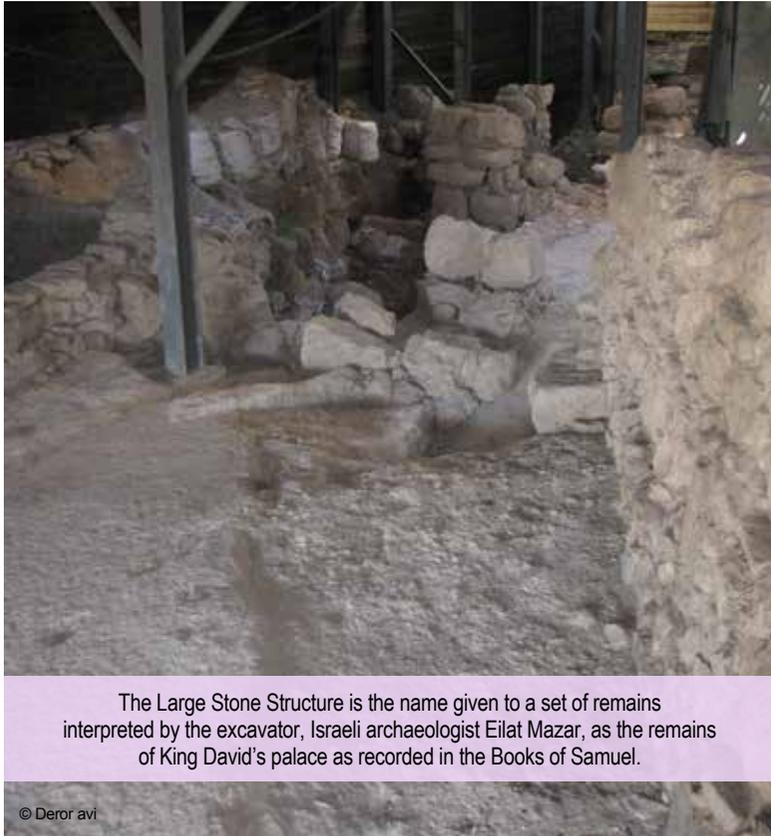
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2. King David's Palace

Archaeologist Eilat Mazar writes, “There can be little doubt that King David had a palace. The Bible tells us that Hiram of Tyre (who would later help King Solomon build the Temple) constructed the palace for David: ‘King Hiram of Tyre sent envoys to David, with cedar logs, carpenters and stonemasons; and they built a palace for David’ (2 Sam. 5:11). Nine years ago, I wrote an article in BAR [*Biblical Archeology Review*] suggesting where, in my opinion, the remains of King David’s palace might lie. I proposed looking in the northern part of the most ancient area of Jerusalem, known as the City of David.”³



The Large Stone Structure is the name given to a set of remains interpreted by the excavator, Israeli archaeologist Eilat Mazar, as the remains of King David's palace as recorded in the Books of Samuel.

© Deror avi

It was a novel idea—relying on the Bible as a guide for the search for King David’s palace.⁴ And it worked! Building on the work of Kathleen Kenyon and others in “the restricted area of site H, north of the line of the east-west complex,” Mazar has found what she believes are the remains of the royal palace in strata dating from the 10th century BC (or roughly the time of King David).

More information: cityof david.org.il

3. Seals of Isaiah and King Hezekiah

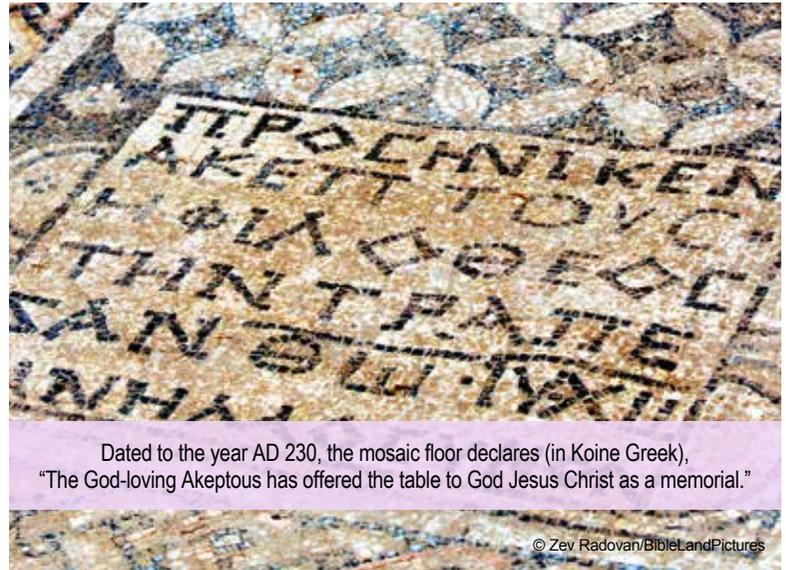
Clay seals were an important part of ancient, daily life. They were used for administrative purposes by royalty and their governments, so it’s not surprising that excavations in Jerusalem (which has been the seat of Jewish governance since 1000 BC or so) have turned up various seals in strata going back to the Davidic era.

The two seals pictured here bear the inscriptions “Belonging to Hezekiah, [son of] Ahaz, King of Judah” and “Belonging to Isaiah . . .” (believed to be “the prophet,” or *haNavi*).

The seals are on display along with 40 other artifacts from the time of King Hezekiah. They include a selection of royal Judean vessels, silver bullion, and weaponry used during the siege of Lachish.

4. Ancient mosaic floor in Israel referring to Jesus as “God”

This find—uncovered behind the walls of a prison in Megiddo—was originally billed as part of the discovery of the world’s oldest church; however, it may well have been a residence that was used as a meeting place for early Messianic believers in Northern Israel, rather than an actual church building.



Dated to the year AD 230, the mosaic floor declares (in Koine Greek), “The God-loving Akeptous has offered the table to God Jesus Christ as a memorial.”

© Zev Radovan/BibleLandPictures

The Megiddo Regional Council soon announced that the prison population would be relocated to a new facility to make way for a new archaeological park on the site.⁵

The mosaic floor (which has nothing to do with Moses, in case you’re wondering) is significant not only for its archaeological value, but also for what it reveals about the theology of the Early Church. Clearly, the early Jewish believers in Israel recognized Yeshua not only as the Messiah, but also as Deity in the flesh.

This flies in the face of the views of critical scholars like Bart Ehrman, who has suggested that Yeshua never claimed to be God in human form.⁶ These “demythologizers” typically claim that the elevation of Yeshua to the status of divinity occurred in the fourth century and was perpetrated by Gentile religionists at Nicea.

Here, however, we have evidence from a century or more before Nicea showing that *Jewish believers in Israel* (not Gentiles in Rome or Constantinople) recognized Yeshua of Nazareth as the God-Man (Isa. 9:6; Phil. 2:5-8).



courtesy of Eilat Mazar

5. Ceramic shard with possibly the oldest Hebrew inscription ever found

A 6-by-6-inch pottery shard (pictured here), excavated at an archaeological site on a hilltop south of Jerusalem, is thought by some to bear the oldest Hebrew inscription in the world. The five lines of proto-Canaanite writing date to the time of King David, some 3,000 years ago.⁷ Yossi Garfinkel of Hebrew University brushes aside the doubts of the skeptics and points out that even though other ancient Semitic peoples used a similar proto-Canaanite alphabet, the inscription on this shard includes a distinctive, three-letter verb meaning “to do” that he identifies as uniquely Hebrew. He told the Associated Press, “That leads us to believe that this is Hebrew, and that this is the oldest Hebrew inscription that has been found.”⁸

Liberal scholars are skeptical because the find doesn't fit their preferred narrative (i.e., that early Israelites were essentially illiterate and therefore incapable of having composed the biblical books attributed to them). If Garfinkel is right, however, it demonstrates that Moses and the ancient prophets were perfectly capable of authoring the complex documents that comprise the *Tanakh* (*Torah-Nevi'im-Ketuvim*) without relying on oral tradition or local mythologies.⁹



© AP/Sebastian Scheiner

6. Elusive biblical wall discovered?

According to the Science page at NBCNews.com, “A biblical wall that has eluded archaeologists for years has finally been found . . .” However, since the work is ongoing and subject to further peer review, it might be more correct to say, “. . . *may* have been found.”

Here's what we can say with certainty. The Book of Nehemiah describes the return of a Jewish brigade to Jerusalem to rebuild the city's walls that had been destroyed by the Babylonians some 70 years earlier. Eilat Mazar (see #1 above) believes her team may have now found the remains of that rebuilt wall.

The pottery pieces and other artifacts shown online provide evidence to support her case. They were uncovered near a wall that had been dated to the Hasmonean period of Jewish history (142-37 BC). These pottery fragments, however, date to the 5th century BC, suggesting that the wall is centuries older than previously thought and corresponding nicely with the timing of the biblical account.¹⁰

Science on NBCNEWS.com

Elusive biblical wall found at last, scholar says

Discovery, made in Jerusalem's ancient City of David, was a 'great surprise'

By Regan E. Doherty
Associated Press
Updated 11/29/2017 6:55:23 PM ET

JERUSALEM — A biblical wall that has eluded archaeologists for years has finally been found, according to an Israeli scholar. A team of archaeologists in Jerusalem has uncovered what they believe to be part of a wall mentioned in the Bible's Book of Nehemiah.

The discovery, made in Jerusalem's ancient City of David, came as a result of a rescue attempt on a tower which was in danger of collapse, said Eilat Mazar, head of the Institute of Archaeology at the Shalem Center, a Jerusalem-based research and educational institute, and leader of the dig.

Artifacts including pottery shards and arrowheads found under the tower suggested that both the tower and the nearby wall are from the 5th century B.C., the time of Nehemiah, according to Mazar. Scholars previously thought the wall dated to the Hasmonean period (142-37 B.C.).

The findings suggest that the wall is actually part of the same city wall the Bible says Nehemiah rebuilt, Mazar said. The Book of Nehemiah (chapters 3-6) gives a detailed description of construction of the walls, destroyed earlier by the Babylonians.

𐤀 hēt ḥ	זי zayin z	וּ wāw w	הּ hē h	דָּ dālet d	גִּ gīmel g	בֵּ bēt b	אָ 'ālef '
שׂ sāmek s	נּ nun n	מֶ mēm m	לָ lāmed l	כּ kaf k	יּ yōd y	תּ tēt ṭ	
תּ tāw t	שׁ śin/śin ś	רֶ rēš r	קֹ qōf q	שׂ šādē š	פּ pē p	עֵ 'ayin '	

A chart showing the evolution of the ancient proto-Canaanite alphabet into the Hebrew later adopted by the Israelites. Courtesy of hebrew4christians.com.

7. Remains of ‘miracle pool’ found

The ancient Siloam Pool was a *mikveh*, of sorts, where ancient Israelites would come for ritual immersion (i.e., purification) before going up to the Temple to offer sacrifices and offerings.¹¹

This pool became the setting for one of Yeshua’s most famous miracles. It was here that He healed a beggar who was widely known by local residents to have been blind from birth: *When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So, he went and washed, and came back seeing*” (John 9:6-7).



Water shown here flowing through a site where a famous miracle was performed by Messiah Yeshua (John 9).

© Deror avi

Because so many locals were acquainted with the blind man, and they knew he had *never* seen anything before, this miracle caused quite a stir in Jerusalem: *Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?”* (v. 8).

The authenticity of the site—located today in Silwan, an Arab neighborhood—has been confirmed by the discovery of biblical-era coins bearing Hebrew inscriptions, pottery shards, and a stone bottle cork, all of which date to the New Testament era.

8. More evidence of King Herod’s tomb

Several years ago, a friend and I were driving through the Judean desert on our way back to Jerusalem from the Dead Sea when we took a wrong turn and ended up in the Herodian National Park. It became immediately evident that a lot of fresh archaeological work was being done at the time, with a great deal of excitement, so we drove around to check it out. As it turned out, archaeologists were excavating King Herod’s winter palace there in the Judean desert (southeast of Bethlehem). They had unearthed what appeared to be the remains of the ancient (and unpopular) ruler’s tomb. The sarcophagus shown here was pieced together from fragments of a mausoleum archaeologists believe was destroyed by Jewish zealots just before their defeat in AD 70-71. Herod had Jewish ancestry and was installed by Rome as “Palestine’s” puppet ruler from 37 to 4 BC. Historians believe his palace became a stronghold for the Jewish resistance after his death. The palace, along with Herod’s tomb, was destroyed in AD 71, shortly after Jerusalem and the Temple were demolished.



The sarcophagus of King Herod, reassembled from smashed fragments.

© AP/Bernat Armanque

This discovery, however, is not uncontested. The late Israeli archaeologist Ehud Netzer was quite certain that he had found Herod’s Tomb, but other archaeologists like Joseph Patrich and Benjamin Arubas are equally certain that he didn’t—so the controversy, and the work, continue.¹²

9. Tunnels, chambers used to escape the advancing Roman legions

When the Romans sacked Jerusalem around AD 70, we now know (thanks to recent excavations) that some Jewish residents took refuge in a network of underground tunnels and chambers below the Temple Mount and around the ancient City of David to the south. This image depicts one of the tunnels dug beneath the main road of Jerusalem during what is known as the Second Temple era (extending roughly from 516 BC to AD 70). Pottery shards and coins from near the end of the era demonstrate the tunnel's antiquity, according to archaeologists. They've also uncovered ancient chambers filled in with unused supplies, showing that the ancient Judeans were preparing for the Roman siege they knew was coming.

Interestingly, indications are that few Yeshua-believers (Messianics, or *Meshichim*) remained in Jerusalem by

AD 70, when the Romans delivered the final, fatal blow to the City. The believers had fled months earlier (i.e., as early as AD 68) because they remembered the warning of Yeshua: "*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her*" (Luke 21:20-21).

For this reason, some historians trace "the parting of the ways" (between traditional Judaism and the early Jewish believers) to AD 70. Prior to this time, the Messianic movement was mostly regarded as a sect of first-century Judaism. Afterward, however, the Yeshua-believers (later known as "Christians") were seen by some as traitors or cowards because they fled to Pella (in present-day Jordan) before Jerusalem was destroyed.¹³ For them, however, it was an act of obedience rather than one of cowardice. They were simply following Yeshua's instructions.¹⁴



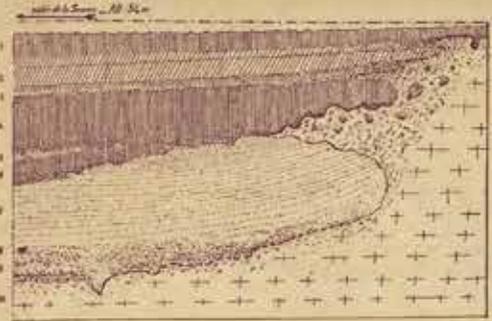
This photo shows one of the tunnels dug underneath the main road of Jerusalem during the latter part of the Second Temple era.

© AP/Emilio Morenatti

A promotional banner for a 2020 Pilgrimage Tour to Israel. The background is a panoramic view of Jerusalem, showing the Dome of the Rock and other landmarks. The text is overlaid on the image. The main title is "2020 PILGRIMAGE TOUR TO ISRAEL" in large, bold, white letters. Below it, the dates "JUNE 13 - 21, 2020" are written in blue. At the bottom, a yellow text box contains the following information: "EXPERIENCE ISRAEL FROM A MESSIANIC PERSPECTIVE AS YOU VISIT JERUSALEM, MASADA, THE VALLEY OF MEGIDDO, GALILEE AND MANY OTHERS. GO TO CJFM.ORG/TOURS FOR DETAILS."



GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMINOLOGY



Archaeology—Learning about ancient peoples and civilizations through the retrieval and study of human artifacts and other material they left behind.

Artifact—A manmade object in a historical or cultural context.

Back Dirt—Soil that's left over after excavation and is assumed to be of no further archaeological use. Back dirt is often used for back fill (see below) after a dig has been completed.

Back Fill—Once a dig is over, this is dirt used to fill in gaps and holes created during the excavation of the area. See "Back Dirt" above.

Bronze Age—Roughly 3,000 to 1,000 BC in prehistory. Followed by the Iron Age (see below). (Stone Age→Bronze Age→Iron Age)

Catastrophism—An approach to the study of the ancient world that allows for catastrophic events (like the Noachic Flood) and other interruptions in natural processes. The present, then, isn't always a reliable key to the past. See "Uniformitarianism" below.

Civilization—A complex society characterized by urban development, shared language and communication, laws, and political structures.

Culture—An umbrella term encompassing commonly-held beliefs, behavior, and norms of a human society.

Dating—Any one of several methods used to determine when an item was made or when a society was active.

Deluge—The Noachic Flood described in the biblical Book of Genesis, regarded by many evangelicals and others as having been worldwide in scope.

Deposit—An artifact (e.g., a sherd, bone, or tool) left in the archaeological record.

Dig—An archaeological site (see "Site" below).

Digging—Removing layers of sediment and/or debris that have, over time, covered the remains of a society or civilization.

Excavation—Careful, methodical exploration and analysis of a site, accomplished by digging, to uncover, preserve, and study relics.

Field Survey (or Survey) See "Survey" below.

Flotation—The use of water to separate out tiny particles (e.g., pollen) in dirt that can't be sifted with a sieve (see "Matrix" and "Sifting" below).

Grid—Organizing a dig by dividing the site up into smaller squares.

Iron Age—The period following the Bronze Age (see above) when metallurgy advanced and the use of iron became widespread. David and Solomon lived in the early part of the Iron Age. (Stone Age→Bronze Age→Iron Age)

Law of Superposition—The common-sense assumption that in the absence of other forces at work (e.g., volcanic activity, earthquakes, flooding, fault-line shifting), the deepest layers or strata are the oldest.

Material Culture—The physical leftovers from an ancient culture or society. See "Remains" below.

Matrix—The physical milieu (usually dirt) in which a culture's remains were deposited.

Old World—See "Prehistory" below.

Paleontology—The study of fossils.

Prehistory—Anything dating from before the time when written records were kept.

Pre- (Ante-)/Post-Diluvian—Before/after the Noachic Flood.

Provenance—Earliest known history of an object or artifact.

Provenience—See "Three-Dimensional Context" below.

Pseudo-archaeology—Efforts of amateur, pretend "archaeologists" to manipulate facts and data to support an agenda, often for profit. Examples include bogus (unsubstantiated) claims by some individuals or groups to have discovered such important artifacts as Noah's Ark, Pharaoh's chariot wheels, the "real" Temple Mount, the "real" Mount Calvary, or the Ark of the Covenant.

Relic—A recovered object or artifact of archaeological, religious, or historical interest.

Remains—Physical evidence left behind by a culture or society. See "Material Culture" above.

Sherd/Shard—A piece of broken pottery recovered from a dig.

Sifting—Running dirt through a screen or sieve to separate out small artifacts. Dr. Gabriel Barkay has made extensive use of sifting in his work on back dirt (see above) from the Temple Mount since the early 2000s.

Site—A geographical area or tell (see below) where archaeological excavation is taking (or has taken) place.

Society—A group of individuals who live together and interact. See "Culture" above.

Stone Age—The earliest period of prehistory (pre-3,000 BC) before bronze and iron implements were used. (Stone Age→Bronze Age→Iron Age)

Strata—Layers of sediments, soils, and material culture at an archaeological site. See "Law of Superposition" above.

Survey (or Field Survey)—Locating a potential site by walking an area and looking around for surface clues indicating earlier human habitation.

Tell (Tel)—A hill or mound formed by the stratified remains of a series of earlier human settlements. *Tell* is the Arabic word for "tall" (تال).

Terminus Ante Quem—Earliest possible date when something could have been made or deposited at a site.

Terminus Post Quem—Latest possible date when something could have been made or deposited at a site.

Three-Dimensional Context—The location, function, and date of an archaeological find. Also referred to as "Provenience."

Uniformitarianism—An approach to the study of the ancient world that assumes natural processes like erosion, sedimentation, radioactive decay, and even the passage of time itself, have always occurred at the same rate as they do today. With this assumption, its advocates believe the present becomes the key to the past. Contrasted with Catastrophism (see above).

Ziggurats—Ancient, pyramid-like, terraced, stone structures that served as elevated platforms for Sumerian, Assyrian, and Babylonian temples in ancient Mesopotamia, as well as in other parts of the world.

10. New Dead Sea Scroll Caves

Since the discovery of the last Dead Sea Scroll cave north of Qumran more than 60 years ago, it was thought there were no more scroll caves or scrolls to be found. That changed in 2017-18 with the discovery of a new scroll cave to the south of Qumran. Cave 53 yielded seven scroll jars, pieces of linen wrappings and ties for the scrolls, even a unique stick used to pack the scroll jars, and a pair of pick axes used to make niches in the sides of the cave to hide the jars.

While no new scrolls were uncovered, probably due to their removal by the inhabitants of Qumran when they fled to Masada to escape the Roman invasion of their settlement in AD 68, the remains of the scroll jars in a collapsed cave nonetheless allow for the possibility that there could be some heretofore undiscovered scrolls in one of the 600 known caves in this area.

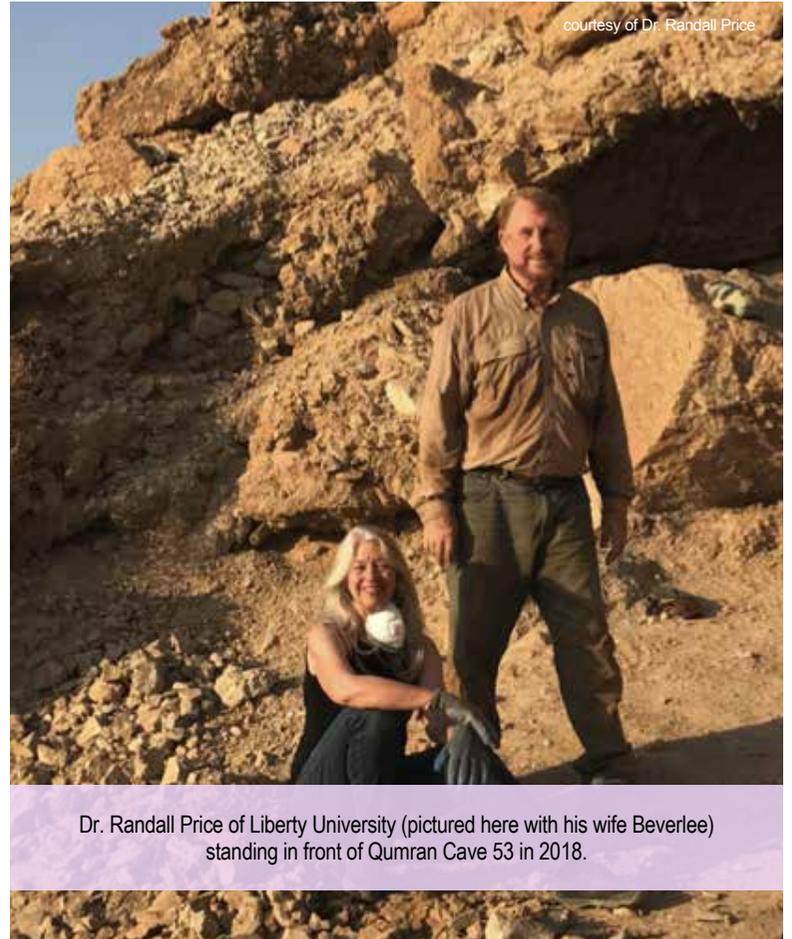
Dr. Randall Price of Liberty University (pictured here with his wife Beverlee) and Dr. Oren Gutfeld of Hebrew University made the original discovery and are continuing exploration and planned excavation of new caves as part of Operation Scroll.¹⁵

Conclusion

The “Prince of Preachers,” Charles Spurgeon, used to say that he would rather defend a lion than try to defend the Bible.¹⁶ His approach to apologetics was to unloose the Scriptures and let them defend themselves!

While the Bible doesn’t need us to defend it, it’s nonetheless true that archaeologists are in a unique position to confirm its accuracy. More than 125 years ago, a British scholar named George Pentecost expressed it like this:

But we claim no revelation given before the age of our race, and put forth no myth which antedates the history of earth and man. As far back as history goes the records of our faith are found. **Every turn of the archaeologist’s spade confirms the truth of them.** In this respect we are not ashamed of the Gospel. Its historical antiquity stands unrivaled among the religions of the world (emphasis added).¹⁷



Dr. Randall Price of Liberty University (pictured here with his wife Beverlee) standing in front of Qumran Cave 53 in 2018.



Dr. Gary Hedrick is president of C/JF Ministries.

¹ For information about the Temple Mount Sifting Project, see tmsifting.org/en. After a two-year pause, they are active once again and are recruiting volunteers.

² For more information about the location of the ancient Temples in Jerusalem, see “Where Did Solomon Build the Temple?” by Gary Hedrick in *Messianic Perspectives* (December-January-February, 2016-2017) in the archives at cjfm.org/resources.

³ “Did I Find King David’s Palace?” by Eilat Mazar in the January/February 2006 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* (BAR) at bib-arch.org. Professor Mazar credits her grandfather, the famed Israeli archaeologist Benjamin Mazar (1906-1995), with instilling in her a love and respect for the Hebrew Scriptures as the Word of God.

⁴ It was a novel idea because her approach presumes that the Scriptures are historically trustworthy, even in geographical and historical details. Many archaeologists these days reject Mazar’s “high” view of Scripture—yet she’s the one uncovering these remarkable sites!

⁵ It sounds like the beginning of a joke, but it’s actually very serious. “A Jew, an Early Christian and a Roman Meet in Archaeological Park to Be Built on Evacuated Prison” by Ruth Schuster in *HaAretz Israel News* (May 9, 2018) at haaretz.com.

⁶ See *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* by Bart Ehrman (New York City: HarperOne Publishers, 2014).

⁷ Proto-Canaanite is an early, Phoenician-like form of written Hebrew.

⁸ “Ancient Jewish Tablet Found,” CBS News (January 13, 2003) at cbsnews.com.

⁹ The Hebrew word *Tanakh* (T-N-K) is an acronym derived from the three main divisions of the Hebrew Bible: *Torah* (the five Books of Moses), *Nevi’im* (the Prophets), and the *Ketuvim* (the Writings).

¹⁰ “Elusive biblical wall found at last, scholar says” by Regan E. Doherty (Associated Press, 11/29/2007) at nbcnews.com.

¹¹ There was a series of pools at Siloam, each dating from a different era. The original pool was constructed during the time of King Hezekiah (and has yet to be found), but the pool mentioned in John 9 dates to the latter part of the Second Temple Period (the time of Jesus and His early followers), and its site was unearthed in 2004. A third pool dates to the Byzantine period and was probably built to commemorate the healing that took place at the biblical site. See “Where Is the Original Siloam Pool from the Bible?” in the May 22, 2018, edition of *Bible History Daily* (published by the Biblical Archaeology Society) at biblicalarchaeology.org.

¹² “Herodium: The Tomb of King Herod Revisited” by Noah Wiener in the March 2, 2017, edition of *Bible History Daily* (published by the Biblical Archaeology Society) at biblicalarchaeology.org.

¹³ “The Christian Flight to Pella: True or Tale?” by Stephen Bourke in *Biblical Archaeology Review* (39:3, May/June 2013) at baslibrary.org.

¹⁴ The believers’ flight to Pella isn’t recorded anywhere in the NT, but it was reported by the fourth-century church historian Eusebius of Caesarea.

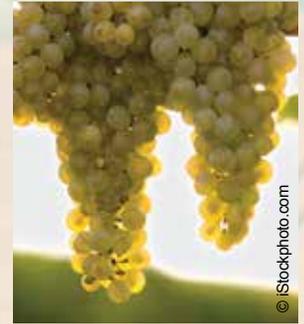
¹⁵ “Archaeologists Are Looking for Dead Sea Scrolls Inside 2 Newfound Qumran Caves” by Owen Jarus in *Live Science* (November 30, 2018) at livescience.com.

¹⁶ Here’s the quote: “I believe the best way of defending the Gospel is to spread the Gospel! . . . Suppose a number of persons were to take it into their heads that they had to defend a lion, a full-grown king of beasts! There he is in a cage, and here come all the soldiers of the army to fight for him. Well, I would suggest to them, if they would not object and feel that it was humbling to them, that they should kindly stand back, open the door, and let the lion out!” (*The Complete Works of C.H. Spurgeon*, Volume 42: Sermons 2446-2497 [Harrington, Delaware: Delmarva Publications, 2012]).

¹⁷ “The Present Outlook of Religions,” a paper presented by Rev. George F. Pentecost to the British Parliament; in *World’s Congress of Religions: The Addresses and Papers Delivered Before the Parliament* (London: J.W. Keeler, 1894), 632.

Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



The Connection

Richard Hill, CJFM representative and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation (Las Vegas), considers it a blessing to be welcomed by churches in the Southwest who schedule him to teach the Jewish roots of Christianity. He explains that his ministry is twofold: reaching “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” with the Gospel message, and enlightening Gentiles to the Jewish roots of Christianity. Rich’s messages include teachings on “Messiah in the Passover,” “Israel in Prophecy,” and “Israel Today.” He incorporates the Gospel of Jesus Christ into all his messages and gives an altar call at the end of each service. In the last couple months, 14 individuals in these churches have prayed with Rich to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. He writes: “We are praising the Lord that many people are seeing, for the first time, the Lord’s connection between salvation and the Jewish roots of Christianity. Please pray for the spiritual growth of these new believers.”

Rich and his outreach team visit the shopping malls in Las Vegas with a special ministry—looking for opportunities to share the Gospel message with the Jewish Israelis who work at many of the kiosks. The team wears colorful “I Love Israel” T-shirts, and always receives a warm reception from the Jewish Israelis who love the T-shirts. In just a couple of summer months, the team was able to share the Good News with 30 Jewish Israelis, hand out many “I Love Israel” T-shirts, and even distribute a few Hebrew New Testaments. “Daniel,” manager of one of the kiosks and an Orthodox Jewish Israeli, asked a member of the team (Pastor Cooper) for a T-shirt. It led to a half-hour discussion with the team about Yeshua (Jesus) and the tri-unity of God. He did not believe but did listen to verses in the Old Testament and discussed in a good spirit. Two of his workers also asked for T-shirts, and they, too, listened to an explanation of the Gospel message. Daniel told the group that he has seen them in the malls for the past 13 years, and that they “were committed in a good way.” Rich adds, “It is truly amazing and a blessing to see and be a part of this T-shirt ministry, which really opens the door for us to share the Good News. Please pray for the salvation of all of the Jewish Israelis we have shared Yeshua with this summer.”

A Double Blessing

Michelle Beadle, CJFM representative (New Orleans), relates that two Jewish women told her they were invited to attend a *Messianic* Jewish Passover Seder during their vacation last year. It was the first time for both of them, and they said the experience touched them deeply. Upon returning home, they decided to search for a Messianic Jewish congregation. It was there—at that congregation—that Michelle first met them. Following the service, the three women “schmoozed” (chatted) and subsequently exchanged personal contact information. Since then, both

women have been meeting with Michelle for a Messianic Prophecy Scripture study, a series which Michelle has written. During one of those Bible studies, they realized, personally, that Yeshua (Jesus) was none other than the Promised Messiah of Israel, and both women prayed with Michelle to receive Yeshua as their Messiah. They are growing spiritually, and recently proclaimed their faith through water immersion. Michelle writes: “Praise God for the opportunity to sow into the lives of others. It is a blessing to see them grow in Messiah.”

No More Doubts

CJFM representative Eric Chabot (Columbus, OH), shares the following testimony about what the apologetics ministry at Ohio State University (OSU) meant to the former president of the student ministry on campus:

Eric, the ministry at OSU anchored my faith when I was in a very low place, spiritually. I was isolated, anxious and backsliding. I tended to put more faith in my doubts than in what I knew I believed. The weekly meetings more than balanced the explicit anti-Christianity teaching of my science professors. What we discussed in those meetings reinforced my sense of awe and reverence for God, the Creator. Time and again, it helped restore my confidence in the God of the Bible. I graduated two years ago, in 2016.

This month I went on a mission trip to a post-Communist country with a team from my church. I discussed apologetics with the students, some of whom have been challenged for their faith in school. I told them some of what I had learned, and I credit most of my understanding to the apologetics and outreach ministry at OSU. Thanks, Eric, for your faith, patience, consistency and diligence. For inviting speakers and hosting debates. For the pizza. May God bless you many times over for the investment you made in us. I know it’s been a while, but I wanted to let you know I really appreciated everything! – J.

“Not Much”

Diann Parkas, CJFM representative (New Jersey), recently shared her testimony at a nursing home she had never been to before. Upon finishing, Diann greeted some of the people in attendance. One of the women told her that she was Jewish. When Diann asked her what she thought about Jesus, the woman replied, “Not much.” She added that she participates in whatever events are going on in the home so that she won’t get bored. Diann already has plans to return and share more with this woman about Jesus and how Jewish it is to find salvation in Him—the Promised Messiah of Israel. Diann asks that we “pray for God to open the woman’s eyes to the truth of His Word, and to her own need for the Savior.” Also, please pray that Diann would obtain an “approved” status so that she could participate as a featured speaker at evangelistic women’s events and home Bible studies. 🌿



ISRAEL TOUR FAQ

How much does a tour to Israel cost?

Maybe less than you think. Amazingly, fuel costs today aren't much more than they were 20 years ago, so airline tickets (coach, round-trip) on most airlines hover around the \$1,000 mark, in a range from \$600 to \$1,400 or so. Ground arrangements, once you arrive in Israel, will add another \$2,000–\$4,000, depending on the itinerary. So, the cost of a tour (air + ground) ranges roughly anywhere from \$3,000 to \$5,500 USD per person (double occupancy). With some advance planning, most people can manage it. There's an additional charge for single occupancy (one person to a room). A luxury tour includes the very best of everything and can cost up to \$10,000 or more—but splurging like that isn't necessary in order to enjoy a superb, life-changing tour experience.

Could I visit Israel on my own and save some money?

Yes, of course, you could do your own tour. But it will probably end up costing you more than you'd spend on an organized tour. Over the years, we've had friends who have tried the “do-it-yourself” approach; however, by their own admission, they ended up spending more money (and seeing fewer sites) than they would have on one of our tours.

Who plans your tours?

Great question. Planning is critical to the success of a tour. Our tours are custom planned in-house by Rick and Shaunett Higbee. Rick has helped plan and lead more than 25 CJFM excursions to Israel since the mid-1990s, both large and small, and his wife, Shaunett, is a Jewish believer who's a licensed travel agent. We also utilize the services of partners in Israel like Sar El Tours and America-Israel Tours, among others. The Higbees routinely monitor what other tour operators are doing and they keep up with the latest trends in the tour industry.

I found an Israel tour online that's cheaper than yours.

It's not hard to operate a cheap tour if you're willing to cut corners. John Ruskin, the 19th century English critic and essayist, reportedly said, “There is scarcely anything in the world that some man cannot make a little worse and sell a little more cheaply. The person who buys on price alone is this man's lawful prey.”

There are several ways tour operators can economize:

1. Use cheaper hotels.
2. Pack more people on older or smaller buses.
3. Spend fewer days actually touring.
4. Go to more sites that have no admission fee.

There's nothing wrong with economizing—within reason, of course. We stay at hotels we're familiar with where there's a good balance between quality and value. We do business with people in Israel whom we've known for years—so there are no surprises. We don't want our people to feel crowded on the bus; so even though a typical tour bus will seat up to 50-52 people, we limit each bus to approximately 35 passengers.

If you find a tour online that's significantly less expensive than ours, there's got to be a reason. Proceed with caution. Be sure you're comparing apples with apples.

Will we go to any dangerous places?

No. The Israelis are the best in the world when it comes to keeping people safe. Our buses are equipped with radios and our guides all have cell phones, so they can be in touch with Israeli security services instantly, if need be. Statistically, you're safer in Israel than you are in many American cities!

Am I too young/old to go on one of your tours?

We've had people on our tours varying in age all the way from one (a nursing baby) to 86. (Our longtime friend, Claudia Topps of Anchorage, Alaska, went to Israel with us nine times over a 20-year period and did her last tour at age 86.) If you're reasonably able-bodied and can do a moderate amount of walking, you'll be fine (see “clothes/shoes” below). If you have a medical condition, we would request a note of release from your physician stating that you're cleared to participate. Older participants often bring a younger friend or family member with them—not a bad idea. Minors (age 17 or younger) must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.



What else should I know?

- **Daily travel updates will be posted online during the tour.** We typically do this on our website (cjfm.org) and on our Facebook page (facebook.com/cjfmministries). Sometimes, depending on available bandwidth, there may even be a live feed from the tour bus—and you can tell your family and friends when they can tune in. Before you depart, make sure your loved ones know they can keep track of you online.
- **Leave contact information.** You'll receive a list of your hotels (with phone numbers) in your final information packet prior to departure. It will also include your tour leader's mobile/text number. Leave this information with family members in case something urgent arises while you're in Israel and they need to contact you.
- **Pastors/church staff can go "free."** Take a church group and you can receive a "free" trip for every 15 paying passengers. If your group is at least 30 people, for instance, two people (e.g., the pastor and his wife) can travel free of charge. Write to Rick for more details (rickh@cjfm.org).
- **Cell phones work in Israel.** There's a wide array of options for telecommunications while you're in the Land. Did you know that Motorola invented the cell phone in Israel? They have towers in all populated areas, so coverage is quite good. However, you should contact your carrier ahead of time to check on rates for overseas calling and data roaming. Most services (like Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile, and Sprint) offer international plans with lower rates between Israel and North America. Also, when you're on a local wireless network in Israel (at a hotel or coffee shop, for instance), you can use apps like FaceTime to call home with Internet calling free of charge. Most hotels offer Wi-Fi at little or no charge.
- **Don't overpack.** Sometimes, a tour member will bring two big, bulky suitcases bulging with outfits—a different one for every day of the tour. This really isn't necessary. Some hotels have a self-service laundry available, and most seasoned travelers have mastered the art of washing items of clothing in the hotel sink when necessary. In the desert climate, most clothing dries easily overnight.
- **Always keep your passport with you on tour.** Don't lose it. It's your ID while you're in Israel and it's your "ticket" back into the US/Canada when you return home. When you pass through border control and enter the country in Tel Aviv, you'll receive a little piece of paper that you should keep with you because you'll need it later when you're leaving the country. So, we recommend keeping it tucked snugly inside your passport.
- **Clothes/shoes.** On some days, there will be religious sites where women must be dressed modestly in order to be admitted (no shorts or bare arms/shoulders). We will tell you in advance which days these are. Otherwise, wear clothing that's appropriate for the season. During the winter months, for example, it can get rather chilly in the evenings, especially in Jerusalem—down into the 30s or 40s sometimes—so you'll want to bring a jacket if you're planning to go out and do any socializing at night. The summers are hot during the day, so you'll want to wear light, airy clothing. A hat (and sunblock) will help prevent sunburn in any season. Regarding shoes, bear in mind that you'll be doing a good bit of walking each day. Consider wearing a comfortable, broken-in pair of tennis shoes or something similar. On our final evening in Israel, we have a Farewell Banquet at the hotel and some of our folks enjoy dressing up for it.
- **Bringing cash.** It's not necessary to carry a lot of cash with you on the tour. Most stores and gift shops in Israel accept your credit or debit cards. You might want to check and see if your credit card charges a foreign transaction fee (FTF, usually around 3%) for overseas purchases (some do, and some don't). If you'd like to avoid the FTF on purchases in Israel, consider using a card that doesn't have one.
- **No visa required.** All you need for travel to Israel is a valid passport. If your current passport expires within six months of your dates of travel, we strongly recommend that you apply for a new one.

More info available online. Check our CJF Ministries tours page at cjfm.org/cjfm-tours/2020-tour/ for more details about upcoming tours and the tour ministry in general. The Israel Ministry of Tourism also maintains a helpful and informative website at israel.travel.

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CJF Ministries®

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There has been a lot of talk recently about the next generation. This is especially true in churches and more importantly for us, in Messianic Congregations. The current generation of leaders is getting ready to step down. Will the next generation step up?

Yes, and CJF Ministries has developed a two-year program to help them succeed. It's called Leading Others (LO). Leading Others is designed to mentor and train while providing community and ministry opportunities to the next generation of Messianic leaders.

We've already launched the program and our first candidate, Kyle, will graduate this September. With two years of mentoring and training with Messianic leader, Irving S., he's prepared and ready to begin his next ministry.

Two other young men are enrolled in LO, both Israelis, and are currently studying in the US. When their education is complete, they will go back to begin their ministries in the Land.

We are more than excited and blessed to play a part in the ministry of these three young men. We hope you are excited as well, reaching God's Chosen People through congregations and churches with well-trained leaders. We also hope you will partner with us in helping to fund our goal of a self-sustaining Leading Others Legacy Fund. Training future leaders is a huge undertaking. We welcome your prayers and also gifts to the fund—large or small. For more information, contact Rob Styler at robs@cjfm.org or (602) 769-1133.