

ZEITAH EXCAVATIONS 2011



The Zeitah Excavations, sponsored by Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, continue this summer

in Tel Zayit, Israel. Launched in 1999, the international team of professional staff and volunteers excavate under the direction of Ron E. Tappy, G. Albert Shoemaker Professor of Bible and Archaeology and director of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary's James L. Kelso Bible Lands Museum. Among this year's team are six Pittsburgh Seminary students and one recent graduate.

One of the major goals of The Zeitah Excavations consists in clarifying our understanding of life in a typical town setting in ancient Israel. The Zeitah Excavations incorporates a full-scale program of field exploration and study. In addition to learning field methodology by working side-by-side with internationally-known professional archaeologists on-site, volunteers participate in an academic curriculum that addresses specific aspects of archaeological work, as well as more general themes related to the study of life in ancient Israel. The Zeitah Excavations foster a greater understanding of the literature of the Bible and a more intimate knowledge of Israel's historic past. Volunteers have unearthed remains dating from the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2000-1550 B.C.E.) to the Crusader and Ottoman periods.

During the 2005 season excavators discovered a rare find: an inscription securely dated to the 10th century B.C.E. (the period of King Solomon's reign). The two-line inscription, incised on a 33-pound limestone boulder embedded in a stone wall, consists of the earliest known example of the complete Hebrew alphabet as it emerged from Phoenician on its way to becoming the mature Hebrew script. Scholars refer to this type of inscription as an abecedary. The first significant inscription from this period in nearly a century—and the only one found in a securely datable archaeological context—its discovery made world news and will make an important contribution to the heated debate over the history and literacy of the region in the 10th century B.C.E.

To learn more about The Zeitah Excavations, visit www.zeitah.net/index.htm. Visitors are also invited to learn more about previous Seminary-sponsored excavations—Bab edh Dhra, Tell Beit Mirsim, Bethel, and Tutul el Alayiq in the Kelso Bible Lands Museum at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The Museum is open during the summer Wednesday-Saturday 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Admission and parking are free. Visit www.pts.edu/Museum to learn more.

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is a graduate professional institution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). Founded in 1794, the Seminary is located in Pittsburgh, Pa. and approximately 320 students are enrolled yearly in the degree programs. The Seminary prepares leaders who proclaim with great joy God's message of good news in both word and deed. PTS is rooted in the Reformed history of faithfulness to Scripture and commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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