



CENTER FOR  
NEAR EASTERN  
ARCHAEOLOGY  
LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY

# La Sierra Digs

Newsletter of the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology | HMS Richards Divinity School | La Sierra University | Vol. 6:3 Autumn 2018

## 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Archaeology Discovery Weekend

**November 10-11 2018**

# Reinventing Biblical Archaeology

Results after 50 Years of Excavating in Central Jordan

Find out more at

[lasierra.edu/archaeology](http://lasierra.edu/archaeology)

### Schedule

#### Saturday, November 10

Illustrated presentations and discussions, Bedouin Hospitality Tent, authentic Jordanian Banquet, and more!

#### Sunday, November 11

Illustrated presentations and discussions, Kids Dig, hands-on displays and activities, and more!

### Locations

Center for Near Eastern Archaeology & Zapara School of Business at La Sierra University  
4500 Riverwalk Parkway  
Riverside CA, 92505

#### Saturday Lectures: 3:00—5:30 PM

#### What Fifty Years of Excavating in Central Jordan Have Taught Us

*Tall Hisban*—Øystein LaBianca, with contributions from Lawrence Geraty and Larry Herr

*Tall al-'Umayri*—Douglas Clark, with contributions from Larry Herr, Kent Bramlett, Monique Vincent

*Tall Jalul*—Randall Younker, with contributions from Paul Gregor, Paul Ray

Informal responses by panel of William Dever, Susan Ackerman, Andy Vaughn, and Beth Alpert Nakhai

#### Sunday Lectures: 1:00—5:00 PM

#### Reinventing Biblical Archaeology

*The Bible and Archaeology: A Marriage Made in Heaven?*—Tom Davis; responses by Beth Alpert Nakhai, Andy Vaughn, Lawrence Geraty

*Archaeology and the Bible: Strange Bedfellows or New Companions?*—William Dever; responses by Larry Herr, Kent Bramlett, Robert Mullins

Panel discussion on presentations and on the interface between the Bible and archaeology (past, present, and future)—co-chaired by Susan Ackerman and Douglas Clark

Find out more at [lasierra.edu/archaeology](http://lasierra.edu/archaeology)

p: (951) 785-2632 (CNEA)

e: [archaeology@lasierra.edu](mailto:archaeology@lasierra.edu)

For all weekend events,

register online at:

<https://lasierra.edu/>

[cnea/discovery-weekend/](https://lasierra.edu/cnea/discovery-weekend/)

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10<sup>th</sup> Annual Archaeology Discovery Weekend • Nov 10-11 2018

## Reinventing Biblical Archaeology

Results after 50 Years of Excavating in Central Jordan

### Archaeology Discovery Weekend 2018

Douglas Clark

As is pretty clear from the cover page of this issue of *La Sierra Digs* and from the CNEA website ([lasierra.edu/archaeology](http://lasierra.edu/archaeology)), the tenth annual edition of Archaeology Discovery Weekend will celebrate 50 years of archaeological research in Jordan by the Madaba Plains Project in the context of “biblical archaeology.” Fifty years of excavation in Jordan have displayed the wide-ranging contributions of this major Middle Eastern project. These five decades have also witnessed seismic shifts in the way archaeologists working in the Middle East relate their work to the Bible, if they do so at all.

The Saturday sessions will be dedicated entirely to the Madaba Plains Project. Each of the three major sites will be presented by the directors and specialists, followed by a panel of interested professional friends who have been encouraged to assess the project overall in terms of positive outcomes as well as critiques. The lectures will lead directly into the reception at the Jordanian Bedouin tent and our authentic Jordanian banquet. Sunday’s illustrated presentations and panel discussions, directed primarily by experts in the field of Near Eastern archaeology, will provide a history of biblical archaeology and lay out the groundwork for reinventing it.

And of course, as usual on Sunday, we will have a robust kids dig and hands-on lab activities, as well as refreshments and maybe even falafels cooked on the spot for sale.



### The 2019 Excavations at Khirbat Ataruz

Chang Ho Ji

Archaeological excavations at Khirbat Ataruz, an ancient Moabite site south of Madaba, Jordan, which is rich in cultic (religious) finds and installations, will take place 21 June through 7 July 2019. Few sites in the region can claim the same attention to cultic institutions and life as Ataruz.

Previous work at the site during the 2016 and 2017 seasons exposed a curious massive stepped-stone sequence on the surface of the eastern slope, ascending from the eastern access area of the temple complex westward up the hill toward the

temple itself and dating from the 9th century BC. Our working hypotheses included possible stairs leading to the temple complex, terraced agricultural footings, or stone courses used for defensive purposes. Evidence to this point indicates a stairway. Also dating to the 9th century BC was a walled food-preparation facility which functioned in connection with the temple.

The goals for the 2019 season are to continue exposing the massive staircase and exploring further the cultic remains of the temple. For more information on how to participate, contact me at: [cji@lasierra.edu](mailto:cji@lasierra.edu).



### The 2019 Excavations at Khirbat al-Balu'a

Monique Vincent, Kent Bramlett, Friedbert Ninow (Co-Directors)

The Balu'a Regional Archaeological Project (BRAP) will be back in the field at Khirbat al-Balu'a this summer from June 20 to August 2, 2019. The most extensive period of occupation at Balu'a dates to the Iron II period (1000–550 BC), when the city expanded to include a large, walled lower settlement. The Iron II settlement is impressive, with building walls preserved to over 6 feet in height and doorways with stone lintels still intact. One of these buildings was the focus of excavation in 2012 and 2017, with crushed storage jars and everyday household artifacts. An immense fortification wall circles the core of the settlement, excavated in one probe to a height of over 18 feet in 2017. An inner room in this wall contained a surprise—over 40 loom weights used in textile weaving! The 2017 excavations also included the site's largest feature, a massive standing structure called the Qasr, built in the Iron I period or earlier.

The 2019 season will continue work on these three key areas of the site. We will investigate everyday life, the society and economy, of the Iron Age by expanding our excavations of the Iron II house and fortification system. We will also work to establish the founding date of the Qasr and clarify its use over the centuries as an Iron Age and later Nabataean structure. We also plan to begin excavations of the Islamic village at Balu'a, establishing its role and importance in regional trade.

If you are interested in excavating this ancient Moabite city with our team, please email [mvincent@lasierra.edu](mailto:mvincent@lasierra.edu) for more information. For pictures and newsletters from the 2017 season, or for updates about the 2019 season, check out [www.facebook.com/BRAPJordan](http://www.facebook.com/BRAPJordan).

Panorama of Tall Hisban from the northeast. This view captures well the agricultural surroundings of the Madaba Plains as well as the site's size and elevation above the countryside. (Photo: S. Ullom)



### Fiftieth Anniversary Celebrations Coming to a Conclusion

*Douglas Clark*

The summer 2018 issue of *Spectrum* magazine marks one of the closing events of a year-long celebration of the Madaba Plains Project at 50 years of age (see *Spectrum*, Volume 46, Issue 3, pp. 69–84 or visit [spectrummagazine.org](http://spectrummagazine.org)).

Beginning at Andrews University in September 2017, several lectures and/or published articles have carried the weight of this extended celebration of an accomplishment very few archaeological projects anywhere can claim. The *Spectrum* issue signals a departure from these more left-brain approaches by focusing on the contributions of artists (in photography, drawing, painting, and poetry) who have been associated with MPP over the years.



The major event marking the conclusion, however, is Archaeology Discovery Weekend, as noted elsewhere in this issue of *La Sierra Digs*. However, more lecture events are in the works, including a presentation to the annual meeting of the Pacific Northwest (PNW) regional conference of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature scheduled for May 2019 at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, WA.

### Display Case

*Dawn Acevedo*

While “Display Case” normally focuses on small artifacts, this edition takes on something much larger: a *tholos* typical of those constructed by Herod the Great. The term *tholos* is used to describe a circular building with a domed or conical roof [see the author’s model at right].

Herod used the *tholos* as the form for the reception hall in his northern palace at Masada and in his third palace at Jericho. At Herodium, he utilized the form for his large tower atop the fortress, for a swimming pool pavilion in the lower complex, and as part of his mausoleum constructed on the north side of the man-made mountain. In Jerusalem, a Herodian-era mausoleum, likely built for Herod’s extended family, was also in the shape of a *tholos*.

Next quarter’s issue of *La Sierra Digs* will feature a more in-depth article on the *tholos*!



### Summer Bramlett (1970–2018)

*Kent Bramlett*

On Friday, September 14, my lovely wife, friend, and soul-mate, passed away at 9:53am (PDT). I was holding her hand and stroking her forehead as she breathed her last. I miss her terribly. She was diagnosed a month earlier with Stage IV pancreatic cancer.

Her spirit was so strong. The last words the team lead doctor said to me was, “Clearly she’s a fighter.” With pain sometimes more intense than labor without the epidural (her words) she never complained. She did pray, “Father, take this cup from me.” But she chose to fight, especially for her boys, and also for me. The most agonizing for her was the realization she wouldn’t get to see her two boys (8 and 11) grow up. She had so many plans. Plans for her family, plans for achievement, then plans for retirement with reading, gardening, writing, and watching the grandkids. To the end she was planning. Planning on how to help us manage without her.

We will all miss her in so many ways.

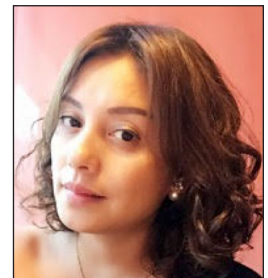
### Yan Yergen (1975–2018)

*Norman Yergen*

Yan Yergen was born in 1975 in Yichang, China, and we were married there on June 7, 2014. Our daughter, Yingzi Lixing, is a freshman at La Sierra University. On Sept. 15, 2018 Yan rested on the Sabbath from all her labors to await the resurrection to eternal bliss.

Words from our wedding: “I want morning and noon and nightfall with you. I want your tears, your smiles, your kisses... the smell of your hair... the touch of your breath on my face. I want to see you in the final hour of my life... to lie in your arms as I take my last breath.” The last night as I sang to Yan for the last time, “All to Jesus I surrender,” she squeezed my hand I kissed her . . . she lay in my arms and took her last breath.

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth, they will rest from their labor to await the resurrection.



## La Sierra Digs

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## Calendar of Events 2018-2019 [www.lasierra.edu/archaeology](http://www.lasierra.edu/archaeology)

10–11 November 2018

Tenth Annual Archaeology Discovery  
Weekend at the CNEA—MPP@50 focus!  
<https://lasierra.edu/cnea/discovery-week-end/>

21 June - 2 August 2019

BRAP Excavations at Khirbat al-Balua

21 June - 7 July 2019

Excavations at Ataruz

16-17 November 2019

Archaeology Discovery Weekend

## SUPPORT CNEA!

As this issue of La Sierra Digs makes clear, the Center for Near Eastern Archaeology at La Sierra University is on the move! And it needs your support for student travel scholarships, the new university museum, and ongoing operations. Please go online at <https://lasierra.edu/donate> and click on “Center for Near Eastern Archaeology” to make your contribution. Or contact the Office of University Advancement at (951) 785-2500. Thank you!

## Recent Discoveries

Assembled by Monique Vincent

### A Year's Discoveries in Review

A recent article by *The Jerusalem Post* reviews some of the highlights in archaeological discoveries in Israel over the past year (by the Jewish calendar, 5778). These discoveries include the seal attributed to the prophet Isaiah, the Roman theater of Jerusalem, decapitated frogs, and more. For more details, head to <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Israeli-archaeological-finds-that-uncover-500000-years-of-Jewish-history-567649>.

### Hellenistic Letters Sealed in Clay

Excavators at Maresha, a Hellenistic (3rd–2nd centuries BC) city southwest of Jerusalem, discovered a subterranean room full of over 1,000 bullae – clay seals used to secure a papyrus document or letter. While the fragile papyrus has long since crumbled into dust, the seals remain. The sealings feature imagery familiar from the Greco-Roman mythological and everyday world, including Apollo, Aphrodite, and animals. These bullae attest to the multi-cultural world experienced by the inhabitants of Hellenistic Judea. Read more at <http://huc.edu/news/2018/09/04/hundreds-hellenistic-period-seal-impressions-discovered-maresha-israel> and find photos of the seals at <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/israel/1000-ancient-letter-seals-found-in-beit-guvrin-national-park/2018/09/17/>.

### Church of Nicaea Discovered Underwater

In 325, Emperor Constantine assembled church leaders at the Council of Nicaea to discuss church doctrines and practices. In the last few years, archaeologists discovered the basilica that hosted this council 10 feet under the surface of Lake Iznik in Turkey. They have been excavating this underwater site and working to preserve it in a museum. For more details, plans, and photographs: <https://www.livescience.com/63498-ancient-church-hidden-in-turkey-lake.html>.