



# TEL ABEL BETH MAACAH ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT, ISRAEL

*Course ID: ARCH 350i*  
*JUNE 24–JULY 20, 2018*

## FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTORS:

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## INTRODUCTION

As a city that guarded the northern approaches into ancient Israel, Tel Abel Beth Maacah has long been of interest to scholars. Moreover, the tell's multi-layered character, hiding the secrets of past Bronze and Iron Age cultures, makes this site a potential source of new and rich information about the past. Throughout its long history, Abel Beth Maacah has sat in a border zone between various ethnic, cultural, and geopolitical groups. In the second millennium BCE, these included Canaanites, Hurrians, and Hittites. In the first millennium, they involved the polities of Israel, Phoenicia (Lebanon) and Aram (Syria). An imposing mound on a strategic crossroads just south of present-day Metulla on the border with Lebanon, the tell is roughly 4.5 mi/6 km west of Tel Dan, 18.5 mi/30 km north of Tel Hazor, 22 mi/35 km from Tyre on the Lebanese coast, and 43.5 mi/70 km from Damascus. The site appears in second millennium BCE Egyptian sources. During the first millennium BCE, it is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as a city loyal to King David in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and was later conquered by the Arameans and the Neo-Assyrians in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, respectively. 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars like Edward Robinson

and Victor Guerrin were the first to propose the identification of the Arab town of Abil el-Qameh with Abel Beth Maacah. The mound comprises a small lofty upper tell in the north and a large flat lower tell in the south.

A brief survey in 2012 followed by five seasons of excavations (2013–2017) have revealed rich remains from the Middle Bronze, Late Bronze and Iron Ages, as well as intermittent occupation later on. During Middle Bronze Age II and Iron Age I the entire site was densely occupied, while only parts of the mound appear to have been settled in the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age II, and later periods. Of particular interest for this project is the discovery of an intense Iron I and Iron IIA (1200-800 BCE) occupation sequence with strata containing significant finds. These include a cultic structure with standing stones from early Iron Age I, a unique and extensive administrative-cultic-industrial (metallurgical) complex of late Iron Age I, and a casemate structure that may have been part of a citadel on the upper mound from Iron IIA. These abundant finds shed new light on the social and political interaction between the Arameans, Israelites, and Phoenicians at a crucial period of time between the demise of the Late Bronze Age city-state system (dominated locally by Hazor) and the rise of the Iron Age II territorial kingdoms (particularly Aram and Israel) so well-documented in the Bible and in extra-biblical sources. The excavated finds from these periods are examined within the theoretical framework of various models of state formation (i.e., voluntary versus coercion, bottom up or top down, etc.), borrowed from the field of political science and sociology. A dearth of archaeological data from neighboring southern Lebanon and southern Syria during the Iron Age can now be illuminated by the discoveries from Tel Abel Beth Maacah.

During the 2018 season we will continue to expose Iron Age I and II remains in the upper and lower tell (Areas A and B). One key goal is to fine-tune the occupation sequence and its absolute chronology. We also want to better understand the nature and function of the Iron Age I public complex in Area A, whose unique architecture was violently destroyed at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE, as well as the Iron II casemate structure in Area B, whose finds included imported Phoenician Bichrome pottery, a unique faience figurine head of a bearded male executed in what appears to be an eclectic Egypto-Syrian style, and evidence of metal-working and storage (stone-lined silos). An additional goal will be to open a new area (Area R) in the center of the narrowest part of the lower tell in order to explore the occupation sequence in this still unexcavated part of the mound. Topographically, this area can potentially contain a gate complex, with even the possibility of inscriptions, as were found at the neighbor site of Tel Dan.

#### ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

**Credit Units:** Attending students will be awarded 8 semester credit units (equivalent to 12 quarter credit units) through our academic partner, Connecticut College. Connecticut College is a private, highly ranked liberal arts institution with a deep commitment to undergraduate education. Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field school (see grading assessment and matrix). This field school provides a minimum of 160 direct instructional hours. Students are encouraged to discuss the transferability of credit units with faculty and registrars at their home institutions prior to attending this field school.

**Transcripts:** An official copy of transcripts will be mailed to the permanent address listed by students on their online application. One additional transcript may be sent to the student's home institution at no additional cost. Additional transcripts may be ordered at any time through the National Student Clearinghouse: <http://bit.ly/2hvurkl>.

#### COURSE OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this field school is to introduce students to the archaeological process as widely practiced throughout the Middle East. This includes methods of excavation, analysis and interpretation

of the stratigraphy, and recording methods. Every site presents its unique challenges, so students will learn how to adjust field strategies and make proper inferences from the material culture. Students will also have opportunities to learn in the evening lecture environment from well-respected archaeologists and specialists. In some case, students may be able to use primary material collected during the dig for their own academic goals and research.

Students will participate in the following research activities:

**Excavation:** Students will learn how to set up an excavation grid, use a manual transit and a Total Station to survey and document finds in the field, draw and conduct daily top plans, record the provenience of archaeological finds, fill out locus and wall forms, interpret stratigraphic relationships, carry out data entry, catalog artifacts, draw stratigraphic sections and write a field report.

**Laboratory activities:** At the kibbutz, students must participate in a variety of afternoon tasks, including regular pottery washing and sorting, the cleaning of faunal remains collected from the field, as well as collecting microarchaeological remains through wet sieving and flotation techniques.

### **PREREQUISITES**

There are no prerequisites for participation in the field school. The skills and methods of archaeological excavation will be learned first-hand by working in the field under a supervisor's guidance and getting hands-on experience. It is important that the student has a positive attitude and intellectual curiosity about the experience, and is aware that it entails hard physical labor in a hot climate with an intense time schedule, and requires both teamwork and personal responsibility. The work is hard and demanding, but the rewards are great.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

On successful completion of the field school, the student will be able to,

- Describe the various components of an archaeological field project and their proper relationship.
- Discuss the stratigraphy of the site and describe the relationship between layers and features.
- Apply proper excavation methods to archaeological contexts.
- Demonstrate how to use the proper tools appropriate to each context.
- Apply standard recording techniques to document excavation results.
- Process and analyze a selection of archaeological artifacts and ecofacts.

### **GRADING MATRIX**

30% - **Fieldwork.** Students must carry out daily activities assigned to them by the area supervisor and will be assessed on this basis. They must also demonstrate an ability to correctly use the excavation tools, correctly articulate a cultural feature, trim balks, and dry-sift as necessary. The student must also demonstrate that they can measure the provenience of an artifact, plot its find location on the daily top plan, read and calculate heights using a surveying level, fill out pottery tags, etc.

30% - **Laboratory.** Students must participate in late afternoon activities back at the kibbutz, including washing and sorting pottery, data entry, wet-sieving for microarchaeological remains, etc.

20% - **Field Journal.** Students must keep their own field journal that will be evaluated at the end of the course. The journal must include a daily sketch of your individual work area and a summary of the day's activities, including stratigraphic observations and a discussion of the significance of the finds as one learns more about them from the supervisors or directors. All journals will be returned to the students before departure.

20% - **Exam.** Students will take a mixed objective and short essay exam during the first week of the field school over the assigned reading. All mandatory reading must be finished before the dig begins.

### **TRAVEL & MEETING POINT**

All planes to Israel land at Ben Gurion International Airport (TLV) near Tel Aviv. Students are encouraged to arrive in Israel a few days early in order to sightsee in Jerusalem before the start of the dig. A private bus will take staff and students from the meeting point in Jerusalem directly to our lodging in **Kibbutz Kfar Szold**, at 13:00 on Sunday, June 24. We will provide instructions on how to get to the meeting point in Jerusalem, recommended places to stay, and a sample itinerary of activities.

If you arrive in Israel on Sunday, June 24, after the Jerusalem bus has left for the kibbutz, we will provide you with detailed travel instructions on how to take public transportation from the airport to the town of **Kiryat Shemonah**. When you arrive in Kiryat Shemonah, you will call or text a staff member who will pick you up at the bus station. The train or bus service in Israel is easily accessible and affordable. English is widely spoken and the chances are good that you will find French, German, Spanish, and Arabic speakers as well.

If you missed your connection or your flight is delayed, please call, text, or email a project director. A local emergency cell phone number will be provided to all students enrolled in the field school.

### **VISA REQUIREMENTS**

US citizens do not need a formal visa to enter Israel, but an onward or return ticket and proof of sufficient funds may be required for entry. Although the Israeli government does not require that a passport be valid for six months from the date of entry, airlines routinely do so and may decline boarding if a traveler has less than six months validity on his or her passport.

Travelers normally receive a free, three-month tourist visa upon arrival in Israel, which may be extended. It is important **not to say** that you are coming to Israel to work—they will understand that to mean you will be working for remuneration. Your function is as a **tourist** visiting various sites in Israel.

Israel no longer stamps passports with an entry stamp, but instead provides all travelers with an entry card, although travelers reserve the right to stamp the passport. All travelers should retain this entry card throughout the duration of their stay in Israel as it is their proof of lawful entry. Although not required for exit, travelers are advised to have their entry card to avoid delays when departing Israel.

Citizens of other countries should research the website of the Israeli Embassy in their home country for visa requirements.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students will live in comfortable and clean housing at Kibbutz Kfar Szold in the Hula Valley, a 15 minute ride from the tell and from the town of Kiryat Shemonah. Air-conditioned rooms accommodate three or four people and include an equipped kitchenette and a bathroom with a shower. Each room has a porch that opens to a communal lawn. Linens and towels are provided. Rooms are cleaned twice a week. Free Wi-Fi is available in the rooms. The kibbutz has a spring, a pool and a convenience store.

All meals are communal events and will provide plenty of nutritious food in the tradition of local Israeli cuisine, heavy on fresh fruits and vegetables, and may include hummus, tehina, falafel, and other local specialties, alongside the usual staples of chicken, meat, and fish. A rich breakfast buffet is served in the field during the week. Lunch and dinner take place in the kibbutz dining room. All meals on the weekend are in the kibbutz dining room. Bread, jam, and peanut butter are provided during the week to prepare an early-morning snack in your room. The food is kosher. We can accommodate vegetarian, gluten-free and vegan diets.

## **DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY**

Archaeological fieldwork involves physical work outdoors and conditions may be considerably different than what one is used to at home. Daily tasks will vary from lighter physical activity to more difficult duties like using a large pick and hoe, carrying buckets of earth, and pushing a wheelbarrow; however, we will take an individual's limitations into account when possible. While the site is located in a lush environment in Upper Galilee, temperatures can reach 90°F (32°C) during the day. We work under tarps that shelters one from the direct sun, but it is still important to wear protective clothing that covers your shoulders and a hat. Sunscreen and sturdy, closed-toe footwear is required. No sandals are allowed on the site. You may encounter scorpions, spiders, and occasionally snakes in the excavation areas.

If you have any medical concerns, please consult with your doctor. For all other concerns, please consult with the project director.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

Students are expected to arrive at the kibbutz on Sunday, June 24, 2018. There will be an orientation session after dinner, which includes a Hebrew University of Jerusalem mandated safety presentation. The excavations begin on Monday, June 25 and continue through July 20. During the week (Monday-Friday) we will be at the site from 5:00 until 13:00. In the afternoons, from 16:00 until 18:00, we will carry out the laboratory work. Mini-workshops on pottery identification and analysis, as well as other more specialized mini-workshops will take place in the afternoons. Evening lectures will take place 2-3 times per week at 18:00 before dinner in the air-conditioned dining room.

Weekends (Saturday-Sunday) are free to rest and relax. Weekend activities include swimming, kayaking on the Jordan River, and visits to nearby Tel Dan, Tel Hazor, and other sites of archaeological interest in the local region. The only scheduled weekend activities for students in the field school are two Sunday tours – one to sites around the Sea of Galilee (July 1) and the other to the Golan Heights (July 15).

### **Weeks 1-3 (June 25-July 13, 2018):**

Sunday	Students and staff arrive at Kibbutz Kfar Szold 17:30 – Preliminary introductions and orientation to the site 18:30 – Dinner in dining room 19:30 – Safety presentation and work assignments
Mon-Fri	4:15 – Rise-and-shine, eat light snack in rooms 4:45 – Bus departs for tell 5:15 – Work begins 7:15 – First break – teatime 9:00 – Group breakfast on site 9:30 – Work resumes 11:00 – Second break – juice/fruit break 12:45 – Work ends. Leave for bus and return to kibbutz 13:15 – Group lunch in kibbutz dining room 14:00 – Siesta (time to sleep, swim, relax, shop at the convenience store) 16:00 – Pottery washing, sorting, and workshop 18:00 – Lecture in dining room (2-3 times per week) 19:00 – Group dinner in dining room 20:00 – Dig office activities (rotating among students) 22:00 – Recommended bedtime

## **Week 4 (July 16-19)**

*Schedule may vary slightly depending on the circumstances for final photos and closing of the site*

- 4:00 – Rise-and-shine, eat light snack in rooms
- 4:45 – Take bus to site
- 5:00 – Help with cleaning and preparing assigned areas for final photographs
- 7:00 – First break – teatime
- 9:00 – Breakfast on tel
- 10:00 – Return to work
- 11:00 – Second break – juice/fruit break
- 12:00 – Begin cleanup
- 12:30 – Put away tools
- 12:45 – Leave for bus and return to kibbutz
- 13:30 – Lunch in dining room
- 16:00 – Help package finds for return to Jerusalem
- 19:00 – Dinner in dining room
- 20:00 – Rotating office activities
- 22:00 – Bedtime

## **Departure day (July 20)**

- 08:00 – Breakfast
- 10:00 – Must vacate rooms

Rooms must be vacated by 10:00 am on Friday, July 20 so plan your return flight accordingly. One can go to Jerusalem and spend more time before returning to the airport, or take public transportation to the airport. Buses and trains run on Friday until mid-afternoon. Allow 4-5 hours travel. We recommend an evening flight on July 20 or an early morning flight on July 21.

## **LECTURE SERIES**

Topics to be covered include:

- A Brief Introduction to Archaeological Field Methods
- Humans in the Hula Valley: The First Million Years
- Historical Geography of the Upper Galilee: The Long Durée Perspective
- The First Five Seasons of Excavation at Abel Beth Maacah
- The Things That You're Liable to Read in the Bible...Text and Spade in Iron Age Israel
- Arameans and Israelites: Friends and Foes
- A Condensed Guide to the Pottery of the Holy Land
- Pots and People: An Anthropological Approach to Ancient Technology
- Eat, Drink and be Merry: Feasting in the Archaeological Record
- Pick a Bone with Me: The Significance of the Bone and Ivory Tool Industry
- The Transition from Bronze to Iron: Not What You Expected
- Zooarchaeology: They Were What They Ate
- Archaeobotany: Ancient Weeds and Seed
- End of the Season Summary and Results

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Two full-day field trips to archaeological sites in the Galilee will include key sites of biblical interest in the region, among them Hazor, Dan, Megiddo and Beth Shean.

## EQUIPMENT LIST

### What to bring (a must):

- Work clothing. Work clothes should be sturdy, light in weight and color, and easy to wash. Since the sun is intense you may need to vary sleeve and pant lengths until you get into condition. Remember that loose clothing is more comfortable than close fitting, and that synthetic fibers tend to be hot. We do not permit excavating without a shirt for men or in a bathing suit for women. Even though we work under shade cloths, sun rays still penetrate and can badly burn exposed skin, so a high SPF sunscreen (50+) is a must. A good lightweight pair of work gloves will protect your hands. We recommend garden gloves with a coating of nitrile (a rubber-like film) on the palms and fingers.
- Work shoes. Sturdy and comfortable shoes are a must. The soles must be thick enough to provide protection from the rocks and an occasional curious scorpion. We discourage sneakers. Sandals are not allowed in the field – only closed shoes!
- Sun hat. A broad brim hat made from light breathable cotton is best.
- Casual clothing. For after work and on weekends. Dress in Israel tends to be informal. Don't forget your swim suit! A shawl or wrap-around skirt for women is advisable for visits to holy places in Jerusalem and at church sites around the Sea of Galilee.
- Canteen. Although we provide you with cold water in the field, you cannot drink from the common tank. Each person must fill their own canteen or water bottle with the cold water we provide. You will also find it useful for field trips and on weekends. An insulated water bottle holder is a good idea as well.

### HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Toiletry items

Medicine, prescription and other

Sunglasses

Swim suit

Towel and flip-flops (though towels are provided at the kibbutz)

Sunscreen of SPF50 or higher

Insect repellent

Clothesline and clothes pins

Liquid detergent in a plastic bottle (Handwashing soap for clothes available in the kibbutz store)

Flashlight

Alarm Clock

Reading material

Modest clothing (a wrap skirt and shawl for women and long pants for men) for day trips to churches, synagogues, mosques which require modest dress to enter them.

Camera

Personal computer/tablet. Free Wi-Fi is available on the kibbutz and also available – also free – at many coffee shops and public places; even on most buses and the train.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOOLS

Archaeological handpicks and trowels are available on site, so there is no requirement to buy your own; however, avid archaeology students often like to come with their own “dig kits”. A good resource is Forestry Suppliers at 1-800-647-5368 or <http://www.forestry-suppliers.com>. For Marshalltown pointed trowels, No. 45/4 is the best size; a “4 inch” blade. They can be bought in a few hardware stores, but they are harder to get these days. Avoid the cheap off-brands. A 45/4 pointing trowel (Stock number

53685 with a 4 x 2" blade) sells for around \$15. The 45/5 with a 5" blade is also good, but not as efficient as the shorter blades. You can also buy the high quality Ingalls Co. archaeological handpicks through Forestry Suppliers for \$60 (Stock number 33454). We recommend the "Detailer" or slightly wider "Surveyor" models. Mark your personal trowel or handpick with your name, initials, or some other identifier so you can easily find it in the dirt or if it gets accidentally picked up by someone else.

### MANDATORY READINGS

Students are required to read at least 200 pages prior to their arrival. The following will be available for download on the Abel Beth Maacah website one month in advance of the field school program.

- Arie, E. 2008. Reconsidering the Iron Age II Strata at Tel Dan: Archaeological and Historical Implications. *Tel Aviv* 35: 6–64.
- Berlejung, A. 2014. Arameans Outside of Syria: Palestine, Pp. 339–365 in: H. Niehr (ed.), *The Arameans in Ancient Syria*. Leiden/Boston.
- David, A., Mullins, R. and Panitz-Cohen, N. 2016. A *Mnxprra* Scarab from Tel Abel Beth Maacah. *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 9: 1–13.
- Dever, W.G. 1986. Abel-Beth-Maacah: Northern Gateway of Ancient Israel in L.T. Geraty/L.G.Herr (eds.), *The Archaeology of Jordan and Other Studies. A Presented to Siegfried H. Horn*, Berrien Springs 1986, 207–223.
- Mazar, B. 1961. Geshur and Maacah. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80/1:16–28.
- Mullins, R. A. *A Brief Introduction to Field Archaeology*. Abel Beth Maacah Archaeological Project.
- Na'aman, N. 2012. The Kingdom of Geshur in History and Memory, *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 26/1: 88–101.
- Panitz-Cohen, N., Mullins, R.A. and Bonfil, R., *Launching Excavations at Tell Abil el Qameh* (Abel Beth Maacah), *Strata* 31 (2013) 27–42.
- Panitz-Cohen, N., Mullins, R.A. and Bonfil, R., Second Preliminary Report of the Excavations at Tell Abil el-Qameh (Abel Beth Maacah), *Strata* 33 (2015) 35–60.
- Panitz-Cohen, N. and Mullins, R.A., Aram-Maacah? Aramaeans and Israelites on the Border: Excavations at Tell Abil el-Qameh (Abel-beth-maacah) in Northern Israel, Pp. O. Sergi/M.Oeming/I.J. de Hulster (eds.), *In Search for Aram and Israel: Politics, Culture and Identity*, Tübingen 2016.

### RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Aharoni, Y. *The Land of the Bible: An Historical Geography*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1981.
- Akkermans, P. and G. Schwartz, *The Archaeology of Syria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Ahlstrom, G. W. *The History of Ancient Palestine*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993.
- Ben-Tor, A. and R. Greenberg, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.
- Cline, E. H. *Biblical Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-19-534263-5 (General background in biblical and near eastern archaeology. It introduces the first explorers in the Holy Land, some controversies in archaeology, and gives a brief overview of the periods most closely related to biblical history.)
- Currid, J.D. *Doing Archaeology in the Land of the Bible: A Basic Guide*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999. ISBN: 0-8010-2213-4 (Introduces archaeological periods and emphasizes field techniques.)
- Dever, W. G. *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us About the Reality of Ancient Israel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.



- Dever, W. G. *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Faust, A. *Israel's Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion and Resistance.* Equinox, 2006.
- Finkelstein, I. and A. Mazar, *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel.* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-58983-277-0 (This book looks at the current debate on the historicity of the Bible by Israel's two most prominent archaeologists.)
- Finkelstein, I and N. A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origins of Its Sacred Texts.* New York: Free Press, 2002. ISBN-13: 978-0684869131.
- Hayes, J. H. and J. M. Miller, *Israelite and Judaeon History.* Westminster, 1977.
- King, P. and L. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel.* Westminster John Knox, 2001. ISBN: 978-0-66422-148-5.
- Liverani, M. *Israel's History and the History of Israel.* Oakville: Equinox, 2003.
- Mazar, A. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible.* New York: Doubleday, 1991. ISBN: 978-0-38542-590-2 (This is the standard college text in English for biblical archaeology.)
- Moorey, P. R. S. *A Century of Biblical Archaeology.* Westminster John Knox, 1991.
- Murphy-O'Connor, J. *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700.* 4th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. ISBN 0192880136.
- Pederson, J. *Israel: Its Life and Culture.* 4 vols. Oxford: Oxford University, 1940.
- Rainey A. and S. Notley, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World.* Jerusalem: Carta, 2005.
- Richard, S. (ed.) *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader.* Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003.
- Redford, D. B. *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1992.
- Matthews, V. *A Brief History of Ancient Israel.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
- Moscati, S. (ed.), *The Phoenicians.* I.B. Tauris, 2001.
- K. L. Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: An Introduction.* Sheffield: Sheffield University, 2001)
- Meyers, C. *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context.* Oxford: Oxford University, 1988.
- Stern, E. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible. Volume II. The Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian Periods, 732-332 BCE.* New York: Doubleday, 2001.
- Vaux, R. de *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Dove, 1997.
- Kessler, R. *The Social History of Ancient Israel: An Introduction.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.