

# Digging in Israel

## Faith, archaeology, and discovery

BY PHYLLIS EVANS

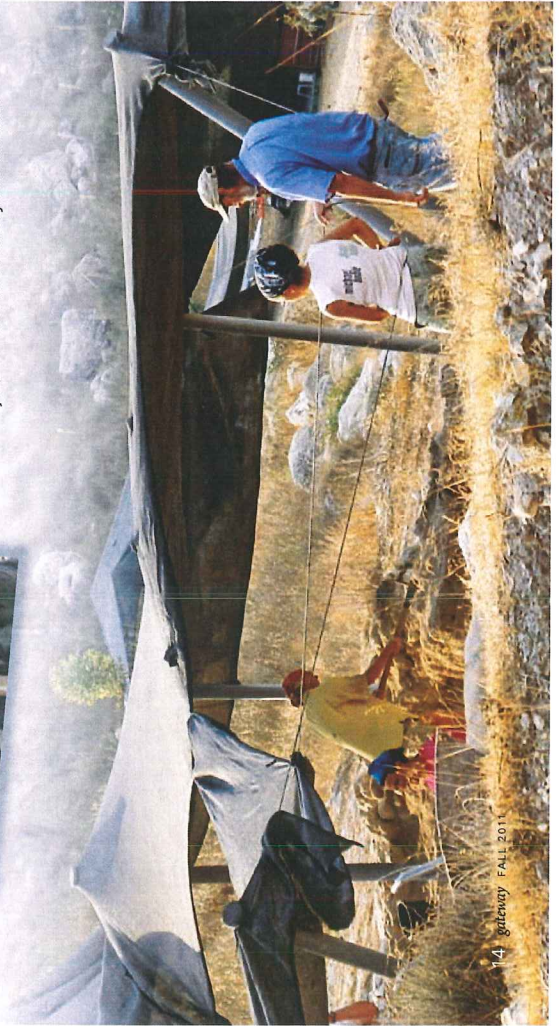


This summer professor Gary Arbino and some Golden Gate Seminary students and their spouses participated in the fifth season of the Tel Gezer excavations in Israel. The Marian Eakins Archaeological Collection (the museum) of Golden Gate Seminary has been a consortium member of this multi-disciplinary field project since excavations began in 2006. The project's continuing goal is to better understand the ancient city of Gezer – a major city of the biblical period, associated directly by the biblical text with King Solomon.

"This season we found substantial materials: buildings and fortifications dating to Solomon's time (ca. 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C.)," said Golden Gate Seminary professor of Archaeology and Old Testament Interpretation Gary Arbino, one of two field archaeologists who ran the day-to-day excavations in the semi-arid Judean lowlands.

"About 100 people excavated thirty 5x5 meter squares in two fields, uncovering materials and architecture dating from the Hellenistic period (ca. 200 B.C.) to the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1300 B.C.), with a focus on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries," Arbino reported.

Two Golden Gate students accompanied by their husbands joined Dr. Arbino for the five-week Tel Gezer project; Lila and Maoe Tjoe, with Julie Miller and Sylvan Eideleman.



"The landscape, the people, the artifacts – it gave me a connection with the people from that time period, an understanding of their way of life," said Lila Tjoe of her archaeology experience. "Seeing and touching the items that were uncovered: the pottery, olive press, even the bones they used to sharpen tools – it was very valuable and enriching for my personal and academic growth, especially as a student of the Bible."

"This project provided me with a unique opportunity for a hands-on experience in excavation as well as to be able to explore Israel, work and spend time with many serious students of archaeology, history, and the Bible," agreed Maoe Tjoe, who audited the course. "I gained knowledge on an intellectual level, insight on a spiritual level, and endurance on a physical level, all while interacting with many wonderful people from all over the U.S. and the world."

"My involvement with the dig gave me an appreciation of how the science of archaeology reveals the stories of a site's occupation and use," added Julie Miller. "Our discoveries informed my understanding of the ancient Near East and the world of the Bible. We found things like a potters' wheel, flints, juglets, and even a game board. Everyday items like slingshot balls, weights used on a loom, or basalt grinding stones were fairly common. Bones of all kinds of animals were also found where they were buried or tossed outside a room. These bones may tell what was eaten or what animals were domesticated."

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(Top) Lila uncovering a treasure in her square  
(Middle) Julie Miller with a pickaxe onsite at Tel Gezer  
(Bottom) Dr. Gary Arbino with field staff overlooking Field West, Tel Gezer



Digging through layers of human habitation is something like walking from the rim of the Grand Canyon to the Colorado River, Miller observed. In the canyon, you see the layers of sandstone change texture and color, and in a dig you see the changes in the dirt consistency as well as the pottery styles.

"The 2011 season at Tel Gezer was very successful and has produced much material for further research," said Arbino. "We were pleased to have these Golden Gate students and their spouses participate with us. They contributed much to the overall experience of the dig."

For information about participating (as a volunteer excavator or financial supporter), contact Dr. Gary Arbino at [garyarbino@ggbts.edu](mailto:garyarbino@ggbts.edu).



(Top) Clearing away dust before sunrise for better "soil reading"  
(Left) The GGBTS team as well as co-dig directors Dr. Sam Wolff of the Israel Antiquities Authority and Dr. Steven M. Ortiz from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
(Above) Tel Gezer archaeological finds