



THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG

Welcoming all who seek a Progressive vision of Jewish life

SHABBAT SHALOM

29 – 30 January, 2016

20 Shevat 5776

Parashat Yitro
(Exodus 18:1-20:23)

Rabbi Stanton M. Zamek
Rabbi Martha Bergadine, Education & Programming Director
Cantor Melissa Berman, Cantor/Programming Associate

From the Rabbi's desk

I want to express my gratitude to Prof. Aren Maeir for providing our chevre with such a wonderful introduction to the field of Biblical archaeology. Prof. Maeir's lectures may have left many of you hungry for something more than a taste of this fascinating field. With Prof. Maeir's input, I am happy to share the following resources for further inquiry. Dig in (pun intended) and enjoy!

1. The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant : 8000-332BCE comes with the Maeir seal of approval. This book will be a significant investment of time (it is 912 pages long) and money (175USD). There is an ebook version, but one should not expect it to be a bargain. Still, this is probably the most up to date one volume option available. Click here to have a look: (<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-oxford-handbook-of-the-archaeology-of-the-levant-9780199212972?cc=us&lang=en&>)

2. For a more accessible starting point for your studies, try Amihai Mazar's Archaeology of the Land of the Bible. Prof. Maeir cautions that this volume was written "before the big debates on chronology that Israel Finkelstein started." For most, this is probably the best option for an introduction to the subject. (http://www.amazon.com/Archaeology-Land-Bible-000-586-Reference/dp/030014007X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1453950597&sr=1-1&keywords=amihai+mazar)

3. You may want to supplement Mazar's book with: The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel. This book contrasts the views of Amihai Mazar and Israel Finkelstein and gives a nice snapshot on the state of play in mainstream Biblical archaeology. Our expert says that this is "a good option for those wishing to read one of the many versions of the debate." I have started reading the iBooks version and so far it is excellent. (http://www.amazon.com/Quest-Historical-Israel-Debating-Archaeology/dp/1589832779/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1453949666&sr=1-4&keywords=israel+finkelstein)

4. In the course of our discussions, Prof. Maeir confirmed my view that *Biblical Archaeology Review* can be a good resource, if one reads with a critical eye. The quality is uneven and the editors are prone to jumping to conclusions about new discoveries. So while this is a *caaveat emptor* situation, I do subscribe. The magazine has a digital version. (<http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/magazine/>)

5. I am a regular follower of the PaleoJudaica blog. Prof. James Davila, Professor of Early Jewish Studies at the Divinity School of the University of St. Andrews, posts nearly every day on a wide range of subjects, including Biblical archaeology. Have a look by going to (<http://paleojudaica.blogspot.hk>)

6. Prof. Maeir has his own blog - The Ackerman Family Bar-Ilan University Expedition to Gath Official (and Unofficial) Weblog. There is valuable information here about developments at Gath, but also interesting posts covering Biblical archaeology in general. Great stuff from a new friend of The UJC. There are also links on this site for those interested in volunteering at the excavation. (<https://gath.wordpress.com>)

This is a Goliath-sized pile of material I have slung at you, but don't be a philistine - go learn more about the Philistines and Biblical Israel!

All Blessings,
Rabbi Z
(rabbizamek@ujc.org.hk)

28th January 2016