

**CNRS 335: Practicum in Classical or Near Eastern Archaeology:
Archaeological Field School at Horvat Midras, Israel**
Department of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies
The University of British Columbia

Instructor: Professor Gregg E. Gardner

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Prerequisites: None

Introduction

This course will train students in the principles and methods of field archaeology as practiced in the Mediterranean and Near East today by participating in the excavation of Horvat Midras in Israel. This course will also provide students with an understanding of the archaeology of ancient Palestine, with special attention to the Hellenistic and Roman eras (323 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.).

Horvat Midras is a site located in Israel approximately 45 kilometres southwest of Jerusalem. Previous small-scale salvage excavations have shown that the site was one of the largest and richest rural sites in the Judaeen Foothills during the Roman period. The site features the remains of Jewish, Christian, and Roman pagan communities. It also includes several underground passageways and unique tombs – including one marked by a magnificent pyramid as well as a rare example a “rolling stone” tomb like that mentioned in the New Testament.

Settlement at the site began already in the Persian era (fourth century B.C.E.). The excavation is meant to illuminate the socio-economic and ethnic character of the region just before and after its conquest in the second century B.C.E. by the Hasmoneans. Also known as the Maccabees (literally, “hammers”), the Hasmoneans were a dynasty of Jewish military and political leaders whose victories over the Greeks are still celebrated today in the Jewish holiday of Hanukah. In particular, we hope to clarify the settlement patterns of the Idumeans (pagans who later converted to Judaism) and ethnic Jews in the area. Based on the identification of the site with ancient Drusias, named after Drusus of the family of the Roman Emperor Augustus, scholars have suggested that the site was populated by the Idumean elite, including, perhaps, the family of King Herod the Great – a prominent king of ancient Palestine in the first century B.C.E. who is mentioned in the New Testament and famous for enlarging and beautifying the Temple and Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Herod may have initiated a construction project in Horvat Midras during his reign. Later and up until the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome (the so-called “Bar Kokhba Revolt” from 132–135 C.E.) the site was a thriving large village with elaborate burial caves and many agricultural installations. The inhabitants took active part in the Second Revolt and the site was abandoned as consequence of the war. Our excavation aims to help clarify the identities of those who re-settled the site as well as when and why they did so. By the fourth century C.E. the village was thriving again and in the fifth century the population was predominantly Christian, as the site featured a large basilica church with magnificent mosaics built at its northern edge. The excavations at the site will focus on the remains of the early Roman settlement, a post-Second Revolt public building and a stepped-pyramidal funerary monument. This project will be conducted in collaboration with Dr. Orit Peleg-Barkat (director) of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and her excavation staff (comprised of mostly graduate students and post-doctoral students at Hebrew University).

By unearthing, recording, processing, and identifying new archaeological finds, students are participating and contributing directly to the creation of new scholarly knowledge about the history and material culture of the Near East. Students' work in this course will help shed new light on questions of continuity and change along with the turbulent history of this region. The course work will also illuminate the region's rural settlement patterns – a topic often overlooked and under-studied as scholars tend to focus on urban sites. In many ways, students' work in this course will help re-write the history of the region.

Accommodations

Accommodations will be provided at Kibbutz Beit Guvrin. A kibbutz is a collective farm that is cooperatively owned and managed by its members. At the kibbutz, students will be housed in dormitories (known as the Mechinat Lachish Dormitories). Please note that accommodations are very basic: three or four individuals will share a room, and shared washrooms at the end of the hall. The kibbutz is an approximately 15-minute drive to excavation site at Horvat Midras. Transportation will be provided. More details on the accommodations will be provided at our orientation meeting in Vancouver.

Learning Objectives

This course will provide students from UBC with training in archaeology, material culture, and excavation methods. Students will be trained in the principles and methods of field archaeology as practiced in the Mediterranean and Near East today so that they can work as responsible archaeologists on other archaeological projects in the future. Upon completion of this course, students will gain the following skills:

- basic excavations skills, such as using a trowel, hand-pick, spade, and brush
- detect and articulate architectural features, artifacts, and changes in soil layers within a pre-defined excavation trench
- essential aspects of archaeological recording, including trench plan drawings, section drawings, the collection, classification and recording of artifacts (i.e. pottery, metal, lithics), and eco-facts (i.e. animal bones, botanical remains, soil samples)
- basic elements of archaeological survey, including how to lay out excavation trenches, map archaeological remains within a trench, and take elevations
- recording and drawing of top plans and sections (e.g. features and the vertical baulks between excavation squares)
- cleaning, processing, classifying, and identifying the finds
- gain an understanding of archaeological method
- gain an understanding of Palestinian archaeology
- gain an understanding of the history of Israel and the Mediterranean world in the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine ages (from the 4th century B.C.E. through the 7th century C.E.)

These skills will be acquired through hands-on archaeological fieldwork; by attending lectures in the evenings delivered by the instructor, other students, visiting lecturers, and others; in guided visits to other archaeological sites in the region; and in visits to archaeological museums.

Requirements and Grading

Fieldwork Participation	50 %
Field Notebook	20 %
Blog Posts	5 %
Student Presentation	5 %
Written Report	20 %

Fieldwork Participation

Students will be expected to participate fully and enthusiastically in all aspects of fieldwork and will be graded based on observations of their activities by the instructor and project staff. Grading will be based on the student's ability carry out the various fieldwork activities in an effective and timely manner, showing proper care in dealing with archaeological resources.

Field Notebook

Throughout the course, students will keep a notebook documenting their daily activities in the field, as well as notes from the lectures and site visits. Students' notebooks will include both written and graphic narratives of their experience. This will include descriptions of work performed, detailed sketches of excavation areas, finds, etc., and possible interpretations of the archaeological record. The notebooks will be reviewed and assessed on a weekly basis by Dr. Gardner.

Blog Posts

Students will also be required to write and post short blog entries (one per week) for the Horvat Midras's website or Facebook page. The blogs will discuss and document an aspect of the student's experience – whether in the excavation square or visiting other sites.

Student Presentation

Students will also give a 10-minute talk on a particular archaeological site in the area. The presentation will include a handout summarizing the most important aspect of the site and its significance for understanding the material culture of ancient Palestine. Students will choose their site/topic before the workshop, allowing them to prepare the materials in Canada before departing for Israel.

Written Report

Students will provide a written report (approximately 6-8 pages) that includes the following:

- a description of the site
- a history of the excavation of the site
- the objectives and expectations of the current excavations
- a detailed description of the results achieved during the field school
- the finds from the area(s) in which the student worked and the significance of the finds
- a conclusion that discusses the significance of the site and its finds within the wider region

Further instructions about the paper will be provided. The paper would be due three weeks after the end of the excavation.

Tentative Schedule and Itinerary

April/May 2018: Mandatory orientation meeting at UBC. Date, time, and location to be announced.

Date TBA: Arrival in Tel-Aviv, Ben Gurion Airport. Pick-up by Dr. Gardner for travel to the Mechinat Lachish dormitories located at Kibbutz Beit Guvrin.

Date TBA: Orientation Day, including a tour of the Kibbutz and a tour of the Horvat Midras excavation site. Introduction to the Hebrew University staff.

Date TBA: Excavation begins

Weekdays

The team will excavate Mondays through Fridays, leaving Friday afternoon through Sunday for weekend excursions (see below). The excavations will take place in the mornings. The day begins with a snack at the kibbutz at 5:00 AM, followed by the short drive to the excavation site. We will excavate until 12:30 PM, with breaks at 8:00 AM for a full breakfast and 10:00 AM for another snack. We will return to the kibbutz for lunch at approximately 1:00 PM. The afternoons and evenings will entail processing and identifying the finds, as well as lectures on archaeological methods, the material culture of Greco-Roman Palestine, and the broader history of the era. The talks will be delivered by Dr. Gardner, Dr. Peleg-Barkat, members of the Horvat Midras excavation staff, and visiting scholars from abroad. The afternoons and evenings will also include field trips to other sites in the area, such as Maresha and Beit Guvrin, Khirbet 'Itri, Khirbet Burgin, Beit Nattif, as well as other working excavations and museums.

Weekends

This course will also include optional weekend excursions to locations such as Jerusalem, Masada, and Tel-Aviv.

Date TBA: Last day of excavation.

Date TBA: Departure from Horvat Midras to Ben Gurion Airport in Tel-Aviv.

End of August: Students' written report will be due approximately three weeks after the end of the course (date TBA). Further details will be provided by the instructor. There will also be a follow-up meeting at UBC.

Academic Integrity

According to the UBC Academic Calendar, "Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own... when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation." If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult your instructor or visit: <http://help.library.ubc.ca/planning-your-research/academic-integrity-plagiarism/>

Recommended Background Reading

Magness, Jodi, *The Archaeology of the Holy Land: From the Destruction of Solomon's Temple to the Muslim Conquest* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

This book is available for purchase at the UBC Bookstore.

Selected Readings on Horvat Midras

The following articles are available on the UBC course website.

Di Segni, L., 1991. "A Fragmentary Greek Inscription from the Giv'at Seled Burial Cave," *'Atiqot* 20: 164–65.

Ganor, A., Klein, A., Avner, R., and Zissu, A., 2012. "Horbat Midras - Preliminary Report," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot - Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 124. http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/Report_Detail_Eng.aspx?id=1929&mag_id=119

Kloner, A., 1991. "A Burial Cave from the Early Roman Period at Giv'at Seled in the Judean Shephelah," *'Atiqot* 20: 159–63.

Kloner, A., 1993. "Midras, Horvat," in E. Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. Vol. 3, Jerusalem, pp. 1041–42.

Shatzman, I., 2013. "Herod's Childhood and the Idumaeen Provenance of his Family: Marisa or Horvat Midras?" *Scripta Classica Israelica* 32:123–52.

Additional Recommended Resources

Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

Master, Daniel M., ed. 2013. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Archaeology*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Meyers, Eric M., ed. 1997. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Stern, Ephraim, ed. 1993-2008. *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. 5 vols. Jerusalem and New York: Israel Exploration Society, Carta and Simon & Schuster.

Collections of Articles (Edited Volumes)

Cambridge History of Judaism; Oxford Handbook of Daily Life in Roman Palestine; Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant: C. 8000-332 B.C.E.; Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies; Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies

Journals

Biblica; Biblical Archaeology Review; Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research; Catholic Biblical Quarterly; Harvard Theological Review; Israel Exploration Journal; Jewish Quarterly Review; Jewish Studies Quarterly; Journal of the American Academy of Religion;

Journal of Theological Studies; Journal of Biblical Literature; Journal of Early Christian Studies; Journal of Jewish Studies; Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods; Near Eastern Archaeology; New Testament Studies; Palestine Exploration Quarterly; Revue Biblique; Strata: Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society; Tel Aviv: Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University; Vetus Testamentum