



Dr. Merling “deified” at Hathor Temple.

complex were in a military zone, and hence unavailable to the general public. While a couple of the Institute staff had at one time gained entrance to the complex with permission, photographs and free access to the site had proved fruitless until the present visit.

Due to recent security concerns in the Sinai, certain parts of the peninsula are currently off-limits to foreigners, so a couple of places on the itinerary were unavailable to visit. Hence, the time was spent exploring other sites in the area such as the Hathor Temple at Serabit el-Khadim, the proto-Sinaitic inscriptions and some camel petroglyphs in Wadi Nasib, the latter of special interest to Dr. Younker, and climbing Gebel Musa, the



Sam and Angie Millen befriend Camel.

traditional site of Mount Sinai. While relaxing at Nuweiba, the group took time to look into the claims that this was the Red Sea crossing point of the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. Part of the group, who are certified scuba-divers, dove to the natural table coral formations, which some have thought to be chariot wheels. Pharaoh Island, possibly the site of Ezion-geber of the Bible, was also visited.

In addition to dig-related business in Jordan, the group took time to tour such sites as Amman, Petra and Jerash as well as dining at Kan Zaman, a unique Arab dining and cultural experience housed in an Ottoman-period building south of Amman. (Paul J. Ray, Jr.)



Tappy Lecture

On April 6, 2006 Ronald Tappy presented an illustrated lecture entitled “Tel Zayit in the Early Iron II Period: A Biblical City on the Border of Judah” for the Horn Museum Lecture Series. Dr. Tappy is from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary where he serves as G. Albert Shoemaker Professor of Bible and Archaeology, director of the James L. Kelso Bible Lands Museum at the Seminary, and director of excavations at Tel Zayit (Tell Zeitah in Arabic).

Work began in 1999 at Tel Zayit, an ancient village believed to be biblical Libnah in ancient Judah, on the border of Judah and Philistia. Libnah is first mentioned in Joshua 15:20 as one of the cities of this region which is located in the central valley system of the lowlands. At first glance this site shows little indication of anything of significance, but recent discoveries are changing that opinion.

The site was inhabited during the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1500-1200 BC) at which time there are indications of Egyptian presence, as can be seen in the building structures, jewelry, and other artifacts found at this site. There are also

Cypriot imports such as Bichrome ware and evidence of a destruction (ca. 1250 BC). This destruction was followed by an occupational gap of about 250 years from 1250-1000 BC. During this time the Philistines were at their strongest as a distinct culture, but unlike Lachish, Tel Zayit appears not to have come under their domination.

At least three Early Iron Age II levels have been discovered at the site so far, consisting of local levels III-I, dating to the 10th, early 9th, and late 9th centuries BC respectively. Local Level I was destroyed by fire. This destruction appears to correlate with Hazael’s campaign (2 Kings 12:17-18).

In Square N-20 there was a beaten-earth surface against a flimsy wall with



Ron Tappy.

pits everywhere. Part of the floor was cut away and secondary deposits were found. Under this floor a large number of intact amphorae with rounded bottoms that could be set in a hole in the floor of a house were located. They are not typical Judahite jars, but Coastal Plain jars from the late 9th century BC also found at Philistine sites. Ash and grain from the local Level I destruction was dated to the late 9th century BC using Carbon 14.

In Square O-20 there were two pits contemporary with the late 9th century BC building, which appear to have been used for storage and contained Judahite pottery with red-slip vertical-hand burnish. There was also coastal plain one-

handled jars, Ashdod ware with black and white bands on 2-handled jars. In the bottom of the pit there were large clay balls of unbaked clay weighing about 900 grams that appear to be fermentation stoppers which they would stuff with cloth.

In Square O-19 there were more pits and a large wall with earthquake cracks dating to early 8th century BC (cp. Amos 1). A monolith was discovered, that turned out to be part of an interior wall. Another monolith was found 12 m away, with a third monolith at another 12 m distance, and so on all the way around the site. In the 10th century BC, when this site was rebuilt it appears that the inhabitants built a defense system enclosing the upper city. A two-story house with a collapsed upper room was also found. Underneath the debris was a flagstone floor. In the lower room there was a burned beam and a lot of sling stones indicating a destruction which dates to the late 10th century BC, after the reign of Solomon.

During the last two days of the season, a volunteer saw some scratches on a rock in a wall. Its position in the wall suggests it was intended to be seen. When the stone was removed, they found a cavity on the bottom side indicating previous use. The inscription contains all 22 Hebrew consonants, but there are some peculiar features. The normal order of some of the consonants is reversed and appears in following order: *wau* and *heh* (unattested), *het* and *zayin* (attested in Isbet Sartah), *lamed* and *kaf* (unattested), *pe* and *ayin* (attested in the Hebrew Bible acrostic poems in the Psalms and in a few other places in the OT). Whether the two unattested transpositions are scribal errors or simply an early tradition of the Hebrew alphabet is as yet undetermined. The form of the Tell Zayit letters appears to have more archaic traits than the Gezer calendar (also 10th century BC). The significance of this find is that it provides more evidence of written forms of Hebrew in the 10th century BC. (Carrie Rhodes)

