

A NOTE CONCERNING AN UPCOMING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE SEPPHORIS REGION IN ISRAEL

RANDALL W. YOUNKER
Director of the Institute of Archaeology
Andrews University

It had been previously announced (in the last issue of the *Horn Archaeological Museum Newsletter*) that the Institute of Archaeology was planning a small excavation for this coming summer at Tel Mevorakh, a "daughter" settlement of Tel Dor, the latter serving as a major port city for the northern coast of Israel in antiquity. However, due to some unforeseen local political problems (not at all connected with the current upheaval taking place elsewhere in the country), we have had to postpone this project for the time being. However, Eric Meyers of Duke University in Durham, North Carolina,¹ has recently invited Andrews University archaeologists Randall W. Younker, P. David Merling, and J. Bjørnar Storfjell to conduct an intensive and comprehensive archaeological survey of a 5-kilometer region around Sepphoris, an ancient city just northwest of Nazareth, Israel, that Meyers is presently excavating.

Each of the afore-mentioned archaeologists will lead a team of three to four individuals in conducting the survey, with each member having a specific role—recorder, photographer, artifact-sample collector. Each archaeological site which is discovered will be mapped, described, photographed, and "sherded" (the process wherein broken potsherds are collected for dating). Collected data will then be returned to the field laboratory for further study and analysis.

The survey teams will use two types of survey methodologies—the random square survey, and the judgmental survey. The first type is conducted by dividing up the entire 5-kilometer region into 200-x-200-meter squares and then randomly selecting squares for intensive survey. The data thus collected will provide a statistically valid sample of what can be expected to be found in the region. The data will also provide a control for the judgmental surveys which are to be conducted in areas where environmental, topographic, and other factors lead us to suspect the presence of ancient remains.

The overarching objective of this new project is to gain an increased understanding of the various interrelationships of an ancient Palestinian urban center (in this case Sepphoris and its neighboring predecessor), with its

¹ Eric Meyers is also currently the Vice-President for Publications of the American Schools of Oriental Research, as well as the editor of the *Biblical Archaeologist*, the most authoritative popular American journal on Biblical Archaeology.

supporting hinterland region. The collected data will be analyzed through several interpretive frameworks—i.e. political, historical, and anthropological.

Since Sepphoris is located near Nazareth in the heartland of ancient Biblical Israel and was occupied continuously from pre-patriarchal times down to the NT period and beyond, much, if not most, of the material and information collected from this survey will greatly aid in reconstructing the day-to-day life of the peoples of Bible times. This reconstruction can, in turn, shed further light on the major historical and political events that occurred in the region which are known from both biblical and extra-biblical sources and which have great significance to students of the Bible. In short, this research can ultimately lead to a greater understanding of the events that are recorded in the Bible, particularly those that occurred in the Nazareth and Jezreel-valley region.