



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

In 2012, Dr. Rosaria Butterfield wrote of her conversion to Christ in *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*. She perceptively writes, "Conversion put me in a complicated and comprehensive chaos." Before her conversion, she was the youngest tenured professor at Syracuse University and the Director of Undergraduate Studies. In her personal life, she was committed to a lesbian relationship and the promotion of this lifestyle. Yet this all changed when she was introduced to Jesus by an elderly pastor and his wife living in her neighborhood. Because of her story, Dr. Butterfield encourages Christians to be true disciples. For her, Christianity is not to be reduced to a single public decision; rather, it is an unwavering life-choice to be a disciple of Jesus. Her story challenges me to consider my obedience to Jesus' words: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself... and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).



DR. MARK HASSLER

Dr. Mark Hassler (left) is the Associate Professor of Old Testament here at VBTS. He is pictured above where he spent last month as a supervisor of the Associates for Biblical Research Shiloh Excavation in the land of Israel. Dr. Hassler's passion for the Old Testament scriptures and history has led him to participate in archaeological expeditions during each of the last five summers. Because Dr. Hassler is a prolific writer and an experienced archaeologist, he was recently selected to become the editor of the historic *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin*. Dr. Hassler's influence grows here at VBTS, and his passion for the Old Testament will continue to touch many lives. When asked for a favorite verse, he immediately thought of Psalm 115:1, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory." Thank you, Dr. Hassler for your humble spirit and your heart of grace.



Special Report: *The Shiloh Archaeological Expedition*

Dr. Mark Hassler, VBTS Associate Professor in Old Testament

The summer of 2017 marked the first archaeological expedition to the biblical site of Shiloh by the Associates for Biblical Research. The ABR team consists of researchers committed to demonstrating the historical reliability and intended meaning of Scripture. As a member of the ABR staff, I serve as a square supervisor in the expedition, and my colleague, Dr. Scott Stripling (pictured with me on the first page), is the director of excavations. In previous years, our team excavated Khirbet el-Maqatir, identifying it as the fortress of Ai in Joshua 7–8, a conclusion that vindicates the biblical chronology (cf. 1 Kgs 6:1).

Over one hundred participants from all over the world joined together to unearth the ancient city of Shiloh. Shiloh remained the center of Israelite religion and the home of the ark of the covenant during the Judges period. Hannah prayed there; Yahweh appeared to Samuel there; the Benjaminites corralled wives there. After the destruction of the city, the ruins became an object lesson for Jeremiah's audience: "go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel" (Jer 7:12).

Our crew uncovered the northern section of the fortification wall that surrounded the city, as well as the storage rooms built against the inner face of the wall. The fortification wall dates to the Middle Bronze III period (ca. 1650–1485 BC). The wall was massive. It stood seventeen feet thick and it was preserved to a height of thirteen feet. The preserved height of the wall represents only a fraction of the original height. No wonder Moses warned of Canaanite cities that were "fortified into the sky" (Deut 9:1).

In addition to the architecture, our team recovered seven hundred artifacts from antiquity, two hundred and fifty of which were coins. Other discoveries included tools (an axe head), weapons (arrowheads, slingstones, a large bronze spearhead), jewelry (rings and beads from necklaces or bracelets), two scarabs (amulets), a sealing impression, ceramic vessels, religious paraphernalia, domestic implements, alphabetic letters inscribed on potsherds, and so on.

After discovery, the artifacts go through a process of being registered, cleaned, restored, photographed, analyzed, interpreted, and ultimately published. The artifacts yield meaning within the stratigraphic sequence (archaeological context). The discoveries provide a window into daily life during Bible times and insight into the material culture of the Old and New Testaments. Indeed, the work of biblical archaeology connects us with the past in a tangible way.

You can experience the adventure of a lifetime by joining the Shiloh excavation in the summer of 2018. Join the team for one, two, three, or four weeks (May 20–June 16). The package includes full room and board, on-site training, and evening lectures on archaeology. The team stays at a hotel in Jerusalem, a short walk to the Temple Mount. To reserve your spot or receive more information, please contact Dr. Mark Hassler, associate professor of Old Testament at VBTS (mhassler@vbts.edu).