

From Her Hands

by John T. Strong

In the early morning, she would pull this bowl of uneven, reddish color from the shelf, fill it with some of the fruits of the season, such as dates or figs, and hand it to her husband, who would take from it first, and then pass it down to his children, each taking from it in their own order. It wasn't a special bowl, exactly, but every morning, it was there, doing its job, feeding her family before they left to travel the small by-ways of the city, exit the city gate, and work in the fields of their family's inheritance. Upon their return, in the evening, she would then place her warm, freshly baked flat bread in this reddish bowl, again handing it first to her husband, who would pass it on. Nothing special, but very functional and utilitarian. Just a part of life in ancient Israel.

Finally, she handed her bowl to me.

At least, she handed a part of it to me—but I'm getting ahead of myself. For the past two summers, I have traveled to the central part of Israel to participate in the renewed excavations of Tel Gezer. Ancient Gezer was occupied from roughly 3300 BCE (=BC) until the first century CE (=AD).

During these many millennia, it often served as an administration center for this region of Palestine. Sitting at the intersection of the coastal plain, which runs north and south connecting Egypt and, eventually, Mesopotamia, and the Ajalon Valley, which runs east to Jerusalem and the central highlands, Gezer controlled a strategic location, bringing with this all the trouble that comes with such a position. Its kings, we learn from the El Amarna tablets, found in Egypt, were harassed by pesky Habiru. Later, the Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah brags that he destroyed it. Solomon, upon receiving Gezer as a gift on the occasion of his marriage to the Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kings 9:15), made it one of his fortress cities. The Assyrian bully-king, Tiglath-Pileser III (mid-700s BCE), destroyed it.

And now, we are excavating it. The excavation is directed by Dr. Steven Ortiz, professor of archaeology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Dr. Sam Wolff, of the Israel Antiquities Authority (and lifelong Cubs fan!). This year, roughly 60 volunteers and 10 staff worked as a team to uncover remnants, ruins, and secrets of the Late Bronze Age (1400-1200 BCE) and Iron Age (1200-587 BCE) occupations of Gezer.

In our second season (the inaugural season being 2006), we worked west of the famed "Solomonic Gate" (through which the above-imagined Israelite family traveled daily) in order to reveal remnants of the city wall and

explore a residential area of the city. Another aspect of our excavations—just one of those "facts of life"—was also to dig through the archaeological dump of previous archaeologists (from the early 20th century and the 1960s and 70s).

So, what did we find ...

A city wall—continuing on west of the walls we found last season (2006), and which seems to have been rebuilt, perhaps after an enemy attacked and destroyed it (e.g., Tiglath-Pileser?). A foundation/rampart outside the city walls that helped to fortify Gezer against attack. A layer of destruction that may be the violent work of Tiglath-Pileser, and of significance to us because it may have sealed in a rich layer of residential finds below ... perhaps to be revealed next summer (2008). A "torpedo" store jar, in situ, dating to the 8th century BCE. A cylinder seal, displaying a Persian king (or god?) astride a winged lion.

And we found the broken potsherd from the reddish-colored bowl passed to her husband and children by the mother of the Israelite family, imagined above. And perhaps that's the most intriguing find of them all. All the potsherds found in all the layers have behind them some forgotten, hazy story of human life and interaction. To us 3000 years later, that potsherd recovered from the dirt of Tel Gezer doesn't look like much—even when washed. It becomes just one more shard passing through our hands. But a moment's reflection takes us back to that family and that mother, who sat together and ate figs and bread, who laughed, cried, fought, and loved, and who strove to survive and thrive in a city on a hill in

the land of ancient Palestine, far from Springfield and the 21st century.

From her hand we touched the story of her life.

Graduate Program Update

by Mark D. Given

It has been ten years since an article in the department newsletter reported on the state of our M.A. in Religious Studies. Having just become the Graduate Program Director and General Graduate Advisor, I am pleased to report that the program is thriving. This semester we have twenty-nine students registered for courses and our total current enrollment in the program is about thirty-five. The present success of the program owes much to the able leadership of the previous department head, Dr. James Moyer, and the previous Graduate Program Director and General Graduate Advisor, Dr. Jack Llewellyn. Thanks are also due to Dr. Stan Burgess who directed the program from its inception in the fall 1994 semester until his retirement in 2004.



With the city gates as their backdrop, volunteers begin exploring Gezer's forgotten past in the early morning.

In previous newsletter articles appearing in 1994 and 1997, Drs. Moyer and Burgess explained the basic structure of the program, which can be reviewed in the box to the below, "In a Nutshell ...". More information, of course, is now readily available on the department's website, but I would like to highlight some fairly recent changes and enhancements. In the fall of 2005, the History of Religions area of emphasis

was changed to South Asian Religions to reflect our faculty strengths in that specialization. The other areas of emphasis, Biblical Studies, History of Judaism and Christianity, and Religion, Self, and Society, remain unchanged. The core requirements continue to be four Basic Issues courses, i.e. one in each of the areas of emphasis, and two seminars, one in either South Asian Religions or Religion, Self and Society plus one in either Biblical Studies or History of Judaism and Christianity. We are very excited to be in the process of searching for an Assistant Professor of Judaism. The History of Judaism and Christianity area has never been fully staffed, but we hope it will be by fall of 2008.

Two very recent enhancements to the program are the Accelerated Master's option and the Certificate in Religious Studies for the Professions. Under the Accelerated Master's option, eligible undergraduate majors in Religious Studies or an equivalent department from an accredited institution may

Graduate Assistants, 2007-2008

Michael Criger, Rogersville, Missouri
(Drury University, 1997)

Jared Chatfield, West Chicago, Illinois
(Evangel University, 2007)

Meghan Faries, St. Charles, Missouri
(Missouri State University, 2006)

Jane Terry, Euclid, Ohio
(Missouri State University, 2005)

Joseph Dutko, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
(Evangel University, 2006)

Adam Park, Springfield, Missouri
(Missouri State University, 2006)

apply for early admission to the Master of Arts in Religious Studies. Once accepted for early admission, students will be able to take up to twelve credit hours at the 500- and 600-level that apply to both their undergraduate and graduate programs. We already have two MSU students and one Evangel University student taking advantage of this option. The rationale for the certificate program is that in order to

serve effectively in various human professions one must understand the religious and cultural beliefs and values of those with whom one works. The certificate is designed to meet the needs of individuals who wish to increase both their knowledge and appreciation of the religious diversity they encounter. Prerequisites are waived for the certificate. Students must complete four three-hour courses at the 500-level in the department of Religious Studies. The four courses must represent three different areas of specialization within the department. We currently have one student from the MSU School of Social Work pursuing the certificate. More details about the requirements for



Scenes from room 272, the G.A. Office. Here, graduate assistants write, study, grade, and walk the path of their own pilgrimage through the life of the mind. L-R: Adam Park, Jane Terry, Jared Chatfield, Meghan Faries, and Joseph Dutko. (Not pictured: Michael Criger)

the accelerated master's and the certificate can be found on the department's website.

One of the most exciting aspects of the M.A. program over the years has been seeing the growing number of high caliber students. While we take pride in all our successful M.A. students, we are especially gratified by the increasing number who have chosen to write theses and apply to Ph.D. programs. One of those students, Brian Doak, is featured in this issue, and we plan to feature others in the future.

In a Nutshell ...

Missouri State's Master of Arts Degree in Religious Studies:

The program is designed to provide both a broad understanding of religion and a great deal of flexibility to specialize.

The program is divided into four areas:

- South Asian Religions
- Biblical Studies
- History of Judaism and Christianity
- Religion, Self and Society

The degree requires the successful completion of a minimum of 32 graduate hours, including 18 hours of core courses and 14 hours of electives.

Dr. LaMoine DeVries Retires with the Best of Memories

by Jared Chatfield

Sometimes, a person overthinks life, and misses it altogether. Not so with beloved Professor, LaMoine DeVries. Pies, colleagues, Herodian palaces, but above all, students have spiced up his life, and flavored his memories as he looks back from his retirement this past August, 2007.



Dr. LaMoine DeVries shares a few laughs and casual comments with students Brian Doak and Christina Evans. “I knew all along,” he confides to Brian, “that the Israel Museum had so much stuff, they’d never miss this old thing!”

Dr. DeVries has certainly been an important part of this department for many years. He started working here in 1980 and has enjoyed many years of working with what he calls the best department in world because of the world-class talent and the care for the students that exists here. He said, “I had a humble beginning in life. Probably one of the most important things is that this department helped to mold, direct and challenge me.” In my interview with Dr. DeVries it quickly became apparent that the most important memories he will be taking away from his experience here is the relationships he has made.

Dr. DeVries started working here as a part time teacher in 1980. He also served as campus minister. When I asked him what some of his favorite memories were, he went into great detail about some of the trips he went on with the Department. “I remember very vividly traveling to society meetings with our group. The first fall I was here, we traveled to New York City and Dr. TenZythoff [or Dr. T] was department head at that time. We traveled in my van from Springfield to St. Louis and we had a fun trip with Dr. T in there. Dr. T made it a fun trip.” Many in this department would probably remember that Dr. DeVries has reputation for knowing good pie places. He said that it was on this very trip that the reputation got started: “My reputation is knowing the pie places on our travels.” Dr. DeVries recalled that the department at that time was located in Pummel Hall where the offices were cramped and cold.

Some of his favorite memories came from archeology trips to Israel with students. “One of the most important dimensions of my work here was in the field biblical

archeology. My graduate work was in Hebrew Bible and biblical archeology. From the very beginning, Jim Moyer, Victor Matthews and I were involved in American School of Oriental Research, and I delivered papers at those meetings. The great climax came in 1995 when, I led the Religious Studies department team on the summer excavation at Banias, the New Testament cite of Caesarea Philippi. I think I took 9 or 10 students that year, my wife went along, and it was just an exciting trip. I took student groups in 95, 96, 97, 99, and 2000. Students have told me, even years after the experience, how much that trip meant to them and basically they have told me that it was the most important thing they have done in their life. In 1996 we took 21 students and it was our largest group. We were excavating a first century Roman city that was built by Herod-Philip the son of Herod the Great, and he built it as his capital city.

There can be no doubt that Dr. DeVries had great respect for his fellow faculty. “My work here has been very exciting because I have found our faculty to be very stimulating, encouraging and embracing, and I am impressed by their scholarship of research, writing and their teaching. I have always felt that I have always had the support and the encouragement of the faculty in what I did.” However, students have always been of great importance to him. “The most exciting thing that I did was working with students in the classroom. I felt that it was especially important for me to deal with each student as much as I could on a one-to-one basis. I had each student each semester into my office for ten minutes to get acquainted. I also had each class out to my house for a cook-out each semester. One semester I had a NT class over for a cook out and two years later one of the young men who were at the party and one of the young women were married. They had met at that cook out. I have had a number of students who have worked with me, and have gone on to some important graduate programs and positions.”

Dr. DeVries concluded the interview by giving some encouragement to the department. “I have great appreciation for this department. It has a great quality of people that comprise it, and a good reputation around the world. It’s a creative mix of people. And it just functions in a great way. In my opinion it is if not the greatest, one of the greatest departments in the world. I think the faculty realizes that they are part of the most unique program anywhere and I guess the future of the department is great. No limit to what this department can do.” This professor has left a great impact on this campus and he will surely be missed. He wrapped up the discussion by giving some good advice to the future students that may come through this department: “For students, come in and take everything you can. Get acquainted to the professors and shoot for the moon.”

Hey, Look What We Did!

The “Life of the Mind” shows up in publications. Here are our most recent.

The History of the Buddha’s Relic Shrine

By Stephen Berkwitz

Buddhist chronicles have long been had a central place in the study of Buddhism. Scholars, however, have relied almost exclusively on Pali works that were composed by elites for learned audiences, to the neglect of a large number of Buddhist histories written in local languages for popular consumption. The Sinhala Thupavamsa, composed by Parakama Pandita in thirteenth-century Sri Lanka, is an important example of a Buddhist chronicle written in the vernacular Sinhala language. This work offers the first complete English translation of the Sinhala Thupavamsa. It contains a richly descriptive account of how Buddhism spread outside of India, replete with poetic embellishments and interpolations not found in other accounts of those events. Aside from being an important literary work, the Sinhala Thupavamsa. is a text of considerable historical and religious significance. The central focus of this work concerns the variety of relics associated with the historical Buddha, particularly how the relics were acquired and the presumed benefits of venerating them.

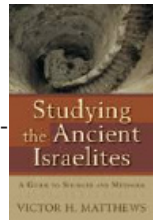


5)?" For the smaller prophetic books, there are brief summaries of their basic themes, and for the major prophets there are several entries that step through the prophet’s message, methods of delivery, and historical setting. Rounding out the collection are questions on different types of prophecy, including ecstatic and apocalyptic. The answers are designed to aid the layperson, minister, or religious professional to more quickly gain a basic understanding of the biblical world and the role of the prophets.

Studying the Ancient Israelites (Baker Academic)

By Victor Matthews

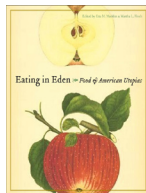
The Old Testament was not written in a vacuum. It was written by and to a specific people who lived within specific social, historical, political, and literary contexts not only of their own culture but also of the surrounding peoples. Clearly, an understanding of ancient Israel and the ancient Near East is essential for proper interpretation of the Bible. With this as a goal, *Studying the Ancient Israelites* provides a guide to the tools, methods, and goals of the study of ancient Israel. The book also examines the insights that can be gained from geography, archaeology, literary study, sociology, and historiography as well as the limitations of each of these disciplines.



Eating in Eden: Food and American Utopias (Univ. of Nebraska Press)

Ed. by Etta M. Madden and Martha L. Finch

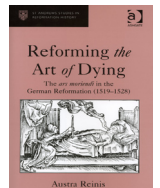
Perennially viewed as both a utopian land of abundant resources and a fallen nation of consummate consumers, North America has provided a fertile setting for diverse communities. From New England Puritans to Slow Food devotees, Shaker vegetarians to Hindu immigrants, groups have employed distinctive foodways in order to materialize their hopes for a better life. This theoretically informed, interdisciplinary collection of thirteen essays broadens familiar definitions of utopianism and community to explore the ways that Americans have produced, consumed, avoided, and marketed food and food-related products and meanings to further their visionary ideals.



Reforming the Art of Dying (Ashgate)

By Austrá Reinis

The Reformation led those who embraced Martin Luther’s teachings to revise virtually every aspect of their faith and to reorder their daily lives in view of their new beliefs. Nowhere was this more true than with death. By the beginning of the sixteenth-century the Medieval Church had established a sophisticated mechanism. To fill the resulting gap and to offer comfort to the dying, they produced new liturgies, new church orders, and new handbooks on dying. This study focuses on the earliest of the Protestant handbooks, beginning with Luther’s Sermon on Preparing to Die in 1519 and ending with Jakob Otter’s Christlich leben und sterben in 1528. It explores how Luther and his colleagues adopted traditional themes and motifs even as they transformed them to accord with their conviction that Christians could be certain of their salvation. It further shows how Luther’s colleagues drew not only on his teaching on dying, but also on other writings including his sermons on the sacraments. The study concludes that the assurance of salvation offered in the Protestant handbooks represented a significant departure from traditional teaching on death.



The Prophets of Israel (Paulist Press)

By Victor Matthews

This volume on the Prophets provides easy to understand answers to commonly asked questions. In some cases this means going into depth on a biblical narrative such as “Why do the 70 Elders prophesy in Num 11:25-26?” In other cases, basic information is provided the reader with background or social world details, such as “Why does Na’aman consult Elisha for a cure for his leprosy (1 Kgs



By examining the ways in which the themes and teaching of the reformers differed from the late medieval *ars moriendi*, the book highlights both breaks with tradition and continuities that mark the early Reformation.



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postage

A Note from the Department Head ...

Dr. Jack Llewellyn



In the Department of Religious Studies, the only constant is change, as we are always working to better serve our students and the community. One change this past year has been that this column has acquired a new author. I became department head on 2 July 2007, when Jim Moyer stepped down after twenty-two years of dynamic leadership.

As a friend of the department, you'll be glad to know that Dr. Moyer has not retired, so we will still be able to rely on his wisdom and experience. I joined the department in 1989 fresh out of graduate school at the University of Chicago. Since I owe everything that I know about being a department head to Dr. Moyer, you should expect more continuity than change in leadership here.

Another important change in the department is that LaMoine DeVries has retired, after serving for more than twenty-five years. A model teacher and scholar, Dr. DeVries particularly distinguished himself in taking groups of students to Israel on an archaeological dig every summer for several years. We are hoping that we will be able to field a group again soon, as the security situation in Israel improves. In the meantime, the department is excited about a current search for a specialist in Judaism to replace Dr. DeVries, though there is no question of finding a replacement for someone with such a unique combination of personal and professional gifts.

I could go on about the great things underway in the department, but I want to save something for the Homecoming Potluck Dinner at the home of Austra Reinis on 27 October. I look forward to seeing all the friends of Dr. DeVries, and the friends of the Department of Religious Studies there.

JOIN US FOR HOMECOMING!

When:

ca 4:00 pm (after the football game)
October 27, 2007

Where:

Dr. Austra Reinis' Home
1166 South Clay Avenue

There will be feasting and merry-making of all kinds. Bring an empty stomach and a light spirit, and catch up with the Department of Religious Studies

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Religious Studies Notebook

Newsletter of the Department of Religious Studies at Missouri State University

Moving On: Brian Doak's Pilgrimage Leads to Harvard

One never knows exactly where one might end up, or what path life and education can lead.

That's half the fun. Brian Doak (M.A. 2004)

Narrates a little about his journey to Harvard, Ashkelon, San Diego ... and points unknown.

Since graduating from Missouri State University in 2004 with an M.A. in Religious Studies, I have had many exciting academic and personal experiences. My wife and I moved from Springfield to Somerville, MA so that I could begin Ph.D. studies at Harvard University (Hebrew Bible, through the department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations). The transition took longer than I expected, both physically and emotionally, but after a full year of studies, I'm beginning to feel like I fit in.

My chief academic advisor in the program at this point, Professor Peter Machinist, has been an excellent guide on many levels and has taught several classes through which I have already learned quite a bit and improved immensely as a student. However, I found that in every class, the work I did at Missouri State during my two years of graduate study and two subsequent years of per-course work as an instructor in the Religious Studies and Classics departments gave me a strong competitive edge vis-à-vis the other students in my program. For example, while I lagged behind others in terms of ancient languages mastered before entering Ph.D. work, the theoretical background in the sociology/anthropology of religion and history of religions generally has been a tremendous asset in understanding the methodological problems that are so vital to our discipline (Professor Berkwitz's excellent REL 610 class is largely responsible for this!). I miss my professors and colleagues in the Religious Studies department very much, and remember with great fondness their congeniality and openness. Also, being able to communicate with Victor Matthews, Jim Moyer, LaMoine DeVries and John Strong about my current research and struggles has given me much-needed support in times of need; Victor, especially, has taken the time to proofread and give suggestions for several of my papers over the past few months, for which I am very grateful!

This past summer, I spent a month and a half in Ashkelon, Israel, working for the Leon Levy excavation. Another one of my current professors, Lawrence Stager, is in charge of the project, and he has worked tirelessly over the past 20 years to help us all understand the great importance of this site, which is so critical for our understanding of both the Philistines and Late Bronze and Iron Age trade networks in the ancient Near East. The season turned out to be an exciting one for several reasons. We uncovered areas pertaining to the



Brian Doak pays homage to an ancient Assyrian deity at the British Museum.

transition between Late Bronze Egyptian occupation and the earliest Philistine presence (12th cen.), where we discovered a unique Egyptian-style chalk statue (possibly of some goddess). I personally worked on the other side of the grid to uncover 12th-11th cen. Philistine domestic space; we found many good examples of Philistine pottery (some of it intricately painted with hallmark Philistine artistic motifs), a fully intact

pottery kit, and some as-yet unprecedented Philistine iconography incised on a store-jar. On Saturdays, I had a chance to explore some important archaeological sites southern Israel, such as Lachish, Arad, and Beersheva, and a few of us spent a long weekend in Jerusalem crawling through Hezekiah's tunnel and exploring the Old City.

The upcoming fall semester is shaping up to be quite busy; in late November, I will be traveling to San Diego, CA for the American Schools of Oriental Research and Society for Biblical Literature conferences to present three papers. The titles of the essays are as follows: "No Statues or Familiar Images": Re-examining the Claim for Phoenician Aniconism," "A Re-evaluation of the Iconographic Motifs of the Ta'anach Cult Stand," and "Ezekiel's Theology of Divination and the Authority of Prophetic Speech in Ezek. 21:26." Through coursework, I will also be researching the political/religious matrix of Persian-period Yehud in the 6th cen. BCE, Isaiah 1-39, various aspects of Akkadian language, and biblical archaeology. Considering the challenges that lie ahead, I am extremely thankful for my educational background at Missouri State and look forward to learning alongside my new friends in the NELC department.

Finally, I would like to send my warm regards to all of the past students in the M.A. program (especially those with whom I shared coursework from 2002-2004!) and best wishes to those who are currently pursuing their degrees. If anyone is in the Boston area and would like to meet for lunch or take a tour around Harvard, please do not hesitate to contact me at doak@fas.harvard.edu.