

## THE 2007 EXCAVATIONS IN THE ROMAN FORT AT YOTVATA, ISRAEL

### INTRODUCTION

Yotvata is the modern name of an oasis with saline marshes located in Israel's southern Arava (rift valley), about 25 miles north of Eilat and Aqaba on the Red Sea. The name Yotvata is based on the possible identification of the oasis with Biblical "Jotbathah, a land with brooks of water" (Deut. 10:7), one of the Israelites' encampments during their desert wanderings. The water springs and location made Yotvata a focus for settlement in different periods, with a number of ancient sites located around the oasis.

In June 2007, we will conduct our fifth (and final) season of excavations in the Roman fort at Yotvata. The fort is located to the west of and next to the main highway to Eilat. A stone police station of the British Mandatory period sits atop the remains of the fort. In plan, the fort is a typical Roman *castellum*: a square enclosure measuring approximately 40 x 40 meters (ca. 120 feet square). In the 1970's, an expedition under the direction of Zeev Meshel of Tel Aviv University made some soundings in the fort. This expedition discovered two main occupation levels, both of which they dated to the fourth century C.E. on the basis of coins. In the mid-1980's, a monumental Latin inscription was discovered by accident. Originally set above the main (east) gate, it tells us that the fort was built by Priscus, probably one of the governors (*praeses*) of the province of Syria-Palestina during the reign of Diocletian and the other tetrarchs (293-305). This fort guarded the oasis and its garrison would have escorted caravan traffic along the valley road. Our excavations in 2003-2006 revealed a more complex occupational sequence than that suggested by Meshel. We have good evidence for an early Islamic occupation (seventh-early eighth centuries) as well as a series of Roman phases, the earliest of which equates to the Tetrarchic foundation.

### DATES AND HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

The 2007 excavations will take place from Sunday, June 3-Friday, June 29 under the direction of Professor Gwyn Davies of Florida International University (Miami, FL), and Professor Jodi Magness of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The staff and work force will consist of students and volunteers from the US, Israel, and other countries. The excavation is open to anyone 18 years of age and above. No archaeological experience is required. We will be housed at Kibbutz Lotan, a communal farm up the highway from the site. Housing will consist of air-conditioned, shared rooms (with two persons per room). Each room has its own bathroom and shower facilities, and the dorm units are equipped with kitchenettes. Participants on the dig are allowed access to the kibbutz's swimming pool. We will dig from the crack of dawn (about 5:30 am) until lunchtime (about 1 pm) every day, Sundays through Fridays. After lunch and a siesta, participants will wash pottery or participate in workshops given by staff members in the afternoon. Two or three nights per week, senior staff members will give lectures after dinner. Breakfast will be eaten at the site; lunches and dinners will be eaten in the kibbutz dining room.

### SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

As a remote desert site far from major urban centers, Yotvata is a safe area. Nevertheless, for security reasons, participants will not be allowed to travel on their own during the period of the excavation. Instead, we will organize field trips to local archaeological sites on weekends. These trips will avoid Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and other crowded urban areas. Before the excavation begins and after it ends, participants are free to travel on their own, but at their own risk and responsibility. All participants are required to sign the attached "Informed Consent/Waiver of Responsibility" Form before arriving on the excavation.

Participants can fly into Ben-Gurion Airport (near Tel Aviv; about a 4 hour drive from the site) or into the airport in Eilat (about ½ hour drive from Yotvata). Please note that we will arrange to meet flights arriving at Ben Gurion on June 02 – the transport will depart the airport for the kibbutz in the late afternoon-early evening (around 6 pm). Similarly, we will ensure that transport is provided from the kibbutz back to Ben Gurion on the morning of June 30. Anyone flying in to or out of the airport on alternative dates (or those with early morning flights leaving Ben Gurion on June 30) will have to make independent transport arrangements.

## COST AND CREDIT

The excavation costs \$50 per day per participant. This covers room, full board, and transportation for the purposes of the excavation (including all field trips **except** for a possible, two-day field trip in mid-June). It does **not** include airfare to and from Israel; participants must make their own air travel arrangements. A minimum stay of 2 weeks is required. Students wishing to receive academic credit may do so through the Hebrew University School for Overseas Students Summer Courses Program (and transfer the credit to their home institution). Students from UNC-CH who want academic credit must contact the UNC Study Abroad Office. Students opting to receive academic credit for the excavation are required to participate for the full 4 weeks and must fulfill the requirements set by Professor Magness. TOTAL COST: Airfare to Israel + \$50 per day for room and board + \$70 non-refundable application fee (see below) + tuition (optional, for academic credit) + pocket money.

## REQUIREMENTS

No background in archaeology is required for this excavation, as participants will receive full instruction (though any background is considered a plus). The two qualities we seek are:

- 1) Physical strength and endurance. Digging is hard physical labor, involving the use of picks, shovels, wheelbarrows, and the lifting of stones. We will be doing this work in the middle of the desert, in the heat of the Middle Eastern summer, where temperatures regularly average well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The biggest health hazard participants will face is dehydration and sunstroke. Because of this, everyone is required to dig with the protection of a hat and sunscreen, to wear appropriate clothing and footwear (no digging in bathing suits!), and to drink plenty of water. Before being accepted to the excavation, applicants must have a physician certify that they are in excellent physical condition (see attached form). They must also provide written documentation that they carry full health coverage and insurance that will cover them in Israel.
- 2) A cheerful outlook and a sense of humor. Getting up before dawn, working in the summer heat, and living intensively with a small group of people can be stressful. We seek team players who can get along well with others under these conditions, and who will appreciate the unique experience of digging at Yotvata.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1) Applicants must submit a completed application form, a signed medical form (see below), two passport photos, a signed waiver of responsibility form (see below), and a non-refundable application fee of \$70 to Professor Davies no later than March 16, 2007. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance by March 31, 2007. Please send the application materials and checks to:

Professor Gwyn Davies, Florida International University, Department of History, DM 388A, University Park, Miami, FL 33199. Tel: (305) 348 2974. Fax: (305) 348 3561. Email: [daviesg@fiu.edu](mailto:daviesg@fiu.edu).

2) A non-refundable registration fee of \$125 must be paid within one week of notification of acceptance to hold the applicant's place on the excavation.

3) ALL OTHER PAYMENT FOR ROOM AND BOARD MUST BE RECEIVED BY APRIL 15, 2007. Please note that the \$125 registration fee is counted towards the cost of room and board. Payment of tuition for academic credit is made directly to the Hebrew University School for Overseas Students Summer Courses Program or to UNC-Chapel Hill.

ALL CHECKS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO **Gwyn Davies**.

Applicants accepted to the excavation will receive newsletters with additional information during the course of spring 2007.

## APPLICATION FORM

1) Name (last name, first name, middle initial) \_\_\_\_\_

2) Country of citizenship and passport number \_\_\_\_\_

3) Present address \_\_\_\_\_

4) Telephone with area code \_\_\_\_\_

Above address effective through what date? \_\_\_\_\_

5) Address and telephone after end of school year \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6) Email address \_\_\_\_\_

7) Place and date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

8) Marital status \_\_\_\_\_

9) Field of study or occupation \_\_\_\_\_

10) If currently a student, indicate your academic institution, the degree program in which you are enrolled, and the expected date of your degree \_\_\_\_\_

11) Briefly describe why you want to participate on the excavation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12) Have you previously visited Israel or the Middle East (when)? Do you know any Hebrew or Arabic?

\_\_\_\_\_

13) Briefly describe your past experiences in archaeological excavations, if any (names and dates of excavations)

\_\_\_\_\_

14) List any courses you have taken in archaeology, and where you took them \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15) Do you have any archaeological skills or training in conservation, surveying, drafting, photography, or computer programming (such as GPS): \_\_\_\_\_

16) Persons to be notified in case of emergency while abroad:

Name, address, phone number (including area code), and email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact's relationship to you\_\_\_\_\_

17) Signature of applicant\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Send all application materials to:

Professor Gwyn Davies  
Florida International University  
Department of History  
DM 388A  
University Park  
Miami, FL 33199

NOTE TO APPLICANTS:  
YOUR APPLICATION WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED WITHOUT THE FOLLOWING:

- 1) Completed medical form
- 2) Signed "Informed Consent/Waiver of Responsibility Form"
- 3) Two passport signed photographs
- 4) A non-refundable check for \$60 made payable to **Gwyn Davies**.
- 5) Completed application form

**YOTVATA EXCAVATIONS MEDICAL FORM**

THIS SECTION IS TO BE FILLED OUT BY THE APPLICANT. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU ANSWER THE QUESTIONS COMPLETELY, ACCURATELY, AND HONESTLY. PLEASE INFORM US IF YOU HAVE ANY MEDICAL CONDITIONS OF WHICH WE SHOULD BE AWARE.

Name of applicant (last name first)\_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth\_\_\_\_\_ Occupation\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Medical/Accident Insurer\_\_\_\_\_

Type of Coverage\_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number\_\_\_\_\_

Address of Insurance Company\_\_\_\_\_

Provide written confirmation that your insurance carrier will cover you in Israel. In case of emergency, how will you contact your carrier from Israel? (NOTE: it is impossible to use an 800 number to phone the US from Israel).

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you allergic to sunscreen? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you had eye infections, glaucoma, or any eye surgical procedures, or do you use any eye medications?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you wear contact lenses?\_\_\_\_\_ If so, will you wear them or eyeglasses on the excavation?\_\_\_\_\_

Do you take medications for your ears or nose?\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a heart murmur or high blood pressure? Do you take any medications for the heart or blood pressure or high cholesterol?\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any food intolerances or allergies?\_\_\_\_\_

Do you take any medications for your bladder or kidneys?\_\_\_\_\_

Have you suffered any back or head injuries?\_\_\_\_\_

Do you suffer from migraines or other headaches? If so, what medication do you take? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have seizures or epilepsy?\_\_\_\_\_

Do you take medications for anemia of any type?\_\_\_\_\_

If you have ever been hospitalized for a major physical or mental illness, surgery, or injury, please give year, reason, and result\_\_\_\_\_

Do you now or have you ever had any allergic reactions to drugs, injections, or insect bites? If yes, give details\_\_\_\_\_

List all medications that you are now taking, and for what purpose\_\_\_\_\_

Have you been restricted in any physical activities by a physician in the past year (if so, why)?\_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICANT: GIVE THIS FORM TO YOUR PHYSICIAN**

NOTE TO THE PHYSICIAN:

Your examination is required to determine the individual's **present state of physical and emotional health** and his or her ability to withstand the strenuous outdoor living required for archaeological excavations. Physical labor such as bending and lifting dirt and rocks performed in the hot, dry climate of Israel's desert will be required. Disorders of the musculo-skeletal system, especially of the lower back, should be carefully considered. The presence of dust necessitates careful consideration of those with respiratory disorders, especially asthma. Individuals with contact lenses should plan to wear eyeglasses while digging. The presence of hearth problems must be carefully evaluated, especially in older individuals.

With these considerations in mind, please perform a thorough physical examination of the individual and write your findings on this sheet. If necessary, attach an additional sheet. Please include the following information:

- list any significant impairments and diagnoses;
- do you have any reservation in recommending this individual for participation in the strenuous outdoor activities described above? If so, why?
- in case a medical emergency arises and it is necessary to seek medical treatment for this individual in Israel, is there any information we should be aware of? (medical conditions, allergies, etc.).

Applicant's name (last name, first name)\_\_\_\_\_

Physician's signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

Physician's name, printed or typed\_\_\_\_\_

Degree\_\_\_\_\_

Street Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_ State\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone\_\_\_\_\_

PHYSICIAN: PLEASE MAIL THE COMPLETED FORM TO:

Professor Gwyn Davies  
Florida International University  
Department of History  
DM 388A  
University Park  
Miami, Fl 33199  
Fax (305) 348 3561

**THE JUNE 2007 EXCAVATIONS IN THE ROMAN FORT AT YOTVATA**

Read Carefully Before Signing.

This Document Contains Important Information Which Affects Your Rights.

**RELEASE**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am aware of the inherent risks of travel and work in international settings. I understand that the archaeological excavations at Yotvata on which I desire to participate will take place in a desert area under severe climactic conditions, and will involve difficult physical labor. I also understand that the political and crime situations in Israel differ from those in my own country.

I am aware of the risks inherent in traveling to Israel and the advisories issued by the U.S. State Department. I am also aware of the risks of participating on the archaeological excavations at Yotvata. I have weighed the dangers inherent in foreign travel and work, the risks presented to my own health and well-being, and my personal desire to further my educational experiences by participating on this project. I freely conclude that the risks are acceptable to me and are outweighed by my desire to participate.

I voluntarily assume all risks associated with participation on the June 2007 excavations in the Roman fort at Yotvata. I waive any right to make a claim or demand against the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill or Florida International University, their trustees, agents, servants, and employees (including Jodi Magness and Gwyn Davies) from any and all liability, claims, causes of action, or demands, of any kind or nature whatsoever, arising in any way out of my participation on the 2007 excavations in the Roman fort at Yotvata, and my travel and work abroad while participating on this program.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Witness' name and signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_