Thanks to the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) Heritage Fellowship, I returned to Tel Dan to continue supervising excavation activities begun in 2008. The goal for 2012 was to expand excavation of an undated gate structure previously discovered in 1993. In addition, I was able to explore the use of a radio control (RC) quadcopter for tracking excavation progress through aerial photography.

In the third week of excavation we reached Iron II material and discovered a very short course of stones abutting one of the towers of the gate structure to the east. This very short course of stones was only a meter in length with no evidence of continuation. Preliminarily, it is believed this structure may have been a failed project to build a six-chamber gate. Unfortunately, we still have no conclusive evidence for the date of the gate’s construction. In addition to digging, aerial photos taken at the end of the season enabled me to identify more elements of the gate structure that had been reused in later Iron II walls, just north of the gate towers. These elements have been clearly visible for more than 15 years, but their association with the gate structure was never realized.

My first hand experience this season with RC-based aerial photography in the field has opened my eyes to the value of this technology for survey, recording and mapping purposes. I am currently researching equipment software and techniques for the use of low level aerial photography combined with photogrammetry for future seasons. I am grateful to the ASOR Heritage Fellowship for making this experience possible.
Dear Colleagues,

As Alumni Association president, I attended the HUC-JIR Council of Alumni Associations meeting in New York on November 14-15. More than a dozen participants representing the leadership of each HUC-JIR school partook in this annual face-to-face meeting. (Our other five meetings are conference calls.)

We discussed effective fundraising strategies, met with current students, teleconferenced with HUC-JIR President David Ellenson to hear about the current state of the College-Institute (which is positive) and shared reasons for our service to the College-Institute as alumni representatives. I responded to this latter topic by stating that HUC-JIR was good to me, contributing substantially to me as a student, and I want to give back.

Since that meeting, I have contemplated ways our Alumni Association can contribute to the current HUC-JIR graduate student body. My dream is that School of Graduate Studies alumni would be so generous that the current School of Graduate Studies stipend could grow from its current amount to a figure higher and more competitive with comparable programs. If you have been out of touch with the SGS, will you reach out this year with a gift? If you gave last year, will you increase your gift this year? Together, we can make the experience of our graduate students everything it can be.

Andrew J. Riley (‘10)
Xavier University
Report from
Dr. James Bowley:

Governor, HUC-JIR

As I begin my fourth year on the Board of Governors of HUC-JIR, I look back and think about all of the issues, problems and opportunities the school has faced in my few years, and I am fascinated by how our beloved institution survives and thrives. As an HUC-JIR graduate school student, alumnus, as a faculty member of my own institution, and now as a Governor, I’ve seen the institution from quite a few levels. Oh, and I try not to forget that in undergrad I was a janitor, and at HUC-JIR I was a late night library worker at the Klau! All levels are important.

Members of the Board of Governors, and especially some of those who are in executive positions, give large amounts of their time (not to mention resources) to the College-Institute. I am on the Board only because I love HUC-JIR and the School of Graduate Studies, and I must say that I see other members who give so much to help and to lead HUC-JIR. Currently, the Board is involved in a self-study to assess how we can improve our leadership and effectiveness, and changes are being made within the Board to improve the way we work. In other words, the Board genuinely works to be the best kind of higher education board it can.

I have observed that the Board does look after the interests of all the schools under the HUC-JIR umbrella, with a major emphasis on supporting all four campuses. This is why we rotate Board meetings to gather on each of the campuses. Furthermore, I have been strongly impressed by the Cincinnati Board of Overseers and their dedication to the programs on the Cincinnati campus, including the SGS. The SGS does well by maintaining close working relations with the overseers.

Board members love hearing first hand from students and value the face-to-face anecdotal “evidence,” as well as the bigger picture data that we get in the meetings. I am working on an initiative whereby the SGS student body president would give regular reports to the Board, as well as other student leadership bodies.

Let me say that the work of Adam Kamesar, Sam Greengus and now Nili Fox as directors of the SGS has been exemplary. I am also working to create a situation where the director of the SGS (and other schools) provides direct and regular reports to the Board. It is crucial that the Board understand the work of all the schools, their distinct strengths and crucial missions.

Finally, please feel free to send me feedback, ideas and concerns about the College-Institute and the Board. I would love to hear from you as I further the mission of the SGS and the whole of HUC-JIR in any way I can. Please contact me at james.bowley@millsaps.edu
“Where was it held this year?”

“Chicago,” I say.

“Chicago in November? Who on earth went to such a thing?”

“About 10,000 biblical and religious studies scholars,” I noted (I’m always astonished by this number).

“So let me get this straight, 10,000 professors and students got together, offered and attended lectures and shopped for books in a city that, in the winter, seems more like a hyperborean wind-striped steppe punctuated by skyscrapers than a major American urban center? It sounds like it was ghastly. But I understand it’s an important component of your career so you had to go. You know, I once had to attend a conference in Branson, Missouri?”

The logic was sound, I had to admit, though the comparison of Chicago with Branson seemed remarkably unfair to both cities. In any case, I surprised both my conversation partner and myself with my response: “No, you don’t get it. It was work, but it was also some of the most fun I have had all year. There were lectures, yes, but there was also lots of smiling, laughing and hugging.”

In short: “How good and how pleasant it is that colleagues dwell together!” (Ps 133:1)

This is all to say that on November 18 the School of Graduate Studies held its Annual Alumni Association Luncheon at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Chicago. Over eighty alumni, students, faculty and friends of the College-Institute cozily gathered ourselves into a tasteful corner of the otherwise sprawling conference center. We were joined by two very special guests; the first, Ms. Joan Pines, is Chair of the Cincinnati Board of Overseers and member of the Board of Governors. Ms. Pines’ fervent support of the School of Graduate Studies cannot be overstated, and we were truly honored to have her among us. Also in attendance was Ms. Joy Wasserman, who is HUC-JIR’s National Director of Alumni Engagement. Ms. Wasserman’s tireless efforts help keep all of the College-Institute’s alumni connected not only with our alma mater, but also with each other and the Reform Movement.

There were few announcements this year, but they point to a bright future for the SGS. Of course, we made the standard plea for alumni giving (you have donated, haven’t you?), which supports the next generation of scholars formed by the SGS. Wisdom loves those who love her. (“Those who love me, I love.” Prov 8:17) Second, Professor Nili Fox announced two new faculty searches: one for a Medieval Studies position; the other for a Bible faculty, for which interviews were being conducted at SBL’s Employment Center. It is encouraging to hear that the College-Institute has begun replacing our beloved teachers who have retired, left the college or sadly passed on in the last few years.

We look forward to next year’s luncheon when we will get to see our old friends and teachers. We will also say the motsi with a new generation of scholars, no doubt, and we will welcome the new faculty members to the greater HUC-JIR academic community. “A time for laughing . . . a time for embracing.” (Qoh 3:4-5)
Greetings and blessings for 2013! As you know, the goal of our new semi-annual newsletter Qol Hadash is to update students, alumni, faculty and friends about programs, events and special accomplishments at the School of Graduate Studies. We welcome contributions from any of you who want to share news.

2013 Graduate Program Teaching Initiative

I am very pleased to announce that the SGS has been awarded a generous grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. The grant will enable us to conduct a study at HUC-JIR to assess our teacher training of Ph.D. students. We will bring to Cincinnati ten of our recent (2008-2012) Ph.D. recipients who are currently teaching full-time at seminaries, colleges and universities in the United States. Then, in a two-day gathering (date to be determined), alumni, a committee of HUC faculty and a consultant from the Wabash Center will confer on how the SGS can enhance our Ph.D. program with a teaching component that assures students guided teaching opportunities. More and more, pedagogy skills and teaching experience are becoming essential for new Ph.D.s to land academic positions.

Alumni participants will be paid a $500 stipend for the two-day meeting, in addition to being reimbursed for all travel expenses. Letters will be sent in the next few weeks inviting qualified alumni.

Our 2013 Alumna in Residence

It is my pleasure to announce that Dr. Karla Suomala (Ph.D. 2002) will serve as our distinguished Alumna in Residence for 2013. The SGS, which sponsors this program, invites an HUC alumnus/alumna of note to campus to present his or her scholarship to faculty, students and members of the community. In addition, he or she offers workshops relevant to graduate students, such as Teaching Religious Studies, Landing an Academic Position and Academic Publishing. This year, the program is scheduled for Monday through Wednesday, March 11-13. Dr. Suomala is Associate Professor of Religion at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Her two academic lectures are entitled: “Gendered Property: How the Metaphor of Ownership Conceals the Suffering of Talmudic Women” and “Job’s Wife and the Hidden Suffering of Women in the Bible.” The two workshops for graduate students include: “Knowledge Meets Reality: What you’ll be teaching when you leave HUC and how to prepare for it”; and “Tougher Markets, Fewer Jobs: Getting your foot in the academic door with the right letter and CV.”

Dead Sea Scrolls: Life and Faith in Ancient Times

The special exhibit Dead Sea Scrolls: Life and Faith in Ancient Times, currently at the Cincinnati Museum Center has been a tremendous hit, bringing in thousands of visitors of all ages and walks of life. The exhibit not only showcases parchments inscribed with biblical and sectarian writings discovered in the caves of Qumran, but hundreds of additional artifacts, especially of stone and ceramics, that span the biblical period – from early to late antiquity. The visitor travels through time, more than 1,000 years, encountering elements of Israelite culture, from household goods to cultic objects and inscriptions.

In honor of the exhibit, a number of HUC-JIR faculty, students and alumni have conducted tours and presented lectures for community groups. The College-Institute is highlighted in a special room attached to the exhibit, which features the story of our connection to the preservation and decipherment of the scrolls. Visitors can even see the ca. 25-year-old Apple computer used by Professor Ben Zion Wachholder and his Ph.D. student Martin Abegg (now a well-known scholar in his own right) for their publication of the scroll fragments from Cave 4.

I encourage one and all to visit this extraordinary exhibit in Cincinnati. It is well worth the trip.
My name is Cody Eklov, and I am a graduate student on the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. I am entering my final semester of coursework as I pursue my studies in the Bible and Ancient Near East Program. While I am glad to be soon finishing one stage of my studies at the College-Institute, I am also looking forward to what the future has in store for the school.

All of the graduate students are excited about the prospect of hiring two new faculty members on the Cincinnati campus. This expansion of our faculty is, indeed, a further expansion of the College-Institute’s world-renowned resources. Many of us take delight in the appointment of a new Bible Professor and Medieval Studies Professor, as it opens more opportunities for students and provides relief to our already hard-working faculty.

Furthermore, we are grateful to take part in this process. Many of us will join the faculty search committee and applicants for breakfasts and lectures. We will use this as an opportunity to get to know the candidates and discern what they would bring to our Cincinnati campus. We hope this process proceeds smoothly and provides two more skilled and knowledgeable professors to join our community in the following academic year.

As we begin the spring semester, we look forward to growing in knowledge through a great variety of courses, such as Biblical Poetry, Readings in Greek Exegeses, Sumerian, From Genesis to Genesis Rabbah and more. Some continue to prepare for their comprehensive finals while others are making progress on their dissertations. We anticipate a productive and insightful semester for all.