

# PROJECT 01

## BEIT LEHI VISITOR CENTER

ARC 3110 | Fall Semester 2021

### DESIGN BRIEF

See course website via Canvas for additional info

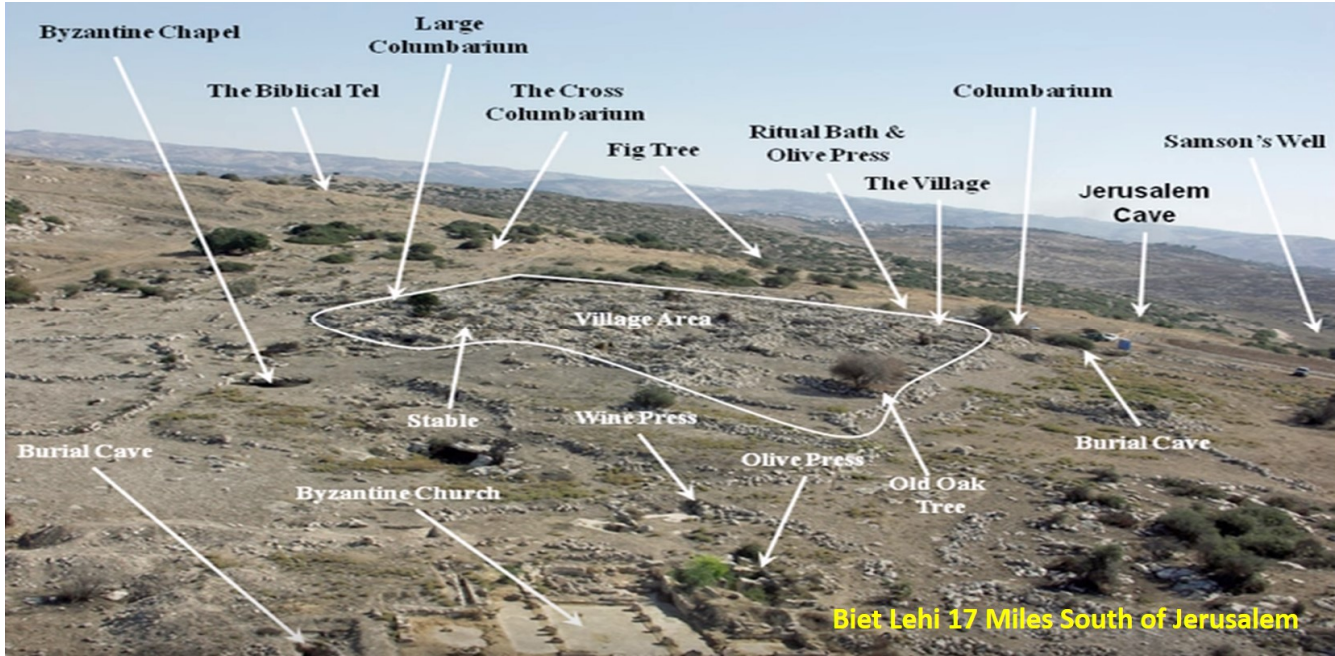


*Aerial photo of the Byzantine church at Beit Lehi (Courtesy of the Beit Lehi Foundation)*

### DESIGN CHALLENGE

After several years of fundraising efforts by the Beit Lehi Foundation from private donors, the organization has just been awarded a large grant to construct a new visitor center that will serve the larger Beit Lehi archeological site. The visitor center will serve as a gateway for tourists before they begin their explorations of the publicly accessible archaeological sites. The visitor center will also serve as an educational center that assists tourists in becoming familiar with the broader history of the site and the ongoing archaeological excavations. Upon arrival visitors will watch an introductory film in a small theater as well as observe recent discoveries in an exhibit and gallery space. Adjacent to the exhibit area, there will be a back of house processing lab for handling, cataloging, and preserving artifacts found on site. In addition to these spaces, the visitor center will also include a gift shop, café, kitchen, and outdoor dining area.

As the architect for the project, you have been commissioned to design an early conceptual proposal for a new visitor center that will be presented to the Beit Lehi Foundation, Israeli government, and the Israel Antiquities Authority. This project will require the designer to balance the shifting design priorities that arise when considering client-user needs, site planning, architectural programming, religio-cultural ideals, and contextual issues.



**PROPOSED SITE**

The location for the Beit Lehi Visitor Center is located at the southeast quadrant of the larger archaeological site. The southeast corner of the site is located at 31° 33' 46" N, 34° 55' 49" E. The site is approximately 1.51 acres (65,776 ft<sup>2</sup>) in size.



## PROGRAM

The architectural program for the Beit Lehi Visitor Center is broken down as follows:

### **Exhibition Area (2,000 SF total)**

- Permanent galleries (1,500 SF)
- Processing lab for preparation of exhibitions and conservation (500 SF)

### **Administration (1,030 SF total)**

- Director's office (150 SF)
- Curator's office (100 SF)
- Storage/Supplies (120 SF)
- Conference room (400 SF)
- First Aid (80 SF)
- Security (80 SF)
- Unisex restroom – 1 water closet, 1 lavatory (100 SF)

### **Public Spaces (7,050 SF total)**

- Main lobby for display and receptions (2,300 SF)
- Gift shop/Café/Kitchen (3,150 SF)
- Theater with 56 seats (800 SF)
- Women's restroom – 4 water closets, 2 lavatories, changing table (400 SF)
- Men's restroom – 2 water closets, 2 urinals, 2 lavatories, changing table (400 SF)

### **Support (1,200 SF total)**

- Loading dock with controlled access for the transfer of collection material; temporary secure storage (400 SF)
- Mechanical room (800 SF)
- A minimum of two (2) exits are required for egress

### **Exterior Improvements**

- Parking area for 10 vehicles and 3 buses
- Bus loading and unloading area in front of main entrance
- Tour loading and unloading area
- Outdoor covered seating for Café
- Outdoor vendor area near gift shop

### **Beit Lehi Visitor Center total net square footage (11,280 SF)**

*Gross square footage - 1.35 multiplier for circulation (15,228 SF)*

**(NOTE: All text that follows is from the Beit Lehi Foundation website: <https://beitlehi.org/>)**

## LOCATION OF BEIT LEHI



*Location map of Beit Lehi (Courtesy of Beit Lehi Foundation)*

Beit Lehi, or Beit Loya, is an active archaeological site southwest of Jerusalem, about an hour and a quarter's drive by car. It is situated within a geographical region known as the Judean Shephelah, or Lowland, sandwiched between the Judean Hills in the east and the coastal plain in the west. Throughout antiquity, a major road that led to and from the coastal port city of Gaza passed by the site.

## EXCAVATION TIMELINE

The late Professor Yoram Tsafrir of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem first carried out small-scale excavations at Beit Lehi in the early 1980s, when he uncovered parts of an impressive Byzantine church complex. After this, the site lay untouched for nearly two decades before work was resumed in 2005. This time, Dr. Oren Gutfeld, also of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (and at the time Prof. Tsafrir's doctoral candidate), directed the excavation. Since then, Dr. Gutfeld and his team have carried out an average of two excavations each year with the generous support of the Beit Lehi Foundation.



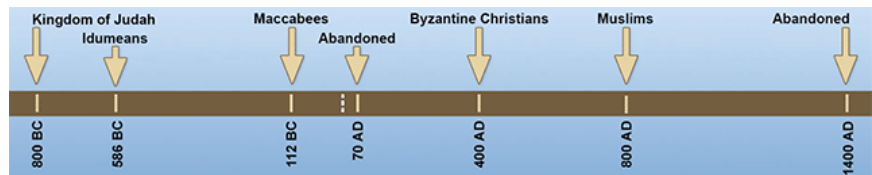
*Closeup of mosaic floor in the Byzantine church (Courtesy of Beit Lehi Foundation)*

## ORIGINS OF THE NAME “BEIT LEHI”

Almost every town or city is named for something—a person, an event, or a nearby geographical wonder. Beit Lehi is no different. “Beit” in Hebrew means “house or dwelling of,” while “lehi” means “jawbone.” The name “Lehi” seems to have originated in biblical times, apparently referring to the traditional resting place of Samson after he slew one thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass. “But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En Hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day” (Judges 15:19). Thus, Beit Lehi means “dwelling place of Lehi.”

We suggest identifying the site of Beit Lehi with “Beit Tzedek”, or the “House of Righteousness” mentioned by the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius in the 1st century A.D. Josephus recounts how, during the time of the Great Revolt against Rome (66–70 AD), a group of Jewish rebels escaped to a village by this name.

## HISTORY OF BEIT LEHI



*Timeline of settlement at Beit Lehi (Courtesy of Beit Lehi Foundation)*

Many of the historical milestones that happened anciently in the land of Israel are reflected by the settlement history of Beit Lehi.

The site was apparently first settled around 800 B.C. (the Iron Age II) as part of the Kingdom of Judah. It was abandoned during the Babylonian conquest in 586 B.C., and soon after it was reoccupied by the pagan Idumeans who came from the southeast (King Herod was half-Idumean). Around 112 B.C. the area reverted to Jewish control under the Hasmoneans/Maccabees, remaining so into the Herodian, or Late Second Temple, period.

Following the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (66–70 A.D.), the site seems to have been abandoned. It was resettled some 300 years later, in the Byzantine period, as a Christian village. Although the site remained Christian following the Arab conquest of the land of Israel ca. 636 A.D., by the late 8th century its Christian inhabitants seem to have been replaced by Muslims. During the following centuries, Beit Lehi seems to have existed as a small, modest village, finally abandoned around the 13th or 14th century. Since then, it has lain undisturbed, with centuries of rain and wind doing their best to cover the existing structures.



*One of the many columbaria found at Beit Lehi (Courtesy of Beit Lehi Foundation)*

## SUBTERRANEAN STRUCTURES

The geology of this region of Israel is characterized by a deep layer of soft limestone that is covered by a 4-foot layer of hard limestone. Thus, it would not have been particularly difficult for the ancient inhabitants of the site to carve out large subterranean structures, which would have been cool in the summer and dry in the winter. Among our discoveries are an oil press and adjacent Jewish ritual bath (miqveh), a massive dovecote (columbarium), a chapel, a stable, and a number of water cisterns—all hewn from bedrock and all of which we found filled with centuries of accumulated earth and debris. There is still much more to unearth, and your financial assistance can help us move forward! As we continue to expose these underground wonders, we will provide photos, descriptions, and virtual tours, as well as offer tours at the site.

## REQUIRED READING / VIDEOS

- Merhav, Racheli, and Ann E. Killebrew. "Public Exposure: For Better and for Worse." *Museum International* 50, no. 4 (1998): 15-20.
- Palumbo, Gaetano. "Threats and Challenges to the Archaeological Heritage in the Mediterranean," in *Management Planning for Archaeological Sites* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2002), p.3-12.
- Patrich, Joseph and Yoram Tsafrir, "Horvat Beth Loya," in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society & Carta, 1993), 1:210-213.
- BibleWalks, "Kh. Beit Lehi – Aerial Views" [https://youtu.be/Mq\\_9ur0IXql](https://youtu.be/Mq_9ur0IXql)
- Utah Valley University, "Beit Lehi Archeological Project," <https://youtu.be/k9NtYJxh9oM>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, "Mosque," <https://youtu.be/cwQT0q203yo>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, "Multifunctional Complex," [https://youtu.be/HdRfCYLc\\_NI](https://youtu.be/HdRfCYLc_NI)

- Beit Lehi Foundation, “Hellenistic Tomb,” [https://youtu.be/CMVh\\_Tnjefw](https://youtu.be/CMVh_Tnjefw)
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “The Oil Press and Jewish Ritual Bath Complex,” <https://youtu.be/JVkJsfzh8xdY>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “The Subterranean Stable,” <https://youtu.be/F52KKpeJFR0>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “Lehi Tree,” [https://youtu.be/59J\\_oGVIMRo](https://youtu.be/59J_oGVIMRo)
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “Jerusalem Cave,” <https://youtu.be/1jZv-ab5TjE>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “Jesus is Here Cave,” <https://youtu.be/xpI2051g2jU>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “The Byzantine Church,” <https://youtu.be/CE7LxwJuioU>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “Beit Lehi Church,” <https://youtu.be/wc65WdmDrsQ>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “Large Columbarium,” <https://youtu.be/f7oK3Uu30IQ>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “Cruciform Columbarium,” <https://youtu.be/4aAx17c20Hs>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “The Subterranean Chapel,” <https://youtu.be/A-cnVXaRqmc>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “Introduction,” <https://youtu.be/AiyMiAv8UfM>
- Beit Lehi Foundation, “House of Lehi,” <https://youtu.be/FDqIf11Fwecg>

## ASSESSMENT

The weight of each of the projects and assignments will be broken down as follows:

### ***PROJECT 01: Beit Lehi Visitor Center***

Pre-Design Phase (Site, Precedent, Programming Analysis)	10%
Schematic Design Phase (Interim Review)	15%
Design Development Phase (Final Review)	20%