

## LaBianca Spends 4.5 Months in Jerusalem

Serves at the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research

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The LaBiancas traveled to Florence, Italy, where Oystein was one of the keynote speakers for the opening session of the International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan. (Photo by Oystein LaBianca)

By: Gillian Panigot, media communications manager and FOCUS editor

Oystein LaBianca, professor of anthropology and associate director of the Institute of Archaeology at Andrews University, recently spent four and a half months in Jerusalem for an annual professor fellowship at the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research.

During his stay, Oystein completed work on two books. “Levantine Entanglement: Local Dynamics of Globalization in a Contested Region” is the lead publication resulting from a research collaboration at the Center for Advanced Study in Norway. It describes the geographical region known as the Levant as a way to study the culture, history and religions of the Eastern Mediterranean. The second book, “The Leventine Nexus: The View from Hisban,” summarizes four decades of research developing methods and theories for studying the long-term in the Southern Levant.

While at the Albright Institute, Oystein also co-presented a workshop with Terje Stordalen, professor of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament studies at the University of Oslo, Norway, and OBEL Social Science visiting professor, University of Aalborg, Denmark. The presentation, “A Global Turn for History and Archaeology of the Southern Levant,” made a case for approaching the history of the Southern Levant through a global context. The workshop consisted of two 20-minute presentations followed by two invited responses and time for general discussion. Oystein introduced the global history perspective and discussed how he is using it to interpret the archaeological record of Tall Hisban, biblical Heshbon, in Jordan. Stordalen discussed the implications of the global history perspective for understanding the interactions in the Southern Levant that shaped a particular cultural context associated with the literature of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

In addition to the academic activities, the Albright Institute organized cultural activities for its visiting fellows, including a hike up the Mount of Olives and a 10-day tour of Egypt. Oystein and his wife, Asta, enjoyed exploring the local area on their own, too, taking a tour of the Temple Mount area and visiting Bethlehem, Hebron and the south of Israel.

The LaBiancas also traveled to Florence, Italy, where Oystein was one of the keynote speakers for the opening session of the International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan. The opening session took place at the Hall of the Five Hundred in the City Hall of Florence, and Oystein shared the stage with Prince Hassan of Jordan, the mayor of Florence, the Italian ambassador to Jordan, and the director of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

Oystein says, “Our stay at the Albright was an unforgettable experience. The fellowship with staff and various senior and junior scholars also in-residence at the Institute was enriching both on a professional level and personally. We also greatly enjoyed visits to the innumerable heritage sites throughout Israel, and especially in the Old City of Jerusalem.”