

Often mentioned in the Torah, the biblical city of Gath was one of the five Philistine city-states established in northwestern Philistia. Referred to as “Gath of the Philistines,” it is said to be the home of Goliath and near the location where a blinded Shimon knocked down the temple pillars. A treasure trove of fascinating biblical and other artifacts that beckon to be unearthed, Gath’s existence is confirmed by ancient Egyptian inscriptions.

Today, the city’s ruins can be found inside Tel Zafit, an Israeli national park, where it has become a major archaeological site. Since 1996, Aren Maeir, professor of archaeology at Bar Ilan University, has been the director of the Tel es-Safi/Gath excavation. Among the remarkable findings dug up by Professor Maeir and his team are a Philistine Temple, the remains of a Crusader-era castle, and myriad ritual items dating back to the Iron Age.

Professor Maeir’s archaeological expertise has earned him the nickname of “Israel’s Indiana Jones.” Prior to Gath, he directed excavations and surveys in Israel, including Jerusalem, Hazor, Yoqneam, Tel Qasile, and Beth-Shean. He has authored more than 100 scholarly articles on archaeology as well as several books. Moreover, his blog gets hundreds of hits each day from people who are curious about the secrets unraveled by archaeology, particularly in Israel, a region rich in archaeological sites. A world-renowned scholar, he has unearthed a remarkable collection of ancient pottery and other artifacts dating back 3,000 years, many of which are on exhibit in his department of Land of Israel Studies at Bar Ilan.

The many people who come to volunteer on his excavations include novices,