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## PROFILE

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# Siegfried Horn

## Dialogue With an Adventist Archaeologist

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**S**iegfried Herbert Horn, world-renowned archaeologist and eminent biblical scholar, is professor emeritus of archaeology and history of antiquity at Andrews University. Born in Wurzen, Germany, in 1908, Horn received his early education at Friedensau Seminary in Germany and Stanborough College in England.

From 1930 to 1940 Horn served as a minister in the Netherlands and a

missionary in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). During World War II, he was held as a prisoner of war for six and a half years by the Dutch in Indonesia and the English in India.

After gaining his freedom in 1946, Horn emigrated to the United States, where he completed a B.A. at Walla Walla College and an M.A. at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. He completed his Ph.D. in 1951 at the University of Chicago. From that time until 1976, he taught at Andrews University in Michigan. While at Andrews University, he began the doctoral program in theology and founded the journal *Andrews University Seminary Studies*. On June 7, 1992, Andrews University presented Siegfried Horn the degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa.

As an archaeologist, Horn is known especially for the important expedition which he initiated and directed at Tell Hesban (biblical Heshbon) in Jordan.

He also participated in archaeological expeditions at Mt. Ararat, Turkey, and Tell Balatah, Jordan. In 1970 he founded the Andrews University Archaeological Museum that has subsequently been named after him, and from 1970-1971, he was director of the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, Jordan.

Author of nearly 800 articles and several books, Siegfried Horn contributed substantially to the multi-volume *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* and was the principal author of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*.

The fascinating story of Siegfried Horn's life has been recounted in two publications: a biography entitled *Survivor*, by Joyce Rochat (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1986) and an autobiography entitled *Promise Deferred* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1987).

**D**r. Horn, in a sense you have lived many lives. What have been the highest points in your career?

As I think over my life, the highest point has been teaching prospective ministers for 26 years in our theological seminary. Now I meet my former students all over the world. There is nothing that has given me more satisfaction than this.

Another high point was my administration in 1968 of the first archaeological expedition directed by our church under Andrews University at Tell Hesban (biblical Heshbon) in Jordan. At that time I was the only Adventist archaeologist. I had only five people on the expedition, but in the course of time we became the largest expedition in Jordan. Today, we are

excavating Tell el-'Umeiri also in Jordan, and continue to be the largest archaeological expedition in the country.

**Your mother was a strong Seventh-day Adventist. How did she solve the problem of being required to send you to school on Saturdays?**

My mother's stand for the Sabbath ensured that I could never disappoint her by breaking the Sabbath. As children, we were required to attend school six days a week, including Sabbath. In order to avoid the inevitable fines and imprisonment that she would have faced for refusing to comply with the law, my mother arranged for me to attend the Jewish school in Leipzig with the Jewish children. I attended that school from age 6 to 11. I spoke Hebrew and can still

read my Hebrew Bible. When we moved to Chemnitz, we were forced to attend public school on the Sabbath. Initially, my mother's refusal to comply with the law resulted in fines. However, the time finally came when she could not pay them.

**What did she do then?**

Repeatedly we came home from school to a note on the door, "I have been taken to jail." I was eleven, my brother was eight, and my sister was five. Church members brought us some food, but in those years food was rationed and we had to basically provide for ourselves. One Sabbath when the soldiers came to force my mother to send us to school, she sat them down and gave them a Bible study. Another time when they came and Mother was talking to them, we

children tried to escape, but there was a soldier in the hallway blocking our way. We locked ourselves in the attic and when the soldiers searched the house they could not find us. Mother was eventually able to get a petition passed that allowed Adventist children to have their religious freedom and not be forced to attend school on the Sabbath in the German State of Saxony. This law was upheld through the communist regime. My own niece was granted this privilege. Later I wrote up my story, and it fell into the hands of Adventists in Romania who had the same problem. It was published and circulated throughout all the Adventist churches in that country and helped many have the courage to remain faithful.

**What first triggered your love for archaeology?**

As a boy of 11 or 12 a minister gave me a five-volume work on archaeology and the Bible. This was my first exposure to archaeology, and I read the book with great interest. From that point on, it became my hobby. In the following years, I read articles and books on archaeology in my spare time. However, even later as a minister I knew no archaeologist, and it never occurred to me that an archaeologist could be useful in the church.

**During World War II you were held in a concentration camp for six and a half years. What activities occupied your time?**

There were hundreds of missionaries in the camp. When they discovered that I knew both biblical Hebrew and Greek, they asked me to teach courses in these subjects. My wife had been allowed to send me a number of books and with these, including the Hebrew grammar that I had used as a child in Hebrew school, my Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and grammars, I was able to teach. My students, having copied my grammars by hand, studied them from cover to cover several times.

The question constantly plagued me, "What shall I do with my time?" I knew that one day, God would ask me to give an account of my time. Also, I had always complained of not having enough time to study. As a missionary during the Depression years, budgets had been cut so that I had had to carry five full-time jobs, which never allowed me enough time to do the study that I longed for. Now at last I had time and I decided to intensively study my great interest, archaeology.

While in the camp, I worked on several major projects. I wanted to confront the problems a translator would have to face, so I translated the entire Bible from Hebrew into German, a project that took me several years to complete. I also studied and wrote extensively on the subjects of biblical chronology and the history of postexilic Israel. I devoted a year to the study of the New Testament. I would borrow books from other prisoners in the camp and spend whole nights copying the books by hand. I wrote hundreds of pages of notes on all I studied so that I would never forget what I had learned. These notes later became invaluable resources to me. These were not lost years.

**What do you consider to be your major contributions to biblical archaeology?**

My major contribution has been to popularize archaeology for Adventists and to create an interest in it that I don't think existed before my time. However, it was a sacrifice. I spent years writing on the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* and was unable to do my own scholarly writing. The galley proofs followed me all over the world, even down the Nile while I was on a study tour in Egypt.

**Have you encountered conflict between archaeological data and the biblical text? How have you resolved this in your own mind?**

I must say yes, conflicts do exist. If an Adventist teacher wants to be

honest and yet effective, he has to not only be acquainted with the problems, but he also has to know how to deal with them. I do not belong to the class of teachers who throw their students in the air and have nothing with which to catch them when they come down! If students came to me with questions, and it happened frequently, I admitted that I was aware of and acquainted with the problems, and that for some of these questions I had no answers. For example, I hope to ask Moses why he never named the pharaoh of the Exodus. In the case of contradictions that I can not answer, I have chosen to believe the Bible. I have always prayed, "Lord, whatever I learn, make sure I do not lose my childlike faith." That does not mean I can explain everything; I can not. Some conflicts I have not resolved I just accept.

**Are others building on the foundation that you have laid?**

Many who began as my archaeology students are now connected with Adventist colleges and universities. Some of these are also well known in the scholarly world. I think of Larry Geraty at Atlantic Union College, Larry Herr at Canadian Union College, Doug Clark at Walla Walla College, William Shea at the Biblical Research Institute, Bjornar Storfjell at Andrews University, and David Merling, curator of the Horn Archaeological Museum at Andrews University, to name a few. They learned to love biblical archaeology and are now making important contributions in this fascinating field.

**Connie Gane**

*Connie Gane teaches biblical archaeology at Pacific Union College, in Angwin, California. She completed her M.A. in Mesopotamian Archaeology at the University of California, Berkeley in 1991 and is currently on a leave of absence from her Ph.D. studies while she raises her family.*