On May 3, 2013, I flew into Calgary International Airport, where I was greeted by students from the University of Edmonton who gave me a ride to Lethbridge. I saw a lot of open grasslands and beautiful mountains on the drive and took many pictures. My Canadian companions also bought me a delicious “ice cap” from Tim Horton’s Coffee and Bake Shop, which is what they call an iced coffee. During the drive I heard all about hockey, a sport much more famous in Canada than it is in the U.S. After a few hours we arrived at the Lethbridge Days Inn, which had a mural on the walls that I had to take a picture of.

The next day we went to the university for the first day of the conference. It was very interesting to see all of the different presentations on different areas related to religious studies like the sociology of religion or the history of different religious figures. My main focus was on the religion of the Ancient Israelites, which was what my research covered. In my session, I watched two presentations about archaeological and historical evidence concerning the emergence of ancient Israel as well as the first religious beliefs of the ancient Israelites. The most interesting presentation was about archaeological evidence that showed the shift from the previous ancient occupiers of the land now known as Israel and the Ancient Israelites: the consumption of pigs dramatically increased at a certain point, a clear sign that the Israelites who did not eat pork moved into the area.

After I watched those presentations I presented my research on the portrayal of angels in Genesis as very human figures based on Genesis 6:1-4 when the angels married and had children with human women, and Genesis 18-19 when angels eat human food and accept human hospitality, and Genesis 32 when Jacob wrestles with an angel (see a copy of my research paper.
for more details on the topic). I had a lot of fun with my presentation and the audience asked questions that were easily answered by my research.

After the presentations there was a two hour break before the banquet and we returned to the hotel. I took advantage of the time to go to the local museum, which was walking distance, and to take pictures of the hills and the Lethbridge Viaduct, the largest bridge of its kind in the world. When time was up, we returned to the University of Lethbridge, where keynote speaker Prof. James Linville spoke about the New Atheist movement and different ways of studying religions. When the presentation ended, we stayed a little longer and talked to some of the other students. I found myself at the archaeology table, so I heard many fun stories about archaeology digs in ancient sites and new findings, including a seal with the picture of a man battling a lion that could be ancient representations of the biblical Samson story.

After the final conference panel on the second day, I left with my Canadian companions who drove me back to Calgary. On the way back I ate at A & W and enjoyed Poutine, a Canadian dish comprised brown gravy with cheese curds on top of fries. It was pretty delicious, although it could not have been healthy, and I took a few pictures to commemorate my taste of Canada. A few hours later we were at my Calgary hotel and I said goodbye. The next morning I took a shuttle to the airport and headed back to the US.

My trip to the University of Lethbridge for the Research in Religious Studies Conference was a great experience. I got to share with and learn from undergraduate and graduate students who were far more knowledgeable than me. The Blankfield Fellowship gave me an opportunity to meet people who share my interest in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel and to present in an academic setting.