RJ Hall

Subject: FW: TeHEP UPDATE 22 DECEMBER 2009

Tall el-Hammam Excavation Project

Trinity Southwest University,
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

in a Joint Scientific Project with the

Department of Antiquities,
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

TeHEP UPDATE

22 December 2009

An Exclusive Report for TeHEP Alumni, Financial Supporters, and Friends

[GLOSSARY OF CHRONOLOGICAL TERMS FREQUENTLY USED IN TeHEP UPDATES:
Chalcolithic Period = Copper/Stone Age, 4400-3300 BCE; EBA = Early Bronze Age, 3300-2350 BCE; IBA = Intermediate Bronze Age, 2350-2000 BCE; MBA = Middle Bronze Age, 2000-1550 BCE; LBA = Late Bronze Age, 1550-1200 BCE; IA1 = Iron Age 1, 1200-1000 BCE; IA2 = Iron Age 2, 1000-586 BCE; IA3 = Iron Age 3/Persian Period, 586-332 BCE; HP = Hellenistic/Greek Period, 332-63 BCE; ERP = Early Roman Period, 63 BCE-168 CE]

Hello All:

Well, for once the weatherman was right on. Most of the forecasts are done for Amman, but their weather is very different from here in the valley. They can be getting snow while we're basking in the warm sun. But they said it would rain, and about 3am it really cut loose. It woke many of us up with some thunder and pounding rain. It rained pretty hard for about two or three hours. It was the hardest rain for the longest duration that I've ever seen here in the Jordan Valley, for sure.

Needless to say, we didn't go out to the site because it would have been too muddy. However, it did clear off nicely during the day, and gave us a good drying out. It's amazing how thirsty the ground is, and how fast things dry around here. It's kind of like New Mexico in that regard. Even though we didn't go out to the site, many of us did get quite a bit of work done---you know, reading, writing, drawing, researching.

I spent most of the day working on my study of the location of Zoar, and also working on Dead Sea level data for the past several thousand years. During that timeframe, the lake has fluctuated from -300 to -400 meters below sea level. That sounds huge, but I computed that it represents rise/fall levels over, say, a thousand years, of about 15cm a year,

depending on the speed of rise/fall and the heights reached. But the size and shape of the lake is dramatically different at the historical extremes. The Dead Sea configuration that you see on your Bible maps is at about -350m. The lake today is at -432 (we measured it just the other day). At -400m the lake has no “tongue” (Lisan), and only consists of the deep northern basin, and it’s entirely dried up at the southern end. At -300m, the lake is quite a bit larger than it is on Bible maps, with the Lisan completely covered by water, and with the southern shallow end extending down about 10km S from where it is on Bible maps. All this has a lot to do with the Sodom narratives, but I’ll do some on that a bit later when I’ve got time.

Some of the team went up to Madaba and Mount Nebo. We always encourage our folks to take those kinds of field trips whenever we have to take a weather break, which doesn’t happen very often (last year we didn’t lose a single dig day to weather).

Looks like tomorrow will be a sunny day. Hopefully the mud won’t be too bad.

Digging the Bible,

Steven Collins, TeHEP Director
Dean, College of Archaeology, Trinity Southwest University

P.S. Please forward this to whomever you like!

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For detailed information about the Tall el-Hammam Excavation Project, visit the official TeHEP website: www.tallelhammam.com.