

RJ Hall

Subject: FW: First Report From the Field and First Pictures

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

15 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]



FIRST TALL EL-HAMMON EXCAVATION
PROJECT GROUP OF SEASON FIVE



CLEARING THE MBA STREET

Here are two reports, one from Steven Collins, and one from Gary Byers.

Hello All:

What a day! You may or may not remember that last season we excavated what we thought was the EB3 city wall around the lower city. We always thought that it looked more like an MBA wall in overall character, but we didn't have any good reason to push it into that period (the time of Abraham). And that pretty much held until today.

1/20/2010

But what a difference a day makes! Most of the surface stone domestic foundations in our trench LA.28 were solidly dated to the MBA in our final pottery reading from last season. But the big 4-meter-thick city wall only about 2 meters to the S of the closest domestic foundation was still, in our minds, an EBA wall with perhaps some MBA refurbishing. Then today we extended our LA.28 trench further to the S beyond those fortifications only to discover an earlier city wall, entirely EBA in character ("one-man" field stone construction), 5 meters thick! With this discovery, our other wall started looking all the more MBA.

Then I got to fiddling with the section cut we created between the domestic foundation and the 4m wall, and there it was. I could see that the hard-packed street not only sealed against the MBA house wall, but it also sealed against the 4m city wall. In other words, they were used in exactly the same period. So, the house, street, and city wall were all from the time of Abraham and Lot, the MBA. That also means that the ash covering the street is from the destruction of Sodom. And the only thing above that was blue sky. There was a real finality to that!

I could almost hear the footsteps of Lot and the visiting messengers of Yahweh as they may have walked right along this very road that likely encircled the entire city just inside the wall. I have to admit, my eyes really got misty there for few moments to realize what I was looking at, what I was touching, what our TeHEP Team members were uncovering. What a moment.

Enjoy these photos. In one you're looking at a street from the city of Sodom that hasn't seen the light of day since it's fiery destruction nearly 4000 years ago. Amazing. Just amazing.

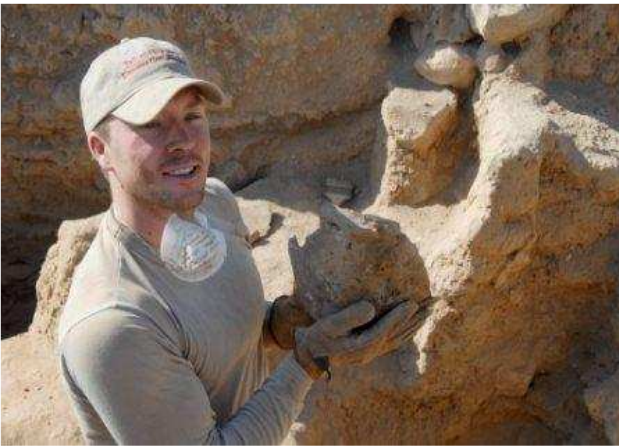
Blessings to you all.

Steven Collins, Ph.D.
Director, TeHEP, Jordan

Gary Byers Reports from Tall el-Hammam...

First time diggers on an excavation generally feel that the first day of a dig is the worst. But many veterans say they are running the first day on adrenaline and on the second day it still has not quite caught up with them. But on the third day, it all comes crashing down! Well, today was the third day.

Since day one, the weather has been wonderful. The temperature has been shirtsleeve weather while we have been digging all three days. Each day we have made some wonderful finds, which also keeps spirits high. But today was particularly unique.



OWEN WITH A POTTERY VESSEL

Our normal routine is breakfast at 6am and on the bus by 7am. We are at the site before 7:30 and digging furiously before 8 in the morning. We normally stop for lunch, about 11:30, to eat a very tasty meal of chicken shawarma, French fries, and vegetables from a local restaurant. Work continues again till about 2:30 when we clean up our excavations for the day, pack up our equipment, and head back for the bus.

Immediately upon returning to the hotel, we wash the pottery we dug that day and analyze ("read") the pottery we dug and washed the day before. This is our routine, 5 days a week. You either love it or hate it!

Well, today was a little different. We had breakfast at 6 and were on the bus by 7, as usual. But today we did not stop for restaurant shawarma at 11:30. While everybody did take a break, we worked straight through till 2 PM and then packed our tools and headed back to the bus for a very special meal.

Abu Ahmed, our neighbor, good friend and site caretaker year round, had set up a large tent with tables and chairs inside. Then he fed the whole group, (21 today) a traditional Jordanian meal of magluba (meaning "upside down" in Arabic). It included chicken and rice, a traditional Jordanian salad with sour cream, and soft drinks. Sitting on chairs under the tent and eating a delicious hot meal was just what our group needed. After exchanging pleasantries and posing for photographs, I told Abu Ahmed that it was my 58th birthday, which he did not know. He did not miss a beat, but immediately announced to everyone that he had gone to all this effort just for me, which absolutely no one believed!

It was an amazing display of hospitality by our friend and his family. We were truly honored by his generosity and kindness. The Jordanian people have been so warm and friendly. My wife and I really enjoy coming and getting to know better those whom we meet and get to spend some time with.

So, we made it through day 3 and I am now one year older. God is good!

Gary A. Byers
TeHEP Senior Field Archaeologist



LUNCH ON ABU AHMED



THE YELLOW-GLOVE GANG

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

You can make donations to TeHEP at the TSU shopping website: www.shop.tsu-edu.us.

Donations can be mailed to: **TSU; 5600 Eubank NE, Suite 130; Albuquerque, NM USA 87111.**

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