The Tall el-Hammam Excavation Project (TeHEP) is a joint scientific project between Trinity Southwest University, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA and the Department of Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The goal of TeHEP is to study the relationship of this immense and strategically-located site within its ancient period socio-cultural, economic and political contexts, and to ascertain its position, function and influence within those contexts. In addition to this broader focus incorporating historical and archaeological data from neighboring sites in the southern Jordan Valley and beyond, the Project will study the site as a microcosm of life and activity within its own local environment, seeking to determine its phases of settlement, urbanization and the reasons for its decline, destruction and/or abandonment at archaeological period interfaces. Within this micro-context the Project seeks to shed light on how the inhabitants of Tall el-Hammam adapted to the local environment and environmental changes, and utilized available resources, enabling them to attain levels of city planning and building on a resultantly large scale.
I. INTRODUCTION

One of the highlights of the 2008 Season was the collaboration producing a new Joint Agreement between Trinity Southwest University (TSU) and the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DoA) for the duration of five years (and renewable), creating a joint scientific expedition extending through the 2013 season. This milestone for the Tall el-Hammam Excavation Project (TeHEP) was signed on 21 January 2008 by Dr. Steven Collins (TSU), project Co-Director and Executive Archaeologist, and Dr. Fawwaz Al-Khraysheh, Director General of the DoA of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The Agreement not only sets forth guidelines and parameters for the ongoing excavation of Tall el-Hammam, but also provides opportunities for mutual scholarly interchange between TSU, the DoA, and Jordanian institutions of higher education and cultural heritage.
Season Three\(^1\) of the Tall el-Hammam Excavation Project was conducted from 3 January through 13 February 2008, with the authorization and support of Dr. Fawwaz Al-Khraysheh. The first segment of Season Three was directed by Dr. Steven Collins (Dean, College of Archaeology, TSU), assisted by Mr. Hussein Aljarrah (DoA Regional Director, Kafrein District; Field Archaeologist), Mr. Gary Byers (TSU, Senior Archaeologist), and Mr. Steve McAllister (TSU, Field Archaeologist). The second segment of the season, marked by the signing of the Joint Agreement, was co-directed by Dr. Steven Collins and Mr. Abdesamee' Abu Dayyah (DoA, Archaeologist and CRM), and assisted by Mr. Adeib abu-Shmais (DoA, Archaeological Inspector of Amman; Senior Archaeologist), Mr. Gary Byers, Mr. Khalil Hamdan (DoA, Head of Excavation Sector; Senior Archaeologist), Mr. Hussein Aljarrah (DoA, Field Archaeologist), Mr. Jehad Haroun (DoA, Field Archaeologist), Mr. Michael C. Luddeni (TSU, Director of Photography), Mr. Steve McAllister (TSU, Field Archaeologist), and Mr. Qutaiba Dasouqi (DoA, Surveyor). TeHEP professional archaeologists and specialists were assisted by a team of Square Supervisors consisting of TSU graduate and doctoral students in archaeology, along with scholars from other institutions. Volunteer excavators from the USA, Canada, Germany and Italy, and local workers, rounded out the TeHEP Team.

Tall el-Hammam (TeH) is located 8 km N of the Dead Sea, 12 km E of the Jordan River, and 8 km S of the modern village of South Shouna (the location of Tall Nimrim), and 1 km SSW of the Kafrein Dam. This area of the southern Jordan Valley, particularly the eastern half of what many now call “the Jordan Disk” (the circular alluvial area N of the Dead Sea, approximately 25 km in diameter), lies on the crossroads of the region’s ancient N/S and E/W trade routes. Several significant sites, all variously occupied during the high points of Levantine Bronze Age civilization, hug the eastern edge of the Jordan Disk beyond the spread of the ancient flood plain, bounded on the N by the throat of the Jordan Valley, and on the S by the rocky terrain of the Dead Sea area—Tall Nimrim with Tall Bleibel and Tall Mustah in close proximity, sprawling Tall el-Hammam with comparatively petite Tall Kafrein, Tall Rama, and Tall Mwais a short distance to the NE, SW, and SSW, respectively, and Tall Iktanu approximately 3km SSE. Also nearby are several large dolmen fields and smaller sites that, for the most part, remain unexcavated.

Tall el-Hammam is the largest of the Jordan Disk sites.\(^2\) The site spreads roughly 1000m from E to W, and from 500m to 700m N to S (for the most part, the site spreads from the Wadi Kafrein on the N to the Wadi Ar Rawda on the S, and from the main road to the E to the confluence of

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these two wadis to the W). Thus, the general site footprint is about 60 hectares (just over 150 acres). These dimensions approximate the areas of the site occupied in more remote antiquity, from at least the Chalcolithic Period through the late Iron Age (there are likely gaps). There is, additionally, ample evidence of a significant Hellenistic/Early Roman Period occupation off the main tall to the immediate S. Reports about the site from the late 19th century\(^3\) describe an aqueduct that fed the area south of the upper tall. There is also a warm spring at about the E/W center of the site in close proximity to what may have been a Roman bath complex or water reservoir. However, the extent of the Hellenistic/Roman occupation remains an unknown quantity except for the large structure in Field R on the lower tall, and a possible tower in Field A on the upper tall (see below). There is also some evidence (pottery sherds) from the Byzantine Period, and occasional Islamic Period sherds. There seems to have been some re-use of earlier structures on the upper tall (particularly those built initially during the Iron Age) periodically from the Iron Age through the Late Islamic Period (perhaps squatters).

Surface surveys and excavation reveal significant occupation beginning at least during the Chalcolithic Period (some Pottery Neolithic material may also be present) and extending, with detectible consistency, through the Early Bronze Age, the Intermediate Bronze Age (old EBA IV), and into the Middle Bronze Age (all with associated architecture). Late Bronze Age sherds are present but rare, but there is no discernable LBA architecture at this point in the excavation. One of the more surprising discoveries of the 2008 season was that the EBA/IBA city wall extended not just around the lower tall (as originally thought), but also around the entire base of the upper tall as well. Equally surprising were indications that the MBA city fortifications were not simply confined to the mudbrick/earthen rampart ringing the upper tall, but also extended around the lower tall, often refurbishing and strengthening the EBA city wall as part of the MBA defensive strategy. Further, detailed surface sherding of the lower tall revealed a large quantity of material dating to the Intermediate Bronze Age, indicating that the city likely survived the ubiquitous period-ending calamity that caused the demise of EBA cities throughout the Levant, many of which never recovered.\(^4\) Perhaps owing to Tall el-Hammam's access to multiple water resources (the Jordan River, seasonal rainfall and wadi flows, and numerous nearby and on-site springs), residents seem to have overcome the negative factors leading to the decline and/or demise of other cities in the region.

Like Tall el-Hammam, nearby sites such as T. Nimrin, T. Kafrein, and T. Iktanu seem to lack significant, or any, Late Bronze Age occupation.\(^5\) The preliminary surface ceramic indicators

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suggest that T. el-Hammam follows suit. Is the “LBA gap” (as the T. Nimrin excavators call it\(^6\)) a regional phenomenon, and can T. el-Hammam shed light on what caused it? There are now excavation data that seem to support such a gap at T. el-Hammam (see below). Whatever caused the absence of occupation at the eastern Jordan Disk sites during the LBA timeframe did, in fact, not continue, as most were resettled during the mid-Iron Age. Indeed, the Iron Age II occupation at T. el-Hammam is quite extensive, and surrounded by a 3+m thick fortification wall (see below). What gave rise to the site’s Iron Age city, and what brought about its demise? These are questions that are only beginning to be probed by the first three seasons of excavation.

Tall el-Hammam certainly holds key pieces of the archaeological puzzle from which a greater comprehension and appreciation of the regional history can emerge. The focus of the third season of excavation was to continue to identify and sound sections of the site determined to offer reasonable opportunities to expose stratigraphic sequencing in the upper tall (Area U).

II. METHODOLOGY

When considering its constituent components collectively, TeH is enormous. But there are factors that have assisted us in narrowing the focus of the excavation thus far.

First, the ease of access to the EBA/IBA/MBA lower city led K. Prag, about seventeen years ago, to do a few soundings on the far western extremity of the lower tall (our Area L).\(^7\) In that location, the fortified Bronze Age occupation spreads over a circular area some 500m in diameter, much of which is exposed to, or near, the surface. Fortification walls and towers are clearly visible in many places, making the approximate parameters of the Bronze Age city relatively easy to identify. Thus, while certainly in need of additional excavation, the lower tall is at least a partially-known quantity.

Second, the ruins of the Iron Age city (mainly Iron II) spread over the top of the upper tall, and much of it, too, is exposed to the surface. Considerable segments of the fortification walls are visible, especially on the northern-most side. The remains of mudbrick walls and stone structures, many of them of monumental scale, are clearly visible in several locations. The first three seasons of excavation have begun to help in the periodization of the Iron Age occupation (see below), but again, the IA city is a partially-known quantity.

Third, at some point in the recent history of the site (likely from the Ottoman Period through the late 20\(^{th}\) century) the upper tall was made into a military outpost of some kind, with trenches, and gun and tank emplacements. Most or all of the military hardware comprising the outpost are long gone, but the military use of the site left behind a collection of huge, bulldozed scars across the site. The main scar is an ingress/egress “road” cut in from one to three meters in depth, from five

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\(^7\) See footnote 5.
to ten meters wide, and generally running NE/SW for 500m. It cuts a deep gouge through the SW (Field A) end of the upper tall to a depth of more than 3m in places, ejecting large amounts of ancient debris over and down its SW slope. Ancient debris is cast up on the sides of these bulldozed trenches along their full extent. Obviously, whatever stratification had existed in these disturbed/removed sections of the tall is gone, and that is unfortunate. However, for all of its destructive results, there are areas of the military trenching (now officially designated as MT) that we have used to our advantage in clarifying some exposed stratigraphy across the upper tall.

With these three factors in mind, our methodology for approaching the excavation of Tall el-Hammam in this third season was as follows:

1. We determined to remove several sections of the MT cast-up down to the original surface level of the upper tall, and to sift that material. In spite of the fact that this activity could not produce any stratigraphic data due to its highly disturbed nature, it could, theoretically, produce some chronological and cultural clues. At any rate, the removal of this disturbed material would also make those formerly covered (undisturbed) areas available for excavation. Since the MT is so extensive, it seemed best to get started with this process in earnest, particularly in fields B and C.

2. There was also a massive amount of bulldozing and farming activity on the lower tall in Field R (named for the obvious Roman presence there) that needed to be cleaned up before any meaningful excavation could be performed there in the future. The amount of cast-up material in that location seems almost insurmountable, but we decided to have a go at it, paving the way for the excavation and restoration of the known large structures there in a coming season.

3. We targeted Field A on the upper tall for clean up, due to the amount of MT material needing to be removed before additional excavation can be performed there. We decided that excavation in Field A could not proceed this season, but that such a clean-up would help us define what had already been done there, and give us a chance to sift for period indicators in the process.

4. In Field B we saw the need to expand into squares adjacent to those already in progress (facilitated by point 1 above). This would allow us to see more of the monumental buildings there, and help us glean some answers to the complex occupational history. There seems to have been significant re-use of these buildings from their inception through several phases of re-occupation, re-modeling, and re-orientation, making the puzzle a difficult one to unravel. Horizontal coverage, rather than depth, seemed the prudent way to address these complications.

5. Field C (upper tall) had given us our best stratigraphic sequences for the Iron Age thus far, and we decided to continue the work in this location, primarily in 28J. There was also the possibility of opening up an adjacent trench after some MT clean-up to reveal several exposed walls parallel to those in 28J (facilitated by point 1 above).

6. A long, 1.5m trench down the 35 line northward from Field D held prospects of revealing further the relationship between the MBA and IA fortification systems, and the configurations of those systems, as well as the possibility of exposing additional features further down the northern slope of the upper tall. We also decided to add two squares to
connect the "35 trench" to the structures and city wall already seen in the previous two seasons' work.

7. General exploration, measuring, and surveying of the site needed to continue, and we set our minds to accomplish much of this "in our spare time." Such activity always yields new and important information.

III. ACTIVITY DURING THE 2008 SEASON

A. Area L: Lower Tall

Several sweeps of the lower tall were made for sherding purposes. Chalcolithic, Early Bronze, Intermediate Bronze, and Middle Bronze Age forms were abundant, and in similar quantities (see side photos). We also spent a considerable amount of time and care tracing the Bronze Age city walls, towers, and (possible) gates, and placing these on the site survey. After much discussion, we concluded that sections of the fortification walls had likely been added or refurbished during the MBA, as signaled by square towers and megalithic construction over segments of the 4m-thick EBA/IBA city wall. The EBA/IBA walls are fundamentally different in character, and made primarily with "one-man" field stones and cobble fill, with rounded towers at frequent intervals.

Field R got some much-needed attention, as local treasure hunters had created many large holes and trenches through previously-deposited heaps of soil bulldozed in or out (depending on the location) for military and/or agricultural purposes. We took advantage of the situation to clean away debris from several sections of walls that turned out to be a very large structure (nearly 40m square) (a water reservoir? bath complex?) (see photo below). There was an abundance of Roman (and some Byzantine) pottery and glass fragments. Many of the ashlars in this structure exceed 1m in length, and some are as large as 2m. Floors and plaster are evident. No mosaic tiles were found,
lending support to the idea that the structure may be a water retention system of some kind, but this is strictly speculation.

B. Area U: Upper Tall

We spent a considerable amount of time carefully tracking the Bronze Age city walls from the lower tall around the upper tall, effectively doubling its size, or nearly so. We also discovered that the MBA city stretches out from the upper tall onto the lower tall, making it nearly as big as the earlier city, if not re-occupying the entire EBA footprint. All of this activity was finally surveyed, which will yield excellent dimension computations. Minimally, however, TeH is one of the largest Bronze Age sites in the southern Levant. Our work on the upper tall expanded somewhat this year, mainly due to the need to extend our knowledge of stratigraphy for the later periods, beginning with Iron II.

1. Field UA

Field A is cut approximately E/W by MT. A 3m deep trench through the highest point of the tall destroyed a 5m wide swath of ancient occupation, including massive stone and mudbrick structures. Our goal in this area has been, and continues to be, a clarification of the “mess” created by the MT, and a determination of the stratigraphy still discernable. MT clarification from the first season revealed at least three occupational levels: Hellenistic/Roman, Iron Age and, perhaps, Bronze Age (initially indeterminate as to periodization and/or phasing). During Season Two the presence of Late Hellenistic (LH) and Early Roman (ER) ceramics confirmed that the uppermost architectural structures were perhaps built on Iron Age foundations. As the Iron Age stone foundations were exposed to their bases, it became increasingly evident that the Bronze Age was present in some manner underneath (EBA, IBA, and MBA pottery is frequent, and in good contexts), but the sequences are still unclear, likely because of re-use and/or remodeling in several periods. Field A got a general cleaning from the uppermost MT debris, but no additional excavation was accomplished.
2. Field UB

Trenched through by modern military activity, 19U is a complex pile of tumble and poorly-laid (re-used) stones along its northern third for a depth of about 1m. However, once the surface “mess” was removed, several phases of Iron Age construction became apparent. A cobble surface at about the same level as the cobble layer in 20U (see 2007 report) is perhaps an extension of the same road or plaza. Some aspects of the larger walls in the square suggest that we may be in a gateway or something related to it. A "mirror image" of the tower section excavated in 20U exists in 19U. 19T provides a good look at the IA II city wall, and its connection to the monumental tower of 20U, 21U, 20T, and 21T (and extending to unopened squares to the south). 19U is also showing a prior fortification phase under the IA city wall that could be a section of MBA wall built into the MBA mudbrick rampart (?).

Selected for initial excavation because of the surface visibility of a monumental building foundation, square 20U (and adjacent squares opened up during Season Two) has within its balk boundaries walls of 1m (loci 1 and 6 in the final phase) and 2m thickness (locus 2 in the final phase), the intersection of which forms two inside corners (loci 3 and 4, and subsequent loci within the wall boundaries). The well-leveled tops of wall loci 1 and 2, with reddish decomposed mudbrick tightly packed between the stones, seems to indicate, at least in this square, that the tightly-laid boulder and chink foundation is preserved in its entirety. The pottery associated with the wall foundation is Iron Age II, and exists in several phases. The final IA II phase is delineated by a clear burn layer, the conflagration of which was hot enough to crack large boulders and leave behind many “klinkers” (melted mudbrick and other material). This final phase was built squarely over at least one earlier phase which defined the monumental building at this location.

The first phase of the IA II monumental building was built over a layer of cobbles (20cm to 30cm thick; see photo) that seems to form a stretch of road or plaza pavement, associated with a wall-stub of only one preserved course installed over the cobbles. Under that wall stub and cobbles is another wall (at least 1m thick) existing as one preserved course of large boulders (at an oblique angle relative to the later phases). These are cut into a mixed matrix of decomposed mudbrick, mudbrick fragments, and ash, associated with two earlier walls and a floor with clay-lined silo. The pottery associated with these two earlier walls, floor and silo dates to the Middle Bronze Age, and all associated loci seem to be sealed and free from later intrusion. Significant portions of two MBA storage jars and a distinctive piriform juglet were discovered in this context. 20U was cleaned in Season Three, but no further excavation was performed, allowing for adjacent squares to be opened for a better look at the larger structure of what we now believe is a (twin) tower overlooking a gate complex. 21U was opened this season to extend our look at the tower. Mixed pottery from the Iron Age, Hellenistic (rare), and Islamic
(rare) Periods attests to the (continuous?) re-use of this massive structure for many centuries. 21U is also revealing monumental walls below the tower (date undetermined).

21T was opened last season primarily to extend our excavation of the multi-phased IA II monumental building first seen in 20U. Along with two additional walls from that structure, another building was discovered adjacent to it. This new structure seems also to date from IA II, and contains two well-preserved doorways (see photo). 22T extends our view of this structure. Mixed pottery also signals re-use of this facility over several periods.

3. Field UC

Square 28J was originally placed to include the pottery discovered by MT cleanup. The square is bounded on three sides by MT destruction, but remains as an “island” of preservation. The context clarified rather quickly with the discovery of an in situ mudbrick wall (locus 2) laid over the top of the destruction debris (locus 3) containing a pottery hoard. The top of the wall had been destroyed by MT activity. Last season the square was opened up to its full extent, revealing several phases, all IA II. Several phases of an IA II structure were unearthed, including an installation appearing to be some sort of cultic, stone and plaster “altar” on a floor, with fragments of several juglets and “chalices” dating to IA II. The mix of ceramics is interesting throughout this square, as IA II A, B and C (and even a few Persian Period) forms are present, often in the same context. This suggests re-use and remodeling of these structures throughout IA II and III. The earliest phase seems to be domestic, while the latest phase, and the one prior to it, seem to be cultic, containing not only the chalices, but fragments of at least one figurine. Two additional installations were unearthed (loci 27 and 29) at a level earlier than the altar, but seemingly associated with the same walls (see photo). Several remodels are probably in view.

Square 30K was opened up near 28J to provide a look at the level below the MT cut level, and immediately revealed IA foundations and floors. Pottery was mixed EBA, MBA and IA II.

The house excavated last season in 29P contained several IA II storage jars, juglets, and cooking pots. Several “hearths” were present, with associated tabun and/or tannur fragments. Obviously destroyed by an earthquake during one of the latest phases, several repairs and remodels were visible, represented by numerous floor levels and wall additions. The residence was obviously
rebuilt and re-used over a long period of time. Storage jars were of types used both in IA II A and B. Iron II C forms seem rare and only fragmentary. Underneath the floor of the IA house were the remains of what appeared to be an oval-shaped Bronze Age (?) house, but the associated pottery from this season was EBA/IBA/MBA and IA mixed. The circular structure may have been cleaned out and incorporated into the IA house. 29Q contains an extension of the same IA II house excavated in 29P.

4. Field UD

Dubbed “the kitchen” by excavators in the first season, 37E continued to yield numerous artifacts of food preparation. Floors and storage silos were cut into the thick mudbrick matrix of an earlier period. It now seems reasonably clear that that mudbrick matrix belongs to the MBA fortification rampart which was likely terraced down into the MBA city. Most of the work done in 37E this season was to remove the debris from a storage pit dug into the MBA mudbrick matrix to a depth of almost 2m.

Squares 35D and 36D were opened to extend our understanding of the relationship between the many structures superimposed in 37E and the IA city wall in particular, which was, in turn, built squarely on top of the MBA rampart\(^8\). IA pottery is most abundant in Field D, but some forms from the Hellenistic and later periods do appear from time to time, again suggesting some level of re-use. The IA structures are clearly "carved" into the massive mudbrick matrix of the MBA rampart (see photo). One fragment of a gray, burnished Tell el-Yahudiya Ware juglet (MB II) was also found in 35D, giving some indication of what might be the terminal period for the MBA city.

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A 1.5m trench was laid down the 35 line northward from the IA city wall, using grid squares 35A, 35B, and 35C. The purpose of this trench was to reveal a long section of Tall el-Hammam's period fortification systems in an area where wall structures seemed relatively "on the surface." We began at the top of the IA II city wall, cleaning the outer face to the bottom of the foundation. Immediately it became clear that it was built (as in 38E last season) on top of the MBA rampart, only this time the mudbrick of the rampart's top surface extended out from below the IA wall over two meters (see photo). In other words, no "leveling" was done to support the IA wall in this location (as was the case in 38E), as it sat firmly atop and inside the rampart's outer edge.

IV. STRATIGRAPHY

A. Theoretical Stratigraphy for Tall el-Hammam

The stratigraphic profile of Tall el-Hammam had long been suspected, but has needed to be confirmed by excavation. The following is a theoretical stratigraphic profile based on observations from extensive sherdig, clearing and clarification of MT disturbances, and the results of scientific excavation through three seasons. By "theoretical stratigraphy" we mean what is suggested by a "general assessment" of the ceramic indicators over the whole of the site, giving consideration to the frequency of certain period diagnostics. In other words, significant amounts of pottery from a given period would indicate, theoretically, that an architecturally-based occupation would be likely. On the other hand, rare occurrences of ceramics from a given period would suggest, theoretically, the unlikelihood of a substantial architectural complex dating to that timeframe. Of course, only excavation can reveal the actual stratigraphic profile of a site. Ceramic indicators suggest the following occupational sequence at Tall el-Hammam:

1. Early-to-Late Islamic Periods

These ceramic forms seem to be mixed into contexts with the latest structures on the upper tall. Re-use of older structures may account for this. However, such wares are rare on the site as compared to Bronze and Iron Age pottery forms.

2. Late Hellenistic/Early Roman Period and Byzantine Period

The Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods are represented at the site, but play a minor role in comparison to the Bronze and Iron Age ceramic assemblages. Byzantine sherds are present, but cannot be called common at this juncture.

3. Iron Age II, III
The Iron Age city is quite extensive, but at this point periodization/phasing is not entirely clear except isolated squares. Iron I pottery is extremely rare at this point. The principal Iron Age city at Tall el-Hammam seems to have been built during Iron Age II A-B, and Iron III (Persian Period) sherds are fairly rare at this point.

4. Middle Bronze Age
Both MB I and II (same timeframe as old MB II A, B, C) are strongly represented in the TeH ceramic repertoire, and in related artifactual materials, throughout the site.

5. Intermediate Bronze Age
IBA pottery forms appear with high frequency across the entire site.

6. Early Bronze Age
The EBA city of Tall el-Hammam is unmistakable and massive, but periodization and phasing need to be studied carefully on the basis of future excavation. EBA I, II, and III ceramic forms are common throughout. The EBA-style lithic industry is extensive.

7. Chalcolithic Period
Chalcolithic pottery forms of the Ghassulian variety abound, as do various basalt bowls. Lithic artifacts from this period are frequent, if not abundant.

B. Confirmed Stratigraphy for Tall el-Hammam
While the Chalcolithic presence is everywhere abundant on the surface of TeH, no architecture from that period is, as yet, attested (although it is strongly anticipated). The Early Bronze Age and Intermediate Bronze Age occupants of the site seem to be the original builders of the extensive fortification systems that surround both upper and lower talls (the style of the walls is commensurate with construction practices during these periods). Much of the EBA/IBA city is visible at the surface. The Middle Bronze Age is strongly attested architecturally at TeH, particularly in its fortification ramparts and walls on both the upper and lower talls, and in at least one domestic context. No structures belonging to the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age I are presently known. The Iron II city is extensively attested by both monumental and defensive architecture, and in domestic contexts. Iron III seems present, but yet unconfirmed by anything more than re-use of older buildings. Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine architecture (re-used?) seem confirmed on the south side of the site, and perhaps in Field A on the upper tall. Islamic structures are presently unknown, except (perhaps) through re-use of earlier architecture.

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V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The seven-week 2008 excavation season has been successful in clarifying many questions remaining from the previous season, and has also provided a good foundation for the balance of the Project. Of course, many new questions have arisen that must be answered in future seasons. Not only has the excavation proper managed to clarify a great deal on the upper tell relative to IA II phasing and the clarification of the MBA rampart, but also, the survey, the further building of relationships with local residents, extensive walk-about to nearby archaeological sites and features, and the experience of working with the Department of Antiquities, have all come together to build positive expectations for the continuation of TeHEP. As is now widely known, it was also realized coming into the excavation that Tall el-Hammam was a reasonable candidate for biblical Sodom based on a detailed analysis of the relevant biblical materials regarding the chronology and location of the city. Extensive research (Dr. Collins), along with archaeological data from three seasons of excavation, is now leading many scholars to seriously consider this theory on its evidential merits.

We wholeheartedly recommend that The Tall el-Hammam Excavation Project continue into the next season scheduled for winter 2009.

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