

Aqabah,
Tell el-Kheleifi
March 25, 1938

News Letter Number 3

This is being written from our camp at Tell el Kheleifi. We arrived here on March 14, 1938 having left Jerusalem on March 11. The road to Amman was in such poor shape that traffic on it was permitted only between 12:00 and 2:00 P.M. This necessitated spending the night in Amman. The rains had seriously damaged the road also from Amman to Maan, with the result that slow travel caused us to spend the night in Maan. ~~We~~ slept the following night in the police-post at Aqabah. I hired a special truck to bring our equipment from Jerusalem to Amman, and another one from Amman to Aqabah. Our cars were the first to traverse the Amman-Maan road in a period of over twenty ~~days~~ ^{days}. The unusually heavy winter rains, had made the roads impassable for a longer period than is usual at this time of the year. On March 14 we moved on from the police-post at Aqabah, and set up camp about a hundred metres from the seashore, and about 450 metres from the tell itself. We put our camp so ~~comparatively~~ far from the mound, in order to gain some comparative shelter from the sand and dust which our excavations were bound to throw up from the mound and because the prevailing north wind blows a good deal of sand southward. Some of which is stopped by several sand-dunes bet. the mound and our camp. The dunes near us are stationary, with some bushes on them holding the sand in place.

I shall not attempt to describe the happenings at the School since I wrote the last news-letter, because I have not got my diary with me, but that will keep for another occasion. The ~~staff, consisting of~~ staff consists of Prof. S. Vernon McCasland, our Annual Professor from Goucher College, Mr. William Reed, the Two Brothers Fellow from Yale, Mr. Ernest F. Beaumont, an old resident of Jerusalem, and a former member of the American Colony, and Dr. Albert K. Henschel, in addition to myself. The first couple of days were spent in making a contour map, dividing off the mound into five-meter squares, hanging on to the tents in a driving sandstorm, making arrangement for water, etc., and with a small group of workers ~~of~~ sifting the entire surface of the mound down to about ten cm. below the surface. We did that because there were hundreds of copper fragments, pieces of slag, sherds, etc., that we wanted to collect, before beginning the actual excavations. We thought that it might be necessary to sift the entire mound, because the sifting of the upper surface yielded such interesting results, which could have been achieved only by sifting. Numerous copper nails, fish-hooks, carnelian beads, etc., were found which testified to the nature of the articles we might expect to find in deeper excavations. That done, however, our hardest work began. All the walls are made of mud-brick, and the tops of the walls have completely decomposed. To carry on as we began, by scraping off the surface layer by layer, would have resulted in the total destruction of the walls. We would have found objects, to be sure, but ~~wax~~ would have left a lamentable hole in the ground where once there had been an important small town. We therefore abandoned the scraping process, and starting from the northwest corner, have

by painstakingly slow, and judicious sounding established where the walls of the rooms at the northwest corner were located. Once found, we follow the walls first, before removing the contents of the rooms. The process has been successful thus far, but it is a very slow one, and it is more than possible that we shall not be able to finish this season. At the present time, we are employing about thirty five workmen from Agabah, I could easily dig up the whole mound in two or three weeks with 150 workmen, but with the present staff, 35 workmen are all that we can control, and it keeps us on the jump all day long. I shall also not be able to complete the excavations with the money at hand from the American Philosophical Society, and will need at least a thousand dollars more.

The results thus far achieved, are, I believe, fairly satisfactory, considering the fact that we did not actually begin to dig until March 18. We have found a series of small furnace- and smelting rooms on the northwest slope of the mound, with flues in the walls. We have opened up one large room, which was full of slag, and had seven flues in one wall. Some of the rooms have what we think are the crucibles, in which the ore was smelted. Very few objects have been found in these rooms, but it is natural that in the rooms where the ore was smelted, very few objects should be found. The first Sunday, March 20, we took off as rest day. Local sentiment, however, has made it advisable to adopt the custom which prevails at Megiddo and Tell ed-Duweir, and take Friday off as our fest-day, so today too, we are not working. In the work-week, which begins tomorrow, we hope to get a lot accomplished, although our general policy is to make haste slowly. The Arab proverb has it that "haste is from the devil", and with their rest-day, we have also adopted this proverb of theirs, so far as the methodical prosecution of our work is concerned. I shall not give any further details of our dig at present, but will send another news-letter in a couple of weeks. Furthermore, it is time to go to bed. We start work at 6 A.M., and it is now 9 P.M.

Dear Millar:

The foregoing news-letter is for general information. Will you please have a copy of it sent to Albright. There is nothing else that I want to add to it at the present moment, except to wish that you were here with us.

As ever, sincerely yours,