

Thzer – Bethsiada – Julias. Reconstruction of the site et-Tell in the light of historical and archaeological sources.

Summary

The archaeological site et-Tell is located on a hill (-165,91 m) situated on the left bank of the Jordan River at the mouth of the Sea of Galilee (2 km north from its shore). The earliest small traces of human habitat, which were discovered during excavation, dates back to the Bronze Age II period. During the Iron Age the significant growth of the settlement had been recorded. From that time one of the most important findings are magnificent city gate with adjacent places of worship (so-called "high places") and the *bit-hilani* type of palace. R. Arav identified the structures with mentioned in the Old Testament city of Tzer, the capital of the Geshurites. Maacah, the daughter of Geshurites King Talmai, was beloved wife of King David. The sudden end of the settlement was brought by Assyrian king Tiglath Pileser III, who destroyed the city in the eighth century BCE. Current excavation revealed low activity during Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian periods. Nevertheless, some findings of administrative and religious nature were discovered.

The repopulation of the hill had started in the Hellenistic period. In that time settlement become known as Bethsaida ("fisherman house"). It has been frequently mention in The New Testament. According to the Evangelists at this place or in its vicinity Jesus of Nazareth preached and performed miracles such as healing of the blind men, multiplication of bread and fish, walking on the water and stilling the stormy weather. Furthermore, Bethsaida was the birthplace of the apostles Peter, Andrew and Philip. On the other hand, it was one of the city mention alongside with Capernaum and Korazim, condemned by Jesus Christ for turning away from His teachings. In the year 2000, et-Tell/Bethsaida was recognized by Vatican as a sacred place as pope John Paul II gave it an additional title of "The First Capital of Peter". The city is mention again by Josephus in *Antiquitates Judaicae* and *Bellum Judaicum*. It was renamed Julia (after Julia Livia, wife of Augustus, some scholars suppose that name might have been given after his daughter Julia the Elder) by tetrarch Philip, son of Herod the Great, who inherited this part of his father kingdom. Around 29 CE Philip presume to enlarge the city with the new wave of settlers. Additionally, he died there and was buried in the tomb, which archaeologist still hoping to find. During Jewish revolt against the Roman Empire in the years 66-73 CE

vicinity of Julias was place of military skirmishes between rebel forces of Josephus against Sulla, who led forces of pro-Roman king Agrippa II. After the revolt city had started declining. From the Hellenistic and Roman periods the most significant discoveries are private houses (two of the utmost importance are so-called "fisherman's house" and "wine producer's house") and the temple area (I. Skpupińska-Løvset propose this Hellenistic structure as a Phoenician type of temple. Furthermore, R. Arav suggested that during reign of Philip the building was remodel into temple of the roman imperial cult). The city once again under the name of Bethsaida is mentioned again in Rabbinical sources as a small community.

By association with early Christianity Bethsaida was important for early pilgrimage movement. Seismic activity of the region had caused difference in the shoreline over the centuries. The last major change was triggered by the huge earthquake in 364 CE. Combining with not always accurate literary sources it was one of the reasons of different or wrong identifications of Bethsaida in the late Antiquity and Middle Ages. Finding Bethsaida become important matter with the beginning of modern research in the nineteenth century. During that time different location were proposed for Bethsaida (mostly el-Araj or el-Messadiyeh). However, archaeological excavation that began in 1987 simultaneously on different sites north from the Sea of Galilee proven that only et-Tell had remains which could be date back to the first century CE. In 1987 the State of Israel officially recognized et-Tell as Bethsaida and in 1991 the international Consortium of the "Bethsaida Excavations Project" was founded (Polish mission joined in 1998).

Interdisciplinary is one of the strongest parts of the research over et-Tell. Considerable portion of this dissertation is devoted to the modern technologies in archaeology. Digital reconstruction of the site was divided in chronological order with various type of 3D models. Technological, as well as, methodological and ethical merits had been taken under consideration. The results of this work is accessible via internet on the project website www.bethsaida.uni.lodz.pl.

Literary sources and archaeological remains are disused from different points of view to clearly present various thesis. The dissertation summarize the current state of knowledge regarding multicultural and highly complex archeological site et-Tell.

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