THE ELEPHANT MOSAIC PANEL IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT HUQOQ: OFFICIAL PUBLICATION AND INITIAL INTERPRETATIONS

by
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We feel most privileged to be studying the mosaics uncovered in the synagogue in the ancient village of Huqoq, foremost among which is the “elephant panel”, the subject of the present work. The ancient residents of this modest Galilean village can scarcely have imagined the intense fascination that this mosaic panel would hold for the scholarly community and for the wider public a millennium and a half later. Nonetheless, those who commissioned this panel, the villagers who were its initial viewers, and the craftspeople who produced it succeeded in creating a work of significant historical importance, not to mention beauty.

We owe this privilege to Jodi Magness, Director of the Huqoq Excavation Project, whose foresight and skills have made possible the discoveries at the synagogue. We are grateful for the deep confidence she has placed in us and for her unstinting support throughout our research, which would also not have been possible without the efforts of the entire archaeological team over several seasons. We owe special thanks to Assistant Director Shua Kisilevitz and to the project’s site conservator, Orna Cohen, and the mosaic field team, in particular Bryan Bozung and Patrick Angiolillo, for their meticulous work. We are grateful to James Haberman and Randy Mohr, who not only provided us with photographs and the map, but also offered technical assistance with the images. For their expert assistance and support of our research, we thank Dean Farzaneh Razzaghi and Cara Barker of the Hunter Library at Western Carolina University. Amongst our excellent research assistants, we would especially like to acknowledge the contributions made by Henry Gruber and John Ladouceur to this particular study.

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