

Preface

The long Jordan River, Dead Sea and the Arava/Araba chain of valleys compose together a segment of a global system termed The Syrian-African Rift which extends over 1/6 of the earth's circumference. Therefore, since the early 19th century this particular region became the target of multidisciplinary interest.

The Dead Sea-Jordan Valley Rift is not only an important geological and geographical feature but is of primary importance for the understanding of global zoological, botanical and anthropological migration processes. The prehistoric forefathers migrated 1.3 millions years ago through this Valley from Africa towards Europe and southern Asia. Among other places they settled south of Lake Tiberias and religious traditions, which evolved in this region which was once very prosperous, regarded this area as the mythical Paradise.

Unfortunately over long periods, the illusion of Paradise vanished and the valley became a pathway of armies - ancient Egyptians marching northwards and Assyrian and Babylonians going southwards. Later, the Valley was overrun by many others who wandered along this narrow border between green lands and desert.

During the present times, the political mosaic around the Jordan Valley is very complicated and - for a long time - did not facilitate free, easy and open dialogue neither between people nor between scholars and scientists. Nevertheless, the present book is the result of long and fruitful cooperation between scientists from Germany, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This may be the beginning of a new era of understanding and mutual help.

This is the first time when this complicate area has been studied by scientists from all riparian countries and without being hindered by territorial or by political limitations. This enabled us to create a complete, even 3-dimensional image of the area and solve hydrogeological issues which bothered all specialists in the area for many decades. One may say that following the studies described in the book, there is a clear picture as to all water bodies – fresh and saline - reaching the Jordan Valley and of their mutual interaction.

A most important achievement of the Project is the attenuation or even complete dissipation of suspicions between the riparians as to water resources. Moreover, its results indicate that in the study area, there is no negative transboundary influence which could have been caused by the utilization of local water resources. The joint and concerted scientific investigations are a tangible contribution to an atmosphere of cooperation not only in the domain of research but also in the ongoing exploitation of regional water resources. Throughout the duration of the investigations, all participants shared the feeling that they are contributing to the welfare of all inhabitants of the Valley and that the gradual progress of this concerted scientific effort, promotes the building of bridges joining the hitherto divided peoples of the area.

The Jordan Valley is in desperate need of additional water resources and we all hope that the results of our studies will enable to meet these acute demands. We all hope that the students and young researchers trained within the framework of the Project, will contribute to the development of additional water resources and to their rational management so as it should not be a Land of Lost— but a Land of Reborn Paradise.

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