

Prophet Hud

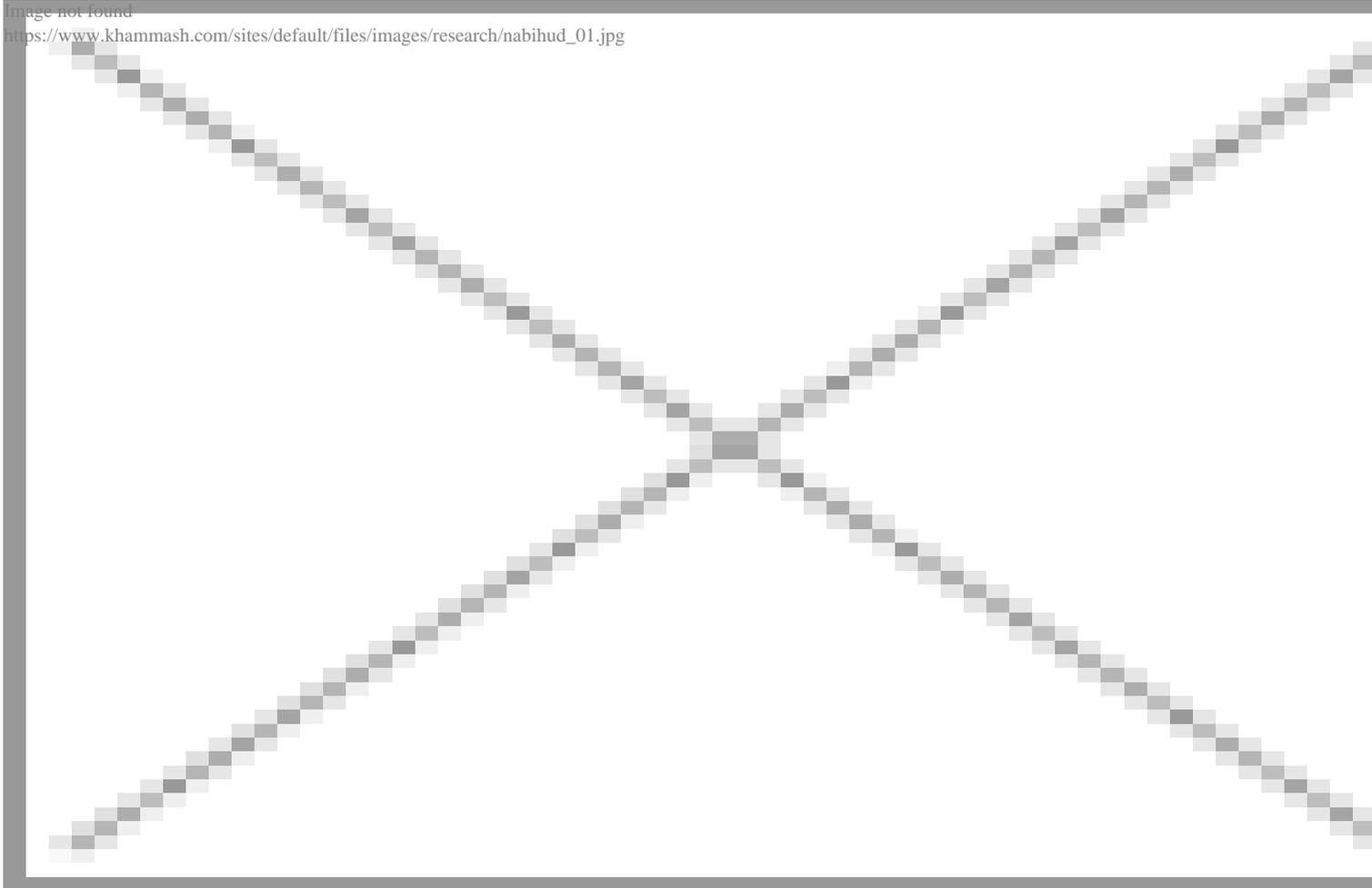
By Ammar Khammash, The Jordan Times Weekender - November 2003

A tiny road winds up to a small village, and as you gain height the vast landscape around you drops and extends into an infinite circle of horizons with no ends. To the west, you can see the green mountains of Ajloun in the background, Dibbeen in the middle and the shady Jerash valley in the foreground. To the north you see Jerash with its Roman site to the left, and the modern town to the right, and behind that you see the forests of Thaghret Asfour followed by the plateau of Kufr Khall. To the east you see the hills around Bal'ama and the village of Rihab (or Irhab) with its many Byzantine mosaic floors, and behind them, the far ends of the eastern Badia. To the south, across the Zarka River, you see the oak-dotted hills of Juba, Al Aalouk and Mastaba, and behind them the heights of Jubaiha and Salt to the right.

This is one of the most commanding and powerful spots in central Jordan; the choice of this location to build the shrine of such an important prophet, was not a mere chance.

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The small village carries the name of Nabi Hud (pronounced hood), and Hud was the prophet that the Quran's eleventh sura was named after. Passing the contemporary village, towards the south, the landscape keeps climbing, till, at the highest possible spot, you observe a modest structure with a dome. The traditional village of the early 20th century used to surround this shrine, mostly from its northern side at which an arched entrance is located. Further to the south, the high spot is altered only by a modest graveyard, and, until the mid 1980s, the whole surrounding of the prophet's domed shrine was carpeted with blooming iris.

In this windy spot, the iris flowers kept bending their stems eastwards, all in synchronized movements following the fluctuating gusts of the breeze, and their petals kept flapping like tiny silver-purple birds, occasionally torn away and taken by the wind whenever it picked up speed. That was, most probably the biggest stretch of this kind of iris (*Iris Germanica*) in the country.

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