

# Sinai Journey Report June 2026

# Makhad

People Spirit Environment



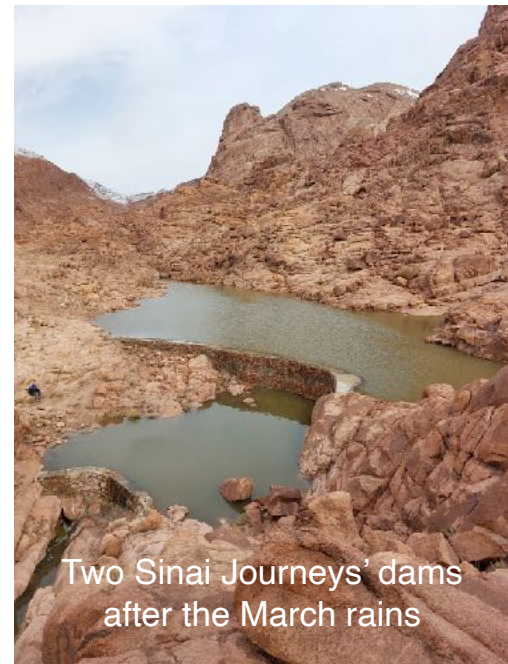
Katharine DeFrance  
Project Manager

**News from Sinai,  
Wells and  
Weaving Project  
& Sinai Journeys**

## The News

Fancy a good news story from the Middle East? We have one! There has been a most immense rain. I asked a Bedouin if it was the biggest they've had in five years and he answered "In 25 years", A once in a quarter of a century downpour. It has rained all over the Arab world. In February when I was last in Sinai and they were looking at a summer having not had rain, the implications for which were many and disastrous. The stress was etched on their faces. Then, at the end of the rain season this vast downpour. People are buoyant, drinking water is assured, gardens, trees and livelihoods and everyone has gone about re-establishing their veg patches with great gusto.

Mountain dams, a traditional Bedouin practice that holds the water to either seep into the mountain or slowly trickle down the valley, came into their own. Twenty-three of which were built by Makhad Trust's partner organisation Sinai Journeys. When I visited, forty days after the rain, there were still little streams slowly coming down the mountain.



Two Sinai Journeys' dams  
after the March rains



Rounded Bedouin roofs  
foreground. The Project's  
flat roofs, background

"How did The Project buildings hold up?" I asked my Bedouin friend and with a concerned shake of the head he replied, "Their roofs leaked". The Project, is the name of the building work the Egyptian government is undertaking at St Katherine's. Its design is grand, for the attention and use of an international and elite audience. It is also ill thought out to its surroundings and beset with one issue after another. Its name, I fear, will be self-fulfilling; ever the project and never the

finished site. The Project's style is modernism with a hint of Bedouin aesthetic, they have flat roofs. The Bedouin's roofs are curved and pitched. Whilst the Project is happening to them, and they are living around it, at the leaking roofs they didn't smirk and laugh, as I surely would have done, theirs is too generous a culture, instead they lamented for the Egyptians and the waste.

## Project Stories: Wells

As I picked my way across Hassan's garden, he pointed out different areas, of what he'd done and of what he'd like to do. It had once been an abandoned garden and now it is full of green and life. He took the original garden and painstakingly enclosed it, and then extended it in themed levels. There's the newly planted olive grove, his covered planting for those plants needing more shade, his newly established veg patches, his flower garden, his bee hives. He has recently restored his well with a Makhad grant and his enterprising, resourceful and hard working ways are evident in his garden and his remarkable wells. Why you might ask are two wells so closely placed by



each other. The answer is that they join two different dykes, two different water sources deep in the mountain. The wells are both over twenty metres deep, on the surface they stand 80cms apart. As they go down, they slightly pull away from each other. At their bottom they are joined by a small tunnel. It is arched, about half a metre wide and travels two meters connecting the two well bottoms. And why the tunnel? The two water sources, now joined, require only one pump to extract the water. So sensible, so ingenious, so very Bedouin.

## Well Statistics

As of May 26

	39	Completed	Underway	Waiting Sponsor	Waiting List
Garden Wells		366	7	48	115
Community Wells		370	8	32	126
Totals		736	15	80	241

## Project Stories: The Weaving and Textiles Project

This project was initiated in February 2025 for the benefit of the Mouzaina Tribe and has expanded hugely since then thanks to the energetic efforts of the Sheikh of the tribe, Sheikh Mousa. The aim of the project is to use existing resources, wool from goats, sheep and camels, to create rugs and handicrafts to be sold and provide an income for poor families. From the first payment, Sheikh Mousa has used guile and intelligence to grow the project way beyond our expectations. Instead of buying the wool directly from herders, Sheikh Mousa bought corn instead and gave this to the goat herders who gave him wool in return. The herders profited from having

the corn as their goats were healthier and fatter, so they fetched a better price at market and more money for the herders than they would have got just from the sale of the wool.

This year, Sheikh Mousa has planted wheat and corn on land he has near El Tur on the coast, in order to trade for wool. The funds to buy the seeds were a lot less than buying the grain costing 1 EGP per kilo and giving grain worth 5 EGP per kilo to the herders in exchange for wool. Other herders from far away have heard about the project and brought their wool to sell to Sheikh Mousa so they have some income. The wool is being spun into skeins and woven into rugs by Mouzaina women all over the Sinai peninsular. Word about the project has spread, not just amongst the Mouzaina tribe, but much further afield and there are now people in the Jebeliya, Oulat Sayeid, Aligat, Tarabin and Garesha tribes, selling their wool and also starting spinning and weaving. In fact, news of the project has spread throughout South Sinai and beyond. Just now is the season to be shearing goats, sheep and camels, and the wool will be bringing in much needed income for very many families. And they are all washing their animals first before shearing so they all look lovely and clean!

Sheikh Mousa has met with the new Governor of Sinai who was sufficiently impressed with the project to order several very big rugs which will help advertise the products and project further afield. The Governor has also promised a shop outside St Katherine's, for all the woven goods and craft work, at the new checkpoint where all the visitors to St Katherine's have to check in for permits before visiting St K. They will have time on their hands to browse for gifts and the shop should do well.

Sheikh Mousa will make three new hubs at other Bedouin villages spread around South Sinai and has plans to increase this to another six village centres. This project is growing quickly from the small grants we have given, and is making a big difference to thousands of Bedouin.



## Sinai Journeys

A group of seven participants plus leader Helen Cranston have been working alongside local Bedouin to build a small dam, this time in Wadi Tinya, high up in the mountains. The valley is quite a bit more difficult to reach than most of the other dams sites, so we needed a very able group. Fortunately the people who booked on the trip were very happy with the challenge and we made good time climbing the 200m mountain trail. In the valley of Wadi Tinya, we were warmly welcomed by Ramadan whose house is close to the dam site and who owns the garden where we slept. Our participants seemed to enjoy working hard and had a very nice time hauling cement and stones while the Bedouin builders crafted the dam from these materials. We were catered for by Jemeya and Abdoh who made delicious meals to keep up our energy. Sleeping under the stars during the dark phase of the moon was another lovely experience. Once the dam was finished we trekked to the base of Mount Sinai and, aided by camel rides, made it most of the way up the mountain, leaving just 750 steps still to climb to the top and magnificent views. From there, the

next stage of the trip was to enjoy the peace, beauty and silence of the desert, interspersed with exploratory walks. It was a memorable trip for everyone and a very special experience.

The next Sinai Journey will be from 29 September to the 10 October. If you are interested in booking a place on the trip, please go to <https://sinaijourneys.org/details-of-mountain-and-desert-journey/>



## A Sign of the Times

In the mountainside around St Katherine's you will occasionally see markings on rocks. Some are in Arabic, a prayer or benediction, but also useful messages indicating a direction or information about the nearest drinking well. There is also graffiti, love proclamations or pictures of birds and wildlife, done in charcoal, that someone might have done musing by a dying fire. That global human inclination, when feeling moved, to make our mark. There are also much older messages, early Christian, that could date from the 3rd, 4th or 5th century. They tell of a way to a chapel or hermitage long since gone. I've come upon two great boulders with possibly Greek script, but I'm unsure and would love to hear from any linguists - see image right.



My favourite rock message is a contemporary one, it is written next to abandoned gardens, it is someone's name and a circle. The circle represents the garden, it tells of their hoped for plan, that one day they might round the circle and enclose the garden, the first and vital step before planting can start. Once enclosed they will be able to build a livelihood and a life - this, they are telling the world, is where they hope to plant their garden.



---

## Contact the Makhad Trust

If you would like more information about any of our projects or about the Trust in general, we would love to hear from you.

The Makhad Trust,  
Wolseley House, Oriel Road, Cheltenham, GL50 1TH  
01242 544546  
[www.makhad.org](http://www.makhad.org)

Contact [info@makhad.org](mailto:info@makhad.org) or [katharine@makhad.org](mailto:katharine@makhad.org)

*The Makhad Trust is a not for profit organisation managed by a Board of Trustees and is a registered charity No 1100377*