Ralph K. Hawkins, Erasmus Gaß, and Dror Ben-Yosef

נַחֲלָתוֹ

A Memorial Volume for Adam Zertal

Alter Orient und Altes Testament

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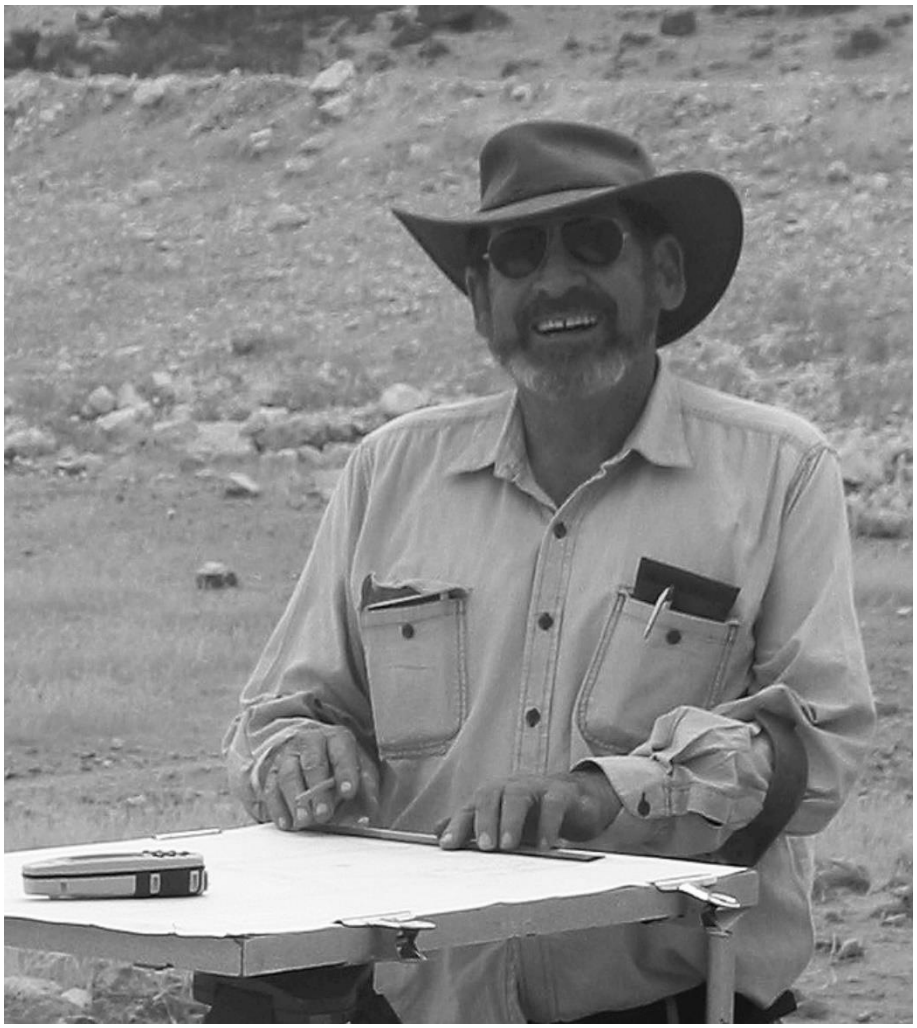

Acknowledgements

Ralph K. Hawkins, Erasmus Gaß, and Dror Ben-Yosef

Authors often point out that they do not publish books by themselves, but that it takes many hands to carry a book across the finish line to publication. In this case, the foregoing saying is especially apt, since this project involved roughly two dozen authors and editors, all living in different locations around the world. Each of us received the support of our institutions to carry out the research, writing, and editorial work necessary to complete this volume.

We would especially like to thank Averett University for granting Ralph a sabbatical leave during the 2020–21 academic year, which made it possible for him to focus on the completion of this volume. We are grateful for the staff of Averett University's Blount Library, including Linda Lemery, Jennifer Robinson, Peggy Adkins, and Kevin Harden, who have always gone above and beyond to support his research and writing. We are all indebted to Heike Mockenhaupt-Hardt from the Theological Faculty of Trier, who assisted with so many of the technical details in bringing this project to completion.

We would like to thank Prof. Dr. Thomas Kämmerer, Prof. Dr. Angelika Berlejung, Prof. Dr. Jan Dietrich, Prof. Dr. Manfried Dietrich, and Prof. Dr. Enrique Jiménez for accepting this project, and Ugarit-Verlag for publishing it. Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks for Prof. Dr. Adam Zertal, our teacher, mentor, and friend, to whose memory this collection of memorial essays is dedicated. Our hope is that this volume might highlight the importance of Adam's contributions to the fields of archaeology, historical geography, and biblical studies for future generation, so that his memory may always remain a blessing.

Throughout this volume, each author chose his or her own Bible translation, and sometimes supplied their own. In either case, their usage is indicated in the text. With regard to toponyms, we harmonized them according to the rules of the Deutsche Palästinavereins, which meant rendering them in Arabic and not in English transcript. However, since some authors also used Hebrew toponyms, we include two indexes, one for Arabic and another for Hebrew toponyms. The authors have the copyright of all figures or have used them by permission unless indicated otherwise.

Preface

Ralph K. Hawkins

I first heard the name Adam Zertal in 1991, when I had my first graduate course for an M.A. in biblical studies. It was a seminar on the biblical book of Joshua and, when my professor discussed the early Israelite settlement, he gave us a copy of Adam's 1991 article, "Israel Enters Canaan: Following the Pottery Trail" (BAR 17/5, 28–49, 75). Later in the course, when we reached Josh 8:30–35, he handed copies of Adam's 1985 article, "Has Joshua's Altar been Found on Mt. Ebal?" (BAR 11/1, 26–43). I was fascinated by the way that Adam used "dirt archaeology" to breathe new life into ancient texts. He did not have a "flat-footed" reading of the Bible, and he used broken pottery sherds and other debris from the ancient past to fill in its gaps and speak into its silences. He animated the Bible in a way that I had never experienced.

At the time, however, I was on a ministerial track and, when I finished my degree, I went into full-time pastoral work. My interest in archaeology had been piqued, however, and I subscribed to several academic journals and archaeology magazines in order to enhance my Bible study and preaching. In 1995, I saw an ad that Adam had published, in which he was soliciting volunteers for a new dig he had launched in the highlands of Israel at a site called *el-Aḥwāṭ*. I wrote him a letter and explained to him that, although I was a pastor and not an archaeologist, I had read some of his articles and was fascinated by his work. I asked him if I could take my summer vacation and come to work for him as a volunteer at *el-Aḥwāṭ*. A few weeks later, much to my surprise, I received a letter in the mail from Adam, in which he replied that he would welcome me on the dig, and that he hoped I would make plans to be a part of the team.

I did join Adam that summer, and I was so enamored by his charisma and his own excitement about the project that I returned every summer for four years. During those dig seasons, Adam ran the excavation as a field school, and there would always be lectures one or two nights a week. Whenever Adam lectured, he would talk about the early Israelite settlement in Canaan, Mt. Ebal, or the "Battle for the Bible". Whenever he lectured, I was spellbound, and drawn into the mystery of how the earliest Israelites had really originated in Canaan, whether the Iron Age ruins on Mt. Ebal actually had any connection with the traditions in the book of Joshua, and the relationship between the Bible and history.

Adam Zertal and Ralph Hawkins at *el-Aḥwāṭ* (1995)

One night, in 1998, while we were sitting around the campfire, I asked Adam what he thought of the idea of my going back to school for a Ph.D. and writing my dissertation on Mt. Ebal. He looked at me with a wry smile and said, “Don’t do it; it will ruin your career”. When I returned home, I mulled over this for the next three years but, finally, in 2002, my wife and I sold everything we had, moved to Michigan, and I began to work on a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Archaeology. Despite Adam’s misgivings, I wrote my dissertation on Mt. Ebal, which was later published (The Iron Age I Structure on Mt. Ebal. Excavation and Interpretation [BBRSup 6], Winona Lake 2012).

(f.l.t.r.) Dror Ben-Yosef, Amit Romano, Nirit Lavie-Alon, Ralph K. Hawkins, and Raphael Kimchi at Kibbutz Barkai (1996)

I cannot know how my career may or may not have been different if I had chosen to work on other subject matter, but what I do know is that Adam and I remained friends from that point until his death. He took an interest in my work and we corresponded frequently. He wrote letters of reference for me. And he always sent me a copy of the latest installment in the Manasseh Hill Country Survey. His work, in so many ways, has provided the foundation for my own.

Many of the contributors to this volume were much closer to Adam than me, and can tell similar stories, I am sure. Many were his students and earned their degrees under him. Many spent years working with him in the field. And many also knew him as a friend and mentor.

Dror Ben-Yosef is a case in point. He earned his Ph.D. under Adam and served on his staff on multiple archaeological projects. Dror and I had met at *el-Aḥwāṭ* in the 1990s, and again in 2007, when I was finishing my dissertation. After Adam's death in 2015, Dror and I began corresponding and, on November 16, he proposed the idea of doing a memorial volume for him. We began pitching the project to publishers and recruiting writers, and the project began to move forward. For various reasons, however, the project stalled several times and, in 2017, we were still without a publisher. At that point, my friend and colleague Erasmus Gaß, who worked intensively with Adam Zertal's studies on the Manasseh hills, came on

board with us as a co-editor, facilitated a contract with Ugarit-Verlag, and has been a tremendous help in bringing the book to completion.

Dror, Erasmus and I are so grateful that all of the contributors have hung in there with us to see this book to completion. We hope that it will convey to Adam's family the love that his students, friends, and colleagues had for him. We also hope that it will enable future generations to come to know him, too.

Adam Zertal Z"L – Publications List

compiled by the Manasseh Hill Country Survey team

A. Books

1984 Arubboth, Hepher and the third Solomonic District, Tel Aviv. (Hebr.)

1988 The Israelite Settlement in the Hill-Country of Manasseh, Haifa. (Hebr.)

1992 The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. I. The Shechem Syncline, Tel Aviv. (Hebr.)

1996 The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. II. The Eastern Valleys and the Fringes of the Desert, Tel Aviv. (Hebr.)

1996 El Ahwat. A Fortified Site of the "Sea Peoples" near Nahal ʿIron, Early Report of the First Three Seasons 1993–1995 (editing and contribution of some chapters), Haifa. (Hebr.)

2000 (with Nivi Mirkam) The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. III. From Nahal ʿIron to Nahal Shechem, Tel Aviv. (Hebr.)

2000 A Nation Born. The Altar on Mt. Ebal and the Birth of Israel, Tel Aviv. (Hebr.)

2000 The River Iron and its Vicinity. A Reader, Haifa. (Hebr.)

2000 Mount Ebal. A Reader, Haifa. (Hebr./Engl.)

2003 The Excavations at Tel Assawir. Preliminary Report of the First Two Seasons 2001–2002 (editing and contribution of some chapters), Haifa. (Hebr.)

2004 The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. I. The Shechem Syncline (CHANE 21.1), Leiden.

2005 The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. IV. From Nahal Bezeq to the Sartaba, Tel Aviv. (Hebr.)

2008 The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. II. The Eastern Valleys and the Fringes of the Desert (CHANE 21.2), Leiden.

2010 Sisra's Secret. A Journey After the "Sea Peoples" and The Song of Deborah, Tel Aviv. (Hebr.)

2011 A Nation Born. The Altar on Mt. Ebal and the Birth of Israel (Experimental Edition).

2012 The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. V. The Middle Jordan Valley, From Wadi Fasael to Wadi, Haifa. (Hebr.)

2012 El-Ahwat. A Fortified site from the Early Iron Age Near Nahal ʿIron, Israel, Excavations 1993–2000 (CHANE 24), Leiden (editing and contribution of some chapters).

2015 Naissance d'une nation. Lautel du mont Ébal el l'émergence d'Israël, Québec.
2016 (with Nivi Mirkam; ed. by Shay Bar) The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol III. From Nahal ʿIron to Nahal Shechem (CHANE 21.3), Leiden.
2016 (with Shay Bar) The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. VI. The Eastern Samaria Shoulder, From Wadi Farʿah to Maale Ephraim Junction, Haifa. (Hebr.)
2016 (ed. by Shay Bar) Sisra's Secret, Haifa.
2017 (with Shay Bar) The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. IV. From Nahal Bezeq to the Sartaba (CHANE 21.4), Leiden.
2018 A Nation Born. The Altar on Mount Ebal and the Birth of Israel, Ofra.
2019 (with Shay Bar) The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. VII. The South-Eastern Samaria Shoulder. From Wadi Rashash to Wadi ʿAujah, Haifa. (Hebr.)
2019 (with Shay Bar) The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. V. The Middle Jordan Valley. From Wadi Fasael to Wadi ʿAujah (CHANE 21.5), Leiden.
2020 (with Shay Bar) The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. VIII. The Slopes of Western Samaria, From Nahal Shechem to Wadi Zir, Haifa. (Hebr.)
2021 (with Shay Bar) The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. VI. The Eastern Samaria Shoulder, From Nahal Tirzah (Wadi Farʿah) to Maʿale Ephraim Junction (CHANE 21.6), Leiden.

B. Articles

1977 *A Samaritan Ring and the Identification of ʿAin-Kushi*, in: Qadmoniot 38–39, 84–87. (Hebr.)
1977 *An Unknown Coin of Akko-Ptolemais*, in: Alon – Internal Quarterly of the Israel Numismatic Society 6 (2), 21–24. (Hebr.)
1979 *The Samaritans in the District of Caesarea*, in: Ariel 48, 98–116. (Hebr.)
1979 *A Bronze Figurine of a Reining God from the Taanach Region*, in: Qadmoniot 46–47, 59–61. (Hebr.)
1981 *The Roman Siege System at Khirbet el-Hammam (Narbata) in Samaria*, in: Qadmoniot 55–56, 112–118. (Hebr.)
1981 *The Gates of Gezer*, in: Eretz Israel 15, 222–228. (Hebr.)
1982 *The Siege of Narbata and the Start of the Great Revolt*, in: Zmanim 10, 32–45. (Hebr.)
1983 (with M. Greenberg) *On Computerized Methods of Survey Recording*, in: Proceedings of the Tenth Archaeological Congress in Israel, Jerusalem, 6. (Hebr.)
1985 *Has Joshua's Altar been found on Mount Ebal?*, in: BAR 11/1, 26–43.
1986 *How Can Kempinski be so Wrong?*, in: BAR 12/1, 43–53.

1986 *The Roman Road from Caesarea to Ginae*, in: Dar, S./Safrai, Z. (eds.), Shomron Studies, Tel Aviv, 183–194. (Hebr.)

1987 *An Early Iron Age Cultic Site on Mount Ebal. Excavation Seasons 1982–1987– A Preliminary Report*, in: TA 13–14, 105–166.

1987 *The Water Factor during the Israelite Settlement Process in Canaan*, in: Heltzer, M./Lipiński, E. (eds.), Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean (1500–1000 B.C.) – Proceedings of the International Symposium held at the University of Haifa (OLA 23), Leuven, 341–352.

1988 *The Water Factor during the Israelite Settlement Process in Canaan*, in: Bunimovitz, S./Kochavi, M./Kasher, A. (eds.), Settlements, Society and Economy in Antiquity – Proceedings of the Symposium held in Memory of Y. Aharoni, Tel Aviv, 126–145. (Hebr.)

1988 *A Cultic Site with a Burnt Offerings Altar from Early Iron Age I Period at Mt. Ebal*, in: Augustin, M./Schunck, K.D. (eds.), "Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden" – Collected Communications to the XIIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Jerusalem, Frankfurt, 137–155.

1988 *"From Watchtowers to Fortified Cities". On the History of Highway Forts in the Israelite Kingdom*, in: Qadmoniot 83–84, 82–86. (Hebr.)

1989 *The Pahwah of Samaria (Northern Israel) during the Persian Period. Types of Settlement, Economy, History and New Discoveries*, in: Transeuphratène 2, 9–30.

1989 *The Wedge-Shaped Decorated Bowl and the Origin of the Samaritans*, in: BASOR 276, 77–84.

1989 *The Wedge-Decorated Bowl and the Origin of the Cuthaeans*, in: Eretz-Israel 20, 181–187. (Hebr.)

1990 *The Roman Road Caesarea-Ginae and the Location of Capercotani*, in: PEQ 122, 21–33.

1990 *"In the land of the Perizzites and of the Giants". The Israelite Settlement in the Hill Country of Manasseh*, in: Naʾaman, N./Finkelstein, I. (eds.) From Nomadism to Monarchy, Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel, Jerusalem, 53–100. (Hebr.)

1990 *Eight Seasons of Excavation at Mount Ebal*, in: Qadmoniot 89–90, 42–50. (Hebr.)

1991 *Following the Pottery Trail – Israel Enters Canaan*, in: BAR 17/5, 28–49, 75.

1991 *Two Roman Castellae in the Jordan Valley, and the Location of Coabis*, in: Cathedra 62, 3–17. (Hebr.)

1992 *How to Tell a Canaanite from an Israelite (Response to W.G. Dever)*, in: Shanks, H./Dever, W.G./Halpern, B./McCarter, P.K. (eds.), The Rise of Ancient Israel, Washington, 76–79.

1993 *Fortified Enclosures of the Early Bronze Age in the Samaria Region and the Beginning of Urbanization*, in: Levant 25, 113–125.

1993 *Fortified Enclosures of the Early Bronze Age in the Samaria Region*, in: Heltzer, M./Segal, A./Kaufman, D. (eds.), Studies in the History and Archaeology of Eretz-Israel presented to Moshe Dothan, Haifa, 57–77. (Hebr.)

1993 *A Fortified Camp from the Iron Age near Samaria*, in: Eshel, Y. (ed.), Judea and Samaria Research Studies 2, Kedumim, 149–167. (Hebr.)

1994 *"To the Land of the Perizzites and the Giants". On the Israelite Settlement in the Hill-Country of Manasseh*, in: Finkelstein, I./Naʾaman, N. (eds.), From Nomadism to Monarchy, Jerusalem, 47–69.

1995 *The Roman Siege-System at Khirbet el-Hamam (Narbata)*, in: Humphry, J. (ed.), The Roman and Byzantine Near East (Journal of Roman Archaeology, Supplement Series 14), Ann Arbor, 70–94.

1995 *Three Iron Age Fortresses in the Jordan Valley and the Origin of the Ammonite Circular Towers*, in: IEJ 45, 253–273.

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Biblical Studies in Honor of Prof. Michael Heltzer, Tel Aviv, 75*–98*. (Hebr.)

1999 *Vineyard in Stone – An Unknown Agricultural Method in Samaria*, in: Eshel, Y. (ed.), Judea and Samaria Research Studies 8, Kedumim-Ariel, 33–42. (Hebr.)

1999 (with A. Tsatskin and D. Nadel) *Ein Suhun – a PPNA/B Site in the Eastern Samarian Hills*, in: Neo-Lithics 2, 3–4.

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2000 *A Bronze Figurine of a Reining God from The Taanach Region*, in: Zertal, A./Mirkam, N. (eds.), The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. III. From Nahal ʿIron to Nahal Shechem, Tel Aviv, 455–457. (Hebr.)

2000 *A Quarried Vineyard, an Unknown Agricultural Practice from the Roman-Byzantine Period in Samaria*, in: Zertal, A./Mirkam, N. (eds.), The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. III. From Nahal ʿIron to Nahal Shechem, Tel Aviv, 461–467. (Hebr.)

2000 *An Ivory Stopper in the Shape of a Goat or an Ibex from El-Ahwat*, in: Zertal, A./Mirkam, N. (eds.), The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. III. From Nahal ʿIron to Nahal Shechem, Tel Aviv, 473–477. (Hebr.)

2000 (with A. Tsatskin and D. Nadel) *Ein Suhun – a PPNA/B Settlement in the Eastern Samarian Hills*, in: Mitkufat Haeven – Journal of the Israel Prehistoric Society 30, 73–87.

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2001 *The "Corridor-builders" of Central Israel. Evidence for the Settlement of the "Northern Sea Peoples"?*, in: Karageorghis, V./Morris, C.E. (eds.), Defensive Settlements of the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean c. 1200 B.C., Nicosia, 215–232.

2002 *Philistine Kin Found in Early Israel*, in: BAR 28/3, 18–31.

2002 *The Water System of Khirbet el-Hamman (Narbata)*, in: Amit, D./Patrich, J./Hirschfeld, Y. (eds.), The Aqueducts of Israel (Journal of Roman Archaeology, Supplement Series 46), Portsmouth, 413–416.

2003 *The Province of Samaria (Assyrian Samerina) in the Late Iron Age (Iron Age III)*, in: Lipschits, O./Blenkinsopp, J. (eds.), Juda and Judaeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period. Proceedings of a Colloquium held in Tel-Aviv University, Winona Lake, 377–413.

2003 *The "Eynun Pottery" – History, Meaning, Future*, in: Eshel, Y. (ed.), Judea and Samaria Research Studies 12, Ariel, 9–19. (Hebr.)

2003 *Tel Assawir – Its Location and Structure*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), The Excavations at Tel Assawir. Preliminary Report of the First Two Seasons 2001–2002, Haifa, 10–13. (Hebr.)

2003 *History of The Research*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), The Excavations at Tel Assawir. Preliminary Report of the First Two Seasons 2001–2002, Haifa, 14–16. (Hebr.)
2003 *The Cemeteries and the Tombs in the District of Assawir*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), The Excavations at Tel Assawir. Preliminary Report of the First Two Seasons 2001–2002, Haifa, 17–18. (Hebr.)
2003 *The Identification Suggestions for Tel Assawir*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), The Excavations at Tel Assawir. Preliminary Report of the First Two Seasons 2001–2002, Haifa, 19–20. (Hebr.)
2004 *Taanath Shiloh (Joshua 16:6)*, in: Heltzer, M./Malul, M. (eds.), Teshurot LeAvishur. Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East in Hebrew and Semitic Languages, Tel Aviv, 229*–237*.
2004 *Sticking to the Facts*, in BAR 30/2, 22–23.
2005 (with D. Ben-Yosef and O. Cohen) *Kh. ʿAujah el-Foqa – A Fortified Iron Age Site North of Jericho*, in: Eshel, Y. (ed.), Judea and Samaria Research Studies 24, Ariel, 11–34. (Hebr.)
2006 *Shomron and Jerusalem. Capital Cities and Religious Compounds*, in: Meiron, E. (ed.), City of David. Studies of Ancient Jerusalem. The Seventh Annual Conference, Jerusalem, 43–57. (Hebr.)
2008 *You Cross the Jordan. New Findings from the Iron Age in the Jordan Valley*, in: Peleg, Z. (ed.), Ha-Sfar Ve-Hamidbar Be-Eretz-Israel III, Susia, 11–30. (Hebr.)
2009 *The Geographical and Archaeological Reality of the Book of Judith*, in: Eretz-Israel 29, 161–175. (Hebr.)
2009 (with D. Ben-Yosef) *Bedhat esh-Shaʿab. An Iron Age I Enclosure in the Jordan Valley*, in: Schloen, D. (ed.), Exploring the Longue Durée. Essays in Honor of Lawrence E. Stager, Winona Lake, 517–529.
2009 (with D. Ben-Yosef, O. Cohen, and R. Beʾeri) *Kh. ʿAujah el-Foqa (Ataroth) – An Iron Age Fortified City in the Jordan Valley*, in: PEQ 141, 104–126.
2011 *Riots and Siege. Caesarea and Narbata at the beginning of the First Revolt*, in: Porath, Y./Ayalin, E./Izdarechet, A. (eds.), Caesarea Treasures II, Jerusalem, 245–260. (Hebr.)
2011 *The Arunah Pass*, in: Bar, S./Kahn, D./Shirley, J.J. (eds.), Egypt, Canaan and Israel. History, Imperialism, Ideology and Literature. Proceedings of a Conference at the University of Haifa, 3–7 May 2009 (CHANE 52), Leiden, 342–356.
2012 *Vessels Marked with Impressions and their Implications for Evidence of Early Iron Age Israel*, in: Gruber, M.I./Brenner, A./Garsiel, M./Levine, B.A./Mor, M. (eds.), Teshura Le-Zafrira. Studies in the Bible, the History of Israel and the Ancient Near East Presented to Zafrira Ben-Barak, Beer-Sheva, 175–210. (Hebr.)
2012 (with D. Ben-Yosef, O. Cohen, and R. Beʾeri) *Kh. ʿAujah el-Foqa (ʿAtarot). A Iron Age City-Citadel in the Southern Jordan Valley*, in: Zertal,

A. (ed.), The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. V. The Middle Jordan Valley. From Wadi Fasael to Wadi ʿAujah, Haifa, 608–631. (Hebr.)

2012 *The Irrigation Systems and the Aqueducts in Nahal Fasael and Wadi ʿAujah (Nahal Yitav)*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. V. The Middle Jordan Valley. From Wadi Fasael to Wadi ʿAujah, Haifa, 525–579. (Hebr.)

2012 (with Y. Gruntfest) *A South-Arabian Tomb Inscription from the Vicinity of Jericho*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. V. The Middle Jordan Valley. From Wadi Fasael to Wadi ʿAujah, Haifa, 580–586. (Hebr.)

2012 (with S. Bar and O. Cohen) *The Excavations at Tell esh-Sheikh Diyab*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), The Manasseh Hill Country Survey. Vol. V. The Middle Jordan Valley. From Wadi Fasael to Wadi ʿAujah, Haifa, 608–631. (Hebr.)

2012 *History of the Excavations, The Staff, and The Methodology*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), El-Ahwat. A Fortified Site from the Early Iron Age Near Nahal ʿIron, Israel, Excavations 1993–2000 (CHANE 24), Leiden, 11–18.

2012 *The Site – General Data*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), El-Ahwat. A Fortified Site from the Early Iron Age Near Nahal ʿIron, Israel, Excavations 1993–2000 (CHANE 24), Leiden, 21–25.

2012 *Plan and Fortifications*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), El-Ahwat. A Fortified Site from the Early Iron Age Near Nahal ʿIron, Israel, Excavations 1993–2000 (CHANE 24), Leiden, 26–40.

2012 *Stratigraphy and Chronology*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), El-Ahwat. A Fortified Site from the Early Iron Age Near Nahal ʿIron, Israel, Excavations 1993–2000 (CHANE 24), Leiden, 41–54.

2012 (with R. Beʾeri) *Area A – The City Gate (A1), the "Approach" (A2), and the Upper Terrace (A3)*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), El-Ahwat. A Fortified Site from the Early Iron Age Near Nahal ʿIron, Israel, Excavations 1993–2000 (CHANE 24), Leiden, 55–81.

2012 *Area T – The Outer Tower*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), El-Ahwat. A Fortified Site from the Early Iron Age Near Nahal ʿIron, Israel, Excavations 1993–2000 (CHANE 24), Leiden, 174–177.

2012 *An Ivory Caprid-Head from Area A3*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), El-Ahwat. A Fortified Site from the Early Iron Age Near Nahal ʿIron, Israel, Excavations 1993–2000 (CHANE 24), Leiden, 288–294.

2012 *Architectural and Archaeological Parallels between el-Ahwat and the Western Mediterranean*, in: Zertal, A. (ed.), El-Ahwat. A Fortified Site from the Early Iron Age Near Nahal ʿIron, Israel, Excavations 1993–2000 (CHANE 24), Leiden, 411–423.

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The Jordan Valley Excavation Project

Retrospects and Prospects

Ralph K. Hawkins / David Ben-Shlomo / Michael Freikman

Abstract: The region of Manasseh played a very significant role in the history of ancient Israel. Adam Zertal's pioneering survey of this important area, which has been ongoing for more than 40 years, has made voluminous contributions to both the fields of archaeology and biblical studies. The methodology of the survey and the validity of its conclusion, however, have been called into question by some scholars. It is well known, however, that surveys provide provisional explanations for settlement phenomena to be confirmed through the collection of independently obtained excavation data, and the provisional explanations of the Manasseh Hill Country Survey (MHCS), therefore, should not be dismissed but tested in the field. Several excavations have already been conducted in Samaria and the Jordan Valley in concert with the survey, and the Jordan Valley Excavation Project (JVEP) was launched in 2016 with a view to excavating additional sites, specifically in the Middle Jordan Valley. To date, excavations have been ongoing at two sites, *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* and *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*. In this article, we provide a brief overview of these excavations and their key findings, examine how these results relate to those of the MHCS, and consider what questions are pertinent for future excavation in the Middle Jordan Valley.

1. The Manasseh Hill Country Survey and the Jordan Valley Excavation Project

According to the Bible, Manasseh was premier among the tribes of Israel throughout much of its history. It has long been recognized that it played a central role in the Israelite settlement.[1] The Deuteronomistic History claims that Manasseh was given the largest allotment of territory of all the tribes in the central hill-country (Josh 17:1–13). Seventy percent of all Iron Age I sites in the country of Israel are located in the territory of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, with the oldest having been discovered in Manasseh.[2] The natural passageways to Transjordan and to the King's Highway are in the territory of Manasseh – through the *Wādi Farʿah* and along the *Wādi Zerqāʾ*.[3] The biblical data suggest a picture of Manasseh as "the

[1] ALT 1967, 175–221; DE GEUS 1992, 494–496; MAZAR 1986, 25–49.

[2] FINKELSTEIN 1988, 65–91, 353–356.

[3] ZERTAL 2008, 25–29; ZERTAL/MIRKAM 2016, 17–24; ZERTAL/BAR 2017, 23–31; ZERTAL/ BAR 2019, 23; BAR/ZERTAL 2021, 18–26.

cradle of the Israelite clans and tribes that originated from there."[4] All four of the capitals of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were located in the tribal territory of Manasseh, including: Shechem (1 Kgs 12:25); Penuel in Transjordan (1 Kgs 12:25); Tirzah (*Tell el-Farʿah* North: 1 Kgs 14:17); and Samaria (1 Kgs 16:23–24). Because of its prominence and the abundance of biblical material on Manasseh, scholars have been drawn to its study since the earliest years of the 20th century.[5]

The late Adam Zertal pioneered the modern study of this region. He launched the Manasseh Hill Country Survey (MHCS) in 1978 and led the project continually for 38 years, until his death on October 18, 2015.[6] The MHCS team covered more than 2500 square kilometers of the Manassite territory by foot, which is about 80 percent of the central hill-country. The area of the survey extends from the Jordan Valley to the Mediterranean coastal plain, and provides a cross-section of western Palestine, making it possible to compare different geographical units. More than two hundred Iron Age I sites were processed, producing a wealth of new data regarding the settlement of the central hill-country from ca. 1250–1000 BCE.[7]

Within the larger territory of Manasseh, East Manasseh (approx. 500 km²) was one of the lesser-known and lesser-research areas of the Holy Land in general and of the central hill-country in particular. The reasons for this include its location, its lack of famous historical sites, and difficult conditions for exploration. The MHCS surveyed this region over the course of 14 years (1980–1994), with additional work from 2014 to the present. During this time, the area was surveyed comprehensively, with more than 500 days of field work invested in the process. The survey of East Manasseh has discovered hundreds of sites, many of which were previously unknown to modern research, and brought to light an entire previously undocumented region.

Following Adam's death, his protégé Shay Bar has continued both the survey and the publication of its reports. As of the date of this publication, the MHCS has published seven volumes so far – seven in Hebrew and six in English – with nine volumes projected (Fig. 1). Owing to its vast contribution of entirely new data, the MHCS has been called „one of the most important ever undertaken in the land of Israel."[8] Some archaeologists, however, have criticized the MHCS and the value of conclusions drawn from archaeological surveys in general.[9] It is well known that surveys provide provisional explanations for settlement phenomena to be confirmed through the collection of independently obtained excavation data. Indeed, several excavations have already been conducted in the Middle Jordan Valley in concert with the survey, including two sites by Dror Ben-Yosef, three by Shay Bar, and two by Zertal himself.[10] Following the latter's death, we

[4] KOCHAVI 1985, 56.

[5] ALBRIGHT 1931, 241–251.

[6] For an overview, see ZERTAL 1993, 1311f.

[7] ZERTAL 1998, 240.

[8] FINKELSTEIN 1988, 89.

[9] DEVER 1993, 32*; 1998, 227. Cf. the discussion in HAKWINS 2008, 173–177.

[10] ZERTAL/BAR 2019, 10–12; BEN-YOSEF 2007; BAR 2008; ZERTAL 2012.

launched the Jordan Valley Excavation Project (JVEP) with a view to excavating additional sites in the Middle Jordan Valley and, so far, have conducted excavations at two sites, *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* and *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*. Our purpose here is not to provide a detailed presentation of those excavations, since we have already published preliminary reports elsewhere.[11] In this paper, we will simply provide an overview of the excavations and their key findings to date, focus on how our findings relate to the provisional explanations of the MHCS, and consider what questions are pertinent for future excavation in the Middle Jordan Valley.

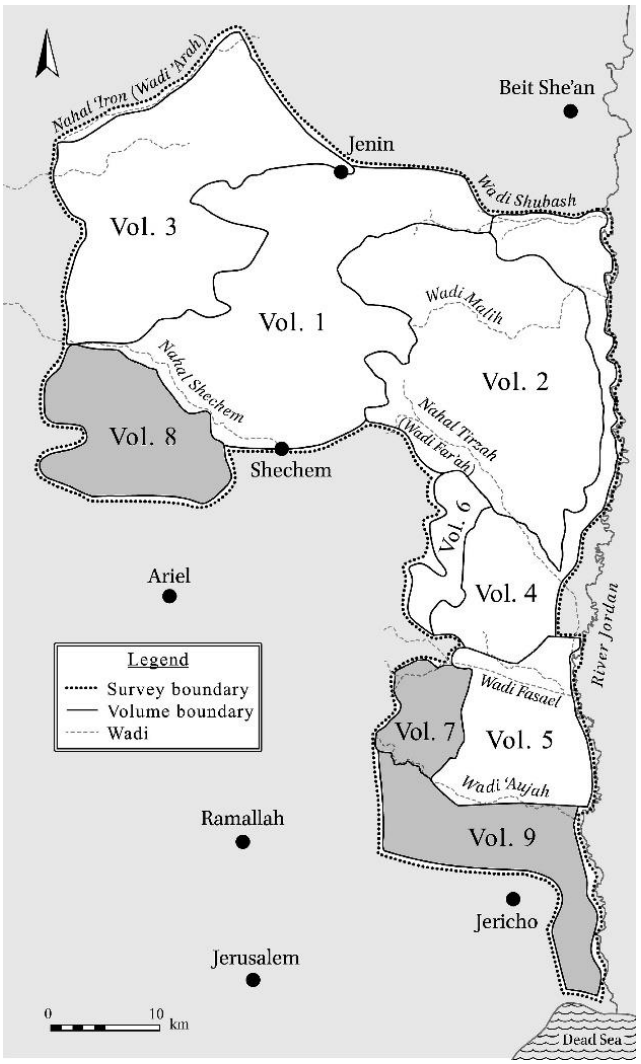

Fig. 1: The Manasseh Hill Country Survey with the areas covered in published and planned volumes (Courtesy of Shay Bar)

[11] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017; BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020.

2. *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah*

2.1 Background

The transition from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age was a time of major historical change in the Eastern Mediterranean world. Beginning in *c.* 1250 BCE, the 'Great Powers' Club' of the Mediterranean world began to disintegrate, the great states lost much of their power, and some disappeared completely.[12] As the international framework crumbled, new influential groups arose, some of whom were likely immigrants from outside the Eastern Mediterranean, while others may have been formerly powerless elements of local populations. Everywhere, people had to create new lifestyles with a mixture of old and new that depended on local circumstances. In the southern Levant, the collapse of the Late Bronze Age system led to the rise of new population groups on the frontiers of Early Iron Age Canaan,[13] including the Jordan Valley.

In the Bible, the Jordan Valley features prominently in the traditions about early Israelite origins. The book of Joshua claims that the earliest Israelites came from the east, outside the land of Canaan, and that they entered Cisjordan by crossing the Jordan River „opposite Jericho" (Josh 3:16). Many modern scholars, however, subscribe to various permutations of the Social-Revolution Model, in which the earliest Israelites were originally disaffected Canaanites who fled their oppressive overlords in the urban centers in the coastal region and headed for the central hill country. There, they met a few Yahwists – worshipers of the deity Yahweh – who had lived in southern Canaan under Egyptian influence or perhaps had escaped from Egypt. The two groups entered into a covenant with each other and became „Israel."[14] Most of the models of early Israelite origins circulating today are variations on this theme of indigenous origins, which currently predominates in the academy. Dever writes that „all current models ... focus on indigenous origins somewhere within Greater Canaan."[15]

Models of indigenous origins have been based, in part, on the assumption that there is no evidence for early Israel during the Iron Age I in the eastern part of the land of Israel, especially the Jordan Valley.[16] Until recently, this area was among the lesser-known and lesser-researched regions of the country. While limited excavation near the Sea of Galilee had already revealed characteristics of the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods in the northern region of the Jordan Valley, the area between the Samarian Hills and the lower Jordan Valley remained virtually unknown archaeologically. The recent surveys conducted throughout both the southern and northern regions of the Jordan Valley by the MHCS, however, are profoundly important in that they have disovered a plethora of previously unknown

[12] Cf. LIVERANI 2000, 15–27.
[13] KILLEBREW 2014, 595–606.
[14] The Social-Revolution Model was first articulated in MENDENHALL 1962, 66–87, and modified in GOTTWALD 1979.
[15] DEVER 2017, 232.
[16] E.g., DEVER 2017, 152.

sites that date to the transitional period from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age I. If this interpretation is correct, it reveals a significant development that occured in the settlement of the Jordan Valley during this period, with an increase from seven sites in the Late Bronze Age to fifty-four settlements in the Iron Age I.[17] Of the 54 Iron Age I sites discovered, more than 30 are simple oval compounds and camp sites, with little potential for yielding archaeological data. Six of the sites, however, are more complex enclosures. These six sites are larger and include concentrations of small stone buildings with adjacent courtyards. These sites have the highest potential of yielding a significant assemblage of material culture in an archaeological context.[18] None of the oval or complex oval compound type sites in the region had been excavated, and Zertal suggested that *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah*, the largest of the complex oval enclosures, may be an ideal site for elucidating the cultural, ethnic and socio-economic nature of the rise in settlements, possibly connected with the early Israelite settlement (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Adam Zertal – standing next to Hawkins in 2007 – points to *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah*

From the beginning, this site was intriguing. Its name, „Mastarah", is derived from a root that means „to hide," so that the name *el-Mastarah* literally means „hidden." Located in the desert 8 km north of Jericho, off the main roads and away from reliable water sources, it is indeed hidden (OIG 1888.1520) (Fig. 3).[19] It is

[17] BEN-YOSEF 2015, 34.

[18] BEN-YOSEF 2015, 40–45.

[19] ZERTAL/BAR 2019, Site No. 113. The closest water source is *Wādi ʿŌğa*, about 2 km to the south.

situated in the fork of a *wādi* and surrounded by hills on three sides, which completely masks it from its surroundings (Fig. 4). The founding of *el-Mastarah* as a permanent settlement in such an isolated location seemed puzzling, and begged the question of its relationship to the other newly established sites in the surrounding region in the Early Iron Age.

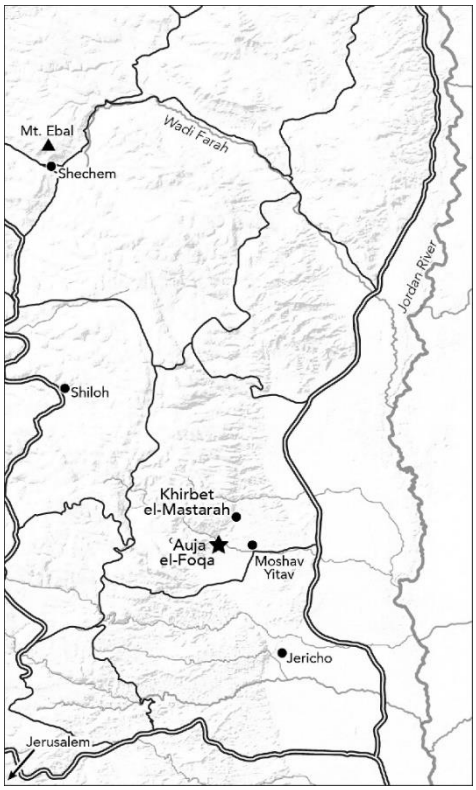

Fig. 3: Map showing the locations of *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* and *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* (Map by A. D. Riddle)

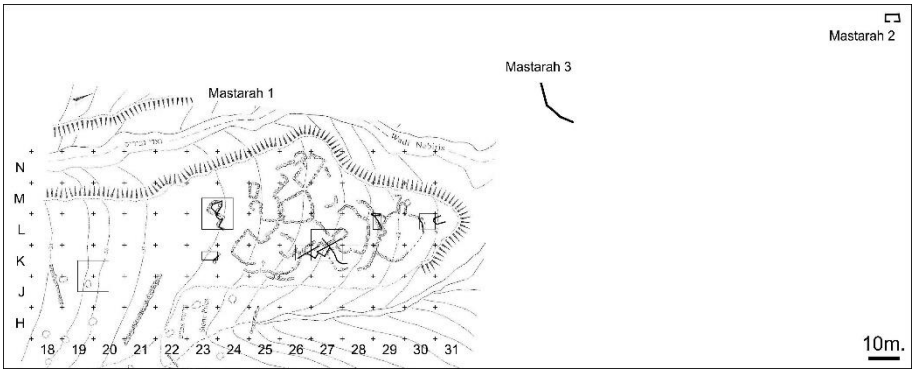

Fig. 4: Site plan of *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* with *Mastarah* sites 1–3 and excavated areas

2.2 Excavation

JVEP conducted excavations at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* in 2017.[20] Six test trenches were dug in the main site and three in two subsidiary sites. A total of 14 complete 5-by-5 m squares, along with six partial squares, were excavated. Altogether, an area of about 400 m² were excavated (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5: *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah*, in the middle of a *wādi* (on the knoll behind the tree), surrounded by hills on three sides

Architecture

Ḫirbet el-Mastarah contains three types of architectural units, including: (1) large rounded enclosures (about 3 m in diameter); (2) small rounded or oval enclosures (usually 2–3 m in diameter); and (3) small rectilinear rooms (usually about 1.2 × 1.8 m). The walls, which are built of rubble stones typically about 0.4 m in size, were each only a single course in height and usually only one row thick.[21]

The excavation areas included rounded enclosures, oval units that were either smaller enclosures or may have been part of smaller structures, walls, open areas, and several areas where there were a lot of large stones but no clear, definable architecture (Figs. 6–7). One oval unit that was excavated had an entrance with a large flat stone that served as a threshhold.[22] Inside another unit, two large basalt grinding stones were found. These appear to have been *in situ* on a floor.[23] A few

[20] Cf. BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 49*–82*.
[21] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 55*–63*.
[22] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 56*.
[23] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 56*.

bones, all from sheep or goats, were found nearby.[24] Most of the excavated areas, however, were almost entirely devoid of finds, which meant that it was impossible to establish a firm date for the architecture.

Fig. 6: Oval enclosure with abutting structure at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah*

Fig. 7: Rectilinear ruins at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah*

[24] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 71*.

Pottery

The pottery repertoire contained fragments of two kraters that date either to the Late Bronze Age II or the Iron Age I.[25] There were also 26 Iron Age sherds, eight of which came from cooking pots. Three of these date to the Early Iron Age (c. 1200 BCE) or the beginning of Iron Age II (c. 1000 BCE).[26] This is of special interest, since a large proportion of cooking pots was also noted in the Iron Age assemblage at several of the so-called „foot-shaped" sites (i.e., sandal- or foot-shaped enclosures) discovered in the Jordan Valley.[27]

Most of the pottery and small finds at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* date to the Roman-Byzantine periods. The pottery from the Roman period is more variable than that from previous ages, with a total of 42 indicative sherds from bowls, cooking pots, jars, and other vessels.[28] Among the finds that date to the Roman period are a flat roof tile fragment (*tegula*), a Bronze fibula fragment,[29] and several glass fragments. There are a few indicative sherds that date to the Byzantine, Islamic and Ottoman periods.[30]

Date

One of the primary goals for the excavation at *el-Mastarah* was to determine the date and function of the structures that were already visible above ground prior to the excavation. Based on the sherds found in the initial survey, Zertal had originally concluded that the site was dated mainly to Iron Age I–II.[31] In the updated edition of the survey, however, the site as a whole is reported as having been founded in the Middle Bronze Age II, functioned mostly during the Iron Age, and reused during later periods, especially the Roman period.[32]

In our excavation, the lack of pottery sherds in direct association with the structures did not allow for establishing the date of their construction and use.[33] They seemed to have been built all in the same period, since there was no evidence that the structures cut into or overlay each other. The structures themselves, however, belied a date. In every place where excavation was conducted, once 0.15–0.76 m in depth was reached, a sterile layer was encountered with no finds at all.[34] In 2018, we utilized a relatively new technique, Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL), in order to obtain more information about the date and nature of the site at

[25] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 70*. Cf. Fig. 29:4, 5.
[26] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 70*.
[27] ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF 2017, 682; ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF 2009, 525f.
[28] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 70*, Tables 1, 3, 4; Figs. 30, 31.
[29] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, Fig. 31:10.
[30] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 70*.
[31] ZERTAL 2012, 326.
[32] ZERTAL/BAR 2019, 328.
[33] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 71*.
[34] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 71*f.

Ḫirbet el-Mastarah. In this procedure, dust is collected from under the stones of the wall and subjected to OSL analysis, which identifies the last date upon which the crystals in the soil were exposed to light, and thereby revealing the wall's date of construction.[35] The OSL results indicate that the walls were used, and possibly constructed, during several periods, including Iron Age II, Late Hellenistic or Early Roman, Late Byzantine, Early Islamic and Islamic/Abassid periods.[36] It appears that *el-Mastarah* has a horizontal chronology rather than a vertical stratigraphy, and may be characterized as a single-layered site with multiple periods of spacial usage or modification.[37] In terms of the earliest Iron Age II dates, the OSL results indicate that initial wall construction at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* took place 2570 years before 2018, plus or minus 220 years, which would produce a range from 772–552 BCE. The implications of these dates will be discussed later, under section 4, "Comparison of the Data Sets and Prospects for Future Research", below.

2.3 Identification, Nature, and Purpose of the Site

The ancient name of *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* is unknown. As noted above, its modern name is derived from its hidden location. Zertal connected the site with the other enclosure sites documented in the MHCS, which he associated with the movements of peoples, namely the early tribes of Israel, whom he argued immigrated from Transjordan in the Iron Age I and migrated westwards.[38] Other scholars have attributed the change in the settlement pattern in the region to social and economic changes within the local ("Canaanite") population of the southern Levant.[39] The interpretation of the archaeological data related to the early Israelite settlement in Canaan continues to be debated.[40] In view of the findings at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah*, the dating of enclosure sites may also become part of this debate.

Irrespective of the origin of the inhabitants of these sites, Ben-Yosef concludes that the oval-shaped enclosures point to a relatively simple society active in the Jordan Valley during the Iron Age I.[41] Although, as we have seen, the date of these compounds is debated and may be variable, the settlement pattern suggests a semi-nomadic society tailored to the arid environment and desert conditions. The settlers appear to have had an economy based primarily on sheep- and goat-herding, and possibly also the cultivation of some limited seasonal crops. Ben-Yosef enumerates

[35] This system was used to date the construction of stone walls at the ancient site of *Ruǧm el-Hiri* (see e.g., FREIKMAN/PORAT 2017, 26f.).
[36] ACKERMAN/ANKER/BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS/PORAT *forthcoming*.
[37] ACKERMAN/ANKER/BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS/PORAT *forthcoming*.
[38] ZERTAL 1988, 240–243.
[39] See the overview in HAWKINS 2013, 40–46.
[40] For recent summaries and discussions of the settlement models, see DESSEL 2017, 275–298; HAWKINS 2013, 29–48; MAZANI 2008, 95–109; RAY 2008, 79–93.
[41] BEN-YOSEF 2015, 48.

several factors that point to this, including: (1) the architecture, which consists of spread out enclosures (some oval and some complex) which served as livestock pens, accompanied by tent sites; (2) location in peripheral areas, away from contemporary Canaanite centers, main roads, and water sources; (3) a sparsity of finds, which includes a limited ceramic repertoire that lacks imported vessels[42]; (4) the absence of sickle blades, which are present in settlements based on grain crops[43]; (5) climatological studies of the Jordan Rift Valley suggest that it was an extremely dry environment in the Late Bronze–Iron Age I transition period, well-suited to seasonal grazing, much as it is today; and (6) permanent settlement only appears to have existed in the Iron Age I in the southern Beth Shean Valley, where a handful of medium and large *tell*s dating to the latter part of the period showed evidence of year-round agricultural activity.[44] It was only during the Iron Age II that *tell* settlements became firmly established in this part of the region. These six factors suggest that a semi-nomadic society, tailored to the arid environment and desert conditions, inhabited the region in the Iron Age I.

As noted above, the structures at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* were devoid of finds, and may have functioned either as the foundations for huts or tents or, more probably, as enclosure fences for corralling animals, probably herds of sheep and goats belonging to those who made use of the site.[45] The latter function would explain the lack of artifacts, since the people would have lived in tents outside the area of the enclosures, possibly in the flatter areas of the site, or even further away. This interpretation is supported by studies of current Bedouin settlements, which show that animals are often located in enclosures that are separated from the location of the tents by some distance, and that other structures are often absent at such sites.[46] Apparently, the structures at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* were not dwelling enclosures, but were an agglomeration of pens for holding animals, while the people camped in tents nearby.[47]

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[42] The limited ceramic repertoire includes about five kinds of vessels, with the most prominent being the cooking pot, which comprises about 50% of the collection.

[43] Sickel blades only begin to appear at highland sites 300 m above sea level, on the desert border and in the central hills. Cf. WINTER 2008, 7*–24*.

[44] BEN-YOSEF 2015, 48.

[45] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 71*–73*.

[46] Cf. SAIDEL 2008, 465–486; ZERTAL/BAR 2017, 58–63. However, ZERTAL 2001, 51 reports that, in some cases, large quantities of potsherds have been found inside enclosures, which could suggest that, at least in some locations, people were living inside. ZERTAL/BAR 2017, 67 note that the interpretation of the enclosures as animal pens is based on analagy with modern animal pens.

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3. *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*

3.1 Background

Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā (in Arabic ‚upper *ʿŌğa*‘) (OIG 187908.150482)[48] is a well-preserved settlement, apparently a small fortified town, located on the summit of a high hill south of *Wādi ʿŌğa* and 2 km west of *Mošav Yitav* (Fig. 3). The site is isolated by steep slopes and is almost circular (110 m north–south, and 85 m east–west), with a projection on its south-eastern edge. It rises about 100 m above its surroundings with an elevation of up to 27 m above sea level (Fig. 8).

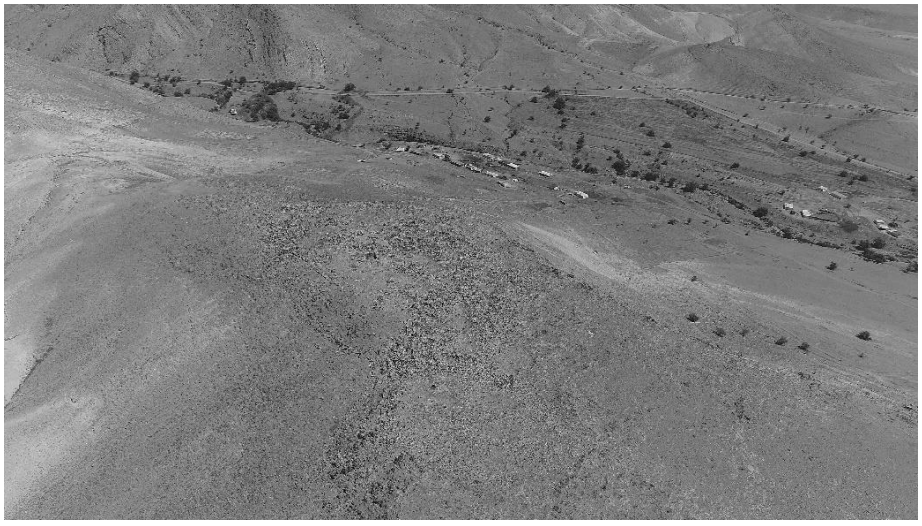

Fig. 8: A general view of *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*, looking north, with the Bedouin village of *Rās ʿĒn el-ʿŌğa* below (Courtesy of Michael Freikman)

The site was first visited and reported by the British Survey in 1874, who described it as „a ruined village on a mound, apparently modern“[49]. Their description of the site dissuaded other scholars from studying or even visiting it for the next 129 years. It was not until the winter of 2003–2004 that it was surveyed by the MHCS.[50] This intensive survey demonstrated that the primary period during which the site was in use was the Iron Age II, the time of the Israelite monarchy.[51]

The initial report included a site plan that contained within it all the visible architectural elements on the site, together with the remnants of a casemate wall that had apparently surrounded it, along with a tower in its center.[52] Allowing for

[48] Cf. ZERTAL 2012, 494–524; ZERTAL/BAR 2019, Site No. 143.
[49] CONDER/KITCHENER 1882, 391.
[50] ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF/COHEN/BEʾERI 2009, 104–23. The original report has been updated in ZERTAL/BAR 2019, Site 143, though the conclusions are essentially the same.
[51] ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF/COHEN/BEʾERI 2009, 110–117.
[52] ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF/COHEN/BEʾERI 2009, 106, Fig. 2.

the lack of stratigraphic excavation, Zertal proposed that all or most of the architectural phases were in the Iron Age, with the better preserved sections having been built last.[53] With regard to the date of the site, he concluded that, outside of the Iron Age, there was only sporadic activity at the site.[54] Based on an analysis of the sherds from *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* and their comparison with the ceramic assemblages of other sites, Zertal postulated that: (1) the site was first inhabited in Iron Age I; (2) a more substantial settlement was founded at the beginning of Iron Age IIB; (3) although there were quite a few sherds attributed to the northern tradition, most of them were similar to the pottery tradition of the Kingdom of Judah; and (4) the site was abandoned during the second half of the Iron Age IIB or the beginning of Iron Age IIC.[55] In sum, the site was understood as having been founded as a small, unfortified village during the Early Iron Age, and later expanded and fortified during the monarchic period, in the eighth century BCE, when it may have served an administrative function in the region.[56]

When we made an initial visit to the site in 2017, we found numerous pottery sherds from the ninth–eighth centuries BCE lying on the surface that seemed to confirm that the period of most intensive usage at the site was during the Iron Age II.[57] As we walked around the site, however, it seemed evident that there were two completely different architectural phases, including an upper phase of about 35–40 well-preserved small rounded single-room houses, ranging from 6–9 m in diameter, and underneath a series of thicker, well-built linear structures. In a few places, there were even earlier remains visible beneath those on the surface, hinting that the site may have been settled before the Iron Age II, as Zertal had suggested.[58]

In the initial survey report, Zertal identified *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* as biblical Ataroth, one of a series of sites listed in the description of the Manasseh-Ephraim boundary said to have been located between Shechem and Jericho.[59] According to the biblical text, the boundary went „down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah, and touches Jericho, ending at the Jordan" (Josh 16:7 NRSV). This identification of the site with Ataroth was due both to its location north of Jericho, and to the meaning of the name – „a crown" – since the site crowns the local hilltop. However, Alt suggested locating Ataroth at *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa et-Taḥṭā*, 1 km east of *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*,[60] although this site is smaller and seems less strategic. Recently, Ahituv, Klein and Ganor published a papyrus purported to record a delivery of wine from

[53] ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF/COHEN/BEʾERI 2009, 110.
[54] ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF/COHEN/BEʾERI 2009, 110.
[55] ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF/COHEN/BEʾERI 2009, 116f.
[56] ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF/COHEN/BEʾERI 2009, 117–121.
[57] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2020, 59.
[58] BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2020, 59f.
[59] ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF/COHEN/BEʾERI 2009, 120.
[60] ALT 1926, 33. For *Ḫ. ʿŌğa et-Taḥṭā*, see ZERTAL/BAR 2019, Site 146, though this site seems smaller and less strategic

Naʿarat to Jerusalem, and the authors suggest identifying this site with the *Naʿaratah* mentioned in Josh 16:7 and locating it at *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*.[61] The authenticity of this so-called „Jerusalem" Papyrus, however, has been called into question[62] and, until further analysis can settle the question, it cannot be considered in the identification of *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*. In the meantime, Ataroth and *Naʿaratah* both remain as possibilities for the identification of *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*.

While the results of the MHCS study were published, the site had remained unexcavated. It was looted in several places, mostly during a short period after the intensive survey, as several robbery pits and earth piles attest. In view of the impressive remains at the site, its potential as an administrative center of the region during the Iron Age, its possible identification with biblical Ataroth or *Naʿaratah*, and the danger of further destruction to the site, the JVEP excavation project at the site was initiated.

3.2 Excavation

Three seasons of excavations have been conducted so far, including one full season in the summer of 2019, and two shorter seasons in the winters of 2020 and 2021.[63] Excavations have been concentrated in two areas, including Areas A and B (Fig. 9).

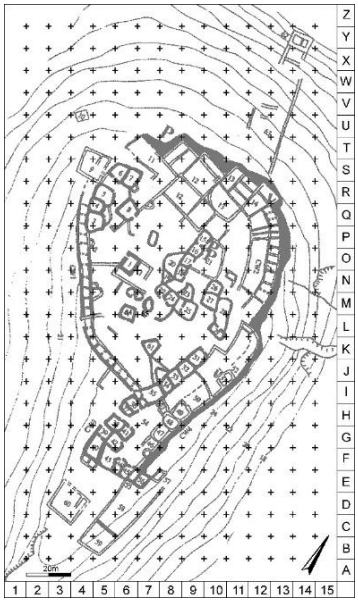

Fig. 9: Plan of the structures at *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* with current grid (after ZERTAL et al. 2009, Fig. 2)

[61] AHITUV/KLEIN/GANOR 2017, 168–182. The MT reads נערתה, which is usually rendered as the geographical name Naarah.

[62] ROLLSTON 2017, 319–328.

[63] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 11*–35*.

Area A

Area A, located on the southern part of the site and adjacent to the casemate wall, was the focus of excavation in 2019 (Figs. 10–11). Here, we uncovered four „cells“ or rooms inside the casemate wall itself. Some of these included a destruction layer with evidence of fire and a substantial quanity of restorable pottery. In addition, several iron and bronze arrowheads were found near the casemate wall, which may provide evidence of a battle at the site.[64]

Fig. 10: Photo of Area A (Courtesy of Michael Freikman)

[64] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 21*–24*, 28*, Fig. 16.

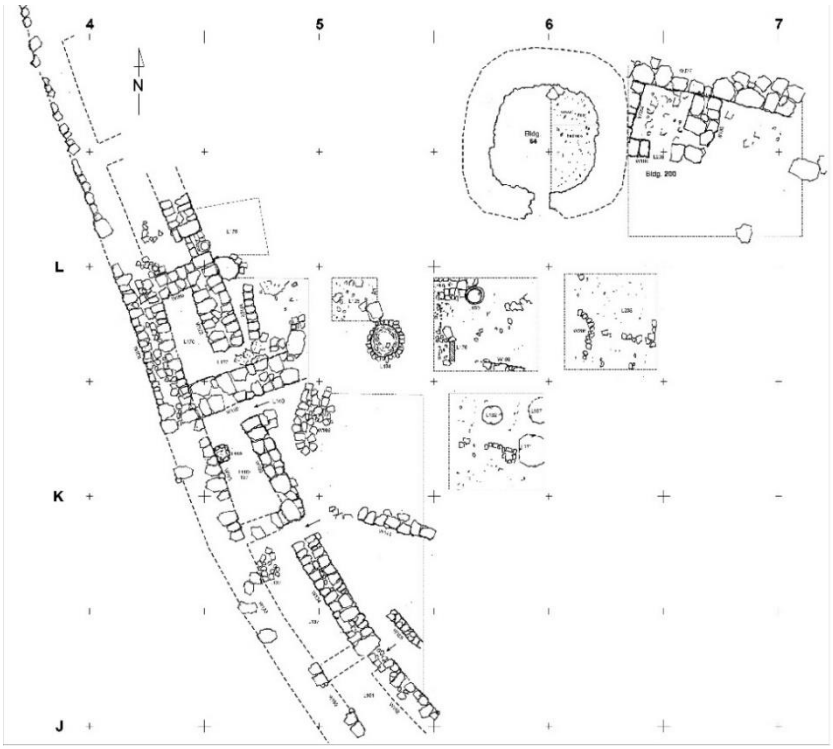

Fig. 11: Schematic plan of Area A

In the area inside the town, there were hardly any houses attached to the city wall.[65] It is well-known that, in fortified Judahite towns of this period, such as *Ḫirbet Qēyafa* and Beersheba, rows of houses that used the casemate cells as rear rooms were attached to the city wall.[66] In the interior of Area A at *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*, however, all that was found were a small, stone-lined silo (Fig. 12), a few pits, a *tabun*, and several other small installations in an open area. While there were remains of larger structures, these were evident only inside the town about 40 m from the casemate wall.

During the 2019 season, half of one of the small rounded single-room houses from the uppermost phase was excavated to bedrock (Fig. 13).[67] While there was debris that included Iron Age II sherds, as well as later material, a nearly complete Ottoman period vessel was found on the floor, protruding from underneath the wall.[68] The buildings from this phase clearly overlie the main Iron Age phase, and may date to the Mamluk or Ottoman period, since most of the post-Iron Age

[65] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 23*f.

[66] HERZOG 1992, 269f.; 1997, 237–249. For *Ḫirbet Qēyafa*, see GARFINKEL/KREIMERMAN/ZILBERG 2016, 48–56, 68–72. For Beersheba, see AHARONI 1973, 13–18; HERZOG 1984, 70–87.

[67] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 18*f.

[68] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 18*, 28*, Fig. 16:4.

sherds date from this period. *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* may have also served as a small administrative center during this period.[69]

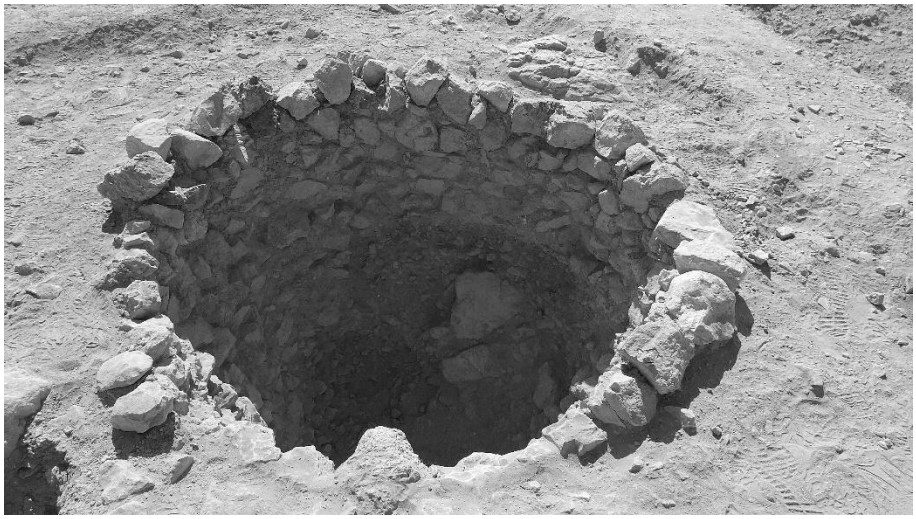

Fig. 12: Stone-lined silo in Area A

Fig. 13: Single-room house in Area A

Area B

Area B, in the northern part of the site, yielded even more promising results. Since this area is precisely where the less steep slopes ascend to the site from the direction of the spring, it may be the location of the town's main gate. In the winter

[69] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 18*f.

seasons of 2020 and 2021, we completely excavated an Iron Age house in this area that was destroyed in the 9th or 8th centuries BCE (Fig. 14).[70] It is part of a larger complex, for which we have not been able to reconstruct a complete plan, since it is overlaid in its southern part by a later structure. A destruction layer was evident in several of the rooms of this complex, with complete pottery vessels, some fully intact. To the north of this structure lies a flat, open area and, beyond that, the northern part of the casemate wall. There is a gap in the casemate that could indicate that the gate was located here.

Fig. 14: Iron Age house in Area B (Courtesy of Michael Freikman)

Finds and Features

The site is rich with finds, especially pottery dated to the 9th and 8th centuries BCE.[71] Most of the pottery vessels are closed shapes, such as storage jars, jugs, and cooking pots, while bowls other tableware are rare. This is in contrast to many other contemporary sites, where bowls and kraters are the most common pottery types. Among the vessels that were discovered were a few chalices, which are sometimes associated with religious rituals. There were also several decorated and imported vessels, along with a relatively large group of iron tools and weapons, as well as stone vessels, possible sling-stones, and mud doughnut-shaped objects,

[70] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020b, 133–166.
[71] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 25*–28*, Figs. 14, 15.

which may have served as stoppers for jars. Overall, the ceramic styles found at *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* are generally more similar to ones found in the northern Israelite kingdom rather than Judah.[72]

The main feature we have found so far is the well-built Iron Age casemate wall. It was built according to the same basic plan as the casemate wall at *Ḫirbet Qēyafa*,[73] which probably predates the one at *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* by at least 200 years.[74] The site of *Ḫirbet Qēyafa* has been interpreted as a Judahite stronghold that served as a western defense against Philistia.[75] The fortification of towns with casemate walls and a radial town plan is often linked with the „Judahite" city plan in the monarchic period,[76] although this may have been a more universal functional design for military settlements throughout the southern Levant during the Iron Age. This same plan appears in northern Israel, as well.[77]

3.3 Identification, Nature and Purpose of the Site

Since the pottery of *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* seems to reflect northern styles, it may tentatively be seen as an Israelite site, at least during the late Iron Age II.[78] The casemate wall, along with the location of the site and some of the military appurtenances found therein (spear tips, arrowheads, sling stones), probably indicates a strategic and military function for the site. Furthermore, the resemblance of the casemate walls at *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* and *Qēyafa* and their locations on a border between two political entities link these two sites as political-historical phenomena during the biblical period. This raises questions about the identification, nature, and purpose of the site as a fortified town in the southern Jordan Valley.

As for the site's identity, we propose that it should be identified with *Naʿaratah* rather than Ataroth. The description of the Manasseh-Ephraim boundary in Josh 16:7 works its way from west to east, with Ataroth and *Naʿaratah* being the last two sites before the boundary reaches Jericho. Since *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* is the only site with Iron Age remains before Jericho on the biblical border, it would seem that an identification with *Naʿaratah* is probably correct.

As for the nature and purpose of the site, it probably served multiple functions, on both the local and regional levels.[79] On a local level, it may have controlled the nearby spring of *ʿĒn ʿŌğa*, a major water source for the region of Jericho to *Wādi Farʿah*, and protected it from local semi-nomadic populations or external enemies

[72] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 25*.
[73] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 30*.
[74] GARFINKEL/KREIMERMAN/ZILBERG 2016, 48–56, 68–72.
[75] GARFINKEL/KREIMERMAN/ZILBERG 2016, 224f.
[76] Cf. HERZOG 1997, 237–249; GARFINKEL/KREIMERMAN/ZILBERG 2016, 205–207.
[77] E.g., ZARZECKI-PELEG 2005, 169–183, regarding Stratum XIV of the Iron Age IIA at Tel Yoqneam.
[78] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 30*f.
[79] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 31*.

(Fig. 15).[80] It may have also provided aid in territorial disputes between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Further, it may have been part of an administrative or military system during the Iron Age that governed the region, although it is not clear whether it belonged to the kingdom of Israel or Judah.

Fig. 15: *ʿĒn ʿŌğa*

[80] A nearby site in a similar position is *Ḫirbet Marğame*, 8 km to the northwest, near the upper section of *Nahal Yitav*. This site controlled another important spring, *ʿĒn Samiye*. See MAZAR 1992; 1995; BEN-SHLOMO/TAVGER/HAR-EVEN 2018, 81*–115*.

On a broader level, it probably guarded the eastern frontier against enemies like the Arameans, Ammonites, and Moabites. Notably, the site faces Transjordan and the Ammonite kingdom east of the Jordan River. According to the Bible, there had been conflict between the Israelites and the Ammonites since the days of the premonarchic judges.[81] The Ammonites increased in economic and political power during the Iron Age II and, sometime between the late 7th and early 6th centuries BCE, apparently annexed the territory of Gad.[82] Conflicts between the Israelites and the Ammonites would have involved traversing the area north of Jericho and south of *Wādi Farʿah*. In fact, two important roads crossed the Jordan River in this area: one near Jericho and the other at *Wādi Farʿah*.[83]

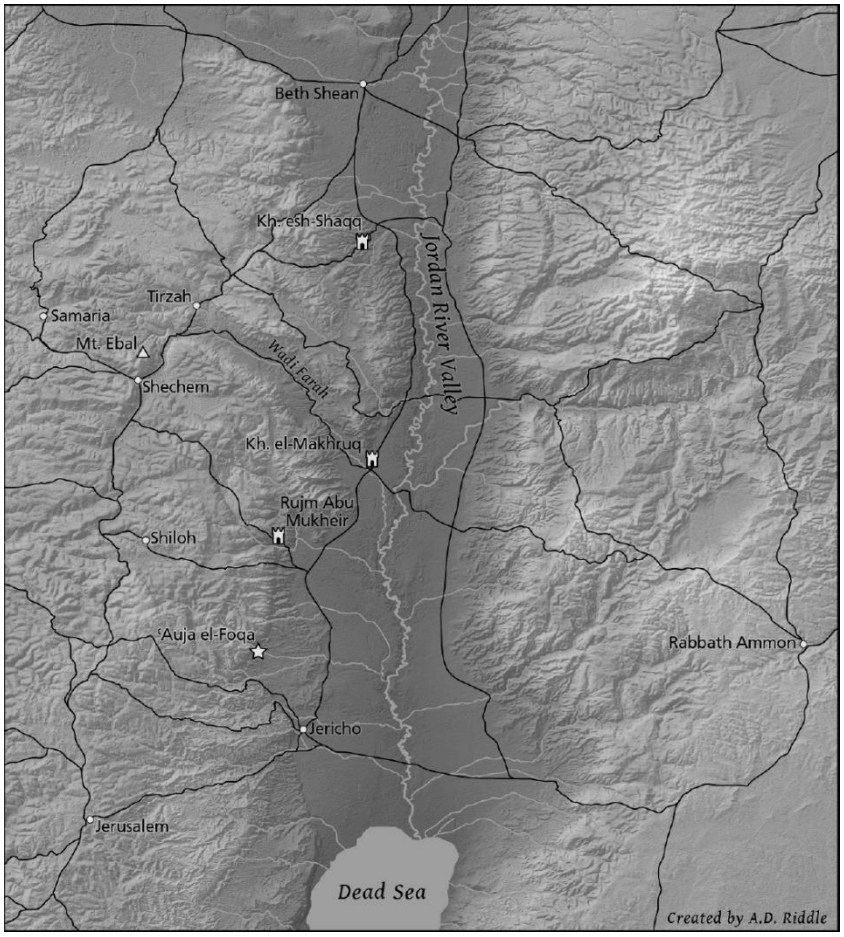

Fig. 16: Iron Age II *Ruğm el-Malfuf* type forts in the Jordan Valley

[81] Cf. e.g., Judg 10:6–12:15.

[82] This according to Jer 49, in which the prophet rebukes Ammon for its annexation of Gad.

[83] ZERTAL/BAR 2019, 20–23, 575.

The importance of the Jordan Valley as a transit zone and road junction led to a relative increase in the number of forts in the area.[84] Zertal proposed that three forts of the *Ruğm el-Malfuf* type were located at the crossroads from the Jordan Valley to the heart of the Israelite kingdom, in *Wādi Māliḥ*, *Wādi Farʿah*, and *Ruğm Abū Muḥēr* (Fig. 16).[85] These three sites shared a similar architectural layout and may have been part of a royal fortification system designed to shore up Israel's eastern border.[86] In light of the geopolitical situation, it makes sense that *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* may have served a similar purpose on the eastern frontier as some claim *Ḫirbet Qēyafa* did for Israel's western border: a local administrative and military center of the southern Jordan Valley during the Iron Age II, in the 9th and 8th centuries BCE, with a possible destruction in the same period.[87]

4. Comparison of the Data Sets and Prospects for Future Research

As noted above, surveys provide provisional explanations for settlement phenomena to be confirmed through the collection of independently obtained excavation data. JVEP was launched for the purpose of excavating a selection of sites surveyed and recorded by the MHCS, in order to provide such independent excavation data. Here, we will consider how the results of our excavations relate to the provisional explanations of the MHCS.

4.1 The Dating of *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* and Other Enclosure Sites in the Jordan Valley

The site of *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* provides a cautionary tale for the dating of enclosure sites in the Jordan Valley. Zertal dated the construction of the numerous enclosures in the Jordan Valley to the earliest period attested by the sherds present at the site.[88] Likewise, Ben-Yosef suggests this approach for all the sites in the Jordan Valley where Iron Age I sites are the most dominant and/or the earliest sherds in the survey assemblage.[89] Based on the ceramics, as well as numerous other factors, the enclosures in the region were interpreted as part of a settlement

[84] Several forts have been published in Volumes 4 and 5 of the MHCS. Cf. ZERTAL/BAR 2017, 64f.; ZERTAL/BAR 2019, 46.
[85] ZERTAL 1995, 253–273; 1988, 82–86.
[86] The two excavated forts have been dated to the 9th–8th centuries (YEIVIN 1974; 1992).
[87] The identity, date, nature, and function of *Ḫirbet Qēyafa* all continue to be heavily debated. For recent discussions, see AVITS 2016, 232–244; GARFINKEL/KREIMERMAN/ ZILBERG 2016; NAʾAMAN 2010; 2017; SCHROER/MÜNGER 2017. Despite the ongoing controversy, the location and the data uncovered clearly indicate that *Ḫirbet Qēyafa* was a Judean city rather than a Canaanite or Philistine one. Cf. GARFINKEL 2017, 5–59.
[88] Cf. ZERTAL 1998, 240. The identification of Iron Age I sites in Manasseh as those yielding Iron Age I pottery was not arbitrary, but was "based upon past excavations of hill-country sites with remains dated to 1250–1000 BCE" (ZERTAL 1998, 240).
[89] BEN-YOSEF 2015, 40.

wave that occured in the Iron Age I.[90] They were not part of „a slow organic evolution ... but a relatively rapid entry of new populations“[91], which was associated with the early Israelite settlement.

At *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah*, however, the almost total absence of any finds within the structures impeded any chronological estimation of their construction and date of usage. In order to determine whether similar evidence may be available from other sites in the region, we consulted the site reports for *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab* and *Yafit* (3), two „foot-shaped“ enclosure sites in the Jordan Valley excavated by Ben-Yosef, and both of which were dated to the Iron Age I.[92]

4.2 Comparison with *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab* and *Yafit* (3)

Beḏat eš-Šaʿab, located 1 km south-west of the modern village of *Argaman* (OIG 1988.1742) is a large enclosure site, in the shape of a sandal, encircled by a 400 m long wall with several courses preserved over 1 m high, and a rounded *bamah* in its northern tip (Fig. 17).[93] There were 904 sherds at the site dated to the Iron Age, with 139 indicative, along with a small number of indicative sherds from the Roman period.[94] It is not clear from the discussion of the pottery plates where the sherds under discussion were actually found, whether in the structures, under the walls, or floating on the surface.

[90] This interpretation is not based on pottery alone, but on numerous factors. For a discussion of Zertal's classification and interpretation of the Iron Age I sites in Manasseh, cf. ZERTAL 1988, 240–243. For a discussion of the survey of Manasseh in relation to the early Israelite settlement, see HAWKINS 2013, 125–130.

[91] ZERTAL/BAR 2017, 61.

[92] BEN-YOSEF 2017a; BEN-YOSEF 2017b. It should be noted that the size and shape of the „foot-shaped“ enclosures are unique, and differ from other enclosures that are common in desert areas in various periods. They have been interpreted as cultic in nature, but a consideration of this interpretation goes beyond the purpose of this paper. For discussion, see BEN-YOSEF 2007, 228–315; BEN-YOSEF 2017a, 698f.; BEN-YOSEF 2017b, 716; HAWKINS 2012, 118–122; HAWKINS 2013, 179–184; ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF 2009, 517–529.

[93] BEN-YOSEF 2017a, 667–670, and Figs. B1 and B2.

[94] ZERTAL/BEN-YOSEF 2017, 681–686.

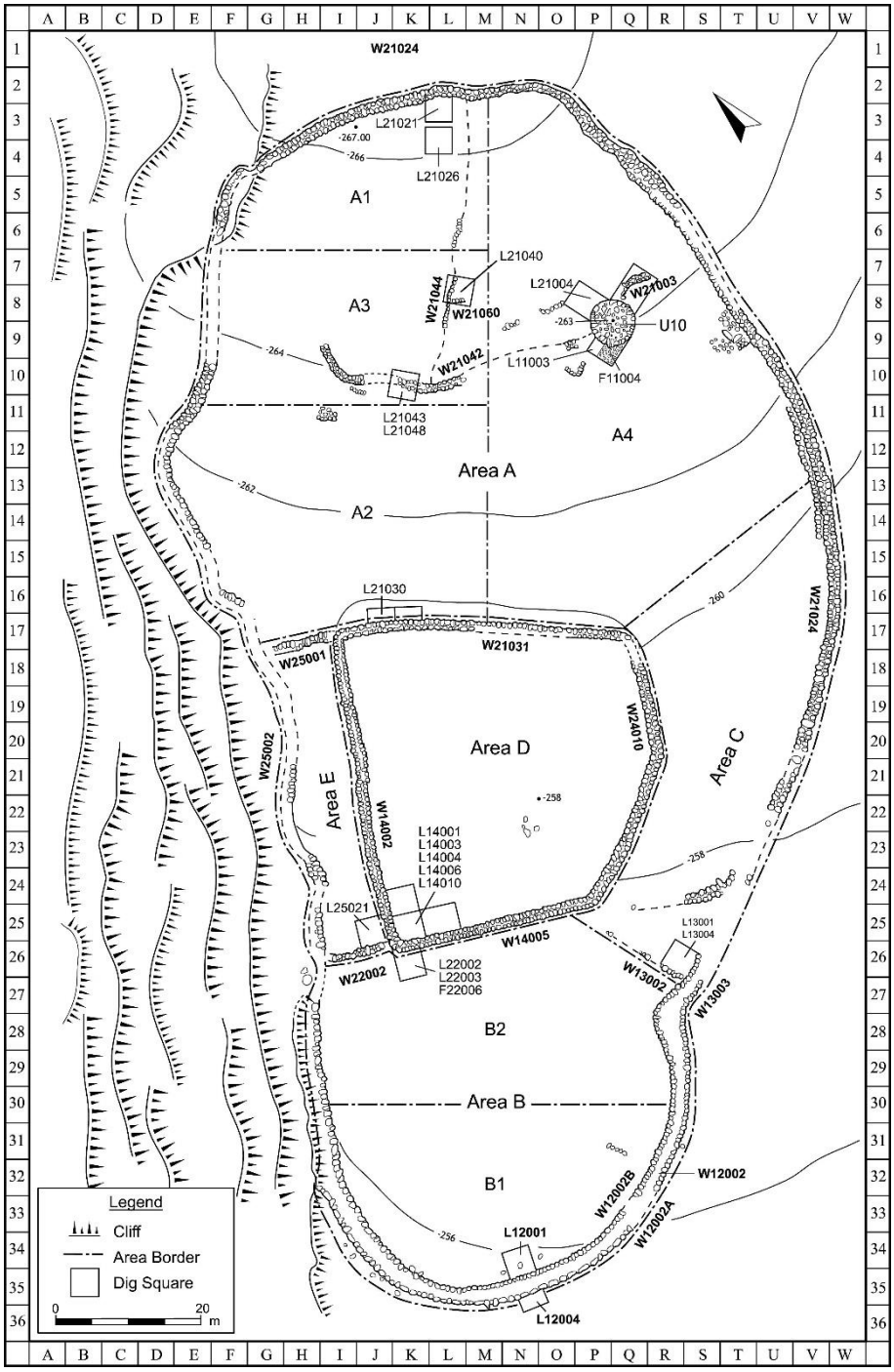

Fig. 17: Site plan for *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab* (used with permission)

Yafit (3), located 1 km south-west of the modern village of *Yafit* (OIG 1939.1628), is a smaller enclosure site, also in the shape of a foot (Fig. 18).[95] Only 246 pottery sherds were retrieved at *Yafit* (3), with 114 dating to the Iron Age, and only 20 indicatives. Ben-Yosef interprets the data as indicating that the site was founded during Iron Age I, and that its primary architecture was built during the same period, continued in use in the Iron Age II, and had a later Roman phase with minor constructions.[96] The pottery, however, like that of *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab*, is presented without clear indications of its context.[97]

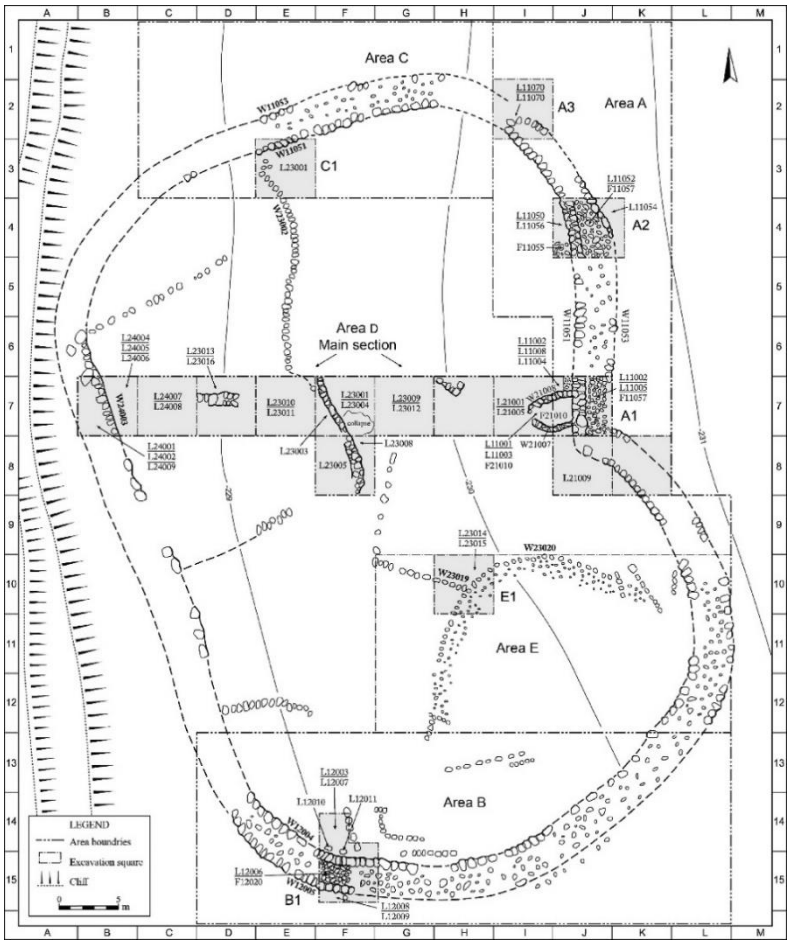

Fig. 18: Site plan for *Yafit* (3) (used with permission)

The lack of clarity about where the sherds at both sites were found leads to some uncertainty about whether the construction and earliest phases of the structures at

[95] BEN-YOSEF 2017b, 703–705, Figs C1 and C2.
[96] BEN-YOSEF 2017b, 716.
[97] BEN-YOSEF 2017b, 713–715.

both sites can be dated to the Iron Age I, especially since small quantities of later sherds are said to have been found in some of the same contexts.[98] This uncertainty, as well as the complete lack of pottery sherds in direct association with the structures at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah*, led to the employment of OSL analysis in order to reach more definitive dates for their construction. The results of these tests (discussed in section 2.2, above) indicate that the walls were used, and may have been constructed, during several periods, including Iron Age II, Late Hellenistic or Early Roman, Late Byzantine, Early Islamic and Islamic/Abassid periods.[99] The earliest walls at *el-Mastarah* were built sometime between 772–552 BCE. These results do not rule out the possibility that *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab* and *Yafit* (3) – as well as other enclosure sites in the Jordan Valley – date to the Iron Age I. They do, however, highlight the difficulties in dating similar shallow-debris-accumulation sites in this region.

4.3 Additional Data on the Dating of *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab* and *Yafit* (3)

In a recent publication, Bar and Ben-Yosef acknowledge that the pottery descriptions in the preliminary reports for both *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab* and *Yafit* (3) were typological and not context-oriented, and therefore precluded the possibility of dating the constructions of the architecture at the two sites.[100] In the article, however, they highlight specific data pertinent to the dating of both sites, as well as other Iron Age enclosures recently found in the Jordan Valley and eastern Samaria. At *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab*, only two well-dated contexts can be used to date the construction of two of the main features at the site: the enclosure perimeter wall and the rounded structure in the northern part of the enclosure.[101] The perimeter wall was probed in Area A1, where two probes were conducted in a lower layer that abuts the lowest courses of W21024 and lies below L21020. Two indicative sherds were dated to the Iron Age I–IIA,[102] which established the earliest possible construction of the enclosure wall in this time frame.[103] The rounded structure in the northern part of the site was partially surrounded by a rough stone pavement (F11004), which abutted its lowest course. A probe underneath this pavement reached bedrock and yielded Iron Age I sherds.[104]

At *Yafit* (3), the perimeter wall of the enclosure is the main feature of the site and the only reliable context for establishing a date for the construction of the site. Probes in several locations along the wall yielded a clear pottery sequence that ranged from the Late Bronze Age to the Roman period.[105] The results suggest that

[98] See the full discussion in BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS 2017, 75*f.
[99] ACKERMAN/ANKER/BEN-SHLOMO/HAWKINS/PORAT *forthcoming*.
[100] BAR/BEN-YOSEF 2021, 9*.
[101] For these locations, see BAR/BEN-YOSEF 2021, 7*, Fig. 1.
[102] BAR/BEN-YOSEF 2021, 11*, Fig. 3:8, 18.
[103] BAR/BEN-YOSEF 2021, 10*.
[104] BAR/BEN-YOSEF 2021, 13*.
[105] BAR/BEN-YOSEF 2021, 14*, Fig. 6.

the earliest construction date of the enclosure wall was either in the Late Bronze Age or the Iron Age I, and that the site was reused in the Roman period.[106]

4.4 The Newly Discovered „Foot-Shaped" Enclosure of *Šaʿab Romani*

In another recent publication, Bar has provided data on another „foot-shaped" enclosure, *Šaʿab Romani*, which we can add to the list of sites that provide comparative data for *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* and other shallow-debris-accumulation sites in this region.[107] This site, located in the hilly region of southeastern Samaria, lies on the northern bank of *Wādi el-Makuk*, 11 km west-north-west of *Tell es-Sulṭān* (OIG 18184.14581). This site was surveyed by the MHCS in May 2013, and Zertal conducted a probe there in May 2015. *Šaʿab Romani* is a small site, with an area less than 1500 m², and with an enclosure 42 m long and 25 m wide (Fig. 19).[108] The site has two main architectural components, including the enclosure wall and two cells therein.

Four small probes were conducted at the site, and all of them reached bedrock at a maximum depth of 40 cm below the surface. In the survey and the excavation, 883 pottery sherds were collected. Most of the indicative sherds from the survey were dated to the Roman period (followed by Iron Age finds), while those found in the probes were dated to the Iron Age (followed by Roman period finds). None of the finds in either the survey or the excavation were found *in situ*, which means that the dating of the features at the site must remain tentative, and no complete or even nearly complete vessels were found. The pottery, like that at *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab* and *Yafit* (3) „is thus presented by period, and not by context"[109].

The ceramic findings suggest that the site was occupied in two main periods, including the Iron Age and Roman-Byzantine periods, with some limited activity in the Hellenistic and Mamluk periods.[110] Bar notes that „Iron Age pottery was scattered all over the site and the slopes," and that 63 indicative sherds were found in both the survey and the probe, which suggests that „this is the earliest occupation phase at the site, and the most probable date of construction of the enclosure wall."[111] Bar stresses that, because the ceramic remains have parallels in both Iron Age I and II strata in the region, the dating within the Iron Age cannnot be determined with more precision.[112]

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[106] BAR/BEN-YOSEF 2021, 15*f.
[107] BAR 2020, 29*–51*.
[108] BAR 2020, 34*f., Figs. 4–5.
[109] BAR 2020, 40*.
[110] BAR 2020, 40*.
[111] BAR 2020, 40*.
[112] BAR 2020, 41*, and Fig. 11 and Tab. 2.

Fig. 19: Site plan for *Šaʿab Romani* (used with permission)

4.5 Summary of Data on Iron Age Enclosure Sites in the Jordan Valley

Bar also provides a summary of the data on 30 Iron Age enclosure sites in the Jordan Valley, based on Volumes 4 and 5 of the MHCS.[113] He makes four important observations about the data, including: (1) In most cases, although Roman pottery is present, Iron Age pottery predominates; (2) when there are ceramics from periods earlier than the Iron Age I at enclosure sites, it is in very small quantities; (3) in the entire region of Eastern Samaria, there are only a few enclosure sites that date to other periods, and where there is no Iron Age or Roman pottery; and (4) the results from the southeastern slopes of the Samarian Mountains were very similar.[114] While acknowledging that without excavation it is difficult to date the construction phases of these enclosures, Bar suggests that, based on the cumulative data from the MHCS, and while acknowledging its limitations, „we can suggest that most enclosures in the region were built during the Iron Age, and reused in later periods, mainly during the Roman period."[115] He concludes that „It is not logical to date the construction of most of these enclosures to the Roman period, because this does not explain the presence of finds they contain from the Iron Age. On the contrary, the fact that in almost every enclosure containing Roman pottery, Iron Age pottery is also abundant attests to the use of the place in the earlier period."[116]

4.6 Comparative Results from *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah, Beḏat eš-Šaʿab, Yafit* (3), and *Šaʿab Romani*

The results at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* diverge somewhat from those at *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab*, *Yafit* (3), and *Šaʿab Romani*, although they are not sharply divergent. The data from *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab* is not that dissimilar, and suggests that, while the rounded structure in the northern part of the site may have been built in the Iron Age I, the earliest possible construction of the enclosure wall was sometime between Iron Age I to IIA. While these elements may have been built contemporaneously, the data could also allow that the rounded structure was built and used earlier, and that the enclosure wall could have been added later. At *Yafit* (3), the earliest construction date of the enclosure wall was either in the Late Bronze Age or the Iron Age I, and at *Šaʿab Romani*, the date of the construction of the enclosure wall lies sometime between Iron Age I and II. At *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah*, the pottery suggests

[113] BAR 2020, 45*f., Tab. 4. We would note that these are simple and/or complex enclosures, which are distinct from the "foot-shaped" enclosures. The simple and/or complex enclosures are not always clear and may vary in date.
[114] BAR 2020, 46*. For the results from the southeastern slopes of the Samarian Mountains, see ZERTAL/BAR 2019.
[115] BAR 2020, 46*.
[116] BAR 2020, 46*.

that the site was visited in the Early Bronze Age, Middle Bronze Age,[117] and Iron Age I, although most of the pottery is Roman, with some from Byzantine, Islamic, and Ottoman periods, and the results of the OSL tests indicate that some of its walls were used, and possibly constructed, in the IA II, sometime between 772–552 BCE, as well as Late Hellenistic or Early Roman periods, Late Byzantine, and Early Islamic and Islamic/Abassid periods.

When we began the excavation at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah*, our working hypothesis was that the site may have been associated with the early Israelite settlement. While the presence of a few Iron Age I or early Iron Age IIA cooking pot sherds with similarities to those in the assemblage from *Beḏat eš-Šaʿab* could suggest that those with a shared *ethnos* may have visited the site in those periods, the main period of usage at the site only began in the 8th–6th century BCE, when walls began to be constructed at the site.

While this may not support our initial hypothesis, it accords well with the survey data on the region during Iron Age II. During this period, there was a stable regime at the capital in Samaria, and this resulted in thriving settlement in the region. The kings of the Omride Dynasty, along with their successors, maintained a policy of developing the border regions, such as the Jordan Valley.[118] During this period, two of the most common types of sites were farms and enclosures.[119] Farms were defined by their plans as family farmsteads, consisting of a house or houses for the family and associated structures and courtyards for the animals.[120] They are ideal for exploiting small, out-of-the-way tracts of land that are difficult to cultivate. Such farms flourished during the Iron Age II, especially in the desert fringes, and their high proportion indicates prosperity and the search for formerly undervalued lands.[121] Enclosures, already discussed in section 2.1, have an average diameter of 20–30 m, and were presumably used to house animals, while the people lived around and outside, probably in tents. Such enclosures can house up to 100 head of sheep.[122] While already numerous in the Iron Age I, the number of enclosure sites increases during the Iron Age II.[123] The initial construction of enclosure walls at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* at this time reflects the increasing usage of such sites during this period.

Likewise, the preponderance of Roman pottery at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* accords with the MHCS's interpretation of the settlement patterns in the region from the Early to Late Roman Periods. There was a considerable increase in the number of

[117] There was hardly any Early Bronze Age or Middle Bronze Age pottery.
[118] ZERTAL 2001, 42f.
[119] ZERTAL 2001, 45–59.
[120] ZERTAL 2001, 45, Fig. 2.2.
[121] ZERTAL 2001, 47, Fig. 2.3. Zertal notes that a similar picture of farm distribution was observed in the western fringes of the Ephraimite territory during the Iron Age II. See DAR 1982, 1986; FINKELSTEIN 1981; FAUST 1995; 2012, 148–159.
[122] See, however, the caveats in n. 47. This is a hypothesis that must be tested.
[123] ZERTAL 2001, 51.

sites in the Middle Jordan Valley during the Early Roman Period (63 BCE–73 CE), compared with the previous period.[124] One of the most noteworthy is the city of Archelais (OIG 1945/1526), established by Herod's son Archelaus, and located 11 km north of Jericho and just north of the modern village of *ʿŌğa et-Taḥṭā*.[125] The largest Roman-Byzantine site in the Jordan Valley, Archelais includes a citadel, a residential structure, and a church, and is supplied by an aqueduct from *ʿĒn ʿŌğa*, which is about 8.5 km away. The city of Phasaelis, a large city in the center of the Fasael Valley, appears to have been built at the same time.[126] At least three large built complexes were found in the survey area, including a citadel, a large public building, a dwelling area, a possible enclosure wall, an aqueduct, and a raised area northeast of the citadel that may have featured a villa or another structure. Numerous additional Early Roman sites are scattered throughout the Middle Jordan Valley.[127]

The Late Roman Period (73–313 CE), according to the MHCS, was a period of settlement climax, in which the period's sherds were found in 119 sites, which amounted to 73.9% of the total, a nearly threefold increase over the preceeding period.[128] The entire region prospered due to the settlement increase, and Archelais and Phasaelis, the two largest cities, held sway over their environs. The water systems in Fasael and *Wādi ʿŌğa* provided water for most of the settlements in the Jordan Valley, including their irrigation systems.[129] The population of the region required a food supply and, while it is possible that foodstuffs could have been imported in exchange for the income from the dates and balsam grown in the region, it is more likely that they were grown and produced in nearby sites, which may have included some of the numerous enclosures in the region during this period. Geographically, the *Wādi Talʾat Zaġarah* divides these rural settlements into two halves, with those north of the *wādi* (Sites 3–66) connected to Phasaelis and those south of it (Sites 67–155) to Archelais. Numerous enclosure sites, including the *el-Mastarah* group (Sites 101–120) were located around Archelais.

Zertal and Bar link the prosperity of the Middle Jordan Valley in the Late Roman Period to the Trajan-Herodian rulers, who regarded the region as important.[130] As evidence for this, they point to the well-developed military infrastructure discovered along the valley, concentrated in the camp at *Ḫirbet es-Suwēdeh*.[131] They note that the background for this military buildup is as yet unclear, but may have been connected with military actions taken during the Bar-Kochba revolt (132–135 CE) or to the strengthening of the *limes* system along the borders of the province.[132]

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[124] ZERTAL/BAR 2019, 50f., Fig. 24.
[125] ZERTAL/BAR 2019, Site 111.
[126] ZERTAL/BAR 2019, Site 34.
[127] ZERTAL/BAR 2019, 51, Fig. 24.
[128] ZERTAL/BAR 2019, 52f., Fig. 25.
[129] ZERTAL 2019, 517–574.
[130] ZERTAL/BAR 2017, 73.
[131] ZERTAL 2008, Site 239.
[132] ZERTAL/BAR 2017, 73.

In any case, the development of an enclosure site like *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* during the Iron Age II, and its continued use and remodeling during the Roman period, fit in well with the survey data as it is currently understood. Future excavations should be conducted at similar sites in order to further test the interpretation of both Iron Age I and Iron Age II enclosures by the MHCS and to provide further comparative material. In addition, further study will be needed to answer questions about the function of the enclosures and the walled units within them, and about desert agriculture that may have been associated with the sites.

4.7 *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*

With regard to *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*, the JVEP excavations have been able to clarify several aspects of the site. First, they have clarified the architectural phases. On the basis of the survey, Zertal had proposed that all or most of the architectural phases were built in the Iron Age, with the better preserved sections having been built last. He proposed that it had first been established in the Iron Age I, that a more substantial site was founded at the beginning of Iron Age IIB, and that it was connected with the Kingdom of Judah. He also suggested that the site was abandoned during the second half of Iron Age IIB or Iron Age IIC and that, outside of the Iron Age, there was only sporadic activity at the site. During the 2019 season at *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā*, however, at least three archaeological phases were defined, which included (1) an upper phase characterized by rounded or oval one-room houses that probably date to the Mamluk/Ottoman periods; (2) a main phase consisting of the casemate wall and massive rectilinear structures, all of which date to the Iron Age II; and (3) a lower phase featuring poorly preserved walls that may date to the Iron Age I or early Iron Age II.[133] This clarification shows that, while the primary usage of the site was in the Iron Age, it continued to a role in the geopolitics of the region into the Mamluk or Ottoman periods.

Second, the JVEP excavations have clarified the identification of the site. Although Zertal made a strong case for identifying *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* with Ataroth, it seems that, since it is the only site with Iron Age remains on the biblical border before Jericho, it may be more prudent to identify it with *Naʿaratah*.

Third, excavation has clarified the nature of the site. Since the material culture of our site (especially the pottery) seems to be of a more northern or „Israelite" nature, and the location was traditionally under the control of the northern kingdom, *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* may be seen as an Israelite site, at least during the late Iron Age II. This would accord well with the survey date on the region during Iron Age II, which shows that one of the byproducts of the stable regime in the capital of Samaria was thriving settlement in the region. The kings of the Omride Dynasty, along with their successors, maintained a policy of developing the border regions.[134] The settlement of formerly underpopulated territories, such as the Jordan Valley, would naturally involve fortifying the borders.

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[133] BEN-SHLOMO/FREIKMAN/HAWKINS 2020a, 18*–21*.

[134] ZERTAL 2001, 42f.

The need for further excavation at *ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* is clear, both because of the site's well-preserved remains from the Iron Age and Late Antiquity and its special location in the southern Jordan Valley, a region poorly understood in terms of archaeological research, especially with respect to the monarchic period. In future seasons, which we plan to conduct at least through 2024, we will continue to look for the gate and excavate more architecture inside the site, including some large structures that may have had administrative or storage purposes.

5. Conclusions

The MHCS has been surveying Samaria and the Jordan Valley for more than 40 years, during which time it has discovered hundreds of sites ranging from the Chalcolithic to the Ottoman periods. While the MHCS has been described as „one of the most important [surveys] ever undertaken in the land of Israel,"[135] its value and conclusions have also been called into question. It is well known, however, that surveys provide provisional explanations for settlement phenomena to be confirmed through the collection of independently obtained excavation data, and the provisional explanations of the MHCS, therefore, should not be dismissed but tested in the field. In this paper, the initial findings from two sites under excavation by JVEP, have been presented and their results compared with those of the MHCS. The enclosure site of *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* does not appear to have been part of a settlement wave in the Iron Age I, it comports with the increase in the number of enclosure sites in the region during Iron Age II. The fortified town at *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* had at least three architectural phases, may have been associated with the Kingdom of Israel rather than the Kingdom of Judah, and should probably be identified with *Naʿaratah* rather than Ataroth. These corrections, however, are relatively minor when compared to the larger contributions of the MHCS. In a general way, the excavations at *Ḫirbet el-Mastarah* and *Ḫirbet ʿŌğa el-Fōqā* have demonstrated the pioneering contributions of the MHCS for the study of the Middle Jordan Valley. The study of the sites identified and all the data presented in the MHCS will occupy students and scholars alike for generations to come and, in this way, the memory of Adam Zertal will live on.

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[135] FINKELSTEIN 1988, 89.

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