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YINON SHIVTI'EL

Cliff Shelters and Hiding Complexes: The Jewish Defense Methods in Galilee During the Roman Period

VANDENHOECK & RUPRECHT GÖTTINGEN

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The Speleological and Archaeological Evidence

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Preface

The English edition of this volume is the result of prolonged, systematic exploration in parts of the Galilee that usually lie off the beaten track of both hikers and scholars. The academic research involved clambering up the precipitous cliffs that abound in the region, rising up on both sides of the larger riverbeds. It called for exhausting scrambles across scree slopes and strenuous climbs up rocky outcrops and through dense, thorny thickets. The task of anchoring ropes to boulders and rappelling down 100-meter drops to caves containing signs of rock hewing presents a serious physical challenge. The same is true of the interminable hours spent crawling through underground hiding passages. During such crawls, the entire body struggles to penetrate a thick layer of dirt mixed with animal waste that has accumulated over centuries, engulfed in total darkness while only the glimmer of the flashlight lights up the winding crawlway. The fieldwork and its findings, juxtaposed with the historical sources, provided the necessary academic basis for this volume.

The book is based on the author's doctoral thesis and it documents and classifies two Galilean phenomena that throw light on the history of the local Jewish community in times of adversity during the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods. With an increase in interest in the underground cavities of the Galilee and the publication of the Hebrew edition of this book, other underground sites used principally for hiding have been discovered in the region, thus expanding on research into the question of Galilee's involvement in the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Two main kinds of underground cavities used by the Galilean Jewish community are found in the region. The first of these are natural caves at the top of cliffs near Jewish settlements known to have existed in the Second Temple period. The caves have been modified and contain clear signs of human activity. Both historically and archaeologically, most of these sites can be identified with the Jewish population that participated in the Great Revolt, although some of the caves were modified at an earlier time. We propose adopting the term 'cliff shelters' for this type of underground cavity.

The second phenomenon discussed here is that of the hiding complexes. The book contains plans of most of the underground cavities with characteristic hiding-complex features. These sites are also compared with the hiding complexes discovered in the Judean Desert. The typology of the Galilean underground cavities necessitated a more flexible definition of the term 'hiding complex', since they do not fully conform to the same criteria as those of the hiding complexes found in Judea. Furthermore, the hiding complexes in the Galilee have their own distinct characteristics. We therefore divided the underground cavities into six categories:

1) Small underground cavities expressly quarried out as hiding complexes. Such cavities are simply hewn, with no attempt to finish them to a high standard, and they are small and similar to the hiding complexes found in Judea at sites such as Horvat 'Etri and to the complexes discovered at Horvat Zit'a. The systems were designed in such a way as to make it as difficult as possible for the enemy to penetrate the underground cavities. The passages do not necessarily turn at exact ninety-degree angles and there is no consistency in the hewing of the different levels of the caves. It would seem that the people who made them were satisfied with the fact that the complexes were dark and narrow and that any progress through them would force a person to crawl blindly into the unknown. Over twenty-five hiding complexes of this type were hewn in Galilean settlements in preparation for worst-case scenarios. Some were apparently made at the end of the Second Temple period. Most

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of these hiding places were very probably prepared immediately prior to the Great Revolt.

2) Well-developed hiding complexes. These complexes consist of low, specially hewn winding narrow passages with ninety-degree-angle turns that render any progress along them extremely difficult. The passages lead to smoothly hewn chambers furnished with niches for oil lamps. Many of these systems clearly cut into ancient agricultural installations and earlier tunnels. The complexes are similar to those in the Judean foothills, as at Horvat Midras, Amazya, and Horvat Ga'ada. Since the sophisticated hiding complexes found in the Judean foothills date to the Bar Kokhba Revolt, the approximately thirty well-developed systems of this type surveyed in the Galilee may well also have been hewn during the second century CE. They may also attest to preparations made by the Jews of the Galilee in anticipation of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, even if the Galileans did not participate in the revolt.

3) Hiding complexes that render obsolete previous underground installations such as storage rooms for agricultural produce, water cisterns, olive presses, and ritual baths. Such underground chambers were cool, sheltered, and protected from the rain and could easily be converted into hiding complexes. Similar hiding complexes have also been found in the Judean foothills, as at Horvat Hazan. In the Galilee, hiding complexes have been discovered that rendered previously hewn underground cavities unusable, a few of which were used as olive presses. In some of these, narrow tunnels – some finely finished and some roughly hewn – lead to other man-made cavities. Water cisterns or ritual baths were incorporated in most complexes of this type, for example at Meroth and Zippori, and previous existing installations were damaged beyond repair. The phenomenon is evident at most of the hiding complexes explored in the Judean foothills, as at Horbat Bet Loya. In a few cases, the water cisterns remained viable and could still be used to store limited amounts of water. In such complexes, the entrances to hiding passages were hewn a few meters above the bottom of the cistern and from above only the water was visible. The same phenomenon has been documented at Horvat ʿAqad in the Judean foothills, at Horvat Naqiq, and at the Nahal Yattir site. It is reasonable to assume that the underground installations were sacrificed in favor of hiding complexes during a period of heightened danger. The passages were probably cut into them when the inhabitants of Galilee realized that the hiding complexes could potentially save lives.

4) Underground complexes cut into burial caves. In Judea, this is extremely rare and has only been observed at Horvat Burgin and Horvat Benaya. Three of the six burial caves adapted as hiding places in Galilee are located inside the settlement of ʿIyei Meʿarot. The other three burial caves converted for hiding were found bordering on or outside settlements.

5) Escape passages. This type of underground cavity is rare both in Judea and in Galilee. Their scarcity makes it difficult to specify their characteristics and the extent to which they were used. Apart from Josephus' description of the use of tunnels to bring produce and information into Yodefat for the rebels (*War* 3:190–192), no other documentation exists of escape passages in the Second Temple period. An escape passage was discovered at Gush Halav and there are tunnels in Nahal ʿAmal and at Tel ʿAmal that may also have been used for this purpose. In Judea, there is an example of an escape complex at the Nahal Yattir site (Rasam Yattir).

6) Cavities that cannot be identified as hiding complexes. This category includes underground cavities assumed by some scholars to have been hiding complexes, but which I do not believe should be regarded as such. The underground cavities at Jebel Qat, Eilabun, the passages at Tel ʿAmal, and the Tel ʿAmal tunnel do not exhibit the characteristics of hiding complexes.

To summarize, the book describes the ways in which the Galilean Jews used underground cavities as places of refuge and as hideouts during periods when they felt under immediate threat from the Roman authorities. It was a constant threat hanging over the Jewish population of Galilee, as in Judea, for much of the Second Temple era.

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"What I have vowed I will make good (…) Salvation comes from the Lord" (Jonah 2:10).

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The English edition of this book would not have been possible without the great encouragement and strong support of Prof. Jurgen Zangenberg, who spent months of his valuable time to prepare an accurate English version.

Dr. Yinon Shivti'el

Zefat Academic College, 2018

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Introduction

From the standpoint of archaeological and historical research, the caves in Galilee are less well known than those in the Judean Desert and foothills.[1] Ever since the Dead Sea Scrolls first began to be discovered in the summer of 1947, the Judean Desert has been extensively studied and surveyed. Its caves have been systematically combed and surveyed and the diverse finds discovered in them shed light on many details from the Second Temple period, the Great Revolt, and the Bar Kokhba Revolt.[2] Gradually, a singular pattern of natural karst caves containing networks of crawlways and chambers used as refuges by Jews during the Early Roman period was identified in the Judean Desert. These caves, located in the steep cliffs of large riverbeds descending from the Judean Desert toward the fault scarp near the Dead Sea, were called 'refuge caves'.[3] I recently suggested a new term for natural caves in Galilee, also found near the top of precipitous cliffs containing features that are comparable with those in the Judean foothills. Unlike the Judean 'refuge caves', these natural caves were adapted for human habitation and lie near to Jewish settlements rather than in remote locations. In my research on the Galilean model, I have adopted the term 'cliff shelters' for such sites.[4] Along with the refuge caves and cliff shelters, another type of underground complex was discovered. These 'hiding complexes' were first studied in Judea in the 1970s, where they were discovered and classified by David Alon in 1978. Since that time, they have been extensively researched and documented.[5] Hiding complexes are characterized by two main features: All are underground cavities hewn out by man and all lie beneath the remains of Jewish settlements. They provided places of refuge mainly in the Early Roman period and sometimes afterward, although recent research attests to some having been used in earlier periods.[6]

This book is a compilation of the research into both phenomena in Galilee, including detailed new data gathered in recent years. It contains all the known evidence of the two types of underground cavities that existed in Galilee. This evidence helps us identify Jewish communities in Galilee that were mentioned by Josephus. In particular, the research of cliff shelters and hiding complexes has revealed the defensive methods of the Galilean Jews during times of crisis during the period under discussion.

Two of Josephus' works, *The Jewish War* and *The Life,* describe his operations in Galilee, to where he was dispatched to organize preparations for the Great Revolt. In *The Jewish War,* he writes that he managed to enlist an army of one hundred thousand fighters in Galilee, whom he trained in Roman military tactics, and that he personally fortified seventeen named settlements. These were in addition to Gush Halav, which was fortified by John of Gischala, and Zippori, which organized its own defenses. In his *Life,* the author again lists the settlements he claims to have fortified and prepared in anticipation of the Roman army's mobilization to quell the revolt in Galilee.

On the question of whether he did in fact establish such a large army in the short time available to him from the moment of his arrival in the Galilee

1 Weiss 2005.

2 Yadin 1971; Kloner 1983; Eshel/Amit 1999; Porat/Eshel/Frumkin 2006; Porat/Eshel 2008; Frumkin et al. 2015.

3 Eshel/Amit 1999:8, 11; Porat/Eshel 2008.

4 I am grateful to the late Prof. Hanan Eshel for suggesting this term for the phenomenon I discussed with him while researching it; Shivti'el 2010:41–72; Shivti'el/Frumkin 2014.

5 Kloner, Oppenheimer, Gichon/Yadin 1983; Isaac/Oppenheimer 1985:39–44; Alon 1987:107–114; Kloner/Tepper 1987; Kloner/Zissu 2005; Shivti'el, 2011a.

6 Shivti'el 2016:175–200.

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to the beginning of the Roman campaign, there is a general consensus that his description is greatly exaggerated. However, the defenses deployed by the settlements can be archaeologically examined and their finds studied, thus contributing to an understanding of the tactics described by Josephus at those settlements he claimed to have fortified.

The identification and scientific exploration of these settlements has been extensively discussed in the past, but previous discussion has focused mainly on the problem of identification and includes only a general overview of the finds discovered at such sites. The defensive tactics of these settlements have not been sufficiently examined. In the book, I maintain that many of the settlements identified and mentioned by Josephus in both his works are located near two types of underground refuges. Those that I term 'cliff shelters' are different from the Judean 'refuge caves' described above that have no direct association with the communities from which the fugitives fled. During the course of the field work, dozens of settlements described in the book were examined. Six of the villages Josephus claims to have fortified are located near steep cliffs containing karstic caves, the majority of which are only accessible by rope. These caves were adapted for human habitation and yielded plastered water reservoirs, ritual baths, potsherds, coins, a complete jug, an intact jar, and other finds dating them to the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods.[7] The same phenomenon was also identified at other settlements that are not mentioned by Josephus throughout the Upper Galilee. Four ancient villages in Western Galilee lie near steep cliffs containing numerous natural cave complexes in precipitous rock faces that are either difficult or impossible to reach without ropes. Most of the caves were adapted by rock-cutting in ancient times and yielded evidence of their use in two main phases, the Hellenistic and the Early Roman periods. The discovery of this type of cliff shelter in the Western Galilee necessitated an investigation into the existence of Jewish settlements in an area that was known to have had a predominantly non-Jewish population.

Furthermore, the finds discovered in and around the cliff shelters indicate activity in the period preceding the Great Revolt. This proves that the fortifications described by Josephus in both his works were prepared not only under his command and that at least some of them predate the Great Revolt. Even if the use of underground cavities began long before the Great Revolt and continued after it, Josephus' testimony is of great importance to this research since it is the most detailed we have of Jewish life in Galilee at the time. More than any other source, it also attests to the use of caves for refuge during the Jewish revolt in Galilee and Judea. The results of exploring the underground cavities presented in this volume shed light on the defensive tactics of Jewish settlements in Galilee during the Second Temple period and the distribution of the Jewish population in the region at the time. Because the shelters are located in steep cliffs, those sheltering in them must have reached them by clambering up sheer faces of friable, crumbling limestone rock or, as was often the case, by abseiling down from the cliff tops by rope or by some other means. Whichever method was used, it would have involved tremendous daring and considerable hazards. Only a population confronted with extreme danger would have risked reaching such inaccessible locations and preparing them for a prolonged stay. The Galilee cliff shelters are comparable with the 'refuge caves' in the Judean Desert, even if the time of their adaptation and period of use are more difficult to determine than those of the Judean refuge caves, which date to both Jewish revolts. This study summarizes the results of a comprehensive survey conducted in the Galilean caves by the author and colleagues from the Israel Cave Research Center, while discussing the archaeological findings discovered in the cliff shelters and their conclusions.

The second type of underground cavity described here is the 'hiding complex'. Hiding complexes are quarried beneath the sites of Second Temple-period Jewish settlements and bear typological similarities to examples discovered throughout the Judean foothills.[8] The book covers all the currently known hiding complexes in Galilee, including many that were discovered during the current research work, and compares the Galilee examples with the Judean type. It is now obvious that the defensive tactic of hiding complexes was far more extensive in Galilee than has previously been described and extended across Lower Galilee and the whole of Upper Eastern Galilee.

The descriptions of the two groups of caves are accompanied by a discussion of the reasons that prompted the local population in Galilee to prepare these underground cavities, relying on two assumptions: 1. The preparation of shelters near the top of steep cliffs and the hewing out of chambers and narrow underground passages indicates that such opera-

7 Shivti'el, Zissu/Eshel 2009–2010; Regarding the uniqueness of the ritual baths at these sites, see Shivti'el 2012a.

8 Tepper/Shachar 1987b:279–280; Shachar 2001; Shivti'el 2013a.

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tions were motivated by a heightened sense of imminent danger. 2. The project would have depended on the local population concentrating its resources and organizing combined manpower. The discovery of the cliff shelters and hiding complexes in Galilee raises the issue of whether some kind of ruling body or military commander was giving directions to the local population. Another intriguing question concerns the relationship between Galilee and Judea, in light of the similar use made of underground cavities in both places. Cliff shelters and hiding complexes appear to have been employed in a similar manner in both regions, prompting us to ask why some settlements opted for cliff shelters and some quarried out hiding complexes. Another question concerns those settlements where both hiding complexes and cliff shelters have been found. Cliff shelters are all typically located near Jewish settlements whose residents can be assumed to have readied them for use. Most hiding complexes bear a striking resemblance to the Judean complexes, which are without doubt related to the Jewish population. During this period, it was mainly the Jewish population who were in most danger. One of the important pieces of evidence for this is given by examples where it is clear that in order to complete the hiding complexes, it was necessary to render existing features obsolete (agricultural installations, storage cellars, ritual baths, water cisterns and burial caves) by cutting through them and joining them together to form a hiding complex. The physical evidence is accompanied by a discussion of the relevant historical sources related to the phenomenon of underground cavities, which can help date the finds. The majority of the hiding complexes published in this book provide evidence of use, or preparedness for use, and continued maintenance into the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE.

The documentation of the underground cavities presented here is based on the accepted speleological practices used by the Israel Cave Research Center in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Department of Earth Sciences. In the course of our fieldwork, we documented and partially mapped all the accessible cliffs in the Galilee subject to nature-reserve restrictions (since many are located within such reserves) and accessibility and safety constrictions. In some cases, access to the cliff shelters was so difficult and dangerous as to make it seem incredible that Jews had managed to reach them nearly two thousand years previously, by means that were doubtless far less sophisticated than our own. The book presents plans of all the previously-mapped underground cavities, some of which have been improved, and new plans of all the sites discovered while surveying for my research on the Galilee caves, which were professionally documented and mapped using special computerized graphic processing.

This volume describes 74 underground cavities used as hiding complexes. The terminology is used with extreme caution, since not all the sites have all the characteristics of those hiding complexes surveyed in Judea and Samaria on which the criteria was based to identify the phenomenon, thus enabling them to be compared with the hiding complexes in the Galilee. It is not always easy to use systematic comparison to identify some of the sites surveyed in the Galilee as typical hiding complexes, since some have unique characteristics. I therefore divided the hiding complexes into six categories, adjusted to the categories used for the hiding complexes discovered in Judea.

Locating and accessing the cavities, combined with prolonged crawling along the passages and removing soil and debris or dirt, provided a major physical challenge, as did extensive underground stays in extreme environments. Many caves, for example, are home to ticks that infest every protective garment currently available, and some of the ticks carry tick-borne relapsing fever. The work of mapping and drafting the caves was difficult, as was that of documenting and describing the cliff shelters. All these activities had to be carried out under challenging field conditions. For this reason, there may be small discrepancies between some of the descriptions and the plans. In a few instances the plans are not complete, and where massive tick infestation prohibited work, only schematic plans were made.

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Chapter 1:

Identifying the Settlements Fortified by Josephus in Galilee

Two of Josephus' works document the course of events in Galilee during 66–67 CE. The first is *The Jewish War* (written ca. 71–81 CE) and the second *The Life* (written in approximately 94–96 CE). Together, they provide the main historical source for the events of the Great Revolt. Following the defeat of Cestius Gallus near Jerusalem in November 66 CE, Josephus was given command of the Golan and Galilee, which he reached a few months prior to the Roman invasion led by Vespasian and his son Titus (*War* 3:35–43). Various scholars have discussed the credibility of the two sources and the inconsistencies between them.[1]

This book reviews the defensive measures taken by the Jewish inhabitants of Galilee during the Great Revolt, based on surveys and archaeological remains at sites mentioned in Josephus' writings. It is obvious from his testimony that the Jews were reluctant to meet the Roman army in open battle; when circumstances made such a confrontation unavoidable, Josephus' forces would retreat almost immediately as the Romans approached. Since Josephus had no military experience, his only feasible options were to fortify settlements by throwing up defenses and preparing concealed shelters to withstand the might of the Roman onslaught. This volume examines the seventeen settlements Josephus claims to have fortified and commanded in person.[2]

Josephus begins by describing Galilee's boundaries (*War* 3:35–43):

> Galilee, with its two divisions known as Upper and Lower Galilee, is enveloped by Phoenicia and Syria. Its western frontiers are the outlying territory of Ptolemais and Carmel, a mountain once belonging to Galilee, and now to Tyre; adjacent to Carmel is Gaba (…). On the south the country is bounded by Samaria and the territory of Scythopolis up to the waters of Jordan; on the east by the territory of Hippos, Gadara, and Gaulanitis, the frontier-line of Agrippa's kingdom; on the north Tyre and its dependent district mark its limits. Lower Galilee extends in length from Tiberias to Chabulon, which is not far from Ptolemais on the coast; in breadth, from a village in the Great Plain called Xaloth to Bersabe. At this point begins Upper Galilee, which extends in breadth to the village of Baka, the frontier of Tyrian territory; in length, it reaches from the village of Thella, near the Jordan, to Meroth.

According to his own words, Josephus faced three challenges when assigned command over the two Galilean districts:

(1) selecting and appointing seventy elders to head the districts, together with seven judges for each town;

(2) enlisting and training a Jewish army of 100 000 fighters; and

(3) building and fortifying settlements, some of which were walled, to resist the imminent Roman invasion of Galilee.

Josephus lists the names of seventeen settlements whose fortification he ordered and supervised, adding that Gischala (Gush Halav) and Sepphoris (Zippori) prepared their own fortifications (*War* 2:572–576; *Life*

1 *War* 2:568; *Life* 29–30; cf. Broshi 1983: 21–29; Dan 1983: 67–68; Rappaport 1983: 22–65; Schwartz 1994: 291.

2 Josephus notes that he was not personally responsible for the fortification of two of the nineteen settlements he lists.

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187 where the nineteen fortified settlements are only listed with no further details).

Josephus' three tasks were supposedly accomplished over the seven-month period between his arrival in Galilee and his capture at Iotapata (Yodefat) on July 20, 67 CE. The account of his appointment of community leaders and judges may be true; however, the establishment of a skilled, hundred thousand-strong army trained in Roman military tactics would almost certainly have required far more than the six months at his disposal. Furthermore, Josephus' Galilee operations were viewed with animosity by key rebel leaders; at least three of the main towns in Galilee rejected his command: Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Gischala, where John of Gischala openly opposed him with support from the local citizens. Josephus' self-professed lack of military experience did little to improve his status (*Life* 1–12). It is hard to imagine that under such circumstances Josephus would have succeeded in recruiting nearly two-thirds of the local population to man his army.

Some of the settlements Josephus lists have been identified beyond question while others have only been located with a high degree of certainty; several have been excavated and have yielded findings consistent with Josephus' descriptions. In some places it is even possible to examine and assess the actual method of fortification and to estimate the minimum time needed to complete it. The seventeen settlements fortified by Josephus are listed with similar words in *The Jewish War* and in *The Life*. In *The Jewish War,* Josephus writes (*War* 2:572–576):

> Having established these principles for the internal regulation of the various towns, he proceeded to take measures for their security from external attack. Foreseeing that Galilee would bear the brunt of the Romans' opening assault, he fortified the most suitable places, namely, Iotapata, Bersabe, Selame, Kapharekcho, Iapha, Sigoph, the mount called Itabyrion, Tarichaea and Tiberias; he further provided with walls the caves in Lower Galilee in the neighborhood of the lake of Gennesaret and in Upper Galilee the rock known as Akchabaron, Sepph, Iamnith, and Meroth. In Gaulanitis he fortified Seleukia, Soganae and Gamala. The inhabitants of Sepphoris alone were authorized by him to erect walls on their own account, because he saw that they were in affluent circumstances and even without orders, eager for hostilities. Similarly, John, son of Levi, fortified Gischala at his own expense, on instruction by Josephus. The other fortresses were all built under the personal superintendence of Josephus who both assisted in and directed the operations. He, moreover, levied in Galilee an army of upwards of a hundred thousand young men, all of whom he equipped with old arms collected for the purpose.

In *Life* he states (*Life* 187):

> I erected walls at Seleucia and Soganae, villages with very strong natural defenses, and provided similar protection for certain villages in upper Galilee, also in very rugged surroundings, named Iamnia, Ameroth and Acharabe. In Lower Galilee I fortified the cities of Tarichaea, Tiberias and Sepphoris, and the villages of the Cave of Arbela, Beersubae, Selame, Iotapata, Kapharath, Komus, Soganae, Papha and Itabyrion. These places I stocked with ample supplies of corn and arms for their future security.

The existing research into Josephus' fortifications in Galilee has focused on two main issues: Firstly, on attempting to identify the settlements, particularly those whose locations are indeterminate such as Kapharekcho, Meroth, Seleukia and Soganae. The second, related line of research centers on detecting some method in Josephus' references to settlements and the order in which they are listed in the two works, in order to understand Josephus' strategy and the geographical distribution of Jewish settlement in Galilee during the Great Revolt.

Avi-Yonah started the debate by claiming that Josephus planned to form a defensive line along Galilee's borders.[3] He believed that each fortress was assigned a specific role, dictated by its location and the network of roads existing in Galilee at the time. In Avi-Yonah's opinion, the group of fortified settlements in Upper Galilee – ʿAkhbera, (**Fig. 2**) Zefat, Iamnith and Meron – controlled the crossroads between Mount Meron, the Qadesh Naftali ridge, Nahal ʿAmud, and Mount Canaan. Gischala completed this group. A second group of settlements in the Lower Galilee – Tiberias, Tarichaea and the Arbela Caves – guarded the shores of the Sea of Galilee. A third group – Itabyrion and Yifit – was built in the southern Galilee. The fortress of Sepphoris (Zippori) was located at the intersection between the southern and the western lines of defense. Avi-Yonah believed that Iotapata, Bersabe and Selame (together with Kfar ʿAkko and Kfar ʿAta) secured the western border of the Jewish Galilee. Avi-Yonah commented on the fact that the geographical order was not adhered to in the lists and even added Sikhane (Sahnin) to this line.

3 See Avi-Yonah 1951. Avi-Yonah proposed adding Agrippina to the list of southern settlements before it was conclusively located at Tel Faras in the southern Golan Heights. For the identification of Agrippina see Ben-Ephraim 2003:13; Ben-Ephraim/Dar 2007.

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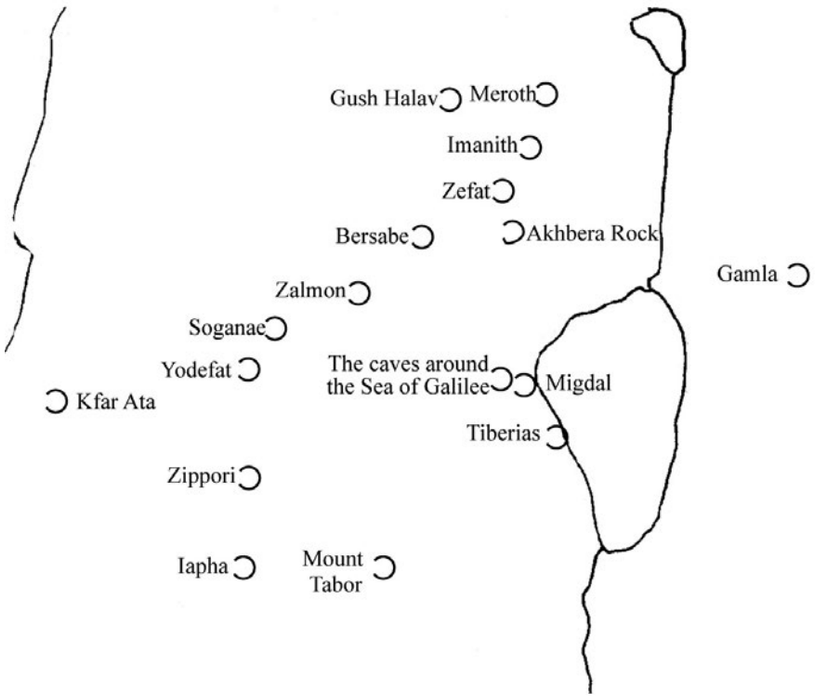

Fig. 1a: Fortification of Josephus Sites according to Aviam, 1983

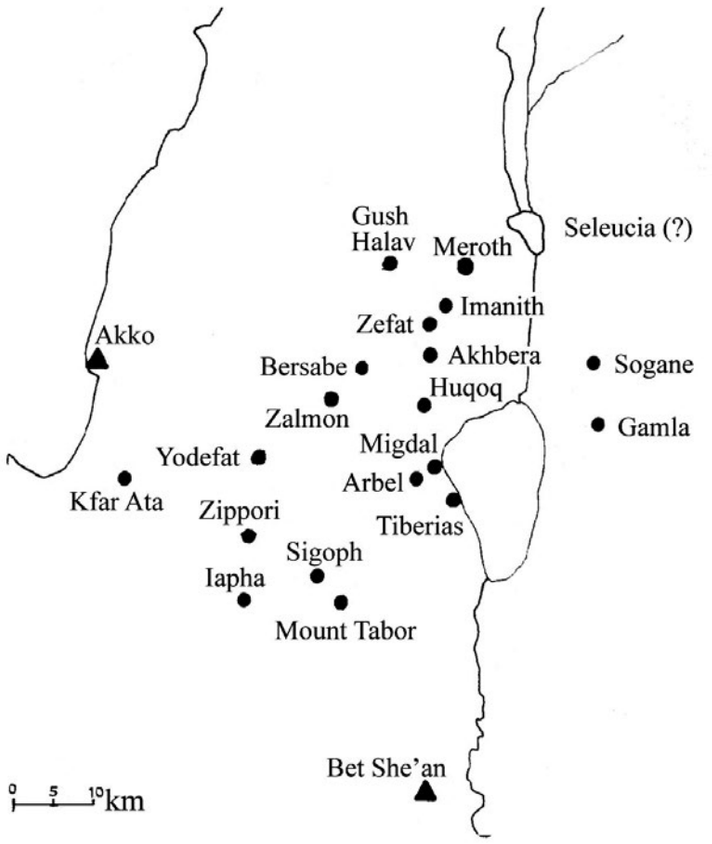

Fig. 1b: Fortification of Josephus Sites according to Damati, 1986

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Fig. 2: 'Akhbera Rock, with the village of 'Akhbera in the background

Following Avi-Yonah's theory, Menashe Har-El believes that Josephus chose to fortify eighteen sites (although Avi-Yonah claimed that Josephus had only fortified seventeen) from among dozens of other Jewish towns in Galilee according to the following key: Ten in the Lower Galilee, four in the Upper Galilee, one on the border between the Lower and Upper Galilee, and three in the Golan. Har-El's choice of sites was based on the following criteria: (1) a commanding topographic location; (2) easy access and communication routes; (3) signaling visibility between the forts; and (4), provision for stocks of food and water. According to Har-El, six of the main forts were arranged in two triangular formations and were intended to act as the principle defensive centers and lookout positions. He believes that the three main forts are Itabyrion (Mount Tabor), Mount Meron (called "Miro" in *Life,* as interpreted by Har-El and others) and Mount Azmon (near Iotapata). Three additional forts served as lookout posts and defensive positions on the eastern fringes of Galilee around Bet She'an, the Jordan Valley and Transjordan. These were Iamnith, Arbela and Apharatha (Kfar 'Ihka or Kapharta, which Har-El proposed identifying with Agrippina, placed by him at Kokhav Ha-Yarden).[4]

Table 1 compares the two lists given by Josephus in the order in which the settlements are mentioned in *The Jewish War,* then followed by a discussion of each individual site.

4 Har-El 1968; Aviam, 2008.

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Location number	Place name in The Jewish War 2:572–576	Place name in The Life 187–188	Place name used in this volume	Modern Hebrew name
1	Ἰωτάπατα	Ἰωτάπατα	Iotapata	Yodefat
2	Βηρσάβη	Βηρσαβεέ	Bersabe	Be'er Sheva Ha-Glilit
3	Σελαμίν	Σελαμίν	Selame	Zalmon
4	Καφαρεκχώ	Καφαρεκχώ	Kapharekcho	Huqoq(?)
5	Ἰαφά	Παφά (corrupt text?)	Iapha	Yafi'a
6	Σιγώφ	Σωγανή	Sigoph (in Galilee) Sogane (in Golan)	Sigoph
7	Ἰταβύριον καλούμενον ὄρος	Ἰταβύριον ὄρος	Mount Tabor	Tabor
8	Ταριχέαι	Ταριχαῖαι	Tarichaea	Migdal
9	Τιβεριάς	Τιβεριάς	Tiberias	Tiberias
10	Τὰ περὶ Γεννεσὰρ τὴν λίμην σπήλαια	Κώμαι Ἄρβηλων σπήλαιον	Arbela Caves	Arbel
11	ἥ τε προσαγορευσομένη Ἀχαβάρων πέτρα	Ἀχαράβη	'Akhbara Rock	–
12	Σέπφ	–	Zefat	Zefat
13	Ἰαμνίθ	Ἰάμνεια	Iamnith	Yavnit
14	Μηρώθ	Ἀμηρώθ	Meroth	Meroth
15	Σελεύκεια	Σελεύκεια	Seleukia	Seleucia
16	Σωγάνη	Σωγάναι	Soganae	Sugni
17	Γάμαλα	–	Gamala	Gamla
18	Σεπφωρῖται	Σέπφωρις	Sepphoris	Zippori

Table 1: Fortified settlements listed by Josephus[5]

5 Greek spelling taken from Thackeray 1926 (LCL 186), 1927a (LCL 203) and Thackeray 1927b (LCL 487).

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Fig. 3: Yodefat, looking toward the west wall

We will now individually examine the place names.

(1) Iotapata (Yodefat)

The Battle of Iotapata occupies a prominent position in *The Jewish War,* since Josephus himself commanded its defending forces and eventually surrendered to the Romans in the city, which he describes as follows (*War* 3:158–160):

> The town of Iotapata is almost entirely built on precipitous cliffs, being surrounded on three sides by ravines so deep that sight fails in the attempt to fathom the abyss. On the north side alone, where the town has straggled sideways up a descending spur of the mountains, is it accessible. But this quarter, too, Josephus, when he fortified the city, had enclosed within his wall, in order to prevent the enemy from occupying the ridge which commanded it. Concealed by other mountains surrounding it, the town was quite invisible.

The Mishnah mentions "ancient Yodefat" in a list of walled cities from the time of Joshua bin Nun (*Mishna 'Arakhin* 9:6), leading some early scholars to believe that there were in fact two places named Iotapata. Iotapata was first located by Gustav Schultz (1849) on an isolated hilltop 419 m above sea level (asl), northwest of Bet Netofa and at the foot of Mount Azmon. The hill lies above a meander in the Yodefat River and is surrounded by a chain of hills now known as the Yodefat Ridge. Schultz's identification was based on Josephus' description and on the site's name, "Shifat" (Jifat) preserved in local Arab tradition. Both Victor Guérin (1880) and members of the Palestine Exploration Fund recorded the site in the late nineteenth century. Ze'ev Safrai remarked on the unusual position of Iotapata compared with other Lower Galilean settlements, noting that its location at Khirbet Jifat was determined by a compromise between a preference for cretaceous rock sites (into which water cisterns can easily be hewn) near agricultural land, and the need

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Fig. 4: Bersabe, Galilee

to exploit the natural fortifications. Mordechai Aviam conducted extensive archaeological excavations on the hill, exposing the city walls, residential neighborhoods, and ample evidence of the fierce battle that had raged there. He also discovered traces of a siege ramp, two hiding complexes, and additional finds consistent with Josephus' descriptions.[6]

(2) Bersabe (Be'er Sheva Ha-Glilit)

Scholars agree on Bersabe's location at Khirbet Abu-Sheva, a hilltop at the eastern end of Bet Ha-Kerem Valley and 472 m asl. Bersabe lies near Kefar Hananya, a site of considerable importance in the Mishnah. Aviam thought that there was probably extensive devastation at Bersabe during the Great Revolt and that for this reason the settlement was abandoned and later rebuilt at a different location, nearby Kefar Hananya.[7] Nevertheless, the finds from Bersabe show that it did in fact continue to be occupied after the Great Revolt, although a marked decline is evident.[8] Josephus mentions Bersabe not just as a town he fortified, but also as a place lying on the border between the Upper and the Lower Galilee (*War* 3:39–40):

> On the north Tyre and its dependent district mark its limits. Lower Galilee extends in length from Tiberias to Chabulon, which is not far from Ptolemais on the coast; in breadth, from a village in the Great Plain called Xaloth to Bersabe. At this point begins Upper Galilee, which extends in breadth to the village of Baka, the frontier of Tyrian territory; in length, it reaches from the village of Thella, near the Jordan, to Meroth.

6 See Aviam 2005:1.

7 See Aviam 1983:38; Aviam/Richardson 2001:182.

8 See Leibner 2009:123.

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The location of Kefar Hananya near Bersabe and its attestation in the Mishnah as a town on the border between the Upper and Lower Galilee has reinforced the identification of both sites. In *Mishnah Shevi'it* 9:2 it marked the boundary between the Upper and Lower Galilee, as in the following description: "From Kefar Hananya and upward, where the sycamore fig tree does not grow, is the Upper Galilee and from Kefar Hananya down, where the sycamore fig tree grows, is the Lower Galilee". Ze'ev Safrai noted that the reference to Bersabe and later to Kefar Hananya as marking boundaries inside Galilee attests to the importance of the two towns.[9] Although Bersaba was a major town during the Second Temple period and the Great Revolt (according to Safrai) there is no documentation of it after the revolt, whereas Kefar Hananya is frequently mentioned instead.[10]

Several surveys have been conducted at Bersabe. Guérin observed burial caves hewn into the rock among its ruins. On the same occasion, Guérin continued south from Bersabe to Kfar ʿAnan which he believed to be Kfar Hananya where black-ware pottery was produced.[11] Conder and Kitchener also documented the ruins.[12] Yosef Breslavsky surveyed the site in 1934 and observed that Josephus had fortified it not only because of its position on an obvious geographical border, but also because it commanded the most direct route between the ʿAkko plain and the heart of the Upper and Lower Galilee. Breslavsky made remarks on the clear line of visibility between Bersabe and ʿAkhbera Rock, the Arbela Caves and the heights above Iotapata and Itabyrion – all sites Josephus listed as having fortified. Breslavsky also noted that the mount was surrounded by a large wall built of massive stones. On its summit, he observed the remains of numerous stone-built structures with masonry similar to that of the wall. Breslavsky believed that the entire complex should be attributed to the hasty fortifications Josephus supervised.[13] Eric Meyers, James Strange and Dennis Groh surveyed the site in the late 1970s and identified and recorded the course of the wall.[14] Mordechai Aviam surveyed the site several times in the 1980s and recovered potsherds and other surface finds from various periods, including the Second Temple period, and coins from the 2nd to the 4th centuries CE.[15] On the north side of the hill, Aviam also detected the remains of a wall with traces of three towers.[16]

Oren Tal, Yigal Tepper and Alexander Fantalkin surveyed the site in 1997 and discovered an additional, outer fortification system beyond the previously identified wall. Here, they detected four main stages: (1) outer defenses with a wall approximately 1.65 m thick; (2) a thickened wall about 2.8 m deep constructed on the northeast slope of the hill; (3) the addition of a northwest watchtower whose eastern part was adjacent to the thickened wall and whose western part was next to the earlier wall; and (4), three semicircular towers constructed near the outer face of the thickened wall. Despite the difficulty of dating the first two stages of outer fortifications, the third stage was datable to the Hellenistic or Roman period. The archaeologists believed that the presence of semicircular towers similar to examples found at Mount Nittai and the abundance of Early Roman pottery finds near the base of the towers supported Josephus' testimony regarding the fortification and strengthening of existing defenses at Jewish towns in Galilee prior to the Great Revolt.[17]

(3) Selame (Zalmon)

Fig. 5: Zalmon

The Jewish town Zalmin is also known as Zalmon in Rabbinic literature[18] which cites the name in connection with a war identified by some as the Great Revolt.[19] In *Tosefta,* R. Yehuda describes the town's

9 See Safrai 1981:93.
10 See Klein 1939:165.
11 See Guérin 1880:255.
12 See Conder/Kitchener 1881:235.
13 See Breslavsky 1954:241–245.
14 See Meyers, Strange/Groh 1978:1, 4.
15 At Kefar Hananya near Bersabe, David Adan-Bayewitz excavated a large workshop where cooking vessels and kraters were produced (Adan-Bayewitz 1993:75–77).
16 Aviam 2004:95.
17 See Tal/Tepper/Fantalkin 2000.
18 See *Mishnah Kilayim* 4:9; *Mishnah Yevamot* 16:4.
19 See Klein 1945:165.

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spring "flowing down to Zalmon" whose water was forbidden to be used for purification since "it is dry during war."[20] The toponym Dalmanutha in Mk 8:10 might be identified with Zalmon.[21] Priests from the order of Daliah resided at Zalmon. The settlement has been identified on the summit of a hill 304 m above sea level, between Nahal Qamun to the west and Nahal Zalmon to the east. Secondary use of building stones has destroyed most of the site's archaeological remains. Guérin identified another rectangular compound 80 paces long and 50 paces wide, which he believed had a military purpose. In and around the site, he saw ancient remains that he identified as Josephus' defenses.[22] On top of the hill's eastern slope Breslavsky identified a row of roughly-hewn wall stones, which he attributed to the fortification of Selame from the time of the Great Revolt.[23] Ze'ev Safrai noted that Selame's location as a fortified town was the result of a compromise between the population's need for farmland and its defensive requirements. Economic needs dictated its proximity to fertile soil and Nahal Zalmon, which is a perennial water source. In the 1980s Mordechai Aviam recovered a sarcophagus fragment with a Greek inscription on the summit of Tel Zalmon. The inscription was deciphered by Shimon Applebaum, Benjamin Isaac and Yohanan Landau and attributed to a Roman military commander in Vespasian's army called *Lucagus* or *Lucagas*.[24]

Mordechai Aviam also surveyed the ruins on Tel Zalmon and identified the remains of the rectangular compound previously interpreted by Guérin as a citadel dating from the rule of Dahar al-Omar (1750–1775 CE). Among the meager surface finds he recorded a few potsherds from various periods including the Second Temple era, helping identify the site as one fortified by Josephus. Mordechai Aviam also noted the possibility that the place was linked to the site described in the Mishnah in connection with the spring known to have dried up in time of war, possibly implying the Great Revolt.[25] Another survey carried out here by Aviam recovered coins from the Early Roman period as well as traces of an unfinished ditch, which eventually became the town's entrance route.[26] The current survey conducted by the author of this book revealed a number of dwelling caves and a plastered water cistern and one of the caves yielded the fragment of a sarcophagus lid.

(4) Kapharekcho/Kapharath (Kfar 'Ata, Huqoq?)

Fig. 6: Horvat Huqoq

When investigating the area of 'Akko, Shmuel Klein identified Kapharekcho-Kapharath as a village near Kabul, between Signah and Iotapata.[27] Later, he followed Avi-Yonah's explanation of the order in which Josephus lists the towns he fortified and proposed locating Kapharath in the region that he considered to have been left unprotected, namely between Iotapata and Sepphoris, thus placing it at Khirbet at-Taibe, east of Shefar'am.[28] In one of the surviving versions of Josephus' *Life,* the place is called Apharatha (Ἀφαραθα). Avi-Yonah believed that "Kaphartha" had been replaced by "Apharatha" which means "demon" in Arabic. Place names similar to Ofra/Opharta were often changed to "at-Taibe" in Arabic for apotropaic reasons, meaning "The good One."

According to Menashe Har-El, Apharatha is Josephus' Kfar 'Ata and its locatization at Kokhav Ha-Yarden is based on Har-El's concept of a triangular layout. Furthermore, to the west of Kokhav Ha-Yarden lies a village called "at-Taibe", which he believed substantiated his identification.[29] Bezalel Bar-Kochva rejected Avi-Yonah and Har-El's theory and their proposed identifications of Kfar 'Ata.[30] Dan Barag adopted the text variants attested in the eleventh-century 'A' and fourteenth-century 'R'

20 See *Tosefta Parah* 9:2.
21 Sickenberger 1934; Seybold 2000.
22 See Guérin 1880:314.
23 See Breslavsky 1954:249.
24 See Applebaum, Isaac/Landau 1981–1982:99.
25 See Aviam 1983:39.
26 See Aviam/Richardson 2001:96; Aviam 2004:193.
27 See Klein 1945:59, 157.
28 For the Greek versions, see Bar-Kochva 1974; for greater detail see Barag 1981:392.
29 See Har-El 1968:209–212.
30 See Bar-Kochva 1974.

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Fig. 7: Nahal ʿAmud Gorge

manuscripts of *Life*.[31] The name Kaphartha appears in both manuscripts. Thus, Bar-Kochva suggested identifying the site with the hill now occupied by the modern residential neighborhood of Qiryat ʿAta. Barag believes that this is a suitable site for a frontline observation post on the western line of defenses that would have made an important contribution to the series of fortresses guarding the western approaches to the Jewish settlements in the Lower Galilee.[32] Ze'ev Safrai sought Kfar ʿAta in the Arab town of El-Macher, some 5 km east of ʿAkko.[33] Paul Romanoff proposed identifying Kfar ʿAta with Horvat ʿAhrosh near ʿAmqa in the Western Galilee,[34] although this is beyond the boundaries of the Jewish Galilee described by Josephus. Kfar ʿAkko (Kapharekcho) – the "missing fort," as Avi-Yonah called it – should probably be identified at Horvat Huqoq, as proposed by Emanuel Damati who based this on the many alterations to the name "Huqoq" in Talmudic literature, which he cited as proof that "Huqoq" is a derivation of 'Icho or Kapharekcho.[35] Damati's proposal also seems to be substantiated by the cliff shelters discovered in the nearby Nahal ʿAmud gorge.

Already in the 1950s, Bezalel Ravani had conducted a survey at Ramat Huqoq on the eastern slopes of Nahal ʿAmud and discovered eighteen sites from the Roman and Byzantine periods. Ravani recorded the ruins of a fort, which he called a "Roman fortress," on the northeastern spur of Mount Huqoq and near the remains of the village of Huqoq. The fort measures 50 × 55 m and has straight walls 1.1 m thick.[36] The

31 Barag 1981.
32 Ibid.
33 Safrai 1981:65.
34 Romanoff 1937:171–173.
35 See Damati 1986.
36 Ravani's survey has not been published, but is cited by Tepper, Der'in/Tepper 2000:38.

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Fig. 8: Nahal 'Amud Gorge

summit provides an excellent view of the entire region and Ravani assumed that the fort was manned by Roman soldiers who controlled the surrounding area and access routes. The fort commanded a view over at least four Jewish settlements existing in the region during the Second Temple period: Horvat Huqoq (Khirbet Yaquq), Sheikh Nashi Hill, Horvat Shuna and a group of caves Ravani called "Caves 25–26."

Horvat Huqoq covers an area of approximately 7.5 acres at Ramat Huqoq. Near Horvat Huqoq, Sheikh Nashi Hill has yielded traces of continued occupation from the Iron Age to the Roman and Byzantine periods[37]. The ancient settlement of Kapharekcho was probably centered on about four acres at Sheikh Nashi. Over the years it spread to seven and a half acres across Ramat Huqoq. Its western side consists of low hills suitable for arable farming. There are several springs in the region, some of which are defunct, but the town's main spring is still an active water source. The site is located on a prominent hill 230 m above sea level, overlooking the Ginnosar Valley and with an unimpaired view of Migdal, Tiberias, 'Akhbara, Zefat and Yamnit. Ramat Huqoq was located on the intersection of several routes: One linked the Ginnosar Valley with the city of Hazor; another led from Huqoq to Zefat via Nahal 'Amud and 'Akhbara; and a third went from Huqoq to Bersabe in Galilee and the valley of Bet Hakerem. North of Horvat Huqoq, Bezalel Ravani excavated four burial caves dating from between the first century BCE and the third century CE.[38] To the south of the village, ritual baths were discovered together with distinctive installations named the "Huqoq installations" by archaeologists, who believed they were used to manufacture mustard-seed oil.[39] In the late 1980s, Yigal Tepper and

37 Grey/Spigel, 2015.

38 See Ravani 1961:128–143; Kahane 1961:121–127.

39 See Tepper, Der'in/Tepper 2000:73, 83–84.

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