Between Text and Trowel: Archaeological Investigations at Hurbat Husham in the Judean Foothills and the Identification of Thamnata

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Abstract

This study presents results from archaeological surveys and excavations at Hurbat Husham, a strategic hill site in the Judean Foothills. Investigations reveal a Jewish settlement that existed from the Hellenistic period through the Bar Kokhba revolt (3rd century BCE - 136 CE).

Key findings include a fortress-like structure at the summit, three ritual baths (miqva'ot), an underground hiding complex, rock-cut tombs, and a large elongated cistern. Material culture—including distinctive pottery and chalk stone vessels—confirms the site's Jewish character during the Second Temple period. The underground complex with connecting tunnels likely served as an escape system during the Bar Kokhba revolt, similar to those at nearby sites.

Based on strategic location, architectural features (particularly the elongated cistern typical of Hasmonean-Herodian desert fortresses), and second-century BCE ceramic evidence, we identify Hurbat Husham with Thamnata—one of Bacchides' fortresses constructed in 160 BCE as recorded in 1 Maccabees and Josephus' Antiquities. This identification is supported by the preserved name at nearby Kh. Tibnah and the site's position controlling major routes into Judea via Nahal Sorek and Nahal Elah. During the Hasmonean and Herodian periods, it served as a fortress associated with the Betholetepha-Pella Toparchy.

We suggest Hurbat Husham was likely Rabbi Simeon the Timnite's hometown during the interbellum period.

Late Roman or Byzantine occupation featured a Christian community, evidenced by graffiti on a ritual bath doorpost. One graffito depicts birds alongside a Christogram combining a cross with the Greek letters chi and rho, while another may represent a fish—an early Christian symbol functioning as an acrostic for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." These symbols were later plastered over when the structure was converted to a water cistern, suggesting they date to the late third or early fourth century CE.

The findings contribute significantly to our understanding of settlement patterns, defensive strategies, and religious transitions in the Judean Foothills, while addressing historical-geographical questions regarding Bacchides' fortresses and Rabbi Simeon the Timnite's origin.

Rezumat: Între Text și Mistrie: Investigaţii Arheologice la Hurbat Husham în Dealurile Iudeei și Identificarea Thamnata

Investigațiile arheologice de la Hurbat Husham documentează o așezare evreiască stabilită în perioada elenistică (secolele III-II î.Hr.) care a persistat până la revolta lui Bar Kokhba. Poziția strategică a sitului pe culmea Înălțimilor Shephelah (380m altitudine) a oferit o vizibilitate extinsă asupra rutelor de tranzit dintre câmpia de coastă și interiorul regiunii Iudeea.

Mai multe băi rituale (mikva'ot), vase din cretă, facilități subterane de depozitare și complexe de ascundere confirmă ocupația evreiască în perioada celui de-al Doilea Templu. Structura de tip fortăreață de pe culme, împreună cu cisterna alungită ce prezintă paralele arhitecturale cu cele din fortărețele hasmonee-herodiene din deșert, susține identificarea sitului ca fortăreață regională ce controla căile de acces vestice spre Iudeea prin văile Nahal Sorek și Nahal Elah.

Dovezile sprijină puternic identificarea Hurbat Husham cu Thamnata, una dintre fortărețele lui Bacchides stabilite în 160 î.Hr. Această identificare se bazează pe poziția strategică de-a lungul graniței administrative vestice a Iudeei, pe materialele ceramice din secolul al II-lea î.Hr., pe conservarea toponimică în apropiere la Kh. Tibnah și pe controlul asupra rutelor către orașele de coastă menționate în 1 Macabei. Situl a servit probabil drept fortăreață a Toparhiei Betholetepha-Pella și ar fi putut fi locul de origine al lui Simeon Timnitul, având în vedere ceramica din perioada interbelică (70-132 d.Hr.) și proximitatea față de Jamnia.

Așezarea s-a contractat între Războiul Iudaic și revolta lui Bar Kokhba, fiind ulterior abandonată. Ocupația creștină târzie este evidențiată prin graffiti cu cruci și cristograme în băile rituale refolosite ca cisterne de apă în perioada

bizantină. Înregistrarea arheologică multi-fazică de la Hurbat Husham luminează atât strategia militară regională, cât și practicile religioase locale din tulburata perioadă a celui de-al Doilea Templu.

Keywords: Hasmonean-Herodian Fortresses; Second Temple Period; Thamnata; Ritual Baths (*Mikva'ot*); Byzantine Christian Graffiti; Bacchides' Fortifications; Hiding Complexes; Bar Kokhba Revolt; Rabbi Simeon the Timnite

Cuvinte cheie: Fortărețe Hasmoneene-Herodiene; Perioada celui de-al Doilea Templu; Thamnata Băi Rituale (Mikva'ot); Graffiti Creștine Bizantine; Fortificațiile lui Bacchides Complexe Subterane de Ascundere; Revolta lui Bar Kokhba; Rabinul Simeon Timnitul

Introduction

Hurbat Husham occupies a commanding position in the Judean Foothills, at the summit of a prominent hill (elevation 380 m above sea level). Located in the northern section of a ridge within the High Shephelah, between the Nahal Sorek and Nahal Elah basins, the site extends across approximately 5 hectares covering both the hilltop and its slopes. Positioned approximately 3.5 km north of Tel Azeka and 2 km west of the Beit Jamal monastery, Hurbat Husham offers panoramic views in all directions. From this vantage point, one can observe the entire Judean coastal plain—from Jaffa in the north, through Yavneh, Gedera, and Ashdod, to Ashqelon and Gaza in the south—as well as extensive portions of the Judean Hills and Beit El Hills. The name of the site, Hurbat Husham (in Arabic, Kh. el-Kheishum, meaning "nose" or "spur"), aptly describes its prominent topographical position dominating the surrounding landscape.[1]

During the 19th century, the site was visited by Victor Guérin and the members of the British Survey of Western Palestine (SWP).[2] Though Felix M. Abel once proposed identifying the site with biblical Makedah, this identification is not accepted today.[3] Yehuda Dagan reported the existence of a square, fortress-like structure at the top of the site, as well as caves, cisterns, a winepress, and agricultural installations. He also reported the presence of potsherds from various periods, including Iron II and the Roman and Byzantine periods. Dagan proposed identifying the site with Enam, one of the cities in the Judean Shephelah in the list in the book of Joshua.[4] Zissu documented the existence of a plastered ritual bath on the summit, adjacent to the fortress (see below), and reported the existence of a network of underground hiding tunnels found by inspectors from the Israel Antiquities Authority's Antiquities Theft Prevention Unit (ATPU) and of the base of a chalk vessel.[5]

This article presents the results of the authors' documentation, survey, and excavation work at the site and its immediate environs, beginning in the late 1990s.[6] The finds attest to the presence of a large Jewish settlement at the site from the Second Temple period until the Bar Kokhba Revolt and suggest the existence of a Hasmonean/Herodian fortress. These finds will be described below, based on their geographic location within the ruin; they are numbered in accordance with the map of ancient remains (Fig. 1).

Archaeological Finds: Excavation and Survey Results

A Roman Milestone in the Wadi Southwest of the Site (Fig. 1:15)

Along the slope of the wadi on the southern boundary of the site (ITM 195193/626079), we discovered a conical limestone fragment just north of a dirt path. The fragment measured approximately 1.3 m in length, with a diameter of 0.62 m at its wider end, tapering to 0.5 m at the narrower end. Based on its distinctive shape, we identified the fragment as part of a Roman milestone (Fig. 2). No inscriptions or engravings were visible on the stone surface.

[1] That the name of the site attests to its prominence is evident from Zev Vilnay's entry for "Khushem" in his *Ariel Encyclopedia*: "A term for large and prominent nose. This leads to a designation for a prominent summit that towers over its surroundings and can be seen from far away. This word is a component of the names of prominent peaks." See Vilnay 1976, 2531.

[2] Guérin, 1969, 27–28; Conder and Kitchener 1983*,* 118.

[3] Abel 1967, 378; Broshi 1968, 304.

[4] Joshua 15:34; Dagan 1992, 86; Dagan 1996, 138–139.

[5] Zissu 2001, 148–149; Zissu 1999, 125.

[6] The documentation of the site was part of ongoing work by the Antiquities Theft Prevention Unit, in light of the extensive looting of the site. We would like to thank Alon Klein, the regional inspector for the ATPU; ATPU director Amir Ganor; Chen Ben-Ari (GIS); and Julia Rudman (pottery drawings).

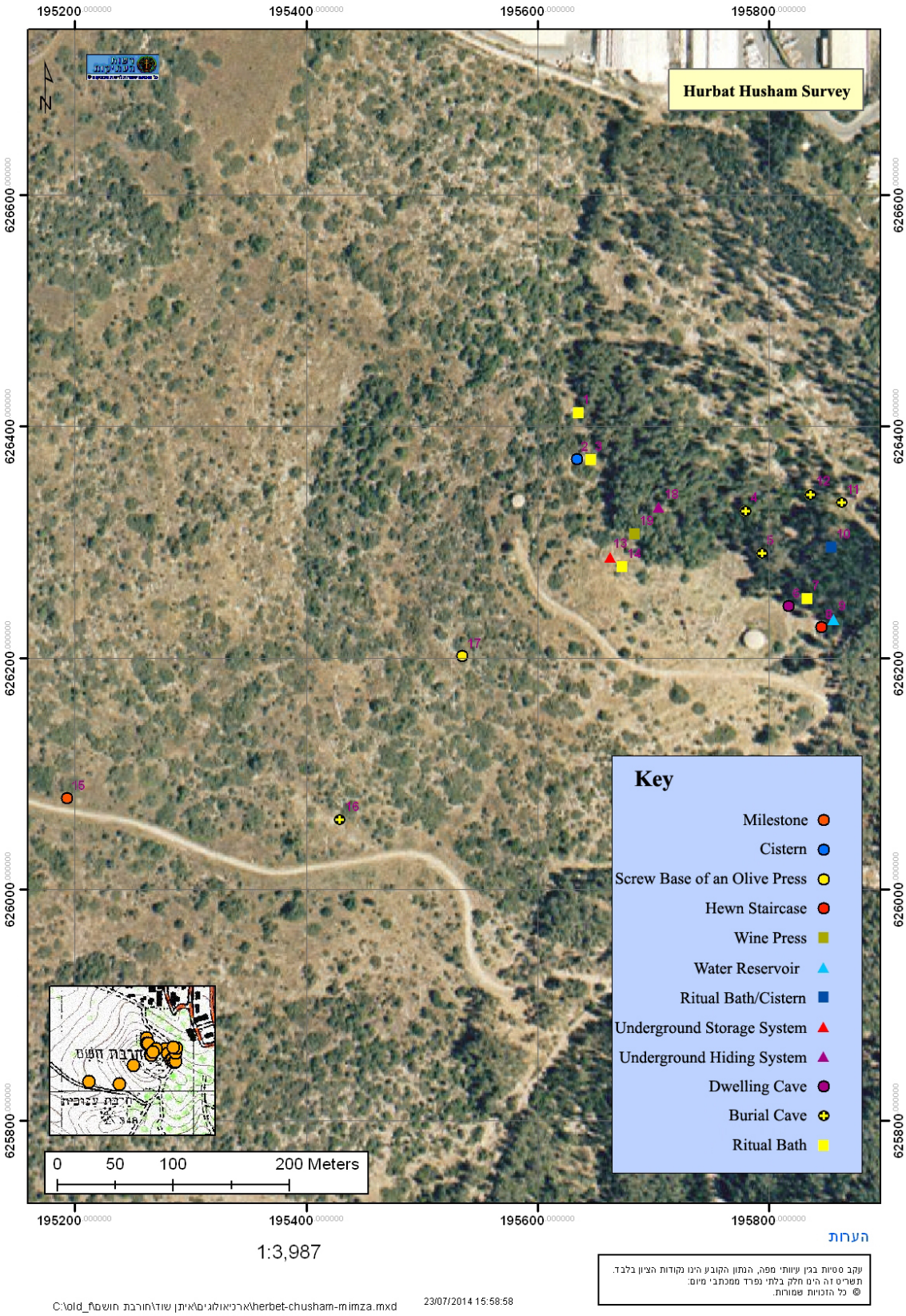

Fig. 1: GIS survey map of the site (inset: Chen Ben-Ari)

The presence of a Roman milestone at this site indicates that a Roman road passed through the area, despite the lack of any documentation of one in this location by modern scholars. Additional evidence for this Roman road

Fig. 2: Milestone fragment: view to the NW (photo: Boaz Zissu)

appears in Peter Thomsen's comprehensive study of Roman milestones in the provinces of Arabia, Syria, and Judea. According to Thomsen, in the late 19th century two milestone fragments dating to the reign of Marcus Aurelius were discovered in the valley adjacent to Beit Jamal. These fragments bore an inscription indicating a distance of 18 miles from Aelia Capitolina (Jerusalem). Thomsen suggested that this milestone marked a Roman road connecting Jerusalem and Jamnia (Yavneh).[7]

The milestone at the base of Hurbat Husham was situated approximately one Roman mile west of the Dekalim Springs valley, which lies at the foot of the Beit Jamal monastery. A small wadi, originating in the saddle between Hurbat Husham and Hurbat Akuvit, drains into the Dekalim Springs valley and provides a natural passageway between the two milestone locations. This saddle likely marks where the road crossed the ridgeline of the High Shephelah hills. Although further fieldwork is necessary to determine the exact route of this Roman road, its general east–west orientation supports Thomsen's hypothesis that it connected Jamnia and Aelia Capitolina. Notably, the SWP map clearly indicates a road approaching from the west, crossing the saddle south of Hurbat Husham, and continuing eastward toward the Dekalim Springs and then in the direction of Beit Shemesh.[8]

Hilltop Complex: Fortress, Storage Facility, and Ritual Bath (Miqveh)

A square building stands at the highest elevation point of the site, oriented along a north–south axis. The building measures approximately 9×9 m, with walls about 1 m thick (Figs. 3, 4). An entrance, 0.8 m wide, was built into the eastern wall. Interior corner additions measuring 1×1 m, possibly pendentive bases, suggest the original structure supported a groin vault and potentially a second floor. The structure is preserved to a height of approximately four courses of large hewn stones. Small fieldstones mixed with gray cement fill the gaps between the hewn stones, though it remains unclear whether these elements were part of the original construction or added during later renovations.

[7] Thomsen 1917, 84, no. 305; CIL III, Supp. I, no. 12087.
[8] Conder and Kitchener 1878, Sheet XVII.

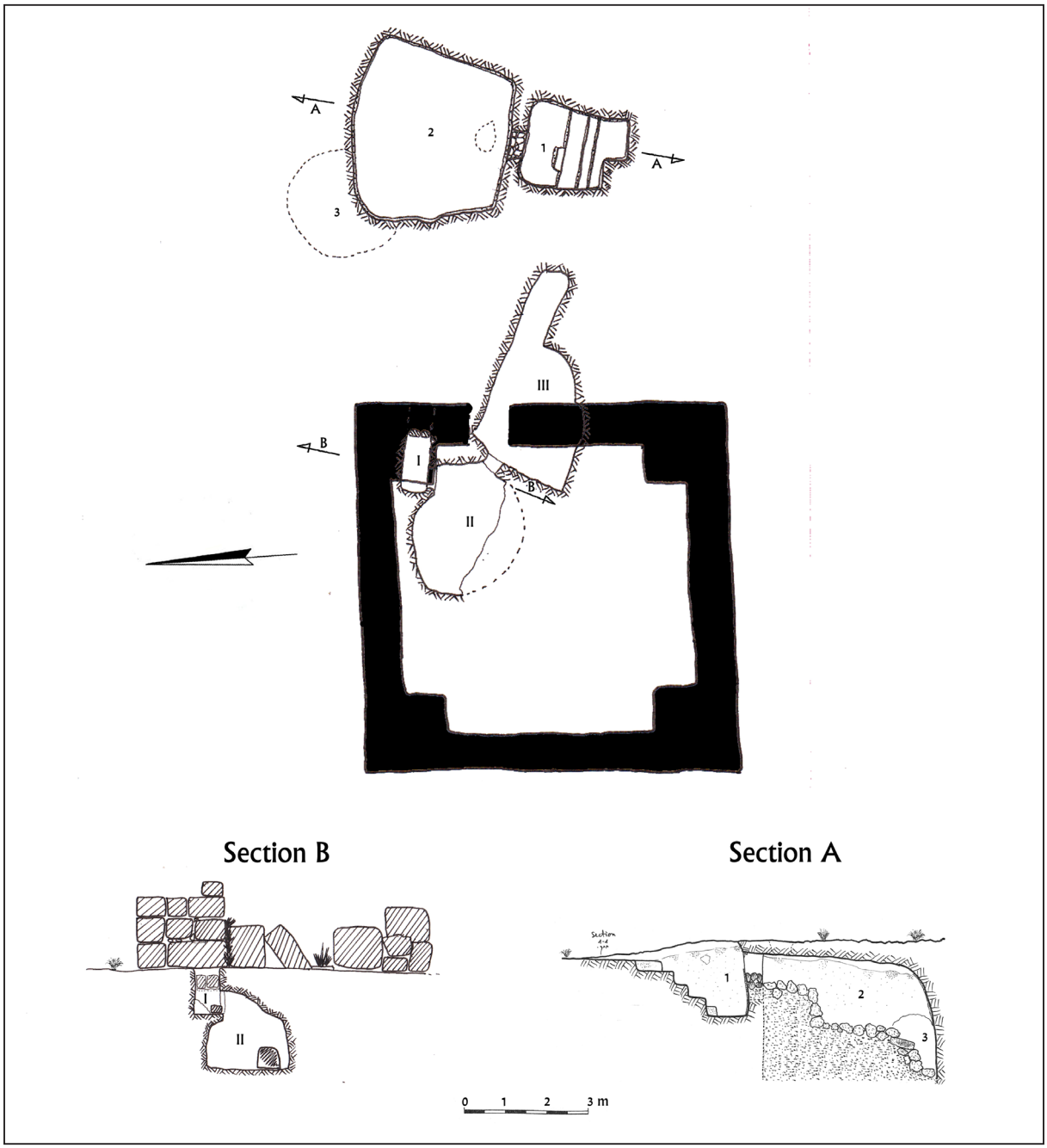

Fig. 3: Plan and cross-section of the fortress, storage system, and ritual bath (drawing: Boaz Zissu and Eitan Klein)

A small opening beneath the abutment in the building's northeastern corner provides access to an underground complex cut into the bedrock, extending below the eastern portion of the structure (Fig. 5). This complex consists of three interconnected chambers. The first is a narrow, rectangular entry shaft (Chamber I; width 0.65 m, height from rock face to floor 1 m) connected via a small opening (0.5 m wide and high) in its southwestern corner to Chamber II. This second space is an oval chamber hewn at a lower level (diameter approximately 3 m, maximum height 1.9 m). From Chamber II, a narrow opening (width and height: 0.5 m) cut into its eastern wall approximately 0.6 m above floor level leads to the rectangular Chamber III (Fig. 6; approximately 3 m long, 2.5 m wide, and 1–1.2 m high). Just south of this opening, a triangular lamp niche was cut into the western wall of Chamber III. A narrow, unfinished tunnel (approximately 2 m long, 0.7 m wide, and 0.6 m high) was cut into the eastern wall of Chamber III; its abrupt termination suggests that construction was suspended.

Based on the architectural plan of this underground system and ceramic finds recovered from Chambers II and III, we can identify this complex as a family storage facility typical of the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman

Fig. 4: Ritual bath, adjacent cistern, and fortress: view to the W (photo: Boaz Zissu)

Fig. 5: Entrance to the underground storage system at the corner of the fortress: view to the NW (photo: Boaz Zissu)

Fig. 6: Entrance to Chamber III of the underground storage system at the summit, with triangular lamp niche alongside: view to the W (photo: Boaz Zissu)

periods. In our recent analysis of similar subterranean storage installations at Horbat ʿEthri, we suggested that these underground facilities served to conceal agricultural produce from taxation authorities.[9]

The construction of the square structure restricted access to Shaft I; however, since it accommodates rather than blocks the shaft, the structure was likely built after the underground storage system was already in place. The architecture of this building, together with its strategic location at the summit commanding views to the south, west, and north, as well as overlooking the road at the foot of the site, suggests its function as a fortress. Comparable square fortresses or guard towers of similar dimensions dating to the Late Roman/Early Byzantine

[9] See, e.g., similar systems from this period at Hurbat ʿEthri in Zissu and Ganor 2002, 20–21; Zissu et al. 2021, 72–87. For a general discussion of these structures, see Kloner and Zissu 2003, 183; Kloner and Zissu 2007, 17. During the late Second Temple period, taxes were commonly collected in kind, as documented in Josephus's accounts of imperial wheat storage in Upper Galilee (Josephus, *Life* 70–72) and Queen Berenice's facilities at Beit She'arim (Josephus, *Life* 118–119). Taxation in Judea varied substantially across periods. Ptolemaic and Seleucid rulers imposed onerous taxes, reaching one-third of field crops and half of tree fruits (1 Macc 10:28–30). Under Hasmonean rule, the tax burden likely decreased (Rappaport 1981, 241). However, taxation intensified considerably under Herod to finance his extensive construction projects (Udoh 2020, 113–127), prompting Jewish delegations to seek relief after his death (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.4; Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.307–308). The Roman census of 6 CE, conducted for tax assessment purposes (Udoh 2020, 127–244), provoked significant opposition among Jews. Josephus attributes the formation of the Zealot movement directly to this census, with Judas of Galilee characterizing taxation as "downright slavery" and advocating independence (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1–9). In *Jewish War* (2.118), Josephus confirms that resistance to Roman taxation was fundamental to this fourth philosophical school. Jewish legal traditions supported tax resistance. Talmudic rulings permitted deception of tax collectors (M Bava Kama 113a), while the Mishnah equated tax collectors with robbers (M Nedarim 3:4). Pharisaic *halakhah* classified tax collectors as sources of ritual impurity (M Bava Kama 10:1; M Sanhedrin 3:3; M Taharot 7:6), partly because they were presumed to touch everything while searching houses. The New Testament reflects these tensions regarding Roman taxation (Mark 12:13–17; Luke 23:1–2), confirming tax resistance as a widespread form of protest. Even compliant taxpayers faced challenges due to exorbitant rates under Roman procurators, cited by both Josephus as contributing factors to the Jewish War (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.272–273, 277–279; see also: Tacitus, *Annals* 2.42).

period have been documented in Jordan and throughout the Roman Empire, although none feature the distinctive corner abutments present at this site.[10] Conversely, if the architectural evidence for a groin vault is confirmed, the structure would date to considerably later, likely the medieval period. In either case, systematic archaeological excavation is necessary to establish a definitive chronology for this building.

Approximately 5.5 m east of the fortress, two adjacent, interconnected plastered chambers were hewn in an extensive bedrock surface. The southern chamber (Fig. 3, no. 1) is unroofed and trapezoidal (maximum length approximately 2.5 m, width approximately 2 m). Four steps spanning the width of the chamber, plus an initial step, were cut into the floor and descend into an immersion basin. The chamber features two distinct plaster layers: a light-colored base coat overlaid with gray plaster. A central opening approximately 0.9 m wide in the northern wall connects this chamber to Chamber 2. This maximum possible height of the opening was 1.4 m (although it was likely less), as greater height would have impeded comfortable entry into the northern chamber. This passage was subsequently sealed with a rough stone wall plastered on both sides (Fig. 7). These architectural features identify Chamber 1 as a ritual immersion bath (*miqveh*), originally covered by a vault that has not survived.

Fig. 7: Blockage and plastering of the opening between the ritual immersion bath at the summit and the adjacent cistern: view to the W (photo: Boaz Zissu)

To the north is Chamber 2, also trapezoidal in shape and carved out of the bedrock. The harder limestone crust above the chalk, quarried and removed, formed the chamber's ceiling. Its walls were coated with carefully smoothed gray plaster, though the ceiling remained unplastered. In the lower section of the northwestern corner, a hole (Chamber 3) was created, apparently providing access to a series of possibly natural underground spaces. An opening was also cut into the ceiling of this chamber.

In a previous study, Zissu proposed that Chamber 2 originally functioned as a ritual bath, while Chamber 1 served as a stepped antechamber providing access to it. According to this interpretation, when Chamber 2 ceased to function as a ritual bath—possibly due to cracks in its walls—the opening between the two structures was sealed and plastered, and Chamber 1 was subsequently repurposed as the ritual bath.[11] However, in light of the discovery of a ritual bath with similar characteristics, and based on an identical opening found between two adjacent plastered

[10] See, e.g., the guard tower at Qasr Abu Rukba in Jordan (Parker 2006, 105, Fig. 2.11). For similar fortresses in other parts of the Roman Empire, see, e.g., Băjenaru 2010, 161–162.

[11] Zissu 1999, 125; Zissu 2001, 148–149.

structures at Hurbat Tayyasim West,[12] we propose that Chamber 1 functioned as the ritual bath while Chamber 2 served as its reservoir. We suggest that the opening between them was created to facilitate the construction of Chamber 2. Once construction was completed, this opening was sealed, and the reservoir was subsequently filled through the shaft in its ceiling. The two chambers seem to have remained connected through a small hole preserved in the sealed opening between the structures. This arrangement maintained Chamber 2 as a reservoir that enabled the regular replacement of drawn water in the adjacent ritual bath.[13]

Ritual Baths, Burial Caves, and a Underground Hiding Complex on the Northern Slope

The dense pine forest and many fallen tree trunks hindered our ability to conduct a comprehensive survey of the underground spaces on the site's northern slope. Nevertheless, we identified surface remains of early structures built from large fieldstones that covered most of this area. Among the subterranean features discovered on the slope, three ritual immersion baths from the Second Temple period merit special attention. These were subsequently repurposed as cisterns, apparently during the Late Roman/Byzantine period. An underground hiding complex was also documented in this area. Pottery sherds collected from various parts of the system provide evidence for the settlement periods at the site. Additionally, several rock-cut tombs discovered along this slope offer insights into the extent and boundaries of the settlement over time.

One tomb (Fig. 1:5) features a façade with a central entrance surrounded by a carved frame, a burial chamber with five burial niches (*kokhim*; Fig. 8), and a bell-shaped underground storage space carved out of its center.

Fig. 8: Burial niches in burial/storage cave no. 5 on the northern slope: view to the S (photo: Boaz Zissu)

[12] Klein and Zissu 2012, 229–232.

[13] There is a specific religious requirement regarding the water used in Jewish ritual baths (*miqva'ot*). According to Jewish law (*halakhah*), a ritual bath must contain "living water," or naturally collected rainwater, in order to be valid for purification. The need to replace the drawn water in the ritual bath relates to two key requirements: (1) Water cleanliness: Over time, water in a ritual bath would become dirty with repeated use. Having a reservoir made it possible to refresh the water while maintaining ritual validity. (2) Religious requirements: Most importantly, drawn water that is manually transported in vessels is considered ritually invalid for a *miqveh* on its own. However, a *miqveh* already containing the required minimum amount of valid water (40 *se'ah*, approximately 500–1000 liters) could have some drawn water added to it without invalidating the entire bath. The reservoir system allowed for maintaining the proper balance of water sources. This architectural arrangement with a reservoir connected to the main immersion pool was an innovative solution developed during the Second Temple period to address both practical needs (maintaining cleanliness) and religious requirements (maintaining ritual validity) for Jewish purification practices. See Reich 2013.

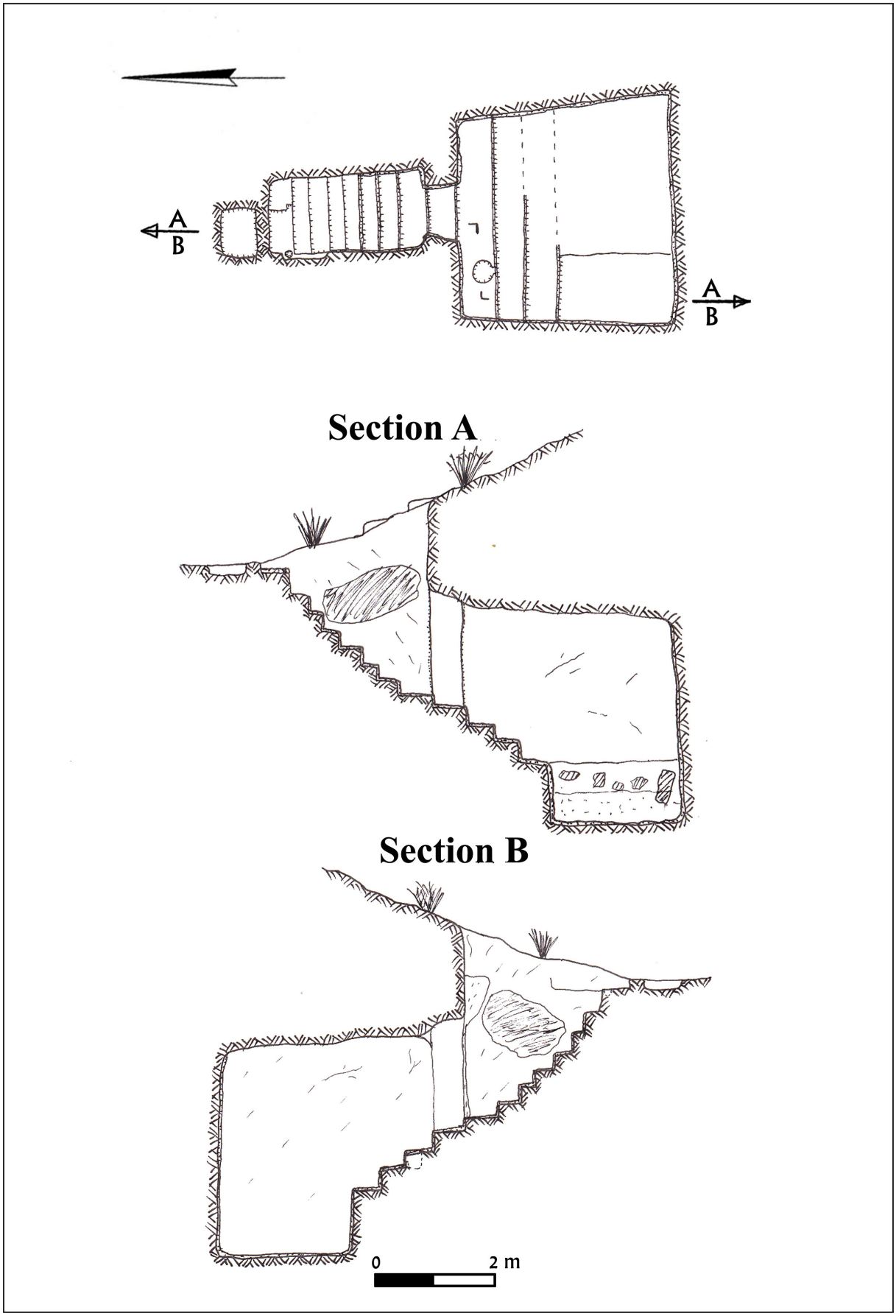

Fig. 9: The Bird Miqveh (drawing: Eitan Klein)

This tomb is located in the upper section of the northern slope, in an area containing structural remains of the settlement. The burial niches, framed opening, and bell-shaped storage chamber—elements characteristic of the late Second Temple period through the Bar Kokhba Revolt—enable us to date the use of this tomb to this period and to propose two main phases of use.[14] Initially, when the settlement was at its maximum extent—perhaps until the Jewish War—the cave likely functioned as a storeroom beneath a house within the village boundaries. Later, as the settlement contracted—possibly during the period between the Jewish War and the Bar Kokhba Revolt—the space, now outside the settlement proper, was repurposed as a burial cave. This phenomenon of settlement contraction in Judea between the Jewish War and the Bar Kokhba Revolt has also been documented at Hurbat ʿEthri, approximately 9 km south of Hurbat Husham.[15] Adjacent to this tomb is another tomb featuring a square burial chamber with three arcosolia, a type most common in Judea during the Late Roman/Byzantine period,[16] further attesting to the settlement's reduced size during this later period.

Ritual Baths

1. **The Bird Miqveh (Fig. 1:3)**: This ritual bath is situated 367 m above sea level, on the site's northern slope, outside the ancient settlement boundaries.[17] The fully plastered structure comprises three rock-cut elements aligned north–south: a shallow basin, a stepped antechamber, and an immersion chamber (Fig. 9). Our excavation completely cleared the stepped antechamber and created a section along the immersion chamber from the western doorpost to the opposite wall, exposing over one-third of the central immersion chamber and enabling an analysis of the structure's architecture and phases of use.

The floor of the structure, originally designed to function as a ritual bath, was covered by a layer of silt and collapsed stone debris. Remnants of pinkish hydraulic plaster were preserved on the walls of the immersion chamber. The floor had fragments of ribbed ceramic jars typical of the Late Roman/Byzantine period embedded in the plaster. No earlier plaster layer was discerned. Graffiti featuring Christian motifs were documented on the upper portion of the eastern doorpost and on the western doorpost (discussed in detail below). Based on these finds, we interpret this structure as a Second Temple–period ritual bath that was later repurposed as a water cistern during the Byzantine period.

A shallow rectangular basin (locus 104; 0.85×0.60 m, depth 0.15 m; Fig. 10) was cut north of the antechamber. Though

Fig. 10: The plastered, rock-cut dromos, with the hewn basin in the Bird Miqveh in front of it (photo: Boaz Zissu)

[14] For the use of *kokhim* in caves from this period, see Kloner and Zissu 2003, 27–36. On the use of bell-shaped storage chambers, see Kloner and Tepper 1987, 65–66.

[15] Zissu and Ganor 2002, 20–21.

[16] Avni 1997, 37–44.

[17] This installation was initially discovered by Alon Klein, ATPU regional inspector, and subsequently excavated by the authors (permit A-6962/2013) in September 2013 on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority following illegal digging at the site. We thank Amir Ganor, Shemesh Yaaran, and Yotham Zissu for their assistance.

not plastered, this basin was likely used for foot-washing or water filtration. A shallow rock-cut partition (0.2 m wide) separates the basin from the antechamber. The antechamber (locus 101) measures 2.6 m in length (to the doorposts) and 1.2 m in width. Eight hewn steps spanning the width of the antechamber descend to the immersion chamber entrance. The uppermost step (0.4 m wide) preserves a 0.85 m long threshold carved to accommodate a door, including a hinge depression and a stone indentation for the opposite side. The width of the doorway matches the frontal basin, suggesting contemporaneous planning. Chisel marks for surface leveling are visible on the upper sections of the antechamber's longitudinal walls, which likely served as the base for a barrel-vaulted roof.

The entrance to the immersion chamber is 0.8 m wide and approximately 1.8 m high, with a threshold depth of 0.5 m.

An elaborate graffito was incised on the eastern doorpost (Fig. 11a): It depicts two large birds—likely doves (or partridges?)—rendered in remarkable detail, alongside what appears to be a braided structure, presumably a woven cage (Fig. 11a:4, 5; 11b). Above (behind?) these prominent birds are smaller avian figures, the upper one displaying a fan-like tail, suggesting the artist's intention to represent peacocks (Fig. 11a:3, 11c). The motif of birds adjacent to or within cages was widespread during the Byzantine period; in early Christian iconography, this imagery symbolized the Holy Spirit or the soul of the believer confined within the physical body. Similar avian representations appear in contemporary mosaics discovered in Israel, including the bird mosaic north of Jerusalem's Damascus Gate (part of an Armenian Christian chapel) and the mosaic floor of the Byzantine-period synagogue at Maʿon in the western Negev.[18]

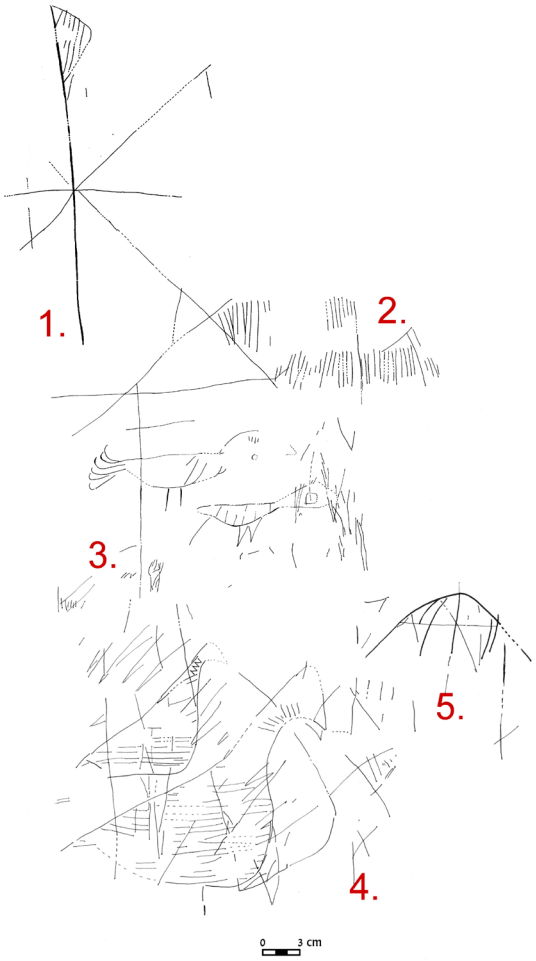

Fig. 11a: Drawing of graffiti on the E doorpost of the ritual bath: 1. Christogram; 2. a fish(?); 3. two peacocks(?); 4. two doves (or partridges?); 5. a cage(?) (drawing: Boaz Zissu, Eitan Klein)

Fig. 11b: Photo of graffiti on the E doorpost of the ritual bath: Two doves (or partridges?) and a cage(?) (Boaz Zissu)

Fig. 11c: Photo of graffiti on the E doorpost of the ritual bath: two peacocks(?) (Boaz Zissu)

[18] Bliss and Dickie 1898, 253–259; Avi-Yonah 1960.

Above the birds appears a monogram combining a cross (staurogram?) with the Greek letters X (chi) and P (rho), the first two letters of Χριστός (*Christos*),[19] confirming the artist's Christian affiliation (Fig. 11a:1, 11e). The western doorpost features another monogrammed cross with a chi-rho (Fig. 11f). Below and to the right of the Christogram on the eastern doorpost is a multi-lined graffito possibly representing a fish (Fig. 11a:2, 11d).

The fish symbol served as a key visual marker in early Christianity before Constantine. The Greek word ΙΧΘΥΣ (fish) functioned as an acrostic for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior," compressing core theological content into a single symbol. During periods of persecution, Christians used this symbol to identify fellow believers discreetly.[20]

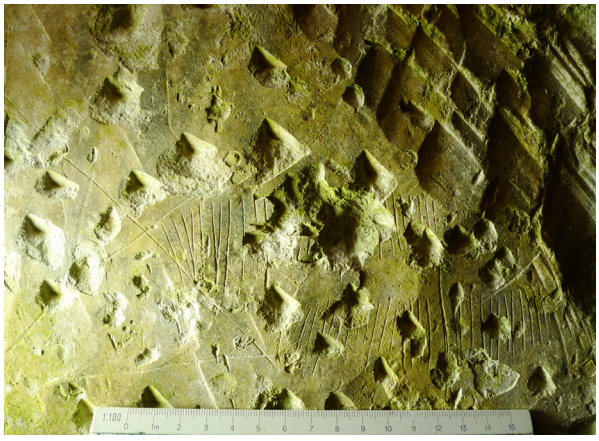

Fig. 11d: Photo of graffito on the E doorpost of the ritual bath: a fish(?) (Boaz Zissu)

Fig. 11e: Photo of graffito on the E doorpost of the ritual bath: a Christogram (Boaz Zissu)

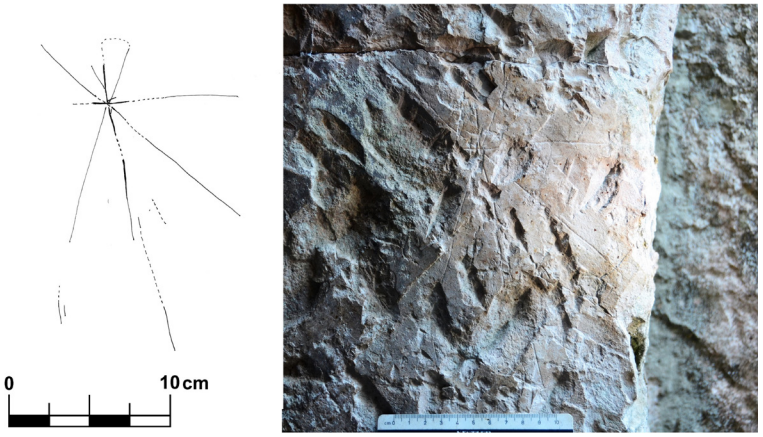

Fig. 11f: Photo of graffito on the W doorpost of the ritual bath: a Christogram (Boaz Zissu)

The symbol's significance draws on numerous New Testament references: Jesus recruiting fishermen, his metaphor of "fishers of men," and miracle accounts involving fish.[21] Early Church writings connect the fish symbol with baptismal practices.[22]

Archaeological evidence from the 2nd century onward, including catacomb inscriptions, funerary monuments, rings, and lamps, demonstrates the widespread use of the symbol across the Mediterranean.[23] The fish symbol effectively combined secrecy, theological meaning, biblical references, and ritual significance, making it ideal for the formative period of Christianity. Its gradual replacement by the cross coincided with Christianity's transition from persecuted movement to state religion.

We do not interpret this composition as referencing Jesus's baptism in the Jordan River—where the Spirit of God appears as a dove[24]—despite the structure's original function for Jewish ritual immersion (before 136 CE). The multiple birds, rather than a single dove, rule out this specific association. More likely, the birds were carved around the Christogram to enhance its protective and life-giving powers, a common practice in early Christian iconography.[25]

[19] A staurogram is an early Christian monogram that combines the Greek letters for "cross" (tau, T, and rho, P) to form a cross-like figure. It symbolizes Christ in early Christian art and inscriptions, as a visual representation of the crucifixion. See Hurtado 2006.

[20] Snyder 2003.

[21] Mark 1:16–20; Matthew 4:19; Luke 5:1–11; John 21:1–14.

[22] Ferguson 2009.

[23] Milburn 1988; Rasimus 2012.

[24] Matthew 3:16; Ziffer 1998, 105–110.

[25] Ziffer 1998, 111.

Regarding the identification of the larger birds as doves, their symbolic significance permeates religious literature. Biblical, patristic, and hagiographical sources consistently present the dove as an archetypal Christian symbol. Genesis (8:6–12) establishes the dove's role in the flood narrative as a messenger of hope, as it returned with an olive branch to indicate receding waters. The dove's virtuous associations are further reinforced in Psalm 74:19, while the Song of Songs employs it as a metaphor for tenderness.[26] The evangelical tradition emphasizes its sacrificial significance, as documented in Luke 2:24 (prefigured in Leviticus 1:14, 5:7, and 12:8 and also in John 2:13–22 and Mark 11:15–19), culminating in its preeminent symbolic role as the Holy Spirit at Jesus's baptism.[27]

Both graffiti were damaged by stone-cutting tools that created shallow dimples in the doorposts, apparently to prepare a rough surface for a layer of plaster, remnants of which are visible around the graffito. This evidence indicates that the inscription predates the plastering of the doorpost, at least in technical terms.

The immersion chamber is approximately square (3.75×3.5 m), with a height of about 3.5 m from the immersion basin floor to the ceiling. Three steps were cut into the floor, each 0.4–0.5 m deep with an average rise of 0.3 m. The western portion of the upper step contains a depression (locus 103) carved in antiquity, measuring 0.3 m in diameter and 0.4 m deep, opening southward toward the lower step (Fig. 12). This walls of the depression were unplastered; its upper section cuts through the plaster layer on the upper step, clearly indicating that it postdates the plastering. Based on its shape, this depression likely held a water-drawing vessel. The rise of the lowest step, measured from the immersion basin floor, is 1 m.

The walls of the main immersion chamber were coated with hydraulic plaster, 0.05 m thick, comprising a white cement base. Above this base are embedded fragments of ribbed pottery vessels typical of the Late Roman/Byzantine period, which provided the foundation for the upper layer of white plaster mixed with gravel. This plaster covered the ritual bath floor and all the steps, including the access steps leading to the entrance.

The excavation yielded no datable artifacts. Consequently, our chronology relies on architectural typology, ceramic fragments within the plaster matrix, and the imagery in the graffiti. The architectural configuration—featuring an antechamber descending to a plastered subterranean chamber—typifies Second Temple–period *miqva'ot* common throughout the Judean Hills and Foothills, serving the region's Jewish population.[28]

Fig. 12: Stepped immersion chamber in the Bird Miqveh: view to the W. Note the cut-out depression in the top step (photo: Boaz Zissu).

[26] Song of Songs 2:14, 4:1, 5:2, 6:9.
[27] Matthew 3:16; Luke 3:22.
[28] Reich 2013; Zissu 2001.

However, the plaster composition features a relatively uniform layer of ribbed jar fragments typical of the Late Roman/Byzantine period. Moreover, the Christograms etched into the entrance doorposts, generally dated to no earlier than the late 3rd century CE and associated primarily with the Constantinian dynasty, suggest a post-Second Temple–period date.[29] Significantly, these graffiti were subsequently plastered over; thus, the plaster application must postdate the 3rd–4th centuries CE and likely belongs to the Byzantine period. The concealment of the graffiti beneath plaster during the structure's final use phase indicates that they were not functionally relevant to the purpose of the installation at that time. Consequently, the graffiti should be considered of secondary importance when interpreting the structure's function. Rather, the depression cut into the upper step, designed to accommodate a water jar, provides more substantial evidence of the installation's final purpose. We propose the following chronological sequence:

1. Initially (late Second Temple period to Bar Kokhba Revolt), this installation functioned as a ritual bath serving the Jewish settlement. Its size and peripheral location suggest a public *miqveh*, particularly valuable during the late summer when private baths might be impractical.[30] However, the absence of period-typical plaster raises the possibility that it remained unfinished. The chalk rock is generally impermeable except for cracks that allow for water percolation.

2. Subsequently (not before the late 3rd century CE), a Christian carved the doorpost graffiti using a sharp implement on the smooth surface. The identity of this person and whether the graffiti related to the facility's function remain unknown. The engravings represent a personal, somewhat naive expression using early Christian iconographic symbols. During this phase, the structure likely no longer functioned as a ritual bath but had been repurposed as a water cistern.

3. In the final conversion phase, the entire installation was completely plastered, creating approximately 50 cubic meters of storage capacity. Before plastering, the walls and doorposts were intentionally roughened with cutting tools, damaging the earlier graffiti. The depression hewn into the upper step dates to this phase, providing a resting place for water-drawing vessels when water levels were low during the summer months.

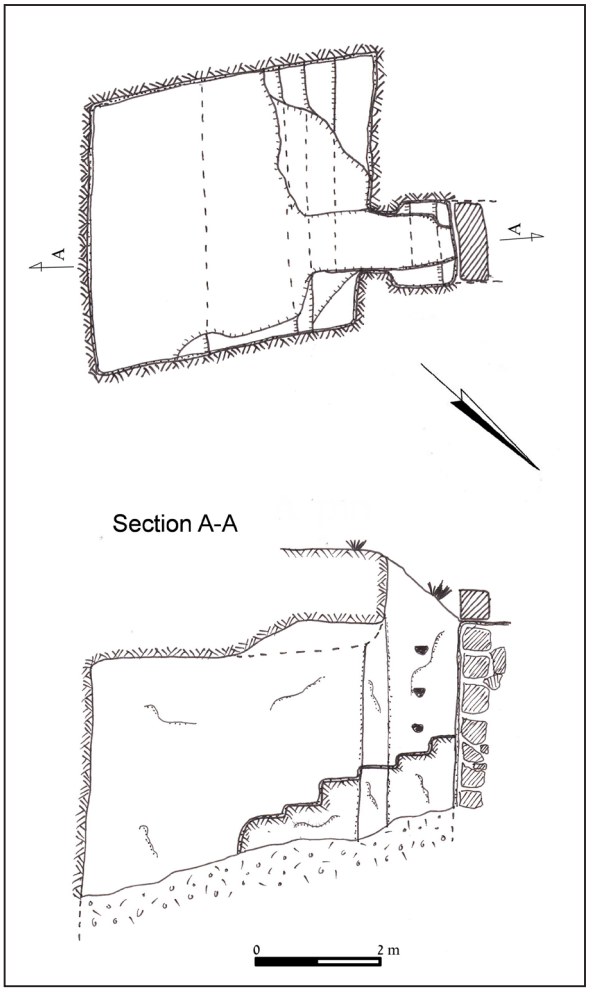

Fig. 13: Plan and cross-section of a ritual bath repurposed as a cistern (no. 1, photo: Boaz Zissu)

2. **A Ritual Bath Repurposed for Use as a Cistern** (Fig. 1:1): Another plastered, rock-cut subterranean structure (Fig. 13) is situated approximately 25 m north of the Bird Miqveh, on the ridge slope outside the boundaries of the ancient settlement. Access is currently via a rectangular shaft with its southern, eastern, and western walls hewn from bedrock, while the northern wall consists of fieldstone construction (shaft dimensions: 1.4 m long, approximately 1 m wide). All walls bear a uniform layer of gray plaster without gravel inclusions (possibly of later date). In several areas, an underlying layer of pinkish plaster applied over ribbed pottery fragments is visible beneath the gray plaster. The shaft extends approximately 3 m to the current earth fill.

On the eastern and western walls of the shaft, approximately 1 m above the present earth fill, imprints of two removed plastered stairs are discernible. The top step appears truncated by the northern shaft wall, demonstrating that this northern wall represents a later closure of a stepped entrance corridor. The walls contain carved indentations facilitating ascent and descent. From the shaft, a 1 m wide opening provides access to a large, trapezoidal hewn chamber

[29] Jensen 2000, 138.
[30] Zissu and Amit 2008.

(measuring 4.5 m in each direction, with a maximum height of approximately 4 m from earth fill to ceiling). This chamber features a gray plaster coating; in several locations, underlying pinkish plaster applied over ribbed pottery fragments is visible. The remains of four steps coated with gray plaster, spanning the entire width of the chamber, are preserved in the northeastern and northwestern corners. The central section of these steps, opposite the entrance, was removed during relatively recent excavation activity (Fig. 14). Although the current height of the opening following stair removal measures approximately 3.5 m, the original entrance height, clearly demarcated by doorpost imprints, was approximately 2.5 m.

The architectural characteristics—a stepped dromos leading to a rock-cut underground chamber with steps spanning its entire width at its lower end—indicate that this structure functioned as a ritual bath for the settlement's Jewish inhabitants during the late Second Temple period. Subsequently, the accessible entrance was blocked by fieldstone wall construction above the stepped corridor, and a vertical shaft was installed as the new access point. Concurrently, the immersion steps were removed, the floor was deepened, and the structure received an additional plaster layer datable to the Late Roman/Byzantine period based on embedded ceramic fragments. These modifications enabled repurposing of the ritual bath as a water cistern with increased capacity— storage volume of approximately 80 cubic meters when full—as it could be filled up to the shaft opening. Evidence suggests that the installation was recoated in a later period (possibly modern) with uniform gray plaster, while it retained its function as a cistern. As with the adjacent Bird Miqveh, the dimensions and peripheral location of this structure support its identification as a public installation.

Fig. 14: Immersion chamber in ritual bath no. 1: view to the N. Note the plastered steps running widthwise and the blocked dromos leading to the structure(photo: Boaz Zissu).

3. **A Ritual Bath Reused as a Water Cistern** (Fig. 1:10; Fig. 15): The entrance to an additional cistern is located at the base of the northeastern slope of the ruin. Access was via a rock-cut dromos 1.2 m wide, currently largely obscured by accumulated silt and debris. The entrance to the installation is 0.9 m wide and has partially plastered doorposts. The main chamber exhibits an irregular configuration comprising an oval area approximately 5 m wide (Chamber B), whose western section connects to a roughly rectangular chamber (Chamber A; 3.5 m long, 3 m wide). The floor of the structure is covered with silt and debris that entered through the opening, preventing determination of its original height. The absence of a roof shaft indicates that the structure was supplied solely through the northern wall opening, which also served for water extraction.

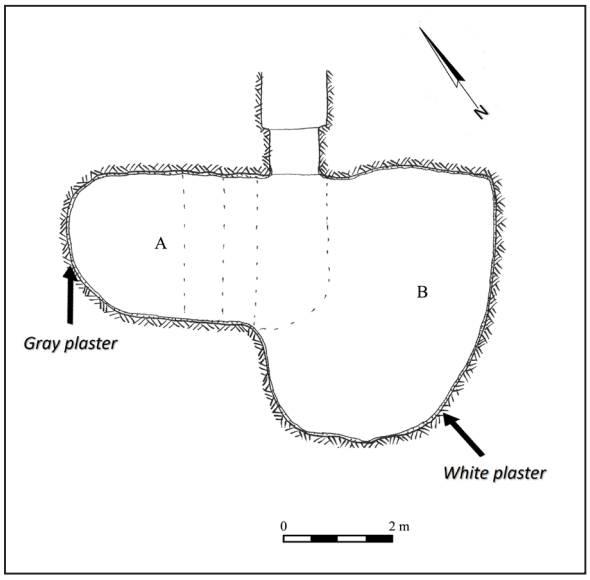

Fig. 15: Plan for ritual bath repurposed as a cistern (no. 10; drawing: Eitan Klein)

The walls of Chambers A and B bear white plaster mixed with ground pottery applied over a layer of ribbed pottery fragments. Significantly, whereas in Chamber B this plaster layer was applied directly to the rock surface, in Chamber A the white plaster overlies a layer of gray plaster containing small gravel inclusions, characteristic of structures dating from the Second Temple period through the Bar Kokhba Revolt.[31]

This stratigraphic evidence suggests two distinct phases of use: During the initial phase, from the late Second Temple period until the Bar Kokhba Revolt, Chamber A functioned as a ritual bath serving the Jewish population. Users would descend along the rock-cut dromos, proceed through the entrance, and turn right to access the immersion area. In the subsequent phase, the structure was repurposed as a cistern by extending Chamber A eastward and applying a uniform layer of white plaster to both cavities. The composition of this plaster, incorporating ribbed pottery fragments, indicates that this conversion occurred during the Late Roman/Byzantine period, as the local population adapted earlier subterranean chambers for water storage.

The Underground Hiding Complex (Fig. 16)

At the summit, approximately 30 m northeast of the fortress within the ancient settlement, a winepress was documented, consisting of a crushing floor and a collection vat lined with orange-colored plaster applied over a foundation of ribbed pottery fragments. This plaster typology is characteristic of the Late Roman/Byzantine period (Fig. 1:19). A shaft positioned in the center of the crushing floor (Shaft I1; approximately 1.2 m long, 0.7 m wide) is sealed with a precisely cut rectangular stone fitted to its dimensions. The perimeter of the shaft was sealed with cement to prevent leakage during operation of the crushing floor.

Adjacent to one wall of the crushing floor but outside the winepress proper, another shaft was identified (Shaft I2; approximately 2 m high). This unsealed opening serves as the access point to a cistern lined with gray hydraulic plaster (Cistern I). The central roof shaft of this cistern (Shaft I1) is, as noted, sealed with the rectangular stone. The stratigraphic relationship clearly indicates that the sealing of the shaft and installation of the crushing floor postdate the construction of the cistern directly beneath it. This evidence suggests that the winepress

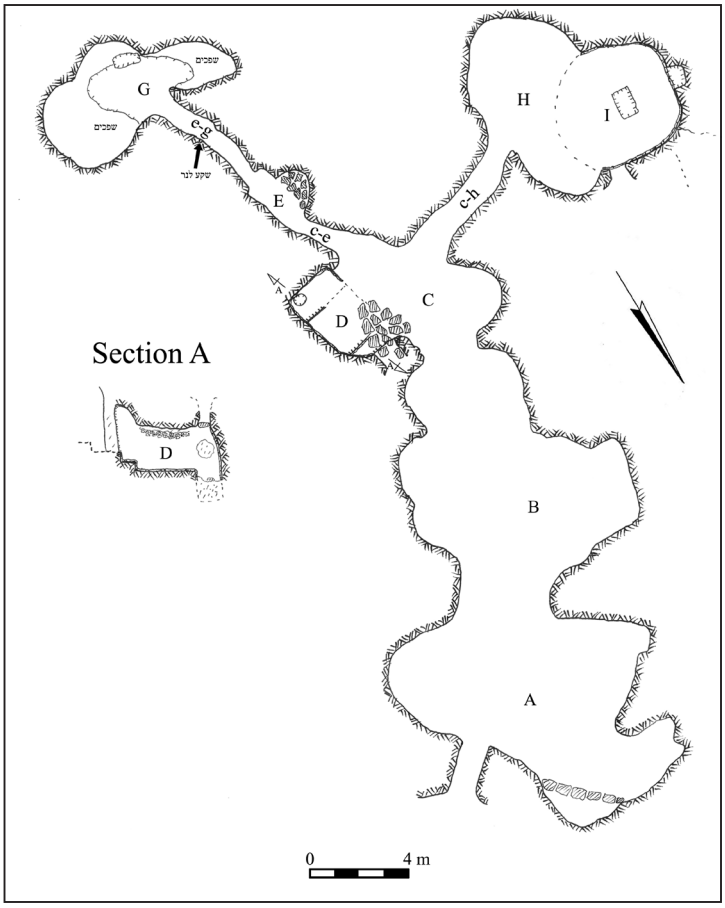

Fig. 16: Plan and cross-section of underground hiding complex in which a ritual bath was incorporated (drawing: Eitan Klein)

[31] Porat 2002, 35; Amit 2002a, 311–312.

builders excavated Shaft I2 to maintain access to the preexisting subterranean chambers while the winepress was in operation.

At some point, the eastern wall of Cistern I was breached to connect the cistern with Chamber H, an elliptical space approximately 8 m long and 5 m wide. A narrow tunnel (c–h), approximately 5 m long and 0.7–1.1 m wide and averaging 0.8 m high, was excavated through the eastern wall of Chamber H. This tunnel leads to Chamber C, an irregularly shaped space roughly 6.5 m long, 3 m wide, and 1.2 m high.

During the eastward expansion of Chamber C, the western wall of an adjacent rectangular chamber (Chamber D; approximately 4 m long, 2.2 m wide, and 1.8–2 m high) was removed. Gray hydraulic plaster covers all the walls of this space; in several areas, repairs to wall fissures using medium-sized fieldstones and cement are visible beneath the plaster. This chamber has an entrance approximately 1 m wide that provided convenient access, although it is currently obstructed by surface rock collapse. Two plastered steps span the width of the structure. The architectural configuration indicates that this structure functioned as a ritual bath serving the Jewish population from the late Second Temple period until the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

A narrow tunnel approximately 2.5 m long was excavated in the southern wall of Chamber C, extending toward the small Room E. Unauthorized excavators constructed a fieldstone terrace that now blocks access to much of this room. The tunnel continues southward from Room E for approximately 6 m before reaching Chamber G, an irregularly shaped space with a currently sealed ceiling access shaft. This tunnel exhibits the characteristic layout and cross-section of hiding complex tunnels (Fig. 17), with several lamp niches cut along its length. We suggest that Chamber G was originally a subterranean storeroom beneath a residential structure, and that the tunnel connecting it to Chamber C and Room E represents a later adaptation for concealment purposes.

A wide opening (approximately 2.2 m) in the northern wall of Chamber C penetrates the ceiling of a large underground hall (Chamber B; approximately 10 m in both length and width). This chamber, measuring 4–5 m high, was hewn out of a soft chalk layer containing numerous flint veins. Apparently, these flint intrusions impeded the stonecutters, who left the chamber unfinished. The original function of this chamber remains unclear. It connects via a 3.8 m wide opening to another large chamber (Chamber A; 10–12 m long, 6 m wide, and 2.5 m

Fig. 17: Tunnel e–g in the refuge system: view to the N (photo: Eitan Klein)

high). An opening in its northeastern wall, approximately 2 m long, 1 m wide, and 1.6 m high, leads to the surface of the eastern slope outside the settlement via a rock-cut dromos.

In various parts of this complex, we found pottery fragments that attest to its main periods of use. In Chamber A, we found a fragment of the rim of a jar that had a simple everted rim and nearly no neck; such jars were common in Judea from the 4th to the later 2nd century BCE.[32] Fragments of storage jars with a thickened rim on the upper section of the neck (Fig. 18:1–4)[33] and cooking pots with a high diagonal rim, narrow opening, and angular shoulders (Fig. 18:7–8),[34] a type common at Hasmonean-period sites in Judea and datable to the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, were found in Chambers A, B, and C. Other pottery, including a cooking pot with an everted triangular rim (Fig. 18:9),[35] a fragment of a flask (Fig. 18:11),[36] a fragment of a juglet (Fig. 18:12),[37] and a piece of the rim of a large stone vessel, a product of the Jewish stone vessel industry of the late Second Temple period,[38] can be dated to somewhere between the 1st century BCE and the first third of the 2nd century CE. A fragment of a storage jar with a long neck and everted rim (Fig. 18:6)[39] and a fragment of a cooking pot with a grooved rim (Fig. 18:10)[40] can be dated to the interbellum period (70–132 CE). They may date to the stage in which the complex was repurposed for refuge during the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

A fragment of a basin with a thickened, everted diagonal rim and two ridges on the inside, a type that was widespread in Judea from the 3rd to the 6th century CE (known as a "rilled rim basin"), was found in Chamber G.[41] A fragment of an Ottoman clay tobacco pipe was found in Chamber H (Fig. 18:15).[42] These finds suggest that various parts of the complex saw some use during more recent periods.

No.	Vessel type	Location	Description
1	Storage jar	Chamber A	Moist orange clay, medium-size white grit
2	Storage jar	Chamber A	Light orange-pink clay with gray core, small white grit
3	Storage jar	Chamber C	Light orange clay, small white grit
4	Storage jar	Chamber A	Gray-green clay with gray core, small white grit
5	Storage jar	Chamber C	Orange clay, small black and white grit
6	Storage jar	Chamber C	Orange and light brown clay, brown core, small white grit
7	Cooking pot	Chamber B	Dark orange clay, white grit
8	Cooking pot	Chamber C	Black-gray clay, white grit
9	Cooking pot	Chamber C	Dark orange clay, gray core, small white grit
10	Cooking pot	Chamber G	Dark orange clay, gray core, small white grit
11	Clay flask	Chamber C	Clay, dark orange exterior, brown interior, gray core, small white grit
12	Juglet	Chamber G	Very fine light orange clay with dark orange core, tiny white grit
13	Basin	Chamber G	Light orange clay with gray core, small white grit
14	Stone vessel	Chamber C	Fragment of a chalk basin
15	Censer	Chamber H	Very fine orange clay, signs of soot on the inside

Fig. 18: Table of Artifacts

32 See Gitin 1990, 253–254; Geva 2003, 125–126, Pl. 5.6:11, 12, 14 and references there.

33 For parallels see Killebrew 1999, Fig. III.62, nos. 1, 2; Bar-Nathan 2002, J-SJ4A-B, 28–31.

34 Killebrew 1999, Type A/1, 117–119, Fig. III.58, nos. 1–4; Bar-Nathan 2002, J-CP1, 68–70.

35 For parallels see, e.g., Bar-Nathan 2002, J-CP2, 170–171, Pl. 26:480–482; Bar-Nathan 2006, M-CP1B, 155–158, Pl. 28:21–22.

36 For parallels see Bar-Nathan 2002, J-FL1, 65–66, Pl. 10:120–121.

37 For parallels see Bar-Nathan 2002, J-JT1, 162–164, Pl. 25:446–447; Bar-Nathan 2006, M-JT1, 190–193, Pl. 33:13.

38 This limestone vessel is evidence that those who used it were meticulous in their observance of the Jewish laws of ritual purity. See Magen 2002.

39 For parallels see Eshel and Zissu 1998, 123, Pl. 1:1; Klein and Frumkin 2009, Pl. 9:1.

40 See parallels from Cave L-G in Nahal Mikhmas (Wadi Suweinit) in Eshel, Zissu, and Frumkin 1998, 96, Pl. 6:1.

41 For parallels, see Magness 1993, 139, 203–204, Fig. 1. nos. 16–18; Magness 2003, 428, 432, Pl. 18.2, no. 10.

42 For a parallel to the pipe, see Avner and De'adle 2009, Fig. 8:4.

The underground hiding complex consists of a series of earlier rock-cut chambers that were part of the settlement infrastructure and were later connected by narrow tunnels to form a complex underground system. Because it was hewn out of soft, brittle chalk of the Adullam Formation,[43] most of the tunnels do not have the cross-section typical of a hiding complex.[44] The complex began at the top of the site, inside the boundaries of the ancient settlement, and ended on the northern slope, apparently outside the bounds of the settlement as it existed in the interbellum period. This allowed the people who took refuge in this complex to flee the settlement in times of danger. Hiding complexes from that period, with exits outside the settlement, are known from several nearby locations, such as Hurbat Lavnin and Tel Socho,[45] and they have been classified as escape systems.[46]

A Large, Elongated Cistern on the Northeastern Slope

On the northeastern slope of the site (Fig. 1:9; ITM 195856/626233), within a dense pine forest approximately 200 m from the summit, we identified the opening of a plastered, rock-cut cistern that had been breached by antiquities looters. This cistern, situated outside the boundaries of the ancient settlement, is accessed via rock-cut steps (Fig. 1:8). Currently, entry to the structure (Fig. 19) is possible through a 3 m shaft that descends to the base of a hewn entrance 1.7 m wide, largely obstructed by substantial boulders. The façade is capped by a cut fieldstone lintel (2.4 m long, 1.1 m wide, 0.6 m high) with a centrally positioned cistern entrance (Fig. 20; 1.2 m wide, 1.7 m high from silt-covered floor to lintel). There is a shallow rectangular recess (0.3 m high, 0.6 m wide, up to 3 cm deep) on the western side of the façade, approximately 0.2 m above the opening; this depression likely accommodated a rectangular plaque bearing an inscription or dedication.

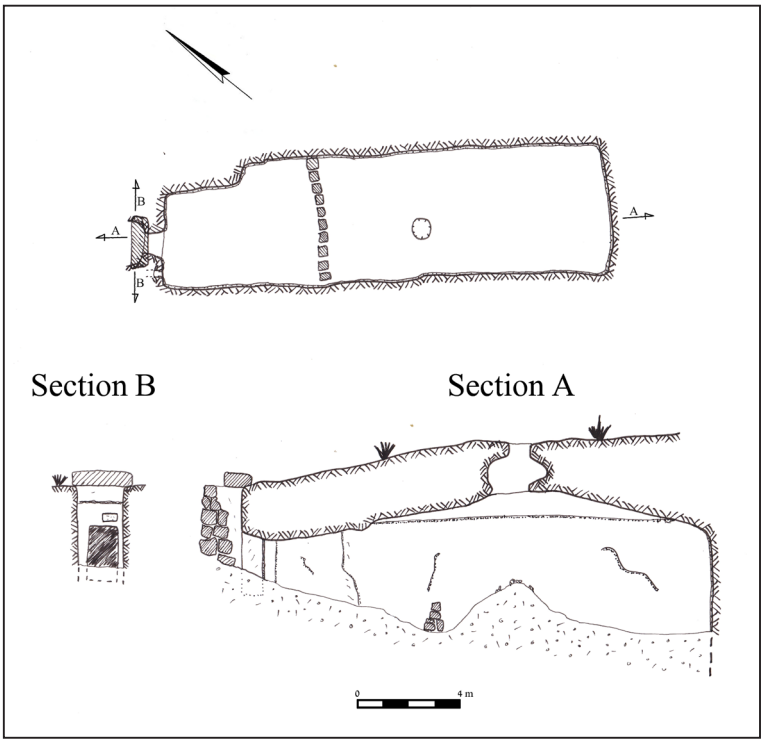

Fig. 19: Plan and cross-section of the rectangular cistern (drawing: Eitan Klein)

The structure measures approximately 17.5 m in length from the northern entrance to its southern terminus (Fig. 21). The initial 3 m beyond the entrance maintain a width of 3.8 m, after which the eastern wall expands to a width of approximately 5 m. The cistern exhibits a trapezoidal cross-section. The distance from the rock ceiling to the current floor surface, covered with silt and collapsed boulders, measures approximately 5 m, though the original floor level evidently lies deeper. The walls are covered with a thick layer of gray plaster mixed with gravel and small stones, characteristic of Second Temple–period construction.[47] In several locations, this plaster extends over unsmoothed rock projections in the chamber walls that compromise the structure's symmetry. The ceiling remains unplastered. Areas where the plaster has been damaged or detached show repairs using pinkish plaster applied over crushed, ribbed pottery fragments—a technique typical of the Late Roman/Byzantine periods, indicating the cistern's continued use during these later phases. A water-drawing shaft was cut into the center of the roof, which we interpret as a secondary feature added when the structure was replastered, repaired, and repurposed as a cistern.

[43] For a geological map of the region, see Sneh 2009.

[44] For the characteristics and geographical distribution of hiding complexes, see Tepper 1987, 37–71; Kloner and Zissu 2003, 182–183; Eshel and Zissu 2019, 48-61; Raviv and Zissu 2022.

[45] Zissu 2000, 70–73; Zissu 2001, 164.

[46] Kloner and Zissu 2003, 185.

[47] van Zuiden and Asscher 2021

Fig. 20: Original cistern mouth: view to the N (photo: Boaz Zissu)

Fig. 21: Rectangular cistern: view to the S. Note the trapezoidal cross-section and the gray plaster on the walls (photo: Boaz Zissu).

Although this structure awaits systematic excavation, we propose a late Second Temple–period dating based on the plaster composition characteristic of that era. Furthermore, its morphology—an elongated cavity with plastered walls and the original entrance positioned at the narrow end—corresponds typologically to cisterns previously documented on the slopes of Judean royal fortresses dating to the Hasmonean-Herodian period.

Hasmonean and Herodian royal fortresses display distinctive architectural and topographical characteristics: they occupy elevated positions atop prominent hills with commanding views of surrounding territories, are typically encircled by steep slopes, and feature substantial fortification walls, elaborate architectural elements, extensive cisterns, ritual baths, and storage facilities. These archaeological components—particularly the sophisticated defensive structures and water management systems—constitute the defining elements of Second Temple–period fortresses documented throughout both the Judean Desert and populated regions.

These fortress sites were initially identified and studied in the Judean Desert.[48] Scholars have proposed various interpretations regarding their function. Ofra Guri-Rimon suggested they served as royal treasuries and administrative centers, while Zeev Meshel argued that they were constructed to counter internal and external threats to Hasmonean authority.[49] Ehud Netzer maintained that these Judean Desert fortresses primarily provided secure refuge for royal family members during periods of instability, which necessitated the storage of water, weapons, and provisions.[50] The substantial cisterns on fortress slopes were designed to sustain occupants during sieges and meet daily water requirements.[51] Cisterns comparable to the one at Hurbat Husham have been documented on the slopes of Hasmonean-Herodian fortresses in the Judean Desert at Sartaba-Alexandrium, Doq, Cypros, Hyrcania, and Masada.[52] Recent research has identified fortified Second Temple–period sites in populated regions (predominantly in Judea) that share characteristics with those in the Judean Desert: commanding positions and slope cisterns. This category includes Kh. al-Hamam (Narbata) in northern Samaria, Kh. Urmeh in southern Samaria, Kh. Artabba in the western Beit El Hills, Kh. Kafira in western Benjamin, Hurbat Tura in the Jerusalem Hills, the Herodium cisterns, and Kh. Jamjum in the Judean Hills.[53] Two cisterns of identical typology were also discovered at Kh. Ras Tumeim east of Mount Scopus, though their association with a Second Temple–period royal fortress or use by Temple pilgrims traveling between Jericho and Jerusalem remains uncertain.[54]

Unlike other identified sites, which feature between two and 14 cisterns of this type, only one such cistern has been discovered at Hurbat Husham. Nevertheless, several factors support our hypothesis that the site was a royal fortress constructed during the Hasmonean or Herodian period: the location of the cistern on the slope beyond the settlement boundaries; the site's topographical attributes (elevated position commanding extensive territory and proximity to an ancient road); appropriate ceramic evidence. With considerable confidence, we propose that Hurbat Husham was a Hasmonean-Herodian fortress—potentially the first identified in the Judean Foothills—defending western approaches and a major route (via Nahal Soreq and Nahal Elah) to Judea during the late Second Temple period. We reasonably hypothesize that this site was the fortress of the toparchy of Bethleptephe-Pella (Beit Nattif).[55]

Geographical and Historical Identification

Is Hurbat Husham Thamnata, one of Bacchides' fortresses?

As established above, multiple lines of evidence support our identification of this site as a Hasmonean-Herodian fortress or fortified settlement: the distinctive topographical features and commanding position, the Arabic toponym, the presence of an impressive rectangular cistern dating to the Second Temple period paralleling those of desert fortresses, evidence of contemporaneous Jewish occupation, and ceramic assemblages dating primarily from the Hellenistic period through the Bar Kokhba Revolt (including 2nd-century BCE pottery). The site's strategic

[48] For an overview, see Tsafrir 1982; see also Shatzman 1991, 36–52, 227–233.

[49] Guri-Rimon 1996.

[50] Meshel 2000; Netzer 2999, 60–61.

[51] Garbrecht and Peleg 1994.

[52] Amit 2002a, 218–220; Amit 2002b, 226–227; Meshel and Amit 2002, 234; Patrich 2002, 255–259; Netzer 2002, 265–270.

[53] Zertal 1981; Eshel and Erlich 1988; Zissu and Raviv 2011; Raviv and Zissu 2019; Raviv 2018; Eshel and Amit 1991; Zissu 2008; Netzer 1981, 85, 141, no. 29, Fig. 114; Meir, Klein, and Zissu 2013.

[54] Zissu and Kloner 2009.

[55] A locality named "Bethleptephe" appears on Pliny's list of Judean districts (Pliny, *Natural History* 5.70). Josephus similarly enumerates the toparchies of Judea, noting a district called Πέλλη (Pella) situated between the toparchies of Emmaus and Idumea (Josephus, *Jewish War* 3.55). Elsewhere, Josephus reports that during its 68 CE campaign in the Judean Shephelah, the Roman army burned Βεθλεπτηνφῶν and its surrounding territory after conquering Emmaus but before subduing Idumea and Bet Guvrin (Josephus, *Jewish War* 4.445–446). Scholarly consensus identifies these three toponyms with a single site: Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif in the Judean Shephelah (Tsafrir, Di Segni and Green 1994, 84). A clay bulla bears an inscription referencing the city/village council of Baitolethepha (Βουλὴ Βαιτολεθηφῶν; Ecker and Zissu 2020). We suggested that the bulla was issued by the council (boule) of the Bethleptephe toparchy. This evidence indicates that governing councils (*boulai*) existed not only in larger cities (*poleis*) but also in smaller towns or larger villages. The toparchy existed from the late Second Temple period until ca. 200 CE, when the region was incorporated into the territory of the newly founded Eleutheropolis.

significance derives from its position along a major thoroughfare in the northern section of the High Shephelah ridge between two principal drainage basins (Nahal Elah to the south and Nahal Soreq to the north) that constituted a primary access route to Judea during these periods. Its location west of Bethleptephe-Pella, the regional toparchy capital during the late Second Temple period, afforded the site considerable tactical advantage, with extensive visibility both eastward and westward.

One would reasonably expect that a fortress at such a strategically significant location would be mentioned in Hellenistic and Roman texts, but we have not identified any explicit or unambiguous reference to a Hasmonean-Herodian fortress at this precise location. Nevertheless, based on the premise that the site's exceptional topographical advantages would have attracted military utilization throughout these periods, we propose identifying it with Thamnata, which appears among the fortifications established by the Seleucid general Bacchides following his victory at the Battle of Elasa. This identification rests primarily on the chronologically appropriate ceramic evidence and the toponymic preservation in Kh. Tibnah, situated a mere 2 km from Hurbat Husham. This identification will be examined further below.

Lists of Bacchides' fortresses appear in two distinct sources. The first is 1 Maccabees, originally written in Hebrew contemporaneously with the events it describes but preserved only in its Greek Septuagint translation. The relevant passage reads as follows:

> Bacchides then returned to Jerusalem and built strong cities in Judea: the fortress in Jericho, and Emmaus, and Beth-horon, and Bethel, and Timnath, and Pharathon, and Tephon, with high walls and gates and bars. And he placed garrisons in them to harass Israel. He also fortified the city of Beth-Zur, and Gazera, and the citadel, and in them he put troops and stores of food.[56]

There is another list of Bacchides' fortresses in Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*, written approximately 200 years after the events described:[57]

> Bacchides then occupied many cities of Judaea and fortified them, such as Jericho, Emmaus, Beth-horon, Bethel, Thamnatha, Pharatho, Tochoa and Gazera; in each of these cities he built towers, and surrounded them with strong walls of exceeding height, and stationed forces in them in order that they might be able to issue from them and harass the Jews. Above all he fortified the citadel in Jerusalem.[58]

Josephus's list is similar to that in 1 Maccabees, with several differences. First of all, 1 Maccabees joins Thamnata to Pharathon without an intervening conjunction (τὴν Θαμναθὰ Φαραθωνὶ), unlike the other fortresses in the text, which are linked by the conjunction καί. As a result, some have proposed that Thamnata-Pharathon is a single place, that is, "Thamnata located near Pharathon," to distinguish it from other places named Thamnata.[59] But *Antiquities* presents Thamnata and Pharathon as two separate fortresses. Another difference between the two lists is the replacement of Tephon, found only in 1 Maccabees, with Tochoa, found only in Josephus. Finally, Beth-Zur (Bethsura), mentioned in 1 Maccabees, is omitted in *Antiquities.*

Scholars agree about the identity of most of the fortified towns in the text. The first four places—Jericho, Emmaus, Beth Horon, and Bethel—form a line of fortifications on the northern boundary of Judea and control the main roads leading to it from the east, north, and northwest.[60] Scholars also accept the identification of Gazera with Tel Gezer, near where the Ayalon Valley debouches into the coastal plain; this city controlled access to Judea from the west along the major highway through the Ayalon Valley.[61] Bethsura, in the Hebron Hills,[62] was a strategic point along what was Judea's southern border during this period and controlled the mountain road in southern Judea. The other three fortresses—Thamnata, Pharathon, and Tephon/Tochoa—are hard to identify; scholars have advanced many proposed identifications, generally in line with their own view of the purpose of the fortresses.

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56 1 Macc 9:50–52, RSV; Abel 1949, 172–173; Kahana 1956, 142; Rappaport 2004*,* 241–242.

57 The consensus is that Josephus took most of the information in this book from older texts to which he had access. See Schalit 1944, iv; Bar-Kochva 1992, 115–117.

58 Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.15–17.

59 See, e.g., Roll 1996, 512.

60 Roll, 511–512; Fischer 1995; Kelso 1968, 52.

61 Dever 1998. Note that several scholars have proposed a different identification for the Gazera fortified by Bacchides: Tel Yaoz, north of the mouth of Nahal Sorek; see Tal, Fischer and Roll 2005, 290–296.

62 Funk 1968, 8–17.

Several scholars have proposed identifying Tephon with biblical Tapuah, identified as Tell Abu Zarad in southern Samaria. This is consistent with their view that Bacchides fortified cities in northern Judea and southern Samaria in order to buttress his control of the area; hence they were meant to dominate areas of Jewish settlement that lay outside of Judea's administrative boundaries during this period.[63] Other disagree and assert that the search for the "missing" fortresses should focus on the administrative boundaries of Judea during this period; they have therefore proposed identifying Tephon with the Tapuah that lies some 3 km west of Hebron;[64] with Kh. Beit Nattif, north of the Elah Valley, due to the phonetic and graphic similarity of the names as found in the *Jewish War;*[65] with Tekoa;[66] and with biblical Netofah, which has been identified as Kh. Badd-Faluh, north of Tekoa.[67] We maintain that Tephon should be sought along Judea's administrative boundaries during this period. Assuming these fortresses controlled major routes into Judea, we favor identifying it with either Tekoa or Kh. Badd-Faluh, both situated on the eastern route running through Judea and providing access to the Judean Desert.

Abel proposed distinguishing between Thamnata and Pharathon and treating them as two different places, and most scholars have adopted his position. However, consistent with his "northern" view, he proposed identifying Pharathon with the village of Far'ata, 10 km southwest of Nablus and far outside the administrative boundaries of Judea.[68] Others have proposed more southerly identifications: the village of Farkha in southern Samaria, ʿAin Farah in Wadi Kelt, Tell el-Ful just north of Jerusalem, and Kh. el-Fir'ah, which lay along Judea's southern administrative boundary during this period.[69]

Abel identified Thamnata as Kh. Tibneh in the Ephraim Hills, northwest of Bir Zeit (ITM 21030/65720), on the Roman road that linked Lydda (Lod) with Nablus.[70] It is not entirely clear when this place, which served as the capital of a toparchy during the late Second Temple period, was annexed to Judea; perhaps it lay within the three *nomoi* north of Judea that Demetrius II granted Jonathan Apphus in the mid-second century BCE.[71] It is clear, however, that when Bacchides built his fortresses this site lay outside of Judea's administrative boundary to the north.[72] As a result, Michael Avi-Yonah preferred to identify Thamnata with Kh. Tibnah, located in the Judean Hills east of the Elah Valley (ITM 20475/62242).[73] Israel Roll took the Thamnata-Pharathon mentioned in 1 Maccabees as a single place, but followed Avi-Yonah in locating it at Kh. Tibna, east of the Elah Valley.[74] This cannot be correct, however, because a number of surveys have been conducted at this site and none of them has uncovered artifacts from the Hellenistic period.[75] Gershon Galil, too, searched for Thamnata along the Judean border and proposed identifying it with Kh. Ras et-Tawil, southeast of Halhul near Hebron.[76]

This identification assumes that biblical Timna is the same as Bacchides' Thamnata, an assumption that lacks supporting evidence beyond the location of Thamnata on Judea's southern boundary. Later, Avi-Yonah changed his mind, identifying Thamnata with Kh. Tibnah near Hurbat Husham (ITM 19396/62785).[77] Some suggest that this ruin preserves the name of biblical Timna (mentioned as being in the territories of Judah and Dan and appearing in the story of Samson).[78] Biblical Timna was likely at Tel Batash in Nahal Sorek, with its name later transferring to Kh. Tibnah after the abandonment of Timna in the Persian period.[79]

Zissu's 1997 examination of Kh. Tibnah revealed only Byzantine and medieval artifacts, not biblical or Second Temple remains.[80] Additionally, its topography lacks strategic views, especially eastward toward Judea. Therefore, Kh. Tibnah cannot be Bacchides' Thamnata. We propose that after the destruction of biblical Timna, its name transferred first to Hurbat Husham's fortress and settlement, and only later to nearby Kh. Tibnah.

63 Abel 1925, 202–208; Rappaport 2004, 241–242.
64 Kahana 1956, 152n50.
65 Βεθλεπτηνφῶν; Josephus, *Jewish War* 4.445; Möller and Schmitt 1976, 34–37; Galil 1992, 29–30.
66 Avi-Yonah 1963, 36; Kallai 1982, 97.
67 Roll 1996, 513.
68 Abel 1925, 206; Rappaport 2004, 240.
69 Safrai 1980, 60–62; Na'aman 1989; Avi-Yonah 1963, 36–37; Kallai 1982, 95–97; Finkelstein 2011, 115–116; Galil 1992, 28–29.
70 Abel 1925, 202; see also Kallai 1982, 96; Rappaport 2004, 240.
71 1 Macc 11:34; Raviv 2019.
72 Schürer 1979, 192n33.
73 Avi-Yonah 1963, 36–37.
74 Roll 1996.
75 Mazar 1981, 246; Weiss, Zissu and Solimany 2004, 93.
76 Galil 1992, 27–28.
77 Avi-Yonah 1976, 100; see also Tsafrir, Di Segni and Green 1994, 247.
78 Josh 15:10, 19:43; Judg 14–15.
79 Josh 15:10, 19:43; Judg 14–15.
80 Zissu 2001, 149.

We identify Hurbat Husham as Thamnata based on the name preserved at the adjacent Kh. Tibnah, its commanding position overlooking the Judean Hills and Shephelah, its location on the western boundary of Judea, and 2nd-century BCE artifacts. If Thamnata and Pharathon were separate Bacchidean fortifications, we favor Galil's identification of Pharathon with Kh. el-Fir'ah near Idhna, which preserves the ancient name and sits 6 km south of Keʿilah, the capital of a Jewish district on the Jewish-Idumean border in Nehemiah's time.[81]

Bacchides' fortresses thus encircled Judea's administrative boundaries, controlling major roads: Jericho (northeast), Bethel (north), Bethoron and Emmaus (northwest), Gazera and Thamnata/Hurbat Husham (west), Pharathon/Kh. el-Fir'ah (southwest), Bethsura (south), and Tekoa or Kh. Badd-Faluh (southeast) (Fig. 22).

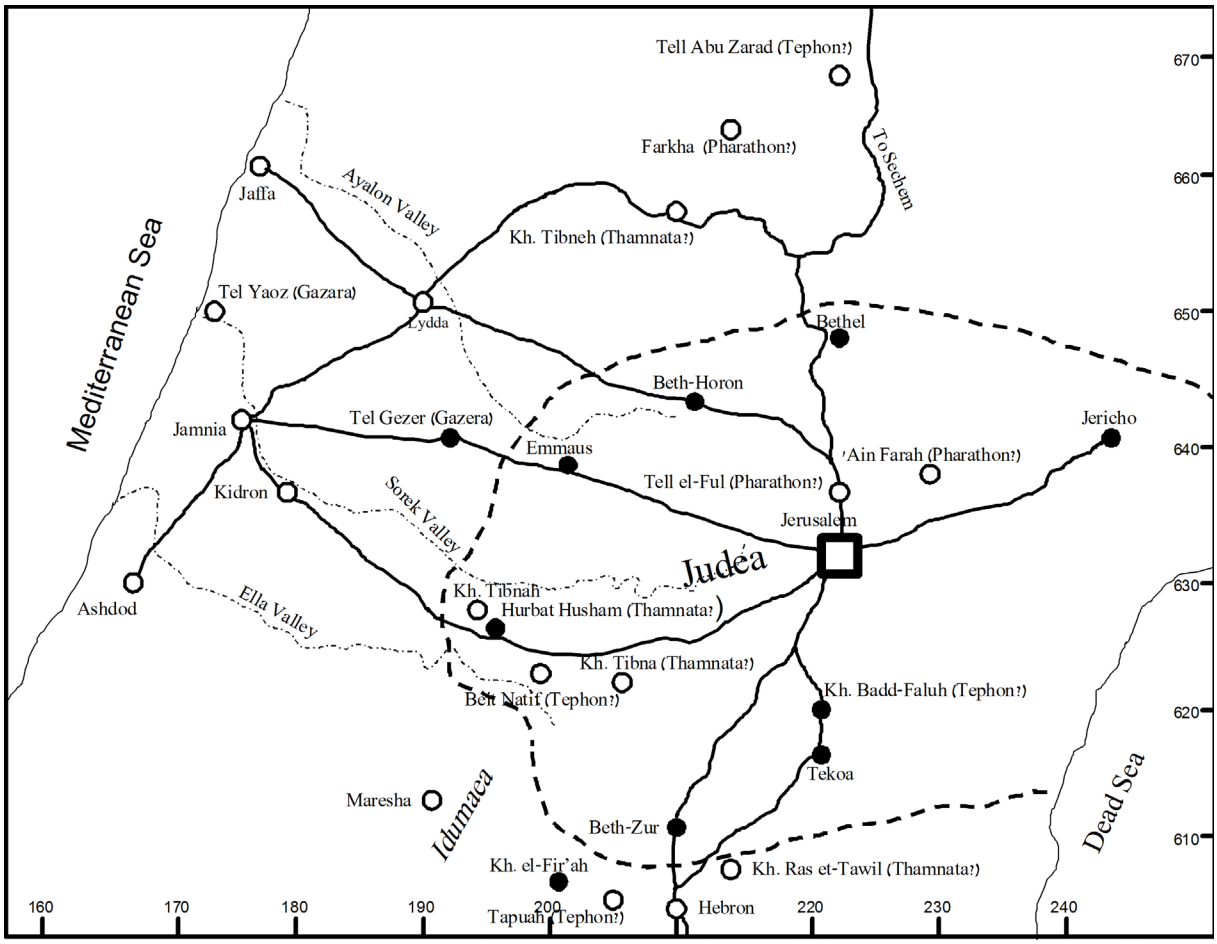

Fig. 22: Map of geographic and historical identifications of Bacchides' fortifications and Hasmonean-Herodian fortresses (sketch: Eitan Klein)

Historical sources may contain two additional unnamed references to the Hurbat Husham fortress. During Simon Thassi's reign, fighting focused on controlling Judean coastal plain towns including Gazera, Jamnia, Kidron, and Ashdod.[82] Simon needed fortresses overlooking these areas to monitor and isolate them from Judea. The construction of such fortresses is documented in 1 Maccabees 13:33: "Then Simon built up the strongholds in Judea, and fenced them about with high towers, and great walls, and gates, and bars, and laid up victuals therein."[83]

Hurbat Husham has a view of the entire southern Judean coastal plain, including Jamnia, Kidron, and Ashdod. Therefore it is possible that Simon's fortifications mentioned in 1 Maccabees include the Hellenistic structure at Hurbat Husham.

It is also possible that Josephus Flavius is referring to Hurbat Husham in his account of the conquest of the toparchy of Bethleptephe-Pella (Beit Nattif) in 68 CE by Vespasian and his army, who set fire to key settlements and fortified suitable locations:

81 Neh 3:17.
82 1 Macc 13:43, 16:1–10.
83 1 Macc 13:33; Kahana 1956, 163.

> Having occupied the approaches to the capital of this province, he fortified a camp and, leaving the fifth legion there, advanced with the rest of his forces to the province of Bethleptephe. After devastating with fire this and the neighbouring district and the outskirts of Idumaea, he built fortresses in suitable situations.[84]

Timna in the Onomasticon and on the Madaba Map

Places called "Timna" or something similar are mentioned in the *Onomasticon* several times. First, under the entry for Adira: "There is another village in the region of Diospolis near Thamnitike (Θαμνιτικὴν) which region itself is called after the village Thamna (Θαμνὰ)."[85] The place is listed again with its own entry: "Where Juda sheared his sheep. A (very) large village remains (is shown) [*sic*] in the boundary of Diospolis [i.e., Lydda] midway to Jerusalem. (In) tribe of Dan or Juda."[86] It is listed a third time under the entry for Thamnathsara (Timnat Serah, Θαμναθσαρά): "City of Josue son of Nun located 'in the mountain.' It is Thamna (Θαμνά) noted also above in which even now there sepulchre of Josue is pointed out [*sic*]. (In) tribe of Dan."[87]

These references suggest that a village called Timna existed in Eusebius's time on a main Jerusalem–Lydda road and was commonly identified with Kh. Tibneh in southern Samaria—not with any Judean ruins with similar names.[88]

On the Madaba Map, which dates from the mid-6th century CE, the city of Timna is marked by the legend "Timna, where Judah [sheared] his sheep," and by an icon of a village at the summit of a prominent hill.[89] Its placement between Beit Horon (south), Modi'in (north), and Beit Anaba (west) precludes identification with either Kh. Tibna near Beit Shemesh or Kh. Tibneh in southern Samaria. Leah Di Segni noted that the Madaba Map creators ignored Eusebius's identification, marking a different Timna on another Lydda–Jerusalem road.[90] Suggested identifications include Kh. Menaaʿ on the Roman road from Lydda to Jerusalem via Beit Horon, where a Byzantine church was found. [91]

Was Hurbat Husham the Hometown of Rabbi Simeon the Timnite?

Rabbi Simeon the Timnite was a *tanna* active in the period before the Bar Kokhba Revolt (70–135 CE). As illustrated in the following episode from the tractate Sanhedrin, he sat in Yavneh along with Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Joshua, and Rabbi Akiba:

> R. Judah said in Rab's name: A Sanhedrin must not be established in a city which does not contain [at least] two who can speak [the seventy languages] and one who understands them. In the city of Bethar there were three and in Jabneh four [who knew how to speak them]: [viz.,] R. Eliezer, R. Joshua. R. Akiba, and Simeon the Temanite/Timnite, who used to discuss before them sitting on the ground. [92]

Furthermore, as recounted in the tractate Betsa, Rabbi Simeon actively opposed the Romans during this period:

> It once happened that Simeon the Temanite did not come to the Academy on the eve [of the Festival]. In the morning Judah b. Baba found him and asked: Why did you not attend yesterday [evening] at the Academy? He replied to him: A troop of soldiers came into our town and wished to plunder the entire city; so we killed a calf for them and fed them and let them depart in peace. Said [Judah] to him: I should be surprised if your gain is not counterbalanced by your loss, for surely the Torah said "for you" but not for heathens.[93]

84 Josephus, *Jewish War* 4.445–446.
85 Eusebius, *Onomasticon* 24.3–5, trans. Wolf.
86 Eusebius, *Onomasticon,* 96.25–26.
87 Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, 100.1–3.
88 Safrai believes that the place is mentioned in the *Onomasticon* both as the capital of a toparchy and as a village near Lydda because Eusebius's lists were drawn up immediately after the administrative reforms implemented in the reign of Diocletian (late 3rd century), when the Timna region was annexed to Lydda. See Safrai 1980; Raviv 2014; Raviv 2019.
89 Alliata 1999, 73; Avi-Yonah 1954*,* 64.
90 Di Segni 1999, 116.
91 Weksler-Bdolach, Onn and Rapuano 2003, 84, note 57.
92 B Sanhedrin 17b, Soncino trans.
93 B Betsa 21a, Soncino trans.

The commentators disagree as to whether Simeon hailed from Yemen (Heb. *Teman*) or from the city of Timna (i.e., whether the Hebrew תימני should be vocalized *temani* or *timni*). In his commentary on the tractate Taanit, Rashi explains the name as follows: "Simeon the Timnite—he came from Timna."[94] B. Z. Segal noted that Codex Kaufmann of the Mishnah writes Simeon's toponymic with a *hiriq* under the *tav*, supporting the reading that the *tanna* came from a place called Timna and not from the land of Teman. In addition, Cambridge MS Add.470.1 (Lowe) spells the sage's toponymic תיבני, which resembles the Arabs' pronunciation of places called Timna—further support for the idea that the *tanna* came from Timna. Segal therefore proposed identifying Simeon's village with Kh. Tibna west of Beit Shemesh;[95] others have suggested that he hailed from Kh. Tibneh in southern Samaria.[96] Because, as noted above, none of the finds at the Kh. Tibna west of Beit Shemesh dates to the Roman period, Zissu has proposed identifying Simeon the Timnite's hometown as nearby Hurbat Husham.[97] Above we documented a hiding complex containing pottery shards typical of the interbellum period. In light of this find, the suggested identification of Thamnata/Timna and our site's relative proximity to Jamnia (approximately 24 km), the main center of Simeon the Timnite's activity, this identification seems plausible.

Summary and Conclusions

This study presents the results of archaeological surveys and excavations conducted at Hurbat Husham, a prominent hill site in the Judean Foothills commanding panoramic views. The investigations reveal a significant Jewish settlement that existed from the Hellenistic period through the Bar Kokhba Revolt (3rd century BCE–135 CE).

Key archaeological finds include a square fortress-like structure at the summit, three ritual baths (*miqva'ot*), an underground hiding complex, rock-cut tombs, and a large, elongated cistern on the northeastern slope. Material culture recovered from these features—including distinctive pottery assemblages and chalk stone vessels—firmly establishes the site's Jewish character during the Second Temple period. The underground hiding complex, containing interlinked tunnels and multiple chambers, likely served as an escape system during the Bar Kokhba Revolt, similar to those documented at nearby sites.

Based on the site's strategic location and distinctive topography, architectural features (particularly the elongated cistern typical of Hasmonean-Herodian desert fortresses), and ceramic evidence dating to the 2nd century BCE, we propose identifying Hurbat Husham with Thamnata, one of the fortresses constructed by the Seleucid general Bacchides in 160 BCE as recorded in 1 Maccabees and Josephus's *Antiquities*. This identification is supported by the preservation of the name at nearby Kh. Tibnah and the site's strategic position controlling major routes into Judea from the west via Nahal Sorek and Nahal Elah. Subsequently, during the Hasmonean and Herodian periods, it served as a fortress associated with the capital of the toparchy of Bethleptephe-Pella (Beit Nattif).

Furthermore, we suggest that Hurbat Husham was likely the hometown of Rabbi Simeon the Timnite, active during the interbellum period.

Subsequent occupation, likely during the Late Roman or Early Byzantine period, was by a Christian community, as evidenced by graffiti on one of the doorposts of the ritual bath that was later repurposed as a water cistern. One graffito depicts two large birds (probably doves or partridges) alongside smaller avian figures with fan-like tails (possibly peacocks) and what appears to be a woven cage. Above these figures is a monogram combining a cross with the Greek letters chi and rho (a Christogram), confirming the artist's Christian affiliation. Notably, a multi-lined graffito to the right may represent a fish—an important early Christian symbol. The fish (Greek: ΙΧΘΥΣ) functioned as an acrostic for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior," serving as both cryptographic identifier during persecution and theological shorthand. These Christian symbols were later plastered over during the structure's conversion to a water cistern, suggesting they date to the late 3rd or early 4th century CE. During this phase, the site's cisterns were renovated, with the *miqva'ot* repurposed for water storage. Whether a church or monastery existed at the site during this period remains uncertain; only systematic excavation of the summit can resolve this question.

The finds at Hurbat Husham contribute significantly to our understanding of settlement patterns, defensive strategies, and religious transitions in the Judean Foothills from the Hellenistic through the Byzantine period, while offering potential solutions to longstanding historical-geographical questions regarding Bacchides' fortresses and the origin of Rabbi Simeon the Timnite.

94 Rashi on B Taanit 19a.
95 Segal 1979, 185f.
96 Klein 1939, 157; Schwartz 1986, 207n6.
97 Zissu 2001, 149.

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Lista figurilor

Appendix A: Description of Features at Hurbat Husham (see Fig. 1)

No.	Coordinates (ICS)	Coordinates (ITM)	Type of site	Notes	Map icon
1.	145635/126412	195635/626412	Ritual bath coated with gray hydraulic plaster converted into a large cistern		Miqveh
2.	145634/126372	195634/626372	Cistern mouth		Cistern
3.	145646/126371	195646/626371	Bird Miqveh	See detailed description, illustrations, and discussion above.	Miqveh
4.	145780/126327	195780/626327	Rock-cut tomb with three arcosolia	Datable to the Late Roman/Byzantine period based on its architecture	Rock-cut tomb
5.	145794/126290	195794/626290	Rock-cut tomb featuring a façade with an opening surrounded by a carved frame, a burial chamber with five niches (*kokhim*), and a bottle-shaped depression carved out in the center		Rock-cut tomb
6.	145817/126245	195817/626245	Cave used for dwelling/ storage and accessed via a rock-cut dromos		Dwelling cave
7.	145833/126251	195833/626251	Underground chamber coated with gray plaster; apparently a ritual bath		Miqveh?
8.	145845/126227	195845/626227	Rock-cut staircase	The staircase leads to a large cistern (no. 9) on the NE slope of the site.	Staircase
9.	145856/126233	195856/626233	Rectangular cistern (similar to the cisterns at the Hasmonean-Herodian fortresses in the Judean Desert and Hills)	See detailed description, illustrations, and discussion above.	Cistern
10.	145854/126296	195854/626296	Cistern that originally served as a ritual bath		Miqveh/ cistern
11.	145863/126334	195863/626334	Carved tomb entrance(?)		Rock-cut tomb
12.	145836/126341	195836/626341	Carved tomb entrance(?)		Rock-cut tomb
13.	145663/126287	195663/626287	Underground storage system at the NE corner of the fortress at the site's summit	See detailed description, illustrations, and discussion above.	Underground fortress storage system

No.	Coordinates (ICS)	Coordinates (ITM)	Type of site	Notes	Map icon
14.	145673/126279	195673/626279	Ritual bath connected to the storage area next to the fortress at the summit	See detailed description, illustrations, and discussion above.	Miqveh
15.	145193/126079	195193/626079	Milestone fragment found at the W foot of Hurbat Husham, next to a 4×4 vehicle trail	See detailed description above.	Milestone
16.	145429/126060	195429/626060	Rock-cut tomb at the foot of the ruin to the SW. The cave includes a carved entrance, façade with an opening surrounded by a carved frame, and rectangular burial chamber with no niches.		Rock-cut tomb
17.	145535/126202	195535/626202	Round stone in "quarry state," likely intended as a screw base for a Byzantine oil press		Base for a screw in an oil press
18.	145705/126330	195705/626330	Opening to a network of large chambers. The ceiling of one chamber was pierced and is connected to several facilities—including a miqveh, cistern, and storage areas—via narrow tunnels.	See detailed description, illustrations, and discussion above.	Underground hiding complex
19.	145684/126305	195684/626305	Rock-cut winepress. The cistern is accessible from the refuge system (no. 18) through the collection pool.		Winepress

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