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Between Phoenicia and Judaea: Preliminary Results of the 2007–2010 Excavation Seasons at Horvat ‘Eleq, Ramat HaNadiv, Israel

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In Memory of Prof. Yizhar Hirschfeld

Renewed excavations at Horvat ‘Eleq support a fresh understanding of this multi-strata settlement. The site was first inhabited in the Iron Age. A fortification system was constructed in the 4th century BCE and was already out of use by the Hellenistic period. The finds indicate that the Hellenistic period saw the zenith of the settlement, in terms of magnitude of construction and extent. New data contradicts Hirschfeld’s identification of the site as a single strata, fortified Herodian palace. Reassessment of the date of the fortification at the site and its phases of occupation sheds light on the border between Phoenicia and Judaea during the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

Introduction

Horvat ‘Eleq (Khirbet Umm el-’Aleq), situated on the eastern slopes of Ramat HaNadiv (Fig. 1), was excavated since 1984 by an archaeological expedition headed by the late Prof. Yizhar Hirschfeld, on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The excavations were initiated and funded by the Ramat HaNadiv Foundation. In 2000 Hirschfeld published the first volume of the report, presenting and analysing the results of the 1984–1998 excavations (Hirschfeld 2000). In the same year, Hirschfeld resumed excavations and they continued, alongside preservation and reconstruction work, until 2005.¹ A final excavation season, scheduled for summer 2007, was meant to complete the exposure of the wall that encircles the site and allow the Ramat HaNadiv Foundation to make preparations for opening the site to the public.

Hirschfeld’s untimely death in November 2006 jeopardized this plan. However, with a decision by the Foundation to complete the excavations and their timely publication, the authors were appointed by the committee of executors of Hirschfeld’s scientific

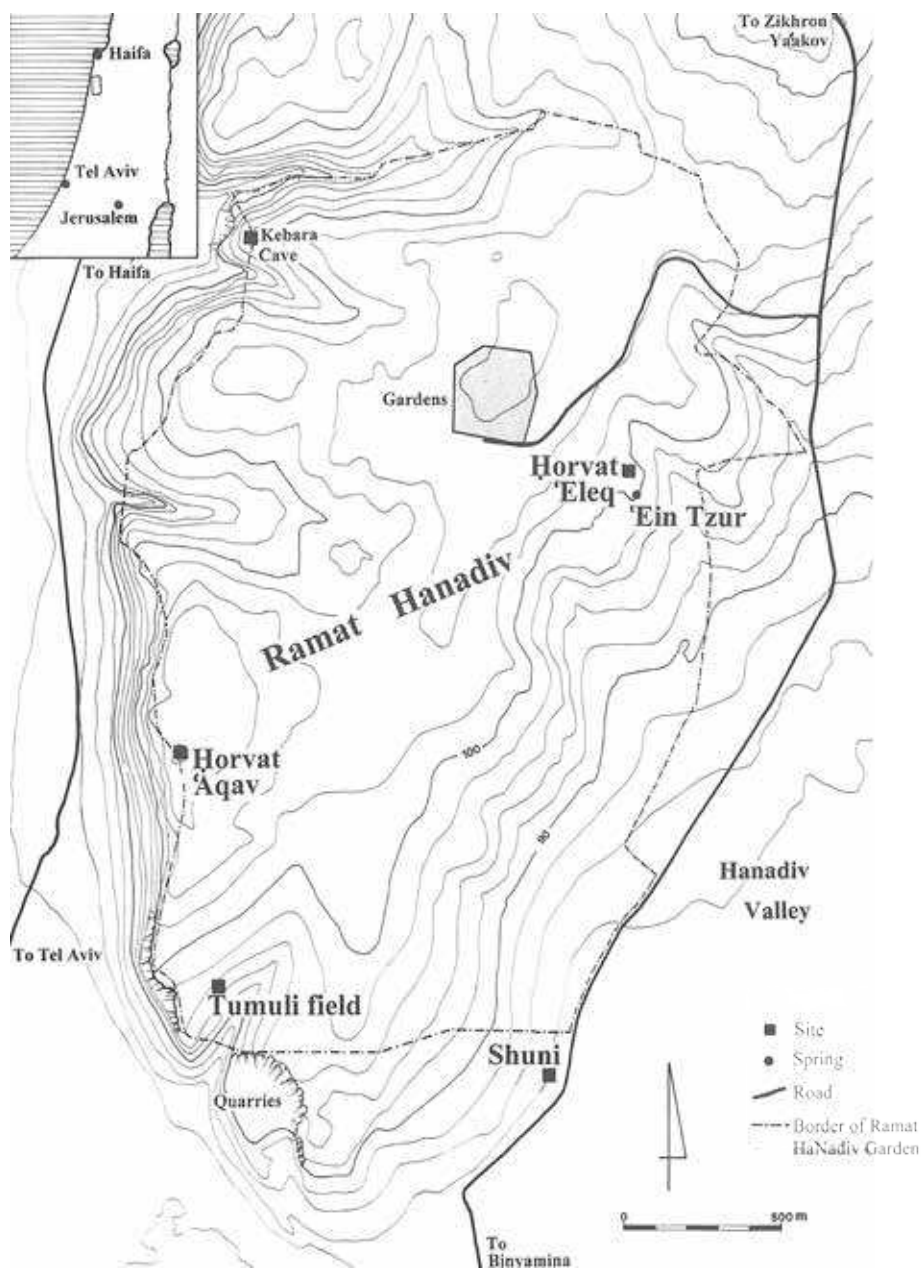


Fig.1. General plan of Ramat HaNadiv and the location of Horvat 'Eleq (Hirschfeld 2000: Fig. 1).

legacy at the Hebrew University to complete and publish the excavations at the site. Consequently, during 2007–2010 three seasons of excavations at Horvat ‘Eleq were conducted.² To publish the complete results of the excavation seasons that have not been published by Hirschfeld himself, the finds from earlier seasons were given to specialists for analysis.

The preliminary results of the renewed excavations depict a more nuanced perception of the site, including the dating of its phases of occupation, and the functions of various buildings. One of the most striking conclusions is that the fortification of the site, ascribed by Hirschfeld to the time of Herod, should be dated *c.* 300 years earlier, namely to the end of the Persian period or the beginning of the Hellenistic period. Hirschfeld’s identification of the site in the Early Roman period as an impressive estate is also questioned by the authors, as no typical palatial Herodian architectonic features were uncovered (Tepper 2013).

Hirschfeld’s Excavations at Horvat ‘Eleq (1984–2005)

In Hirschfeld’s last articles on Horvat ‘Eleq, there is a strong emphasis on the Early Roman phase of occupation at the site (Hirschfeld 2003; Hirschfeld and Peleg 2005; Hirschfeld and Feinberg-Vamosh 2005),³ though in the excavation report (Hirschfeld 2000), he describes five archaeological layers:

Phase I

This phase is represented by a single wall in Area C with both Iron Age I and II pottery found in mixed loci.

Phase II

Hirschfeld identified a dozen walls at the north-western section of the site (Area C) and the remains of a pool near the spring at the foot of the site. He suggested this area was an Early Hellenistic period rural settlement. Several walls and architectural units were uncovered outside of the peripheral wall, to its west, north, and south.

The finds relating to this phase include local and imported pottery dated from the Ptolemaic and Seleucid rule in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE. A lack of Hasmonaean coins in the numismatic assemblage lead Hirschfeld to suggest that the site was destroyed during Alexander Jannaeus’ campaigns (103–76 BCE) and was left in ruins until the ascension to power of King Herod (37–4 BCE).

Phase III

Hirschfeld identified architectural complexes encircled by the peripheral wall with its towers as the remnants of a large Early Roman mansion. Hirschfeld sometimes referred to this area as the Herodian palatial estate or fortified palace, and suggested



Fig. 2. Reconstruction proposal of Horvat 'Eleq, view to the west (Drawing: Balage Balog).

that the Early Roman period was the site's zenith (Fig. 2; Hirschfeld and Feinberg-Vamosh 2005).

The foundations of a central square tower with an internal spiral staircase were excavated in the north western part of the site. When Hirschfeld started excavations here in the 1980s he first suggested that the tower was built in the Hellenistic period. However, he later re-dated the tower to the Early Roman period.

The remains uncovered to the south of the site, in the vicinity of 'Ein Tzur spring, included an agricultural area, an olive press, a *columbarium* (dovecote), a pool, a Roman style bathhouse and a water conduit. These were also associated with the Herodian complex. The Early Roman period finds include coins, local and imported pottery, glassware, and architectural decoration elements.

Hirschfeld suggested that the estate was built in the days of King Herod and that during the 1st century CE, apparently in the days of Agrippa I (41–44 CE), several alterations were conducted, changing its plan. Hirschfeld proposed that it was abandoned during the First Revolt (66–70 CE). The finds testify to the wealth of the owner. Hirschfeld suggested that this site, not far from the newly founded Caesarea overlooking the HaNadiv Valley, served as the mansion or as royal manor of one of Herod's sons or courtiers.

Phase IV

Late Roman period and the Byzantine period pottery were discovered by Hirschfeld mainly in the water conduit, aqueduct and pool that continued in use. Additionally, two Late Roman chest tombs were excavated in the western fringes of the site.

From the Byzantine period the most significant find is a large hoard, containing c. 2,100 coins dating from the 4th until the 7th centuries CE found inside the spring tunnel. This hoard corresponds well with testimony from the Bordeaux pilgrim, dating from 333 CE, who stated that women who bathe in a spring on Mount Syna, three miles away from the city of Caesarea Maritima, become pregnant (*Itinerarium Burdigalense*, 4). Hirschfeld identified the fertility spring mentioned in the Itinerary as the spring of 'Ein Tzur.

Phase V

During the Late Ottoman period and under the British Mandate, occupation resumed. The village known as Umm el-'Aleq occupied an area of c. 0.5 acres at the highest point of the hill. A farmstead called 'Beit Khouri' was added in the 19th century to its north, when the Khouri family from Haifa bought land there. This village and farmstead, above ancient remains, were excavated and documented by Hirschfeld. Zionist pioneers settled at the site after the First World War, when the lands were purchased from the Khouri family by the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) and Baron Edmond de Rothschild. The Zionist settlement was short-lived and the site was abandoned in 1923. In 1954, the Baron and Baroness Edmund de Rothschild were buried on the grounds and the the Ramat HaNadiv Foundation was created for the benefit of future generations.

The 'Fortified Complex'

On a visit to Horvat 'Eleq today one is bound to get the impression that the fortification wall is one of the most prominent features of the site. This is mainly due to extensive restoration works that took place during Hirschfeld's excavations. Rather, merely one or two courses of foundations were preserved in many areas.

The wall has an almost square outline with each side c. 70 m long, enclosing an area of c. 5,000 m². Square towers were built into its four corners. The towers measure 5 × 5 m, with the southeastern tower having been enlarged at a second phase to c. 8 × 9 m. Projecting rectangular towers (5 × 2.5 m) were built at the centre of the northern, eastern and western sides. Hirschfeld fully exposed the walls along the eastern, southern and northern sides. The western flank was partially excavated, yet its southwestern corner tower was left unexposed. This wall was built of roughly hewn dolomite stones and is c. 2 m wide. Hirschfeld estimated that the wall was originally c. 8 m high.

An opening, 3 m wide, exposed by Hirschfeld in the eastern section of the southern fortification wall was identified as an early Roman period gate and was named the 'Water Gate,' since it faces the nearby spring. Since this opening is rather small, Hirschfeld believed it was a secondary gate and continued his search for a more monumental entrance befitting a Herodian palatial estate.

Hirschfeld suggested that the square layout of the fortification wall with its corner towers should be referred to as a *'tetrapyrion'* type of fortified palace, a term used by Flavius Josephus to describe the palace of the Seleucid King Demetrius I Soter (162–150 BCE) near Antioch (*AntJ.* 13.36) and Herod's palace on Masada (*BJ.* 7.289). Since Demetrius' palace did not survive and Herod's palace in Masada, built over three separated terraces, presents a unique variant, Hirschfeld proposed that Horvat 'Eleq represents the only complete example for a palace of the *tetrapyrion* type.

The Renewed Excavations at Horvat 'Eleq (2007–10)⁴

One of the main goals of the renewed excavations, initiated and funded by the Ramat HaNadiv Foundation, the charitable organisation and nature park created by the Baron Edmund de Rothschild was to make the archaeological site accessible to the public. Finding the original entrance to the site was one of the first goals of the project, in order to take into consideration tourism needs, allowing for the possibility that visitors could enter the site through the original gates of the archaeological site. This could possibly also answer essential research questions involving the nature of the site and the dating of its fortifications.

The excavations focused on three areas (Fig. 3). Area E is situated near the north-western corner of the site, where a deviation in the line of the wall of the fortified complex occurred, possibly indicating a blocked gate.⁵ Area F, situated in the south-eastern foot of the site is where Hirschfeld identified the 'Water Gate' that opened towards the spring. The goal of the recent excavation was to examine whether these were gates in the fortification wall and to determine their dating and relationship to the various wings of the walled complex. Area D is where the southern end of the western fortification wall and the south-western corner tower remained unexcavated. The results of the excavations in these areas have brought a new understanding of the character of the site and its different occupation layers. The results helped us to more accurately date the peripheral wall and its towers.

Area E

In 2005, during Hirschfeld's last excavation season, he detected a deviation in the line of the northern flank of the fortification wall, a few meters to the east of the northwestern tower. Topographically, the north-western corner of the fortified complex was at its highest point. This location certainly provided convenient access into the site from the northwest. Hirschfeld suggested that the deviation marked an entrance that had been blocked at some later stage.⁶

We began excavations on either side of the wall of the fortified complex to verify whether a gate existed at this point (Fig. 4). The area of the excavation outside the fortified complex had for the most part been disturbed by excavation debris from



Fig. 3. Horvat ‘Eleq, general site plan with marked location of excavation areas (Drawing: Dov Porotski).

previous seasons. No floors were identified that could provide a secure dating, even though it was dug down to bedrock.⁷ Here, bedrock slopes gently down from north to south, toward the foundations of the wall of the fortified complex. In several places, the rock was levelled and probably served as a habitation layer during the Persian period, as two *in situ* complete Persian period cooking pots found a few centimetres above bedrock indicate (Fig. 5).

Close to the wall a deep, narrow channel cut in the bedrock was full of brownish-red *terra rosa* soil. This soil filling the channel is not local, and



Fig. 4. Aerial photograph of Area E (Photo: Skyview)



Fig. 5. Persian period cooking pots (Photo: Vladimir Naikhin).

indicates that the inhabitants of the site presumably brought it to seal the channel's floor to conduct water. The pottery finds from the channel were meagre and non-indicative, and could not date the channel, yet they support the idea that it was for human use. The fortification wall—both in the area of the deviation and along the regular line of the wall—is at a higher elevation in relation to the rock; its lowest course is about half a meter above the levelled rock and the channels cut into it. Thus, it must post-date the use of the channel. If the rock served as a habitation level during the Persian period, the construction of the fortification wall must post-date it.

The area on the inner side of the wall of the fortified complex was divided into three rooms by two north–south walls. These two walls were uncovered in Hirschfeld's excavations and underwent conservation. The eastern room revealed at least two construction phases; in the centre another wall was uncovered. South of this wall, two poorly preserved floors were identified. When the upper floor was dismantled it was found to contain ceramic material dating no later than the end of the Hellenistic period, while meagre diagnostic material from the foundation of the lower floor dated no later than the Persian period. In the central room, a *tabun* abutting the wall was dated no later than the Roman period in the 2nd century CE, namely to the last phase of occupation at the site.

The excavation of Area E revealed no evidence of an entry. The original wall of the fortified complex was preserved to a height of one to two courses.⁸ If there were any thresholds or doorjambs bases these were not preserved. No remains of steps or a ramp were found abutting the area of the deviation either inside or outside the wall, nor any installations of any kind that could attest to an entrance.

While intensive conservation of this area ruled out examination of the original courses of the wall, based on other considerations it appears almost certain that there was no entrance here. Nonetheless, finds revealed important stratigraphic evidence of several construction phases. The earliest phase, probably dating to the early Persian period, predates the construction of the fortification wall. The latest phase, ascribed to the Roman period, postdate it. The two dated floor levels can be ascribed to the intervening Persian-Hellenistic period. Yet, their association with the wall of the fortified complex remains unclear.

Area F

Area F was also excavated on both sides of the fortified compound (Fig. 6). The excavation area on the inside of the wall (6.5 × 10 m) is between two building complexes. To the west is an Early Roman building that Hirschfeld named the ‘Villa.’ To the east is the partially excavated ‘Eastern Wing.’ Late Ottoman graves hindered further excavation there. Hirschfeld defined this area as a street leading south to the ‘water gate,’ although no pavement was preserved.

The excavation continued c. 10 m beyond the fortification wall to the south. Here, too, as in Area E, part of the area had undergone post-excavation reconstruction. The main features in this area were two walls previously identified as a ramp leading to the ‘Water Gate.’⁹

Ottoman Gate and Burials

During the excavation it became clear that the two diagonal walls are Late Ottoman in date (late 19th or early 20th centuries), and have no connection with the early Roman (or earlier) gate, if such had existed in this area (see below). This conclusion is based on the fact that in dismantling the walls and excavating the fill under their foundations, the pottery and metal objects retrieved clearly date to the Ottoman period. These two walls flanked an Ottoman-period passageway for residents of the village of Umm el-‘Alek, built over the ruins of the ancient site. This passageway led from the village to the ‘Ein Tzur spring and to the agricultural lands in the HaNadiv Valley.

In 2009, we found that one wall was built above an Ottoman period tomb (grave A in Fig. 6). Interestingly, the shape of the tomb and the nature of the burials are unusual and differ markedly from those of the Ottoman cemetery in the eastern part of the site. In this cemetery, rectangular pit-graves were dug east–west, with the head oriented southwards. However, this tomb below the ramp, was built of ashlar in secondary use, placed side by side in a circle c. 1.80 m in diameter. The tomb was dug into earlier Hellenistic period occupation phases. Within this grave were three skeletons—two adults and a child—in flexed positions. Alongside one of the adults (probably a female),



Fig. 6. Aerial photograph of Area F, after removal of the Ottoman walls of the ‘Water Gate’ (Photo: Skyview).



Fig. 7. Dog bones found inside the pile of stones that sealed the northern Ottoman burial in area F (Photo: Guy Bar-Oz).

two bronze rings were found, a bronze pin, a glass bracelet and the bones of a bird and a chicken. The tomb was covered with a heap of stones from which an almost complete pottery jug was retrieved, along with an iron knife, the bones of two dogs (Fig. 7) and a goat or sheep.

In 2010, several meters to the south a second Ottoman period tomb was revealed (grave B in Fig. 6, and see Fig. 8). The form of the tomb was similar to the tomb discussed above. This one was almost circular, and built directly above a Roman-era floor. The tomb was sealed with building stones, some in secondary use, and covered with a heap of small fieldstones. The skeletal remains were brittle and crumbled easily, making it difficult to expose. Two partially articulated skeletons of an adult and child were found within the tomb. The southernmost adult skull was laid on its side, facing east-northeast. The northern skeleton had less well preserved vertebrae, pelvis, arm, and foot bones, and the skull, although partially crushed, appears to have been laid facing the same direction. The skeleton was compacted, flexed and the arms were crossed in front of the body. In addition to the two *in situ* skeletons, bones were discovered in the tomb that may be attributed to a non-articulated skeleton (lower jaw, piece of skull) that may have been interred above the other two, and damaged due to its proximity to the surface.

This second burial contained no grave goods that could assist in dating the tomb. Yet, its stratigraphic context and similarity to the burial discussed above indicate that this burial should also be ascribed to the Ottoman period. Their

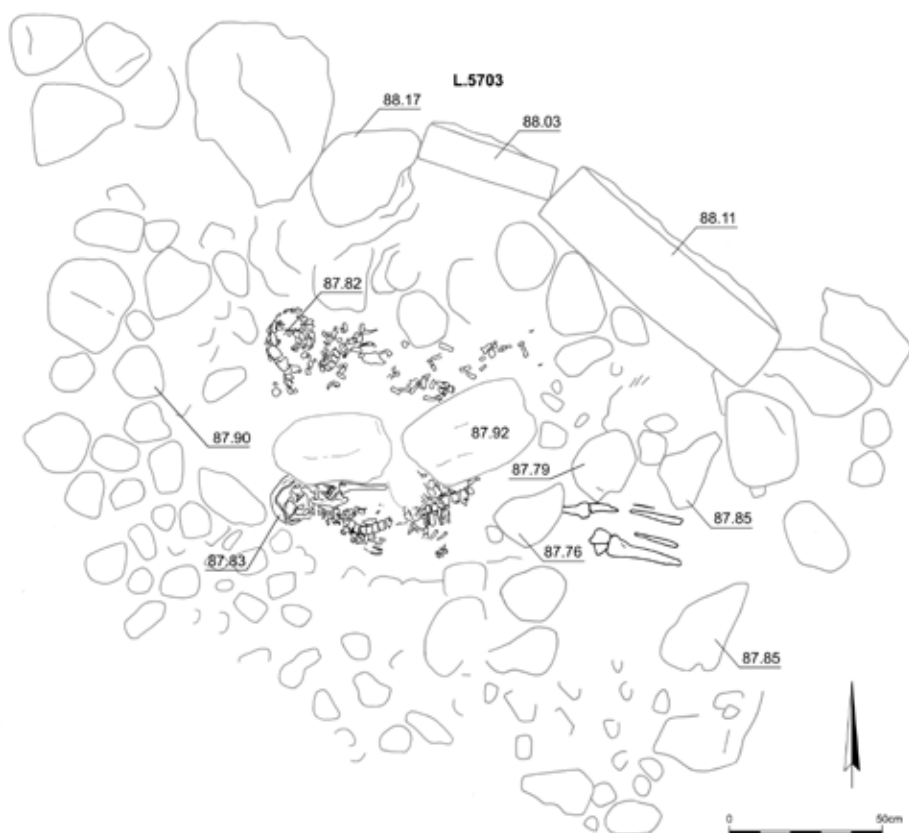


Fig. 8. Detailed plan of the southern Ottoman burial in area F (Drawing: Dov Porotski).

unusual circular shape and burial with several individuals including animal bones, markedly differs from Ottoman-period Muslim burials. Typically, these were simple elongated oval or rectangular pit-graves sealed by flat stone slabs (Eakins 1993: 22–26), oriented east–west, containing a single skeleton and skull facing south towards Mecca (Gorzalczany 2000; 2009a). These two unusual burials might indicate the existence of other ethnic groups in this village, or possibly, of several phases in the history of the Ottoman village’s cemeteries. Since the tomb was covered by an Ottoman period wall, this also indicates that there were at least several phases of occupation.

Early Roman Dwellings Outside the Fortification Wall

No Early Roman occupation levels were uncovered inside of the fortification wall in this area. Such layers were probably excavated in earlier seasons.¹⁰



Fig. 9. The Early Roman complex south of the southern wall, looking north (Photo: Tomer Appelbaum).

An Early Roman complex was uncovered outside the southern wall of the fortified complex (W230, Fig. 9). In this area, two north–south walls were revealed, abutting the southern wall of the fortified complex on the south. One wall was partially sealed below the Ottoman period ramp. The northern section of the complex was covered by a heap of collapsed stones and Early Roman period potsherds. A lintel and jamb-stones were also found in the debris. The threshold of this door was preserved in the southern portion of W5544. After removing the debris, plaster floors were revealed on both sides of this wall. A probe beneath one of these floors revealed Early Roman potsherds.

Another probe beneath W5705, oriented east–west along the line of the southern wall of the site (W230) and constituting the northern wall of the Early Roman complex, described here, clarified its construction date and function. Under its foundation course we uncovered a layer of yellowish marl foundation (L5707), which apparently constituted the continuation of the similar floor that we had unearthed on the northern side of the wall (L5543) and dated to the Hellenistic period. In the fill from the foundation course and the floor beneath it only a few Iron Age and Hellenistic period sherds were found. Apparently, the wall cannot date earlier than the Hellenistic period.

Exposing Early Roman complexes on both sides of the fortification wall attests that it did not serve as a fortification wall in the Roman period. Already in 2004, Hirschfeld found remains of an Early Roman dwelling complex entrenched into the fortification wall’s foundations, south of the ‘Villa.’

Hellenistic Remains North of the Southern Wall

An east–west wall, preserved more than 10 m in length, was uncovered parallel to the southern wall, just one meter north. This wall is earlier than the early Roman ‘Villa’ and probably dates to the Hellenistic period. The western section of its foundation was cut from bedrock. Further cuts in the bedrock created a levelled floor south of the wall. North of this wall another floor was excavated, characterized by a foundation of small and medium-sized stones levelled with the bedrock. In the northern section of this area, a similar floor foundation dated to the Hellenistic period was exposed. Several poorly preserved Hellenistic period walls were found nearby.

Finds from the Persian Period and Iron Age

Although no architectural remains could be securely associated with the Persian period or Iron Age, the ceramic finds from this period were prominent in most of the excavation area, particularly directly below the foundations of the Hellenistic floors above the bedrock. In various places the rock appears to have been levelled and hewn into steps. Whether this infrastructure work occurred in the Iron Age or Persian period cannot be determined. Perhaps this work was preparation for Hellenistic period construction, when fills were brought containing Iron Age and Persian material from other areas of the site.

The Gate in the Southern Wall

The dominant characteristic of the fortification wall, and particularly the southern section, is that it was not built as a single unit, but rather in phases with additions and later supports. This wall makes a kind of a 90 degree ‘bend’ where its eastern section is c. 7.5 m north of its western section. An earlier foundation might have dictated the line of this wall; or, it might have been planned. Since this is the only ‘bend’ or buttress in the fortification wall, it seems a suitable position for a gate. Unfortunately, the southern end of the north–south wall was destroyed by mechanical equipment.

The assumption that this point was suitable for a gate was based on a number of factors. First, this is the most convenient place nearest the spring. Second, a wide street crossing the site from north to south leads here. Third, the south-eastern corner tower near the excavation area is the largest of all,¹¹ attesting to a need to provide increased defence to this part of the fortifications. Fourth, anyone who would try to enter the complex would be in a poorly-defended space.

Here, a threshold of a large doorway was built at this point in the fortification wall, although only the northern section was preserved. The threshold was composed of two stones, and certainly not incorporated in secondary use. Since this wall was constructed over an earlier Hellenistic wall, the threshold could not be earlier than the construction of this wall. Unfortunately, due to the limitations of excavating in an area that has undergone conservation and reconstruction, we lack sufficient data to determine a more precise date.

Area D

In the south-western part of the site, this area exposed the southern part of the western wall, the south-western tower, as well as the western end of the southern wall (Fig. 10). We hoped that the full exposure of the wall would answer the question of accessibility to the site and the location of the gate. Although no gate was uncovered, the excavation provided valuable data securely dating the construction of the fortification wall, as well as when it went out of use.

Ottoman Period Remains

The top-most layer of the excavation, in some cases above layers of collapse and earth fills and in other cases directly over the Roman finds, contained Ottoman period architectural remains. At least three phases were detected, all belonging to the Late Ottoman period. These were remains of temporary structures on the fringes of the Ottoman period Umm el-'Aleq village, with typically rounded walls and courtyards with *tabuns* (Fig. 11). The finds include many iron farming tools, such as hoes, chisels, sickles, tools for fruit harvesting, as well as fragments of home ware. Other finds include smoking pipes, tobacco boxes, horse and mule shoes, rifle bullets, knives, jewellery (Fig. 12) and coins. Most of the pottery vessels were locally made, although some were imports. These finds, along with large amounts of animal bones gathered from the vicinity of the *tabuns* provide valuable data concerning the livelihoods and diet of the villagers.

Noteworthy is a coin, revealed close to surface level, identified as a Zichron Ya'akov Colony private token (Fig. 13). In 1885, three years after the foundation of the colony, as the result of a shortage of small change in the local trade, Yehuda Wormser, the representative of Baron Edmond Rothschild, initiated the use of copper tokens for local use. These were meant to replace the former Ottoman parchment notes and to free their dependence on money-changers. The tokens were prepared in Paris, and guaranteed by the Rothschild family with 30,000 gold francs. Zikhron Ya'akov tokens are extremely rare, since their introduction was opposed by the Ottoman authorities, who shelved them less than a year after they were produced (Kindler 1966: 23–25; Meshorer 2006: 149–148).



Fig. 10. Aerial photograph of Area D (Photo: Skyview).



Fig. 11. Remains of round walls of the Ottoman period (Photo: Yotam Tepper).

The Roman Period – Occupational Continuity Beyond 70 CE

Two early Roman architectural complexes comprising rectangular rooms with dirt floors and courtyards paved with stone slabs were partially excavated inside the wall, near the northern section of area D (Fig. 14). A complete set of Olynthian mill stones (Fig. 15), as well as one stone basin *in situ*, several fragments of similar basins and a domestic olive press (*bodedah*) were found on the floor of a courtyard adjacent to the western wall. Grinding stones were also incorporated in secondary use in the paving of the courtyard. These finds attest to the various professions by the inhabitants of the dwelling in the courtyard. A test pit below the courtyard's floor revealed another floor, dated by the finds to the Hellenistic period.

Although most of the finds collected from the architectural complexes were typically Early Roman, several artefacts found inside the architectural complexes and in their close vicinity date to the second half of the 1st century and the 2nd century CE, including a Roman arrowhead, a complete oil lamp of the 'Darom' Type (Fig. 16), and coins with Tenth Roman Legion counter marks. These coins probably



Fig. 12. Ottoman period bronze rings set with stone cabochons (Photo: Vladimir Naikhin).



Fig. 13. Zikhron Ya'akov Colony private token found in area D (Photo: Vladimir Naikhin).

attest to Roman soldiers living at the site. These finds substantiate evidence from previous seasons attesting to the continuity of the occupation at the site after 70 CE, such as that from 2004, when Hirschfeld excavated two cist tombs west of the western wall and dated by an almost complete 2nd century CE glass vessel.

A marble slab fragment with a Latin inscription on each side was uncovered (Fig. 17). On one side the word ‘aqued[uct]’ may be reconstructed, while on the other appears an Imperial epitaph. The use of Latin rather than Greek, and the size of the letters (11 cm in height), suggests that this is an Imperial, rather than a private inscription. Leah Di Segni studied the inscription and suggested a date in the 2nd or 3rd centuries CE. Although it is possible that the slab was brought to the site from nearby Caesarea Maritima for secondary use, it seems reasonable to link the inscription with the late 2nd century aqueduct connecting the nearby spring of ‘Ein Tzur with Caesarea, constructed by the Roman soldiers of the 6th and 10th legions.



Fig. 14. Paved courtyard of an Early Roman complex with several stone utensils (Photo: Yotam Tepper).

Hellenistic Remains Attesting to the Date of the Fortification System at the Site

The renewed excavations exposed c. 40 m of the western wall of the site, the south-western tower and c. 6 m of the southern wall, completing the exposure of the entire fortification system.¹² This 1.8 m wide wall was built of two faces of large and medium-size field stones with a rubble fill and its construction is neither fine nor uniform.¹³ The wall was preserved to a maximum height of 2 m.

The excavation on either side of the fortification did not reveal any destruction layers whatsoever. A handful of round stones, probably slingshots, one Hellenistic and two Roman period arrowheads were uncovered. Several more were retrieved from other areas of the excavation. The fortification wall probably did not withstand the test of a siege or battle, certainly not in the latest phase of occupation at the site. Furthermore, the careless construction method and its relatively narrow width raise doubts as to its ability to withstand any kind of military siege.

Fills rich in Hellenistic period finds were excavated along the western wall, and especially on its western outer side. The finds include local and imported pottery bowls, jars, juglets, cooking pots as well as oil lamps, large numbers of coins and fibulae. The pottery and coins are mostly of the 3rd century BCE, though several



Fig. 15. Olynthian Mill set found in Area D (Photo: Tomer Appelbaum).



Fig. 16. A complete oil lamp of the ‘Darom’ type found in area D (Drawing: Julia Rudman).



Fig. 17. Marble fragment with Latin inscriptions on both sides (Photo: Vladimir Naikhin).

types of both pottery and coins were dated to the 2nd century BCE.¹⁴ These finds attest to a substantial occupation phase in the Hellenistic period and they shed light on the date of the fortification system. Hellenistic period walls and floors about the outer face of the western wall and south-western tower (see below). Clearly, the wall and tower predate the Hellenistic period construction. The wall and tower must have gone out of use by the time these Hellenistic complexes were constructed.

South of the tower, a room with its floor and two north–south walls abutting the southern face of the tower was partially excavated (Fig. 18). Here, a *tabun* installed into the floor near the tower was exposed. By the time the room with its



Fig. 18. Hellenistic period room with walls and floor (with a *tabun*) abutting the southern face of the southwestern tower (Photo: Tomer Appelbaum).

tabun were constructed, the tower was no longer in use as the external fortification wall of the site. A probe below the floor brought to light finds from the Iron Age to the Hellenistic period. No Early Roman period finds were uncovered either above or below the floor. Another nearby room, whose floor abuts the western wall of the tower, was exposed too. The finds on this floor included fragments of a complete Late Hellenistic jug and bowl. Below the foundations of the floor we uncovered Persian and Hellenistic pottery, a small alabaster bowl, one coin dated to reign of Alexander the Great (336–323 BCE) and another, a silver tetradrachme of Ptolemy I Soter (304–283 BCE, Fig. 19). A coin of Ptolemy II (285–243 BCE) was retrieved from inside a later wall built above the corner tower's western wall. Another, third room against the western face included a floor abutting the outer face of the wall. Hellenistic period pottery shards were found on its dirt floor, including an almost complete *pyxis* and *unguentarium*. A coin of Ptolemy II was also found. North of this room, also abutting the outer face of the fortification wall, the ceramic finds gathered from between the stones of an installation were from the Hellenistic period or earlier.

North of the corner tower, we dug a deep probe under the western flank of the foundation wall (W4011; Fig. 20). Remains of a floor were unearthed about half a metre beneath the foundations (F4266). The floor consisted of a layer of thin yellowish marl. A layer of black ash c. 10 cm thick containing Iron Age I–II and Persian period shards was found. The results of this probe show that the western fortification wall was built later than the Persian period.



Fig. 19. Silver tetradrachme of Ptolemy I retrieved from below the floor abutting to western face of the southwestern tower (Photo: Vladimir Naikhin).

The Hellenistic period floors and walls outside the walled compound abutting the western wall indicate that the entire fortification system predates their construction. The walled compound must have been built prior to the Early Roman period. Moreover, the fortification wall apparently was out of use by the Hellenistic period. The probe west of the western wall provides a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the wall during the later Persian period or to the beginning of the Hellenistic period. A thorough analysis of the finds from this probe together with the other finds of the site will help us with a more exact dating of the construction of this wall.

An important unique find is a carved limestone sundial with a profiled base. This sundial was discovered together with collapsed building stones above the floor of a room of the Early Roman complex not far from the western wall of the site (Fig. 21). Both of the sundial's protruding ends were broken, presumably intentionally, in order to facilitate its incorporation as building material in a later, Early Roman wall. The sundial should be dated to the Hellenistic period. Six incised hour lines can be discerned in its concave portion, and the upper section contains a depression for the *gnomon* (shadow-caster).

Finds from the Persian Period and the Iron Age

A sealed locus from the Persian period was uncovered in 2007 south of and adjacent to the southern wall of the site. The probe below the foundations of the western wall revealed a floor and a small part of an east-west wall as described above. Large quantities of Persian period pottery, including mortaria, jars with basket handles, a pinched lamp, a juglet, and East Greek and other types of pottery, were retrieved. Numerous shards from Iron Age I and II were also found, along with the fragment of a Chalcolithic flint adze. These finds indicate that Horvat ‘Eleq is a multi-stratum site where settlement persisted over a long time-span.

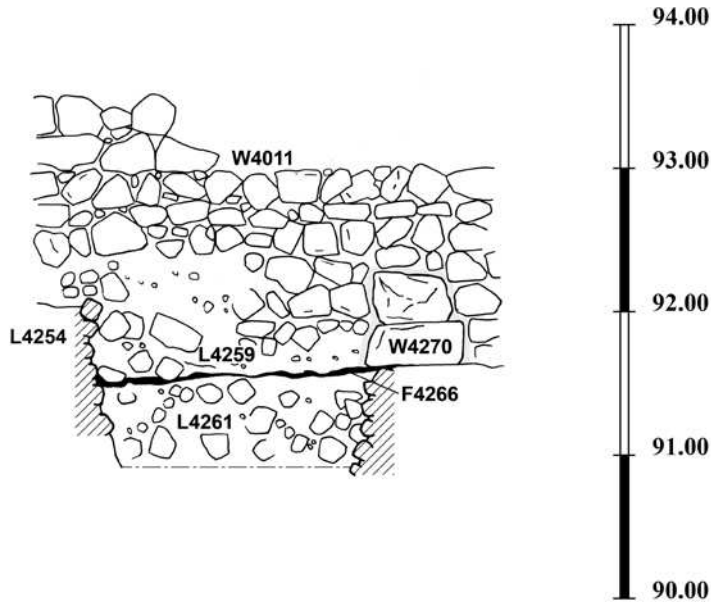


Fig. 20. Section below the western wall of the site (W4011), looking east (Drawing: Dov Porotski).

Conclusion

The location of the site on the southern slopes of Mount Carmel in a strategic point adjacent to a water source, overlooking Roman Imperial roads¹⁵ and fertile agricultural land (HaNadiv Valley) made it suitable for human settlement over long periods. The site served the rural periphery of coastal cities, mainly Dor in the Hellenistic period and Caesarea Maritima during the Roman and Byzantine periods (Tepper 2013).

The results of the 2007–2010 seasons of excavations at Horvat ‘Eleq allow us to refine the dating of the settlement. The renewed excavations clarified the site as multi-strata, spanning through the Iron Age I and II, Persian, Hellenistic, and Early Roman (the second half of the 1st century to the 2nd century CE) periods; with continued human activity near the spring into the Byzantine period. After a long hiatus, settlement returned at the end of the Ottoman period.

The evidence for continued occupation into the 2nd century CE and lack of evidence for destruction as consequence of a siege or battle contradicts previous conclusions that the site was an Early Roman period single-stratum site deserted during the First Revolt.

The western wall and the south-western tower in Area D were built toward the end of the Persian period or at the beginning of the Hellenistic period. They fell out

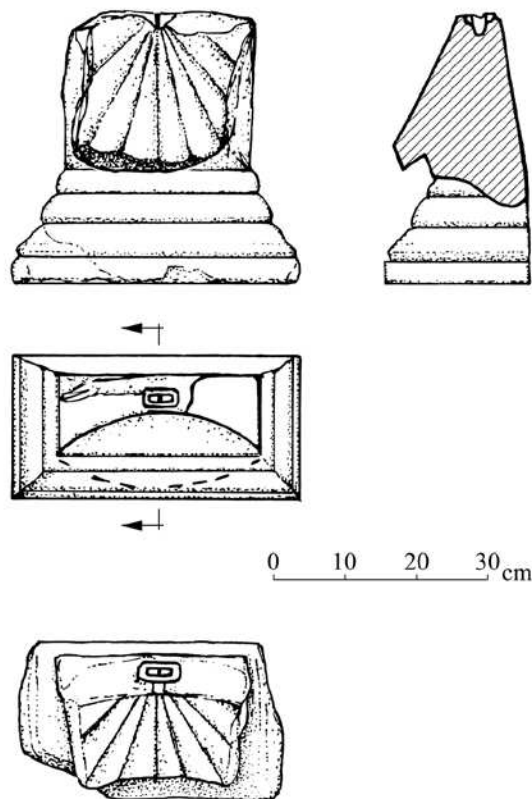
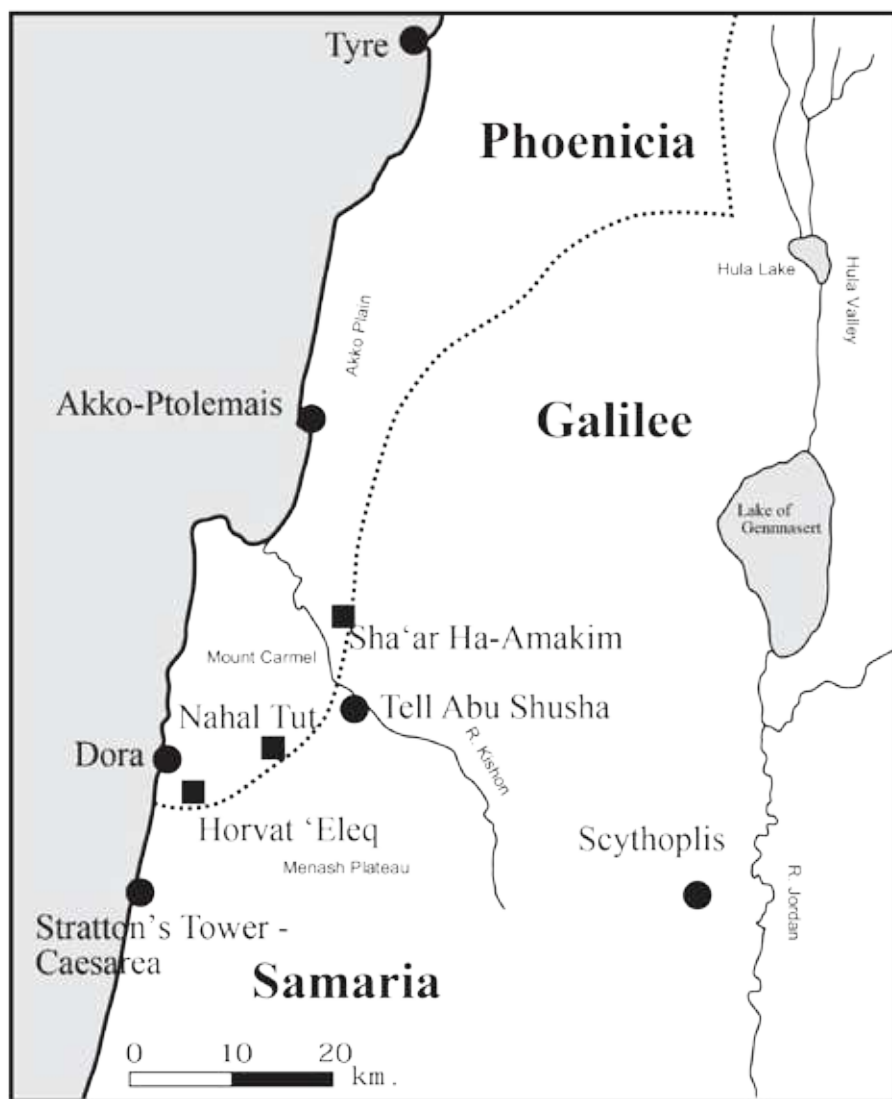


Fig. 21. Hellenistic sundial from area D (Drawing: Dov Porotski).

of use later in the Hellenistic period, when dwellings were constructed abutting the outer faces of the fortification wall and its towers.

Third, the finds indicate that the zenith of the settlement was during the Persian and Hellenistic periods. The current reconstruction of the site and particularly the impressive line of the wall and square corner towers are an imposing creation dating to the late Persian or Hellenistic period and not the early Roman period, as previously thought. Furthermore, Hirschfeld's identification of the site as a palace complex cannot be supported by the finds. So far, no architectural remains such as frescos, reception halls, peristyle courtyards typical of a Herodian-era palace have been found. In our opinion, during the Early Roman period the site was a village or farm, built on the ruins of the earlier Hellenistic site.

Fourth, from the results of the renewed excavations and the new dating of the fortifications, the southern boundary of Phoenicia should be re-examined considering the geographical location of Horvat 'Eleq in relation to other contemporary fortified sites (Fig. 22).



● cities and unfortified rural sites

■ fortified sites

Fig. 22. Map showing a tentative borderline between Phoenicia and Judaea (Drawing: Nimrod Getzov).

Under the reign of Darius I (522–486 BCE), or at the latest during his successor, Darius II (485–465 BCE), twenty administrative satraps were established. The fifth satrapy, called ‘Beyond the River,’ included Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Cyprus (Graf 1994: 173–175; Tal 2005:71–74). The late 6th or early 5th century inscription on the sarcophagus of Eshmunazar II, the king of Sidon, states that the Persian king bestowed Eshmunazar with large territories that extend from Mount Carmel in the north to the Yarkon River in the south, and from Jaffa in the north to Ashdod in the south (Avishur 2000:123–126; Na’aman 2009:314).

From the late 4th century BCE text ‘Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax,’ we know that the entire coastal plain of Palestine was certainly under the sovereignty of Tyre and Sidon (Stern 1973:8–12). In 333 BCE, following Alexander the Great’s Battle of Issus, Syria and Palestine, most of the Phoenician cities along the coast (excluding Tyre and Ashdod) fell to his army. Palestine and parts of Phoenicia were then included in the province of Syria. In the Hellenistic period, the administrative division of the province probably remained similar to the earlier Persian period (Briant 1996:893–896).

In the 2nd century BCE, with the Hasmonaean expansion to the Galilee the situation changed dramatically. John Hyrcanus I and Alexander Jannaeus gained control over the northern Sharon and the southern Carmel coast. The territories to the north, including Mount Carmel and most of the Carmel coast were left in the control of the Phoenician cities (Tal 2006:10–11). Flavius Josephus, while describing the Galilee and its boundaries (*BJ* III. 35) mentions Mount Carmel as being under the control of Sidon. He also mentions Geva Parashim (‘City of Horsemen’), as a site located on the western boundary of the Galilee. Mazar (1986) identified the site as Tell Abu Shusha near Kibbutz Mishmar Ha-Emek, based on Josephus’ description. The location of Geva on the western boundary of the Galilee and that of Horvat ‘Eleq on the northern boundary of Samaria place them both in the southern periphery of Ptolemais, an area that was under strong influence of the Phoenician coastal cities. Solid Hellenistic period remains confirm this geopolitical state of affairs in the southern Carmel region, but its roots are earlier in the Persian period.

Our knowledge of Persian period fortifications in Palestine is unfortunately meagre and fragmented (Stern 1973:51–56). In contrast, a substantial number of forts and other fortified sites of the Hellenistic period are known. Yet, their distribution is inconsistent and in most areas (excluding Arad Valley and the vicinity of Beer-Sheba) it is difficult to reconstruct clear defensive lines along border areas. Probably, the main strategy was to strengthen strategically weak points rather than creating a continuous line of fortifications. This situation changed

under the Hasmonaeans, or perhaps earlier under the Seleucids, when continuous defence lines were established, based on three types of fortified sites, including forts, fortified cities and fortified palaces (Shatzman 1991:94–97, 311–312).

Several km north of Horvat ‘Eleq at Nahal Tut, a similarly dated fortified site was excavated by Y. Alexandre of the IAA (2006). This site comprises a square complex surrounded by a casemate wall with four corner towers. The excavator has suggested that the site was established as an agricultural storage facility by Alexander the Great’s garrison during his siege of Tyre in 333/2 BCE and destroyed a year later in the Samaritan Revolt (332 BCE) that broke when Alexander was in Egypt. Nahal Tut’s geographic location and the finds retrieved during the excavations all point to a strong link with the Phoenician coast line, and especially with Dor. The similarities between this site and that of Horvat ‘Eleq suggest that Horvat ‘Eleq too was fortified at the same period and in similar circumstances, although here, no destruction layer was detected. Their location on the southern border of the Phoenician territory, as well as in an area that is rich in agricultural land turned them suitable to the Macedonian needs.¹⁶

Several studies have attempted to draw an ethno-archaeological line dividing the Galilee and Phoenicia during the Late Hellenistic or Hasmonaeen period, based on historical sources, as well as on ceramic and numismatic finds (Leibner 2012:437–469; Syon 2004:224–235). These studies, whose focus is on the Galilee and not examining other sites on southern Mount Carmel, draw the western border of the Galilee along the Acko\PTolemais Valley (Dar 2014; Gadot and Tepper 2008). Since the territory of the Phoenician influence extended to the Carmel coast, we would like to suggest that the ethno-archaeological border drawn by scholars such as Leibner and Syon from the Hula Valley in the north-east and along the northern border of the Galilee should continue westward along the Menashe Plateau and southern Mount Carmel to the coast (Leibner 2012; Syon 2004). This line would then meet the border of the territory under the influence of the city of Dor.¹⁷

We hope that continued research and analysis of the finds from this site on the south-eastern edge of Ramat HaNadiv from all the excavation seasons will allow us to present additional conclusions about its size in various periods, its importance and its function.

Notes

- 1 Between 2000 and 2005 Hirschfeld published several articles, where he discussed the finds from the excavations and his interpretation of the function and character of the site in ancient times (Hirschfeld 2003; Hirschfeld and Peleg 2005; Hirschfeld and Feinberg-Vamosh 2005).

- 2 We would like to thank all of those who assisted us during the excavation. The area supervisors were Yonathan Mizrahi and Ayelet Tatcher. Hila Frank was in charge of registration of finds. Metal detection was conducted by Bnaya Lopane, Yuval Lopane and Moshe Lopane. Our physical anthropologist was Noga Bachrach. Barak Monnickendam-Givon read pottery and Ariel Berman identified the coins. Other scholars who assisted include: Noa Rabban-Gerstel, Ayelet Sharir and Laila Abado (animal bones), Ruth Tal-Jackson (glass vessels), Leah Di Segni (inscriptions), Noa Klein and Leore Grosman (flints). The drawing of plans and stone objects was conducted by Dov Porotzky and Slava Pirsky. Tomer Appelbaum was the field photographer and photographs of the finds were taken by Vladimir Naikhin. Mimi Lavi was in charge of finds conservation. Julia Rudman drew the finds. Ibrahim Suwaed headed the excavation team. Logistics were coordinated by Mahfouz el-Khatib. The following individuals visited the site and contributed their knowledge and experience: Ehud Netzer, Rebecca Martin, Gideon Avni, Zvika Greenhut, Yossi Levi, Karem Sa’id, Marwan Masarwa, Guy Stiebel, Yigal Tepper and Yuval Shahar. We are grateful to all. Special thanks go to Hugo Jan Trago, the director for his support and assistance to the project since its inception, and to the devoted staff at the Ramat HaNadiv Foundation.
- 3 For a detailed summary of Hirschfeld’s conception of the site, see: Tepper and Peleg 2009.
- 4 Two of the renewed dig areas had been excavated previously by Hirschfeld in the 1998, 2002 and 2005 seasons. These had undergone extensive conservation and reconstruction. This fact created some difficulty in terms of excavation and identification of the original remains and their differentiation from reconstruction. Another difficulty stemmed from the heavy mechanical equipment used in the area adjacent to the north-western corner of the wall of the fortified complex, and more so in the area of the ‘Water Gate’ which almost reached bedrock and severely damaged some remains.
- 5 Hirschfeld proposed this theory at the end of the 2005 season. The ‘postern gate,’ was marked on the plans prepared at the end of that season.
- 6 A study of the site plan and of the outlines of the fortification wall reveals two more deviations in the line of the wall – one in the eastern wall and one in the western wall – both near the towers in the centre of each wall. There is another deviation, albeit less clear-cut, in the western part of the southern wall. It seems therefore, that this was a construction method and not necessarily evidence of an entrance. In addition, the northern part of the western wall is particularly wide – as much as 3 m thick. The wall was apparently thickened at that point to protect a weak point. Indeed, at that point, the site was given to control from the northwest, while to the south and the east, the site has a controlling view of its surroundings. Since the inhabitants of the site perceived the northwestern corner as a strategically weak point, creating a gateway here would have weakened the fortification of this point even further.
- 7 A single white layer, abutting the northern wall of the fortified complex was related to modern conservation work protecting the wall foundations.
- 8 The present height of the wall of the fortified complex is the result of conservation and reconstruction. In the area of the deviation, one course of the original wall was preserved,

- as can be seen in photographs of the excavation and in a cross-section in the excavation report published in 2000 (Hirschfeld 2000: Figs. 90, 117).
- 9 According to Hirschfeld, these were retaining walls for a ramp that approached the gate from the south and the eastern wall also enclosed a small triangular tower east of the gate.
 - 10 During the renewed excavations we re-exposed and documented what Hirschfeld identified as drainage ‘channels’ from the ‘Villa’ complex west of the street. These ‘channels’ were built on top of Hellenistic period walls and fills. Due to their shape and high elevation, we suspected that these were rather remains of Ottoman Muslim burials, similar to the ones Hirschfeld exposed in the eastern wing of the complex.
 - 11 Other corner towers are solid, 5 m² in size, and all are smaller than the southeastern tower, which was enlarged to almost double this size.
 - 12 The excavations along the western wall indicate a date in the late Persian or early Hellenistic period and not in the Herodian period as Hirschfeld suggested. This misconception probably originated since several Herodian period dwellings used the western line of the wall as a boundary wall.
 - 13 In several places the wall is thinner and its construction seems haphazard. Near the south-western tower the stones were placed diagonally to the wall’s axis, rather than in neat courses above earthen fill. The walls of the tower, in contrast, and especially its corners, were built of partially chiselled larger stones.
 - 14 Hirschfeld uncovered some Hellenistic finds and walls in previous seasons (Hirschfeld 2000: 240–243).
 - 15 Horvat ‘Eleq overlooks two Imperial Roman roads. The first is the road from Caesarea to Legio that extends from the coastal plain eastward towards Jezreel Valley, through *Nahal Taninim*, and the second is the Caesarea–Acco/Ptolemais road along the coastal plain that bypasses Mount Carmel from the north (Roll 2011: 239–256; Tepper 2011: 257–275).
 - 16 Another fortified site nearby that shares similar features with Horvat ‘Eleq is the Hellenistic site at Sha’ar Ha-Amakim. The site, dated by the excavators to the Hasmonaean period, has in its centre a massive tower similar in form to the one exposed at Horvat ‘Eleq (Segal, Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz 2014).
 17. For a recent estimation and analysis of the population of Dor in these periods, see: Nitschke, Martin and Shalev 2011.

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