

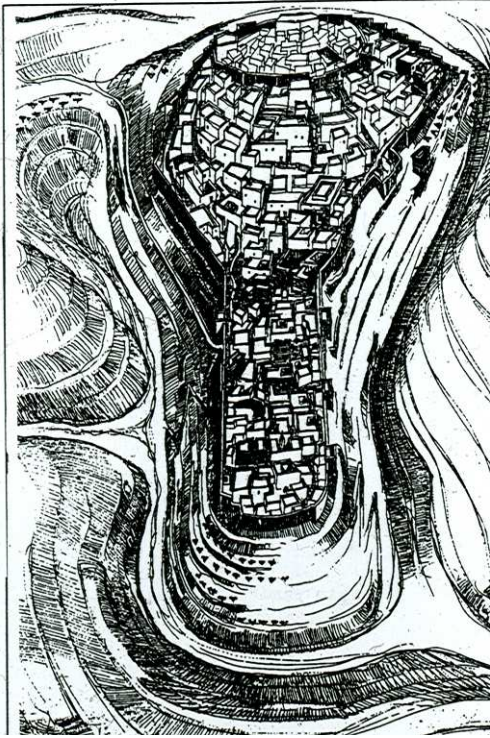
Yodefath Project and the Institute for Galilean Archaeology



KINNERET ACADEMIC COLLEGE
INSTITUTE FOR GALILEAN ARCHAEOLOGY
in collaboration with Miller Institute, University of Miami

Yodefath was an unknown Jewish town in Lower Galilee in the Early Roman period, three miles north of the Capitol city of Sepphoris, until the year 67 AD when it was the site of one of the longest, heaviest, bloodiest battle between Galilean Jews and the Roman army, and the first battle in First Jewish Revolt. Although the most known battle is the one of Masada in the Judean Desert, the battle of Yodefath was much heavier in the quantities of Roman troops, Jewish defenders and number of casualties. Forty seven days of siege were described by Josephus Flavius who was the commander of the Galilee and the battle of Yodefath during in which the town was barraged by 160 catapults and ballistae. Josephus Flavius' long description of Jewish bravery and agony is one of the most detailed in his monumental book of "The Jewish War". At the end of the battle, after the town was conquered, destroyed and most of its citizens were massacred, Josephus Flavius surrendered and gave himself up to the Romans. Nevertheless, Yodefath never won its place in the modern history of the Jews or the State of Israel. Although the site was visited by selected groups of Israeli hikers as well as archaeologists during the years, it never got its publicity in correlation to its historical importance.

In 1992 the University of Rochester and the Israel Antiquities Authority, launched seven years project of excavations at the site that yielded very impressive and important finds which allow us to reconstruct its history from a gentile village in the Hellenistic period (3rd -2nd centuries BCE), a small Jewish settlement in the days of the Hasmonaeans (the end of the 2nd and the 1st centuries BCE), and developed into a twelve acres town in the Early Roman period.



Yodefat, summer 67 CE – a reconstruction

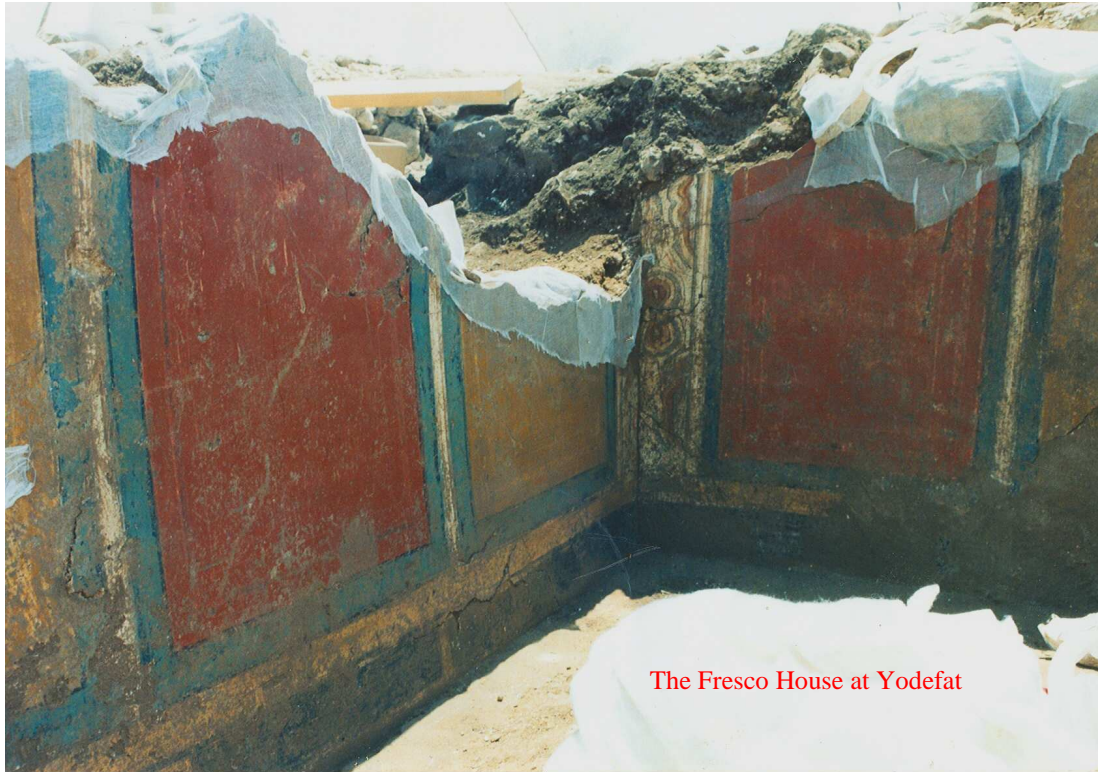


Catapult and bow arrowheads

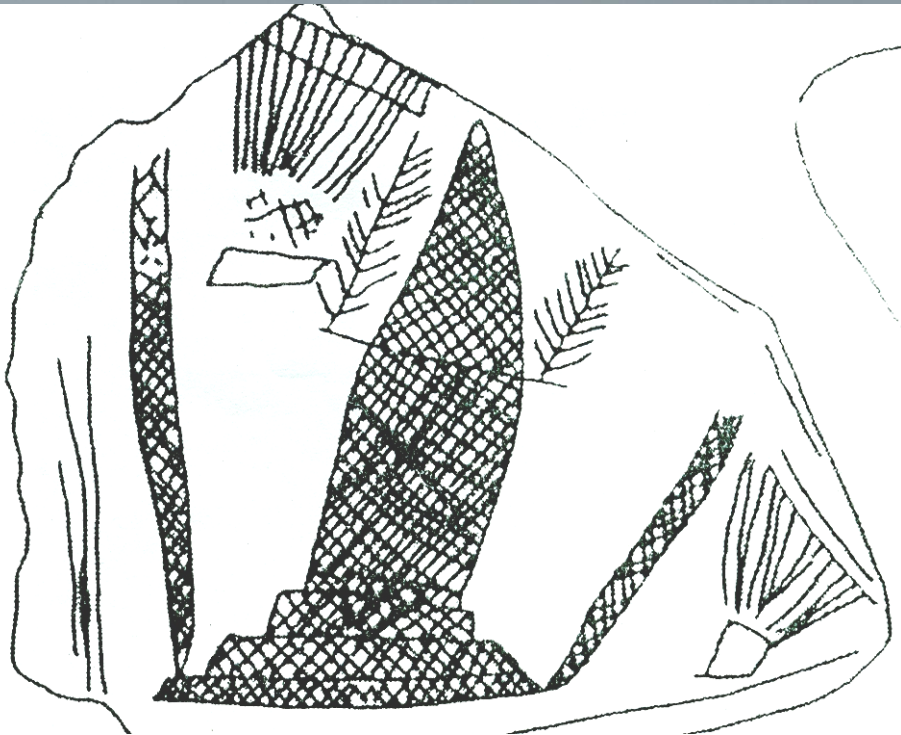
The end of the town was a dramatic one, as described by Flavius. Many arrowheads and ballistae stones were found in the streets and on the floors of the destroyed and burnt houses. Human bones, some burnt and carrying cut-marks, were found everywhere, sometimes collected and buried in caves and cisterns inside the town, probably by family members who came to the destroyed town some years later to bring their beloved ones to an appropriate Jewish burial.

One of the most important, interesting and rare finds was only partially uncovered. In one of the residential areas, a corner of a room was discovered of which its walls (preserved to a height of 1.5 m), as well as the floor, were covered with colorful, vivid frescoes of the 2nd Pompeian style. This type of frescoes was in use in the palaces of

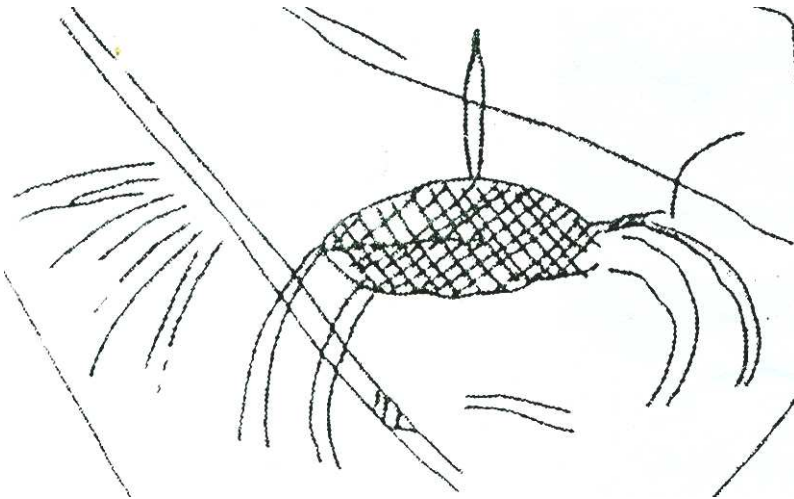
King Herod the Great (such as Masada), as well as in the reach mansions of Jerusalem but in this status of preservation it was never found in the State of Israel north of Jerusalem. As it was impossible neither to leave it in the field nor to cover it again without harming it, it was decided to take it out in a special delicate way, executed by the IAA specialists and financed by the U of R. It was displayed in the Keneset (the Israeli Parliament) for the 10th anniversary of the IAA.



Jewish stone-vessels



The etched stone, side 1 – the mausoleum, the symbol of death



The etched tone, side 2 – the cancer, symbol of time, the Hebrew month of Tamuz

As one of the most heroic sites of the Jewish history, as the only Galilean site preserved from the 1st century CE – the time of Jesus and his movement, and as located in one of the most developing, young areas of the state of Israel, in the center of Galilee and attracting many tourists, this is a place to develop into an interesting ancient site for the glory of the past and the hope for the future.

The Institute for Galilean Archaeology was established three years ago and it is now in the Kinneret College. This is the only archaeological institute in Israel which is in collaboration with an American University – the University of Miami. There are American institutes which are digging in Israel, there are American institutes who are based in Israel but this is the only collaboration institute in which all scholars are Israelis. by the University of Rochester, Center for Judaic Studies and its general goals are:

- 1) Deepening the archaeological research of Galilee by executing excavations, surveys and publications.
- 2) Developing the site of Yodefath as a central tourist site in the Misgav region after accomplishing the excavations, preservation and restoration.
- 3) Increasing the public interest, in Israel and the entire world, in the importance of ancient Galilee for both Christianity and Judaism.
- 4) To be a leading institute in youth education for archaeology and preservation of Galilean ancient sites.

The institute established a series of publications named "Land of Galilee" of which the first one was published in 2004 Called: "Jews, Pagans and Christian in the Galilee. Land of Galilee I", and the second will be published in the next few months: "The Land of Lost Towns, Archaeological Survey of the Shomera Map, Upper Galilee, Israel".

During the last year we conducted excavations in the city of Karmiel, in a small Byzantine (6th century AD) monastery, leading a group of 16-17 years old youth, both Arab from the villages nearby and Jews from the city. This mutual work is a step for better future life in the Galilee, by knowing each other through physical work and uncovering the past. Another small excavation was made in a small Jewish site by the name of Khorvat Beza.

We call upon everyone who loves Israel and understands the importance of the archaeology and history of this region and especially the constructing of the site at Yodefath to support the project and the institute.

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