

Tel Mashav: The Eyes of Tel Hazor

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RIASSUNTO / ABSTRACT

Tell Hazor è uno dei siti maggiormente indagati nel Levante meridionale. È stato un grande centro urbano del secondo e primo millennio a.C., in grado di controllare la Galilea settentrionale (e probabilmente anche le Alture del Golan) – le vie di contatto e il territorio circostante. Ciò è stato dedotto non solo in base alle dimensioni del sito e ai ritrovamenti effettuati durante le molteplici campagne scavo, ma anche grazie alle diverse menzioni di Hazor presenti in svariati testi scritti del Vicino Oriente Antico. Tuttavia, nonostante l'incredibile quantità di informazioni a disposizione sulla città di Hazor durante le età del Bronzo e del Ferro, il suo territorio circostante è ancora poco noto. Uno dei siti di maggior interesse nelle immediate vicinanze è Tel Mashav, situato a circa 3 km a ovest di Hazor. Tel Mashav era con ogni probabilità una fortezza posta a controllo dell'itinerario che collegava la regione con l'area occidentale; al tempo stesso fungeva da protezione per Hazor stessa, avvisando gli abitanti di eventuali pericoli imminenti. La posizione chiave di Tel Mashav, collocato su un'altura dominante Hazor, le vie di contatto con i territori circostanti e infine un'estesa porzione della vicina Valle di Halula, permette di interpretare il sito come una fortezza con funzioni strategiche paragonabili a siti fortificati di epoche successive. Questo lavoro dimostrerà che fortezze simili sono sempre state costruite in funzione di grandi centri urbani, ma che Tel Mashav potrebbe anche essere visto come parte integrante dell'intero sistema di fortificazioni di Hazor.

Tel Hazor is one of the most extensively excavated sites in the southern Levant. It was a large urban center in the second and first millennia BCE, which controlled the upper Galilee (and probably also the Golan Heights) – its roads and hinterland. This conclusion is known not only from the size of the site and the finds exposed during the many years of excavations, but also from documents found throughout the Ancient Near East.

However, though we have acquired an immense amount of knowledge on the daily life in the city of Hazor in the Bronze and Iron Ages, we have hardly any data on its surrounding and environs. One of the conspicuous sites in Hazor's vicinity is Tel Mashav, located about 3 km to the west of Tel Hazor. This site was a fortress inhabited in the Bronze and Iron Ages. This paper will explore the connectivity and dialogue between the two sites. It will be argued that Tel Mashav is a fortress controlling the road leading to the west, protecting Hazor's inhabitants and warning them in times of danger. The strategic location of Tel Mashav, overlooking extensive areas of the Hula Valley and the approaching roads, as well as its position above Tel Hazor, allow us to suggest that this was a fortress with strategic qualities which are shared by fortresses built in later times. It will be shown that similar fortresses have always been built in relation to large sites but that the fortress at Tel Mashav could be viewed as part of Hazor's fortification system.

PAROLE CHIAVE / KEYWORDS

Tell Hazor, Tell Mashav, età del Bronzo, età del Ferro, fortezza, sistema di fortificazioni

Tel Hazor, Tel Mashav, Bronze Age, Iron Age, fortress, fortification system

Introduction

Tel Hazor is one of the most extensively excavated sites in Israel. Its first excavations were carried out in the 1950s by a team from the Hebrew University led by Yigael Yadin. Yadin excavated both Hazor's lower city and its acropolis, exposing several buildings dated to the Bronze and Iron Ages and large fortification systems of these periods.

After about 30-year excavation hiatus at Hazor (except for a supplementary season in 1968), excavations were renewed in 1990, led this time by Amnon Ben-Tor. Ben-Tor's excavations were limited to Hazor's acropolis and focused in two main areas.

However, though we have gained an immense amount of knowledge on Hazor's daily life in the Bronze and Iron Ages, we have only minimal data on its surrounding and environs. Tel Mashav is a conspicuous site in Hazor's vicinity, and this paper will explore the connectivity and entanglement between the two sites. First, a background of Hazor's settlement history will be presented, followed by a summary of previous surveys conducted at Tel Mashav

and by a detailed description of a recent visit to the site by the authors and the conclusions drawn from it, primarily the fact that it was a fortress guarding the road to and from Hazor. In addition, the link between the two sites will be discussed, showing that similar earlier and later fortresses can be found in the vicinity of Hazor, mostly related to large sites, the relationship between the two sites being thus not unique, but one to be expected. The main conclusion of this paper is that the fortress on Tel Mashav is, in fact, part of Hazor's fortification system. The paper will conclude with several follow-up questions for future study.

Tel Hazor

Tel Hazor is located in the Upper Galilee, about 15 km north of the Sea of Galilee, close to the southwestern shores of the former Hula Lake (see fig. 1). The site was the largest and most important center during the second millennium BCE, from its establishment in the 18th century BCE to its demise and

FIGURE 1 – Map of the sites mentioned in the paper

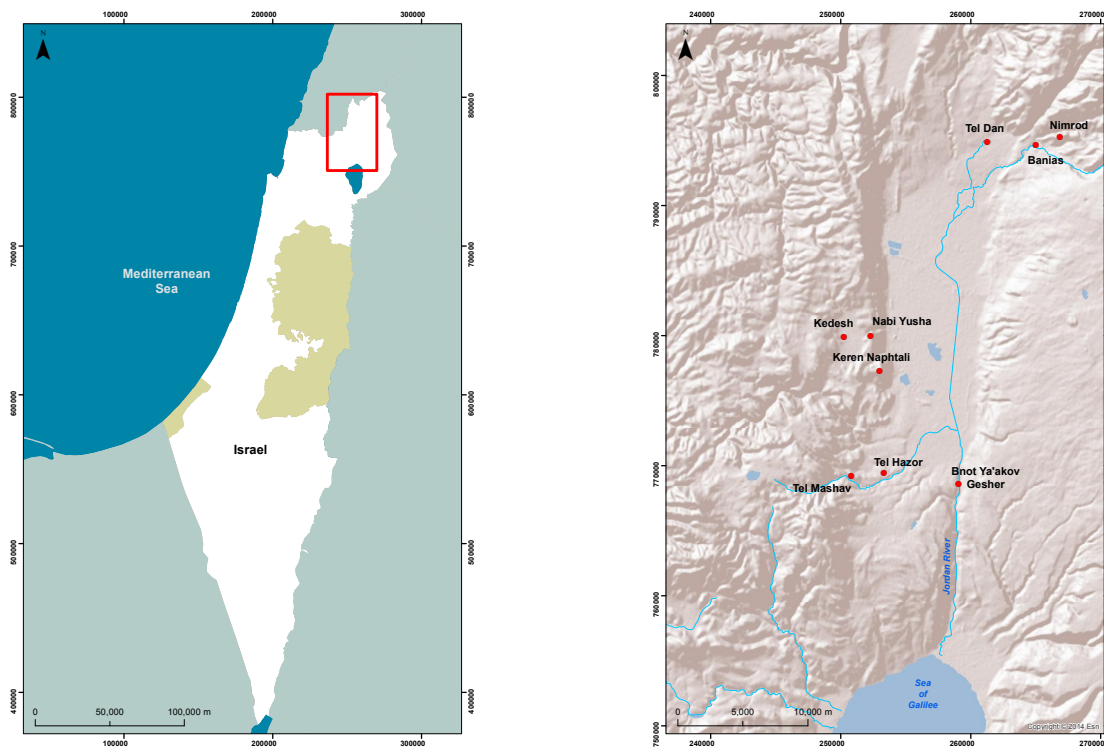


TABLE 1 – Hazor’s strata on the acropolis and the lower city (BEN-TOR, BECHAR 2017)

Period	Stratum on the Acropolis	Stratum in the Lower City
EBA	XX–XIX	-
IBA	XVIII	-
MBIIa/b–MBIIb	XVII	4
MBIIb–MBIIc	XVI	3
LBIa	XV	2
LBIb–LBIIa	XIV	1b
LBIIa–LBIIb	XIII	1a
Iron I	XII/XI	-
Iron II (10th century)	X–IX	-
Iron II (9th century)	VIII–VII	-
Iron II (8th century)	VI–IV	-
Persian	III	-
Hellenistic	II	-
Mamluk/Abasyd	I	-

destruction in the 13th century BCE. During the Bronze Age Strata XVII–XIII (Table 1), the city was composed of an acropolis and a lower city where several temples, palaces, and dwellings were exposed.

Following a hiatus of about 150 years, the site became an important urban center also in the Iron Age, from the 10th to the 8th centuries BCE, until its final devastation, ascribed to the military campaign of Tiglath Pileser III against the northern kingdom of Israel in 732 BCE. During the Iron Age the settlement was confined to the acropolis. Several residential units (which probably belonged to inhabitants of different status), workshops, administrative buildings (such as storage houses) and a water system were found in the Iron Age city. The city never recovered following its destruction in 732 BCE. It was only but a small village during the Persian and Islamic periods.

Hazor’s Fortifications

In the Middle Bronze Age, with the establishment of Hazor as an urban center, a massive fortification

system was built around the city. This system included at least two gates and a large rampart. Different construction techniques of the fortification system were uncovered in several places in the lower city, following the site’s topography and terrain.¹ In most places, the rampart was composed of a thick mud-brick casemate wall filled with basalt and stone pebbles. Layers of earth were thrown against this core, inclining inwards, against the natural slope. The outer face of each layer was then plastered, and the outermost layer was covered with a 15-cm-thick layer of plaster.²

Besides the rampart, two Middle Bronze Age gates were exposed hitherto, one in the northeastern corner of the lower city and the other in its southeastern corner. These two gates had been built together with the massive fortification system. A revetment wall made of huge stones was built near the northern gate of the two.³ The southern of the two

¹ YADIN 1975, p. 141.

² YADIN 1975, pp. 134–135.

³ YADIN 1975, p. 138; BEN-TOR (ed.), 1989, pp. 275–293.

gates was connected to the earthen rampart by a series of terrace walls.⁴

Following the Late Bronze Age destruction of the city, the lower city was deserted and never resettled. In other words, during the Iron Age, the city was confined to the acropolis, limited to the western half of the acropolis at the beginning of the Iron Age, expanding, in the 9th century BCE, over its eastern half. The earlier 10th century BCE city—a date based both on its stratigraphy and the ceramic assemblages attributed to it—was surrounded by a casemate wall. In its eastern part, a six-chamber gate was built, with two large towers on its front. In the 9th century BCE, the eastern part of the city, i.e., the expanded area of the city, was surrounded by a solid wall. In the westernmost part of the city (Area B), a large citadel was built with several administrative and domestic buildings surrounding it. This citadel had nine different occupation phases dated to the 9th and 8th centuries BCE. Located on the highest area of the tell, it is also the most strategic spot. Further evidence for the strategic significance of the citadel's location can be found in the building of a pillbox by the British Colonel Tegart during the 1936–1937 riots.⁵

In the 9th century BCE, the citadel's western walls served as the city's fortification, the steep natural slope of the tell at this point canceling the need for an additional wall. In the 8th century BCE, prior to Tiglath-Pileser III's attack, a solid wall encompassed the western side of the citadel, contributing to its defense. Outside this wall, another small fort was built, controlling the northern and western approaches to the city. In the easternmost part of the city (Area G) a fortress was built, probably functioning also as a postern gate to the city. A narrow opening was found incorporated in this gate at the last phase of Stratum V, dated to the very last days of the city before its final destruction under Tiglath-Pileser III. This narrow opening was blocked, and the city was closed off, within and without.⁶ It should be mentioned that the main gate to this city has never been exposed, and is probably located below the modern offices of the National Park.

Tel Mashav

This site (ITM, 250800/796191) was first surveyed in the spring of 1991 by Yosef Stepansky (see fig. 1), who identified ruins of a settlement and a large complex with several building phases on the top of the hill. He noted that the walls were mostly built of dressed limestone and basalt. According to Stepansky, most of the sherds dated from the Iron Age, but some also dated from the Middle Ages. He identified this site as a fortified settlement, probably built in the Iron Age II.⁷

Stepansky estimated the size of the site in the Bronze and Iron Ages to be 1 to 2 hectares. This site had been previously identified with Rama, a fortified Iron Age city,⁸ mentioned in Joshua's list of cities in the land of the northern Israelite tribe of Naphtali.

The link between Mashav and Hazor cannot be denied. A description of the recent findings from Tel Mashav will be brought in the following section, followed by a suggested interpretation of the relationship between the two sites.

Tel Mashav and Hazor – A Reexamination of Their Relationship

A recent visit by the authors to the site revealed further information allowing a more in-depth discussion on the site's date and function and its relation to Hazor. During this visit, several pottery sherds were collected from the main structure located at the highest elevation spot of the site (fig. 2). In addition to Iron Age and Middle Age sherds, already noted by Stepansky,⁹ Bronze Age sherds were identified. Furthermore, while examining the architectural remains in the area, basalt orthostats (worked basalt slabs) were also identified in the thresholds of some rooms within the building (fig. 3). Scattered pieces of broken orthostats were also found throughout the structure. Orthostats are a unique architectural feature of the Bronze Age, and although these are

⁴ YADIN 1975, pp. 140-141; MAZAR 1997, p. 367.

⁵ YADIN 1975, p. 162.

⁶ YADIN 1975, pp. 162-175.

⁷ STEPANSKY 2012

⁸ STEPANSKY 1999, p. 41.

⁹ STEPANSKY 1999, p. 41.

FIGURE 2 – View of the structure at the highest elevation of Tel Mashav, looking west

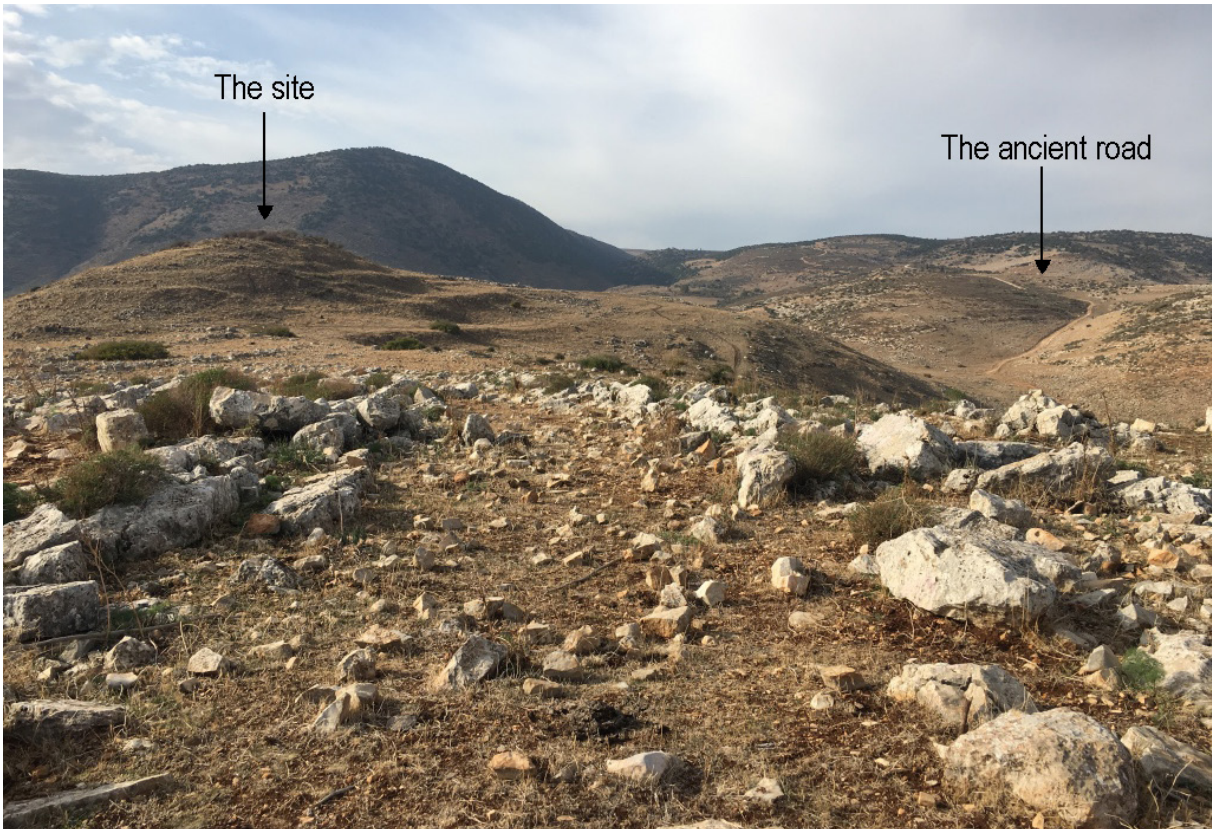


FIGURE 3 – An orthostat *in situ* used in a threshold in the structure at Tel Mashav, looking south



FIGURE 4 – A view-shed analysis of Tel Hazor and Tel Mashav

Tell Mashav / Tell Hazor's acropolis
Viewshed analysis - Combined viewshed

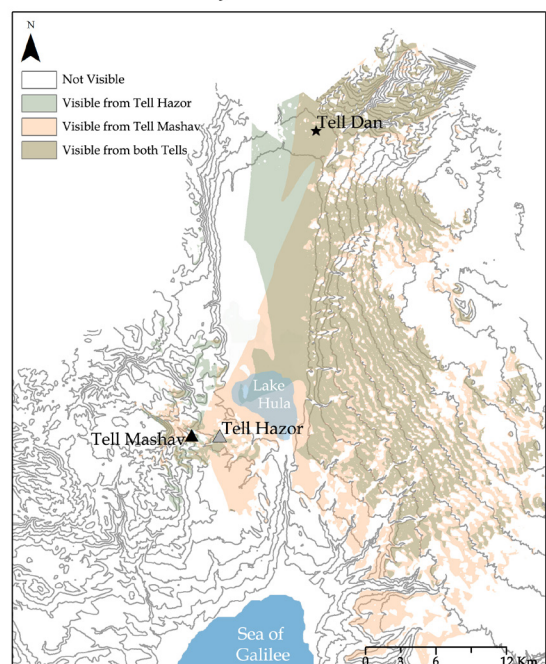


FIGURE 5 – The view of Tel Hazor, standing on the highest elevation at Tel Mashav, looking east



already known from the Early Bronze Age at Hazor¹⁰ and Megiddo,¹¹ they are traditionally dated to the second millennium BCE and are widely used at Hazor in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages.¹² It is plausible these orthostats were robbed from the ruins of Hazor also in later times since orthostats are found in Iron Age contexts at Hazor. However, during the Iron Age orthostats are found in secondary use, serving as just one of the building stones, usually cut into fragments, and not used to line the bottom of the walls or the thresholds, as was their primary use during the second millennium. This primary type of use is also evident at Tel Mashav. Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest a building phase dated to the second millennium BCE at Tel Mashav, based both on the

fact that the orthostats seem to be in their original place and the ceramic evidence mentioned above.

A viewshed analysis of Hazor and Tel Mashav also brought to light new insights¹³ on the relationship between the two sites (fig. 4). It is clear that Hazor's view was limited, being suggested here that Tel Mashav's wide view compensated this. The view from Tel Mashav includes, first and foremost, the entire Hula Valley, which was out of view for Hazor's inhabitants. It also includes the slopes of the Golan Heights, and the possible access roads from Syria towards Hazor in particular or the Naphtali region in general, although these roads were also somewhat visible from Hazor itself. Also, the entire city of Tel Hazor can be seen from Tel Mashav, i.e., both the acropolis and the lower city (fig. 5), and it

¹⁰ ZUCKERMAN, BECHAR 2017, p. 11, photo 1.6.

¹¹ ADAMS 2013, p. 59, fig. 2.31.

¹² ZUCKERMAN, BECHAR 2017, p. 11; BEN-TOR ET AL. 2017a, 2017b.

¹³ We would like to thank Michal Birkenfeld from the Israel Antiquities Authority for producing the view shed analysis maps and assisting us in the GIS analysis.

can be assumed that different activities and movements could be detected from Tel Mashav, even with a naked eye. Tel Mashav must have played a crucial role in advanced warning, as part of a defense network built around Hazor, none of them yet known. This type of defense network is also known from the Mari archive as outposts were guarded and used to block the enemies' routes.¹⁴ In times of danger, fire signals were used to alert communities located at relatively short distances,¹⁵ precisely as attested in the Biblical narrative (Judg. 20:38–40 and Jer 6:1) and the Lachish letters.¹⁶ It is highly likely that this system was also used in Hazor and Tel Mashav's communications. A recent study¹⁷ has identified a network of fortresses used to protect the fertile lands of Middle Bronze Age northern Syria. These fortresses, about 21 km from each other, allowed for a signal-based communication network which incorporated several Syrian kingdoms (Ebla, Qatna, Yamhad, and Tall al-Nasiriya).¹⁸ Since Hazor took part in the same trade network and political system of these kingdoms—based on documents from the Mari archive and Hazor as well as other material evidence from the site showing its connections to Syria—it seems that the fortress at Tel Mashav fits perfectly with the defense system identified by Rousset and her colleagues (2017).

The viewshed analysis clearly shows that Hazor lacks the ability to properly detect enemies encroaching from the south, the southeast, and the west. In other words, Hazor's location, in the valley itself, generated several 'blind spots' that prevented an adequate view of its approaching roads. These blind spots must have turned the city vulnerable, allowing its enemies to rely on the element of surprise when preparing to launch an attack against it.

The view from the Area B citadel in the westernmost part of Hazor (in the 9th and 8th centuries BCE), stretches as far as Tel Dan, which was both a large and important regional center throughout the 2nd and the 1st millennia BCE and the closest regional

center to Hazor. Tel Dan can also be seen from Tel Mashav. In other words, in times of danger, the inhabitants of Tel Dan could warn either Hazor or Tel Mashav.

However, even if Hazor's army merely protected the city's vicinity, it needed a proper view of the roads, one that could alert its rulers of approaching merchants, messengers, envoys, and so forth, as evidenced in the Mari letters.¹⁹ As already noted by Stepansky, Tel Mashav is situated on the route from Hazor to Lebanon, protecting, watching, and controlling any travelers to and from Hazor. This would have allowed the rulers and the army of Hazor to have a proper view of this road even if vicariously through the eyes of the watchers at Tel Mashav.

A digital elevation model (DEM) was also produced following a session of aerial photographs of Tel Mashav.²⁰ The results of the DEM (fig. 6a) show that a large ca. 20×20 m squared building was situated on the site's summit. Other building remains, built on terraces, were also identified at the site. On a lower terrace of the squared building, another large c. 30×36 m (fig. 6b) rectangular building was identified, built of wide walls and with orthostats integrated into its construction.

The large, square building on the summit of the hill is similar to known citadels of the Upper Galilee dated to the Iron Age (e.g., Hurvat Rosh Zait,²¹ Har Adir,²² Tel Harashim,²³ and Nahal Zipori²⁴). The large rectangular building is similar to the Canaanite fortresses identified in Kiryat Shmona²⁵ and near Kabri.²⁶

¹⁴ SASSON 2015, pp. 203-204.

¹⁵ SASSON 2015, pp. 207-208.

¹⁶ NA'AMAN 1999.

¹⁷ ROUSSET ET AL. 2017.

¹⁸ ROUSSET ET AL. 2017, fig. 30.

¹⁹ YADIN 1975, pp. 15-16; BEN-TOR, BECHAR 2017, p. 2.

²⁰ We would like to thank Michael Peleg, of the Israel Antiquities Authority, for the aerial photography, photogrammetry analysis and the Digital Elevation Model.

²¹ GAL, ALEXANDER 2000; GAL 2014.

²² GAL 2014.

²³ BEN-AMI 2000, 2009.

²⁴ FEIG 2010.

²⁵ GADOT, YASSUR-LANDAU 2012.

²⁶ GETZOV 2000.

FIGURE 6a – A Digital Elevation Model of Tel Mashav

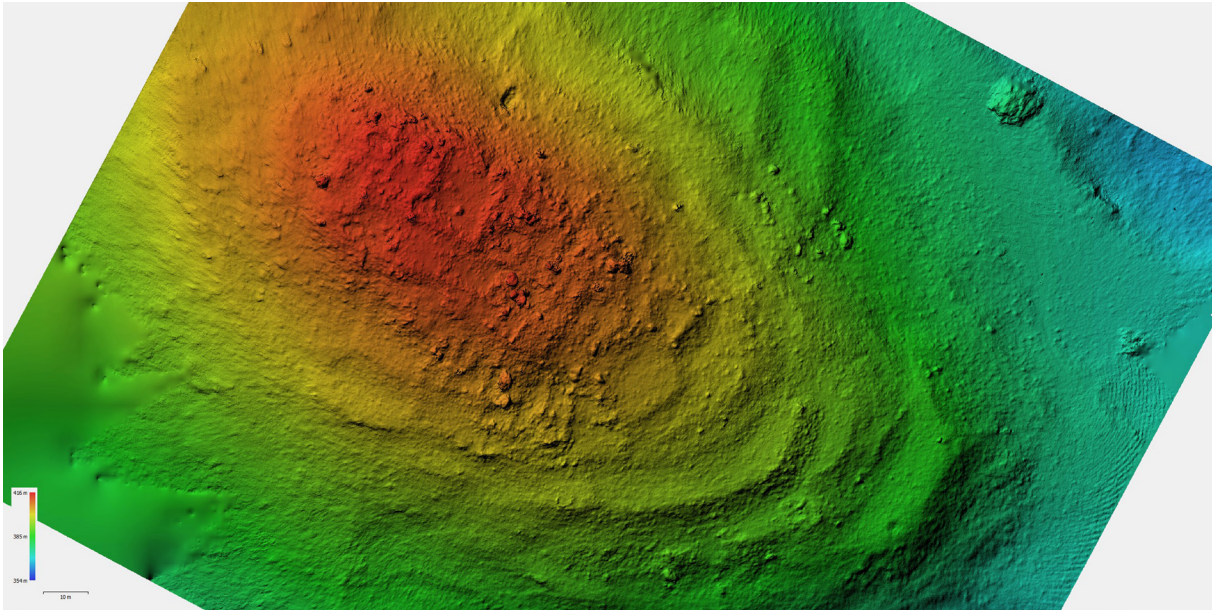
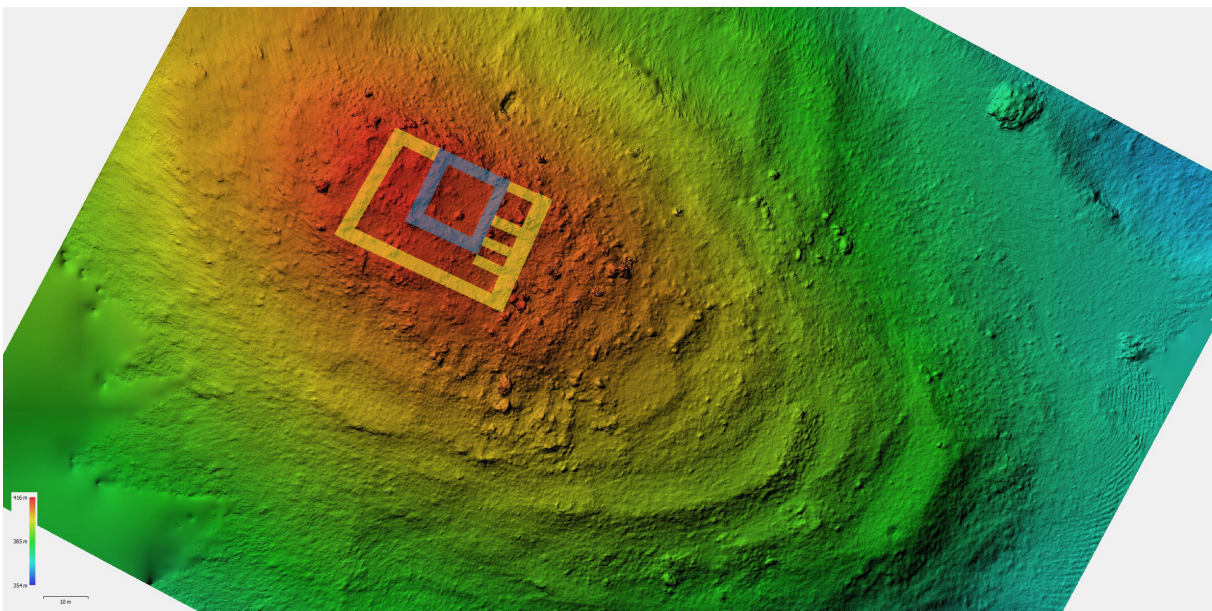


FIGURE 6b – The identified buildings: Iron Age building marked in blue, Bronze Age building marked in yellow



Historic Fortifications in the Hula Valley

The Hula Valley is a low and narrow basin in the northern part of the Jordan Rift Valley. The Hula Lake and swamps covered most of the valley's area until the 1950s when these were drained.²⁷ The valley is surrounded by the great basaltic plateau of the Golan Heights on the east and a steep ridge of the Upper Galilee, named the Naphtali Mountains, on the west.²⁸ The basin between these two geographic high terrains has been, and in some aspects still is, a controversial buffer zone between different geopolitical forces throughout history, being a conflict zone between Phoenicia and Aram, between the Crusader's Kingdom and the Ayyubid state, and between the French and the British Mandate.²⁹ As mentioned earlier, Hazor is located in the southwestern corner of the Hula Valley, probably controlling it, at a strategic strategic «meeting point of the main road from Sidon to Beisan with that from Damascus to Megiddo [...] It occupied the most strategic position in the land, the real key to Palestine.»³⁰

Due to the steep topography of the area, and the presence of the Hula Lake and its swampy marshlands, only a few roads are known in Hazor's surroundings (fig. 7). Two north–south roads were located at the foothills of both the Naphtali Mountains and the Golan Heights, alongside the shorelines of the Hula Lake, and two main east–west roads which led towards Damascus or the Lebanese Mediterranean coast. Tel Hazor is thus situated at a strategic point on the southwestern junction of these main roads.³¹ As was mentioned above, Hazor's protection in the 2nd millennium BCE was composed mainly of a rampart, while in the Iron Age, and especially in the 9th and 8th centuries BCE, it comprised a built stone wall and two citadels. But was this enough?

²⁷ MEROM 1960.

²⁸ MASTERMAN 1908.

²⁹ GIHON 1969; AMERY 1998.

³⁰ GARSTANG 1931, p. 183.

³¹ SHAKED 1998; PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND 1880, Sheet IV.

Fortresses with Eyes on the Roads

Throughout the ages, the upper Galilee saw armies come and go on the trails spread in its veins. Canaanites, Israelites, Assyrians, Hellenic, Roman, Arabs, Crusaders, Ottoman, French, and even Tatar armed troops walked and fought in this land. Each army and each regime built their fortresses on the ridges above the valley. Fortresses located above major roads are not a phenomenon limited to the southern Levant or the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE.³² These fortresses aimed to protect and alert the main settlements while watching the Hula Valley and the landscape beyond it. Some much later watchtowers and fortresses located in the Hula Valley are presented below (fig. 1).

The earliest fortress known so far was found at Keren Naphtali, dated to the Hellenistic and the Hasmonean periods. It is located on the peak of one of the highest mountains of the Naphtali ridge, overlooking the entire Hula Basin, as far as the Golan Heights and also protecting the two main ancient roads leading toward Syria. This fortress also protected the city of Kedesh,³³ located on the Naphtali ridge. This city, situated on the main road to Phoenicia on the western end of the Kedesh Valley,³⁴ lacked any ability to view farther than 3 km to its east. Therefore, it had no proper alerting means in case of intruders approaching from the east. The fortress at Keren Naphtali is within eyeshot of Kedesh. They are connected by a short and comfortable road, enabling fast movements of troops and messengers. Thus, this fortress would have been able to warn the inhabitants of Kedesh of anyone approaching the site.

A few kilometers to the north of Keren Naphtali, and several hundred years later, the medieval Crusaders' fortress of Chateau Neuf, or Hunin Castle, was built. The castle guarded the fields and pastures of the Frankish Kingdom in the Hula Valley and aimed to keep an eye on the caravans and travelers crossing the main roads of the region. These roads, connecting Acre and Tyre to

³² For example see BURKE 2007.

³³ AVIAM 2014, p. 110.

³⁴ HERBERT, BERLIN 2003, 2012.

Damascus via Banias lay beneath the castle. Chateau Neuf effectively protected the eastern border of the Crusaders' kingdom, until its final destruction by Muslim forces in the 13th century.³⁵ The 12th century Spanish Muslim traveler Ibn Jubayr, who walked the route between Damascus and Acre in 1184 CE, mentioned that the city of Banias, at the eastern end of the Hula Valley, was controlled by the Castle of Hunin.³⁶

In the 13th century, the Ayyubid Sultanate built the fortress of Nimrod or Qal'at al-Subayba, in the northeastern corner of the Hula Valley, similarly to the Crusaders' castle of Hunin. This fortress was strategically located, enabling it to watch the valley from the east and the main road connecting Lebanon and Damascus rather than guard the city of Banias located more than three km to its west.³⁷

During the British Mandate in Palestine, a fortress was built close to the Arab village of En-Nabi Yusha' ³⁸ to protect the new road to Lebanon and watch over the entire Hula Valley, as part of the well-planned British security policy. It watched those who crossed the region's roads,³⁹ but also watched out for the French Vichy hostile forces located in Syria,⁴⁰ to the east, alerting of their possible invasion.⁴¹

The examples presented above indicate that the need for control over the roads through well-positioned watchtowers, fortresses, and outposts was a need shared by the different entities who ruled the area of the Hula Valley. These fortresses were located in strategic spots which enabled them to have an extended view of the Hula Valley and the slopes of the Golan Heights. Besides having a view of the roads, these fortresses also guarded large urban centers, such as Kedesh during the Hellenistic period, and Banias during the Crusaders and Ayyubid periods. The fortresses acted as watchtowers,

alerting the urban centers in times of upcoming danger, showing their strategic and tactic importance in the defense systems of the Hula Valley's ruling entities throughout time. Alike these fortresses, the strategic location of Tel Mashav, overlooking extensive areas of the Hula Valley and the approaching roads, together with its geographical position high above Tel Hazor, allow us to suggest that this was a fortress with strategic qualities shared with fortresses built in later times.

The Strategic Position of Tel Mashav

The archaeological remains at Tel Mashav are found on the upper third part of a round mound. The mound, raised above its natural surroundings, is situated on top of a hill naturally fortified on three of its sides. Two small wadis spread at the hill's foot, to the north and south, creating steep slopes which make accessing the top of the mound very difficult. The western slopes of the mound are bounded by a small valley which is in turn bounded by a ridge of cliffs, thus creating another barrier for those trying to reach Tel Mashav. The eastern slopes of the mound slope towards Hazor, almost reaching the site. No natural barrier exists between the two sites, Hazor's fortification line seemingly being the only obstacle between them.

Two sections of a Middle Bronze Age rock-hewn aqueduct carrying water from an unknown source were identified between Tel Mashav and Hazor,⁴² showing a clear connection between the two sites.

The main road in this region passes through the wadi located to the north of Tel Mashav. This road, connecting the Hula Valley to Syria and Lebanon, goes through Gesher Bnot Ya'akov (Daughters of Jacob's Bridge) on the Jordan River, continues through Tel Hazor and extends further north toward Tyre and Sidon (fig. 7). The road was probably in use during the Hellenistic and Roman periods and was the one likely used by Josephus when he fortified the Jewish settlement at Meroth, located a few

³⁵ SHAKED 1995; SHAKED 2002, pp. 24-29; SMITH 1973, p. 308; PRINGLE 1991, p. 89; CONDER, KITCHNER, PALMER 1881, pp. 123-125.

³⁶ ELLENBLUM 1989, p. 106.

³⁷ ELLENBLUM 1989.

³⁸ BERGER 2015.

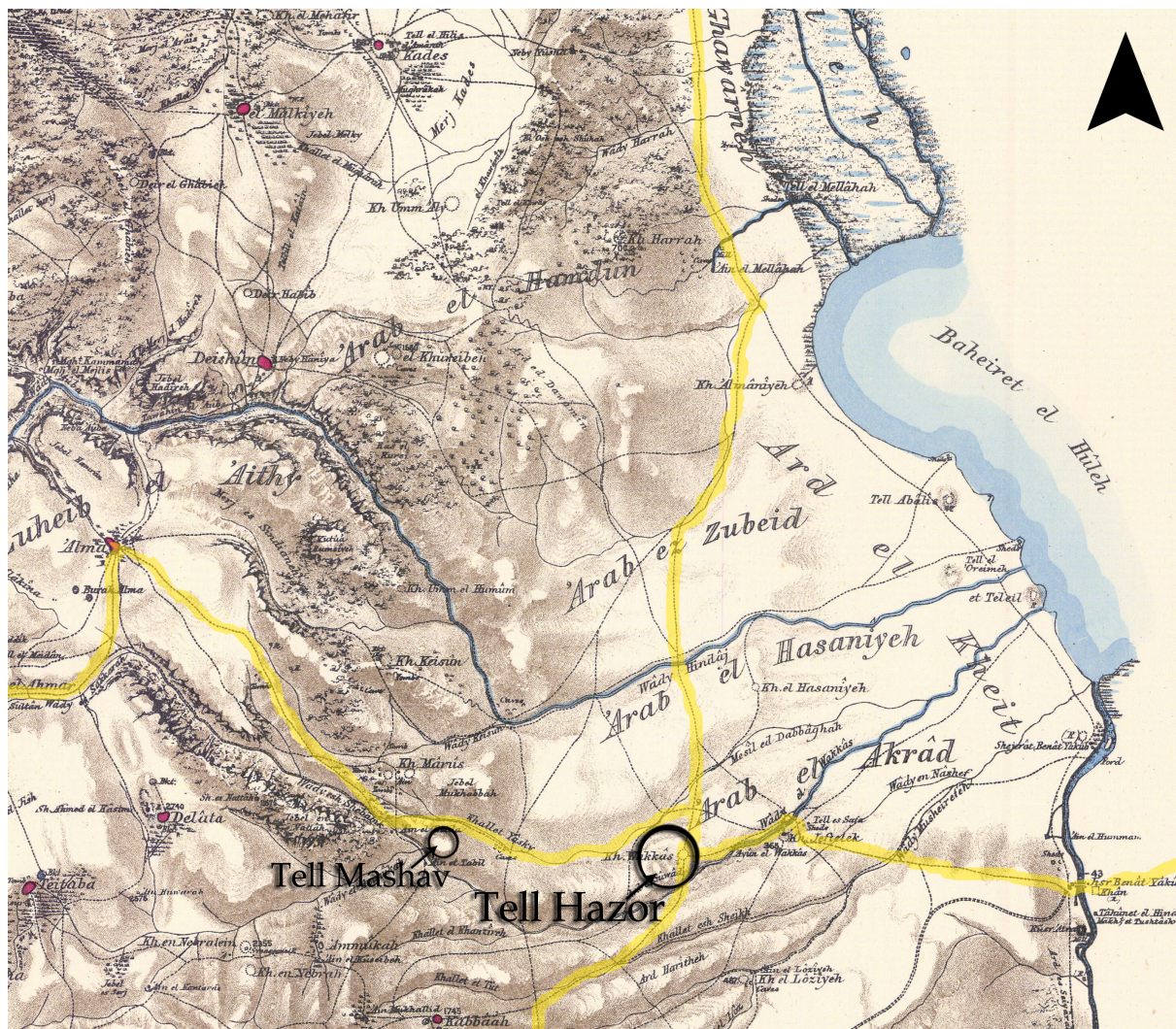
³⁹ KROIZER 2006; EYAL, OREN 2002.

⁴⁰ BOU-NACKLIE 1994, p. 513.

⁴¹ DEKEL 2006.

⁴² STEPANSKY 1996.

FIGURE 7 – The roads leading to Hazor, based on identified roads by the Palestine Exploration Fund 1880



kilometers west of Tel Mashav.⁴³ Near this road, on the northwestern slopes of Tel Mashav, a square construction was identified by the authors. This structure (fig. 8) was built of large, worked limestones. It was most likely a small tower which served to control the road—allowing passage to and from Hazor and protecting the travelers using it. In other words, it may have functioned as a fortified checkpoint, as part of a system controlling the main road to Hazor. The structure is located precisely above a split in the road, where it diverges to the south and continues to the west, toward Lebanon (fig. 8). Since this struc-

ture and others similar to it have not been recorded or surveyed before in this area, let alone excavated, we have no further information regarding them.

The summit of Tel Mashav has both a natural fortification and an artificial, built one. This, together with the challenges set to its would-be conquerors, have made it a perfect destination for the training of Israeli commando forces, which have been training in this area in recent years. Several of these soldiers have testified, in personal communications with us, that running from Tel Mashav to Tel Hazor and back takes, on average, about 30 minutes, with gear, showing the high proximity of the sites despite the difficult climb to the fortress.

⁴³ ILAN 1983; ILAN, DAMATI 1984-5, p. 63.

FIGURE 8 – The squared building on the north-western slopes of Tel Mashav, looking west; notice the car, which is situated precisely at the junction where the road continues to the south and the west, the car is parked to the south of this junction



Tel Hazor's Defense Doctrine during the Bronze and Iron Ages: Further Questions

As already noted above, Tel Mashav controls and protects the road to Lebanon, overlooks the Hula Valley, has a full view of Tel Hazor, and is consequently an ideal location for a watchtower. Since the site is obviously too small to hold large troops, protecting the roads would not be possible in case of an attack by large forces, but rather by bandits, nomads or even petty thieves traveling the roads. The view from the site also allowed its residents to warn those of Hazor of any upcoming intrusion, be it of small groups of bandits or large armies, or to inform its rulers of approaching caravans, envoys or messengers. The great proximity between the two sites allowed the forces sitting at Tel Mashav to either quickly run to Tel Hazor and warn its inhabitants in case of imminent danger or send warning fire signals (see above on using fire signals). Such a warning would have given the rulers of Hazor more time to prepare for such dangers, a time most frequently considered as valuable.⁴⁴ If Tel Mashav had not ex-

isted concurrently with Hazor, the city would not have been able to defend itself in case of these approaching dangers, as it has no view of the Hula Valley, the western slopes of the Naphtali Mountains or the roads coming down from Lebanon or up from the Jordan Valley. Therefore, it is our opinion that Tel Mashav acted as part of Hazor's defense system, as supplementary to its otherwise monumental fortification systems in the Bronze and Iron Ages. In many ways, Tel Mashav was a key element in a suggested defensive belt of forts around Hazor.

In our opinion, Tel Mashav was not a typical watchtower, like those found throughout the Levant in different periods, since while these acted as isolated satellite settlements to larger settlements,⁴⁵ Tel Mashav was an integral part (and parcel) of Tel Hazor itself.

Based on the evidence presented above, it seems that the construction of Tel Mashav should be dated to the MBII, parallel to the establishment of Hazor and its great fortification system. The site probably continued to function also during the Late Bronze Age though this is suggested with some caveats due to the changes that occurred

⁴⁴ See for example EPH'AL 2009, p. 9, fn. 3.

⁴⁵ BURKE 2007, p. 39.

in the city of Hazor in the transition to the Late Bronze II.⁴⁶ In the Iron Age, most probably after Hazor's re-urbanization in the 10th or 9th centuries BCE, the site at Tel Mashav was rebuilt, and it resumed its defensive functions. These suggestions fit well with Burke's overall chronological conclusions on watchtowers (*magdalūma*) in the Levant, who proposed that southern Levant Bronze Age watchtowers (especially those of the Middle Bronze Age) were built on the main roads between larger urban settlements. He also showed these sites were used mainly as signal towers, with strategic importance for the large settlements.⁴⁷ The evidence from Tel Mashav supports Burke's conclusions and may add another type of watchtower, one that is not an isolated settlement but rather one attached or appended to the main urban center.⁴⁸

It is a well-known fact that Hazor controlled the roads surrounding it,⁴⁹ but no evidence was found up to present of how this control was materialized. The evidence from Tel Mashav, however, leads us to suggest that this control was reified by the fortresses in its vicinity since Hazor is situated in the valley, it does not have eyesight of these roads, even from the highest point on the tel (i.e., Area B, fig. 4). The presence of other fortresses or watchtowers in Hazor's vicinity, similar to the one on Tel Mashav, is thus highly plausible, most likely to the west of Tel Mashav and the south of Tel Hazor. These probably acted as Hazor's long arm, where armed soldiers oversaw the roads. Similarly to the fortress at Tel Mashav, these were probably not sites which existed on their own but were, in fact, an integral part of Hazor's fortification system. We would expect these sites to be within each other's vision field.

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⁴⁶ BECHAR, 2018.

⁴⁷ BURKE 2007, especially pp. 40-43; BURKE 2008, p. 115.

⁴⁸ BURKE (BURKE 2008, p. 115) in fact discusses this type of watchtower, but suggests that these are found Mesopotamia.

⁴⁹ ZUCKERMAN 2003, p. 245; FINKELSTEIN 1996, pp. 239-240.

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