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KHIRBET EL-‘AQD

A Hellenistic–Roman Stronghold
in Western Judea

Moshe Fischer and Oren Tal

This book contains the final report of the excavations of Khirbet el-‘Aqd, in the eastern part of Canada Park, conducted by Tel Aviv University in 1978–1980 and 1983. These excavations, led by Professors Mordechai Gichon and Moshe (Ladislav) Fischer, revealed a Hellenistic-period and a Roman-period stronghold and subterranean complexes. Along with the Roman bathhouse of Emmaus and the way-station of Ḥorvat Mešad, Khirbet el-‘Aqd formed part of a broader regional project that focused on Roman roads and associated sites in the western Judean Hills.

The excavations of Khirbet el-‘Aqd focused mainly on the southern fortification line and the gatehouse complex in its center, as well as on the subterranean complex to its west. The results indicate the presence of several settlement periods from the Iron Age to the Ottoman period, but the most significant occupations relate to the 2nd century BCE and to the days of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt. Fischer suggested identifying the Hellenistic stronghold at Emmaus, Bacchides, the Seleukid general of Demetrius I had fortified in order to block routes to Jerusalem (161/60 BCE). This identification is accepted by some other scholars too. The fate of Khirbet el-‘Aqd during the Great Revolt (66–70 CE) is unclear, but its area played an active role in the Roman army consolidation of the western Judean Hills. This consolidation may have continued during the Bar-Kokhba Revolt. Coins found at the site indicate that it was a stronghold for the rebels there in the third or fourth year of the revolt (if not earlier) and was contemporaneous with Herodium.

Moshe Fischer’s untimely passing in 2021 left some of his archaeological excavation and survey projects unpublished, and several former students and colleagues have taken upon themselves the task of bringing them to fruition. The current publication, by Oren Tal, Professor of Classical Archaeology at Tel Aviv University, fulfils part of that legacy.

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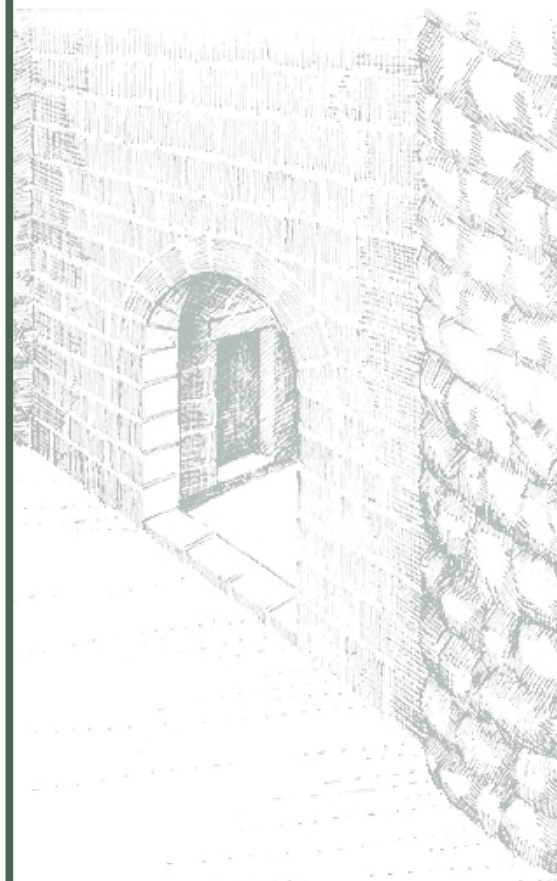
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