

# Volume 131 Year 2019 (reports\_eng.aspx?id=12

## Huqoq – 2018

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Preliminary R

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From May to July 2018, the eighth season of excavations was conducted at Horbat Huqoq in East Galilee (License No. G-16/2018; map ref. 24500–50/75430–65; Magness et al. 2018 ([http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/Report\\_Detail\\_Eng.aspx?id=25419](http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/Report_Detail_Eng.aspx?id=25419)); and see references in Magness et al. 2017 ([http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report\\_detail\\_eng.aspx?id=25304&mag\\_id=125](http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.aspx?id=25304&mag_id=125))). The excavation was undertaken and underwritten by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Baylor University (Texas), Brigham Young University (Utah) and the University of Toronto (Canada). Additional funding was provided by the National Geographic Society, the Friends of Heritage Protection, the Kenan Charitable Trust, the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, the Foundation for Biblical Archaeology (S. Bishop) and private donors. The excavation was directed by J. Magness with the assistance of S. Kisilevitz (assistant director), M. Golan (administration), J. Burney and D. Mizzi (area supervision), J. Haberman (field photography), M. Robinson-Mohr (registration), D. Schindler (ceramics), K. Britt and R. Boustan (mosaics), M. Wells (architecture), S. O'Connell (painted plaster), R. Kool (numismatics—medieval hoard), E. Hubbard (geoarchaeology and micromorphology), R. Mohr (drawing), V. Pirsky (drafting), K. Untch (site conservation), M. Lavie (small finds conservation) and Griffin Higher Photography (aerial photography). The volunteers were undergraduate and graduate students from the U.S.A., Canada and Slovakia.

This season's excavation continued in Area 3000 (Fig. 1), where there are three main occupation phases: a synagogue from the Late Roman period (early fifth century CE), a medieval public building (twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE), which reused the Late Roman synagogue, and the post-Middle Ages (thirteenth–sixteenth centuries CE) and late Ottoman–modern periods (eighteenth–twentieth centuries CE, up to 1948), when the robbing out and pitting of the medieval public building were succeeded by the establishment of houses belonging to the village of Yakuk. In addition, walls belonging to a pre-synagogue phase were discovered under the Late Roman synagogue's north part.

### Pre-Synagogue Phase

The Late Roman synagogue was not the earliest structure built in Area 3000. Under the foundations of its north and northeast stylobates, the tops of two walls built of small fieldstones and a few medium-sized stones were exposed (Fig. 2). Their northeast–southwest orientation differs from that of the Late Roman synagogue walls and stylobate. Although these walls are clearly earlier than the synagogue, they cannot be dated, as no associated surfaces were reached.

### The Late Roman Period—The Synagogue

Work this season focused on the northern end of the east aisle and on the north aisle, as well as on the area immediately outside the synagogue's north wall.

Only a small patch of mosaic showing two yoked oxen (see below) survived at the north of the east aisle. A sounding dug under the level of the mosaic bedding, to the south of the mosaic patch, revealed levelling fills of soil. The fills contained Hellenistic pottery, indicating that they were brought in from a dump or from another context associated with an earlier occupation phase.

The mosaic pavement in the north aisle was found in better condition and included several well-preserved panels. Nevertheless, it sustained heavy damage, apparently from the superstructure's collapse and, later, when it was cut by the foundation trench of the medieval stylobate. Most of the floor was covered by the same light brown fill, consisting of numerous small rocks and a few pockets of ash, as found overlying the mosaics in other parts of the building. Along the north and east walls, this fill covered a deposit of white earth—perhaps residue from fallen architectural elements—that overlay the mosaic floor.

Parts of the Late Roman stylobates were found *in situ* under the foundation trench of the east and north stylobates of the medieval structure. On the north side, the stylobate had three courses: a foundation course and *euthynteria*—both built of nicely cut limestone blocks—and an upper course that would have accommodated the columns and their bases. On the northeast side, there is no foundation course under the *euthynteria*, and no remains of the upper course of the stylobate were found.

The excavation outside the synagogue's north wall revealed that its foundations were constructed of large, roughly cut basalt and limestone blocks. The wall was founded on uneven bedrock covered by a leveling fill. This fill was covered by a thick soil fill that served to seal the foundations and came up to their top course. While the leveling fill contained nothing later than a third–second century BCE oil lamp, the thick soil fill yielded the rim of a Galilean Bowl (Kefar Hananya Ware) Form 1E, which dates from the mid-third through the fifth centuries CE.

## The Mosaics

The mosaic fragment showing a pair of yoked oxen uncovered in the east aisle seems to have belonged to a large panel that was similar in size to the panels uncovered in the east aisle in previous seasons. In contrast to these large panels, the mosaics excavated in the north aisle are arranged in smaller panels that are organized in two superposed rows. The panels in the north aisle differ from both the mosaics in the east aisle and those in the nave—except for the zodiac panel—in another aspect: they contain Hebrew inscriptions labeling the scenes. The individual panels in the north aisle are framed by simple fillet borders. The mosaic panels are further framed by a wide border, composed of an inner polychrome guilloche pattern and an outer monochrome geometric pattern. The following description of the mosaics proceeds from east to west, beginning at the north end of the east aisle and moving west through the north aisle.

**Yoked Oxen.** This preserved fragment of a mosaic at the northern end of the east aisle is oriented to a viewer standing to its west. The fragment preserves two overlapping yoked oxen depicted in profile view.

**The Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace (?); Soldiers; An Inscription in a *Tabula Ansata*.** To the north of the yoked oxen panel, mosaics were uncovered at the transition between the north end of the east aisle and the east end of the north aisle. An unusually wide frame, which begins near the northeast corner of the stylobate, marks the transition from the east aisle to the north aisle. Damage caused to the panel makes it difficult to reconstruct the spatial relationship between the incompletely preserved fragments. One mosaic fragment shows two standing male figures raising their right arms and hands. To

right of the middle figure there was originally a third standing figure, whose raised right arm and hand are preserved. All three figures point upward with their index fingers. The number of youths, their Persian dress and their gestures, which resemble those of gladiators, suggest that the scene depicts Hananya, Misha'el and 'Azarya, the three young survivors of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, as told in Daniel 3. Another fragment preserves an incomplete section of mosaic depicting three soldiers wearing Roman military dress and armed with shields and a spear. Next to the soldiers, a separate panel contains a partially preserved Hebrew inscription in a *tabula ansata* that concludes with the words "Amen selah".

**The Showbread Table, a Pitcher and an Oval Object.** The showbread table from the Jerusalem Temple, or the Wilderness Tabernacle, is depicted in a panel to the west of the panel depicting the three youths in the furnace. The table is flanked on the left by an oval object, perhaps half of a pair of cymbals, and on the right—by a pitcher. The scene is labeled by a partially preserved Hebrew inscription that reads ר[...]שלחן, probably "pure table", which appears to reflect the nomenclature used in Leviticus to describe the showbread table (עַל הַשֻּׁלְחָן הַטָּהוֹר; Leviticus 24:6; cf. Leviticus 25:23–30; possibly also 1 Chronicles 11:13; cf. Exodus 25:23–30, 1 Kings 7:48). The top of the table is rendered in a tilted perspective to provide the viewer with a clearer view of the items on the tabletop. The right-hand side of the table has a stack of six round loaves of bread, which presumably is matched by a stack of six loaves on the left-hand side, but it is not preserved.

**Two Spies with a Cluster of Grapes.** This panel depicts two male figures carrying a pole on their shoulders, from which hangs a large cluster of grapes (Fig. 3). A Hebrew inscription at the top of the panel identifies the scene as a depiction of the spies returning with a grape cluster from the Valley of Eshkol in Numbers 13. The inscription reads במוט בשנים, citing the phrase וַיִּשְׂאוּהוּ בַמוֹט בַּשָּׁנִים (Numbers 13:23).

**A Male Youth with a Leashed Animal.** This panel shows a male youth leading a wild animal, perhaps a wolf, by a leash. A Hebrew inscription in the space between the youth and the wild animal confirms the scene as a depiction of Isaiah's prophetic vision in Isaiah 11. The inscription reads ונער קטון נוהג במ (Isaiah 11:6).

## The Medieval Period—The Public Building

In the twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE, a monumental public building was erected on the same spot where the Late Roman synagogue stood. Some of the architectural elements of the earlier structure were reused in the later building, but the latter was expanded in size to the south and west, and the synagogue's stylobates and pedestals were raised by approximately one meter to the level of the new floor. The 2018 excavation underneath the medieval floor in the north aisle and north end of the east aisle and revealed a series of construction and leveling fills on which the floor was laid. These fills—similar to the fills found under the medieval floor elsewhere in the building—covered the layers of soil that accumulated over the Late Roman floor. In contrast to the east aisle, where the stylobate foundations cut through the medieval construction fills, the construction and leveling fills in the north aisle were not cut by the foundation trench of the north stylobate, which interrupted only the soil accumulation on the synagogue's floor. The medieval stylobate in the north aisle consists of two courses of large ashlar blocks—apparently reused from the Late Roman synagogue—which were laid on the foundation course of the Late Roman stylobate. The south wall of the medieval building was exposed in 2018, but its western half was missing as it was robbed down to its foundations. The wall is not perpendicular to the rest of the building, but rather runs at an approximately 80-degree angle to it, along an east-southeast–west-northwest axis. This season also further unearthed a *pi*-shaped stone structure, which was first identified in 2016 at the southern end of the nave of the Late Roman synagogue and speculated to be either a *bema*, a *mihrab* or a stylobate for a peristyle. It became apparent that this structure was located to the north of the south wall of the medieval building and was contemporaneous with it. A cistern was unearthed approximately in the center of the *pi*-shaped structure, but the function of this structure is unclear.

Parts of the north and east walls of the Late Roman synagogue were rebuilt in the medieval period, and many reused blocks were incorporated into them. Minor modifications made to sections of the lower course of the east wall were apparently associated with the installation of a threshold in the building's northeast corner. Evidence of repairs was also detected along the outer face of the north wall: two trenches, one on top of the other, each associated with a coating of mortar applied over the foundation courses. Both trenches c

through the dark brown fill that sealed the Late Roman foundations. It is unclear whether these trenches represent technical stages in a single construction phase or two distinct chronological phases of repairs. Although the latest pottery in the fill of the trenches date from the mid-third through the fifth centuries CE (Kefar Hananya Ware Form 1E), it appears that both are associated with the medieval phase, when the north wall of the Late Roman synagogue was rebuilt above the original basalt foundations and the first course of the superstructure.

Several of the walls discovered in 2018 to the north of the north wall provide additional evidence of a second, major phase of renovation in the medieval period. The upper course of one of the walls bonds with the north wall of the medieval building, while the bottom courses abut it. This suggests that the north wall had collapsed and was rebuilt, and the wall abutting it was constructed at the time of the rebuilding. It was probably at this time the west wall of the medieval building was extended northward, and the basalt doorway installed in the northwest corner (Magness et al. 2017 ([http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/Report\\_Detail\\_Eng.aspx?id=25419](http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/Report_Detail_Eng.aspx?id=25419))).

An oven was found to the south of a wall running parallel to and c. 1.4 m north of the north wall of the building. The oven was embedded in the thick fill that sealed the foundations of the Late Roman synagogue's north wall, and therefore appears to postdate the Late Roman synagogue and antedate the medieval building. A pit to the north of this wall was partially excavated. A fill within it comprised earth, stones, numerous roof tile fragments and a few pottery sherds, the latest dating from the late fifth century CE. The stratigraphic position of the pit indicates that it is of a medieval date; it should therefore be concluded that unless found to contain Late Roman material, which was deposited during the construction of the medieval building, the roof tiles must be attributed to the Middle Ages, perhaps to the renovation phase.

### **The Post-Medieval and Late Ottoman–Modern Periods**

In 2018, much of the evidence for the post-medieval occupation came from the area to the south of the Late Roman synagogue. Two finds in particular relate to the Mamluk period (thirteenth–fifteenth centuries CE). The first is an intact Mamluk storage jar covered with reverse slip-painted glazed bowl, which was set into a built stone installation to the southwest of the medieval public building (Fig. 4); the jar sat on a layer of gray ash inside

the installation. The second is a coin hoard contained in two juglets that were found under the collapse of a wall to the southeast of the medieval public building. The juglets were deposited in a small pit covered by a stone collapse. When the coins were discovered, one of the juglets had broken open, and a few coins spilled out to one side. The entire hoard and the two juglets was removed as a single unit from the field and X-rayed; it will be taken apart and cleaned at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A preliminary examination indicated it includes fifteenth-century CE Venetian silver ducats and at least one gold coin.

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Magness J., Kisilevitz S., Grey M., Mizzi D. and Britt K. 2017. Huqoq – 2016. HA-ESI 12 ([http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report\\_detail\\_eng.aspx?id=25304&mag\\_id=125](http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.aspx?id=25304&mag_id=125)).

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1. Area 3000 at the end of the 2018 season, aerial view to the north. (Images//G16-2018-1.jpg)
2. Foundation trench of the northern medieval stylobate and the top of the pre-synagogue wall (at bottom), looking north. (Images//G16-2018-2.jpg)
3. The Spies Panel mosaic in the Late Roman synagogue's north aisle, looking north. (Images//G16-2018-3.jpg)
4. An intact Mamluk jar in a stone installation, looking northwest. (Images//G16-2018-4.jpg)





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