

GALILEE

IN THE LATE SECOND TEMPLE AND MISHNAIC PERIODS

Volume 2

*The Archaeological Record from
Cities, Towns, and Villages*

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David A. Fiensy and James Riley Strange

Editors

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David A. Fiensy and James Riley Strange, Editors

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IN MEMORIAM

Douglas Edwards

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3

KEFAR SHIKHIN*

James Riley Strange

Introduction: Shikhin in Ancient Sources

The ancient site of Shikhin (שִׁיחִין/*Šiḥin*; Ἀσώχης/*Asōchis* in Josephus; ITM map ref. 200204-656377) sits on a low ridge of three hilltops, almost completely surrounded by agricultural fields, at the southwestern end of the Beit Netofa Valley of Lower Galilee. The village occupied the northernmost hill, 188 m (617 ft) above sea level and about 0.5 km south of modern Highway 77. In antiquity, as today, one could reach Shikhin by walking 1.8 km (a little over a mile) north and slightly west of the acropolis of Sepphoris, which sits at 285 m (935 ft) above sea level.¹ Excavations began in 2012 through the work of the Shikhin Excavation Project and continue to the present.

Josephus's writings contain the earliest mentions of Shikhin, and the sages of rabbinic literature also talk about it. Both sets of sources tend to mention Shikhin in connection with Sepphoris, and although Sepphoris usually served as the local seat of power throughout their shared history, the sources hint at the village's importance. For example, Josephus tells us that Ptolemy (IX) Lathyros successfully took Asochis on a Sabbath day, after which he failed to take Sepphoris (*Ant.* 13.337; cf. *J. W.* 1.86). This information suggests that by the late second/early first century BCE, Shikhin was settled by Jews (because presumably Ptolemy considered it to be to his advantage to attack on the Sabbath), and that Shikhin probably was not fortified,

* Reports of the excavations at Shikhin in this chapter draw directly from the field books of the Shikhin Excavation Project, which this author directs, and directors' discussions. Readers are encouraged to look for upcoming preliminary publications of the lamp and pottery industry. Some information is available at <http://www.samford.edu/shikhin>. I thank Motti Aviam for reading the chapter and giving his suggestions.

1. James F. Strange, Thomas R. W. Longstaff, and Dennis E. Groh, *Excavations at Sepphoris*, vol. 1, *University of South Florida Probes in the Citadel and Villa* (Brill Reference Library of Judaism 22; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 10.

while Sepphoris, which must have been nearby, probably was.² Surely exaggerating, Josephus also tells us that Ptolemy took ten thousand prisoners and a great deal of plunder.³ Despite the hyperbole, the claim does imply something about the town's standing, as does Ptolemy's desire to capture it. If Josephus's account is generally correct, Shikhin probably already had a substantial Jewish population and some wealth by the time Aristobulus I annexed the Galilee to the Hasmonean kingdom in 104 BCE. Shikhin might have received more Judeans after 70 and 135 CE, including priestly families.⁴

In another direct mention of Shikhin, a passage in the third-century CE Tosefta says that when the house of Joseph ben Simai (a second-century resident?) caught fire on a Sabbath, soldiers from Sepphoris ran to put it out (*t. Šabb.* 13:9; cf. *y. Šabb.* 16:7; *b. Šabb.* 16:121a; *Deut. Rab.*⁵). Both the rabbinic mentions and Josephus's accounts link Shikhin and Sepphoris geographically, and the Tosefta passage indicates that Sepphoris's soldiers (probably Roman soldiers) were obligated to put out fires at Shikhin, or at least at this man's home. Hence, the story might preserve a significant political link, which suggests further social and economic links, between Roman Sepphoris and the nearest town under its jurisdiction.⁶ The Tosefta goes on to say that even though Joseph ben Simai refused to allow the fire to be extinguished, a miraculous rain put it out (suggesting that the narrative places the event in the summer, when it rarely rains), after which he sent money to Sepphoris's soldiers and their commander.

2. See *m. 'Arak.* 9:6 for a list of fortified Galilean towns in the Hellenistic period.

3. In *J.W.* 3.43, Josephus informs his readers that the smallest Galilean villages have populations exceeding fifteen thousand. He was speaking of the Galilee of his own day, but surely this also is a grossly inflated number.

4. According to Samuel Klein, the fourteenth priestly course (יִשְׁבֵּעַב/Jeshebeab) was relocated to Shikhin. First Chronicles 24:1-19 attributes to David the organization of priestly families into twenty-four divisions or "courses" (מִשְׁמָרוֹת/*mišmārōt*) according to ancestral families (cf. Neh. 12:1-19). Using *piyyuṭim* and talmudic passages, Klein constructed hypothetical lists of these courses and Galilean villages, towns, and cities in which they allegedly resettled. Fragments of inscriptions bearing lists that match fairly well with Klein's, so far as we can tell, were found at Caesarea in 1962. See Samuel Klein, *Beiträge zur Geographie und Geschichte Galiläas* (Leipzig: R. Haupt, 1909), 66-67. Michael Avi-Yonah, "A List of Priestly Courses from Caesarea," *IEJ* 12 (1962): 137-39; Avi-Yonah, "The Caesarea Inscription of the Twenty-Four Priestly Courses," in *The Teacher's Yoke: Essays in Memory of Henry Trantham* (ed. E. Jerry Vardaman and James L. Garrett Jr.; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 1964), 46-57; Jerry Vardaman, "Introduction to the Caesarea Inscription of the Twenty-Four Priestly Courses," in Vardaman and Garrett, *Teacher's Yoke*, 42-44. See *y. Ta'an.* 4:6, 68d; cf. *t. Ta'an.* 1:3. For a fuller discussion of similar fragments found elsewhere with bibliography, see n. 43 in ch. 8 of this volume, p. 172. See also Uzi Leibner's discussion in *Settlement and History in Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Galilee* (TSAJ 127; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 404-19. A passage in the Tosefta (*Ta'an.* 1:13) states that it was the practice at Sepphoris (according to the testimony of R. Ḥalafta) and at Sikhnin/סִכְנִין (according to R. Ḥanania) for the minister of the synagogue (חֲזַן הַכְּנֶסֶת) to call on priests to sound the shofar during a fast. See n. 9 below for another reference to Sepphoris and Sikhnin. In conversation, *ših'in* and *skn'in* could be confused for one another. Such confusion is less likely if an author is relying on a written text.

5. Lieberman edition p. 70. The English translation by J. Rabbinowitz does not contain this passage: *Midrash Rabbah*, vol. 7 (London and New York: Soncino, 1983).

6. The passage in the Babylonian Talmud explains that the soldiers wished to put out the fire because Joseph was an administrator for the king.

Josephus mentions that he lived at Asochis for a while (*Life* 384; cf. 233), and he called the Beit Netofa Valley, so-called after a village on its eastern edge, the “Plain of Asochis” (*Life* 207). Sages remembered that both Kefar Ḥananya and Kefar Shikhin sold black (i.e., high quality) clay (*t. B. Meṣi’a* 6:3; cf. *b. B. Meṣi’a* 74a), and they compared ceramic vessels in both towns to iron vessels because they were not likely to burst in fires (*b. Šabb.* 120b). According to the Tosefta, Rabbi Neḥemiah used storage jars from Shikhin as a standard of measure (*t. Ter.* 7:14; cf. *y. Ter.* 8:6, 45d), and another reference suggests that Shikhin’s potters made ceramic oil lamps as well (*t. Me’il.* 2:9; see the discussion below). The fact that sages from other Galilean towns knew about Shikhin’s jars implies that Shikhin exported jars, that it sold something in them—wine, oil, and mustard are possibilities⁷—or both. The plausibility that Shikhin exported goods and produce might explain the comparatively late rabbinic (hyperbolic?) claim that taxes from the villages of Cabul, Shikhin, and Magdala were of such a sum that they had to be carried to Jerusalem, with a gloss adding “in a wagon” (*y. Ta’an.* 4:69a; cf. *Lam. Rab.* 2:2). The text also says that these villages were destroyed; perhaps the First Revolt is meant, but the evidence is slim.⁸ The Yerushalmi passage blames Shikhin’s destruction on sorceries, which could refer to the practice of Christianity there.⁹ At the same time, we have evidence that its residents practiced purity, which, at the end of the first century CE, is not incompatible with following Jesus’ *halakhah*.¹⁰

All of these references allow the excavators to develop hypotheses to test in the field. The excavation of Shikhin, therefore, has implications for the Jewish settlement of Galilee and Jewish social identity, as well as for the Galilean road system and economy in the period that concerns us in these volumes.¹¹ It also stands to tell us about the relationship between a prominent Galilean city and a village under its jurisdiction.

7. For the presence of olive and wine presses at the site, see below. The fertility of Shikhin’s mustard plants made an impression in one text. See *y. Peah* 7:4 (in this anecdote, a single cutting from a mustard branch grows to sufficient size to cover a potter’s booth); cf. *b. Ketub.* 111b.

8. No other text that we currently have tells us Cabul, Shikhin, or Magdala was destroyed in the Bar Kokhba (133–135 CE) or Gallus (350–352 CE) revolts. Of these three towns, Josephus tells us only about the destruction of Magdala during the First Revolt, but only if the identification of ancient Magdala with Josephus’s Taricheae is correct (the evidence is strong; see “Magdala” article by Stefano De Luca in this volume, pp. 280–342).

9. Admittedly the connection is conjectural. A much later passage in *b. Sanh.* 43a–b mentions the execution of a sorcerer, Yeshu, along with five disciples, during Passover, by stoning and hanging. A reference to a Christian from Sikhnin (סכנין), whom R. Eleazar met in Sepphoris, occurs in *t. Hul.* 2:24 and *y. ‘Abod. Zar.* 16b–17a. This town, Sigoph, which Josephus fortified (*J. W.* 2:573; *Life* 188; not to be confused with a town of the same name in the Golan, which he also fortified), lies several kilometers to the north of Shikhin. Again, the mention of Sepphoris and Sikhnin in such close proximity might indicate that *sknin* was confused with *šihin* in conversation.

10. The Tosefta (*Nid.* 8:6) credits R. Yose with the anecdote that people at Shikhin took for granted the uncleanness of a cave (מערה). After a thorough examination assured them the cave was clean, while digging in it, they discovered a mortar filled with human bones.

11. See chapters by Oakman, Overman, Safrai, Mattila, and James F. Strange in David A. Fiensy and James Riley Strange, eds., *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods*, vol. 1, *Life, Culture, and Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

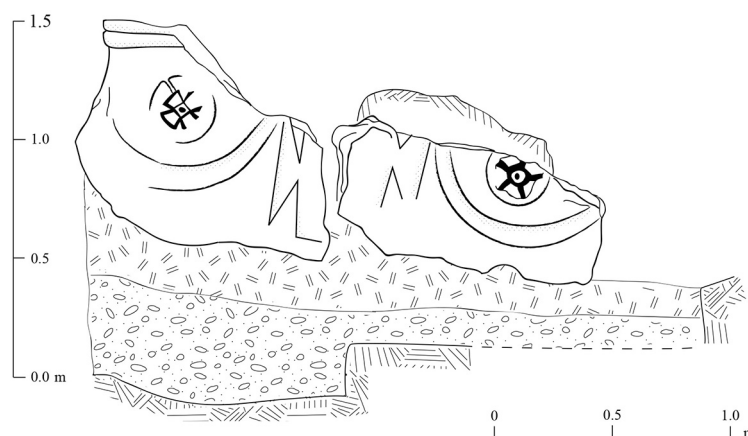


Figure A. Broken and weathered sarcophagus on Jebel Qat, east of Shikhin. Note the four-petaled flowers with garlands flanking a *tabula ansata*. Similar sarcophagi can be found built into the corners of the so-called citadel on the acropolis of Sepphoris. Drawing by Dina Shalem.

Surveys and excavations confirm the predominantly Jewish identity of Shikhin's residents.¹² This history of the site rests on preliminary pottery readings. Shikhin's growth between the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods follows a well-established pattern at many eastern Galilean Jewish sites.¹³ Archaeological investigations have also turned up thirteen sarcophagi, both complete and fragmentary, both in tombs and on the surface, most of them apparently plain; two have one long side decorated in what Mordechai Aviam calls the Sepphorean non-representational style (see fig. A).¹⁴ The excavators have found fragments of stone vessels and incense shovels, a fragment of a first- or second-century oil lamp decorated with a menorah flanked by palm fronds (fig. B), three *mikva'ot* (probably used by people leaving the cemetery south of the village), butchered bones only from kosher animals and following kosher practices,¹⁵ and remains of a Roman-period synagogue. Other lamp fragments have no decora-

12. We do not yet have evidence to suggest that non-Jewish people, or non-observant Jewish people, lived at Shikhin. Admittedly, one cannot mount a strong argument from the absence of evidence.

13. See the discussion below and the summary of survey results and following discussion in Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 309–76. Unlike many other Galilean sites, Shikhin does not show a *floruit* in the third century. Currently, the Shikhin Excavation Project is following the dating of archaeological periods in use by the USF Excavations at Sepphoris, modified for that city from those developed in the Meiron Excavation Project.

14. Mordechai Aviam, "The Necropolis of Sepphoris: The Results of Field Survey," in *A City Set on A Hill: Festschrift in Honor of James F. Strange* (ed. Daniel Warner and Donald Binder; Mountain Home, Ariz.: Borderstone, 2014), 4–16.

15. The number of recovered bones admittedly has been quite small.

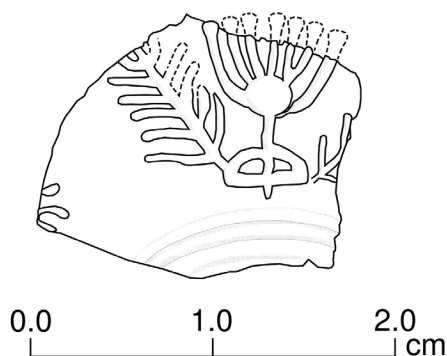


Figure B. Lamp fragment showing a seven-branched menorah flanked by palm fronds.

Drawing by the author.

tion, or they show such things as geometric patterns, dots, amphorae, leaves, vines, tendrils, grapes, and pomegranates.

History of Investigation¹⁶

Heinrich Graetz first suggested the linguistic connection between the sages' *Šīḥin* ("caves" or "pits")¹⁷ and Josephus's *Asōchis*, allowing scholars to read both names as references to the same town.¹⁸ Following W. Oehler,¹⁹ many scholars located Shikhin at Tell el-Badawiya, now commonly called Tel Hannaton.²⁰ In 1988, a survey by a team from the University of South Florida (USF) Excavations at Sepphoris ruled out this location and made a strong case for the nameless hill near Sepphoris currently under excavation by the Shikhin Excavation Project. The survey team confined its work to the two northern hilltops. Among many features of archaeological interest on the northernmost hill, they found pottery wasters near the southern portion of the village's clay pit (farmers at a local kibbutz reported that they had filled in the northern part, which extended into their agricultural fields). Part 2 of the survey's publication included a discussion by David Adan-Bayewitz, Isadore Perlman, and their team, who, as part of an ongoing project, examined samples of pottery and pottery wasters collected on the hill. Neutron

16. For a fuller account, see James F. Strange, Dennis E. Groh, and Thomas R. W. Longstaff, "Excavations at Sepphoris: The Location and Identification of Shikhin (Part 1)," *IEJ* 44 (1994): 217–21.

17. Klein, *Beiträge zur Geographie und Geschichte Galiläas*, 69.

18. Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden vom Untergang des jüdischen Staates bis zum Abschluss des Talmuds* (Berlin: Oskar Leiner, 1853), 3:123 n. 2; cited in J. F. Strange *et al.*, "Excavations at Sepphoris (Part 1)," 217.

19. W. Oehler, "Die Ortschaften und Brenzen Galiläas nach Joesphus," *ZDPV* 27 (1905): 1–26; 49–74; cited in Strange *et al.*, "Excavations at Sepphoris (Part 1)," 217.

20. Map ref. 174-243 (OIG). See Yoram Tsafrir, Leah Di Segni, and Judith Green, eds., *Tabula Imperii Romani Judaea-Palaestina: Maps and Gazetteer* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994), 70 (the *TIR* came out in 1994, the year that the USF survey published its first article).

activation analysis²¹ led Adan-Bayewitz and Perlman to conclude that storage jars made at Shikhin constituted a significant portion of jars of that type found in surveys and excavations of Roman-period Galilean sites. Storage jars, serving bowls, and bell (a.k.a. “Sepphorean”) bowls made at Shikhin accounted for 45 percent of the pottery excavated on the acropolis of Sepphoris by the University of South Florida Excavations.²² Coupled with Adan-Bayewitz’s and Perlman’s findings about Kefar Hananya, a town at the transition between the Upper and Lower Galilees, this information had a notable impact on discussions of the Galilean economy, particularly in scholarship on the so-called historical Jesus, and to a lesser extent on the Judaism of the Talmuds. References to Shikhin, most of them repeating Adan-Bayewitz’s and Perlman’s findings, litter recent books and articles about Jesus’ Galilee.²³

Following the 2010 season of the USF Excavations at Sepphoris,²⁴ in the summer of 2011, a team headed by the author (Samford University, director) and Prof. David Fiensy (Kentucky Christian University, associate director) conducted a second survey of Shikhin with the goal of sinking the first archaeological probes in 2012.²⁵ This survey included all three of Shikhin’s hilltops and, because of time constraints, only part of Jebel Qat to the east.

Mordechai Aviam (Kinneret Institute for Galilean Archaeology at Kinneret Academic College) assisted in the survey, and in 2012 he joined the Shikhin Excavation Project as associate director. Four excavation seasons occurred between 2012 and 2015, and more are planned for a number of future seasons.

Population

The 2011 survey located a rock-cut tomb on the middle hilltop, as well as a few more cave openings that may also indicate tombs. On Shikhin’s northern hill, about 200 meters south of archaeological Field I, a broken sarcophagus and its lid were reused in a field wall. Near the foot of the eastern slope of Shikhin’s middle hill, the 2011 survey also located the foundations of a small building, perhaps a mausoleum similar to the tomb of Rabbi Judah Nasiya southeast of Shikhin (between Shikhin and Sepphoris). On the western slope of Jebel Qat to the east of Shikhin, the survey team found a rock-cut tomb with arcosolia and four nearby sarcophagi

21. David Adan-Bayewitz, F. Asaro, H. V. Michel, and I. Perlman, “The Evidence from Neutron Activation Analysis,” in James F. Strange, Dennis E. Groh, and Thomas R. W. Longstaff, “Excavations at Sepphoris: The Location and Identification of Shikhin (Part 2),” *IEJ* 45 (1995): 180–87.

22. David Adan-Bayewitz and I. Perlman, “The Local Trade of Sepphoris in the Roman Period,” *IEJ* 40 (1990): 160, table 2. See also Strange *et al.*, “Excavations at Sepphoris (Part 1),” 227; Adan-Bayewitz *et al.*, “Evidence from Neutron Activation Analysis,” 182.

23. See, for example, many of the chapters in this volume’s companion, *Galilee I: Life, Culture, and Society*.

24. The first dig season happened in the summer of 1983, with the opening of probes around the so-called citadel and in the theater. See “Sepphoris: Jewel of the Galilee” by James F. Strange in this volume, pp. 22–38.

25. See James Riley Strange, “Preliminary Report of the Samford University Survey of Shikhin,” *HA-ESI* 124 (2012): http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.asp?id=2195&mag_id=119.

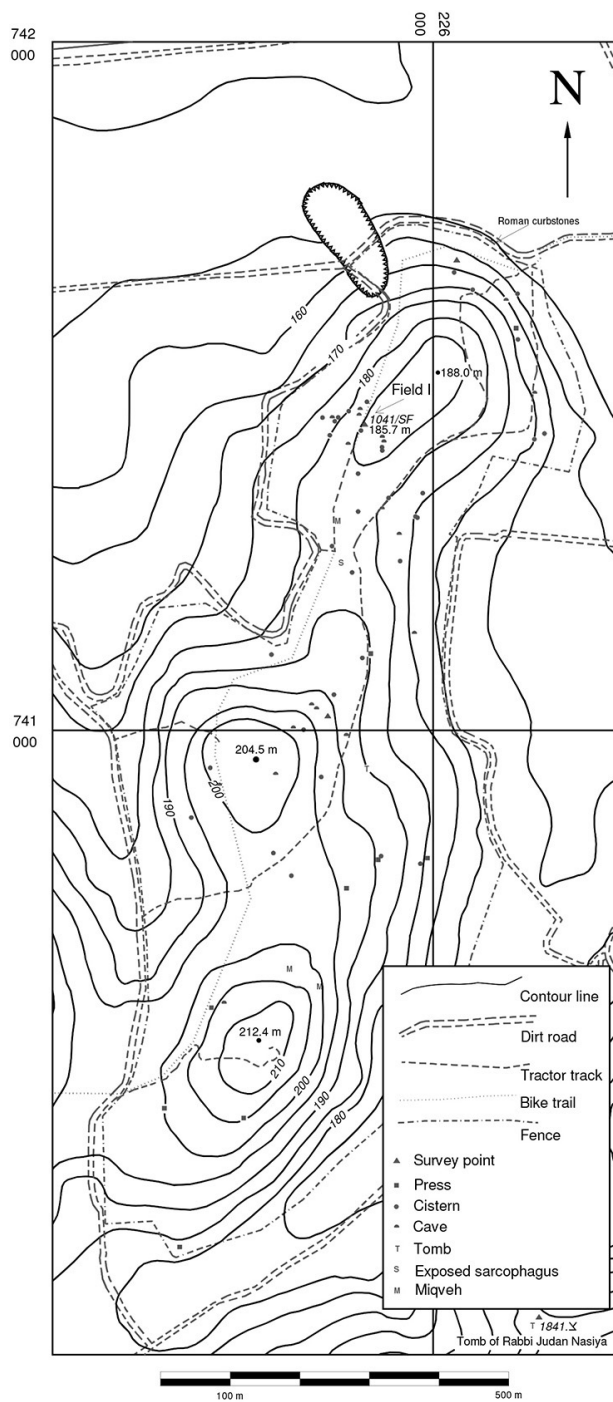


Figure C. Map of the three hilltops of Shikhin. By the author.

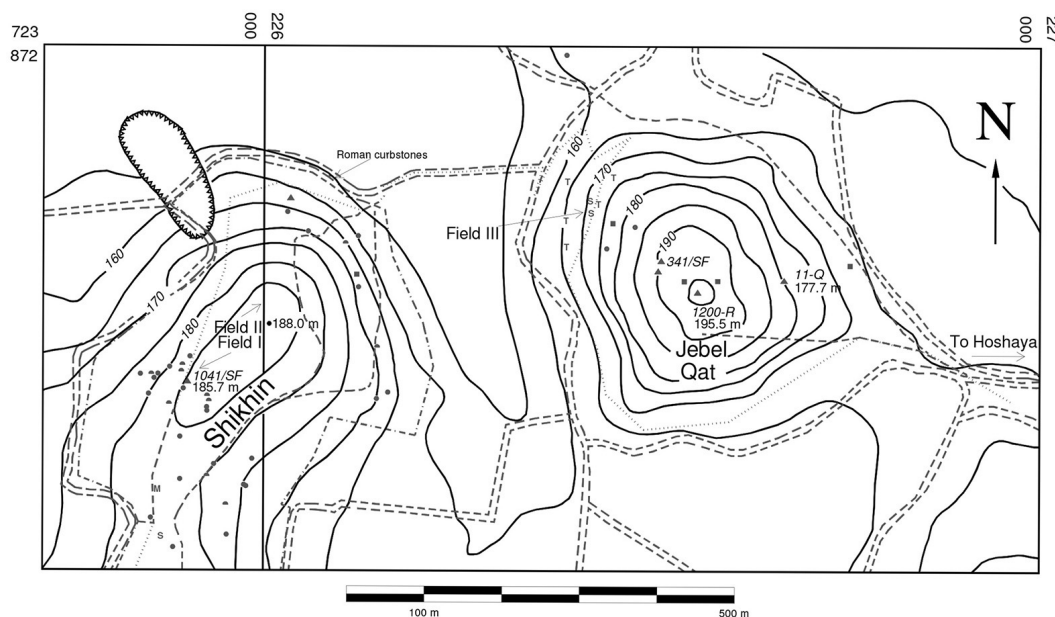


Figure D. Map of the northern hilltop of Shikhin and with Jebel Qat to the east.

By the author.

sitting on the hillside within a few meters of the tomb.²⁶ The excavations, burials, and other elements visible on the surface allow us to estimate the town's greatest extent conservatively at 2.3 hectares (5.7 acres) on the northern hilltop, which in turn permits a cautious population estimation of between 575²⁷ and 900²⁸ at the height of Shikhin's life, a number that falls within Fiensy's category of a "village" (Greek *kōmē*, *κώμη*; Hebrew *kāpār*, *כפר*).²⁹

26. The sarcophagi are probably *in situ*: all are arranged east to west with the head in the east.

27. I use the coefficient of 25 people per dunam derived from Magen Broshi, "Methodology of Population Estimates: The Roman-Byzantine Period as a Case Study," in *Bread, Wine, Walls and Scrolls* (JSPSup 36; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 86–92; reprinted from *Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990: Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology* (ed. A. Biram and J. Aviram; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 420–25.

28. I base this estimate on the coefficient of 400 people per hectare (40 per dunam), accepted by Magen Broshi in an earlier work. This should be taken as an absolute maximum, since Broshi considers only urban populations, which typically are denser than village populations. See Magen Broshi, "The Population of Western Palestine in the Roman-Byzantine Period," in *Bread, Wine, Walls and Scrolls*, 93–109; reprinted from *BASOR* 236 (1979): 1–10; cf. Yigal Shiloh, "The Population of Iron Age Palestine in the Light of a Sample Analysis of Urban Plans, Areas, and Population Density," *BASOR* 239 (1980): 25–35.

29. See David Fiensy's chapter, "The Village," in *Galilee I: Life, Culture, and Society*.

Roman Roads

Shikhin sat at the same major intersection of highways that Sepphoris oversaw. The Via Maris turned inland south of Dora and headed for the Sea of Galilee, passing Meggido, and just north of Shikhin it met up with this east–west highway.³⁰

The 2011 survey found two uninscribed Roman milestones at the foot of the eastern slope of the hill. The stones, which probably date no earlier than the second century CE, lie too close together (around 80 m) to be *in situ*. Rather, both were probably pushed to their current locations when local farmers bulldozed the *wadi* east of the hill to make agricultural fields. The road descended north and slightly west from Sepphoris, running through the *wadi* and skirting the foot of Shikhin on the northeast (where curbstones are still visible), after which it headed northwest to meet up with the Acre/Ptolemais–Tiberias highway.³¹ A length of a similar road, located farther east, which descended from Sepphoris toward the north, probably to meet the same highway, has been excavated at the modern village of Hosha‘ayah.³² In the second century CE, Romans probably paved an earlier road. Cutting a section across the road will test this hypothesis.

In antiquity, anyone traveling to Sepphoris from Acco/Ptolemais to the west would have passed by the foot of Shikhin before climbing the hill to Sepphoris, and Shikhin would have been the last suburb of Sepphoris that travelers passed on their way to Acco. Given its situation, and taking into account when the various cities were built, we can say that in the Late Second Temple through mishnaic periods, hypothetically at least, good roads gave Shikhin’s residents unimpeded access to Sepphoris, Acco, Tiberias, Legio, Caesarea, and Scythopolis, not to mention the many other villages that peppered the Lower Galilee.

Water

No natural spring waters Shikhin. Accordingly, the villagers relied entirely on cisterns cut into the hill’s soft chalk to catch runoff from the abundant winter rains.³³ The 1988 survey team reported finding thirty-three cisterns and possible cisterns, along with two channels they iden-

30. See Composite Map 4C in the front matter of this volume. See also the chapter on Galilean Roads by James F. Strange in *Galilee I: Life, Culture, and Society*. Chapters on Sepphoris, Karm er-Ras, Nazareth, and Kh. Qana mention this highway as well.

31. This road is visible on 1945 aerial photos obtained from the Survey of Israel.

32. Karen Covello-Paran and Yotam Tepper, “Zippori north: Final Report,” *HA-ESI* 123 (2011): A-5752; http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.aspx?id=1674&mag_id=118.

33. For a discussion of Galilee’s rains, see Agnes Choi, “Never the Two Shall Meet? Urban–Rural Interaction in Lower Galilee,” in *Galilee I: Life, Culture, and Society*, 301. Relying on the work of Efraim Orni and Elisha Efrat, Choi reports that Galilee currently receives between 400 and 700 mm (16 and 28 in.) of rain annually. See also J. F. Strange *et al.*, *Excavations at Sepphoris*, 12. In “Nazareth” article in this volume (pp. 167–80), J. F. Strange

tified as sections of aqueduct.³⁴ In several cases, villagers cut cisterns and underground caves into bedrock within a few meters of one another, probably because they were making full use of the exposed soft limestone. The caves may have served both as work and as storage spaces for some of Shikhin's industries.

Natural terraces formed by vertical and horizontal fissures in the limestone bedrock step down the sides of Shikhin. At some point, people took advantage of the northern hill's terraces by building walls along their edges to retain both soil and moisture. Many upper courses of these walls contain architectural fragments and even sarcophagi and so were probably built after the village was abandoned, but lower courses might have existed while it was populated. Shikhin's hillsides, therefore, might have supported fields for cultivating grains, legumes, vegetables, grapes, and olives (olive trees are cultivated on the northern hill and part of Jebel Qat today), and other foods. Today, volunteer capers, za'atar (hyssop), and wild asparagus sprout on the hill, so we can imagine that Shikhin's residents had access to many naturally growing herbs, spices, and seeds.

Activities and Industries

1. Olive and Grape Pressing

The surveys of the northern hill located a fragment of the lower part of an olive crusher and remnants of a screw press for olives.³⁵ Evidence of grape pressing can be found on all three of Shikhin's hills and on Jebel Qat. Grain cracking also occurred on Jebel Qat, as indicated by the presence of an open cut into the bedrock there.

2. Grinding and Weaving

Fragments of both mortars and querns (types of grain grinding stones) made of basalt found on the hill indicate that villagers produced flour in or near the village, which is evidence that they grew their own grain (evidence of plowing shows that grain was certainly cultivated on the hill after the village was abandoned). These grinders, which are ubiquitous at Galilean sites of the period, also suggest that Shikhin traded with settlements near the Sea of Galilee, where basalt is the native stone. About ten loom weights and several spindle whorls recovered in the course of the excavations supply evidence of wool production and weaving.

says that Nazareth, a little over five miles distant from Shikhin, receives an annual rainfall of between 500 and 800 mm (20 to 32 in.).

34. Strange *et al.*, "Excavations at Sepphoris (Part 2)," 173–77. The 2011 survey located thirty-two cisterns and possible cisterns.

35. Ibid.

3. *Stone Quarrying*

As is typical in villages all over Israel, Shikhin and Jebel Qat contain many stone quarries. Because the stones were square-cut, they most likely were intended for the ongoing construction at Sepphoris.

4. *Pottery Manufacture*

Currently, evidence of Shikhin's famous pottery workshops comes from Field I, although wast-ers, burnt stones, and what are probably pieces of kilns have been found on the surface to the north of and downhill from Field I, where centuries of winter rains have washed them. Field I contains remnants of at least three buildings, all of which have been badly disturbed by robbing and plowing. Floors and founding courses of many surviving walls lie within centimeters of the surface, and the plowing of the top of the hill, which probably stopped in 1948, scarred the surviving upper courses of many walls and the surface of bedrock as well. Nearly all soil loci excavated so far result from human disturbance (plowing the field and robbing stones) or human fill operations. At present, the excavators can date only the final abandonment with confidence. All activities associated with the buildings ceased before the earthquake of 363.

The pottery assemblage recovered in both surveys and all three excavation seasons allows the following preliminary conclusions about the settlement: (1) small amounts of pottery from the Iron II through Early Hellenistic periods indicate some human activity on the hill in that time, and (2) there was a significant population increase in the Late Hellenistic period, before pottery production began at the site, according to our current evidence. (3) The pottery counts surge in the Early Roman period and decline through the Late Roman period. Pottery manufacturing, rather than population growth alone, probably explains part of this increase. (4) The pottery counts decline following the Early Roman period, and very little dates later than the fourth century: we have found very few Byzantine and Islamic sherds, although we have lamps and lamp fragments from the Early Islamic period.³⁶ The volume of pottery found at Shikhin suggests that its potters produced more vessels than its residents could use.

The numismatic evidence supports this range of dates but shows a preponderance of coins (over 40 percent) from the second century BCE (these are Tyrian, Seleucid, and Hasmonean), with the number of coins dropping off sharply in the Roman periods. The absence of third-century CE coins among the coins found to date is arresting and requires further investigation.

36. Three factors pose a challenge as we attempt to link the numbers of sherds recovered to Shikhin's population in the three Roman periods. First, we have concentrated our excavations on the crown of the northern hill of Shikhin. (Our pottery profile, however, does correlate well with pottery recovered in both surveys.) Second, pottery manufacture for export—rather than for use by the population alone—probably accounts for a significant part of the surge in Early Roman pottery found. Finally, there is some question about when to date the horizons between the Roman periods. For example, does the Early Roman period end in 70, as the USF Excavations at Sepphoris date it, or in 135, as the Joint Expedition to Sepphoris and Duke University Excavations do (Eric M. Meyers and Carol L. Meyers, eds., *The Pottery from Ancient Sepphoris* [Sepphoris Excavation Reports 1; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013], 4–5)?

The northernmost squares of Field I (fig. E) reveal walls of two or more structures, some of which are associated with pottery and lamp production, although the excavations have not yet uncovered kilns, which probably lie north and east of our area, making use of the prevailing westerly winds to carry smoke and ash away from the village. We will be able to date the construction of the buildings when we dig wall foundations.

Everywhere in the northern buildings of Field I, the excavators find the same basic sequence. (1) Villagers first cut the soft bedrock, probably quarrying for building stones (providing stones for nearby Sepphoris?) but also creating vats or pools (A and E). At least that is the consequence of their operations. (2) The reuse of these voids in the bedrock marks the second phase in the sequence. In more than one place, people built walls (C) above and more or less flush with the vertical faces of cut bedrock (see I.5 and I.8 in fig. E). A stub of a wall (B) in I.5, made up to the cut face of bedrock, may be contemporary with this building phase or may predate it. Some circular and square holes that survive in bedrock (most notably in I.3 and I.5) apparently supported superstructures for industries associated with the buildings. (3) Probably after the house whose southwest corner survives in I.5 was abandoned, people built a wall for a building to the south (D) parallel to the house's southern wall, extending some meters to the west. In I.3, people made up a low, plastered bench (F) to the northern face of the southern wall of this building. They cut a threshold for a narrow door directly into the bedrock foundation of the southern wall. (4) They filled the void in I.5 and I.8 with over 1.5 m of pottery manufacturing waste in order to support a plaster floor (E), which they laid level with the uppermost surviving courses of the house walls. Seasonal plowing badly damaged this and some other plaster floors near the modern surface. In I.6, people transformed a void cut into the bedrock into a pool (A) for holding water by plastering the sides, and they increased its volume by building a plastered wall (A) on top of the vertical face of the rock, thus raising the sides of the pool. Currently, the hypothesis is that the pool served the levigation of clay, but other uses are certainly plausible. People made the pool at around the same time that they made the floor in I.5, because they built the pool's wall against a supporting fill of pottery waste similar to what lay under the floor. Also in the fourth century, someone filled in the pool (but without the same concentration of pottery waste) and laid a plaster floor over it. This floor extends into I.4 to the south. In both places that contain fill made from pottery waste, the vast majority of the pottery dates to the three Roman periods. Because most are near the surface and damaged, as of yet we have recovered very little occupational evidence from floors in Field I.

According to preliminary readings of Shikhin's material culture, the third and fourth centuries saw several different construction operations in the northern part of Field I, followed by their dismantling or destruction and abandonment before the end of the Late Roman period. The final two construction phases made use of waste from pottery manufacturing. At this point, it is difficult to say what we may infer from so much activity and reuse of earlier structures in the Late Roman period.

The waste is primarily in the form of thousands of pottery sherds, many of them "wasters" of various types: vessels that vitrified, turning green and in some cases slumping and

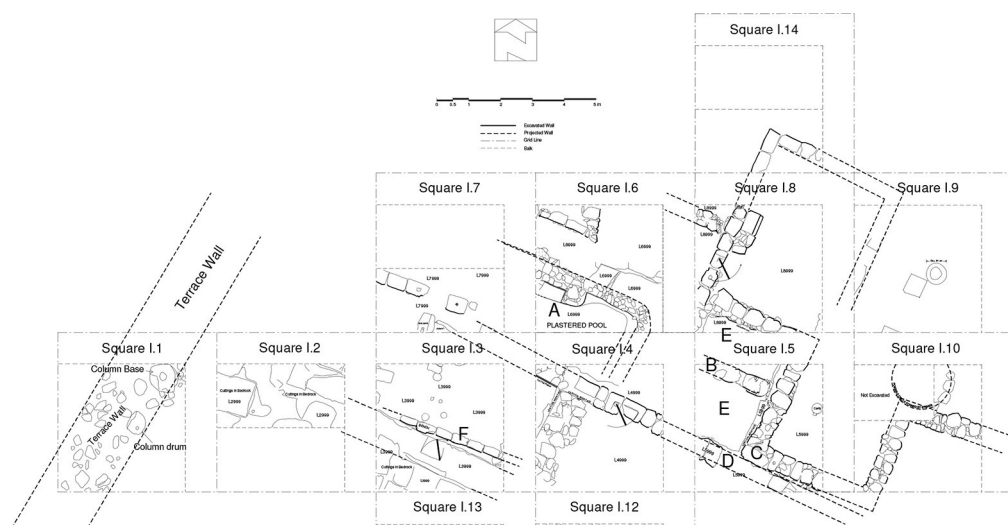


Figure E. Northern squares of Field I: Pottery and lamp manufacture. Plan by J. F. Strange.

bubbling in overheated kilns; jug bases that cracked before firing; gas bubbles and blowouts in vessel walls; and malformed rims. They also come from most of the common Galilean pottery forms: jars, jugs, bowls (including the “Sepphorean bowl” or “bell bowl”) kraters, and cooking pots. The waste also contains pieces of kiln walls and floors, as well as one fragment of the upper part of a potter’s wheel.

Following the extensive work of Adan-Bayewitz and Perlman, many publications of ceramics from Galilean sites have mentioned the so-called Shikhin storage jar.³⁷ Adan-Bayewitz and Perlman discussed the manufacture of bell jars and serving bowls (also known as “kraters”), as well as storage jars, at Shikhin and their presence at nearby Sepphoris, but emphasized the distribution of storage jars, which are the most commonly found storage jar type in the Galilee. The idea that some villages were pottery-production centers for the Galilee, and that two of these specialized in particular kinds of pots, bears further testing, now that the excavators are gaining a picture of the variety of vessel types that Shikhin produced.³⁸

37. Adan-Bayewitz describes it as “characterised by an inset neck and everted rim” (“Evidence from Neutron Activation Analysis,” 182) and “the inset neck-everted rim storage jar” (“Local Trade of Sepphoris,” 168); this corresponds to Florentino Díez Fernández’s forms T 1.5 through T 1.10 (*Cerámica común romana de la Galilea: Aproximaciones y diferencias con la cerámica del resto de Palestina y regiones circundantes* (Madrid: Biblia y Fé, 1983), 137–43, 186–88).

38. See Mordechai Aviam, “Kefar Hananya Ware Made in Yodefat,” in *Roman Pottery in the Levant: Local Production and Regional Trade* (ed. B. Genz, Y. Gerber, H. Hamel; Roman and Late Antique Mediterranean Pottery 2; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013), 139–46.

It is also worth noting that excavations at Shikhin are turning up an unusual number of uncommon pottery forms. Because some of these are wasters, we infer that Shikhin's potters experimented with new forms.³⁹

5. Lamp Production

Evidence of ceramic oil lamp manufacturing at Shikhin has provided our most provocative discovery. We first entertained the possibility that Shikhin's kilns produced lamps when we began to recover a surprising number of lamp fragments, some of them from unused lamps, in our first excavation season. For example, in 2012, out of eight archaeological squares and half-squares, most of which we did not complete, and most of which are relatively shallow, we registered 114 lamp fragments. We registered 406 lamp fragments after three seasons and twenty excavated squares.

When we found our first three fragments of lamp molds in 2012, we knew we had strong evidence of lamp manufacturing at the site. We are now sure of it, having registered twenty fragments of lamp molds. By the end of the 2014 season, square I.8 alone had yielded 156 lamp fragments and fragments of six lamp molds. As with pottery, the number of lamp fragments and mold fragments suggests to us that Shikhin produced a surplus of lamps for export. All molds found so far are fragmentary, which suggests that they were broken during use or afterward as farmers plowed the abandoned hill. The location of mold fragments over parts of the synagogue indicates that plowing scattered them.

We have found molds for Varda Sussman's type RH4, what she calls "the northern undecorated mould-made lamps, whose top is circular with a sharp edge, with arched nozzles and no handles,"⁴⁰ and which she dates to the first through second centuries CE (fig. F). These are relatively plain lamps, decorated only with concentric rings at the outer edge of the shoulder, produced with a compass, and sometimes with parallel curved lines on the nozzle, just below the fill hole. Corresponding to the mold shown in fig. F, we have one lamp fragment that matches, and we have the cutout for a fill hole that was fired, and hence survived (fig. G). On one side of the cutout, a knob corresponds to the hole made by the compass, and the potter left a thumbprint on the other. Another mold fragment found in I.13 shows pomegranates with a meandering tendril inside a circle between the fill hole and the edge, similar to an example

39. Some apparently found a limited market in nearby Sepphoris, where the wide-mouthed jug JG3b was found: Marva Balouka, "Roman Pottery," in *The Pottery from Ancient Sepphoris* (ed. Eric M. Meyers and Carol L. Meyers; Sepphoris Excavation Reports 1; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 44; pl. 21:10–13. Examples have also been found at Shikhin, and Bellarmino Bagatti turned up similar forms in Nazareth (*Gli scavi di Nazaret*, vol. 1, *Dalle origini al secolo XII* [Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1967], 270, fig. 220, 10). Adan-Bayewitz has already suggested that this form was made at Shikhin; see Balouka, "Roman Pottery," 44.

40. Varda Sussman, *Roman Period Oil Lamps in the Holy Land: Collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority* (BAR International Series 2447; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012), 92.



Figure F



Figure G



Figure H



Figure I



Figure J



Figure K

Figures F–K Mold and lamp fragments from Shikhin. Photos by Dror Maayan.

from Mishmar ha-'Emeq at the southwestern edge of the Jezreel Plain (fig. H).⁴¹ In 2013, in I.8, we discovered a fragment of a mold for the bottom of a “Darom” (“southern”)-style lamp. This fragment includes the nozzle and the section joining with the body (fig. I). A lamp nozzle found nearby in I.5 is a good match (fig. J). In 2014, we found very near the surface a fragment of a mold for the top of a lamp that is clearly of the Darom style (fig. K). One can see part of the nozzle and part of one “wing” or “volute” left of the nozzle, with curved fluting on the nozzle neck, and with a radiating pattern inside a raised double circle on the shoulder. These lamps are Sussman’s type RH6, the northern variety of the Darom lamp.

Sussman discusses the production of the Darom lamp in “the Judean Shephelah and the western slopes of the Hebron Hills,”⁴² in the late first century (after 70) and at least up to the Bar Kokhba revolt. She speculates that a northern workshop produced the wheel-made “tea-pot” lamp (RW2; manufactured from the middle or end of the first century BCE through the first half of the first century CE), the well-known wheel-made Herodian lamp with the knife-pared nozzle (RH3; from the end of the first century BCE through 135), the undecorated

41. Ibid., 313.

42. Ibid., 113.

mold-made lamp already mentioned (RH4; from the first through second centuries CE), and two types of decorated mold-made lamps, one without volutes/wings (RH5; from the mid- or late first century CE through the mid-second century CE) and one with (RH6; from the mid first century BCE through the mid second century CE).⁴³

We can now make a persuasive argument that Shikhin produced Darom-style lamps, or the *צפוני דרום נר* (“northern-southern lamp”: Sussman’s type RH6). Because its workshops produced Darom-style lamps, Shikhin may also be the site of the northern workshop near Nazareth that Sussman suspected of making other wheel-made and mold-made lamps, or one such workshop. Because all molds are fragments, making it difficult to identify clearly the types of lamps made in them, aside from some unused knife-pared nozzles, we do not yet have strong evidence at Shikhin for the manufacture of lamps other than Sussman’s forms RH4 and RH6.

We have been speculating that manufacture of the Darom-style lamps began at Shikhin in 135 CE or later, when Judeans whom the Romans expelled migrated into Galilee. This hypothesis links production of these lamps with Shikhin’s appearance on lists of the priestly divisions (see above). Shikhin’s pottery kilns and clays could have attracted southern lamp makers. Excavations at Khirbet Wadi Ḥamam, however, have turned up both undecorated mold-made lamps (RH4) and Darom-style mold-made lamps (RH6) “that are accurately dated to the first third of the 2nd c. CE and were found in a destruction layer rich with coins and pottery.”⁴⁴ The secured dating of the loci suggests that the lamps arrived in Ḥamam before or around the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt, not after. If these lamps are from Shikhin—which we do not yet know—production of RH4 and RH6 began at Shikhin before 135.

Synagogue

Despite the fact that the excavators have not yet secured the date of the synagogue’s construction, the building is significant because it was unknown before our team found its remains in a terrace wall in 2011. Based on preliminary pottery readings, currently we infer that it was abandoned or destroyed before 363 CE along with the rest of the village. The founding course of a short stretch of what is probably an exterior wall of the synagogue reveals stones with bossing on their eastern faces. All have been cut from larger bossed stones, and all are clearly in secondary use and laid on bedrock, which in places has been cut and leveled to match the line and height of this founding course. These stones probably come from a fine home or public building of the Early Roman period.

43. Ibid., 75, 84, 92–94, 96. Sussman mentions the area near Nazareth specifically for the workshop that produced RW2, RH3, and RH6.

44. E-mail exchange among the author, Uzi Leibner, and Mordechai Aviam, November 6, 2014. See the chapter by Uzi Leibner in this volume, pp. 343–61.

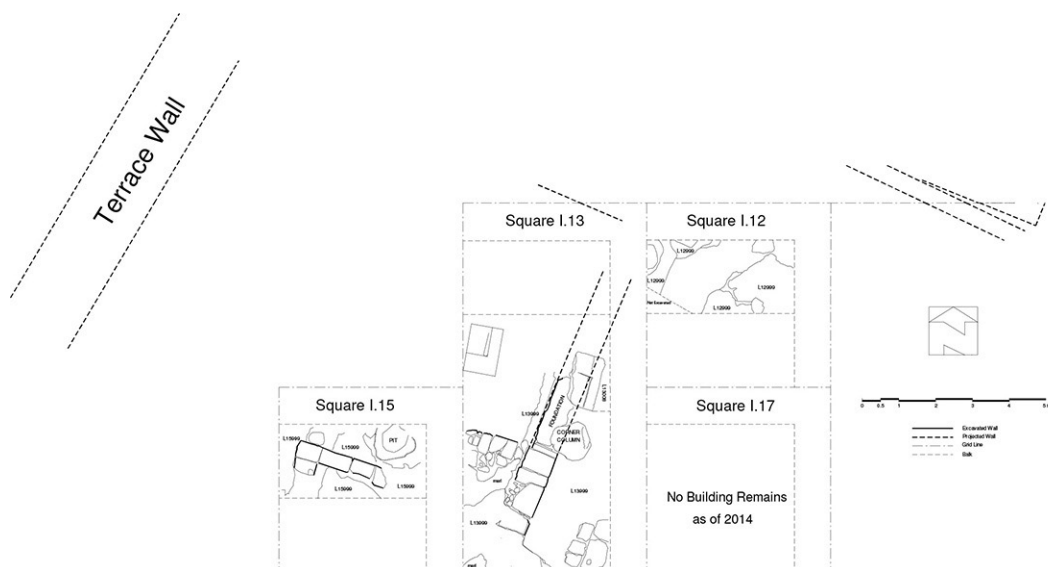


Figure L. Southern squares of Field I: Synagogue remains. Plan by J. F. Strange.

Judging from architectural fragments found in 2011 in the terrace wall that currently marks the western limit of Field I (fig. L), as well as fragments turned up in the excavation, we can say that most of the synagogue was built from locally quarried *nari*, the upper layer of the local chalk limestone. We have found two badly battered and weathered fragments of Ionic capitals. One modified Attic column base has a diameter of 1.03 m at the lowest torus. The lowest part of the column shaft (the section integrated into the base) measures .76 m in diameter. Such a massive column (estimated to reach around 7 m in height) does not appear to fit the interior of the building and perhaps should be located in a porch. Alternatively, it may have originally supported another building. One of the two sections of heart-shaped columns we have found has lobes measuring around .60 m in diameter, similar to other battered and reused column drums found elsewhere in Field I. This might give us the dimensions of the synagogue's interior columns: based on standard dimensions, a diameter of 60 cm allows us to project columns between 5.5 and 6 m in height, including all of their elements.

Two pieces of threshold (fig. M) lying near each other were carved from hard limestone. Unequal in length (1.47 m and 1.28 m), they create a single threshold 2.75 m long (a little more than 9 Roman ft) and .91 m wide (a little more than 3 Roman ft), accommodating a double-leafed door 1.58 meters in width (a little over 5 Roman ft). The front edges and the door slots of the stones do not line up well. Accordingly, the halves may be spoils from two different thresholds. In the synagogue building, the entire threshold sat on a large foundation stone that, in combination with a parallel slot cut in bedrock, accommodated the width of the threshold.

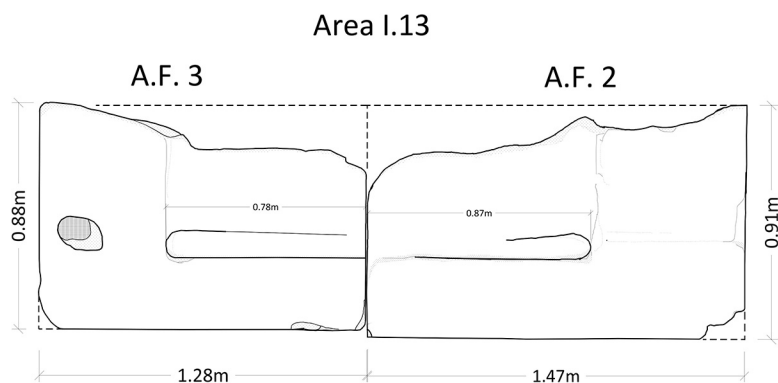


Figure M. Two pieces of synagogue threshold combined to create a single entry. Drawing by J. F. Strange

Remnants of plaster between 8 and 10 cm thick, some with two layers, found in a field wall bordering Field I to the east, suggest that the building had a plaster floor. Part of the floor might have been made of white mosaic, but to date only four tesserae have been found in the area of the synagogue, and none has turned up elsewhere. Fragments of roof tile in the area suggest that the synagogue had a peaked roof. Some fragments of red and yellow painted plaster found in Field I probably came from the synagogue's walls.

Excavations have yielded relatively few glass shards at the site, and many of them come from glass oil lamps that hung from chains. (We have recovered one piece of such a chain.) People did not typically use this type of lamp in homes, so the lamps probably illuminated the synagogue's interior. To date, we have found no inscriptions or artwork associated with the synagogue.

Judging from architectural fragments, Shikhin's residents built a synagogue largely of local, soft limestone, in basilical or broadhouse style, probably not earlier than the second century, reusing pieces of an earlier private villa or public building. Further work will date the building's founding securely and determine its basic layout and orientation.

Conclusion

The picture emerging from texts, surveys, and the excavation of Shikhin is that soon after an influx of Jewish settlers moved there near the transition from the Early to the Late Hellenistic periods, Shikhin became a village of some importance, perhaps in part because of its associations with its nearest neighbor, Sepphoris. It was feasible for someone to live in one and work in the other. Moreover, Sepphoris and Shikhin oversaw the same intersection of major high-

ways, and Shikhin's residents had access to these routes, as well as to the network of smaller roads and tracks that knit Galilee's villages into cultural, trade, political, and kinship systems. Sages knew about its high-quality clays and pottery, its storage jars, and its lamps because people all over the Galilee, including its cities, owned these products of Shikhin's industry. Throughout its relatively brief history, Shikhin maintained an observant Jewish population, although we cannot rule out the presence of non-Jews in the village. Its residents adopted features of Roman architecture for their synagogue (as was the Galilean custom), while keeping purity and otherwise maintaining a Jewish—that is, Judean—identity. These ideas will take clearer shape in the coming seasons.

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