

## THE ‘YANNAI LINE’ (*Bḥ* I, 99–100; *Aḥ* XIII, 390–91): REALITY OR FICTION?

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In a recently published monograph, I. Morris states that one of the major problems of classical archaeology is that it becomes a source of illustration for ancient texts (2000, 41, 75). A similar statement appears to be correct in the case of biblical archaeology (cf. Bunimovitz 2001; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001). In both cases, there is a real danger of falling into the trap of producing archaeological ‘independent evidence’ in order to support a particular historical narrative by creating an archaeological illustration. It is definitely not our intention to argue that classical or biblical archaeologists should ignore the historical sources; such a statement would obviously be absurd. However, we must acknowledge the fact that a well-known and, in some way understandable, archaeological desire to connect a given assemblage with a certain historical text can lead to erroneous conclusions, if it does not take into consideration a wide spectrum of circumstances that may have shaped the historicity of the text. In the same way, an archaeological interpretation (although never truly objective) becomes even more fragile when its main aim, usually formulated at the beginning of an excavation, is to produce an illustration for a particular historical episode.

In what follows, we intend to examine the historical and archaeological data regarding the existence of a so-called ‘Yannai Line’ (i.e. Alexander Jannaeus’ defensive line against Antiochus XII Dionysus), the term that was coined by the late J. Kaplan in a series of publications that appeared from the early 1950s onwards.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Josephus’ accounts (*Bḥ* [*Jewish War*] i, 99–100; *Aḥ* [*Antiquities*] xiii, 390–91), Kaplan has attempted to identify archaeological remains discovered in Tel Aviv and Bene Braq (some distance south of the Yarqon basin), as belonging to Alexander Jannaeus’ defensive line, erected in ca 86/85 B.C.E. Kaplan’s assumptions and interpretations of the excavated remains seem to be widely accepted in historical and archaeological studies dealing with the Late Hellenistic (Hasmonean) period in Ancient Israel (e.g. Feldman 1984, 253; Kasher 1990, 160, note 125; Shatzman 1991, 81, note 172a; Arav 1989, 48; Berlin 1997, 38–39). ‘New’ material which became available only recently permits one, however, to reconsider this previous consensus; but, before embarking on a proper archaeological discussion, let us review the two citations from Josephus’ accounts regarding this episode:<sup>2</sup>

*Bḥ* i, 99–100 [IV, 7]

Disturbance arose in his [Alexander’s] reign again with Antiochus, surnamed Dionysus, brother of Demetrius and last among the Seleucids. Since Alexander feared him because of his campaign against the Arabs, he dug a deep gully between the mountain-side above Antipatris and the sea shore of Joppa, and in front of the ditch he erected a high wall with inserted wooden towers, blocking up weak spots easy to attack. But he failed in restraining Antiochus, who burnt the towers, levelled the ditch, and marched across with his army.

*Aḥ* xiii, 390–91 [XV, 1]

Alexander, fearing an invasion by him, dug a deep ditch, beginning at Chabarsaba which is now called Antipatris, as far as the sea of Joppa, where alone it was assailable; and he erected a wall after setting up wooden towers and spaces between the towers [firing platforms] for [a distance of] a hundred and fifty stades against Antiochus’ attack. But Antiochus, after burning these [constructions], led over his army to Arabia.

The historical background for the above-cited episode lies in the clash over the crown between the two Seleucid brothers, Antiochus XII Dionysus and Philip. The conflict led Dionysus to campaign against the Arabs who actively supported his brother. Josephus says that Dionysus and his army advanced towards the Arabs via Judah and southern Edom. However, Jannaeus, mistrusting Dionysus' intentions, had erected in alarm a defensive alignment, including a ditch (*taphros*), behind which were a wall (*teichos*), wooden towers (*xulinoi purgoi*) and probably firing platforms (*metapurgia*, though mentioned only in *AJ*), for a distance of 150 stades, from Caphersaba/Antipatris to the Sea of Joppa, in order to prevent Dionysus' advance.

In an article dealing with the battle between Ptolemy Lathyrus and Alexander Jannaeus in the Jordan Valley, B. Bar-Kochva has addressed these historical aspects (1999, 15, n. 33); Josephus' accounts regarding this episode, all copied from the accounts of Nicolaus of Damascus, raise chronological and geographical difficulties. According to Bar-Kochva, during the 80s of the first century B.C.E. Dionysus, under pressure in his capital Damascus, could not pose any serious threat and, therefore, Jannaeus did not erect such a defensive alignment against Dionysus; rather, these defences may have been erected previously, even before Jannaeus' time. On the other hand, Josephus' description of this alignment raises even more difficulties. Assuming that the advance of Dionysus' army from Damascus towards the southern Sharon Plain took no more than 10–15 days (as they are ca 200 km apart), Jannaeus would not have been able to complete such a large-scale project, consisting of digging a ditch as long as 150 stadia (ca 28 km), with a wall behind it, flanked by wooden towers and probably equipped with firing-platforms. It should be emphasized that such a defensive alignment does not take into consideration the natural strategic qualities of the Yarqon basin, which in itself is a deep ditch (as already mentioned by Kaplan 1951, 22). Acknowledging this very fact, Bar-Kochva suggests that the presumably existing defensive alignment was concentrated east of the sources of the Yarqon, in the ca 4 km plain between the western part of the Samaria foothills and Aphek. He also suggests that Josephus has copied more selectively than usual the information from Nicolaus of Damascus, without analysing its geographical and chronological validity (Bar-Kochva 1999, 15, n. 33). In addition to Bar-Kochva's observations, we must point out the dissimilarities and confusions existing between Josephus' two accounts. Suffice it to mention that according to *BJ* Antiochus intended to pass through Judah (from Damascus) in order to attack the Arabs, and thereafter Jannaeus erected his fortified constructions; *AJ* on the other hand states that Antiochus returned from Arabia via Judah (*AJ* xiii, 389), and after destroying Jannaeus' fortified constructions passed to Arabia, which does not make sense. In contrast to Bar-Kochva's opinion and ours, some recent historical studies on the Hasmonean dynasty accept Josephus' descriptions of Jannaeus' defensive line (e.g. Goldstein 1989, 340; Grabbe 1992, 303–04), but without examining their historical and geographical validity.

#### THE 'YANNAI LINE'

On 26 November 1949, during a survey in the north-eastern part of Tel Aviv, Kaplan discovered the remains of an ancient structure at the intersection between Arlozorov and Bloch Streets. The structure was partly unearthed as a result of construction works undertaken at the site. Kaplan collected the pottery visible on the surface around the structure and identified it as Hellenistic in date, and thus logically attributed the structure to the Hellenistic period. On 16 December 1949, during a survey in the north-western part of Tel Aviv, the remains of another ancient structure were discovered upon the *kurkar* (fossilized dune sandstone) hill of 'Abd el Nabi, overlooking the Mediterranean, where the surrounding gardens of the Hilton hotel would later be planted. Here too, surface pottery was identified

as Hellenistic in date, thus suggesting the date of the structure. Shortly after the discovery of the remains, Kaplan inspected them together with B. Maisler (Mazar). During their visit to Arlozorov Street (accompanied by H. Halperin, the then chief municipal inspector of Tel Aviv), they found out that the building activities were continuing, and that the structure was covered by modern constructional debris. Building at the site was halted after Kaplan applied to the municipal engineer for a salvage excavation. On 28 December 1949, Kaplan sent a letter to S. Yeivin, the then Head of the Department of Antiquities and Museums, to which a preliminary hand-sketch plan of the site of Arlozorov Street was attached, together with a brief description, as well as a request for some modest financial support (15–20 Israeli Lirat [in late 1940s currency]), so as to conduct an immediate salvage excavation to prevent the unavoidable destruction. The letter was received on 29 December 1949 (No. 1550, Tel Aviv file) and, according to the record, a positive answer was given the same day. Excavation started on 2 January 1950, and continued for four days.

#### ARLOZOROV STREET

Kaplan described the remains discovered on Arlozorov Street in the following manner:

This was a wall, about 1.5 metres thick, that had formed part of a hexagonal structure, each side of which measured approximately eight metres . . . Inside this hexagonal area were found fragments of Hellenistic pottery, and traces of soot and charcoal. This structure stood isolated from any other structures in the vicinity. It may be supposed that this was a Hellenistic military tower, inside which stood a wooden observation turret, and that the wall was there to protect the defenders against surprise attack (1971, 205).

The interpretation of these poorly preserved architectural remains (Figs. 1, 2, and 3) as part of a Hellenistic military tower is highly conjectural. Alternatively, they could have formed part of an enclosure connected with farming activities. Even if we accept the proposed reconstruction as a wooden turret enclosed by a hexagonal wall (which is definitely uncertain), the evidence does not necessarily point to a military character, since the building could have served an agricultural estate. Kaplan mentions that the discovered remains stood isolated from any other structures in the vicinity, but in the excavation logbook he mentions other ancient remains visible to the south of the excavated ones, upon the southern side of the road. Kaplan adds that these remains were not found *in situ*, as they were displaced by mechanical tools from their unknown original location. Unfortunately, there is no further information regarding these remains or the pottery they produced. Perhaps the reason for this silence is that the pottery found there did not support a strictly Hasmonaean date for the excavated structure? Even if these remains were indeed displaced from their original location, it seems logical to assume that they came from the immediate vicinity, which may contain additional undiscovered ancient remains. In any case, it appears that Kaplan's statement suggesting that 'this structure stood isolated from any other structures in the vicinity' is incorrect.

In published articles, Kaplan mentions only the fragments of Hellenistic pottery that were discovered during the excavation on Arlozorov Street. Regrettably, despite prolonged investigations conducted at the Israel Antiquities Authority (henceforth IAA) warehouses, we were unable to locate the finds collected during this excavation. According to the excavation logbook, the recorded finds consisted of thirty-six sherds, including six rims of storage jars, three rims of bowls, three rims of cooking-pots, fourteen handles, three bases, and seven body fragments. Most interesting, however, is a reference to a coin, also uncovered within the context of the excavated structure. According to Kaplan's logbook, it is a Roman provincial coin assigned (in Kaplan's days) to the Roman Procurator Antonius Felix (i.e.



Fig. 1. Arlozorov Street, overview, looking north.



Fig. 2. Arlozorov Street, wall in detail, looking west.

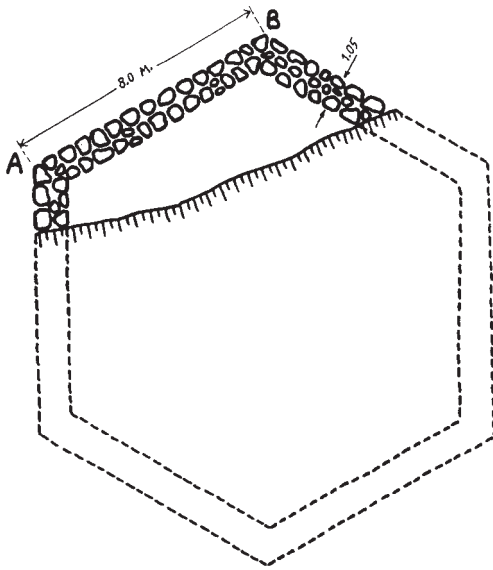


Fig. 3. Arlozorov Street, drawing of the wall discovered (after Kaplan 1971, Fig. 94).

58–60 C.E.),<sup>3</sup> but as with the pottery, we were unable to retrace its present location. It is worth mentioning that at the two other excavated sites (below), the presence of coins of Alexander Jannaeus was used by Kaplan as ultimate evidence in support of the Jannaeus date. Here, we must emphasize that coins of Alexander Jannaeus are among the most common numismatic finds unearthed in the Late Hellenistic/Hasmonean strata in Israel. However, many of these coins are retrieved from post-Hasmonean occupation layers. Owing to their size, similar to that of Late Roman bronze coins, they most probably remained in circulation long after their production. Ample demonstration of this practice may be seen in

several coin hoards of Byzantine date such as at Gush Ḥalav (Bijovsky 1998, 78 [Table 1], 80, 87, coins nos. 1–2 and note 1, with further literature). In the excavation logbook, Kaplan resolves this problem by explaining the presence of a ‘Felix’ coin with the fact that some of the towers erected by Jannaeus were not destroyed by the Syrians, but continued to exist during the Early Roman period. It seems to us, however, that such a claim is unacceptable.

‘ABD EL NABI (MEZAD HAYARQON / MEZAD HILTON)

As briefly mentioned above, Kaplan discovered the remains of another ancient structure at ‘Abd el Nabi, by the eastern garden of today’s Hilton hotel (where the structure is still visible), during a visit on 16 December 1949. The excavation was carried out a few days after the termination of the excavation on Arlozorov Street, and continued from 18 January to 16 February 1950 intermittently, because of rainy days. During the excavation foundation walls of two rooms (A + B) were unearthed (Figs. 4, 5, 6, and 7). Room A measures ca  $5.4 \times 4.3$  m, with an entrance (ca 0.9 m) located close to the centre of its west wall. Room B measures ca  $4.3 \times 2.75$  m, with an entrance (ca 0.8 m) located close to the centre of its joint wall with Room A. Walls of both rooms are built of small fieldstones (ca  $0.2 \times 0.15$  m), ca 0.6 m thick, and consist of two rows of stones with a stone and earth fill in between. The continuation of the west and east walls of the building southward, including the remains of a floor, led Kaplan to assume the existence of an additional room (Room C) with the measurements of Room B. The same holds true of the eastern part of the building, as the northern wall continues to the east, suggesting a longitudinal room the full length of the building. Neither south nor east parts of the building are preserved, owing to modern sand mining activity. The reconstructed building measures ca  $13.5 \times 9$  m and is identified by Kaplan as a Hasmonean fort.

Kaplan reported (1951, 18–19) on the findings of fragments of a Rhodian amphora in the western section and a coin of Alexander Jannaeus in the northern section, as well as a stamped Rhodian amphora handle (Fig. 8, 13) in the north-east corner of Room A. The excavation logbook shows, however, that both coin and stamped amphora handle, were found upon surface level, about 5 m outside the northern limit of the building. Trial trenches to the north of Room B and to the west of Room A yielded no architectural remains except for pottery fragments and an intact bowl found ca 0.5 m below surface (Fig. 8, 1). Additional architectural remains were discovered about 20 m south of the building, from which a round-shaped cistern and silo were discerned (see Kaplan 1971, Fig. 93). Most of the finds (numbering ca 774 fragments, of which sixty-four are described) were retrieved from the building and dated according to Kaplan’s notes to ca 150–50 B.C.E., with the exception of two or three fragments. The identifiable ones that were kept are all shown here and seems to indicate, however, a somewhat earlier date. Their ware is semi-fine (as in the intact bowl and complete lamp) but mostly coarse and of medium to high temperature firing. The intact slipped bowl (Fig. 8, 1) with the incurved rim is of a Late Persian and Hellenistic date (cf. Guz-Zilberstein 1995, 289–290, Fig. 6.1, 1–24, with some exceptions), and so is the fragmented plain incurved rim bowl (Fig. 8, 2; cf. Stern 1995, 52, Fig. 2.1, 8). The outcurved rim bowl (Fig. 8, 3) is mostly of third and second centuries B.C.E. date, as is evident from Dor (Guz-Zilberstein 1995, 291, Figs. 6.3, 8 and 12), and so is the outcurved rim heavy bowl/mortarium (Fig. 8, 4) (Guz-Zilberstein 1995, 295, Fig. 6.9, 8). The cooking-pot (Fig. 8, 5) and jug (Fig. 8, 8) are of a well-known Hellenistic type (cf. Guz-Zilberstein 1995, 298, Fig. 6.17, 2–4; and 309, Fig. 6.31, 2, accordingly) but the kraters (Fig. 8, 6–7) seem to be of a Persian date (cf. Tal 1999, 155, Fig. 4.36, 7). Not much can be said about the fragmented rim and body of the storage jars (Fig. 8, 9–10) and the fragmented toe of the amphora (Fig. 8, 11) except for a common Persian-Hellenistic date. The complete folded thin-walled



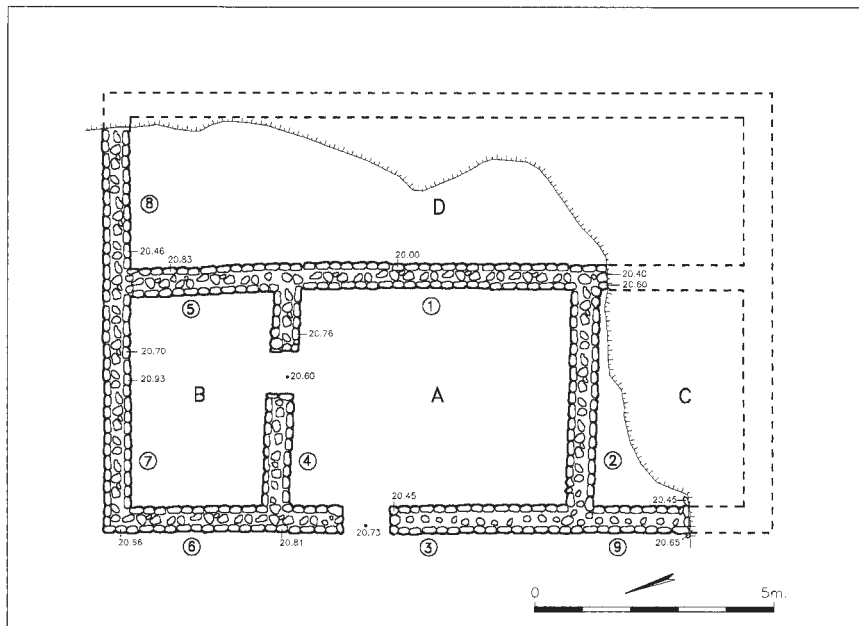


Fig. 4. 'Abd el Nabi / Mezad HaYarqon, site plan (modified after a plan found in the site's archival file).



Fig. 5. 'Abd el Nabi / Mezad HaYarqon, Room A, looking south-east.



Fig. 6. 'Abd el Nabi / Mezad HaYarqon, Room A and Room B, looking north.

wheel-made lamp (Fig. 8, 12) is of a type well-known in Judah in contexts of the first half of the first century B.C.E. (Barag and Hershkovitz 1994, 11–13). The illegible stamped amphora handle with the round-framed rosette (Fig. 8, 13) may be related to Archons of Grace's Period III (ca 220–180 B.C.E.) (1985; and Finkielsztejn 2001, dating to approximately a decade later date). Other documented fragments were related to bowls, cooking-pots, jugs, and storage jars.

The building plan was actually reconstructed as a central courtyard building (though not acknowledged as one), with a court (Room A) open to the west and flanked by three rooms (Rooms B, C, and D) on three of its sides. The cistern and silo about 20 m to its south suggest that the building or its related structures extended to the south and were not preserved, owing to the sand mining activities. The thickness of the walls, ca 0.6 m, does not indicate that these were intended for defence or as foundations for a monumental superstructure. All the evidence (including the varied ceramic assemblage) suggests a building of domestic nature, probably an agricultural estate of Persian date with continuation to Late Hellenistic (Hasmonean) times, of which only the north corner has been preserved.



Fig. 7. 'Abd el Nabi / Meʿzad HaYarqon, Room A and Room B (as at present<sup>7</sup>), looking north-east.

Kaplan returned to the site in the later half of May 1966, but this excavation was not reported in any of his later publications. The brief excavation logbook shows that the excavation was carried out outside the west and north parts of the building. Kaplan recorded and excavated a few architectural remains, ca 5 m to the west of the building and referred to them as earlier in date. However, the identifiable pottery fragments that were kept, which are all shown here, suggest a similar Late Persian–Hellenistic dating. Their ware is coarse and of medium to high temperature firing. The fragmented incurved rim bowl (Fig. 9, 1) and fragmented rim and body of storage jars (Fig. 9, 3–4) are comparable to those shown in Fig. 8, 1 and 9–10, respectively; and the cooking-pot (Fig. 9, 2) is of a well-known Hellenistic type (cf. Guz-Zilberstein 1995, 299, Fig. 6.19, 9–10). It is therefore plausible that these remains form a part of the building discovered in 1949–50. The building plan shows continuation of the southern and eastern walls, and thus the discovered remains may easily be explained as belonging to an adjacent structure. This structure may have formed, together with the four rooms (A, B, C, and D) unearthed previously, part of a larger structure whose remains may be interpreted as an agricultural estate of Late Persian and Hellenistic date (fourth to first centuries B.C.E.).

#### EL WAQF / PARDESS KATZ

Not much is known about the site of el Waqf, a site located today within the city limits of modern Bene Braq. Kaplan carried out a survey and excavation at el Waqf as early as 1948, where discovered remains were identified by him as a Hasmonean encampment (1951, 22). Additional information comes from a typewritten archival report signed by Kaplan and dated to 2 February 1950. The report, written on behalf of the Tel Aviv Municipality and the Department of Antiquities and Museums, deals mainly with the finds from the excavation



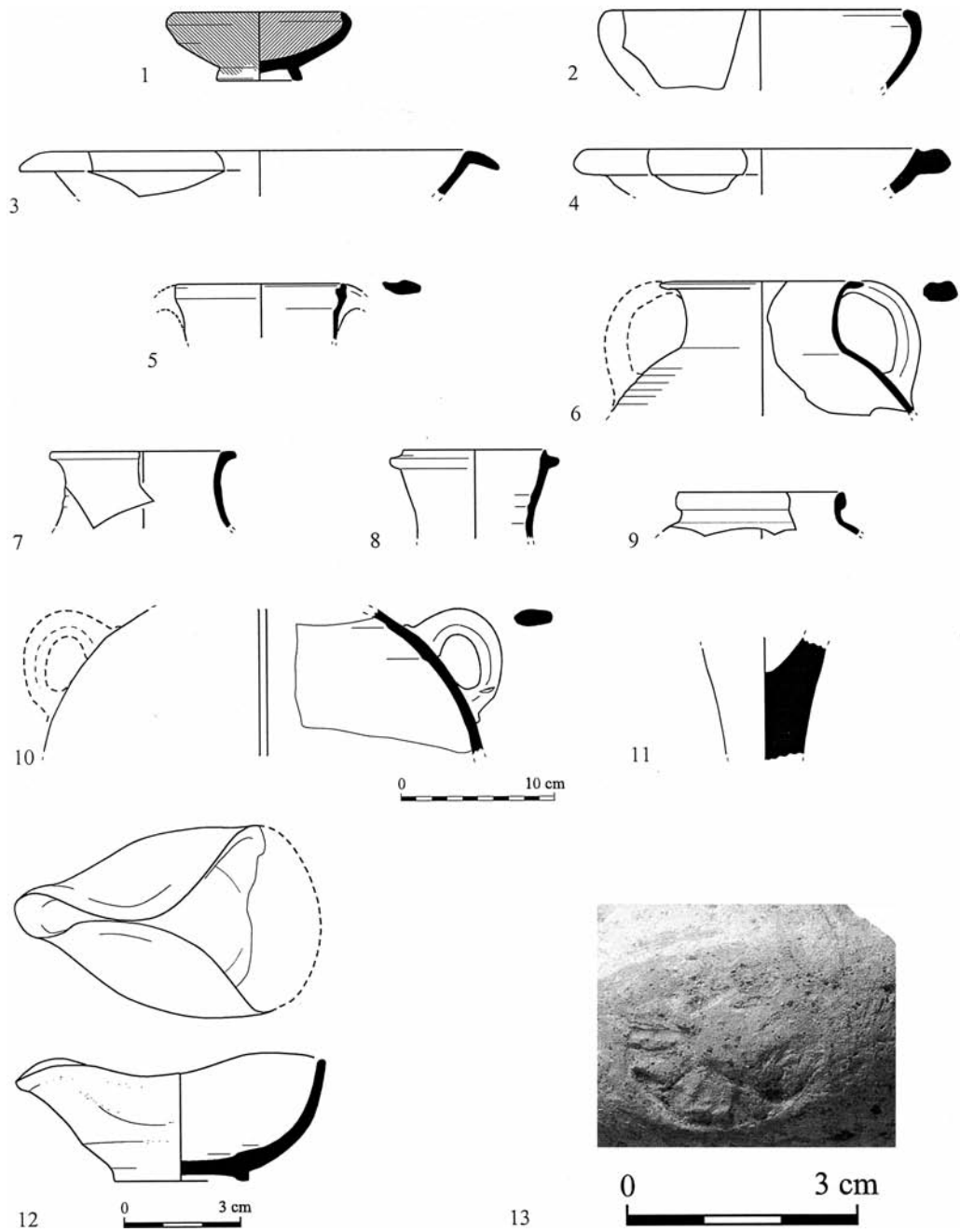


Fig. 8. 'Abd el Nabi / Me'zad HaYarqon, finds from the 1950 excavation.

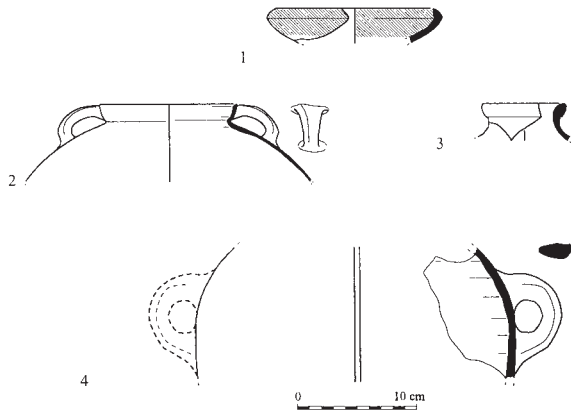


Fig. 9. 'Abd el Nabi / Mezzad HaYarqon, finds from the 1966 excavation.

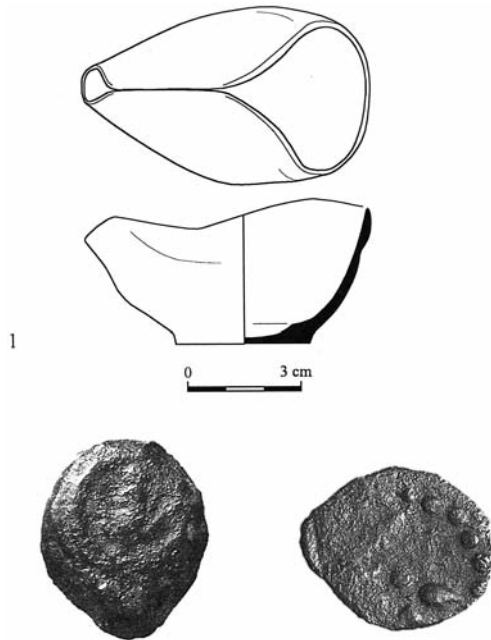


Fig. 10. el Waqf, folded lamp and coin of Alexander Jannaeus (Jerusalem mint; post-dates 79/78 B.C.E., bronze, obverse: anchor within circle; reverse: star; 0.83 gr., 10-13 mm in diameter, axis ←; IAA 48179).

on Arlozorov Street with some reference to the excavations of 'Abd el Nabi and el Waqf. The reference to the excavation at el Waqf is described as follows: 'I saw similar [to Arlozorov Street and 'Abd el Nabi — A.F. & O.T.] foundation remains in trenches dug for constructional works in el Waqf hill at Ramat Gan; where I conducted a year ago an archaeological excavation. There, too, many Hasmonean coins were discovered, but also similarly dated pagan coins. I realized then that during this period a military encampment was located there' (translated from the Hebrew — A.F. & O.T.). Other archival material is scant and mostly illustrative, and Kaplan's publications mentioning this site refer mostly to an additional excavation carried out in 1961:

Further confirmation of our thesis [for the existence of the 'Yannai Line' — A.F. & O.T.] was supplied in 1961, when in Pardes Katz [within the limits of modern Bene Braq — A.F. & O.T.], one of the

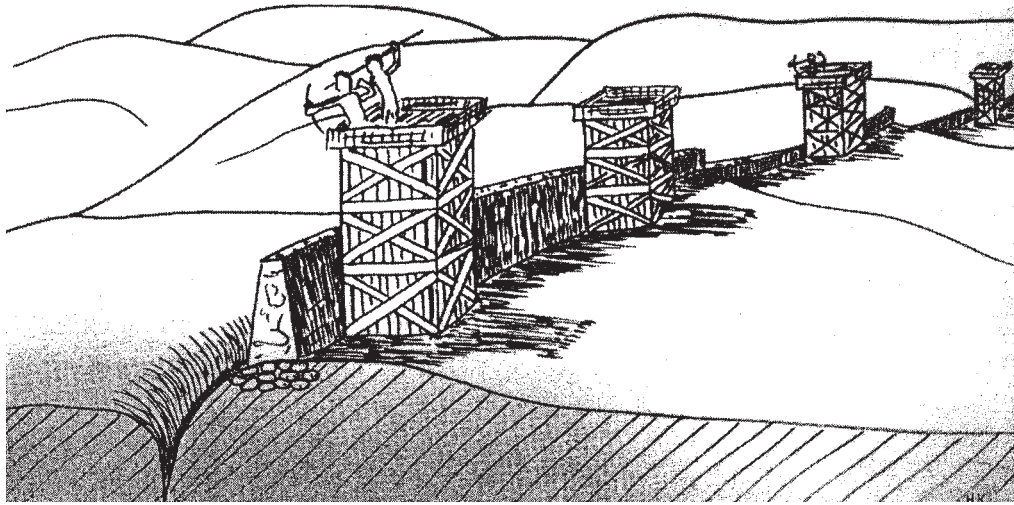


Fig. 11. Reconstruction sketch of the 'Yannai Line' from Antipatris to the Hill Country (after Kaplan 1972, Fig. 12).

highest points overlooking the Yarqon basin, were found the remains of a hexagonal base [see below], each of whose sides measured only 1.5 metres, much less than those of the structure in Arlozoroff Street; but here too the pottery fragments were Hellenistic, and a coin of Alexander Yannai was also found (Kaplan 1971, 205).

It is probable that the hexagonal form of this small base was connected with the method of construction: the wooden columns of the tower were first erected, and the stone walls built round them (Kaplan 1971, 205, note 2).

In 1961, an additional section of the line was discovered at Pardes Katz, near Bene-Berak . . . , where the foundations of another hexagonal structure were exposed. This structure is smaller than the one excavated on Arlozoroff Street. It also dates to the Hellenistic period; here, too, a coin of Jannaeus was found (Kaplan and Ritter-Kaplan 1993, 1455).

It is more than obvious that Kaplan identified the remains at el Waqf as a part of the 'Yannai Line' only after excavating the sites on Arlozoroff Street and at 'Abd el Nabi about a year later. However, the proposed architectural and chronological correlation between these three sites, permitting their identification as belonging to a unified defensive alignment, is a rather imaginary one. The architectural correlation is based on the presence of hexagonal walls on Arlozoroff Street and at el Waqf. However, Kaplan explains the foundation remains of the presumably existing hexagonal base on Arlozoroff Street as a defensive enclosure that had the function of protecting the defenders of the wooden tower against sudden attacks (1971, 205), whereas similar foundation remains at el Waqf are explained differently, with reference to the method of construction of the wooden tower (*ibid.*, note 2 [cited above]). Needless to say, the remains discovered at 'Abd el Nabi have no architectural correlation with the two other sites.

The chronological correlation, on the other hand, is actually based on the presence of Jannaeus' coins at 'Abd el Nabi and el Waqf. However, as we already pointed out (above), the coins of Alexander Jannaeus are among the commonest numismatic finds unearthed in the Hasmonaean and, sometimes even post-Hasmonean strata, in the Land of Israel. Therefore, in order to establish a reliable chronological correlation, one needs to compare

both the numismatic and ceramic evidence from all three sites. The numismatic evidence from Arlozorov Street points to its existence during the Early Roman period. The pottery kept from 'Abd el Nabi, as shown above, has a chronological span from the fourth to the first centuries B.C.E. Unfortunately, we were unable to locate the finds from Kaplan's excavation at el Waqf, except for two specimens; during our investigations in the Coin Department of the IAA we found the above-mentioned Jannaeus' coin from el Waqf (Kaplan and Ritter-Kaplan 1993, 1455, here Fig. 10, 2 [IAA 48179], and cf. Meshorer 1982, I, 122, Type Ce1). According to its registration card, however, it was found on the surface before excavation began. Moreover, Jannaeus' Type Ce coins are commonly dated to after 79/78 B.C.E. (cf., e.g., Meshorer 1982, I, 79–80, who later termed them as coins of Group L, minted at the end of Jannaeus' reign, cf. 2001, 41); some scholars have even dated them to post-Jannaeus' death. The other specimen is a complete folded thin-walled wheel-made lamp (Fig. 10, 1), comparable to the one discussed previously (Fig. 8, 12), which we discovered in the warehouses of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Museum of Antiquities. According to its registration it was found at the site of el Waqf.

A diminutive trial excavation at the site of el Waqf, carried out recently, has shown that the site comprises a few wall foundations of ca 1 m thick, with no secured floors abutting them. The walls were attributed to a large structure of Hellenistic date, as most pottery recovered does, as well as an additional recovered coin of Alexander Jannaeus (Kletter 2000, and Fig. 66, 3–12, with some misinterpretation of the reading of the finds). This Jannaeus' coin (IAA 68381), though not yet published, is also of Type Ce, commonly dated post 79/78 B.C.E. (D. T. Ariel, personal communication). However, finds from the Late Bronze and Iron I Ages, as well as of the Roman and Ottoman periods, have been also reported by Kletter, and may well be connected to these walls that were close to surface level, since another building (possibly a bathhouse) of Late Roman/Byzantine date was discovered nearby (Shaḥam and Ayalon 1991).

#### CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological remains exposed at sites related to the so-called 'Yannai Line' are not sufficient to suggest a military character and may be explained in terms of civilian occupation, most probably related to farming activities. According to the data examined by us the site on Arlozorov Street could have been occupied during the Hellenistic and Early Roman times; that of 'Abd el Nabi was occupied during the Persian and Hellenistic times; and that of el Waqf had a long history of occupation from biblical times (if not earlier) to modern times. Kaplan's excavations revealed finds from various periods, but two coins of Alexander Jannaeus' found at 'Abd el Nabi and el Waqf were taken as ultimate evidence in establishing the absolute dating of the sites discussed. We were unable to locate the present location of the Jannaeus' coin found at 'Abd el Nabi, but the one found at el Waqf is dated to after 79/78 B.C.E., and thus can not relate to the 'Yannai Line' erected in ca 86/85 B.C.E. A similar argument can be applied on the Jannaeus' coin found at el Waqf in Kletter's excavation, as it is of the same type. Moreover, the coin-type Ce is probably the most common coin-type identified as 'Jannaeus'; therefore, it is likely that the coin found at 'Abd el Nabi whose whereabouts is now unknown post-dates 79/78 B.C.E. The archaeological analysis undertaken above permits us to conclude that Kaplan's interpretation of the excavated remains as belonging to Jannaeus' defensive line is misleading, and thus one can not refer to the 'Yannai Line' as identified by Kaplan. Kaplan's reconstruction of the 'Yannai Line' may be seen, however, not only as a simple desire to illustrate Josephus' accounts by using archaeological remains, but also as an outcome of particular historical circumstances, which no longer seem plausible. His explicit statement that 'in general features this defensive



line, which extended from the sea to the hills of Ephraim, recalls the modern fortified lines built before the Second World War' (1971, 201), does not seem to be a coincidence. This kind of argument should be clearly considered in the context of his personal engineering background as well as of a fresh memory of the modern fortified lines, such as the Maginot Line or the Siegfried Line, which were erected in the context of World War II. The discovery of the above-described remains in 1949, only a few years after World War II, and their immediate interpretation as the 'Yannai Line', provide additional corroboration for that assumption.<sup>4</sup> After all, it is well-known that every generation (including ours) writes its own history. Thus the present state of research suggests that the term 'Yannai Line' must be excluded from future scholarly works, unless some archaeological discovery, more convincing than those described above (cf. Fig. 11), comes to light.<sup>5</sup> The same emerges from the historical analysis undertaken by Bar-Kochva (1999, 15, n. 33). We, too, tend to dismiss Josephus' statement about the 'Yannai Line' in the form it is described. Although one can always suspect that there is nothing inherently implausible or blatantly tendentious in these accounts, the region's topography verifies the improbability of erecting such a line (including its constructions) during the available time period. We do not suggest that Josephus invented such a story, but we rather believe that he was confused while copying Nicolaus' accounts. We are inclined to assume that the actual account of Nicolaus was related to a completely different historical event, and most probably to a completely different geographical setting.<sup>6</sup> However, Josephus had his information from Nicolaus, who himself wrote about events before his own time, and we cannot ignore the possibility that Nicolaus is to blame for the confusion. On the other hand, Bar-Kochva considers the probability of the existence of a defensive alignment, erected before Jannaeus' days in the ca 4 km plain, east of the Yaqon sources, between the western part of the Samaria foothills and Antipatris (ibid.). It should be noted, however, that in the present state of archaeological research, we are unable to pinpoint the traces of such a defensive alignment, even as proposed by Bar-Kochva or conjectured in recent soundings at el Waqf by Kletter (2000, 38\*).

The main lesson, however, that may be learned from the case of the 'Yannai Line', is that uncritical acceptance of Josephus' historical accounts copied from other sources (such as Nicolaus of Damascus) may lead to potential misrepresentation of certain archaeological remains. In contrast, Josephus' own historical accounts regarding the events that took place in the eve of and during the First Jewish War, especially in the case of Galilee, seem to be (in the main), both historically and archaeologically corroborated (cf. e.g. Bar-Kochva 1974; Tepper and Shahar 1991; Tal, Tepper and Fantalkin 2000; Aviam 2002; Syon 2002). However, even in this case, caution is best and, as pointed out by Rappaport (1992, 100), each paragraph and topic in Josephus' testimony should be assessed separately, with as few general assumptions and preconceptions as possible.<sup>7</sup>

#### ABSTRACT

*Josephus has supplied us with a detailed description of Alexander Jannaeus' defensive alignment, erected in ca 86/85 B.C.E. against Antiochus XII Dionysus on his way to Arabia. The term 'Yannai Line' was coined by the late J. Kaplan, who in a series of preliminary publications attempted to relate archaeological remains discovered in Tel Aviv and Bene Braq to this defensive alignment. Archaeological and historical studies dealing with the Late Hellenistic (Hasmonean) period in Ancient Israel have often mentioned these remains to illustrate historical validity in archaeological reality. This article analyses the finds from Kaplan's excavations (which were never fully published) and examines Kaplan's interpretation of the remains. We conclude that Kaplan's interpretation of the excavated remains as belonging to a Jannaeus' defensive line is misleading, and thus one can not refer to the 'Yannai Line' as identified by Kaplan. We also raise doubts to the authenticity of the historical sources and tend to dismiss Josephus' statement (copied from Nicolaus of*

*Damascus) about the 'Yannai Line' in the form it is described. We therefore suggest that at the present state of research the term 'Yannai Line' should be excluded from future scholarly works.*

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Kaplan 1951; 1953, 159; 1955, 98–99; 1959, 84–88; 1971; 1972, 89–90; 1992; Kaplan and Ritter-Kaplan 1993, 1455. Short notes were also published in *Rashmot*, State of Israel — Yalqut HaPirsumim 1091, 1325 [18 May, 1964]; *Alon* 3 [1951], 32; *Israel Museum Bulletin* 4 [1962], 13.

<sup>2</sup> Translation from the Ancient Greek text by A.F. & O.T., using the Loeb edition with selective reference to *Flavii Iosephi Opera, editit et apparatu critico instruxit B. Niese*.

<sup>3</sup> The coin designation refers to two possible coin types at present, under the Roman emperor Claudius dating 54/55 c.e. or under the emperor Nero dating 59/60 c.e.; the latter is no longer associated with Antonius Felix; cf. Meshorer 1982, II, 180–83; 2001, 173–74.

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, a quite similar case is observed in Kaplan and Ritter-Kaplan's reconstruction of a number of Iron Age II sites discovered in the same area (1993, 1454). A fairly small number of 8th-century B.C.E. pottery finds from a few sites at Tel Aviv (i.e. Kikar Hill, Giv'at Beth Ha-Mitbahayim, and in areas bordering Yehoshua Bin Nun and Yehohanan Hyrcanus Streets) were identified as probably belonging to Judahite military camps established on the eve of Sennacherib's campaign. Needless to say, these finds could be interpreted differently, and preferably be

connected to Joppa's agricultural hinterland (Fantalkin, forthcoming).

<sup>5</sup> Some reference must be given to Aphek-Antipatris, as during recent excavations at this site a wall of ca 20 m long and 1 m thick was found, which formed, according to the excavator, M. Kochavi, the western wing and the north-western corner of a fortress which may have served the bolt of the 'Yannai Line' (1989, 93, Fig. 79). The wall was discovered in Area A in the north-western part of the high tel, and built of two faces of roughly dressed stones with earth fill inbetween, the northern corner of which is made of ashlar masonry. Here we must point out that Kochavi in an earlier publication dates these architectural remains to the beginning of the third century B.C.E. and suggests that they were probably outside the confines of the city (1975, 40). Since Hellenistic remains of Kochavi's excavations at Aphek-Antipatris were published in a very preliminary form, not much can be said on his reconstruction. We do know, however, of a border-guard (*oruphulax*) at Pegae, which is customarily identified with Aphek-Antipatris, mentioned in one of the Zenon papyri (PSI 406, and cf. Tcherikover 1937); these architectural remains may well be connected to the Ptolemaic administration.

<sup>6</sup> For additional examples of confusions in the writings of Josephus' copied accounts from Nicolaus of Damascus, see Wacholder 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Although Josephus' accounts may be seen as generally reliable, they include many mistakes and confusions. Thus, for instance, Safrai (1989, 320) has pointed out that Josephus not always consistent in his use of administrative-geographic material, including many mistakes in distances. More recently, Begg (1993, 276–86; 2000, 626–35) has shown in detail Josephus' literary techniques in rewriting the biblical accounts, which included omissions, rearrangements, modifications and additions. He states that though Josephus is quite faithful for his two audiences, he 'shows himself a literary juggler of no little skill' (2000, 635). In addition, one should always take into consideration that Josephus' accounts must reflect his own perceptions

regarding the past, including certain propaganda needs and a particular agenda (for Josephus' historiographical method, cf. Villalba i Varneda 1986; Sterling 1992; Mader 2000). All the above, however, can in our case be rejected, as we do not know if it was Josephus rather than Nicolaus who was responsible for the account on the 'Yannai Line'. Furthermore, there is little evidence from any period in ancient history that an effort was made to halt a full-size army with a linear barrier. Linear barriers such as Hadrian's Wall, the Antonine Wall, and the 'Obergermanischer Limes' in south-west Germany are no longer believed to have been aimed against full-scale invasions and armies. They are thought to have served as barriers against small-scale infiltration, and thus are to be compared with barbed-wire alignment. We owe this observation to B. Isaac; cf. Isaac 1990, 372–418, and esp. 413–16.