**Editors’ Note**

This past year of 5881 (2021) has been a particularly challenging one in light of the serious difficulties posed by the COVID-19 throughout the world. Nevertheless, research and creative activity has continued to flourish, as can be seen in the many articles presented in this booklet, the second published this year. This booklet, like the previous one, includes six articles, one of them in English, that have passed our peer review process.

The context of the opening article in the Hebrew section is the historical geography of the Benjaminite region. In this paper, Prof. Yigal Levin presents the different biblical sources that mention Qiryat Ye’arim, and discusses this city’s geographical location within the context of the tribal borders of Judah and Benjamin. Based on this analysis, the author raises doubts about the recent claim by Israel Finkelstein and Thomas Romer regarding the connection between the Kingdom of Israel and the archeological remains found in their recent excavations in Dir El-Azar, the site of Qiryat Ye’arim.

In the second article, Yair Almakeyas and Dr. Aharon Tavger present a system of pits with bell-shaped cross sections recently discovered in the El-Hamam ruins in Northern Samaria. Comparing them to similar sites in the mountain region, the authors conclude that the pits were either used for storing agricultural produce or served as an underground winery during the Iron Age, a finding indicating the centrality and importance of the site during this period.

The third article also addresses new discoveries from Samaria. In this paper, Zeʼev Ḥ. Erlikh (Zabo) and Meir Rotter present the reliefs of four menorahs uncovered in Kafr Hajjah on the stone façade of two houses that were probably of secondary use. The authors date these menorahs, as well as similar ones found in Kafr Hajjah and its immediate surroundings, and discuss the use of this motif by the Samarians in the Roman and Byzantine periods.

The fourth article presents a new study from the field of underground mapping. In this paper, Dr. Gershon Bar-Kokhba describes the *Yussefiyah* structure built in the Middle Ages adjacent to the structure above the Cave of the Patriarchs (*Ma’arat HaMachpela*), and discusses the various architectural elements within it. In addition, the author presents the findings of a subterranean study carried out with ground-penetrating radar, which aided in the discovery that the structure was built over a Roman era water reservoir that served visitors to the Cave. The discovery of the Roman reservoir and the analysis of the architectural elements within the structure gives scholars the ability to reconstruct the various uses of the *Yussefiyah* over the course of time.

The closing article in the Hebrew section of this booklet deals with the history of the archeological work conducted in the central mountain region. In this paper, Mordechai Lash, Prof. Yossi Goldstein, and Prof. Yitzchak Shai describe the state of archeological activity in Judea and Samaria during the years of Jordanian rule, 1948–1967. The authors review the attitudes of the Jordanian authorities and of the delegations of foreign researchers toward the archeological sites and discuss the few excavations carried out in the area during this period, revealing new information regarding secret Israeli involvement in archeological activity beyond the border.

The English section of the booklet is devoted to Dr. Chris McKinney’s article, which, like the first article in the booklet, deals with historical geography in the Benjaminite region. In this paper, the author suggests associating the expression “like the dust of the earth,” found in Genesis as part of the description of God’s promises to the forefathers, with the strategic location of Ofrah, one of the cities in Benjamin, near Beth-El. According to the author, this is an explicit example of the biblical use of linguistic imagery in geographical contexts, as appears in other places in the Bible as well.

These papers join others from previous volumes of the *Be-Ma’aleh Ha-Har* (*In the Depths of the Mountain*), in creating a fertile and important platform for new studies in the fields of the archeology, geography, and history of the mountain region, as well as in the field of the investigation of subterranean cavities throughout Israel. In order to meet the high academic standards of this peer-reviewed journal, all the articles in this booklet, as in our others, have undergone an anonymous review process accompanied by an academic committee, and only papers deemed suitable for publication were forwarded for meticulous language editing. The first page of each article includes the institutional affiliation, academic degree, and email address of the authors, as well as an abstract and key words. The papers appear in a printed version enjoying wide distribution, as well as on the journal’s online website. The process of accepting papers and reviewing them is carried out digitally online, using the advanced ScholarOne Manuscript platform. The journal’s board invites scholars to send their research papers through this system for publication in future volumes, in accordance with the official guidelines stated in the journal’s online website.

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