**Responses to previous reviewers for the proposed grant**

The previous proposal for the ISF was submitted on October 2015 and reviewed by five readers. Four of them (readers 1, 2, 4 and 5) had a very positive-excellent opinion and supported the funding of the proposal. Based on critique and several remarks of the reviewer’s, changes have been made to this proposal and are related to below according to each reviewer. In this response to the readers we focus on the points of improvement from their reviews and relate to some of the new and very promising additional preliminary results that were not available at the time of the original submission. The many positive comments from the readers that we were happy to receive are only briefly related to below.

**Reviewer no. 1** had an overall positive response. Reservations were noted concerning the size of the excavation budget concluding that small areas can provide the information, emphasizing the pottery studies as the main source for learning about urban-rural relationships. The excavation budget for the two main study sites has been decreased, mainly due to the cooperation between the two PI's. However, small areas are insufficient for this study. First of all, as is stated in the proposal, although Hippos has been excavated for over 16 years on the crest, there are few contexts of Roman period date that can be used for this study, which is also diachronic within the Roman period and requires, therefore, a high chronological and contextual resolution. This is why the main excavation area at Hippos will be on the saddle-ridge where new contexts for the past two years have shown promising preliminary results for well-defined Roman period contexts with restorable pottery and other finds. Limiting the excavation to only a few small areas will not provide a critical mass for chronological, contextual and material finds (restorable common pottery, basalt architectural fragments, coins etc.) needed to meet the goals of the proposed study, which goes far beyond a pottery provenance study. Excavations at Hippos and Majduliyya will provide the field laboratory that will supply firsthand high-resolution data instead of relying on general “Roman-Byzantine contexts” in the region which are largely based on surveys and small salvage excavations.
Preliminary results from the excavations on the Hippos saddle-ridge (e.g. the area of a Roman period monumental gate that is well dated to the early 2nd century CE including restorable vessels and Hadrian coins) and at Majduliyya (e.g. an ancient synagogue, stones with masonry marks, well define pottery contexts, kiln, olive press area) have proven that there is no substitute for the resolution and data that can be obtained from a modern pin-pointed excavation.. Furthermore, all research projects, especially archaeology projects, are limited in scope due to cost and the ability of excavating only a limited number of sites. In our proposal one urban and one rural site will act as field laboratories for this study and along with supplementary material from small scale excavations at other sites in the region, should provide the data needed to reach the research goals.

**Reviewer No. 2** gave a positive review. Questions concerning the need for excavating at Hippos are addressed in our response to reader 1. The reader limits the originality to these questions not having been addressed in the southern Golan. However, as reader 1 even notes, the polis-village relationship has not been part of an intensive research project in Israel. Furthermore, there are innovative methods used here such as geo-spatial analysis and basalt provenance as well as the overall research plan (which combines excavations of an urban site and a rural site, along with supplementary material form small scale excavations and surveys and a combination of traditional field work along with analytical work.)

**Reviewer No. 3** was the only negative response. While any researcher must be open to critique, and we demonstrate this in the changes we have made to this research based on the helpful comments of the other reviewers, the content and style of the reviewer 3 crosses the line of acceptable scholarly review and ethics. It includes personal attacks on our integrity accusing us of requesting "funds to do A, but you actually wish to do B". The reviewer doubts the PI's ability " However, nothing in his training thus far, in his research or publications, has prepared him to conduct the regional study " (clearly being unfamiliar with the PI's training and previous research) when the other reviewers state this as one of the strong points. There are also many mistakes in the reviewers reading of the proposal that seem to be intentionally misleading. For example, assuming that the main interest at Majduliyya is the synagogue. It is clear in the proposal this is just one aspect of characterizing a Roman rural site. Just in the past year limited excavations have uncovered an olive press and pottery production area at the site. It is also stated by the reviewer that the synagogue was found in a survey, which is also incorrect. It was only identified after small scale excavations. The reviewer claims the proposal is not well written while other reviewers write this it is in fact well written (e.g. Reviewer 5 " The proposal is very well-written"). There are additional examples but these should suffice as proof that the chasm between this reviewer's comments and the other reviewers can only be explained by personal animus as the comments are either misleading, incorrect or personal in nature. The reviewer is correct in noting a problem with one bibliographical reference that has been fixed.

**Reviewer No. 4** gave high praise stating that the "The proposed project is innovative and groundbreaking, I recommend it without any reservations."

**Reviewer No. 5** gave a positive review. Questions concerning the need for excavating at Hippos are addressed in our response to reader 1 and better clarified in the new proposal. The reviewer also comments that the proposal is " limited in scope". Supplementary sites that will be included (a letter from the IAA referring to their cooperation in handing additional Roman contexts from the region was enclosed to the new proposal) with the analytical work on pottery trade along with additional analytical methods (basalt provenance analyses) have been added. The regional aspect has also been expanded upon in the proposal.