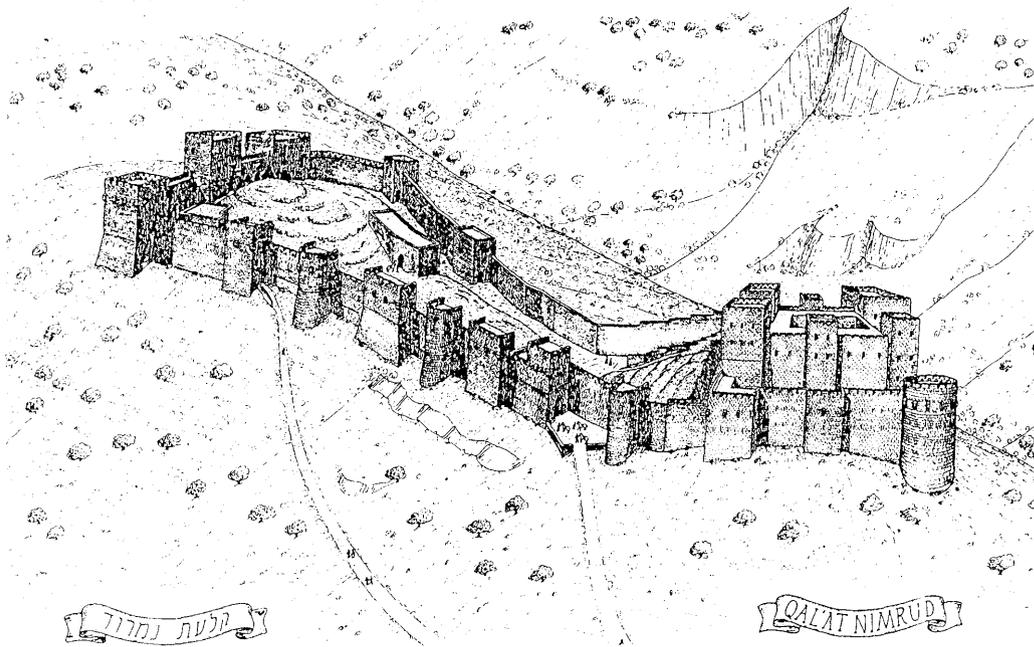


Fortresses in the Life of David and Castles in the Land of Israel

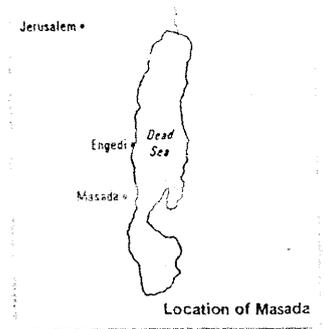


Names and Descriptions of God in the Psalms

The chief purpose of the Psalms is to praise God, and in doing this they describe Him. Below is a list of the numerous titles and descriptions the psalmists use to praise the Lord.

| Name of God | Description of God |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the LORD (1:2) • God of my righteousness (4:1) • My King (5:2) • O LORD my God (7:1) • the LORD Most High (7:17) • God of my salvation (18:46) • God of Jacob (20:1) • O My Strength (22:19) • King of glory (24:7, 8) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a shield for me (3:3) • My glory (3:3) • the One who lifts up my head (3:3) • the righteous God (7:9) • a just judge (7:11) • a refuge (9:9) • the portion of my inheritance and my cup (16:5) • my strength (18:1) • the horn of my salvation, my stronghold (18:2) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LORD of hosts (24:10) • God of glory (29:3) • O LORD God of truth (31:5) • the LORD God of Israel (41:13) • O Mighty One (45:3) • the King of all the earth (47:7) • God of Abraham (47:9) • God Most High (57:2) • YAH (68:4) • the Almighty (68:14) • God the LORD (68:20) • O Holy One of Israel (71:22) • O Shepherd of Israel (80:1) • the LORD our Maker (95:6) • God their Savior (106:21) • the Mighty One of Jacob (132:2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • my support (18:18) • my shepherd (23:1) • my light and my salvation (27:1) • the strength of my life (27:1) • the saving refuge of His anointed (28:8) • my helper (30:10) • rock of refuge (31:2) • my hiding place (32:7) • my help and my deliverer (40:17) • the God of my life (42:8) • my exceeding joy (43:4) • a very present help in trouble (46:1) • our guide even to death (48:14) • my defense (59:9) • my God of mercy (59:10) • a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy (61:3) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the God of gods (136:2) • the God of heaven (136:26) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a father of the fatherless, a defender of widows (68:5) • the strength of my heart and my portion forever (73:26) • the great God and the great King above all gods (95:3) • He who keeps Israel (121:4) • your shade at your right hand (121:5) • my portion in the land of the living (142:5) • my high tower (144:2) |

Was David in the Fortress of Masada?



1. CHRONICLES 12

8 And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, *and* men of war *fit* for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces *were like* the faces of lions, and *were* as swift as the roes upon the mountains;

15 These *are* they that went over Jordan in the *first* month, when it had overflowed all his banks; and they put to flight all *them* of the valleys, *both* toward the east, and toward the west.

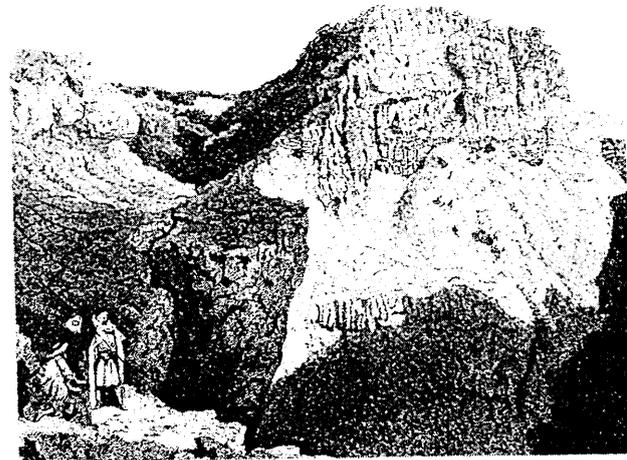
16 And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David.

2. SAMUEL 5

War with the Philistines (1 Chr. 14. 8-17).

17 But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard *of it*, and went down to the *hold*.

(*Here, in the order of time, comes* 2 Sam. 23. 13-17; 1 Chr. 11. 15-19; 12. 8-15.)



—Strong's (Hebrew & Chaldee Dictionary of the Old Testament)

- #4679.
- מִצָּד
- metsad or
- [or] מִצְדָּ
- metsad or
- [or] מִצְדָּה
- metsadah (844d); from 6679; *fastness, a stronghold*.—
- NASB - impregnable(1), stronghold(3), strongholds(7).



The Bible was written by real people, to real people, in real places, and who experienced real events. This website is dedicated to telling the story about these people and the places they lived, visited, and ministered in. It is the goal of this website to expound the Scriptures and bring to life the lands and the peoples of the Bible through the background material that bear on the events of these passages.

- 02Oct

THE LORD IS MY MASADA

Posted by sherri in Life of King David
by Gordon Franz

Introduction

I should preface my comments about the passages on Masada in the psalms by recounting a story. While teaching at the Institute of Holy Land Studies in Jerusalem, I was invited to speak to a Christian tour group in one of the local hotels. The tour host never took his groups to Masada because, as he put it, “The site is post-resurrection [of Jesus], thus unimportant.” One elderly lady in the group asked me quite piously and condescendingly, “You don’t take your groups to Masada, do you?” I knew where that question was coming from. I smiled and said, “Of course I do, it’s a very important Biblical site. King David visited the site on at least three occasions and composed several psalms that mention Masada!” The shocked look on her face was one of those priceless Kodak moments! J She told the group leader of our conversation. He examined the passages and from that point on, he took his groups to Masada.

David at Masada

The word “Masada” in the Hebrew Bible is generally translated “stronghold” or “fortress” in the English Bibles. The French geographer, F. M. Abel, associates Masada with this Hebrew word (1938:2:380). David visited the site on at least three occasions. The first time he saw it was when he was fleeing from Saul. After his family joined him in the cave of Adullam (I Sam. 22:1, 2), David decided to take them to the Land of Moab and ask the king of Moab to let them stay under his protection in his land. David and his entourage would have gone past Masada as they forded the Dead Sea at the Lisan (“tongue”).

As David passed by, he would have noted the strategic and military value of Masada. The mountain plateau was situated 360 meters above the plain floor on the southeastern edge of the Wilderness of Judah, opposite the Lisan of the Dead Sea. Strategically, from the top of the site, David would have a commanding view of the Dead Sea region and the eastern slopes of the Wilderness of Judah. If there was any large troop movement by Saul, or even the Philistines, he could quickly escape across the Lisan to Moab. Militarily, he also noticed the site had steep sides all around it with only one accessible path to the top on the eastern side of the mountain, today called the “Snake Path.” It was easily defensible from any attackers because of its elevation and the single path to the top. The defenders on top could easily roll down boulders of rocks to stop any attackers.

David made good on his observations and stayed at the “stronghold” (Masada) after he left his parents in Moab. As long as there was water on top of the mountain, David felt safe and secure and did not want to leave. It was not until the prophet Gad came and told David to leave, that he left for the Forest of Hereth in the Land of Judah (I Sam. 22:4, 5).

The second time David and his men went to Masada was after he spared Saul’s life at Ein Gedi. The Bible says, “And Saul went home, and David and his men went up to the stronghold” (I Sam. 24:22). Here was the “parting of the ways” between Saul and David.

Saul goes northwest, back to his palace at Gibeah of Saul, and David goes south to the stronghold situated 18 km to the south of Ein Gedi.

The third time we know of David at Masada is after he was anointed king of all Israel in Hebron. The Bible says, “All the Philistines went up to search for David. And David heard of it and went down to the stronghold” (II Sam. 5:17). Notice the topographical indicators in this passage. Hebron (Tel Rumeida) is situated 944 meters above sea level. The base of Masada is 300 meters below sea level. David literally went down to Masada.

Masada was extensively excavated by Professor Yigael Yadin in the early 1960’s. Most of the excavations concentrated on the Early Roman period remains built by Herod the Great and used by the Sicarii at the end of the First Jewish Revolt in AD 73. Yadin, however, also found 10th century BC, Iron Age pottery scattered on the surface (1966:202). Perhaps some of the 10th century pottery was left by David and his men. Yadin, however, is unconvinced by this idea (1965:115). One of his field supervisors, on the other hand, considers the possibility that David and his men did stay at Masada (Meshel 1998: 48; Yadin 1966: 6).

Masada in the Book of Psalms

David composed at least four psalms in which he mentions Masada. The first psalm is Psalm 18. This psalm was written on the “day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul” (18: superscription). In it he sings, “I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress (Masada) and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold (lit. “high tower”)” (18:1, 2; see also II Sam. 22:2-3).

The second psalm is Psalm 31. Again David sings, “In You, O LORD, I put my trust; Let me never be ashamed; Deliver me in your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me, Deliver me speedily; Be my rock of refuge, a fortress (Masada) of defense to save me. For you are my rock and my fortress (Masada); Therefore, for Your name’s sake, Lead me and guide me” (31:1-3).

The Hebrew word “Masada” is also used in Psalm 66:11 and is translated into English as “net” (NKJV; NASB) or “prison” (NIV).

The third psalm that uses Masada is Psalm 71. It is uninscribed, but most likely written by David. In it he sings: “In You, O LORD, I put my trust; Let me never be put to shame. ... Be my strong refuge, To which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, For you are my rock and my fortress (Masada)” (71:1, 3).

The fourth psalm composed by David that mentioned Masada is Psalm 144. In this psalm he sang: “Blessed be the LORD my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle – My loving-kindness and my fortress (Masada), My high tower and my deliverer, My shield and the One in whom I take refuge, Who subdues my people under me” (144:1, 2).

One other psalm mentions a “stronghold.” Psalm 91 is uninscribed, but some commentators attribute it to Moses and suggest it is a continuation of Psalm 90. The superscription of that psalm says: “A Prayer of Moses the man of God.” In Psalm 91 it starts out: “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress (Masada), My God, in Him I will trust’” (91:1, 2).

This would have been a psalm David knew by heart. He understood theologically that the LORD was his fortress / stronghold and his trust was in God. Perhaps when he saw Masada for the first time, it reminded him of the Lord. After staying there on several occasions, he came to realize, as secure as this rocky plateau may seem, the Lord truly was his Masada!

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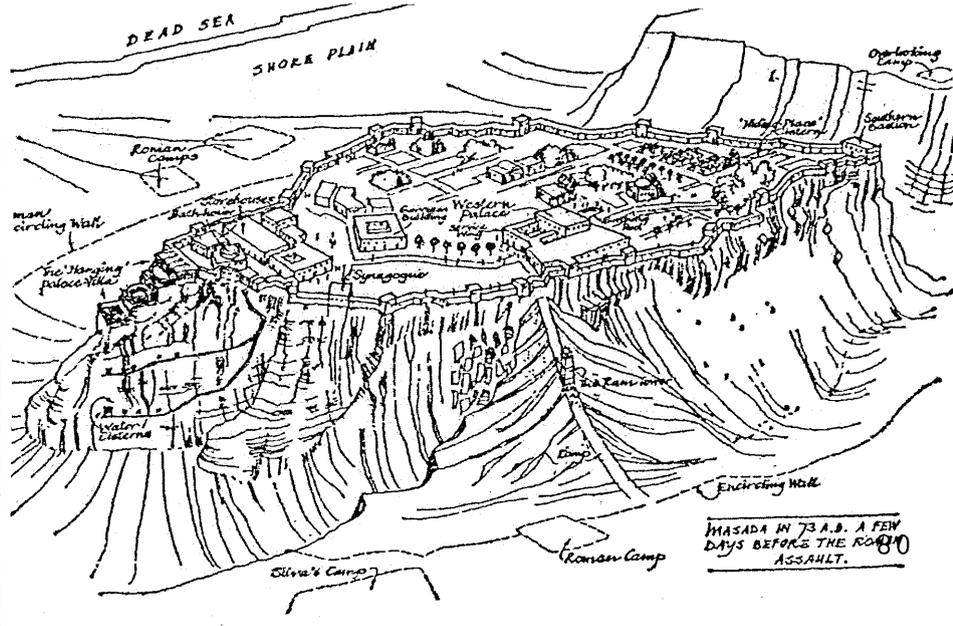
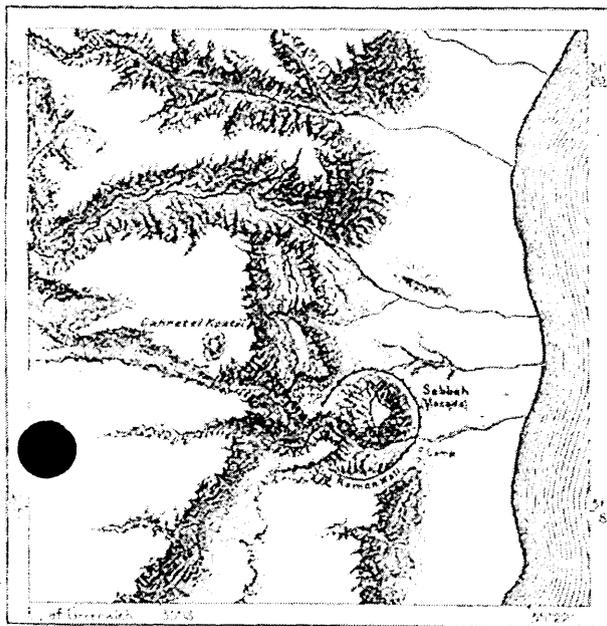
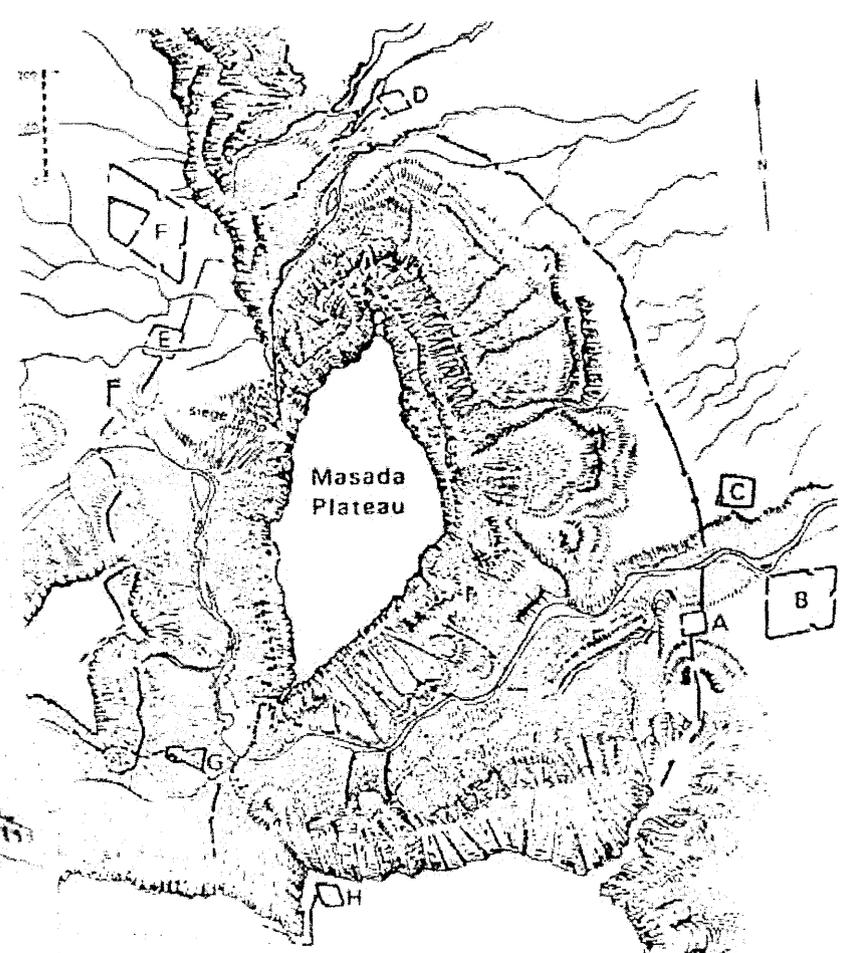
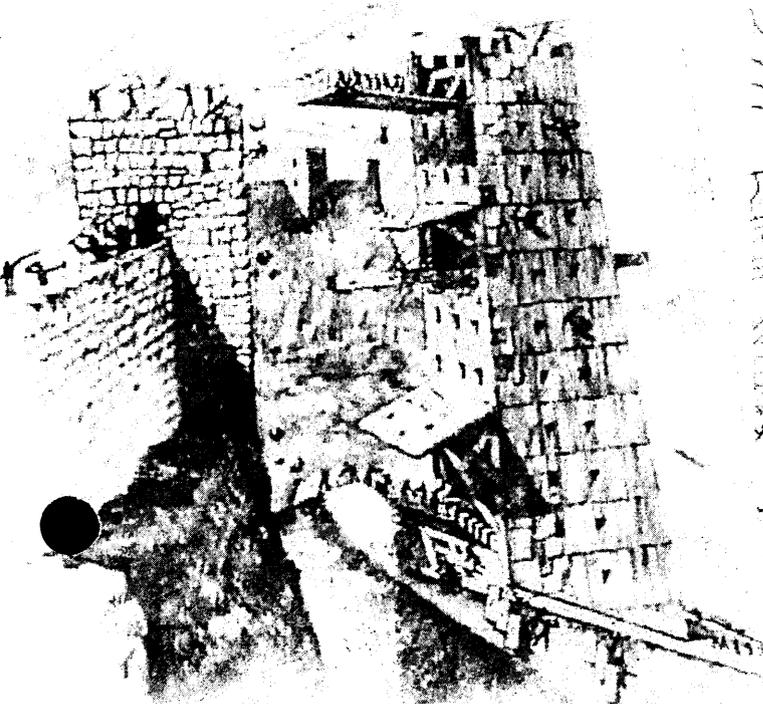
One visit to Masada is not enough.

Neither are a dozen. As many times as people go there, they always want to go back.



Photo: The magnificent fortress of Masada.

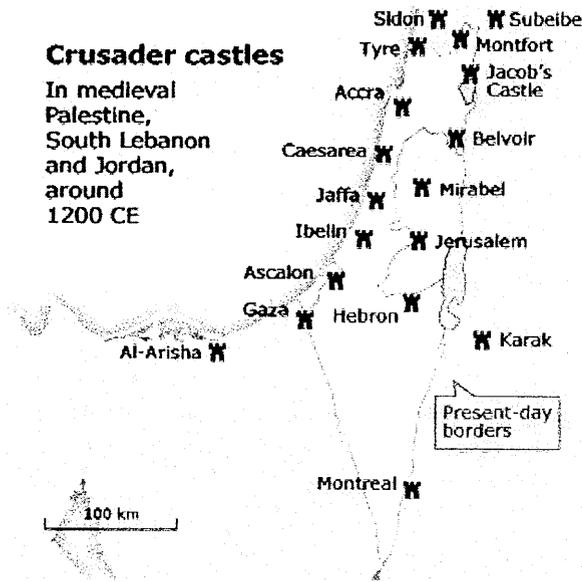
7. Masada—A Place Of Sanctuary, Suicide, And Inspiration



MASADA IN 73 A.D. A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE ROMAN ASSAULT.

Crusader castles

In medieval Palestine, South Lebanon and Jordan, around 1200 CE



Map of Crusader castles in medieval Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan, around 1200 CE

Margouqai at al-Munajab: the castle from SE

The Fortifications of the Crusader Period

News Introduction

The fortifications of the Crusader period, i.e. the two centuries between 1100 and 1300 C.E., are of a special interest not only for the regional history of the Levant but for the history of fortification in general. Their scientific exploration started 150 years ago with the investigation of the castles attributed to the Crusaders and has since then attracted scholars of different fields of interest. Although many of these objects have been studied in detail there are still many open questions. The reasons for this are the insufficient state of research, the complex multicultural historical setting, difficult research conditions due to political circumstances and an often unilateral approach of scholars focused exclusively on particular issues. Thus items like the town defences and the pre-Crusader fortification of the region, both fundamental for the assessment of developments in fortification, were almost blinded out. As comprehensive research on European medieval fortifications has worked out, castles and town defences were entities with a great variety of functions and meanings, fully understood only by means of a multidisciplinary approach. Furthermore, cultural preoccupations, research traditions and the lack of a good acquaintance with these objects, which are spread over nine different countries, have effected biased views. Since about two decades, however, these fortifications and their functions are discussed in a wider frame, encompassing several aspects that have not been considered before.

The Development of Fortification

In the Middle Ages the Levant was an area crucial for the development of fortification. The heritage of a rich past was adopted and diversified by Byzantines, Muslims, Armenians and Crusaders. The Byzantine-Arab wars and local conflicts during the 10th and 11th centuries promoted the evolution of fortification long before the Crusaders arrived in the Eastern Mediterranean. Accordingly, the armies of the First Crusade on their way to Jerusalem between 1096 and 1099 encountered the most advanced fortifications of the time: Constantinople (now Istanbul), Nicaea (now Iznik), Kaisariyya (now Kayseri), Mar'ash (now Kahraman Maraş), Tarsus, 'Ayn Zarbā (now Anavarza), Rāwandān (now Ravanda Kalesi), Tall Bāshir (now Tilbaşar Kalesi), Edessa (now Şanlı Urfa), Antioch, Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān, Ṭarṭūs, 'Arqā, Tripoli, Tyre, Acre, and finally Jerusalem. All of them were surrounded by double, if not triple walls, protected by ample moats. Their gates were commonly entered through indirect access ways.

Constantinople (Istanbul): S section of Land Wall

Şanyūn, E section of castle: Byzantine main wall (left)

The Crusaders became acquainted with achievements in fortification which were vastly superior to what has been developed by then in the West. Supported by well-skilled local craftsmen, of whom Armenians played an important role, they quickly adopted Eastern fortification schemes like the *castrum*-type fortification. Accordingly, a good deal of the castles built in the 12th century were modifications of this model. Although Byzantine fortification in the Eastern Mediterranean is not yet sufficiently explored, it is beyond doubt that it was a decisive source of inspiration. For several reasons this is hardly surprising. On the one hand the Crusaders rather preferred Christians as workers, on the other hand numerous Byzantine fortifications were present in the Levant and more than a few were taken over by them, in particular in the northern regions of their realm, e.g. 'Ain Zarbā (now Anavarza), Baghrās (now Bakras Kalesi), Antioch, Latakia, Ṭarṭūs, Şahyūn (now Qal'at Şalāh al-

Dīn), Balāṭunus, and most of the castles in the Anṣariyya mountains. The main contribution of Western architects to Crusader fortification was the residential tower (*donjon*), a hallmark of Western feudal society not known in the East prior to the Crusader period. It dominated the castle and met the requirements of a noble ruler to demonstrate his power and social status.

From the mid-12th century onwards the picture changed with the rising of the Military Orders. They took over key strongholds and fortified them, according to their growing economical potential, to a much larger extent than the former feudal owners could afford. During the 13th century the two principal orders, the Hospitallers and the Knights Templar, played a vital role in the defence of the Crusader States. They erected huge fortresses, usually constructed on a concentric ground plan, like Tortosa (*Ar. Tarṭūs*), Belvoir (*Ar. Kaukab*), Chastel Pèlerin (*Ar. 'Athlīt*), Saphet (*Ar. Şafad*), Margat (*Ar. Qal'at Marqab*), and, best preserved of all, the famous Crac des Chevaliers (*Ar. Qal'at al-Ḥiṣn*). These 13th-century fortifications reveal stronger architectural influences from the West, in particular from France. This is illustrated by the occurrence of rounded or D-shaped towers, architectural elements in Gothic style and a more regularly-coursed masonry of smaller stones. The fortifications constructed during the presence of king Louis IX of France from 1250 to 1254, of which the remains in Sidon, Caesarea and Arsūf are still to be seen, are of a special interest in this context.

Citadel of Caesarea: E wall and gate

Citadel of Damascus:
NE-Tower

The picture is not complete without considering the Muslim military architecture of the period. Muslim fortifications were the main type of defence the Crusaders were confronted with when entering the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean. Additionally, frequent changes of ownership in border areas promoted the mutual exchange of ideas and achievements. Muslim fortification was at a certain height at the arrival of the Crusaders in the Levant. Ascalon, Jerusalem, Acre, Tyre and Tripoli were well-fortified cities, the two latter even with a triple wall on the landside. In the course of the 12th century only few fortifications were newly built. Major attempts were some town wall reinforcements, executed by Nūr ad-Dīn, and the erection of the citadel and the city walls of Cairo by the Ayyubid sultan Saladin. The virtual revival of Muslim military architecture started at the end of the 12th century, when an enormous new fortification programme was implemented. The impressive citadels of Aleppo, Damascus, Bosra, and the castles of Şubaiba, 'Ajlūn and Baalbek still bear witness of it. These fortifications show an hitherto unknown degree of monumentalization in architecture, which is most evident at the citadel of Damascus. Its enceinte is dotted with huge rectangular towers at narrow intervals. These massive multi-level constructions are a hallmark of Ayyubid and the subsequent Mamluk military architecture. Their emergence can not be adequately explained as a response to Crusader fortification

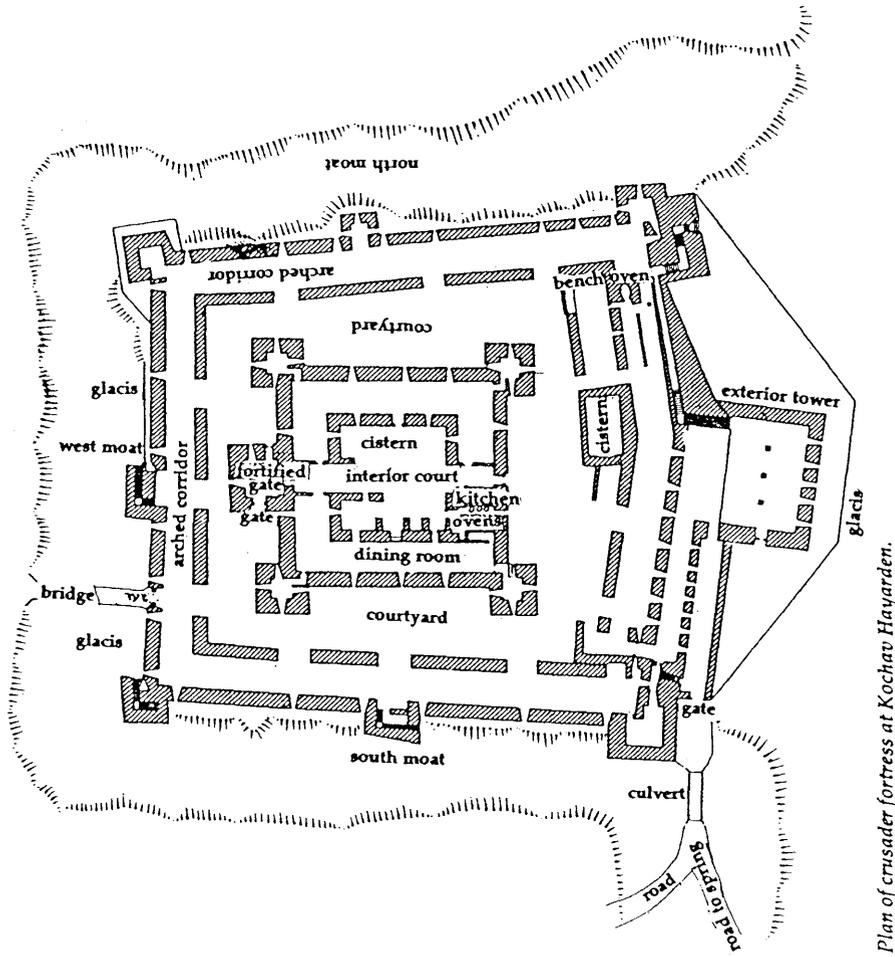
achievements or to the progress of siege techniques. They should rather be seen as a manifestation of the reinvigorated power and significance of the Muslim elites in the aftermath of Saladin's momentous victory over the Crusaders.

After the mid-13th century only few new fortifications were built in the remaining Crusader states. A decisive downturn in Middle Eastern castle building came with the end of the Crusader period on the Levantine mainland in the beginning of the 14th century. The Mamluks in their effort to prevent the Crusaders from taking a hold on the Levantine coast had razed many of the harbours and their fortifications. They only maintained a few castles in the hinterland like Marqab and others at strategic points inland. Although the kingdom of Cyprus continued to exist, Mamluk attacks were rare and inefficient, due to the lack of a powerful navy. Therefore, during the 14th and 15th centuries the rulers of Cyprus felt no need to advance fortification schemes. The next step in the development of military architecture were the defence works of the Hospitallers on Rhodes and the islands of the Dodecanese, where, based on the experience made in the Levant, they created modern fortresses, in response to the new threat posed by the emergence of firearms.

The History of Research

(to be continued)

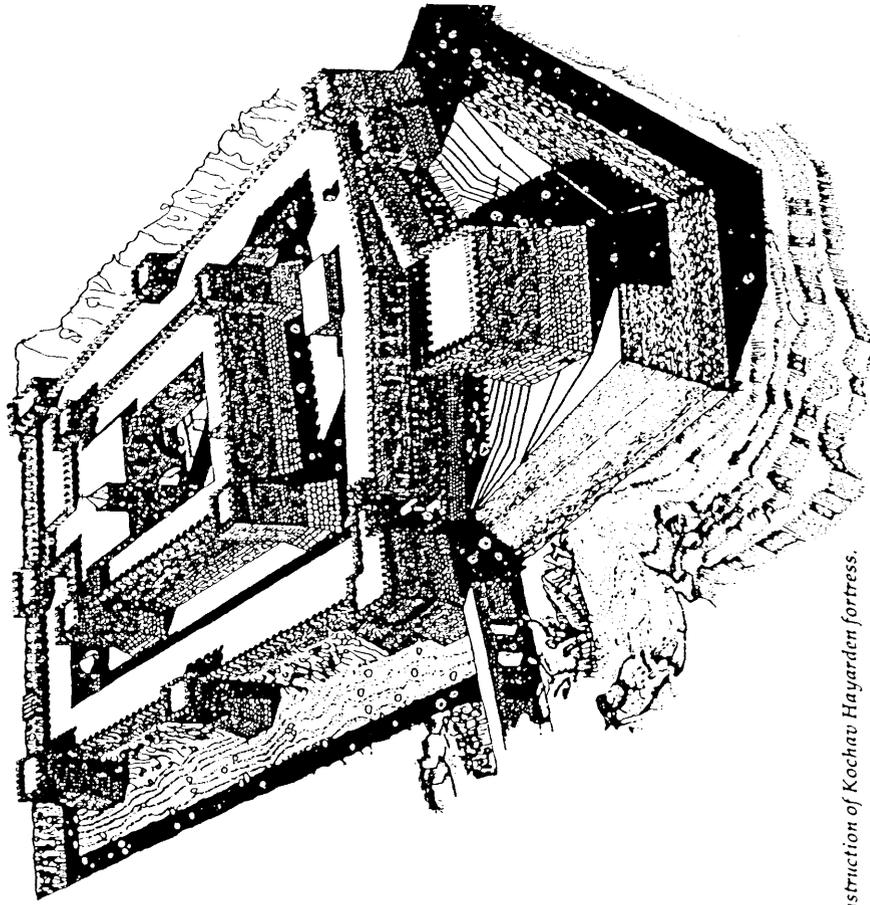
TERMS OF USE



Plan of crusader fortress at Kochav Hayarden.

I shall conclude my survey with my favorite site—Kochav Hayarden, the Crusaders Belvoir known to the Arabs as Kaukab al-Hawa (Star of the Winds). Meir Ben-Dov's excavations in the abandoned Arab village of humble houses and animal pens, folds and stables brought to light one of the handsomest Crusader fortresses ever built. Happily, we can date this fortress to within roughly a 30-year period during the 12th century (1148-1178), though some of the finds can be dated to within a few years of the 13th century when the castle was for a short period again in Crusader possession. Needless to say, such close dating is very rare.⁴⁰

In the fortress's general plan, its builders took advantage of the wadi to the north and the steep slope that faces the River Jordan on the east. The exterior fortifications, the covered gallery comprising the quadrangular fortifications, the inferior citadel and its various installations, and the church on the second floor of the fortress have all contributed enormously to our knowledge of the Crusader Period.



Reconstruction of Kochav Hayarden fortress.

Recent Archaeology in the Land of Israel

Hershel Shanks + Benjamin Mazar, ed

p. 122-124

Belvoir – the best preserved Crusader castle

Architecture

Belvoir is an early example of the concentric castle plan, developed in later crusader castles - in fact this is the first known concentric castle. The castle was highly symmetric, with an outer and an inner fortress. The outer fortress had a rectangular wall, reinforced with square towers at the corners and on each side. This surrounded an inner fortress with four corner towers and one on the west wall.

Vaults on the inner side of both walls provided storage and protection during bombardments.

The walls were built of large basalt ashlars held together by U-shaped iron joints. Well-protected cisterns for the storage of rain water guaranteed the water supply in times of siege.

The main entrance through the outer walls lies on the eastern side, but the entrance to the Keep lies on the Western edge, forcing attackers to battle through heavy fire through the castle.

The Outer Fortress

The outer walls measured 110 x 110 metres. The structure was built in such a way that it could cover attacks from all sides.

An external tower surrounded by a low wall (a barbican) was built on the eastern side, which controlled the dead space on the slope of the hill, both visually and with firepower.

The main entrance to the fortress was an outer gateway from the south-eastern corner. From here, one proceeded up a paved ramp to the top of the external tower, turned back and continued to the inner gate of the fortress. This fortified gate was closed with a wooden door covered with metal and locked from the inside with a heavy wooden beam which fit into slots in the adjacent walls.

A secondary entrance to the fortress was from the west, over a bridge suspended over the man-made moat. The moat was dry, 14 metres deep and 20 metres wide, and designed to prevent siege engines from coming close to the fortifications. A drawbridge could be raised or destroyed when the fortress came under attack. The dry moat surrounded the fortress on three sides while the steep slope and the external tower protected its eastern side.

Huge towers rose at the four corners of the fortress, with additional towers between them at mid-point. The broad bases (taluses) of the towers slope towards the bottom of the moat, to prevent tunneling under them. In the upper stories of the towers were loopholes protected by covered recesses.

The placement of the towers is such that the entire circumference of the fortress walls could be covered by cross fire. Almost every tower incorporated sally ports into the moat, with narrow staircases; the steps are unusually high, to make enemy penetration from the outside more difficult.

In the courtyard between the walls of the outer fortress and the inner fortress were large halls covered with vaults. These served as stables, storehouses and living space and gave access to defensive positions on the roofs.

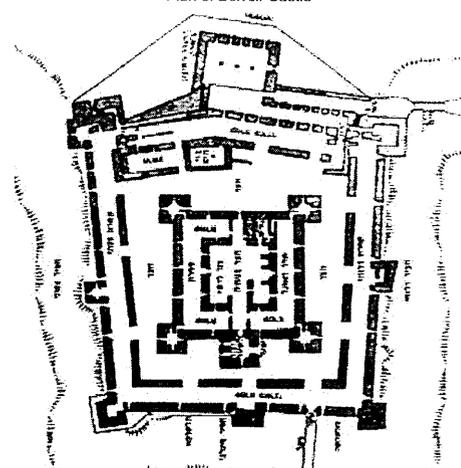
The Inner Fortress

Within the inner walls lies the inner fortress (the Keep or Donjon). Another square design, measuring approximately 50 x 50 metres, this keep could sustain a siege even if the outer walls were to fail.

Well-protected cisterns allowed a plentiful supply of rainwater for those within the walls in times of siege.

Standing two storeys high was an open courtyard at the centre. Vaulted spaces in the walls served as refectory, kitchen, meeting hall, stores, living quarters etc. The upper story served as the command headquarters of the fortress and included the apartments of the knights, as well as a small chapel built of limestone and roofed with cross vaults.

Plan of Belvoir Castle



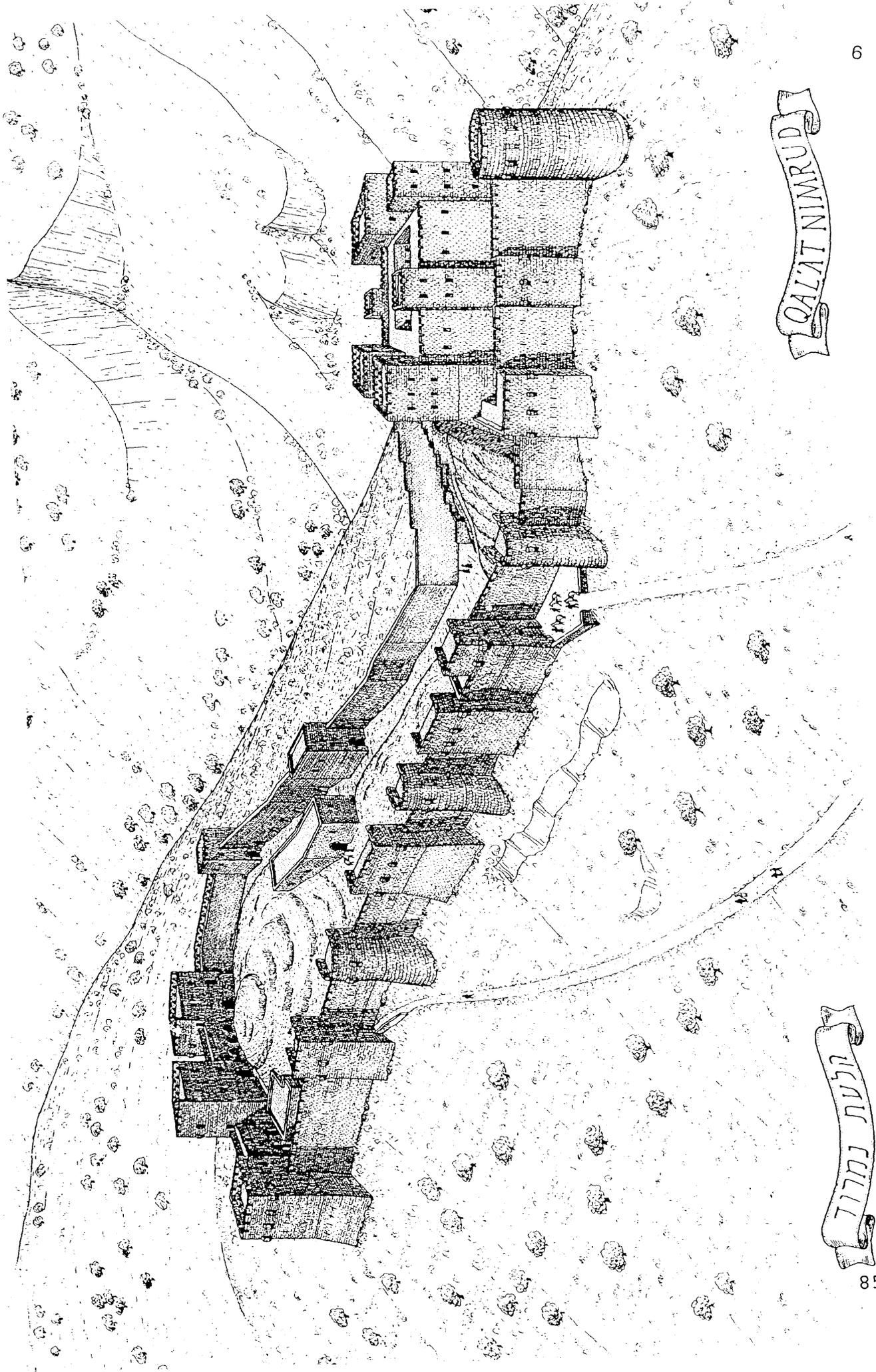
Gateway at Belvoir Castle



artist's impression of Belvoir Castle



Castle of Nimrud – Israel's largest castle



QAL'AT NIMRUD

קולעת נמרוד

Krak des Chevaliers Crusader Castle - Illustration

