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Excavations at Sepphoris: The Location and Identification of Shikhin

Part I

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Introduction

THIS paper is the first of a two-part essay that will report the results of an archaeological survey conducted by the University of South Florida Excavations at Sepphoris in the summer of 1988. We will present the data to support our identification of an unnamed hill north of Sepphoris as the most probable location for the ancient town of Shikhin. In Part I, we will include a brief history of topographical research on Shikhin, summarize the information from Josephus on Asochis and examine references to Shikhin in rabbinic sources. Finally, anticipating some of the information to be presented in Part II, we will conclude by drawing together the literary, archaeological and linguistic evidence which supports our identification of Shikhin.

The Location of the Site

The site which we identify with ancient Shikhin is not named on maps of Israel. It consists of at least one low hill north of Sepphoris in map squares 176 242 and 177 242. More precisely, the top of this hill lies 1.39 km. north of the 'Tomb of Jacob's Daughters' (today called the 'Tomb of Judah ha-Naši') just below Saint Ann's on the north-western slope of Sepphoris. The site is divided by the north-south grid reference line at 176 km. (see Figs. 1, 2).

The peak of the northernmost hill of the site lies at 188 m. above sea level. Since some of the antiquities extend to the next hill, 600 m. to the south-south-west, it is possible that the village, which was known in talmudic times for its pottery-making, extended roughly 750 m. from north to south and about 500 m. from east to west. In the absence of excavation, however, we do not know how much of this area was occupied in different periods.

A Brief History of Topographical Research on Shikhin

In 1853, Grätz noticed that the talmudic place name Shikhin (שיחין) and the Greek name Asochis (Ἀσωχίς) were probably the same linguistically. This suggestion was based on the grounds that they would be pronounced in a similar fashion — that is, the *alpha* resolved the difficulty for a Greek speaker of pronouncing the consonant cluster *sh* (שׁ) in colloquial speech.¹ In 1868, Neubauer devoted a page to Shikhin in his geographic study of the rabbinic sources, on the grounds that it is a well-known site in those documents. He did not follow Grätz's suggestion that Shikhin be identified with Asochis. On the other hand, Neubauer cited the tale in PT Ned. 5,9 38d (see below), about the fire at Shikhin that brought forth 'les habitants de Kaçra de Cippori', which suggested to him that Shikhin lay in the vicinity of Sepphoris. He also argued that no modern locality could be identified with Shikhin. Yet Neubauer noted that Josephus mentions a plain of Asochis, not far from Sepphoris: '...peut-être Sihin [*sic*] s'est-il trouvé dans cette plaine'.²

In 1881, the Palestine Exploration Fund published *The Survey of Western Palestine*, in which 'Tell Bedeiwiyeh' was mentioned at the west end of the Beit Netophah Valley, but was not identified with any site in the Bible, Josephus, or rabbinic writings.³

In 1896, Schlatter advanced the linguistic argument that the Ἀσωφών of Josephus must represent the Hebrew place name צפון, found in Josh. 13:27. He added the observation that Ἀσωχίς of Josephus must represent the Hebrew place name שיחין.⁴

In 1905, Oehler identified the Asochis of Josephus with Tell Badawiya at the west end of the Beit Netophah Valley (which he identified with the 'Plain of Asochis' in Josephus) north of Sepphoris. Oehler's argument was simply that Asochis must lie in the west end of the valley, that Asochis cannot be Kafr Manda, which was known to the rabbis, and that the tell lay close to Sepphoris.⁵ In 1907, Thomsen identified Josephus' city of Asochis with modern Tell Badawiya, but mentioned that the identification of Shikhin in Galilee is unknown.⁶

1 H. Grätz: *Geschichte der Juden vom Untergang der jüdischen Staates bis zum Abschluss des Talmuds*, III, Berlin, 1853, p. 123, n. 2. For typographical convenience we are transliterating שיחין as Shikhin.

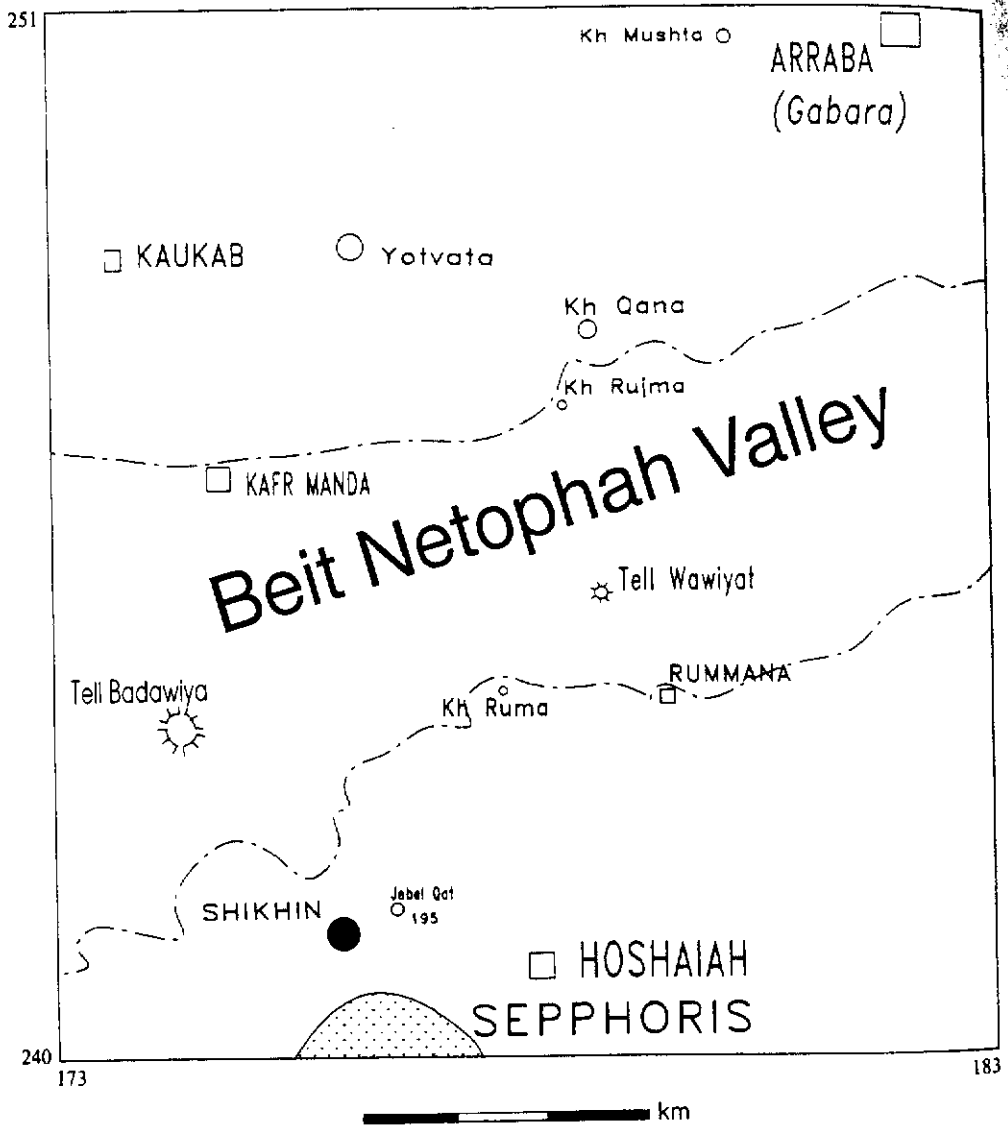
2 A. Neubauer: *Géographie du Talmud*, Paris, 1869, p. 202.

3 C.R. Conder and H.H. Kitchener: *The Survey of Western Palestine*, I, Sheets I–VI Galilee, London, 1881, p. 352: 'Tell Bedeiwiyeh...a large mound with ruins of a small Khan and a well at its foot.'

4 A. Schlatter: *Einige Ergebnisse aus Nieses Ausgabe des Josephus*, ZDPV 19 (1896), pp. 221–232, esp. p. 224: 'Der vokalische Anlaut erscheint in derselben Weise auch bei Ἀσωχίς (= שיחין) ohne Schwankung.'

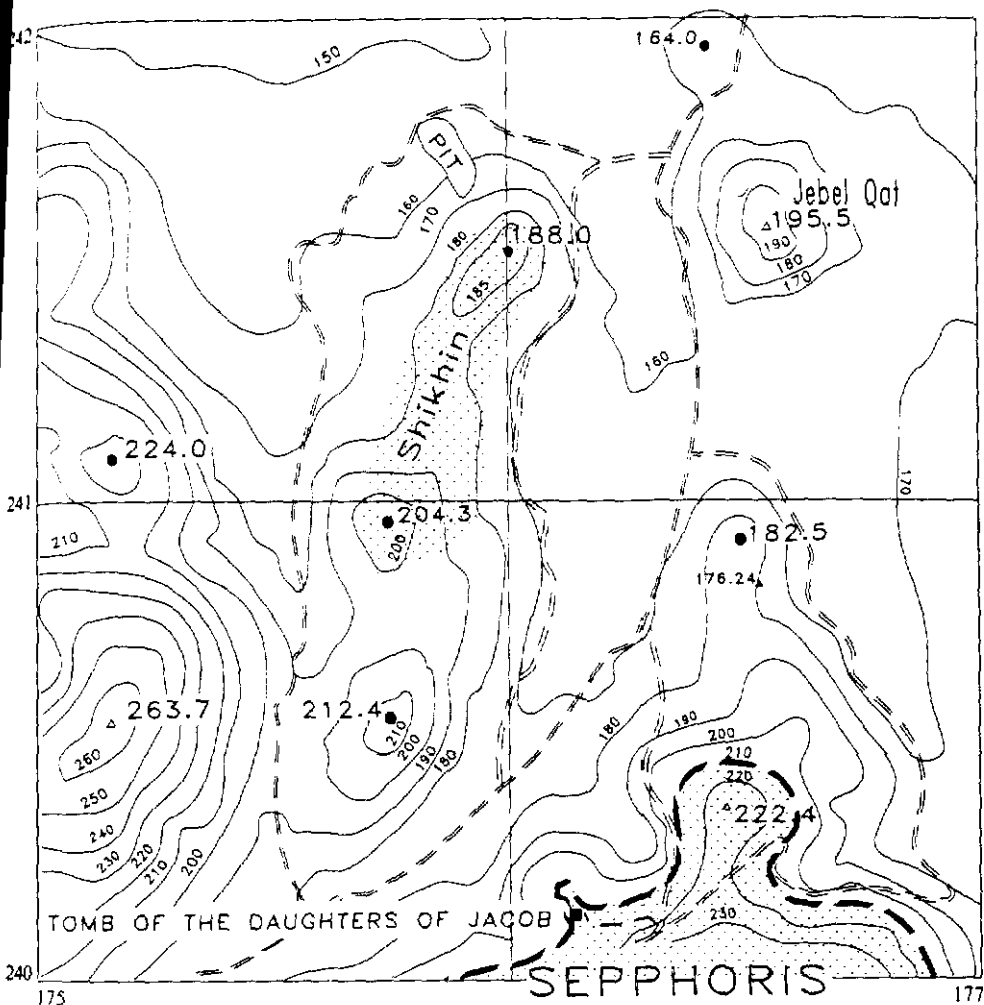
5 W. Oehler: *Die Ortschaften und Grenzen Galiäas nach Josephus*, ZDPV 27 (1905), pp. 1–26 and 49–74.

6 P. Thomsen: *Loca Sancta: Verzeichnis der im 1. bis 6. Jahrhundert nach Christi erwähnten Ortschaften Palästinas mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lokalisierung der biblischen Stätten*, Halle, 1907, pp. 29 and 105.



As early as 1909, Klein, the scholar who treated the talmudic texts relating to Shikhin most exhaustively, published a thorough review of the references in rabbinical sources and Josephus.⁷ He argued for the identification of Asochis, Shikhin and Tell Badawiya with one another on the basis of four traditions about Shikhin: a) the story of the fire at Shikhin that elicited the response from the

7 S. Klein: *Beiträge zur Geographie und Geschichte Galiläas*, Leipzig, 1909, pp. 63-70.



'Soldaten aus der Akropolis von Sepphoris' suggests that the two localities were side by side (see below); b) a tosefta mentions Sepphoris and Shikhin as examples of neighbouring cities (Tos. Me'ila 2,9, Zuckerman, p. 560); c) details about Shikhin were recorded by R. Jose of Sepphoris, further suggesting that the two localities are next to one another; and d) a tosefta implies that Shikhin and Ruma are two Sabbath journeys or 4,000 cubits apart (Tos. 'Eruv. 3,17, Zuckerman, p. 143). Klein believed that this evidence settles the question, for that distance

places the investigator at Tell Badawiya; he maintained this position in subsequent publications until his death in 1940.⁸

Little new topographical research advanced the argument after 1909. In 1923, Albright repeated the identification of Shikhin with Asochis and rejected its identification with Tell Badawiya, but thought it lay in the vicinity of the tell.⁹ Subsequently, Dalman combined his knowledge of Semitic languages and the texts with his detailed knowledge of the topography, but did not advance the discussion.¹⁰ Szczepanski repeated the three-way identification in 1928, but questioned it.¹¹ Avi-Yonah accepted the identification of Asochis, Shikhin and Tell Badawiya in all of his relevant publications;¹² Abel followed Klein in detail in 1938;¹³ and in 1955, Press accepted the identification of Shikhin with Asochis and mentioned that Klein identified Shikhin with Tell Badawiya.¹⁴

Bagatti did not treat ancient Shikhin or Asochis in his work on Galilee, since neither were associated with ancient Christian settlement.¹⁵ Miller and Safrai collected most of the talmudic texts again in 1984 and 1985, especially as they related to Sepphoris. Miller did not attempt a new identification for Shikhin, but Safrai identified it with Kh. Ruma.¹⁶

The identification of Shikhin with Tell Badawiya remained normative as late as 1989,¹⁷ with the exception of Saarisalo, who made a major new proposal for the identification of Asochis in 1929.¹⁸ Saarisalo's hypothesis reappears in a recent re-

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- 8 S. Klein: *Neue Beiträge zur Geographie und Geschichte Galiläas*, Vienna, 1923, p. 6; *idem*, *Palästina-Studien*, Vienna, 1923; *idem*, *Various Essays on the Exploration of the Land of Israel*, Vienna, 1924, pp. 20–21 (Hebrew); *idem*, *Galiläa von der Makkabäerzeit bis 67*, Vienna, 1928, p. 16; *idem*, *Das tanaitische Grenzverzeichnis Palästinas*, Cincinnati, 1928; *idem*, *Sepher ha-Yishuv*, Jerusalem, 1939, pp. 154–155, 163 (Hebrew).
- 9 W.F. Albright: Review of L. Waterman, *Preliminary Report of the University of Michigan Excavations at Sepphoris, Palestine, in 1931*, *BASOR* 11 (1923), p. 11.
- 10 G.H. Dalman: *Sacred Sites and Ways*, London, 1935, pp. 103–104.
- 11 L. Szczepanski: *Geographica Historica Palaestinae Antiquae*, Rome, 1929, p. 205; 'Asochis urbs (Ἀσωχίς πόλις [= ציחין? (sic)] = Tell el-Bedawwiye [?]...').
- 12 M. Avi-Yonah: *Map of Roman Palestine*, Oxford, 1940; *idem*, *The Holy Land from the Persian to the Arab Conquest (536 B.C. — A.D. 640): A Historical Geography*, Grand Rapids, 1977, p. 67; *idem*, *Gazetteer of Roman Palestine (Qedem 5)*, Jerusalem, 1976.
- 13 F.-M. Abel: *Géographie de la Palestine*, I, Paris, 1938, p. 409.
- 14 I. Press: *Topographical-Historical Encyclopedia of the Land of Israel*, III, Jerusalem, 1955, pp. 495 (כפר שיחין) and 502 (כפר שיחין), and esp. IV, pp. 900–901 (שיחין) (Hebrew).
- 15 B. Bagatti: *Antichi villaggi cristiani de Galilea (Pubblicazioni della Studio Biblico Franciscano, Collezione minore 13)*, Jerusalem, 1971.
- 16 S.S. Miller: *Studies in the History and Traditions of Sepphoris (Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 37)*, Leiden, 1984; Z. Safrai: *The Galilee in the Time of the Mishna and Talmud*, 2nd ed., Jerusalem, 1985, pp. 44–45 (Hebrew).
- 17 G. Reeg: *Die Ortsnamen Israels nach der rabbinischen Literature (Beiheft zum Tübingen Atlas des Vorderen Orients B:51)*, Wiesbaden, 1989, pp. 601–602.
- 18 A. Saarisalo: *Topographical Researches in Galilee*, *JPOS* 9 (1929), pp. 34–36.

issue of Klein.¹⁹ He followed Klein in arguing that the Greek place name Asochis is doubtless to be identified with the talmudic place name Shikhin, and he argued further from Josephus that Asochis is to be found in the western end of the Sahl el-Baṭṭof, today's Beit Netophah Valley. There are only two possibilities there for Asochis: Kafr Manda, a known talmudic site, and Tell Badawiya, the preferred site. Saarisalo noted, however, that there are no Roman potsherds to be found at the tell, and he in fact posits a gap at Tell Badawiya from the Early Iron Age to the Arab I periods. He proposed that ancient Asochis be identified with a Roman ruin he found during the summer of 1928 at the west end of the valley, 2 km. north of Tell Badawiya and slightly over 1 km. south-west of Kafr Manda. He suggested that the local place name be Kh. el-Lōn, since the whole district is called by the Arabs 'Arḍ el-Lōn'. He described the ruin as situated on a low, rocky ridge, just north of the beginning of Wadi Badawiya. The area of debris is 270 m. long from west-south-west to east-north-east.²⁰ This would place the site at about map ref. 1727 2453.²¹ Since this putative site is north of Tell Badawiya, it is surely too far from Sepphoris to be a likely candidate for Asochis.

Josephus on Asochis

The site of Shikhin was certainly known to Josephus under the name Asochis. He mentions the site itself in only five passages of his writings, but with information concerning its location in relation to Sepphoris,²² reinforcing our identification of Asochis with Shikhin and with our 1988 survey site.

In *Ant.* 13.338, Josephus mentions that Sepphoris lies 'a little distance from' (μικρὸν ἄποθεν) Asochis. In fact, the two sites lie so close together that Asochis is usually located in relation to Sepphoris whenever it is mentioned (*Life*, 233, 384). In the passage at hand, how are we to understand the phrase 'a little distance from'? The exact phrase occurs only twice in Josephus, here and in *Ant.* 4.79, where it means 'a short distance outside' the Israelite camp. The adjective *mikros* can be used alone to express a short distance from something (e.g. *Ant.* 8.206), but Josephus'

19 *Galilee: Geography and History of Galilee from the Return from Babylonia to the Conclusion of the Talmud*, completed and edited by Yehuda Elitzur, Tel Aviv, 1967, p. 16 (Hebrew).

20 Saarisalo (above, n. 18), p. 35. It is also at least possible that Saarisalo discovered our site, but found his notes confusing when he returned home to Finland.

21 No site appears at this location in either *The Survey of Western Palestine* (as Saarisalo [above, n. 18] noted, p. 35), or in the *Yalqut ha-Pirsumim*, the official list of antiquities sites in modern Israel (Jerusalem, 1964, p. 1379, supplements 1965, 1967 and 1969), nor on the 1:10,000 maps of the region published by the Survey of Israel. Reeg (above, n. 17), p. 602, notes that Saarisalo proposed a new identification with 'H. al-Lōn' at map coordinates 174 245, but appends a question mark.

22 K.H. Rengstorff: *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, Leiden, 1973, *ad. loc.* See also Christa Möller and G. Schmitt: *Siedlungen Palästinas nach Flavius Josephus (Beiheft zum Tübingen Atlas des Vorderen Orients B:14)*, Wiesbaden, 1976, pp. 28-29.

more characteristic usage is to employ it in a temporal or emotional sense to express proximity to a disaster or a 'close call' (e.g. *Ant.* 13.106; 14.279). Clearly the phrase 'a little distance from' indicates that Josephus located Asochis near Sepphoris. Moreover, Josephus knew this site firsthand, having visited it himself (*Life*, 384).

From another passage (*Life*, 233) we learn that to get to Asochis one must descend from Sepphoris. Here Josephus' narrative describes how delegates of his enemies go first to the village of Japha, south-west of Nazareth, then to Sepphoris, and then descend to Asochis. Thus, Asochis should lie just below Sepphoris, on the side away from Nazareth, exactly where our survey site is located.

Lastly, it should be noted that Asochis is called a 'city' (πόλις) whenever Josephus mentions it. Since our identification of Asochis/Shikhin places it adjacent to the large polis of Sepphoris, it is important to determine in what sense Asochis may be said to be a polis. Here a digression on the meaning of the term polis in Josephus' writings seems necessary. That Josephus works primarily with two dominant terms to designate urban life in Palestine becomes clear in his description of Galilee, where he specifically mentions cities (πόλεις) and villages (κώμαι) (*Life*, 235; *War*, 3.43). In addition, for the description of small cities or towns he employs different terms, discussed below. While numerous places are specifically termed cities, in a more general sense the term designates those places which are distinct from the countryside (e.g., *Ant.* 11.28) or a village (*War*, 4.127; *Ant.* 18.28; 20.130). In the course of his historical narratives, Josephus often uses the term polis without a particular meaning (*War*, 1.316; 2.366; 3.63), even when he lists specific cities (*War*, 1.156, 165-166; 2.97; 2.629).²³ In its loosest usage, the term appears in rhetorical statements which allude to 'each city' or 'every city' (e.g., *War*, 1.614; 2.109, 125) or 'all the cities' (*War*, 2.279; 7.96).

An earlier study has indicated that Josephus meant polis in the Hellenistic sense of a city organized along Greek political lines, especially when describing Jerusalem as a polis.²⁴ Traces of this meaning appear elsewhere, e.g. when we hear mention of the 'Council' (βουλή) of Tiberias (*Life*, 169) or of the political independence of Sepphoris (αὐτοκρατορία; *Ant.* 18.27) or in the numerous references where πόλις refers to the citizen body in its collective sense of state (e.g. *War*, 1.242, 428, 474).²⁵

23 For the lack of absolute precision in the terms 'city' and 'village', see C.C. McCown: City, in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, New York — Nashville, 1962, p. 632. For western Imperial terminology on cities, see J. Stambaugh: *The Ancient Roman City*, Baltimore — London, 1989, pp. 243-254.

24 A. Tcherikover: Was Jerusalem a Polis? *IEJ* 14 (1964), pp. 61-78, esp. p. 78.

25 For Sepphoris and Tiberias as poleis and their administration, see M. Goodman: *State and Society in Roman Galilee, A.D. 132-212*, Totowa, N.J., 1983, pp. 129-130; J.D. Cohn: *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, Leiden, 1979, pp. 138-139. The political independence of the Hellenistic city is often stressed as one of its main characteristics: A.H.M. Jones: *The*

Furthermore, when a city is designated a 'capital' city (μητρόπολις), it also carries this political understanding, especially in relation to Jerusalem (e.g. *War*, 1.339, 433), which is also most frequently referred to as a 'city' in Josephus' writings. Indeed, Jerusalem in particular can be termed *the* city (ἡ πόλις; *War*, 1.339). Moreover, the term 'metropolis' can be applied to Jerusalem in a spiritual and political sense (*War*, 7.375),²⁶ but that same term designates other political capitals (Shechem, *Ant.* 11.340; Gadera, *War*, 4.413).

Similarly, the rule of a city over surrounding villages is sometimes noted (e.g. Julias, *Ant.* 20.159) or the (implied) suzerainty of a city over surrounding villages is alluded to (Sepphoris, *Life*, 346) or a specified territory is mentioned (*War*, 2.252; 4.443, 444, 452).²⁷ All of these carry something of the political meanings of the term *polis* in the Hellenistic political vocabulary.²⁸

When Josephus uses the term *polis* with some observable precision, he seems to have thought that spatial extent and/or population size were primary factors distinguishing a 'city' from a 'village'.²⁹ Thus he can say of Batanea that it is 'a village not inferior in size to a city' (*Ant.* 17.23; Lydda, *Ant.* 20.130). When Herod Antipas raises the village of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee to the status of a *polis*, he does so by adding residents and strengthening its fortifications (*Ant.* 18.28). It is the size of the population, not the fortifications, that is significant here, for

Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1971, p. 257; S. Applebaum: When Did Scythopolis Become a Greek City?, in *idem*, *Judaea in Hellenistic and Roman Times, Historical and Archaeological Essays*, Leiden, 1989, pp. 1, 5.

- 26 For Philo's corroborating evidence of Jerusalem as the Jewish metropolis, see Y. Amir: Philo's Version of the Pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in A. Oppenheimer, U. Rappaport and M. Stern (eds.): *Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period: Abraham Schalit Memorial Volume*, Jerusalem, 1980, pp. ix; 154-169 (Hebrew).
- 27 Hence in the Hebrew Bible the villages of a city are called its 'daughters', see McCown (above, n. 23), p. 633. For the Roman period, see Goodman (above, n. 25), p. 130; L.I. Levine: *Caesarea under Roman Rule*, Leiden, 1975, p. 17.
- 28 It must be remembered, however, that aside from the Decapolis cities, cities in the Holy Land did not have the full independence of the Greek *poleis*. Tiberias, for example, was more a royal city than a Hellenistic one, see R. Horsley: Bandits, Messiahs, and Longshoremen: Popular Unrest in Galilee around the Time of Jesus, in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminars Papers*, Atlanta, 1988, p. 195; S. Applebaum: Hellenistic Cities of Judaea and its Vicinity — Some New Aspects, in B.M. Levick (ed.): *The Ancient Historian and his Materials: Essays in Honor of C.E. Stevens on his Seventieth Birthday*, Westmead, 1975, p. 64. Thus a town like Sepphoris too is a Jewish city with a Greek constitution, see S. Applebaum: Jewish Urban Communities and Greek Influences, in *Judaea in Hellenistic and Roman Times* (above, n. 25), p. 44. In the Holy Land as in the Diaspora, the Romans seem to have preferred mixed constitutions in guaranteeing various internal ethnic groups (especially the Jews) their rights, see A. Kasher: The Isopoliteia Question in Caesarea Maritima, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 68 (1977), pp. 24, 26.
- 29 Thus also Goodman (above, n. 25), p. 28.

villages, as well as cities, were fortified in the Galilee³⁰ (*War*, 4.127), and Josephus mentions numerous fortresses (φρούρια) (e.g. *War*, 1.56, 57, 316; 3.34 [Sepphoris itself]; 4.446).

Size, however, can be a rather imprecise criterion in determining urban terminology. The designation 'city' may still rest on political charters not known from our received sources.³¹ Josephus even has a term to designate the 'small city', what we might call today the 'town' (*War*, 3.20): *πολίχνη*.³² He uses this term of Giscala (*War*, 4.84), 'En-gedi (*War*, 4.402) and Hebron (*War*, 4.529). Three times he uses the related term 'small town' (*πολίχνιον*).³³ The small towns occupying the coast between Joppa and Dora before Caesarea was built, he designates with the *hapax legomenon* *πολιτομάτια* (*Ant.* 15.333).

Thus Josephus has three basic urban categories: city (*πόλις*), town (*πολίχνη*) and village (*κώμαι*); size seems to be the most usual way of distinguishing among them (cf. *War*, 4.44 with *War*, 4.438). Given the imprecision of the criterion of size, we should not be surprised that a place designated a 'small city' in one passage is called simply 'a city' elsewhere (e.g. Giscala, *War*, 4.104; Hebron, *War*, 4.530), or that a site called a city once can be called a village elsewhere (e.g., Garis, *War*, 3.129, *Life*, 395). These passages heighten our suspicion that at a number of points *polis* simply means small city or town (e.g. Hebron, *Ant.* 12.353). It is this last usage that Josephus must be reflecting when he calls Asochis a *polis*: he means that it is large enough in size to be a town, although it clearly cannot be a *polis* in the same sense as nearby Sepphoris. When we first walked the perimeter of the site with the regional inspector of Lower Galilee, Ariel Berman, we were struck by the size of the then putative Shikhin/Asochis and the density of the pottery at the base of the hill and in the surrounding cultivated fields. Although we had not located the kilns, we knew we were not examining a typical small, outlying village.

30 Although in the Bible the city is considered to be larger than a village and walled, in the course of time a village could grow and become fortified, see C.U. Wolf: Village, in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (above, n. 23), p. 784.

31 Conversely, a number of towns with no known status show well-developed municipal organizations in talmudic literature, Gamala of Josephus' day being such an example, see Applebaum, *Jewish Urban Communities* (above, n. 28), p. 42; *idem*, *Romanization and Indigenism in Judaea*, in *Judaea in Hellenistic and Roman Times* (above, n. 25), p. 161. For the problem of distinguishing city from village in Josephus, see, briefly, S. Freyne: *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations*, Philadelphia, 1988, p. 145 and n. 25.

32 For the concept of a small town or 'townlet' in the mishnaic or talmudic literature, see Applebaum, *Jewish Urban Communities* (above, n. 28), p. 42; Freyne (above, n. 31), p. 145; Goodman (above, n. 25), pp. 28-29. This literature has a wider and more precise range of terms than Josephus.

33 Josephus uses this term in compound form only once of the site of Capethra in Idumaea, which he calls a *πσενδοπολίχνιον* (*War*, 4.552). Goodman (above, n. 25), p. 28, considers this passage an example of Josephus' ability to use precise terminology on occasion.

This view that the term *polis* in Josephus designates towns of widely varying size is further reinforced by the care with which Josephus points out which cities and villages are the largest (μέγιστα) in a region (e.g. *Life*, 123, 230, 232; *War*, 1.86; 3.34). Asochis, then, should be understood, in Josephus' language, to be a town or small city directly adjacent to and downhill from Sepphoris, to be found on the far side of Sepphoris from Japha.

Shikhin in Rabbinic Sources

Shikhin is well known in rabbinic sources as a pottery-making centre in Galilee. It is often mentioned in the same sentence with Kefar Ḥananya, another village famous for its pottery industry.³⁴ For example, R. Jose ben Halafta, a tanna of the second century who lived in Sepphoris according to the sources (BT San. 19a, 32b, 109a), reported on the durability of the pottery vessels made in these two towns: 'The vessels of Kefar Shikhin and Kefar Hananya are not likely to burst' (BT Šab. 120b).³⁵ One of the most likely reasons why these two villages developed this industry is the superiority of the local clays. R. Jose spoke of the black clay formed into balls that could be bought in Shikhin: '...black earth, such as that of Kfar Hananya and its environs, Kfar Shikhin and its environs...' (BT BM 74a; Tos. BM 6,3, Zuckerman, p. 383). Shikhin was represented to be successful economically, for the taxes paid by the citizens were proverbial for their magnitude: 'The taxes of three cities [that belonged to R. Eleazar b. Harsum] Cabul, Shikhin, and Magdala, [were so heavy] that they had to be carried to Jerusalem [in a wagon]' (Lamentations Rab. to 2:2, par. 4; PT Ta'an 4.69a). The text goes on to explain that the three cities were destroyed, presumably during the First Revolt, for legendary sins (dissension, witchcraft and licentiousness). Shikhin is also noted in the rabbinic literature for the mustard that flourished there. R. Jose spoke of a mustard plant of wonderful fecundity in Shikhin: 'It was taught: R. Jose related: It once happened to a man at Shikhin to whom his father had left three twigs of mustard, that one of these split and was found to contain nine *kab* of mustard, and its timber sufficed to cover a potter's hut' (BT Ket. 111b).³⁶ A certain Nehemiah, 'a man of Kefar Shikhin', is also mentioned in rabbinic literature.³⁷

For the purposes of location and identification of the site of Shikhin, it is important to note that Shikhin and Sepphoris were close to one another in the rabbinic citations. Tos. Me'ila 2,9 names Sepphoris and Shikhin as examples of neighbours: 'And he

34 The most complete discussion of the texts is in D. Adan-Bayewitz: *Common Pottery in Roman Galilee: A Study of Local Trade*, Ramat Gan, 1993, pp. 23-41.

35 See Klein (above, n. 7), pp. 63-70; *idem*, *Sepher ha-Yishuv* (above, n. 8), pp. 154-155.

36 D. Sperber treats this story without identifying Shikhin in *Roman Palestine 200-400, The Land*, Ramat Gan, 1978, p. 29, n. 42.

37 W. Bacher: *Die Agada der Palästinensischen Amoräer*, III, *Die letzten Amoräer des heiligen Landes vom Anfange des 4. bis zum Anfange des 5. Jahrhunderts*, Strasburg, 1892, p. 465, n. 5.

said to him, "...one from Shikhin and one from Sepphoris..." The two localities play a major role in a well-known story about a fire in Shikhin, from which it is clear that Shikhin lies quite near Sepphoris, for the soldiers could see the fire, get to it and return in one day (Tos. Šab. 13,9, Zuckerman, p. 129; PT Šab. 16d, 15d; BT Šab. 121a).³⁸ The soldiers must have had orders to control such fires, or they would not have tried to put it out, implying that Shikhin lies within the immediate administration of the city of Sepphoris. The soldiers went down to Shikhin, which places Shikhin at a lower altitude, perhaps simply below the hill of Sepphoris. Note that this is in accord with Josephus, wherein the delegation travels down to Shikhin from Sepphoris (*Life*, 233, see above).

Furthermore, the Sepphoreans asked R. Jose ben Halafta of Sepphoris about the possible impurity of a cave of Shikhin.³⁹ This evidence suggests that Shikhin lay in the vicinity of R. Jose's city and within his aegis. That is, the writers assume that R. Jose's link with Sepphoris is probably historical.

We have mentioned that Klein estimated the distance between Sepphoris and Shikhin as two Sabbath days' journeys (Tos. 'Erub. 3,17, Zuckerman, p. 143; PT 'Erub. 4,8, 22a; BT 'Erub. 51b.). By using an 'eruv, the poor of Shikhin extended their permitted Sabbath walking distance so as to be able to reach Ruma (likely the Ρούμα of Josephus, *Ant.* 3.233) and return home. This places Shikhin at a distance greater than 2,000 cubits, but less than 4,000 cubits from Ruma, modern Kh. Ruma, at map ref. 178 244.⁴⁰ This longer distance is about 2.24 km. if the cubit is 56 cm.,⁴¹ 2.14 km. if the cubit is 53.34 cm., or 1.83 km. if the cubit is 45.75 cm.⁴² If we take this text literally, we still cannot measure the distance from ancient Ruma and our survey site, since we do not know the location of the outermost structures considered to belong to these settlements. Nevertheless, the northern slopes of the survey site, now cultivated fields with large quantities of pottery sherds, are no more than 2.4 km. from Kh. Ruma. It may be conjectured, therefore, that the effective distance between the settlements for purposes of an 'eruv was even smaller, and could well have been less than 4,000 cubits.⁴³

Literary, Archaeological and Linguistic Evidence for the Identification of Shikhin

We have seen from Josephus and the rabbinic sources that Shikhin is surely a city or town in Galilee, noted for its pottery industry and lying quite near

38 Adapted from Miller (above, n. 16), p. 31.

39 Tos. Nid. 8,6, Zuckerman, pp. 649-650.

40 See Avi-Yonah (above, n. 12, *Gazetteer*), p. 91.

41 A. Ben-David: *Talmudische Ökonomie: Die Wirtschaft des jüdischen Palästina zur Zeit der Mischna und des Talmud*, I, Hildesheim, 1974, Table 17, pp. 344-345.

42 H.H. Cohn: Weights and Measures, in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, 1972, Cols. 376-392, esp. 390.

43 Klein (above, n. 7), p. 68. For the identification of rabbinic Shikhin with Josephus' Asochis and with modern Tell Badawiya (now called Tell Hannaton on modern Hebrew maps at map ref. 174 243), see Avi-Yonah (above, n. 12, *Gazetteer*), p. 33.

Sepphoris. Furthermore, Shikhin should be downhill from Sepphoris, which is most economically interpreted as being at the foot of Sepphoris' own hill. In fact, the tradition about distribution of dried fruit at Ruma places Shikhin in the vicinity of Tell Badawiya at the western end of Beit Netophah Valley. If we also accept the linguistic connection between Asochis (Ἀσοχίς) and Shikhin (שִׁיחִין), and the identification of the Plain of Asochis with Beit Netophah Valley, then it is clear that Shikhin must be found in that small region near Sepphoris.

Although it is surely correct that Asochis and Shikhin are linguistically related, it does not follow that Asochis/Shikhin must be identified with Tell Badawiya. Klein noted that the name appears to mean 'pit' (שִׁיחַ) (√שׁח).⁴⁴ There are no traces of an ancient potter's pit at or near Tell Badawiya, but the old maps of British Palestine of our survey site reveal a large pit on the north-western side of the northern hill (see Fig. 2). Our informants at Kibbutz ha-Solelim told us that they filled the pit to simplify their agricultural operations in that field. We interpret this feature as the pit from which the potters mined the clay for the kilns. Our surface survey reveals that no ancient features are to be found in this pit.⁴⁵

The commanding, near presence of Tell Badawiya suggests some connection between the potters' town of Shikhin and the nearby tell. One might speculate that the tell was a strategic and fortified military post in various periods, and the town simply bore the Hebrew version of the name of a main topographical feature. On the other hand, perhaps Shikhin functioned as the support town for a contingent of soldiers camped on the tell, housing the soldiers' dependents and eventually turning to the pottery industry. Perhaps this situation would be roughly analogous to that of Greater Herodium as the supporting community for the fortress of Herodium.⁴⁶ Finally, the finding of pottery wasters and sherds at our site during a foot reconnaissance survey in 1988, and the discovery by neutron activation analysis that these wasters and sherds are identical with one of the main pottery groups found at Sepphoris, seem to clinch the matter. Detailed information about the survey, the pottery and the results of the neutron activation analysis mentioned here will be presented in the second part of this essay. The wasters indicate the presence of a pottery industry. The facts that the majority of the storage jars of Galilee come from this site and that 45% of the pottery repertory of Sepphoris, as ascertained by neutron activation analysis, was also made here suggest strongly that the survey site can be none other than Shikhin, the town cited so often in the rabbinic sources by R. Jose ben Halafta of Sepphoris.⁴⁷

44 Klein (above, n. 7), p. 69.

45 Klein offers the observation, 'Der Name שִׁיחִין oder שִׁיחִים ist ohne Zweifel von den in dem Orte sich befindlichen Gruben hergenommen' (above, n. 7), pp. 69-70. According to Tos. Nid. 8,6 cited above (n. 39), there were pits and caves in Shikhin, correlating with its name. See also Klein, *Various Essays* (above, n. 8), pp. 20-21.

46 E. Netzer: *Greater Herodium (Qedem 13)*, Jerusalem, 1981.

47 D. Adan-Bayewitz and I. Perlman: *The Local Trade of Sepphoris in the Roman Period*, *IEJ* 40 (1990), p. 160, Table 2.