

Series Editor's Preface

This volume is the third in a series of reports on archaeological investigations of the Lahav Research Project (LRP) at Tell Halif, located near Kibbutz Lahav in southern Israel. LRP research has focused widely on stratigraphic, environmental, and ethnographic problems related to the history of settlement at and around Tell Halif from prehistoric through modern times. The project was initiated in 1975 with sponsorship by the University of Nebraska at Omaha and since 1983 has received its primary support from the Cobb Institute of Archaeology at Mississippi State University. During all field seasons, efforts have also been assisted by consortia of other American academic institutions. Along with all participating field staff, these institutions are recognized in the Series Editor's Preface in *Lahav I* (pp x–xi). Support in Israel was received from the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, both in Jerusalem, and from the Joe Alon Center for Regional and Folklore Studies at Kibbutz Lahav. Throughout, the LRP has been affiliated with the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) as one of its approved projects.

LRP investigations at Tell Halif have continued through three phases (I–III) embracing twelve seasons of field excavation between 1976 and 1999. A fourth phase (IV) directed by Oded Borowski under Emory University sponsorship was initiated in 2007 and has since completed three additional field seasons. Throughout Phases I–III, financial support by participating consortium institutions was supplemented by generous gifts received as private contributions from staff members, subscribers, and worker participants. Patrons and major donors are recognized in the Editor's Preface to *Lahav I* (pp. xv–xvii), and the support of all contributors and participants is acknowledged on the project's Digmaster Web Site at www.cobb.msstate.edu/dig/. We are sincerely grateful to this very large group of individuals for their participation in and support of LRP work. At the same time, we also recognize that none of the project's work could have been accomplished without the help of the members of Kibbutz Lahav. With warm encouragement and much material assistance, Lahav's members provided a supportive and congenial base for the team's field research through all of the past three and a half decades.

This third report in the series focuses on the investigation of Iron II period tombs at Site 72 in the Lahav Forest on the hillside flanking Tell Halif to the south. It embraces work by LRP personnel during three separate periods of investigation. The first was in April 1972 when, as Archaeological Director at the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology in Jerusalem, I was called upon by Avram Biran, then director of the Israel Department of Antiquities, to mitigate three tombs (T1–3) exposed during efforts to widen the roadway along the hill's lower slope. The second set of investigations took place in 1977 during the course of the second LRP excavation season at the site. This work, in three additional tombs (T4–6), was supervised by Oded Borowski. Finally, during a sabbatical year in 1988, Borowski revisited six other tombs (T8 and T16–20) along the adjacent slopes. These were among an additional 18 tombs and caves that had been variously identified and/or opened in the interim, some of which were investigated by the late David Alon for the Israel Department of Antiquities (now Israel Antiquities Authority) in 1976. Borowski's restudy of these six are also included in this report.

The 1972 emergency excavation work was conducted on weekends between April 5th and 19th with the support of the members of the Gezer excavation team that was at the same time involved in a spring campaign at Tell Gezer. Participants joining me in this effort included Karen Seger and Linda Ginsburg (now Tufts) as Area supervisors; and Anne Arenstein (now Sarenson), Mitchell Allen, and Jeanne Jaggard as members of the excavation and recording crew. Photography was by Theodore A. Rosen. (See *Israel Exploration Journal* 22:2–3 [1972]: 161.)

The work conducted by Borowski during the 1977 LRP excavation season was assisted by John M. Wade as Area Supervisor with various students and volunteers serving as crew members. Photography was by the late Patricia O'Connor-Seger. Borowski's explorations in 1988 were primarily an individual effort, with occasional assistance by members of Kibbutz Lahav, especially Vered Philip. Photography was by Borowski (See *Atiqot* 25 [1994]: 45–62).

With a few exceptions, this set of Site 72 tombs had all been disturbed either by intrusions for bedouin burials, bulldozing activity for road work, natural collapse, and/or other investigation efforts. Thus, in most instances, it was not possible to apply all of the usual regimen of field methods designed for LRP work. However, while there was only minimally significant depositional stratigraphy internal to the several tombs, careful recording protocols were observed in all instances, especially with regard to architectural details and with regard to the material culture and artifactual data present. Nonetheless, some unevenness in the details reported for each of the several units was unavoidable. Fortunately, the structural characteristics and artifact repertoires in these tombs clearly demonstrate their Iron Age construction and mainly Iron II period use. Their study will thus provide a significant compliment to evidence of Iron II period occupation on the tell as articulated in our *Lahav II* volume.

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