MAN NEAR A ROMAN ARCH

Once I was sitting on the steps near the gate at David's Citadel and I put down my two heavy baskets beside me. A group of tourists stood there around their guide, and I became their point of reference. "You see that man over there with the baskets? A little to the right of his head there's an arch from the Roman period. A little to the right of his head." "But he's moving, he's moving!" I said to myself: Redemption will come only when they are told, "Do you see that arch over there from the Roman period? It doesn't matter, but near it, a little to the left and then down a bit, there's a man who has just bought fruit and vegetables for his family."

(*The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, selected and translated by Stephan Mitchell and Chana Bloch, University of California Press, 1996).

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MAN NEAR A ROMAN ARCH

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BETWEEN DAMASCUS AND MEGIDDO: ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION IN ANTIQUITY ACROSS THE NORTHEASTERN APPROACHES TO THE HOLY LAND

Israel Roll

George Adam Smith, in his monumental publication on *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, the first edition of which was published more than a century ago (1894), realized already then that an essential element of the country's northern region was in all times its communication network. His words were clear and explicit on the matter. Following a short survey of the region's monotheistic background, he elaborates:

> "The next great features of Galilee are her Roads. This garden of the Lord is crossed by many of the World's famous highways. We saw that Judaea was on the road to nowhere; Galilee is covered with roads to everywhere: from the harbours of the Phoenician coast to Samaria, Gilead, Hauran and Damascus; from Sharon to the valley of the Jordan; from the sea to the desert; from Egypt to Assyria. They were not confined to Esdraelon and the Jordan Valley. They ran over Lower Galilee by its parallel valleys, and even crossed the plateau of Upper Galilee on the shortest way from Tyre and Sidon to Damascus. A review of these highways will enhance our appreciation of Galilee's history. They can be traced by current lines of traffic, by the great khans or caravanserais still in use or in ruin, and by remains of Roman pavements" (Smith 1966: 277).

To these illuminating words, a few remarks of a more general nature are in order. The emergence and use throughout history of main communication lines in any given region were impelled by a series of factors, which can be gathered in two main groups:

a) Human factors, essentially of geo-political order, which include: the nature of the political entity (foreign or local) that ruled over the region under discussion, its military strength, social structure and economic system. Of even greater weight were the demographic distribution and the settlement pattern in the region itself and, above all, the location, size and lucrativeness of its main urban centers. It is always worth underlining, and I do so again and again, that usually main roads connected between main cities; hence the fundamental role played by the chief urban centers in the emergence and flourishing of a region's communication network (Roll 1983: 137–138; 1999: 109; forthcoming; for an overview, see: Braudel 1966: 253–270). These factors were subject to constant historical changes and that implied constant shifting of emphasis among the various potential traffic lines there.

b) Natural factors, notably of geo-morphological order, which include the physical landscape of the region, that is, the terrain's relief and types of soil and rock, the course of perennial and dry streams, the location of appropriate watering places, the climate and vegetation. According to the historical scale of time, these factors are of lasting character and they show no significant changes during the last few millennia. Consequently, they impel to steadiness and continuity of the course of roads and of their alignment in a given region (Witcher 1998).

Let's begin the scrutiny of our topic in light of the second group of factors and, more specifically, with a survey of the physical landscape of the region that stretches between Damascus and Megiddo.

I. The Physical Landscape

The geographical region which, in antiquity, included the northeastern approaches to the Holy Land is divided today between three modern countries, and covers northeastern Israel, southeastern Lebanon and southwestern Syria. The region falls into several geo-morphological units, which differ sharply in their physical landscape, as well as in practically all the other natural factors mentioned above (Abel I 1933: 59–94; Dalman 1935: 1–14; Baly 1957: 184–226; Aharoni 1979: 21–38; Esse 1991: 1–19; see also: Orni and Efrat 1971: 73–97; Karmon 1983: 126–155). These are:

The Eastern Upper Galilee – a rough mountainous country, covered with peaks and ranges which apparently extend in all directions, the southeastern Lebanon included. The area is sharply dissected by a series of deeply carved gorges. The most significant among them are: the river Litani, that flows first southwards and then turns to the west, towards the Mediterranean; the Wadi Dubbeh, which joins the Litani from the south; Nahal Dishon that descends towards the east and joins the Upper Jordan; Nahal Ammud, which flows to the south until reaching the Sea of Galilee. These streams are usually narrow, steep and twisted and, therefore, unfit for organized traffic. The natural lines of communication there forcibly run between the streams, that is, along the ridges and across plateaus. The problem is that in the area under discussion, there is only one east-west potential route fit to serve transversal traffic: the one which extends south of and along the river Litani, on top of the ridges of Taiybeh and el-Abbassieh, with the unavoidable crossing of the steep Wadi Dubbeh that divides between them. As we shall see, along that range a main road was indeed aligned – the one that connected Damascus with Dan and Tyre and was probably designated in later Biblical times as "the Way of the Sea" (Is. 8.23; see: Rainey 1981: 146–149). The other ridges of the Southern Lebanon, like the parallel crests of Bint Jbail and Tibnine that extend to southeast, and the Naphtali ridge that stretches to the north, are much shorter and their direction provides an answer only to the needs of local traffic. On the other hand, the east-west prolonged valley of Beth Hakerem, which marks the southern limit of the Upper Galilee, partially provides an easy route for transversal traffic (Inbar and Ziv 1983; Frankel *et al*. 2001: 1–8).

The Eastern Lower Galilee consists of a lower and gentler terrain. Although the region's main watercourses, Nahal Zalmon, Arbel and Tavor are along most of their course deeply entrenched in the rocky terrain, some of the valleys between them are broad and extend essentially from west to east, a fact which makes them suitable for the alignment of transversal communication lines. That applies to Biqʿat Arbel that extends from Tiberias to the northwest towards the valley of Bet Netufa, and to Biqʿat Yavneel, along which the passage over the river Jordan could be reached at the south of the Sea of Galilee, from the valley of Turʿan (Ben-Arieh 1967; Gal 1992: 1–11).

The Upper Jordan Valley and the Lakes – constitute a segment of the Syro-African Rift. It has the shape of a north-south huge trench that extends along the whole region, bordered on both sides by steep slopes which usually take the form of an escarpment (Inbar 1983). The northern part of the trench is crossed by several north-south perennial watercourses that converge gradually upon the Upper Jordan. The most significant among these tributaries is the Nahal Snir (Hazbani), which occasionally entrenches itself deeply in the alluvial ground. The Upper Jordan Valley divides into three basins, which are separated by two basaltic transversal bars. The northern basin includes the small valley of Yion, which is very fertile but also marshy in winter (Ilan 1976). It is separated from the Hula valley by the northern bar, which consists of low basaltic ondulations that spread from the modern town of Metulla to the east. The middle basin, formerly covered by the Hula Lake and its marshes, is bordered at the south by the second bar, known today as the "Jacob's Daughters Bridge". The place consists of a thick layer of basaltic rock, through which the Upper Jordan has entrenched itself in a deep gorge (Sharon *et al*. 2002). South of it extends the lower end of the Upper Jordan, and the Sea of Galilee and its shores. The swamps, the non-canalized streams and the winter marshes that covered the Upper Jordan Valley until recently made the longitudinal land-traffic inside the Valley an extremely difficult task; the lakes prevented such traf-

fic completely. Consequently, the region's natural lines of communication were limited to a few distinct lines. These included two north-south routes, which stretched along the two edges of the Valley, and several east-west routes that extended across the two basaltic bars, and at both ends of the Sea of Galilee (Roll 2002: 216–217).

Mount Hermon emerges as a fundamental barrier in the region. This huge mountainous block makes an insurmountable obstacle for organized traffic and has always been avoided by it, except for a few paths that climb on its steep slopes and were used by the locals for their own needs only. The main thoroughfares of the region always surrounded the mountain and never went across it (Dar 1993: 1–10).

The Golan and the Western Bashan consist of a widespread open basaltic plateau, which contains isolated volcanic mounds scattered in several rows that stretch from northwest to southeast. Most of the plateau is flat or slightly undulated and a variety of routes can be aligned along it without difficulties: the shallow streams which drain the area are easily crossable, and the volcanic mounds – bypassed. Towards the region's southern limits, the terrain changes dramatically, because of the river Yarmuk and its tributaries. The Yarmuk joins the river Jordan to the south of the Sea of Galilee, and its main northern tributaries are the Nahr er-Rukkad and Nahr al-ʿAllan and, further to the east – Wadi Harrir. During their flow southwards and westwards, these streams entrench themselves deeper and deeper into the rocky ground and their course emerge as a real hindrance to traffic. They could be crossed only at specific suitable fords, located in places that could be reached from both banks. Sudden winter precipitations made these streams practically uncrossable, unless they were bridged, as in Roman times (Schumacher 1886: 1–39; Dussaud 1927: 323–395; Urman 1985: 31–77).

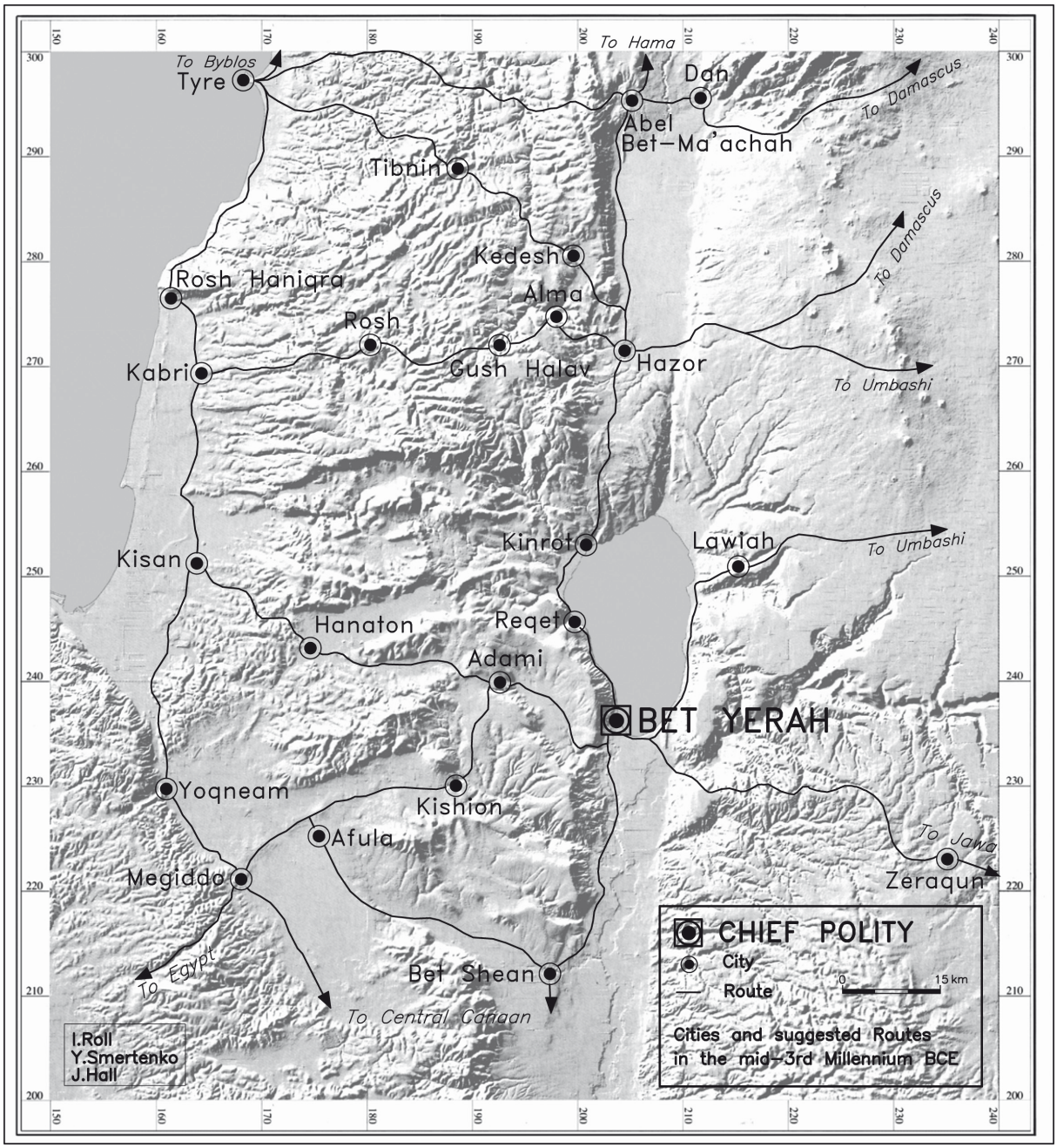
Following the above description, two general traits have to be emphasized.

First, the geo-morphological fragmentation of the region under discussion, and especially the much broken landscape of Galilee, have imposed in all historical times a similar road pattern, which could hardly be changed. That is well reflected in the comprehensive survey of the pre-modern road network of Galilee published more than a century ago by Schwoebel (1904). The road pattern described by this scholar includes practically all the main lines of traffic used in Antiquity, as we shall see below.

Second, the Holy Land could be approached from the north, that is, from the other countries of the Fertile Crescent, along three main arteries of traffic, which extended along the Mediterranean shore, along the Beqaʿ Valley and across the plateaus of the Golan and Bashan. As it has been judiciously remarked by Gichon (1993), each one of the first two roads had to overcome a specific narrow passage, which could easily be blocked by a small-numbered enemy or by a band of outlaws. These were the "Ladder of Tyre" (*Scala Tyriorum*) along the coastal road, and the passage that passed by Jabal Bir ed-Dahr to the south of the Beqaʿ Valley. On the other hand, the wide open plateaus of the Golan and Bashan could be crossed by a variety of traffic lines, which could be chosen according to the needs of its users. Consequently, these traffic lines emerged as the main arteries of communication that served the northeastern approaches to the Holy Land.

II. Biblical Times (Maps 1 – 3)

By this term, the period of time that extends from the early third millennium through the first millennium BCE is included, that is, from the Early Bronze II to the end of the Iron Age. The roads of this long period have one common characteristic: their identification on the ground and their dating are a problematic issue. In the Bronze and Iron Ages, the roads outside the urban and religious centers, even the main ones, were at best cleared, sometimes also leveled and graded, almost never really built or paved. No particular marks were erected along them (as the Roman did, with their milestones), nor were durable bridges built across rivers, to ensure their crossing in all seasons. That kind of road-making has left no datable traces and it is practically impossible nowadays to identify in the field a road from one of the specific periods under discussion (Dorsey 1991: 25–51). Consequently, the reconstruction of a communication network of

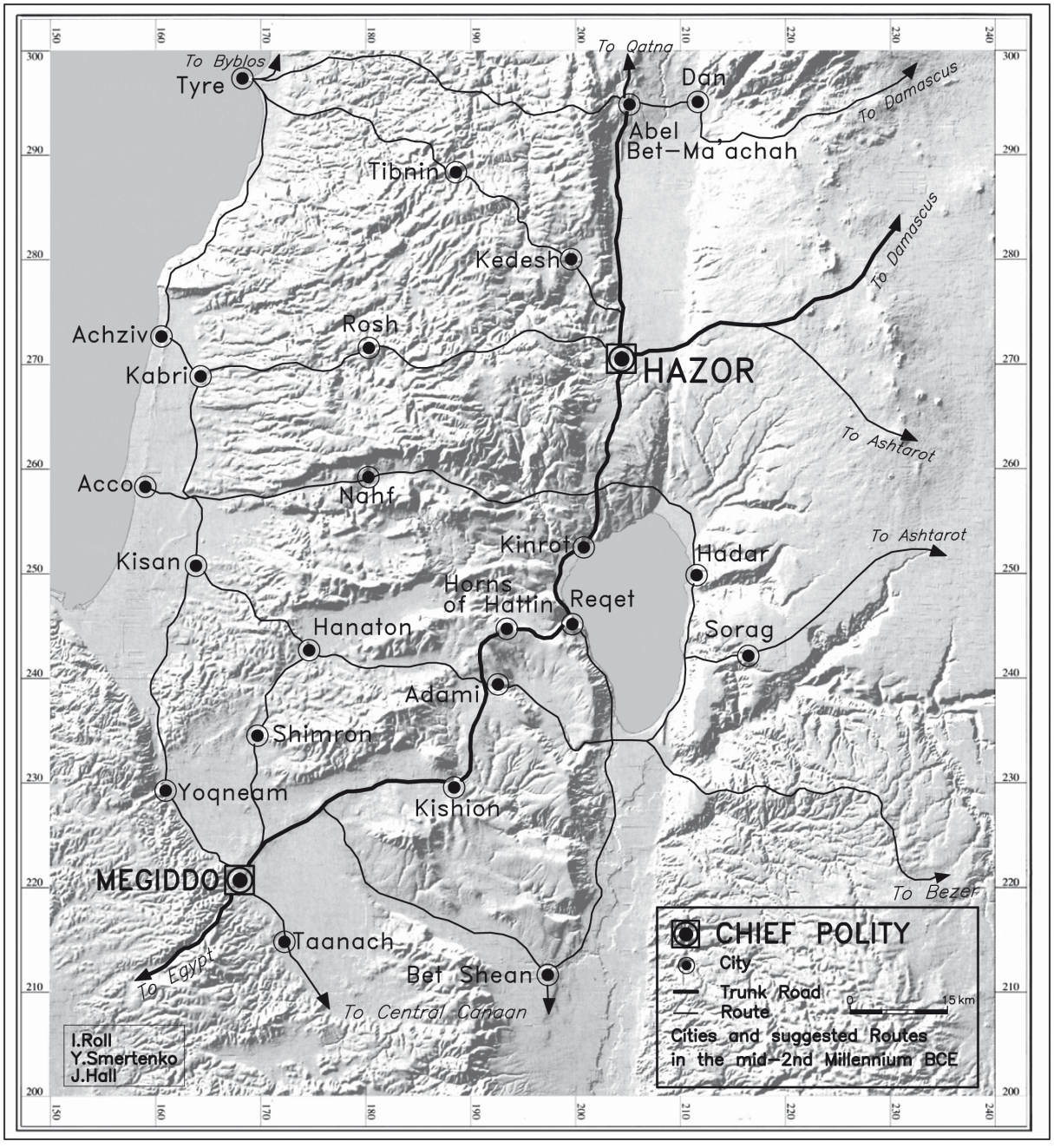


1. Roads in the northeastern approaches to the Holy Land in the mid-3rd millennium BCE.

these times is necessarily based on evidence and premises of a more general nature and not on the arteries themselves which, as mentioned, are virtually undatable. The data for discussion on the topic are the following:

a) *Written sources*, mainly the testimonia on travels and military campaigns related in Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Syro-Palestinian official documents on one hand, and in the Bible on the other; the problem with that kind of documentation is that it usually consists of toponymic lists of cities and regions which served as destinations for the roads, or as stages along them; they seldom provide topographic information about the alignment of the roads in their landscape.

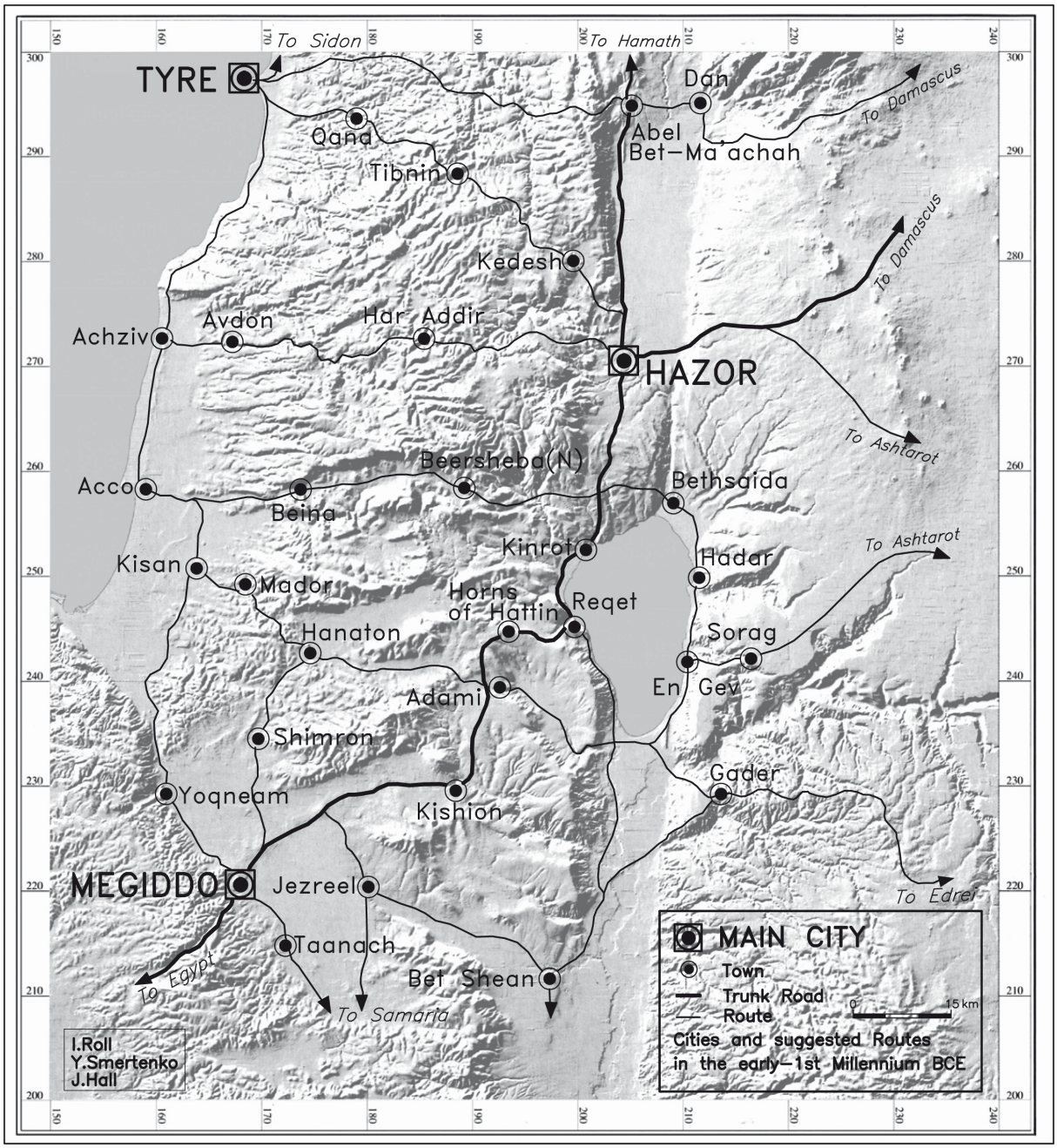
b) *Archaeological documentation* on the chief



2. Roads in the northeastern approaches to the Holy Land in the mid-2nd millennium BCE.

sites which served as destination for the roads, and on the smaller sites distributed along them; excavations and surveys carried out in these sites can provide sound chronological evidence for the use, or un-use, in a given period, of the arteries that connected between them; tangible remains of dated roads of later periods, mainly of Roman times, are also of great importance because they usually followed the alignment of earlier ones.

c) *The logical assumption*, based on premises of pragmatic nature, that ancient thoroughfares followed the most suitable routes available in the terrain between two destinations, which necessitated the least effort for men and yoked animals



3. Roads in the northeastern approaches to the Holy Land in the early 1st millennium BCE.

to reach them; accordingly, we may assume that in Biblical times roads usually evolved along ridges – in mountainous regions; along river valleys – in low hills areas; along the edges – of marshy plains; and as straight as possible – in flat lands (Beitzel 1992; Roll, forthcoming).

As the central motto of this paper is that main roads connected between main cities, its chronological starting point should be the Early Bronze II, with the beginning of the large scale urbanization process in Canaan. According to the overview of Early Bronze urban settlements published recently by Getzov, Paz and Gophna (2001) in the north of the country, the more important among them were located in the Rift, along the western edge of the Upper Jordan Valley and the lakes. These were,

from north to south, Abel Bet-Maʿachah, Hazor, Tel Kinrot; Tel Reqet, Bet Yerah, and Bet Shean. The chief urban center among them was clearly Bet Yerah, which was strongly fortified and covered an area of ca. 250 dunams. The massive Circles Building uncovered there, which seems to have served as a granary that could be approached by a layout of planned and paved streets, could have served not only as a local, but also as a regional center for the storage and distribution of food (Mazar 2001; Paz 2006). That points towards Bet Yerah as the chief center of power of Early Bronze northern Canaan. As such, it was certainly connected with the other cities of the Rift by means of a main north-south route that extended along its western edge, from Abel Bet-Maʿachah to Bet Shean and beyond, in both directions. Bet Yerah was also connected with the Mediterranean Sea by the famous transversal road known in Ottoman times as "Darb el-Hawarneh", that is, "the route of the Hauran", which extended along the valleys of Biqʿat Yavneel, Turʿan and Netufa to Tel Hanaton and then, along Nahal Evlayim to Tel Kisan (Saarisalo 1927: 22–24, 29–54; 1962: 6–10; Oded 1971; Esse 1991: 17–18). On the other hand, the fortified EB urban sites distributed along the well watered but much twisted Nahal Zipori, and Tel Gath Hepher (Gal 1992: 54–56), were probably interconnected by a parallel east-west route, but this one seem to have been of local importance, because of the difficult nature of the terrain. East of Bet Yerah, the "Darb el Hawarneh" seems to have surrounded the Sea of Galilee by the south; and then ascended the Golan Heights across the well fortified EB complex of Lawiah, towards the Bashan and the Hauran (Kochavi 1993). Abel Bet-Maʿachah, defined by some as the "northern gateway to ancient Israel" (Dever 1986), served as a crossroads for another important transversal ridge route, that extended from Tyre to the east (see above) and reached Damascus via the large site of Tel Dan. A third transversal route seems to have crossed the heart of the rough mountainous terrain of the Upper Galilee, from Hazor to Kabri. It probably ascended towards the upper table-lands along the spur of Maruth, and extended to the west via the EB fortified sites of Alma, Gush Halav, and Tel Rosh (Frankel et al. 2001: 100–101; see: Esse 1991: 14–19).

In the second millennium BCE, Hazor became the largest city and the most important center of power in the southern Levant – defined in the Bible (*Jos* 11.11) as "the head of all those kingdoms" of northern Canaan (Maeir 2000; Ben Tor 2004). Its international trade connections reached not only Qatna and Aleppo in Syria, but also Mari in Upper Mesopotamia (Koppen 2007). Towards the south, its connections reached many of the other city-states of Canaan, and Egypt. The outcome was a busy and lucrative international traffic, carried out along a route which, from the Middle Bronze Age II and on, evolved into the chief overland thoroughfare of the Southern Levant (Aharoni 1979: 45–54; Beitzel 1991). This artery was labeled for a long time and by many scholars as "Via Maris", that is, "the Way of the Sea", without a real basis as demonstrated by Meshel (1973). As mentioned above, this name should rather be applied to the northern transversal road, which extended from Damascus to Tyre. I prefer to adopt the term Trunk Road for the overland artery under discussion, judiciously suggested by Baly (1957: 113).

The Trunk Road departed from Damascus towards the southwest, along the relatively gentle terrain of el-Awajj, it crossed the Sʿasʿa corridor that divides between the southeastern slopes of Mount Hermon and the basaltic rough ground of Waʿarat ez-Zaqieh, and passed near by Quneitra towards the Rift (Schumacher 1888: 61–65 and the attached map). A series of Bronze and Iron Ages sites uncovered during a more recent survey carried out by Hartal (1989: 139–140) along the southern bank of Nahal Gilbon (an eastern tributary of the central Upper Jordan) provide archaeological data for the actual alignment of the route during its descent towards the Rift. The Trunk Road crossed the Upper Jordan at the Jacob's Daughters Bridge, and entered the city of Hazor. That city was indeed a main crossroads of northern Canaan, upon which converged several other important roads that came from the Beqʿa valley and Abel Bet-Maʿachah in the north, from Tyre via Tibnin and Tel Kedesh in the northwest, and from Kabri via Tel Rosh in the west (see above). From Hazor, the Trunk Road continued to the south, to Tel Reqet, and then ascended westwards, along the relatively gentle spur that mounts at the south of Biqʿat Arbel, to the Horns of Hattin.

At this commanding place, from which there is a clear view over the whole of Eastern Lower Galilee and the Sea of Galilee, a fortress was erected in the Late Bronze Age, with the probable aim to control and secure the international traffic (Gal 1992: 44–47). From there, the thoroughfare continued southwards, across the central plateau of the Eastern Lower Galilee, turned to southwest and, after crossing the corridor between Mount Tabor and Givʿat Hamoreh, entered the Jezreel Valley. The crossing of the notoriously marshy grounds of that valley, towards Megiddo, was carried out along two consecutive low ridges that extend from northeast to southwest, over which spread today the settlements of Mizrʿa and Hayogev. The crossing of the Nahal Kishon, that flows westwards between the two ridges, was carried out at the natural ford known in the 19th century as "el-Jisr", most probably because in Roman times it was bridged (Hecker 1961: 180; for a detailed map of the two low ridges, see: Baly 1957: fig. 32). Megiddo was definitely another main junction of northern Canaan (Halpern 2000; see also: Cline 2000). The strategic importance of Megiddo for the Egyptians was explicitly emphasized in the Annals carved on the walls of the temple of Thut-mose III at Karnak, which commemorate the king's victory over the Canaanite alliance near the city. The statement in the Annals concerning the conquest of the city, that followed, speaks for itself: "the capturing of Megiddo is the capturing of a thousand towns" (*ANET* 237). The Trunk Road continued from Megiddo to southwest, and after crossing the country's central mountain range along the pass of Nahal Yiron, it attained the main Canaanite cities of the coastal plain and, ultimately, Egypt. Two other routes extended from Megiddo to the north: to Acco and the coast of Phoenicia, and to the towns of Shimron and Hanaton. The artery that extended from Megiddo to Bet Shean, and from there to the north and to the east, could also have served as alternative branches for the Trunk Road (Ilan 1981). On the other side of the Jordan, the northern segment of the "King's Road", which extended from Damascus to Ashtaroth and Heshbon and was labeled in the Bible as "the way of Bashan" (Num 21. 33; Deut 3.1; see: Aharoni 1979: 54), could also have served as an alternative route for the international traffic. Several transversal arteries departed from it to the west, including the "Darb el-Hawarneh", which passed by Sorag, surrounded the Sea of Galilee by the south and extended westwards along its traditional route described above, to Acco (Kochavi 1998).

In the Late Bronze Age Canaan became the passage ground for a long series of military campaigns, carried out by the more active rulers of the New Kingdom of Egypt towards the southern Levant (Hasel 1998: 91–193; Rainey and Notley 2006: 61–103). The main line of advance, communication and supply of the Egyptian army was provided by the Trunk Road, which also became the chief connecting artery of Egypt with the other powers of the Fertile Crescent. Among the transversal routes of northern Canaan, two arteries continued to serve the international traffic. These were:

a) The Darb el-Hawarneh (see above), used mainly by tradesmen and caravans and much less by the armies of the great Near Eastern powers (Frankel 1983: 217–218; Gal 1992; 8–9);

b) The route that connected Hazor with Acco, which probably extended along the fault that divides between the Upper and Lower Galilee; this route departed westwards from the Trunk Road near the modern junction of Amiʿad, crossed the Nahal ʿAmud at the relatively gentle ford of ash- Shuna, and extended further on along the valley of Bet Hakerem, where a series of LB sites were identified by Saarisalo (1962: 13–14).

With the advent of the Iron Age the whole of Canaan underwent fundamental changes. Its Central Mountain region, the Galilee included, emerged as the heart of the Land that became Israel, a development which had a great impact on the country's communication network. In the 10th century BCE, Jerusalem became the royal capital of the United Kingdom, that is, its religious center and political core of power. There was now a royal central government there, which had to maintain political and military control all over the land, and to promote its economic and commercial activity. It also had the concern, and the means, to create and maintain connecting arteries of traffic between the main cities, in the frame of a centralized road network focused upon Jerusalem (Dorsey 1991: 117–142; Fischer, Isaac and Roll: 1996: 324–326; Roll, forthcoming). That road activity seem to have been carried out also

in the northern regions of the United Kingdom, as we may learn from the Solomonic building projects undertaken in two of its main urban centers: Hazor and Megiddo (1 Kgs 9. 15; 2 Chr 8. 5). One can hardly doubt that the Trunk Road, which connected between the two cities, was also taken care of on that occasion. A tangible case for that is the partly excavated fortification complex, which enclosed the 60 dunams lower town at the Horns of Hattin. The origins of the fortifications of that commanding site go back to the 10th century BCE (Gal 1992: 44–47), which seem to reflect royal care for other strongholds in the north of the kingdom, as well as for the thoroughfares that connected between them. That seems to be also the case with three transversal routes that intersected the Trunk Road:

a) The "Darb el-Hawarneh" (see above), which departed from Acco, crossed the Lower Galilee via the tells Mador, Hanaton and Adami, surrounded the Sea of Galilee by the south and ended at Ashtaroth in the Bashan (Kochavi 1998);

b) The route that crossed the Upper Galilee from Hazor to Achziv, the central segment of which was guarded by the impressive Iron Age fortress of Har Addir (Frankel et al. 2001: 104–105).

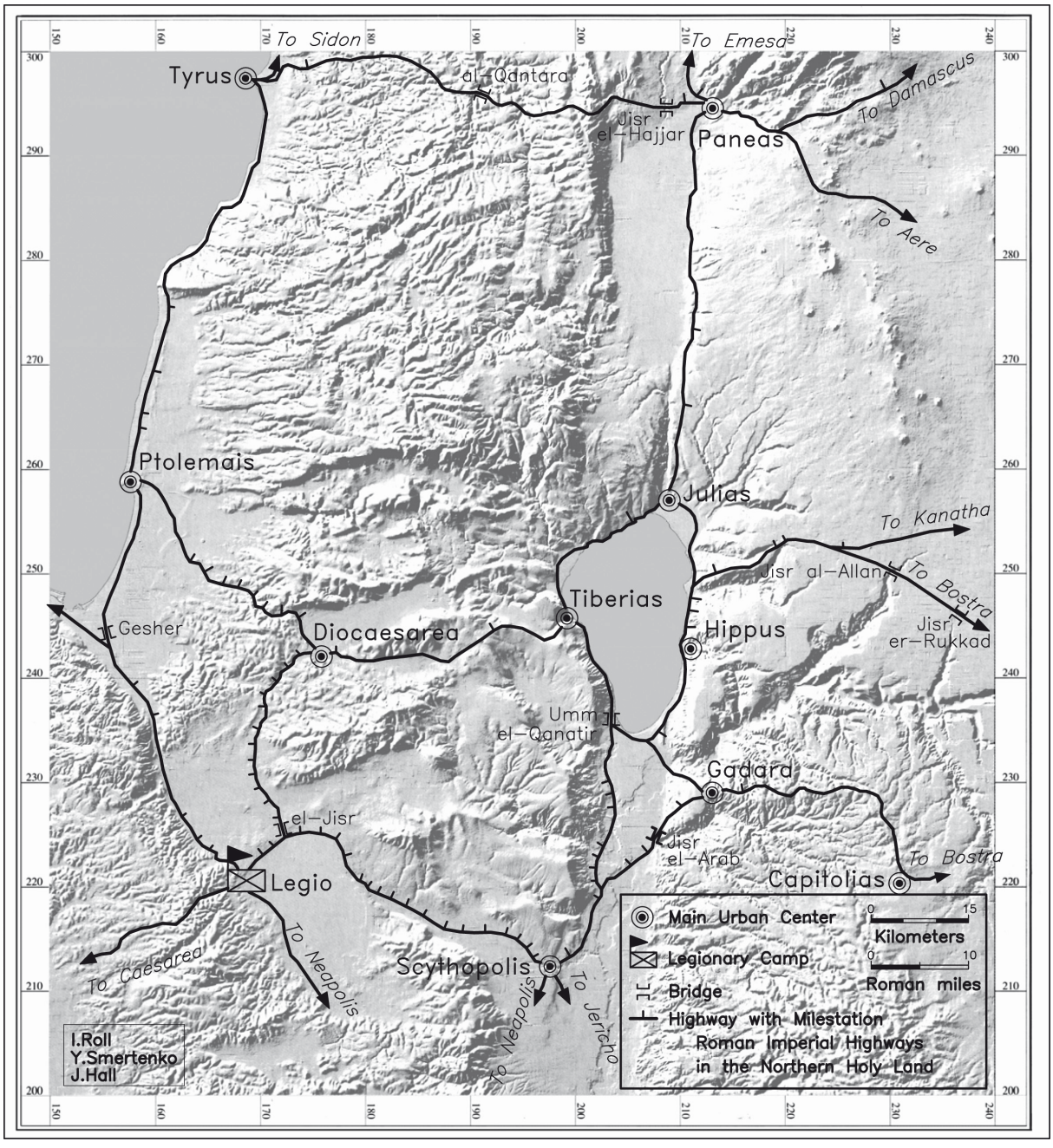
c) The Tyre-Damascus road that crossed the mountain region of the southern Lebanon (see above), descended towards Abel Bet-Maʿachah and Dan, and surrounded Mount Hermon by the south (Hartal 1989: 140). Two more arteries seem to have been used in that period: one that extended from Acco to Bethsaida via Beina and Beersheba (N), and another that stretched from Tyre to Hazor via Qana, Tibnin and Kedesh.

Following the division of the United Kingdom and the creation of the Kingdom of Israel, its northern road network continued to function, apparently with no major changes. Apart from the international traffic, the main roads of the region, and especially the Trunk Road and its various branches, served a long series of military confrontations between the armies of the Kingdoms of Israel and of Aram-Damascus (Lipinski 2000: 367–407).

With the conquest of Samaria by the Assyrians and, later on, of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, the Land of Israel turned into a minor province, and in the same time, into a major land-bridge for a number of successive world Empires (Rainey and Notley 2006: 225–296). That process culminated under the Persian Empire, when the international traffic became fully centered upon the Trunk Road, while all the other roads were of local importance only. For the northeastern approaches to the Holy Land, the result was that this traffic flowed entirely *across* the region, to destinations located far away in the southwest (Egypt) and northeast (Mesopotamia and Iran), and not to destinations in the region itself. The traditional urban centers of Biblical times, mentioned above, suffered destruction or abandonment, and vanished. On the more important sites among them, imperial strongholds were erected – at Hazor by the Assyrians and at Megiddo by the Persians – to enforce state control over the region, and to secure traffic along the Trunk Road (Graf 1993; Roll and Tal 2008).

III. Roman Period (Map 4)

It is generally agreed that the Romans were the greatest road-builders of all times, until the modern era. That came because they considered a well organized road network fit to serve an efficient traffic system as basic elements for proper imperial rule and administration. Consequently, they invested much effort in the form of conceit, planning, labor and technological skill in road building (Chevallier 1997; Grewe 2004). Usually, the conceiving of an imperial artery of traffic implied military and administrative considerations of the highest level, evaluated by the emperor and his advisers, by a chief military commander and his staff, or by a high ranking provincial governor (Pekary 1968: 37–89; Laurence 1999: 39–57). To align and trace such a road, some of the best available surveying methods and tools were used by professional surveyors (Davies 1998; Lewis 2001: 217–245). To build it, a large amount of labor force was employed: to deepen the roadway and fill it back with a solid roadbed; to pave the surface with flat slabs well fitted one to another to provide a smooth surface for traffic; to lay curbstones along the pavement's sides to protect it from disintegration. When necessary, massive embankments were erected, high retaining walls were built and difficult rocky terrain was leveled. Bridges and viaducts were regularly erected across watercourses and, when there was no alternative,



4. Roads in the northeastern approaches to the Holy Land in Roman times.

tunnels were cut into vertical and otherwise impassable cliffs (Quilici and Quilici Gigli 1992; 1994; O'Connor 1993; Grewe 1998). Inscribed milestones were added at fixed intervals of one Roman mile (close to 1500 meters) indicating the name and titles of the emperor under whose rule the road was constructed or repaired. They also indicated the distance to and the name of the official destination of the road (*caput viae*) which, normally, was a main city or a chief military camp (Kolb 2004). In general such a road, which should rather be termed a highway, received the legal status of a *via publica*. That means an official line of communication, which came to respond to the traffic needs of the armed

forces and the administrative personnel. Most of all, it came to serve the *cursus publicus* that provided conveyance not only for the imperial mail but also for the government officials traveling on duty (Kolb 2000: 49–226). Other motives for road building, such as promoting economic or civil traffic, were apparently considered secondary, if at all.

The typical and systematic road building methods described above have left strong imprints on the terrain. For the modern research of Roman highways, their lasting character and distinctive properties usually provide firm evidence for their identification. Segments of them are indeed more often and much better preserved than segments of arteries from previous ages which, as we have seen, cannot be dated accurately. Moreover, the inscribed milestones uncovered along the Roman roads do provide, in many instances, the exact date of their initial construction and of their subsequent repairs, the name of their chief destination (*caput viae*) and the distance from it. The milestones also provide a formal proof that the artery along which they were erected was officially conceived and built as an imperial highway, that is, a *via publica* (Roll 1999).

During the three centuries that preceded the Roman rule over the Holy Land, new urban centers emerged in its northeastern region, which were built according to Greek urban patterns and organized in line with the principles of a Hellenistic *polis*. The more important among them, founded in earlier Hellenistic times**,** were: *Hippos* (Sussita) in the southern Golan**,** *Raphana* (er-Raphe) in the Bashan, *Kanatha* (Qanawath) in the Hauran, *Gadara* (Umm Qeis), *Capitolias* (er-Ras) and *Pella* (Kh. Fahil) in the northern Gilead, and *Scythopolis* (Bet Shean) to the west of the river Jordan. Later on, under the Herods, *Gaba* (Tel Shosh) was founded at the western limits of the Jezreel Valley, *Tiberias* was built on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee**,** and two additional cities were erected at both ends of the Upper Jordan Valley: *Caesarea Philippi*, also known as *Paneas* (Banias) – at its northern limits, and *Julias* (Bethsaida) – at its southern end. In the mountain region west of the river Jordan, the only town that became an urban center was *Sepphoris,* located in the center of the Lower Galilee.[1] Most of these places were newly founded urban centers and their interconnection necessitated new lines of communication. A series of connecting roads between the new cities, and between them and those of the surrounding regions, have certainly begun to emerge already before the arrival of the Romans. However, any verifiable knowledge about their nature and their concrete alignment on the ground is almost nonexistent, not from written sources, nor as identifiable archaeological data. The ascending road from *Caesarea (Philippi)* to Trachonitis (and probably to Damascus), mentioned by Josephus (*War* 3, 10, 7 [510]), apparently in relation to Herodian times, is clearly an exception. What we do know is that many of these roads were gradually converted by the Romans into built and engineered imperial highways, about which the existing evidence is usually substantial, as we shall see below.

The earliest detailed documentation related to Roman road building in Galilee is provided by Josephus, in his description of the measures taken by the Romans to suppress the Great Revolt. Emperor Nero charged Vespasian to suppress the uprising and for that, a military force of sixty thousand men was concentrated at *Ptolemais* (Acco) (*War* 3, 4, 2 [65–69]; for a most recent discussion, see: Shatzman 2008). This large army, which usually marched six soldiers abreast and included heavy war machines and long supply convoys, received the order to advance inland, towards the rebels' stronghold of *Jotapata* (Yodefat), located in the hilly region of Lower Galilee to the north of *Sepphoris* (*War* 3, 6, 2 [115–126]). Josephus specifies that, to ensure a steady and quick advance of his forces, Vespasian "sent a body infantry and cavalry in advance to level the road leading to it (that is, to *Jotapata*), a stony mountain track, difficult for infantry and quite impracticable for mounted troops. In four days their task was completed and a broad highway (*plateia leophoros*) opened for the army" (*War* 3, 7, 3 [141–142]). Elsewhere we read that the Roman army even included special units of road-builders (*hodopoioi*) whose task was "to straighten

1 For a historical summary on these cities, see: Schürer 1979: 130–183; for an extensive Gazetteer on them, see: Tsafrir, Di Segni and Green 1994: *passim*; for the recent archaeological activities there, see the appropriate entries in the newly published *NEAEHL* vol. 5, 2008.

sinuosities on the route, to level the rough places and to cut down obstructing woods, in order to spare the army the fatigues of a toilsome march" (*War* 3, 6, 2 [118]). It is worth noting that *Jotapata* was abandoned after the Roman conquest, and apparently so was the military road (*via militaris*; see: Sasel 1977) built by the Roman soldiers towards it. In any case, the remains of this road have not been identified on the ground, so far.

The earliest inscribed milestone found in the *provincia Judaea* is also related to its northern region, and to the Great Revolt. It was found in the northern sector of the Jezreel Valley, near Afula, on the *Scythopolis – Caesarea* highway which, at this early stage, seem to have extended westward via *Gaba* and Shuni. The stone dates to 69 CE and it commemorates road laying work along this artery by soldiers of the *legio X Fretensis* under the care of its commander, *Marcus Ulpius Traianus* (emperor Trajan's father) (Isaac and Roll 1976; 1982: 66).

East of the river Jordan, and following the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom on the order of emperor Trajan and the formation of the *provincia Arabia* in its place (in 106 CE), a first class strategic highway was erected across the entire length of the newly established province, from *Bostra* (Busra, in southern Syria) to *Aila* (Aqaba). A series of inscribed milestones found along the highway, which date to the years 111 and 114 CE, indicate that it was built and paved (*aperuit et stravit*) under the care of Trajan's legate *Claudius Severus*, that it was officially denominated *Via Nova*, and that it was formally intended to lead from the (southern) limits of Syria to the Red Sea (*a finibus Syriae usque ad Mare Rubrum*) (Thomsen 1917: 34–57; Graf 1995; Bauzou 1998). The purpose of this artery was first and foremost to serve as the backbone of the evolving southeastern frontier zone of the Roman Empire. As a result, the transversal highways that extended from the *Via Nova* to the west, towards the province of *Judaea* and to its Mediterranean ports, necessarily developed into a rear road network of that frontier zone (Roll 2002). As *Bostra* became the permanent base of the chief military unit of the *provincia Arabia* – that is of the *legio III Cyrenaica* – the transversal roads which crossed the northern region of that province became of great importance to the imperial authorities (Bauzou 1985).

During the early years of Hadrian's reign, a substantial increase of the Roman military force occurred in the north of the *Provincia Judaea*. In order to encounter disturbances that seem to have erupted in some Jewish communities of Lower Galilee, a second legion was allocated to the province, in addition to the *legio X Fretensis*, which already camped in Jerusalem since the suppression of the Great Revolt. Initially, the newly allocated unit was the *legio II Traiana*, which was soon replaced permanently by the *legio VI Ferrata* (Isaac and Roll 1979a; see also: Isaac 1998: 198–210). Its camp was erected at the northern end of the traditionally strategic pass of Nahal Yiron, apparently on the level terrain of el-Manach located between the Biblical site of Megiddo and the Second Temple village of *Caparcotna* (Kfar Otnay). In time, the camp and its surrounding quarters became to be known as *Legio*, a toponym which has been preserved in the nearby Arab village of el-Lejjun (Tepper 2002; 2007). In order to meet the traffic requirements of the newly established legion and to ensure the mobility of its troops in all weather and across every kind of terrain, several roads that extended from its camp, mainly toward and athwart the Lower Galilee, were engineered, built and organized as imperial highways. Once again then, the hub of Megiddo turned into a chief crossroads and main strategic point of the northern Holy Land.

In this regard, the most pressing need for the Roman authorities was certainly to ensure the all season crossing of the marshy grounds of the Jezreel Valley. To cope with that, a well engineered longitudinal highway was built, which extended from the legionary camp to Kh. Lidd in the northeast, along the eastern slope of the Hayogev Ridge; then it crossed the Nahal Kishon at the ford known in the 19th century as "el-Jisr" (in Arabic: "the bridge") – a name which undoubtedly indicates that in Roman times it was spanned by a bridge, the remains of which have not survived; from there, the highway extended across the valley straight to the north, surrounded the hills of Shimron by the west and entered the valley of Nahal Zipori; from the valley the road ascended to the dominant grounds of the city of *Sepphoris,* the name of which was changed by the imperial authorities to *Diocaesarea*. The only substantial segment of this road has been

preserved in the valley of Nahal Zipori, where a section has been excavated across it, east of kibbutz Hasolelim. The dig has shown that the highway was erected on an embankment up to one meter high, made of four different foundation layers and crowned with a paved surface framed between two lines of large curbstones (unpublished). In spite of the fact that the road was built on an embankment, its remains have not been preserved in the Jezreel Valley. However, the 13 milestations out of the road's original 15 milestations, which were uncovered in the course of the systematic survey of Hecker (1961), permit the accurate reconstruction of its alignment, as summarized above. Among the inscribed milestones found along the highway, the one uncovered at the fifth milestation from *Legio* has a great historical importance. A new reading of its inscription shows that it was carved in 120 CE and that it commemorated the initial building (*fecit*) of the highway in that year. It also mentions the distance from its two official *capita viae*, in two different languages: 11 miles from *Diocaesarea* – in Greek, and the distance only from the second destination, of 5 miles – in Latin. The latter was certainly the legionary camp of *Legio*, the centrality of which was clear to all, hence, it was not necessary to specify its name (Isaac and Roll 1979b; see also: Isaac 1998: 182–197).

A second milestone from 120 CE has been found at the ninth mile from *Ptolemais* (Acco), on the transversal highway that led from it to *Diocaesarea* (Sepphoris). Although in its inscription the term *fecit* is not mentioned, it is the earliest milestone found along this road, which permit us to assume that it was also initially built in that year (Isaac and Roll 1979a; see also Isaac 1998: 198–210). This highway overcame the plain of Acco following a southeastern alignment, crossed the western hills of Lower Galilee along the valley of Nahal Evlayim, and seems to have ascended to *Diocaesarea* (Sepphoris) from the northwest (Roll 1986). A section excavated across a preserved segment of the highway in Nahal Evlayim has shown that here too, the pavement was laid upon a high roadbed made of several layers – a roadmaking method which apparently was typical to northern *Judaea* in the early years of Hadrian's reign (Roll 1994; see also: Aviam 2002).

A third highway extended from *Diocaesarea* (Sepphoris) to *Tiberias*, which ran all along the transversal valley of Turʿan, passed the Horns of Hattin by the south, and descended to its destination most probably by following the alignment of the modern asphalt road. Sections cut across the road north of the modern Golani Junction have shown an initial construction phase of the artery, and two subsequent repairs (Roll 1994; see also: Stepansky 2002). No inscribed milestones of Hadrian have been uncovered along this road. However, a partially preserved milestone found near the Golani Junction, which includes a well carved molding between base and pillar that was typical to Hadrianic stones, seems to provide a chronological clue for the road's construction (Roll 2002: fig. 12).

The arteries that connected *Ptolemais* (Acco) with *Diocaesarea* (Sepphoris) and then with *Tiberias*, were actually segments of a much longer transversal highway that extended further to the east, until the legionary camp at *Bostra* (Busra). Hence, it was conceived and built by the Roman authorities as a main strategic cross-country thoroughfare, which served the imperial traffic of the northern regions of the two provinces, of *Judaea* and *Arabia*. It also served as a chief connecting artery between the cities of the *Decapolis* and the Mediterranean Sea. As such, it essentially replaced the transversal route of Biblical times, known later on as "Darb el-Hawarneh", the importance of which has been stressed above, again and again. The Roman highway, however, followed a different alignment, with different urban destinations, the more important of which – distributed between *Tiberias* and *Bostra* – are depicted on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*. On the ground, the road continued from *Tiberias* to the south, and crossed the northern tip of the Lower Jordan over a bridge, of which remains of ten arches could still be seen until the mid-19th century (known as Umm el Qanatir); then, the road climbed along an engineered ascent to *Gadara* (Umm Qeis) and continued as a ridge-way, between the basins of the river Yarmuk and the Wadi el-Arab, to *Capitolias* (er-Ras); from there, after crossing the steep Wadi Shellalah, the road continued to *Adraa* (Deraʿa), and to *Bostra* (Roll 2002: 216–217).

Two more transversal highways are depicted in

the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, which extended across the northern and the southern limits of the region under discussion. The northern artery connected between *Tyrus* (Tyre), *Paneas* (Banias) and Damascus, and the rough nature of the terrain it was forced to cross imposed an alignment which was practically identical to the Biblical route, that is, along the ridges of Taiybeh and el-Abassieh. The deep gorge of Wadi Dubbeh, which divides between the two ridges, was most probably crossed over a bridge, as indicated by the present name of the village located near the crossing-point: al-Qantara. The descent of the highway from the heights of Misgav-ʿAm to the Rift Valley took the shape of a series of serpentines aligned along the top of continuous descending spurs. The preserved segments of this ascent show a technology typical to Roman building: alignment on the basis of short straight segments, joining each other in an obtuse angle; road-bounding c. 7 meters apart with a single or double rows of large curbstones; the terracing of steep terrain by means of supporting walls on one side and rock cuttings on the other. In the Rift Valley, no remains of the road have been preserved, except one arch of an originally three-arched bridge over the river Jordan's main tributary – the Hazbani (Roll 2002: 216). From *Paneas*, the highway ascended to the Golan Heights along the southern hillside of the river Saʿar and then turned to northeast, towards Damascus. Well preserved segments of this road are still visible east of *Paneas*, which include pavement of small stones between two rows of large curbstones and a dividing spine in the middle (Hartal 1989: 140–141; Maʿoz 1993: 537). Of the two inscribed milestones found along the Tyre-Damascus artery, the one that was published by Cagnat (1936) and dates to the time of Aurelian, is of great importance because it mentions two of its formal *capita viae*, that is, *Tyrus* and *Paneas*. The other milestone, from the time of Marcus Aurelius, was found at Taranje in the northern Bashan (Urman 1985: 133, n.54), and it provides a clue for the continuation of the highway to Damascus.

The southern transversal highway extended from *Caesarea* to *Legio* and from it to *Scythopolis*. A substantial portion of a well built and engineered segment of the artery has been uncovered most recently during excavations carried out near Regavim (Paz and Paz 2006), which provides sound data about its nature, and about its alignment between *Caesarea* and *Legio*. The valleys of Jezreel and ʿEn Harod, which cross the northern Holy Land from west to east, certainly provide an ideal ground for a transverse thoroughfare and the Romans indeed erected along them a major highway, from the legionary camp of *Legio* to *Scythopolis* (Isaac and Roll 1982). The highway continued from *Scythopolis* to the east, crossed the river Jordan most probably over a bridge about which we have no documentation, to *Pella* (Kh. Fahil); from there, the highway extended further on to *Gerasa* (Jerash), and beyond it to the *Via Nova Traiana* (Mittmann 1970: 152–159).

Between the imperial coastal highway in the west, and the *Via Nova Traiana* in the east, there was one more longitudinal thoroughfare that crossed the northern Holy Land. Its north-south route stretched along the Upper Jordan Valley, from *Paneas* (Banias) to *Julias* (Bethsaida). Three milestations found east of Gadot, near Dardara, and east of Giv'at Azaz, as well as the remains of Roman pavement identified near Shamir and southwest of Paneas, point towards an alignement along the eastern edge of the Rift Valley (Urman 1985: 110-113; Shaked 2001: 28-29, note 16). In this it differs from the Biblical times, when the main urban centers and the longitudinal artery that connected between them were located along the opposite edge (see above). From *Julias* to the south, two highways surrounded the Sea of Galilee. One of them extended along its western shore, to *Tiberias*, and a Hadrianic milestone found nearby it at *Capernaum* seem to provide a chronological clue for its construction (Corbo and Loffreda 1976). The other highway is attested by several anepigraphic milestones found in five milestations distributed along the Sea of Galilee's eastern shore, to the north and to the south of *Hippos*. The main approach from this road to the Golan Heights was carried out along a well paved and engineered ascent, which climbed to the east along the relatively gentle spur of Lawiah. The eastward continuation of this transversal road is well preserved for a rather long distance, and includes long stretches of pavement and several anepigraphic milestones distributed in four milestations (Maʿoz 1993: 537). Near Mazraʿat Quneitra the highway forked into two branches. The left branch continued

straight to the east, most probably towards *Raphana* and *Kanatha*. The ultimate destination of the right branch was undoubtedly the legionary camp at *Bostra*, which was also the departing point of the south-bounded *Via Nova Traiana*, as mentioned above. To attain *Bostra*, three deeply entrenched seasonal watercourses had to be crossed, and that was done over bridges built of stone, the impressive remains of which were recorded long ago by Schumacher (1886: 76–79; 154; 1888: 165–167). The bridge that spanned Nahr al-ʿAllan included four arches, and the one that crossed Nahr er-Rukkad did so on eight arches. Further to east, the Jisr el-Ehreir, which spanned Wadi Ehreir, consisted of no less than fourteen arches, which made it the longest known bridge to the east of the river Jordan. Although the latest phase of the three bridges indicates a Medieval or even later date, their initial building clearly goes back to Roman times.

It should be emphasized that the route of the traditional Trunk Road, the fundamental importance of which in Biblical times has been stressed above, did not correspond with the imperial traffic needs in the Roman Orient. Therefore, it has not been converted into a *via publica* by the Roman authorities. On the other hand, it should be clear that, if need arouse to carry out a journey from Damascus to *Legio*, there was no difficulty whatsoever to accomplish it along several of the highways described above. The most appropriate among them were the arteries which extended between the two destinations and passed by *Paneas, Julias, Tiberias* and *Diocaesarea* (see, for example: Weingarten 2005: 246–247).

To sum up, the northeastern region of the Holy Land was covered in Roman times by a network of longitudinal and transversal engineered and paved highways, which ensured an uninterrupted all season traffic along them. On the imperial level, this network served as a central link between the two main provinces of the Roman Orient – *Syria* and Egypt, and between the two provinces that spread over the two sides of the river Jordan – *Judaea/ Palaestina* and *Arabia*. On the military level, it ensured the movement of troops and of their logistics to and from the southeastern frontier zone of the Roman Empire. On the economic level, it served the commercial traffic needs of the region's urban centers and, much more than that, of the trans-Arabian international commerce which ultimately converged upon the Mediterranean ports (Roll 2005).

IV. Medieval and Later Times

The Roman imperial road network in the Holy Land, its northeastern approaches included, continued to be used and maintained in the Early Christian and Byzantine times, that is, from the fourth through the seventh century CE. Apparently, the military and the officials, the church leaders, and most of all, the variety of pilgrims from all over the Christian world, made heavy use of its traffic system, as attested to by a long list of Early Christian *itineraria* on one hand, and inscribed milestones on the other (Roll 1995; Weingarten 2002).

Following the Islamic conquest of the Near East and the emergence of the Umayyad Caliphate, drastic changes occurred in that domain. Damascus became the capital of this vast Caliphate, as well as the hub of its communication system. On the other hand, in the northeastern region of the Holy Land and except for Tiberias and Banias, all the previously flourishing urban centers there gradually diminished in size and population and became insignificant villages or even completely deserted. The same happened to the region's road network. Except for the thoroughfares which led to and from Damascus, practically all the other arteries described above became local tracks, or were completely abandoned. Consequently, the region's communication system that emerged in Medieval times was entirely centered upon Damascus and, according to G. A. Smith (1966: 277–281), included the following arteries:

a) The longitudinal "Pilgrim's Route", better known as the Darb al-Hajj, which led from Damascus to the south by Muzeirib and Ramta to the Muslim holy cities of Medina and Mecca (Peters 1994: 79–86; 145–162);

b) The transversal road that connected Damascus with Banias and the Mediterranean port of Tyre; this road seem to have passed in Medieval times by Hunin and Tibnin, that is, along a more southerly alignment than the Roman highway (Shaked 2001);

c) The main state highway which connected Damascus with Jerusalem and with Egypt; this road

extended in early Islamic times to the southwest, across the level lands of the Bashan and the Golan, and descended towards the Rift Valley along the steep pass of the Fiq; in this area, three Arabic inscribed milestones have been uncovered, indicating that this difficult ascent had been leveled and dotted with milestones by orders of the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik (Sharon 1966; Elad 1999); from there, the road crossed the river Jordan over the Medieval bridge of Jisr el-Mujjamiyeh and continued along the Jordan valley's west bank to Jericho, Jerusalem and to Egypt.

After the Crusades, the Damascus-Cairo state road (Hartmann 1910) shifted to a more westerly alignment and settled almost all along on the traditional course of the Trunk Road of Biblical times. The artery extended from Damascus to the southwest, passed by Quneitra and crossed the Upper Jordan river on the Jisr Benat Yaqub (Jacob's Daughters Bridge). Then it crossed the Lower Eastern Galilee, where some of its segments are still visible (Tepper and Tepper 2004), and continued towards el-Lejjun, located near Megiddo, and further on to Egypt. A series of road stations (khans) served the state traffic along the artery (Cytryn-Silverman 2006). Two of the more important stations among them in Eastern Galilee were the khans of al-Tujjar and of Jubb Yusuf (Lee, Raso and Hillenbrand 1992). Thus, the millenary Trunk Road resumed its historical role and turned again into the chief international thoroughfare of the southern Fertile Crescent, while all the other roads of the country, the northeastern region included, served the local traffic only. This situation remained so for more than six centuries and began to change only towards the late Ottoman times, with the gradual renewal of road making fit to carry wheeled traffic (Smith 1966: 448–450).

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