

# Huqoq (Lower Galilee) and its synagogue mosaics: preliminary report on the excavations of 2011-13

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## A. PRELIMINARY FIELD REPORT (J. Magness, S. Kisilevitz, M. Grey and C. Spigel)

Horvat Huqoq (henceforth Huqoq; pronounced “hoo-COKE”) lies 3 km northwest of the Sea of Galilee. The site (map ref. 1952/2546) sits on a moderate hill surrounded by arable land, with alluvial plains on the west. A perennial fresh water spring (‘En Huqoq) is located at the foot of the N slope. Roads run 2 km to the south (the Wadi Zalmon route) and 3 km to the north (the Beth ha-Kerem to Ramat Korazim route).<sup>1</sup> The remains of the ancient settlement (c.25-30 dunams) are covered partly by the ruins of the 19th-20th c. village of Yakuk (c.10 dunams), which was inhabited until 1948.

### The site’s history according to literary sources

Literary sources indicate that Huqoq was an agricultural village with occupation in the Biblical, post-Biblical, Mediaeval, and Modern periods. The earliest reference is in Joshua 19:34, where “Huqqoq” (חוקקוֹק), is listed as a village apportioned to the tribe of Naphtali after the Israelite conquest of Canaan.<sup>2</sup> The passage identifies the village as marking the western boundary of Naphtali’s tribal lands along the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>3</sup> It also suggests that Huqoq was occupied in the late Iron Age (when material for the Deuteronomistic history was taking shape), if not earlier in the Late Bronze Age (when Joshua is said to have allotted the tribal lands).

There are no references to Huqoq in sources of the late Second Temple period,<sup>4</sup> but it appears to have been a Jewish agricultural village in the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman

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1 See U. Leibner, *Settlement and history in Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Galilee: an archaeological survey of the Eastern Galilee* (Tübingen 2009) 151.

2 The Septuagint gives the name as *Iakava* (LXX Josh 19:34), which is either an unusual transliteration of חוקקוֹק or refers to a different village altogether. For the identification of Biblical Huqqoq with the Arab village of Yakuk, see N. Lisovsky and N. Na’aman, “A new look on the boundary system of the Twelve Tribes,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 35 (2003) especially 293-97.

The list of Asher’s Levitical cities in 1 Chronicles 6 includes Huqoq (חוקקוֹק [MT, 6:60]; *Ακακ* [LXX 6:75]), but this may reflect an orthographic mistake made by the Chronicler since the same list in Joshua 21:31 has “Helkath (חלקת/Χελκατ) and with its pasture lands” instead of Huqoq. See H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (Grand Rapids, MI 1982) 76; S. Japeth, *I & II Chronicles: a commentary* (Louisville, KY 1993) 145; Lisovsky and Na’aman *ibid.* 294.

3 Joshua’s claim that Huqoq marked the W boundary of Naphtali is confusing, as Huqoq is located farther east than would be expected. However, Lisovsky and Na’aman (*ibid.* 293-97) believe there were gaps in the boundaries between ancient Israelite tribes that are not obvious from the Biblical text.

4 Some secondary scholarship claims, without supporting references, that the site was called *Hucuca* (a transliteration of its Hebrew name in Joshua 19:34) during the Early Roman period; see, e.g., W. Khalidi (ed.), *All that remains: the Palestinian villages occupied and depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC 1992) 546. E. Damati (“Kefar Ekho-Huqoq: the unidentified fortress of Josephus,” *Cathedra* 39 [1986] 37-43 [Hebrew]) suggested that Huqoq was Josephus’ ‘missing’ fortress of Capharecho (καφαρεχω) from the late 1st c. A.D. (Jos., *BJ* 2.573; cf. *Vit.* 37), but this identification has been rejected by most scholars; see Leibner (*supra* n.1) 153.