



VIEW EAST: THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN FROM THE YEHIAM FORTRESS, LOOKING TOWARD MT. EPHRAIM AND THE JUDEAN HILL COUNTRY. THE TERRAIN OF UPPER GALILEE MADE TRAVEL DIFFICULT THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

BELOW (VIEW WEST): THE YEHIAM FORTRESS OVERLOOKS THE ENTIRE COASTAL AREA TOWARD THE MODERN ISRAELI CITY OF NAHARIYA (TOP CENTER), 8 MILES (12.8 KILOMETERS) AWAY.





VIEW WEST: THE YEHIAM FORTRESS (UPPER RIGHT) LOOKS TOWARD THE COAST (TOP). THE FORTRESS IS IN THE SOUTHWEST QUADRANT OF UPPER GALILEE, SOUTH OF THE MONTFORT CASTLE (SEE "MONTFORT CASTLE" ON PAGE 69).

YEHIAM FORTRESS

(SEE BOTTOM MAP ON PAGE 46)

For the following discussion, review “Historical Sketch” in *Blessed Pilgrimage* vol 2. It’s helpful to know who occupied the Holy Land from the time of Abraham to the present. In addition, it’s useful to recognize that no unified empire, monarchy, or government has controlled the Holy Land since the days of Israel’s kings, David and Solomon.

The photos on these pages illustrate why Yehiam was strategically vital to invading armies from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries. The Crusades attempted to “retake” the Holy Land from its Muslim rulers, who had conquered it in 635 AD. The Muslims took the Holy Land by force from its Roman/Byzantine rulers. The Romans initially conquered the land from its Jewish inhabitants in 64 BC, which provides the background for Roman rule in Palestine during the New Testament period.

The Crusaders built their fortress on the ruins of earlier Roman and Byzantine structures. Undoubtedly, the Romans considered Yehiam strategically crucial to the empire. Archaeologists found evidence of a Roman fort and a monastery built during the Byzantine era and excavated Byzantine burials.

The fortress is approximately 8 miles (12.8 kilometers) east of the modern coastal town of Nahariya and 12 miles (19 kilometers) north of Acco on Israel’s northern coast. The fortress played an important historical role when Saladin, the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty, triumphed over the Crusaders in the Battle of Hattin in 1187 AD. This victory led to the subsequent Muslim conquest of most Crusader kingdoms and citadels, including Jerusalem. Despite these losses, the Crusaders managed to retain control over the coastal region, with Acco serving as their capital in the Holy Land. The Yehiam Fortress, as part of the defensive network safeguarding Acco, was strategically significant during this period.



VIEW SOUTHEAST: THIS PHOTO SHOWS THE PATH LEADING TO THE DEFENSE POSTS LEFT OVER FROM ISRAEL'S 1948 WAR OF INDEPENDENCE. COMPARE THE PHOTO ON PAGE 75, USING THE BLUE SIGN AT TOP RIGHT AS A REFERENCE POINT.

BELOW (VIEW EAST): A DEFENSE POST USED BY ISRAELI SOLDIERS TO DEFEND THE STRATEGIC GROUND OF YEHIAM IN ISRAEL'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.



In 1265 AD, the Mamluk sultan Baybar (see “Montfort Castle” on page 69) conquered and destroyed the Yehiam Fortress. The site was taken over five hundred years later by Sheikh Mahd el-Hussein, a local ruler who rebuilt parts of the fortress. The main Yehiam structures visible today date to the time of a Bedouin sheik, Daher al-Omar, who occupied the fortress in 1738 AD. Like other sites in the Holy Land, the fortress changed hands numerous times over the centuries.

WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1948)

History repeats itself. Arab gangs used the fortress as a hiding place during the 1936–1939 Arab uprising in Palestine. After David Ben Gurion declared the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, Yehiam was strategically important to a young nation defending itself against the military forces of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. From the top of the central Crusader tower (see bottom photo on page 72), you can see the entire region to the coast.

Kibbutz Yehiam was established at the foot of the fortress on November 26, 1946, one year before the United Nations partitioned Palestine into independent Arab and Jewish states. The partition plan placed Kibbutz Yehiam and its members inside the boundaries of the proposed Arab state.

For the year before partition, the founders of Kibbutz Yehiam used tents and the fortress as temporary shelters. The kibbutz came under attack after the War of Independence broke out a year later. The residents fortified themselves in the fortress, holding out against their Arab attackers until Israeli forces liberated Western Galilee during the first month of the war.

Kibbutz Yehiam, known initially as HaSela (“The Rock”), was renamed Yehiam after Yehiam Weitz, who was killed not far away in the “Night of the Bridges,” a Palmach operation that took place on June 16–17, 1946. The Palmach blew up eleven bridges to hinder enemies from neighboring countries (see the photo of the Ayun bridge in *Blessed Pilgrimage* vol. 2, “Tel Abel Beth Maacah”).

BELOW: THE TITLE OF THE BLUE SIGN READS IN HEBREW, “SOLDIER POSITIONS.” FOR CONTEXT, YOU CAN SEE THE SAME BLUE SIGN IN THE PHOTO AT THE TOP OF PAGE 74.

