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# YOTVATA

The Ze'ev Meshel Excavations (1974–1980)  
The Iron I “Fortress” and the  
Early Islamic Settlement

Lily Singer-Avitz and Etan Ayalon

This book presents the final report of the excavations at Yotvata, in the southern Arabah Valley, conducted by the Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University in 1974–1980 under the direction of Dr. Ze'ev Meshel. The report covers two central sites: a fortified Iron I site and an Early Islamic settlement. The Iron I remains consist of an irregular casemate wall, surrounding a courtyard, built atop a steep hill. It is argued that this site was established in order to protect the oasis—the main source of water and wood supply for the copper mines in Timna—and to overlook the nearby crossroads extending along the Arabah Valley. Excavation of the Early Islamic settlement, northeast of the oasis, revealed a large courtyard building, a nearby bathhouse and other structures. The settlement's proximity to a sophisticated irrigation system and the finds uncovered here suggest that it served as the center of an agricultural estate owned by an elite Muslim family. The excavations at the Yotvata oasis have made a major contribution to the study of Early Islamic settlement history and material culture in the greater Arabah region.

**Lily Singer-Avitz** specializes in the archaeology of the Bronze and Iron Ages in the Land of Israel and has written extensively on issues of chronology, trade and pottery of these periods. She was the registrar of the archaeological excavations of Tel Aviv University at Tel Beer-sheba, Tel Michal, ancient Jaffa and Tel Gerisa and is co-editor of the final excavation reports of Tel Beer-sheba and Tel Arad.

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