CHAPTER THREE

HISTORY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH OF THE CHALCOLITHIC AND EARLY BRONZE I PERIODS IN THE STUDY AREA

INTRODUCTION

Until recently fewer archaeological studies had been conducted in the southern Jordan Valley and desert fringes of Samaria,¹ than the more developed research in other regions in the southern Levant (the Beer Sheva valley, Golan, etc.). It is true that surveys and excavations were carried out here, beginning in the second half of the 20th century, but these were mostly of short duration. A fundamental change occurred with the start of the Manasseh Hill Country Survey in the Jordan Valley in the 1980s. This survey is presently continuing, and constitutes a cornerstone of our accumulated archaeological knowledge of the whole region.

Mallon, Neuville and Koeppel were the first researchers who identified and defined the Chalcolithic culture at Teleilat Ghassul, slightly south of the study region (Mallon et al. 1934). Albright (1926) was the first to deal with the Early Bronze Age in the Jordan Valley. But it was only in the works of Engberg and Shipton (1934) at Megiddo, and Fitzgerald (1935) at Beth Shean that the EB was chronologically subdivided, and the finds were ascribed to the EB I. The topic was first summarized in works by Wright (1937; 1958). It was only in the 1930s that the necessary knowledge was acquired to identify sites from the Chalcolithic and the EB I.²

We will not present all of the archaeological research carried out in the southern Jordan Valley and the desert fringes of Samaria; rather

¹ The paucity of research apparently stems from a number of reasons: peripheral – in the 20th century both Israel and Jordan considered the western Jordan Valley a periphery and therefore it was not a centre for research; religious – the three monotheistic religions viewed the centre in Jerusalem, and not on the fringes of Samaria; and political – no research was done because of political considerations, the essence of which revolved around the question of who had the right to study this region.
² Such an important survey as that of Conder and Kitchener (1882) did not identify any sites in the region dating to the periods addressed in this study, and so is not included.
focusing on the Chalcolithic and EB I. Nor will we discuss the history of the research of these periods from a broader or regional point of view (for this there are numerous studies, from Albright [1932] to later studies and articles, such as Miroschedji 1971; Amiran 1985; Ben-Tor 1985; Hanbury-Tenison 1986; Levy 1986; 1995; Gilead 1988; Esse 1989; 1991; Gonen 1989; Joffe 1991; 1993; Braun 1996; Philip 2001; and Bourke 2001; Blackham 2002; Rowen and Golden 2009; Golden 2010; Chesson 2011; Banning 2011).

**CHALCOLITHIC AND EB I RESEARCH IN THE SOUTHERN JORDAN VALLEY AND THE DESERT FRINGES OF SAMARIA**

We will focus on the two most common methods of research – survey and excavation.

The first survey performed in the western Jordan Valley was conducted by Glueck in the 1940s, and was partial and not systematic (Glueck 1951). Glueck identified the EB I sites at Tel Miski and in the vicinity of Tell Sheikh Diab.

In the 1960s and 1970s Tzori (1958; 1962; 1977a; 1977b) and Mittman (1970) carried out surveys in the southern Beth Shean Valley. Tzori (1962), who identified four sites that appear here, was also the first to identify the EB I site at Tel Shalem and the Chalcolithic site at Tell Mukehaz. As part of Mittman’s work in the survey of Gilead, the southern part of the Beth Shean Valley was also surveyed, and two previously unknown sites were discovered, among them the EB I site in the region of Shemsiyeh.

In 1967–1968 the Emergency Survey was conducted throughout Judea, Samaria and the Golan. Survey teams headed by Bar-Adon (1972) and Gophna and Porath (1972) operated in the southern Jordan Valley and the desert fringes of Samaria. This was the largest modern archaeological survey performed to date. The survey encompassed an extensive area, but due to time constraints it was only partially completed. Seven Chalcolithic and EB I sites were discovered. The large Chalcolithic sites in the Wadi Far‘ah flood plain – Kaziyet el-Ratrut and Far‘at ej-Jiftlik (Bar-Adon 1972) are prominent among them because of their size.

In 1968 Porath continued surveying the region (Samaria survey B – Porath 1968). The survey was not published, and the Chalcolithic and EB I sites discovered in it are presented for the first time in our study.