CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE EXCAVATIONS AT FAZAEL 7 – ONE OF THE LARGEST DWELLING COMPLEXES FROM THE CHALCOLITHIC PERIOD IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT

INTRODUCTION

In February 2009 an excavation was conducted at Fazael 7 (map ref. Old Israel Grid 1914/1615), a Chalcolithic site located in the Jordan Valley, about 20 km north of Jericho (Fig. 11.1). The site was selected for excavation within the framework of a regional study dealing with a large group of Chalcolithic and EB I sites located in the Wadi Fazael flood plain. This was one of the principal areas of settlement in the Jordan Valley during these periods.

The vast Chalcolithic settlement, which the site was part of, extends from the modern-day settlement of Fazael to the west, along both sides of the old road toward Ma'ale Ephraim. It covers an area of about 20 ha, and is divided into non-contiguous secondary sites: Fazael 1, Fazael 2, Fazael 5, Fazael 7 (named by the Manasseh Hill Country Survey), and the salvage excavations of Porath (1985) and Peleg (2000) within the precincts of the modern village. These sites were located on the northern bank of the ancient riverbed of Wadi Fazael (Fig. 11.2). The site that was excavated and is discussed here is located on level ground north of the riverbed, near the village's western fence.

In the centre of the site is a prominent mound. Remains of an extremely wide broad house were visible at the time the site was discovered during the survey. Three courtyards of different shapes adjoined the building – a square one that extended to the east, and two rectangular ones to the north and north-west. Another, smaller, mound was identified on the security road of the modern village east of the main mound. The ceramic finds recovered from the survey of the two mounds were ascribed to the Chalcolithic period. Meagre wall remains

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1 The excavation was directed by Shay Bar and Uri Davidovitch, with assistance from Ronny Zuckerman (drafting and fauna), Ari Levy (administration), Haim Winter (flint), Sapir Haad (figures: plans, sections and finds), Michael Eisenberg, and the Zinman Institute of Archaeology (scientific support), the Manasseh Hill Country Survey (scientific and logistical support) and the Jordan Valley Regional Council (logistical support).
were also ‘floating’ on the surface level on top of the main mound, and a few body sherds of vessels dating to the Late Roman period were found around them. It seems that a temporary agricultural structure stood there at this time. That building was not excavated in the 2009 season, and is not discussed in the current report.

Figure 11.1. General location map.