

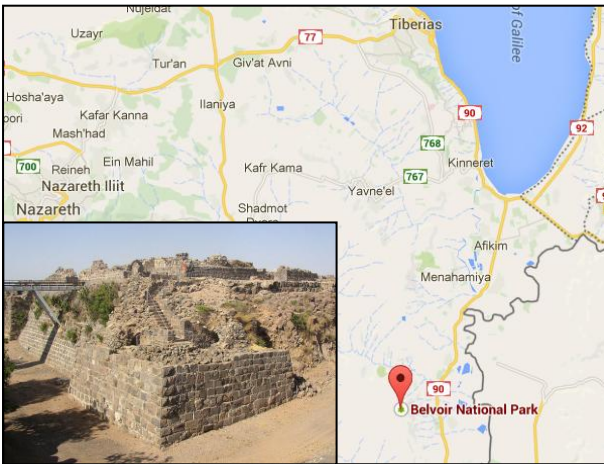
71 Belvoir Castle

Names (also known as)

Kochav Ha Yarden – “Star of the Jordan”

Location/Description

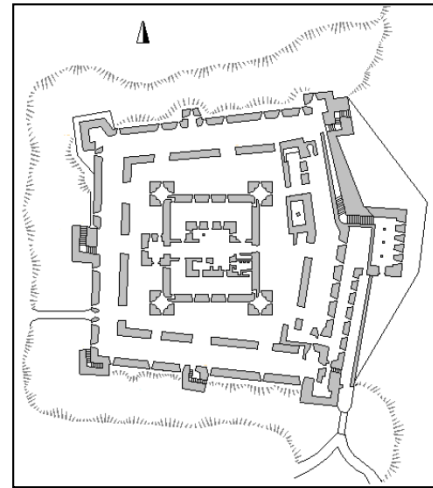
Belvoir is a Crusader fortress in northern Israel, on a hill 20 kilometres (12 miles) south of the Sea of Galilee.



Belvoir was one of the first concentric style Crusader castles and had a heavy influence on castle layouts afterwards. A concentric style castle layout has a rectangular outer wall and then a 2nd rectangular inner wall with a tower in each corner. This is seen in the picture below. It was also surrounded by a moat 66 feet wide and 39 feet deep.



Archaeologists have noted the rocks and bricks with menorahs and other Israelite related images on them, showing how the Crusaders cannibalized surrounding towns to build their castles.



Brief history

When Gilbert of Assailly took control of the knights Hospitaller they built 13 castles in the Holy Land and Belvoir was their most important. They purchased the site from Vellos, a french nobleman, in 1168. Standing 1500 feet (457 metres) above the Jordan River valley, the plateau commanded the route from Gilead to Jerusalem and a nearby river crossing. To the north is the sea of Galilee and to the west is hill country. The site of Belvoir castle dominated and controlled the surrounding area and became a major barrier to Muslim invasion. It withstood attack in 1180, and in 1182 the Battle of Belvoir Castle was fought nearby between Baldwin IV of Jerusalem and Saladin. Following Saladin's victory at the Horn's of Hittin, Belvoir was besieged for a year and a half before surrendering on 5th January 1189. Arabs controlled it until 1219 and the Franks until 1263. In modern times it became the Arab village of Kawkab al-Hawa. The Arab buildings on the site were demolished by the Israelis between 1963 and 1968.

Commenting on the renovation of the crusader remains Meron Benvenisti considers this removal of intervening Arab structures at the Belvoir site as one of the best examples of “the eradication of all traces of an entire civilization from the landscape in Israel”. In a way these are prophetic words of the time when Christ's kingdom will do the same to the kingdom of men, and the glory of Yahweh will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Sources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belvoir_Fortress.

(Compiler – Dan Leadbetter)