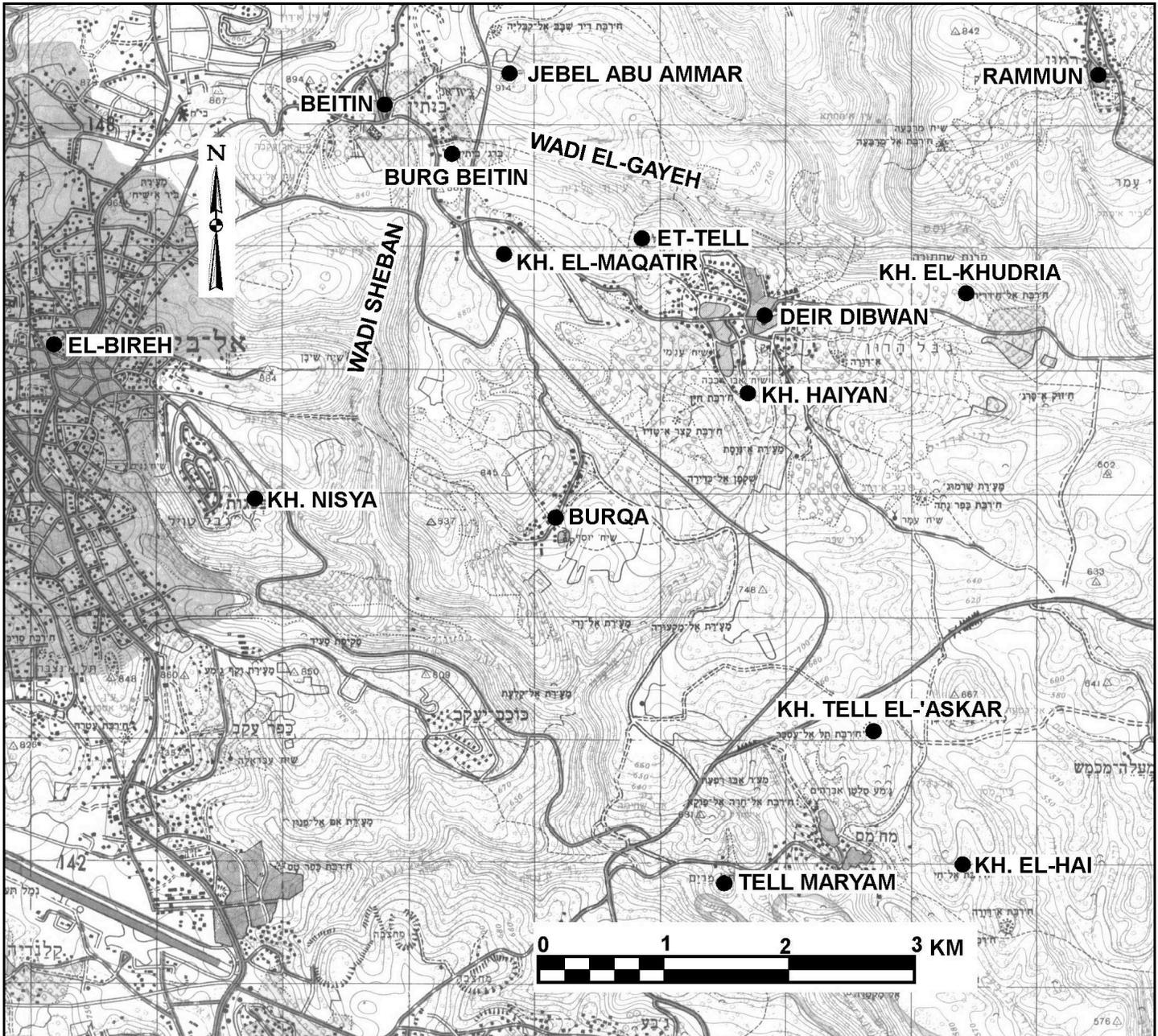# Finding Joshua's Ai

Kh. el-Maqatir was excavated by the Associates for Biblical Research from 1995 to the present, under the direction of Bryant G. Wood. The evidence found strongly suggests the site should be identified as the Ai of Joshua. The Ai of Abraham (Gen. 12:8), on the other hand, should be located at et-Tell 0.6 mile to the east.

Geographical Requirements for Joshua's Ai

- Near (*'im*) Beth Aven (= Beitin) (Josh. 7:2). Kh. el-Maqatir is 1 mile southeast of Beitin.
- East of Bethel (= El Bireh) (Josh. 7:2). Kh. el-Maqatir is northeast of El Bireh. (There are no Hebrew words to express intermediate points on the compass.)
- In the vicinity (*miṣṣad*) of Bethel (Josh. 12:9). Kh. el-Maqatir is ca. 2 miles from El Bireh.
- *Šᵉbārîm* (quarry?) on the retreat route to Jericho (Josh. 7:5). There is a quarry site ca. 2 miles east of Kh. el-Maqatir in the Wadi el-Gayah, the route from Kh. el-Maqatir to Jericho.
- Descent between Ai and the *šᵉbārîm* (Josh. 7:5). There is a decrease in elevation of ca. 1000 feet between the gate at Kh. el-Maqatir and the quarry site in the Wadi el-Gayeh.

- Place for an ambush force to the west, between Bethel and Ai (Josh. 8:9, 12–13). The deep Wadi Sheban between Kh. el-Maqatir and El Bireh is hidden from view from both Kh. el-Maqatir and El Bireh.
- Suitable location (high hill) for Joshua's command post north of Ai (Josh. 8:11). Jebel Abu Ammar ca. 1 mile north of Kh. el-Maqatir is the highest hill in the region, affording panoramic views in all directions.
- Shallow valley north of Ai (Josh. 8:11, 14). The Wadi el-Gayeh is very shallow between Jebel Abu Ammar and Kh. el-Maqatir with all portions being readily visible from Kh. el-Maqatir.
- "A certain place overlooking the Arabah (Jordan Valley)" (Josh. 8:14) where a battle could take place. Ca. 3 miles east of Kh. el-Maqatir, on the north side of the Wadi el-Gayeh, is a small plateau overlooking the Jordan Valley which is a suitable site for a battle.

Archaeological Requirements for Joshua's Ai

- Occupation at the time of the Conquest (second half of the 15th century B.C., the Late Bronze IB period). A small fortress dating to the 15th century B.C. has been found at Kh. el-Maqatir.
- Smaller than Gibeon, which is ca. 10 acres in size (Josh. 7:3; 10:2). The size of the fortress is ca. 3 acres.
- Fortified (Josh. 7:5; 8:29). Stone walls ca. 13 feet wide surrounded the fortress.
- Gate on the north side (Josh. 8:11). The gate of the fortress is on the north side overlooking the Wadi el-Gayeh.
- Pile of stones in the gate entryway (Josh. 8:29). There were many stones in the gateway of the fortress.
- Destroyed by fire (Josh. 8:19, 28). Evidence has been found throughout the fortress of destruction by a violent conflagration.
- A ruin forever (Josh. 8:28). The fortress was left abandoned to be ravaged by the elements and robbed out by later inhabitants.

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