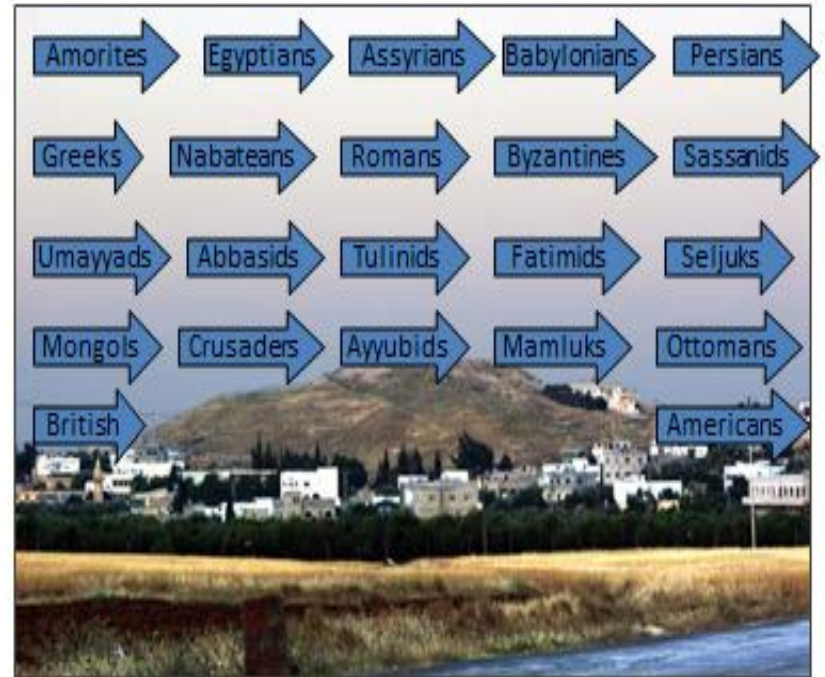


Sign 1. Welcome to Tall Hisban!

Like a sparkling gem, an archaeological tell reflects and refracts the great civilizations that over the millennia have shaped and continue to sustain and enrich the cultural heritage of humanity. Enjoy your journey through three millennia of global and local history in Tall Hisban!



Sign 2. Overview

Tall Hisban's history has been greatly influenced by the fact that its summit, at 885 meters, towers above the surrounding landscape. This lofty location has made Tall Hisban a favored location for the projection of power and prestige by rulers and other elites for over three thousand years.



Mamluk garrison and regional capital 14th Cent. AD

Ayyubid center for study of Islamic law 12th and 13th Cent. AD

Abbasid military post AD 8th-10th Century

Umayyad town AD 661-750

Byzantine ecclesiastical center AD 324-661

Roman acropolis town 63BC – AD 324

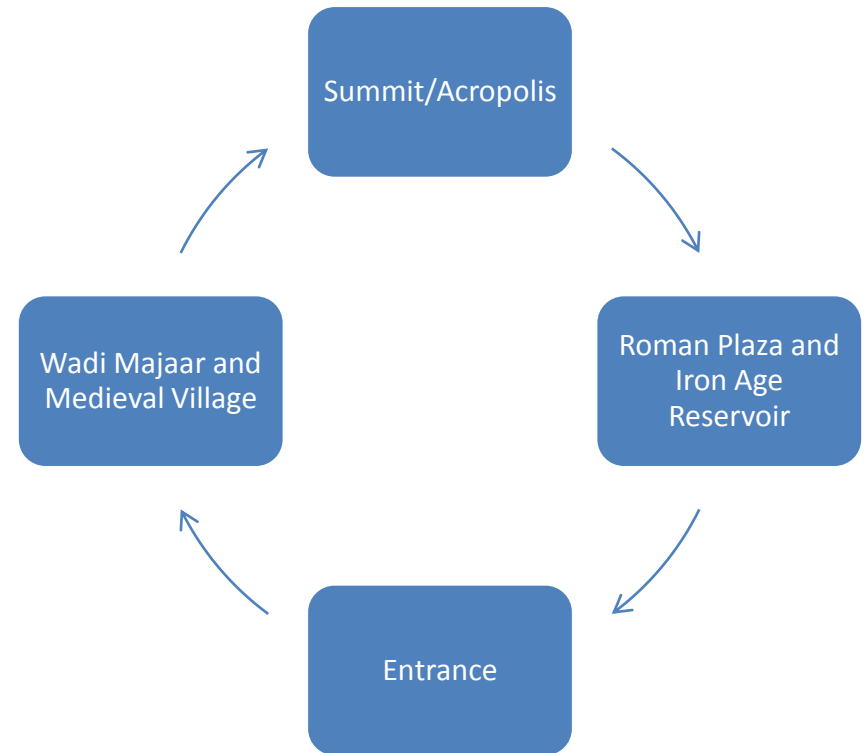
Hellenistic fortress 332-63 BC

Ammonite administrative center 900–500 BC

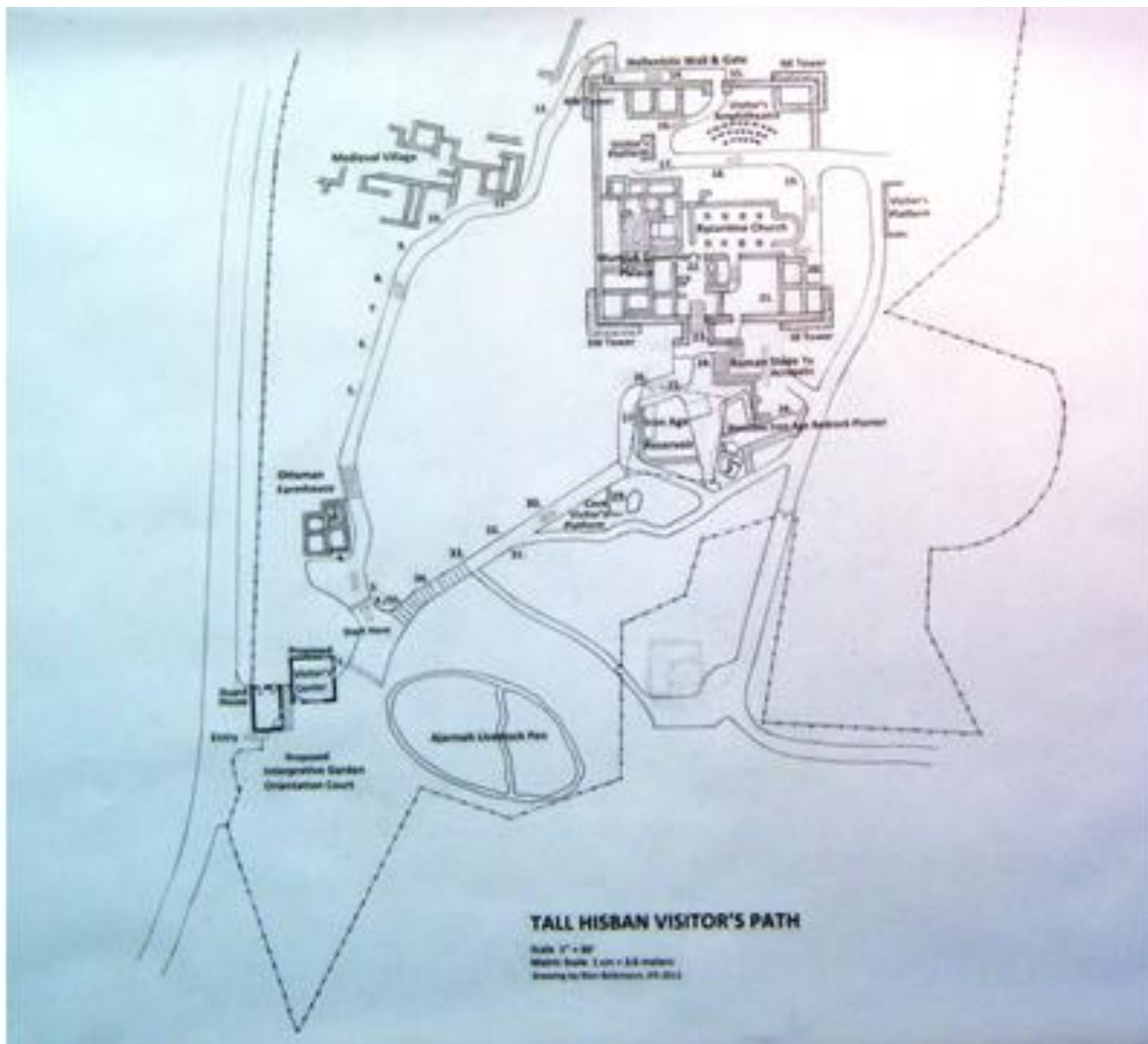
Early Iron Age palace garden 1000-900 BC

Traditional Amorite Stronghold

Sign 3. Trail begins here



Follow the Signs!



Sign 4. Ottoman farm house

An important goal of archaeologists at Tall Hisban has been to illuminate the daily lives and survival strategies of ordinary farmers and shepherds that have outlasted multiple millennia of imperial domination. This farm house from the Ottoman period (AD 1516-1917) had three rooms and a taboun (oven) for making bread.



Sign 5. Rainwater harvesting

Rainwater harvesting has been crucial to survival in Hisban since ancient times. During the rainy season, rain is captured and stored in hillside terraces and field cisterns. In the past retention dams and reservoirs were used to store water along the wadi bottom.



Sign 6. Terraced orchards

Wadi slopes are ideal for growing olives, grapes and other stone fruits in terraced orchards. The olive tree is sign of peace, stability and security.



Sign 7. Cereals, sheep and goats

Wheat, barley and lentils have been staple crops of local farmers since ancient times. The droppings of sheep and goats grazing on stubble fields following harvest help fertilize the fields.



Sign 8. Houses, caves, tents

- Caves have since prehistoric times been used to shelter farmers, their families, tools and animals during winter. In summer, families would move into tents.



Sign 9. Iron II fortification wall

This western slope of the tell is where most people lived during Ayyubid and Mamluk times (12th-16th Cent. A.D.). A wall dating to Late Iron II/Persian is seen below this sign.



Sign 10. Islamic law school

In the Ayyubid period Hisban had a madrasa, a university for the study of Islamic law. By the Mamluk period Hisban scholars were reknown as teachers and lawyers in Damascus, Jerusalem, and Cairo.



Sign 11. Western citadel wall

Looking up from this sign you can see the entire western fortification wall of the citadel of Hisban. The citadel is anchored by four towers: one in each corner. The earliest date for this wall is Hellenistic (332-63 BC) and the latest is Mamluk (AD 1260-1516)



Sign 12. An Ajarmeh village

Most of the residents of today's Hisban belong to the Ajarmeh, one of the oldest tribes in Jordan. Known from written sources dating back at least to the 16th Cent. A.D., the Ajarmeh were admired for their fine wheat crop.



Sign 13. Northern fortification wall

The section of wall in front of this sign is of ashlar construction—a technique perfected by the Romans. Notice the fine cut of each stone. The wall was restored and re-used during Islamic times (AD 650-1516).



Sign 14. Biblical Elealeh

The bald hill seen in the skyline ahead is believed by most scholars to be biblical Elealeh. According to the Roman historian Eusebius in his book of place-names (known as the Onomasticon) the town of Elealeh was located one Roman mile north from Esbus or Hisban.



Sign 15. Northern entrance gate

The summit, at 885 meters, was a favorite location for prestige projects by rulers and other elites starting in the 9th Century BC and ending in the 15th Century AD with the Mamluks. Please proceed through this gate into the citadel.



Sign 16. Mamluk kitchen

These three rooms served as a kitchen for the Mamluk garrison in the 13th century. The rooms were earlier used during Byzantine through Early Islamic times.



Sign 17. Mamluk bath

The furnace and bath which we see inserted into this foundation wall of a monumental Roman building was last in use during Mamluk times. The monumental building may have been a temple, as locally minted Roman coins depict a temple dedicated to Jupiter.



Sign 18. Byzantine church/Esbus

During Roman and Byzantine times Hisban was known as Esbus. With the rise of Christianity (AD 324-661) churches were built in Esbus using stones from previous buildings. Mosaic floors from this Byzantine church are preserved at the Madaba Archaeological Museum.



Sign 19. Bishop Gennadius of Esbus

At the time of the Council of Nicea (AD 325), Esbus appears for the first time as an episcopal seat. It belonged to the province of Arabia and its superior was the metropolitan of Bozrah. The bishop of Esbus, Gennadius, is mentioned twice in the acts of the council, which was convened by the Emperor Constantine as a means to unite the many Christian sects of the empire.



Sign 20. Roman agriculture prowess

The fertile valley on both sides of this modern road was in the past endowed with hillside terraces, watch towers, retention dams, field cisterns and reservoirs. Agriculture based on such rainwater harvesting technology was especially advanced during Byzantine times.



Sign 21. SE tower

Entrance to SE tower. The tower was last used by the Mamluks. It was initially constructed in Early Roman times. Please proceed up the steps to the Mamluk summit.



Sign 24. Emperor Hadrian plaza/stairs

Plaza and stairs belonging to Roman acropolis. Around 129-130, in preparation for the visit of the Emperor Hadrian, a road was built to connect Esbus with Livias, Jericho and Jerusalem. Milestones 5-7 from Esbus have been found.



Sign 26. Hisban reservoir

The Tall Hisban reservoir is too large to have been built by local farmers. It measures 17 X 17 x 7 meters and was capable of storing over 2000 cubic meters of water. As with many of the other structures on the summit, the reservoir was a prestige project by an elite. It was part of a splendid agricultural estate (palace garden?) that also included multiple shallow pools, water channels, terraces and cisterns.



Sign 27. Byzantine kiln

This kiln, installed long after the reservoir was abandoned, was used to make lime, which, in turn was used for making mortar during Byzantine times (AD 324-661).



Sign 28. Palace garden planter?

Several explanations have been posited for this bedrock trench: water channel; defensive moat; palace garden planter. Parallels for the latter can be found in royal palace gardens elsewhere throughout the ancient world, including Nineveh; Babylon, Thebes and Jerusalem.



Sign 29 Industrial/habitation cave

Hisban has many caves that may originally have started as quarries but that later were converted to industrial sites and/or dwellings for people and animals. This one has multiple chambers divided by masonry arches and walls and includes two cisterns. Caves were used in various ways in nearly all periods.



Sign 30. Story of Sihon

To date no discoveries have been made at Tall Hisban that positively confirm or disconfirm the association of Tall Hisban with the stories about Sihon, the Amorite King of Heshbon, and his battle with the Israelites as mentioned in the Bible.



Sign 32. Sponsors

Improvements to this site have been possible thanks to funding from:

- Andrews University
- Municipality of Hisban
- Department of Antiquities of Jordan
- USDS Ambassador Fund for Cultural Preservation



Sign 33. Three generations of Ajarmeh

The excavators would like to thank three generations of Ajarmeh families for being our partners in uncovering the history of this important site. Their friendship and hospitality has created enthusiastic ambassadors for Jordan all around the world!



Sign 34. The signage team

Signage by Oystein S. LaBianca, senior director of the Tall Hisban Cultural Heritage Project; Bethany Walker, co-director and chief archaeologist; Maria Elena Ronza, co-director for restoration; Catreena Hamarneh, German-Jordanian University; Amer Awawdeh, Hisban resident and teacher and Naif Masaha, Hisban iron smith.



Sign 35 A precious gem

A PRECIOUS GEM:

Civilizations are luminous constellations of radiant attitudes, beliefs, great and little traditions, institutions, and works of art, artisanry and architecture that emanate from particular cultural epicenters such as Nineveh, Babylon, Athens, Rome, Constantinople, Damascus and Baghdad. Like a precious sparking gem, Tall Hisban reflects and refracts the great civilizations that over the millennia have shaped and continue to sustain and enrich the cultural heritage of humanity.

Thanks for helping us be good custodians of the precious gem which is Tall Hisban.
Oystein S. LaBianca, Ph.D. Senior Director, Heshbon Cultural Heritage Project.



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Project.

حسبان

جوهرة تميّنة

تُشع من جنباتها آثار الحضارات
تُشع بالموافق وبالمعتقدات
بالتقاليد العظيمة وبالعبادات
بمعاهدتها وبالمؤسسات،

زيتها حرفيوها بالفن و الحمارات

كضاهي بإنتاجها مراكز ثقافية كنينوى وبابل وأثينا وروما
والقسطنطينية ودمشق وبغداد.

حسبان

جوهرة تميّنة،

تُعكس حسبان عراقة الحضارات التي مرت عليها عبر

آلاف السنين وشكلت عبر التواصل الإنساني التراث
الحضاري مساهمة بذلك في إثراء التراث الثقافي للإنسانية
جمعاء.

شكرا لمساعدتنا في حماية هذه النرة التميّنة حسبان.

د. أوستين لابينكا،

مدير المشروع نل حسبان التراثي الثقافي.

