Khirbet Wadi Hamam is a Roman-period village located at the base of the cliffs of Mt. Nitai and above the gorge of Nahal Arbel, two km west of the Sea of Galilee. In an attempt to shed new light on a number of topics concerning village life in Roman Galilee, primarily the debated question of the date of ‘Galilean’-type synagogues, the site was excavated between 2007–2012 by an expedition from the Institute of Archaeology of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In addition to the synagogue and its surroundings, excavations were carried out in a series of domestic structures, agricultural installations and public spaces in the village, as well as along a massive fortification located on the summit of Mt. Nitai, accompanied by a survey of numerous caves in the cliffs between the village and the mountaintop. The rich remains opened a wide window onto the material culture of rural Roman Galilee, enabling us to delineate the history of a typical local village from its establishment in the Hasmonean period until its final abandonment at the beginning of the Byzantine era. The findings bear implications for various aspects in the study of ancient Galilee: the beginning of Jewish settlement in the region in the Second Temple period, the Jewish revolts against Rome, ancient economy, rural life and livelihood, communal organization, domestic architecture, household utensils, ancient diet, and above all the art, architecture and date of the ‘Galilean’-type synagogues.

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A ROMAN-PERIOD VILLAGE AND SYNAGOGUE
IN THE LOWER GALILEE
Uzi Leibner

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