

Heritage Site Homa Umigdal (Tower and Stockade) Tel Amal

A small site with a great pioneering story

Professor Yoav Gelber

Contrary to recent claims of “neo” historians and sociologists, Jewish settlers who arrived in Israel from the end of the 19th century were not armed “colonialists” coming to take over the natives’ land by force. They paid full price for their land and cultivated it by themselves, or through their stiff competition with the Arab “natives” in the agricultural work market of the moshavot. Arab hostility and the ever-increasing damage done to the settlers and their property forced them to arm and defend themselves.

Settlement and security were intertwined during the Mandatory period. The ability of self-defense was a necessary precondition for settlements that were not protectorates of their neighbors. These settlements became the incubator for the Hagana. The fate of those settlements abandoned after being attacked during the riots in 1939 strengthened recognition of this link.

The Palestinian revolt in 1936-1939 created an almost warlike situation in Israel. This was not a short-lived outbreak, as was the case in the waves of earlier riots, but was an extended period of dangers, tensions and preparedness. These conditions necessitated a change of attitude and the finding of suitable solutions for the new settlements, which were vulnerable to Arab attack from the moment of their founding. Political problems soon joined the new settlements’ security and economic difficulties: The partition plan suggested in 1937 caused a flurry of settlement activity under the assumption that settlement borders would determine the borders of the Jewish state-to-be. This race sent settlers into new areas of the country which had not as yet been settled by Jews, such as the Beit Shean valley, the Hula valley, the Zebulun valley and the western Galilee, the south of the country and the border of the mountains in the country’s center.

Homa Umigdal (Tower and Stockade) Tel Amal

Tel: 04-6581017 ; E-mail: homa@npa.org.il

Gan HaShlosa National Park, Regional Council Valley of the Springs

Website: <https://www.parks.org.il/reserve-park/shlosa/>

Heritage Site Homa Umigdal (Tower and Stockade) Tel Amal

A small site with a great pioneering story

Homa Umigdal (Tower and Stockade) was, at first, a technical solution. It was created to allow rapid settlement in the heart of a hostile area and was meant to allow protection for the settlers immediately upon their arrival, before the attack of Arab gangs. But the concept quickly changed from a system to a symbol of settlement as a method of political struggle for borders, as a contribution to the settlement's security and a combination of the ideals of settlement and security.

All 57 settlements constructed during those years, from Tel Amal's settlement in December 1936, are called "tower and stockade settlements." Not all of them were settled using this newly developed system and not all were border settlements which penetrated new areas. But all expressed the Jewish community's determination to continue to settle despite difficult conditions and dangers, as well as the link between settlement and security, setting borders and sovereignty.

The concept of "tower and stockade" took root in the collective memory as settlement to protest limitations imposed by British Mandatory rule on the settlement movement. The use of this terminology is misleading. British limitations went into effect only in 1940, after the "Homa Umigdal" period, and "tower and stockade" settlements were founded with British permission and in coordination with them. They are a part of the Jewish-Arab struggle over Israel, and not part of the Jewish-British struggle for independence.

Professor Yoav Gelber – Title etc.

* * *

Homa Umigdal (Tower and Stockade) Tel Amal

Tel: 04-6581017 ; E-mail: homa@npa.org.il

Gan HaShlosha National Park, Regional Council Valley of the Springs

Website: <https://www.parks.org.il/reserve-park/shlosha/>