

During the Roman and Byzantine periods the rabbis identified the Roman city of Hammath, which lies within the city limits of modern Tiberias on its south side, with biblical Hammath of the tribe of Naphtali (Joshua 19:35). This identification is not certain, but ancient Jewish sources knew of the city of Hammath that eventually united with Tiberias during the first or second century C.E. Since the name refers to the hot springs, it is easy to identify the site by the hot springs that still come to the surface only a few tens of yards from this ruin.

Several synagogues and other buildings were built on this site over the centuries. In the upper right of this view, one can see the walls, floors and apse of the latest (fifth to eighth centuries C.E.) synagogue. To the extreme right is this synagogue's courtyard. This synagogue was built over the remains of what is known as the Synagogue of Severos, after its major donor. The Synagogue of Severos dates to about 325-396 C.E. A portion of it, about 5 feet below the later synagogue, is visible at left and center in this slide. It contains stunning mosaics (seen in detail on Slides 81-85). The Synagogue of Severos is itself a remodeling of a synagogue built in the latter half of the third century C.E. Beneath that synagogue stood a first-century C.E. gymnasium or other public building (not visible in this view). The gymnasium may also have been used as a synagogue.

Through the trees in the background, we see the blue waters of the Sea of Galilee and the steep hills above its eastern shore.