

1 **Classifying marine faults for hazard assessment offshore**
2 **Israel: A new approach based on fault size and vertical**
3 **displacement**

4 May Laor^{1,2*}, Zohar Gvirtzman^{1,2}

5 ¹ Geological Survey of Israel, Yesha'yahu Leibowitz 32, Jerusalem, Israel

6 ² Institute of Earth Sciences, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

7 * Correspondence to: May Laor (may.laor@mail.huji.ac.il)

8 **Abstract**

9 For many countries, the methodology for offshore geohazard mitigation lags far behind
10 the well-established onshore methodology. Particularly complicated is the assessment
11 of fault hazard in the marine environment. The determination of whether a fault is
12 “active” or not requires ultra-high-resolution seismic surveys and multiple coring and
13 unfortunately, frequently ends with uncertain results. Moreover, if a pipeline must cross
14 a fault, it is not enough to determine whether the fault is active; slip rates are needed
15 for resistant planning.

16 Here we suggest a new approach for fault hazard assessment for the master planning of
17 infrastructure. We provide planners a way to choose a route that will cross the least
18 hazardous faults; these faults will then be investigated in site-specific surveys for slip
19 rates that will allow seismic design. Instead of following the onshore practice that is
20 hard to implement in the marine environment, we suggest taking advantage of the
21 marine environment where seismic data is commonly better in quantity and quality.
22 Based on existing industrial 3D seismic surveys, we measure for each fault in the study
23 area the amount of its recent (in our specific case, 350 ka) vertical displacement and the
24 size of its plane. According to these two independently measured quantities, we classify
25 the faults into three hazard levels. This allows planners to choose infrastructure routes
26 that cross the least hazardous faults at an early stage of planning and direct them to sites
27 that need further investigation.

28 Our case study is the Israeli continental slope, where numerous salt-related, thin-
29 skinned, normal faults dissect the seabed, forming tens of meters high scarps. A
30 particular hazardous zone is the upper slope south of the Dor disturbance, where a series
31 of big listric faults rupture the seabed in an area where the sedimentation rate is four

32 times faster than the vertical displacement rate. We suggest that this indicates
33 exceptionally fast creep, seismic rupture, or rapid tremor and slip episodes.

34

35 **1. Introduction**

36 The need for geohazard assessment in the marine environment is increasing globally
37 due to the growing number of infrastructures laid on the seafloor. To mitigate marine
38 geohazards, numerous studies have been conducted in many world basins (Georgia
39 Basin (Barrie et al., 2005); Sea of Marmara (Armijo et al., 2005); Gulf of Mexico (Prior
40 and Hooper, 1999); offshore California (Clark et al., 1985, and the ref in); Norwegian
41 Sea (Shmatkova et al., 2015); Italian continental margins (Chiocci and Ridente, 2011),
42 and more). Some of these studies focus on submarine landslides, and when faults are
43 considered, they are sometimes treated as static seabed obstacles. Note, however, that
44 even extremely accurate mapping of the seafloor does not provide the information
45 needed to determine whether the fault is active or not.

46 Onshore, the criteria for fault activity is based on displacement of dated stratigraphic
47 markers- 11 kyr (California, Bryant and Hart, 2007), 13 kyr (Israel, Sagy et al., 2012),
48 and even older (see Styron and Pagani, 2021 compilation for examples). To determine
49 if a specific fault is active, the continuation or displacement of the chosen marker is
50 examined in outcrops or trenches.

51 In the marine environment, such an approach is much more complicated and requires
52 high-resolution seismic surveys and core analyses (Posamentier, 2000; Kvalstad, 2007;
53 Hough et al., 2011). Commonly a site-specific survey includes four steps (Prior and
54 Hooper, 1999; Angell et al., 2003): (a) Mapping the seafloor, (b) establishing a chrono-
55 stratigraphic scheme by tying high-resolution seismic data to dated horizons in
56 boreholes, (c) structural mapping of the fault and displacement measurements, (d)
57 geological interpretation and quantification. This commonly used approach is
58 problematic because each survey requires months of work and frequently yields
59 uncertain results.

60 One practical option is to define all faults rupturing the seabed as active faults in the
61 absence of age information (On, 2016). This approach is based on the rationale that
62 faults are likely active if they are identified at the seabed despite sedimentation. Note,
63 however, that fault scarps can remain hundreds of thousands of years on the seabed
64 without any additional jump if the sedimentation rate is lower than the displacement
65 rate.

66 Another approach is to apply a Probabilistic Fault Displacement Hazard Assessment
67 (PFDHA, Wong and Stepp, 1998; Youngs et al., 2003; Angell et al., 2003), analogs to
68 the practice developed for earthquake ground motion prediction (PSHA, Cornell, 1968,
69 1971). Such analysis provides a graph showing the annual frequency calculated for
70 various displacement values. This probabilistic approach requires assumptions
71 regarding (1) creep versus seismic slip and (2) the number of seismic events that had
72 produced an observed displacement. In the case studied here (offshore Israel), we do
73 not know if the studied faults produce earthquakes at all (maybe they only creep).
74 Furthermore, if they produce earthquakes, we do not have any information about the
75 magnitudes-frequency relationships. Thus, it seems that this approach will not yield
76 robust results in our case.

77 The goal of this study is to provide a practical and relatively fast solution for early-stage
78 planning of marine infrastructure that must cross a faulted zone. For instance, there is
79 no choice in the case studied here, and planning requires a route that will cross the least
80 hazardous faults. For this, we need criteria to determine the relative fault displacement
81 hazard level. We base this determination on the amount of recent vertical displacement
82 and the size of the fault plane. We assume that bigger faults with larger past
83 displacements have a greater potential for larger future ruptures.

84 Our analysis takes advantage of the wealth of high-resolution seismic data frequently
85 available offshore. Instead of investing in multiple coring to find out whether or not
86 each specific fault in the study area displaces a recently dated horizon (a practice that
87 frequently fails to provide an answer), we measure the vertical displacement of a 350
88 ka horizon (the most recent-dated horizon that covers all our research area), and the
89 area of the fault plane. These two parameters are tough to measure in seismic data
90 usually available on land and are easily measured in high-resolution surveys frequently
91 available offshore.

92 **2. Scientific background**

93 *2.1. Geological history of the Levant Basin*

94 The Levant Basin was formed in the late Paleozoic and early Mesozoic, alongside the
95 opening of the Tethys Ocean that had separated Africa from Eurasia (Garfunkel and
96 Almagor, 1984; Garfunkel, 1988,1998; Robertson, 1998). At that time, several rifting
97 phases created a system of horsts and grabens spreading from the northern Negev
98 northwestwards into the Levant basin (Bein and Gvirtzman, 1977; Garfunkel and
99 Almagor, 1984; Garfunkel, 1988,1998; Robertson, 1998). After the rifting stage,
100 approximately at the end of the Early Jurassic (~180 Ma), the Levant continental
101 margins turned passive and continued to accumulate sediments for more than 100
102 million years (Gvirtzman and Garfunkel, 1997, 1998; Steinberg et al., 2008; Bar et al.,
103 2013).

104 At the end of the Turonian and the beginning of the Santonian (~84 Ma), a change in
105 the relative movement between Africa and Eurasia led to a change in the stress regime
106 and folding along the "Syrian arc" began (Krenkel, 1924; Henson, 1951; De-Sitter,
107 1962; Freund, 1975; Reches and Hoexter, 1981; Eyal and Reches, 1983; Sagy et al.,
108 2018).

109 About 35 million years ago, a large area, including east Africa and northern Arabia,
110 started rising above sea level. This process provided large amounts of clastic sediments
111 to the Levant Basin, where the sedimentation rate increased significantly (Gvirtzman et
112 al., 2008; Steinberg et al., 2011; Avni et al., 2012; Bar et al., 2016, 2013). These clastic
113 sediments compose the Saqiye Group, which thickens from tens of hundreds of meters
114 in the Israeli coasts to 1.5 km in the continental shelf area (Gvirtzman and Buchbinder,
115 1978), and 6 km in the deep Levant Basin (Steinberg et al., 2011).

116 About 6 million years ago, the connection between the Mediterranean Sea and the
117 Atlantic Ocean was restricted during a short event termed the Messinian Salinity Crisis
118 (MSC). During the crisis, the sea level dropped, and a few km thick evaporite sequence
119 accumulated in the entire Mediterranean Sea (e.g., Ryan and Hsü, 1973; Hsü et al.,
120 1973). The salt sequence offshore Israel is nearly 2-km-thick in the deepest portion of
121 the basin, thinning landwards and nearly pinching out to zero beneath the continental
122 slope (Ryan and Cita, 1978; Mart and Gai, 1982; Gradmann et al., 2005; Bertoni and
123 Cartwright, 2006; Netzeband et al., 2006; Gvirtzman et al., 2013, 2017).

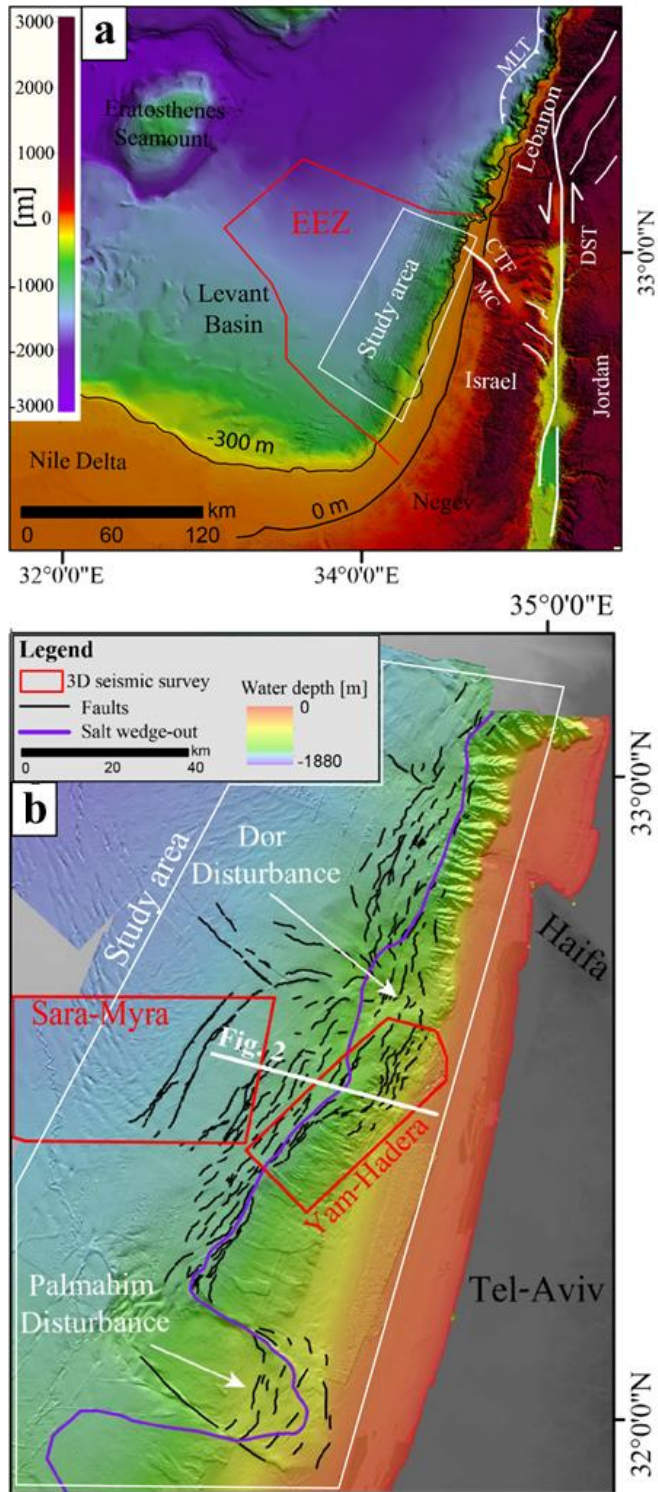
124 In the Pliocene, the Nile, one of the largest rivers in the world, supplied a huge amount
125 of sediments to the eastern Mediterranean that buried the Messinian salt and produced
126 a giant delta with a well-developed deep-sea fan (Masclé et al., 2001). Alongshore
127 currents transporting sediments from the Nile Delta through the Sinai coast to the Israeli
128 coast gradually formed the continental shelf offshore Israel (Gvirtzman and
129 Buchbinder, 1978; Goldsmith and Golik, 1980; Carmel et al., 1985; Stanley, 1989;
130 Tibor et al., 1992; Buchbinder et al., 1993; Golik, 1993, 2002; Buchbinder and
131 Zilberman, 1997; Perlin and Kit, 1999; Ben-Gai et al., 2005; Zviely et al., 2006, 2007;
132 Klein et al., 2007; Schattner et al., 2015; Schattner and Lazar, 2016; Zucker et al.,

133 2021). The slope of this continental shelf is currently faulted by faults, which are the
134 target of this study.

135 2.2. *Regional tectonic activity*

136 It is generally agreed that the Levant continental margin is passive since the Mid-
137 Jurassic (Garfunkel, 1988; Gvirtzman et al., 2008) with no deep-seated active faults
138 south of Mount Carmel (Fig. 1a). Neev et al. (1973), and Neev, (1975) debated this
139 consensus suggesting that an active fault, which they named the Pelusium Line, runs
140 all along the Israeli continental margin. On the other side, Garfunkel and Derin, (1984)
141 and Garfunkel, (1988), argued that all faults crossing the Plio-Quaternary section
142 offshore Israel are thin-skinned and salt-related. Nearly 30 years later, based on better
143 seismic data, Gvirtzman et al. (2008) and Gvirtzman and Steinberg, (2012) showed that
144 a continental margin fault zone (CMFZ) does exist approximately at the same location
145 marked by Neev et al. (1973), but this line stopped operating in the Miocene. The deep-
146 seated faults along the CMFZ (~Pelusium Line) are sealed with Miocene strata and do
147 not reach the surface.

148 Moving northwards to offshore northern Israel and Lebanon, the current tectonic
149 activity is different. The Carmel-Tirza Fault (CTF, Fig. 1a), a branch of the Dead Sea
150 Transform (DST), disrupts the continental margin off the Galilee (Kafri and Folkman,
151 1981; Garfunkel and Almagor, 1984; Ginzburg and Ben-Avraham, 1987; Schattner et
152 al., 2006; Sharon et al., 2020). In addition, the Mount Lebanon Thrust (Fig. 1a) disrupts
153 the continental margin offshore Lebanon and produces earthquakes, such as the 551
154 A.D. M=7.5 Beirut-Tripoli earthquake (Elias et al., 2007).



155

156 *Figure 1: Location maps. (a) Regional setting - bathymetry and topography from Hall (1994).*
 157 *Abbreviations: EEZ - Israel's Exclusive Economic Zone. CTZ- Carmel-Tirza Fault. MC- Mount*
 158 *Carmel. DST - Dead Sea Transform. MLT – Mount Lebanon Thrust Fault. (b) The studied area*
 159 *with thin-skinned faults in black after Gvirtzman et al. (2015). Red polygons are borders of*
 160 *seismic surveys mentioned in the text.*

161

162 2.3. *Thin-skinned, salt-related normal faulting along the Israeli*
163 *continental slope*

164 Unlike the deep-seated faults that stopped operating in the Miocene and do not reach
165 the seabed, numerous thin-skinned normal faults rupture the seafloor all along the
166 Israeli continental slope (Fig. 1b), creating steep steps that are tens of meters high
167 (Almagor and Garfunkel, 1979; Garfunkel et al., 1979; Mart and Gai, 1982; Almagor,
168 1984; Garfunkel, 1984; Garfunkel and Almagor, 1984; Tibor et al., 1992; Gradmann et
169 al., 2005; Martinez et al., 2005; Bertoni and Cartwright, 2005, 2006; Netzeband et al.,
170 2006; Mart and Ryan, 2007; Cartwright and Jackson, 2008; Cartwright et al., 2012;
171 Gvirtzman et al., 2013, 2015; Katz et al., 2015; Safadi et al., 2017; Gadol et al., 2019).

172 Recently, based on improved bathymetry data, the seabed traced of these faults were
173 mapped in detail (Gvirtzman et al., 2015; Katz et al., 2015; Kanari et al., 2020), showing
174 that their scarps are not buried by sediments. This apparently indicates that
175 displacement rates are higher than burial rates. However, averaged over hundreds of
176 thousands of years, displacement rates are roughly similar to sedimentation rates
177 (Elfassi et al., 2019). This indicates that the fault scarps observed on the present seafloor
178 may have formed by recent instantaneous seismic ruptures (Elfassi et al., 2019) or rapid
179 episodic motions. In any case, these relatively shallow thin-skinned faults are incapable
180 of producing large earthquakes (discussed below) because their fault planes are
181 relatively small compared to crustal faults. The major hazard they pose is surface
182 rupture, which may as well trigger slumps (Katz et al., 2015).

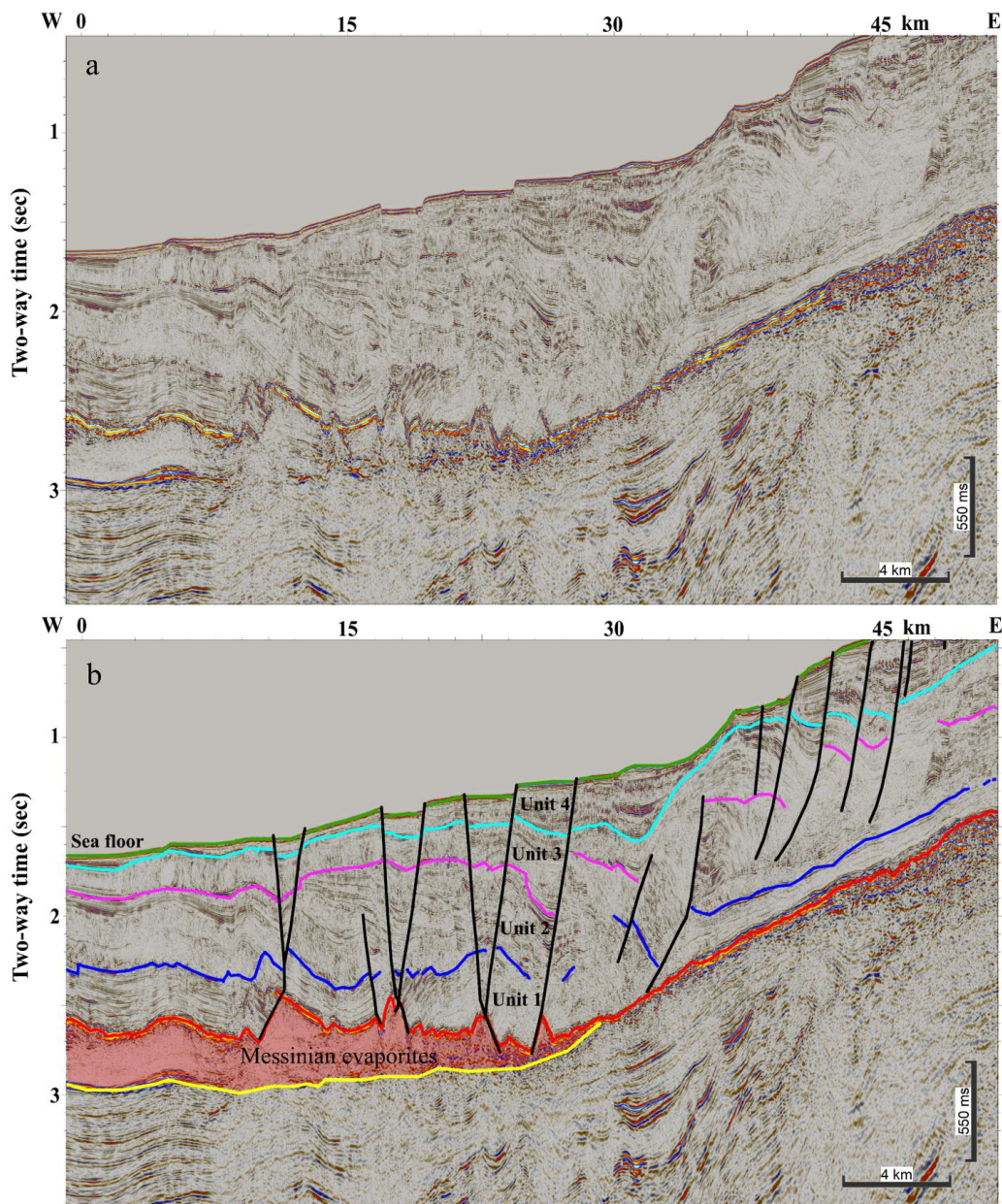
183 The recognition that the thin-skinned faults along the Levant continental margin are
184 related to salt tectonics has been stated in many studies (Neev et al., 1976; Ben-
185 Avraham, 1978; Almagor and Hall, 1979; Garfunkel et al., 1979; Mart and Gai, 1982;
186 Garfunkel, 1984; Garfunkel and Almagor, 1984; Tibor et al., 1992; Gradmann et al.,

187 2005; Martinez et al., 2005; Bertoni and Cartwright, 2006, 2007; Loncke et al., 2006;
188 Netzeband et al., 2006; Hübscher and Netzeband, 2007; Mart and Ryan, 2007;
189 Hübscher et al., 2008; Cartwright and Jackson, 2008; Clark and Cartwright, 2009;
190 Cartwright et al., 2012; Gvirtzman et al., 2013; Gadol et al., 2019; Ben Zeev and
191 Gvirtzman, 2020; Hamdani et al., 2021). In particular, it has been suggested that
192 faulting was initiated by basinward salt flow (Gradmann et al., 2005; Bertoni and
193 Cartwright, 2006, 2015; Allen et al., 2016; Cartwright et al., 2018; Kirkham et al., 2019)
194 triggered by basinward tilting of the continental margin, as a result of coastal uplift
195 (Cartwright and Jackson, 2008; Elfassi et al., 2019; Hamdani et al., 2021).

196 The beginning of faulting was initially dated to a relatively broad time interval between
197 the late Pliocene and the early Pleistocene (e.g., Garfunkel et al., 1979; Almagor, 1984;
198 Gradmann et al., 2005; Netzeband et al., 2006). Later, based on 3D high-resolution
199 seismic surveys, Cartwright and Jackson, (2008) showed that offshore central Israel
200 faulting began in the mid-Pliocene. Then, in the late Pliocene, it spread northward, and
201 in the early Pleistocene, southward. Elfassi et al. (2019) established a new
202 chronostratigraphic scheme for the Pliocene-Quaternary section offshore Israel that
203 allows better fault dating. By combining seismic and bio-stratigraphic data, they
204 divided the Plio-Quaternary sequence into four units (Fig. 2): Unit 1- Pliocene (5.33-
205 2.6 Ma); Unit 2- Gelasian (2.6-1.8 Ma); Unit 3- Calabrian-Ionian (1.8-0.35 Ma); and
206 Unit 4- Ionian-Holocene (<0.35 Ma). Based on the improved Chrono-stratigraphy,
207 Elfassi et al. (2019) measured displacement rates on several faults offshore central
208 Israel (in the Sara-Myra survey, Fig. 1b) and concluded that during the Pliocene faulting

209 activity was minor (< 4 m/Ma), then, in the Gelasian, it peaked to rates of >100 m/Ma
210 (10 cm/ky). Later it decreased to rates of ~ 50 m/My (5 cm/ky).

211 In what follows, we use the chrono-stratigraphy of Elfassi et al. (2019) to map the most
212 recent horizon (350 ka) in the entire study area (light blue- base Unit 4 in Fig. 2b) and
213 identify the zones with the most potent recent activity.



214

215 *Figure 2: Uninterpreted (a) and interpreted (b) seismic section across the Levant continental*
216 *margin offshore Israel (location in Fig. 1b). Chrono- and seismo-stratigraphic of the Pliocene-*
217 *Quaternary section after Elfassi et al. (2019). Green- Sea floor, Light blue – base Unit 4, purple*
218 *– base Unit 3, blue – base Unit 2, red – base Unit 1 (and top evaporites), yellow – Base*
219 *evaporates. Thin-skinned faults in black lines.*

220 2.4. *The Dor and the Palmahim Disturbances*

221 Two huge (10s of km) thin-skinned, rootless structures were observed in the 1970s
222 along the Israeli slope – the Palmahim and the Dor Disturbances (Fig. 1b; Garfunkel et
223 al., 1979; Garfunkel, 1984; Almagor, 1984). Some studies described these disturbances
224 as deep-seated tectonic structures (e.g., Neev et al., 1976), while others suggested
225 gravitational instability structures induced by basinward sliding over late Miocene (i.e.,
226 Messinian evaporites) detachment surface (Garfunkel et al., 1977). According to
227 Garfunkel, (1984), these disturbances are similar to other gravitationally induced
228 rootless structures, which are related to the flowage of underlying salt or shale, that are
229 known in deltas and continental margins in other parts of the world (C. H. Bruce, 1973;
230 Evamy et al., 1978; Harding and Lowell, 1979; Crans et al., 1980). The Palmahim
231 structure has been described as a rotational slide, bounded between two translational
232 faults (Mart et al., 1978; Garfunkel et al., 1979), while the Dor Disturbance seems to be
233 the focus of a regional deformation zone (Garfunkel, 1984; Gadol et al., 2019).

234 **3. Data and Methods**

235 This study aims to map seabed fault scarps and their subsurface continuation.
236 Accordingly, we start with bathymetry analysis quantifying fault scarps; and then use
237 seismic data to map faults in the subsurface and to measure displacements.

238 *3.1. Bathymetry*

239 The Israel national bathymetry survey provides pixel resolution of 15 m until a water
240 depth of ~700 m (Sade et al., 2006, 2007) and 50 m between isobaths 700 m and 1700
241 m (Tibor et al., 2013). In addition, we used bathymetric grids with ~10 m cell size,
242 derived from four 3D seismic surveys listed in Table 1 (Aviya; Dalit; Yam Hadera; and
243 Sara-Myra).

244 To quantify the height of fault scarps at the present seafloor, we developed an algorithm
245 that uses the fault map prepared by Gvirtzman et al. (2015) and automatically calculates
246 elevation differences from both sides of the fault segment every 50 meters. A fault
247 segment is a visually mappable lineament in a bathymetric map, regardless of its
248 connection to other segments in the sub-seabed. The algorithm begins with manually
249 moving fault segments, marked by Gvirtzman et al. (2015), to their most accurate
250 location, that is, along the maximal slope of the seabed fault scarp. Then, for each point
251 along each fault, the algorithm measures the dip angle and the true fault direction (dip
252 direction), ignoring the possibility that the fault scarp may have changed by erosion
253 and/or sedimentation. For each point along the faults, the algorithm searches the two
254 closest points from both sides of the fault according to the true dip direction and the dip
255 angle. The calculated output includes the three components of the fault movement;
256 Throw, Heave, and Displacement. This algorithm was applied to all grids described in
257 Table 1, and the measurements were used for the throw analysis.

258 3.2. *Seismic reflection data*

259 The seismic data used here include 2D and 3D industrial seismic reflection surveys
260 processed in the time domain (TWT) and 3D seismic cubes that were pre-stack depth
261 migrated (Table 1). All surveys were loaded and interpreted using the Kingdom HIS
262 software. Preliminary mapping of the four seismic units described above was done by
263 Elfassi et al. (2019). Ben-Zeev and Gvirtzman, (2020) expanded this mapping to cover
264 Israel's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ; Fig. 1a). Here, we recheck and remap these
265 horizons in detail along the continental slope where faults are common and map these
266 four units in 3D seismic volumes (Fig. 1b, Table 1).

267 3.2.1. *Subsurface faults mapping*

268 Each fault with a seabed expression was mapped in the subsurface. When a seismic
269 volume was available, we mapped the faults in 3D manually and frequently showed
270 that separate seabed segments connect in the subsurface. If only the 2D seismic lines
271 were available, connectivity between segments would sometimes remain uncertain. In
272 addition, we measured the cumulative displacement of the ~350 ka horizon (the
273 theoretical vertical resolution is a quarter of a wavelength; in our case 4-5 m).

274 The subsurface mapping of faults adds several layers of information on top of seabed
275 mapping: (1) it allows measuring the displacement of dated horizons and thus indicates
276 the rate of motion; (2) it allows distinguishing between small surface faults that are
277 minor and small surface faults that connect at the subsurface to large faults; (3) it allows
278 identifying hidden fault segments, which do not appear on the bathymetry but may
279 rupture in the future; (4) it provides a 3D view of the fault plane which is essential
280 for structural analysis (and estimation of potential earthquake magnitudes, if these
281 faults rupture seismically, see discussion).

282

#	Survey name	Survey type and units	Source	Survey's technical details	Grid cell size	Data available for this study
1	Aviya	Seismic reflection: Depth m	Delek Ltd.	Line spacing: 25 m x 12.5 m Sample interval: 4 ms	10 m	Bathymetry
2	Dalit	Seismic reflection: Depth m	Delek Ltd.	Line spacing: 25 m x 12.5 m Sample interval: 4 ms	10 m	Bathymetry
3	Yam Hadera	Seismic reflection: Depth m	Modiin Energy	Line spacing: 25 m x 12.5 m Sample interval: 5 m	9 m	Seismic (3D), Bathymetry
4	Gabriela	Seismic reflection: Depth m	Modiin Energy	Line spacing: 25 m x 12.5 m Sample interval: 4 m	13 m	Seismic (3D)
5	Sara-Myra	Seismic reflection: Depth m	Modiin Energy + ILDC	Line spacing: 25 m x 12.5 m Sample interval: 3 m	10 m	Seismic (3D), Bathymetry
6	The Israel national bathymetry survey	Multibeam sonar: Depth m	(Sade et al., 2006; Tibor et al., 2013)	15 m x 15 m till water depth of 700 m and 50 m x 50 m till water depth of over 1700 m.	50 m, 15 m	Bathymetry
7	Isramco North Central	Seismic reflection: TWT sec	Isramco	Line spacing: 12.5 m x 12.5 m Sample interval: 4 ms		Seismic (3D)
8	TGS	Seismic reflection: TWT sec	TGS-NOPEC Geophysical Company	Shot interval: 25m Group interval: 12.5 m Sample interval: 2 ms Total line length of ~6000 km.	5-10 km	Seismic (2D)
9	HORIZON	Seismic reflection: TWT sec	Horizon Exploration Limited	Shot interval: 25 m Sample interval: 4 ms		Seismic (2D)
10	SPETRUM	Seismic reflection: TWT sec	Spectrum Energy & info. Tech. Ltd	Shot interval: 50 m Group interval: 12.5 m Sample interval: 4 ms Streamer length: 7200 m		Seismic (2D)

284 **4. Results**

285 *4.1. Measurements*

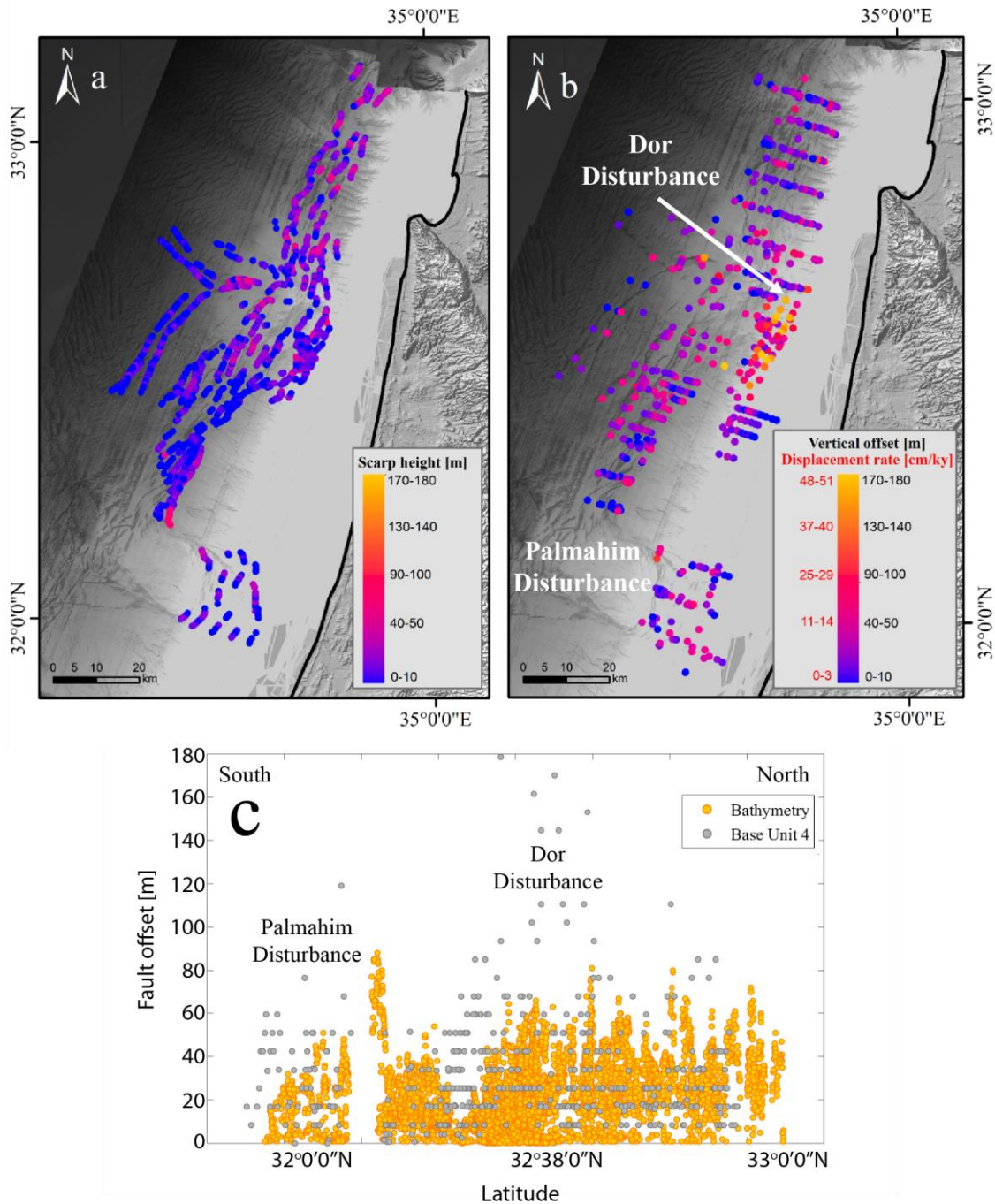
286 *4.1.1. Scarp height*

287 Figure 3a shows the heights of seabed scarps measured from both sides of all faults
 288 every 50 m. The map shows that between the Palmahim and the Dor disturbances, fault
 289 scarps are relatively low (<20 m), whereas from the Dor disturbance northwards, they

290 are significantly higher (20-90 m). This observation is consistent with extension
291 measurements that also increases northwards (Cartwright and Jackson, 2008; Ben Zeev
292 and Gvirtzman, 2020).

293 *4.1.2. Vertical displacement rate*

294 The problem with analyzing bathymetry alone is that faults scarps are reduced by
295 sedimentation and erosion and do not correctly represent fault displacement. Therefore,
296 we also measure fault throw along the youngest regionally mappable horizon (base Unit
297 4, Fig. 3b), which yield vertical displacement rates averaged for the past 350 ky (the
298 best possible representation of ‘recent’ in the study area). These measurements
299 highlight an exceptionally active zone in the vicinity of the Dor disturbance with
300 vertical displacement rates reaching 40-50 cm/ky (Fig. 3b); this anomaly is not detected
301 in the bathymetric analysis (Fig. 3a), emphasizing the need for subsurface
302 measurements. To further illustrate the Dor anomaly, Fig. 3c shows a projection of all
303 seabed and subsurface offset measurements along a south-north section emphasizing
304 peak throws near the Dor disturbance (@X~32°38'0"N), nearly two times larger than
305 in surrounding areas.



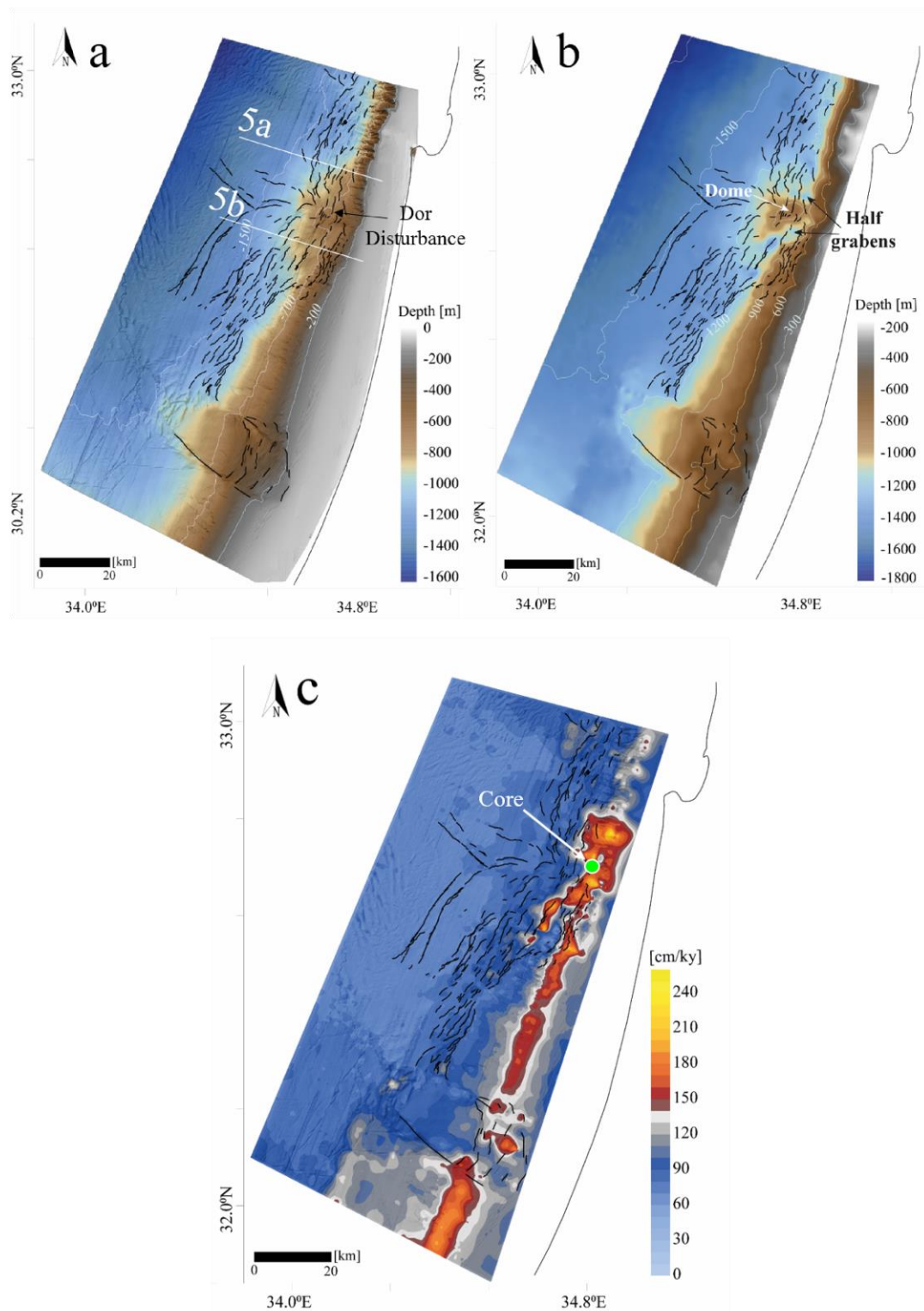
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 307 *Figure 3: Vertical offset measurements along faults. (a) Height of seabed scarps derived from*
 308 *bathymetry analysis. (b) Vertical offsets at the base unit 4 horizon measured from seismic data.*
 309 *Assigning 350 ka to the base Unit 4 horizon (Elfassi et al., 2019), its vertical offset is*
 310 *transformed into vertical displacement rate (the left-hand side of the scale bar in b). (c) Vertical*
 311 *offset measured at the base of unit 4 (gray dots) and scarps height at the seafloor (orange dots).*
 312 *Note that vertical offsets in bathymetry increase northwards, whereas vertical offsets at the*
 313 *base of unit 4 increase in the vicinity of the Dor disturbance. Bathymetry from Tibor et al.*
 314 *(2013).*

315 *4.1.3. Sedimentation rate*

316 Considering the 350 ka age of base Unit 4 (Elfassi et al., 2019), recent sedimentation
317 rates (thickness of Unit 4 divided by 350 ky) can be calculated for the entire study area
318 (Fig. 4c). Results indicate relatively low (<60 cm/ky) values in the deep basin,
319 increasing to ~90 cm/ky in the mid-slope and >150 cm/ky along the basinward
320 propagating shelf edge (Ben Zeev and Gvirtzman, 2020). Particularly interesting is the
321 off-shelf area near the Dor disturbance reaching >200 cm/ky (the impact of this
322 observation on fault interpretation is discussed below).

323 In addition to the shelf edge belt, a large thickness of Unit 4 is observed in a deep half-
324 graben separating a prominent dome at the center of the Dor disturbance from the shelf
325 edge (Fig. 4b). The accommodation space created by this half-graben is quickly filled
326 by sediments arriving from the nearby shelf edge. South of the Dor disturbance, the
327 half-graben is separated from the shelf edge (Fig. 5b). North of the disturbance, the two
328 features create a continuous sedimentary package (Fig. 5a). Noteworthy, the listric
329 faults east of the half-graben are different from all the other faults as will be discussed
330 below.

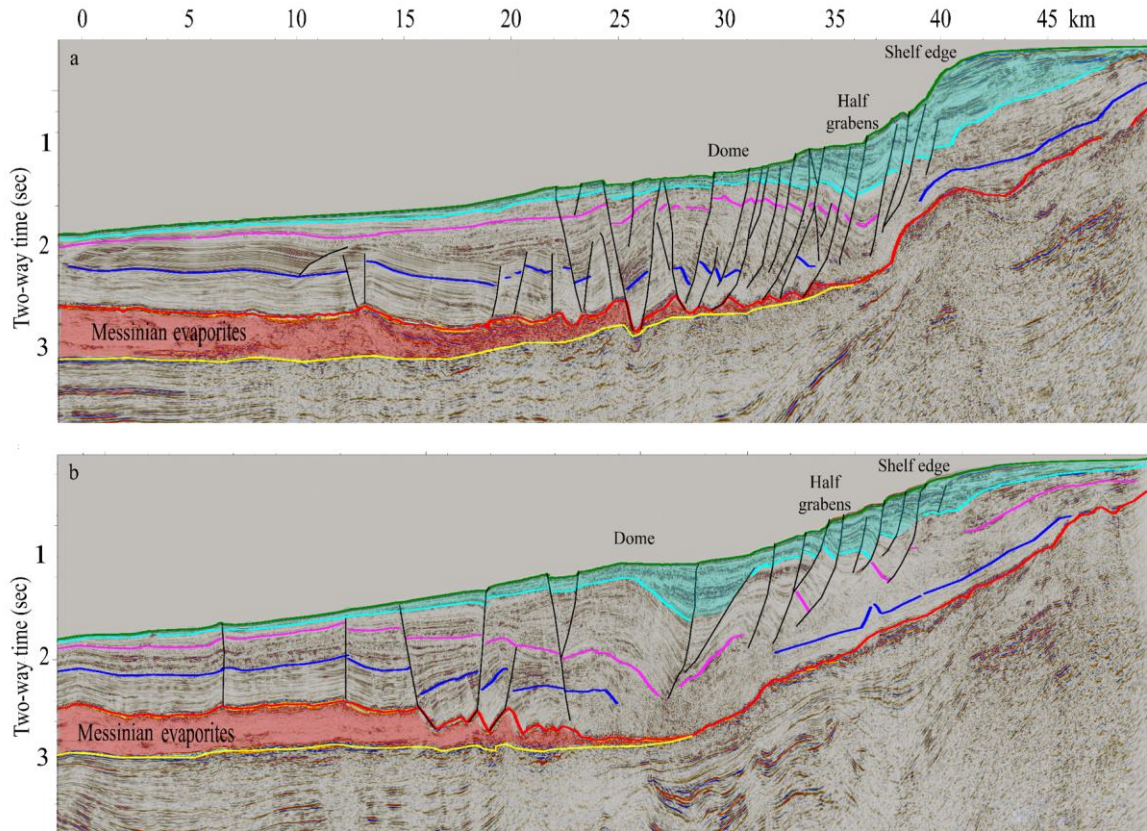
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332

333 *Figure 4: (a) Faults on bathymetry background (After Tibor et al., 2013). (b) Base unit 4*
 334 *structure map. (c) Unit 4 sedimentation rate. Half grabens separated the Dor disturbance from*
 335 *the shelf edge and emphasized its dome shape seen in b. These half grabens are filled with a*
 336 *thick section of Unit 4 with a sedimentation rate exceeding ~1.8 m/ky (c). A high sedimentation*
 337 *rate is also observed along the shelf edge, expressing shelf progradation during the past 350*
 338 *ky.*

339



340

341 *Figure 5: (a) Cross-section north (a) and south (b) of the Dor disturbance (seismic location in*
 342 *Fig. 4a). Normal faults in black lines. Seismic reflectors as in Fig. 2.*

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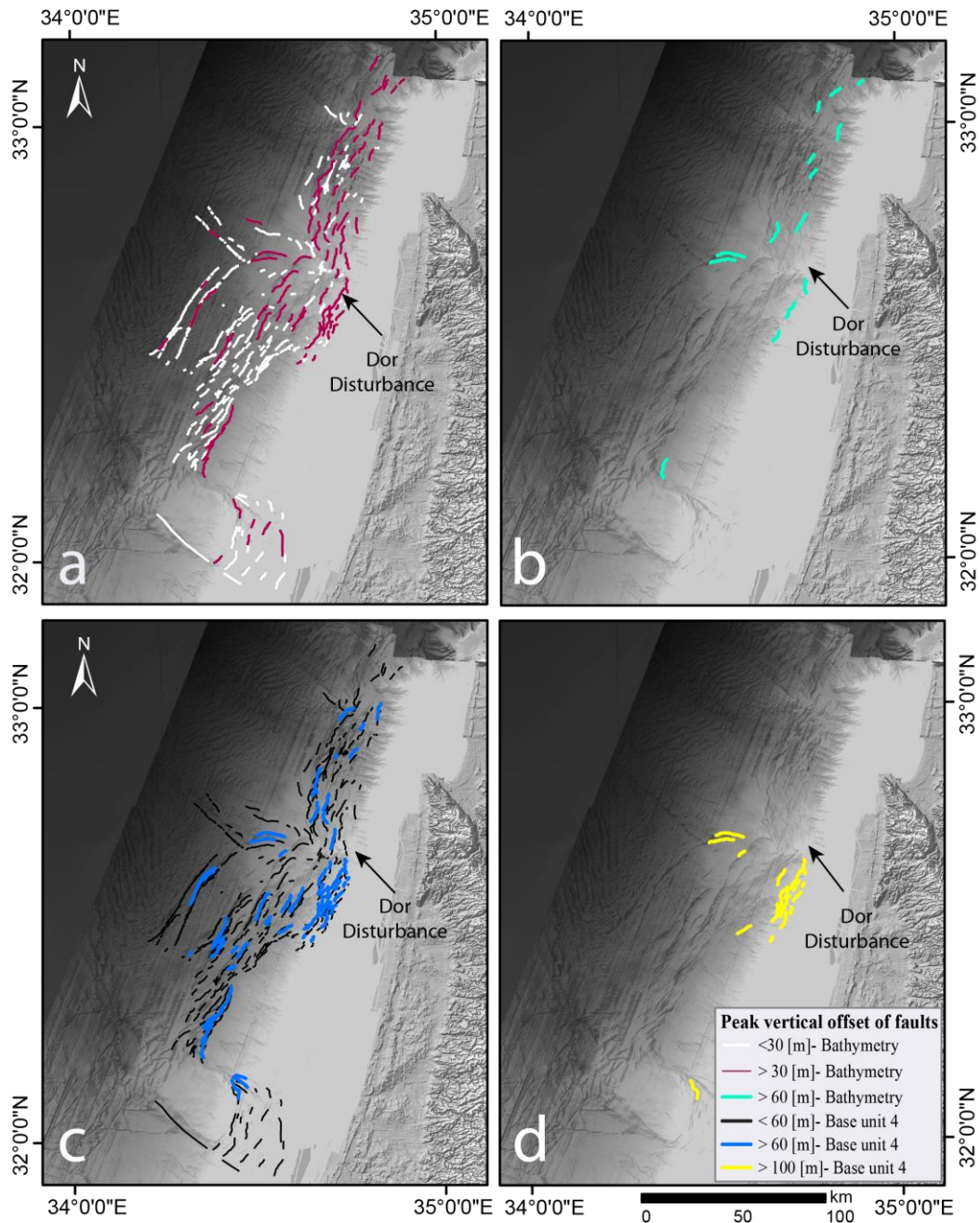
344 4.2. Fault classification

345 4.2.1. Vertical displacement categories

346 To classify faults according to their vertical displacement, we assign each fault segment
 347 a single value of maximum throw measured anywhere along it (a) at the seabed (height
 348 of scarp) and (b) at the base of Unit 4 (vertical offset). Results are presented in Fig. 6
 349 in three colors – white represents faults producing seabed scarps <30 m; red 30-60 m;
 350 and turquoise represents faults with seabed scarps >60 m. This illustration is consistent
 351 with Fig. 3, showing that seabed fault scarps higher than 30 m (red) are more common
 352 near Dor and northwards (Fig. 6a). In contrast, fault scarps higher than 60 m (turquoise)
 353 are observed only north of Dor (Fig. 6b) with the exception of one outlier near the
 354 Palmahim Disturbance. Noteworthy, the threshold values of 30 m and 60 m were
 355 defined for convenience, such that all three groups will include a reasonable number of

356 faults, and the third group with exceptionally high values will be smaller. If needed,
357 these threshold values can be changed.

358 Consistent with our hypothesis that fault scarps are decreased by sedimentation and
359 erosion, classification according to vertical offsets at the base of Unit 4 (Fig. 6c,d)
360 portrays a different picture with peak vertical displacements in the vicinity of the Dor
361 disturbance without increasing northward trend (again, one outlier near Palmahim). In
362 particular, we highlight the faults bounding the Dor disturbance from the east (Fig. 6d),
363 where large throws (>100 m) at the base of Unit 4 are observed. These faults coincide
364 with the listric faults mentioned above (Fig. 5b). Uncommonly, these faults form seabed
365 scarps higher than 60 m (Fig. 6b) despite the exceptionally high sedimentation rate
366 observed at that location (Fig. 4c).



367

368 *Figure 6: Fault classification by vertical throw after assigning each fault segment a single*
 369 *value, representing the maximum vertical displacement measured anywhere along it. (a) Faults*
 370 *forming seabed scarps smaller (white) and higher (red) than 30 meters. (b) Faults forming*
 371 *seabed scarps larger than 60 meters (turquoise). (c) Faults displacing base Unit 4 by more*
 372 *than 60 m (blue) and smaller than 60 meters (black). (d) Faults displacing base Unit 4 by more*
 373 *than 100 m (yellow). Note that faults with the largest vertical throw are concentrated around*
 374 *the Dor Disturbance. Background in all maps is shaded relief of bathymetry (Tibor et al., 2013).*

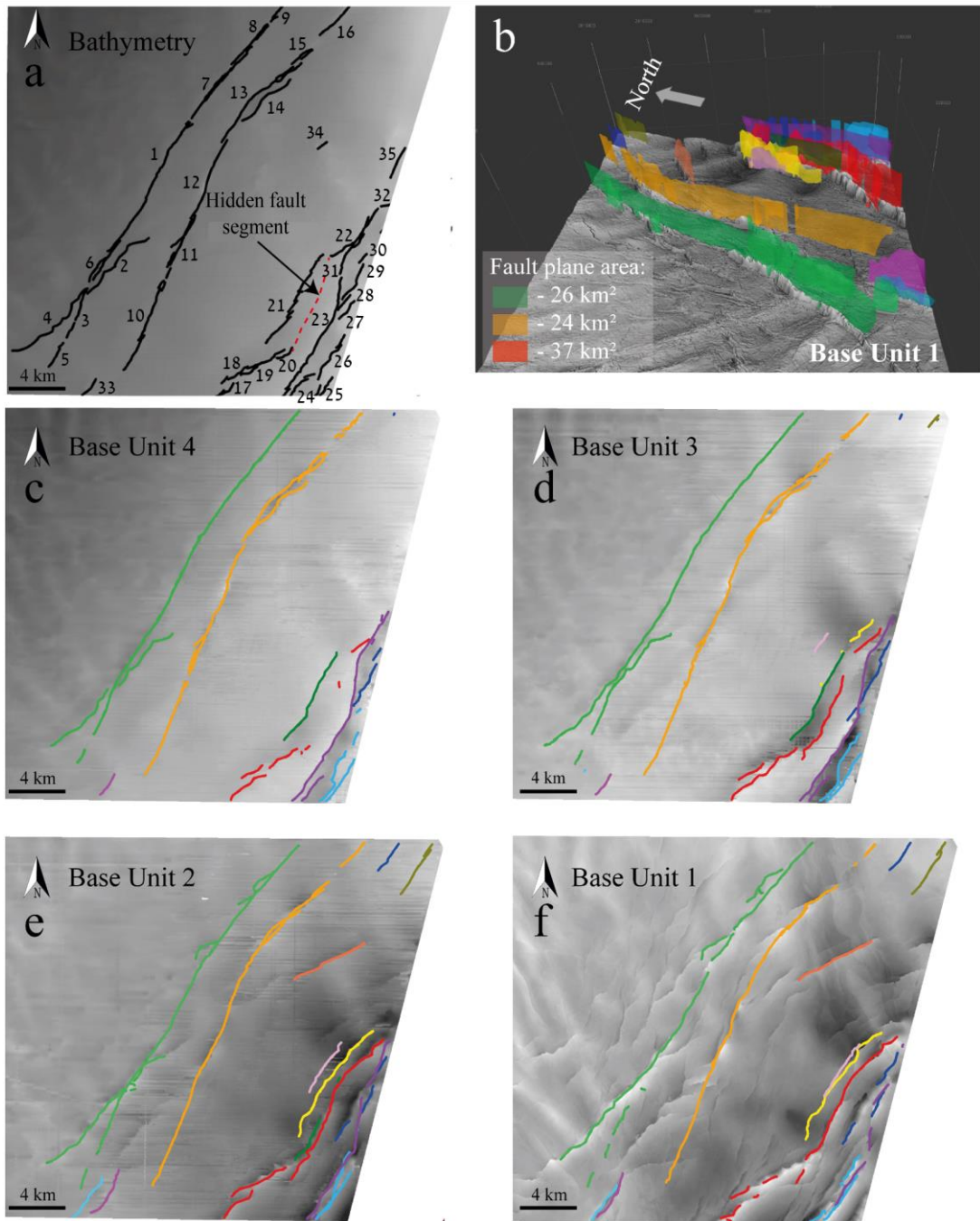
375

376

377 4.2.2. *Hidden fault segments*

378 To map fault planes in the subsurface and measure their area, we use high-resolution
379 3D seismic volumes. Figure 7 illustrates that 35 fault segments rupturing the seabed on
380 the eastern side of the Sara-Myra survey converge at depth to seven major faults.
381 Noteworthy, a part of the fault marked by red (Fig. 7b) has no surface expression (Fig.
382 7a). This hidden fault segment ruptures the three lower horizons (Fig. 7d-f), reaching
383 base Unit 4 in several locations (Fig. 7c) and is unseen at the seabed (Fig. 7a). Namely,
384 the partial seabed segments do not represent the actual fault size. A similar analysis
385 conducted for the Yam Hadera seismic survey illustrates that several major fault
386 segments (marked green, pink, and yellow) are hidden (Fig. 8a,b). The sub-seabed fault
387 mapping in 3D highlights the segments “missing” in the bathymetry.

388 Figure 8c presents an example of five 3D-mapped faults with their measured plane area.
389 The red and blue faults are two sides of one graben rooted in the Messinian salt layer
390 with a relatively minor fault plane area, whereas the pink, yellow and green faults have
391 a significantly larger fault plane area despite their shallower penetration only to the top
392 of the Pliocene (base unit 2) horizon (Fig. 8c).

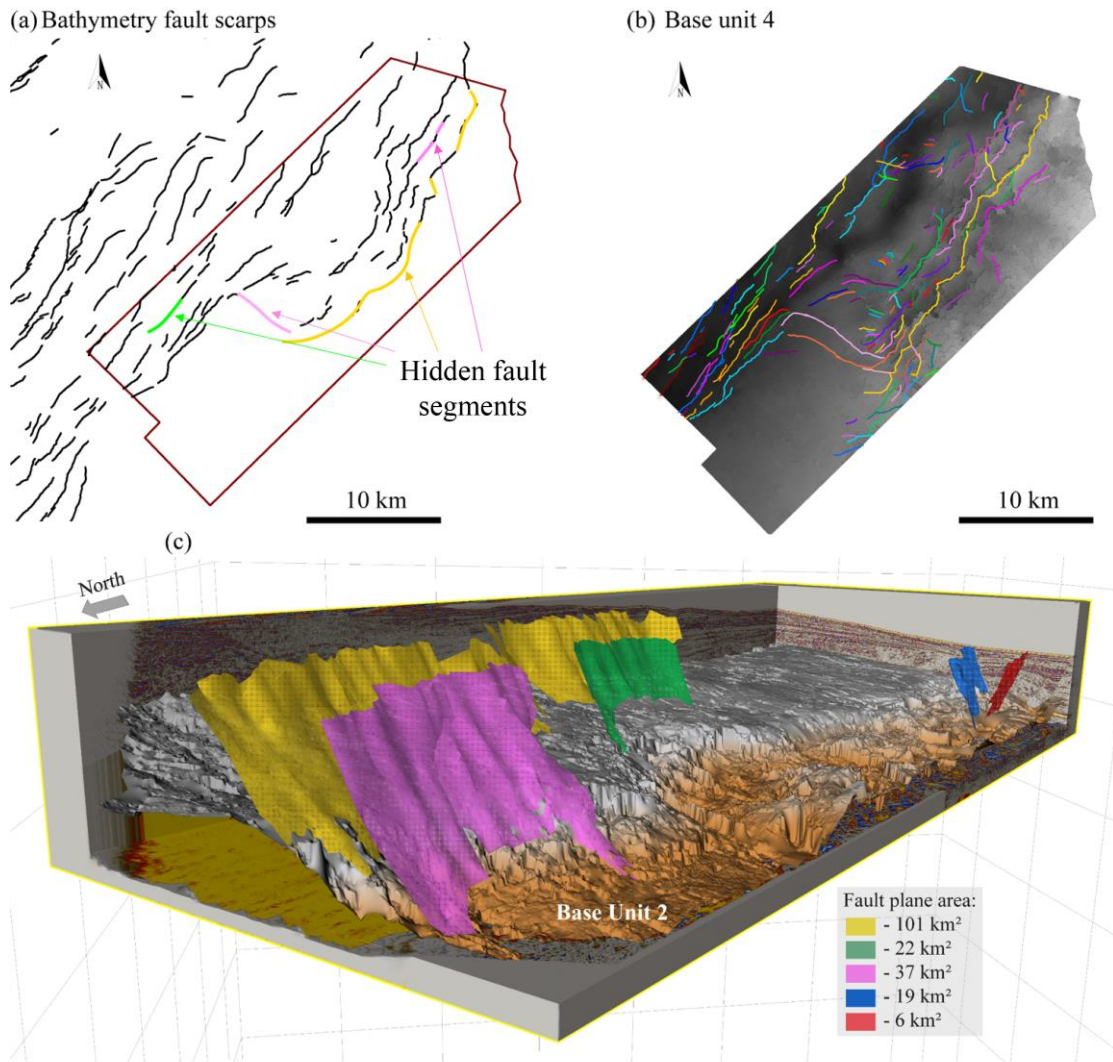


393

394 *Figure 7: Subsurface mapping of fault planes. (a) 35 faults segments rupturing the seabed in*
 395 *the eastern part of the Sara-Myra survey (location in Fig. 1). (b) A 3D view of fault planes*
 396 *illustrating that the 35 fault segments at the seabed belong to 7 major faults (each fault*
 397 *represented by one color). An example of some fault plane area measurements. (c-f) Structural*
 398 *maps of four subsurface horizons (base units 4-1), each with faults crossing it (same colors as*
 399 *in b). Note the hidden fault segment (dashed red line in a), which does not disrupt the seabed*
 400 *but may rupture it in the future.*

401

402



403

404 *Figure 8: (a) Seabed faults in the Yam Hadera seismic survey with hidden fault segments*
 405 *marked in the same colors as the fault to which it is connected in (b). (b) All faults are displacing*
 406 *Base Unit 4. Each fault is represented by one color. (c) 3D illustration of 5 faults with their*
 407 *measured fault plane area. Note that the yellow and the pink faults are not detected at the*
 408 *seabed in some parts (hidden fault segments) despite their large plane area (101², 37² km,*
 409 *respectively), and their colors are the same as in (b).*

410

411

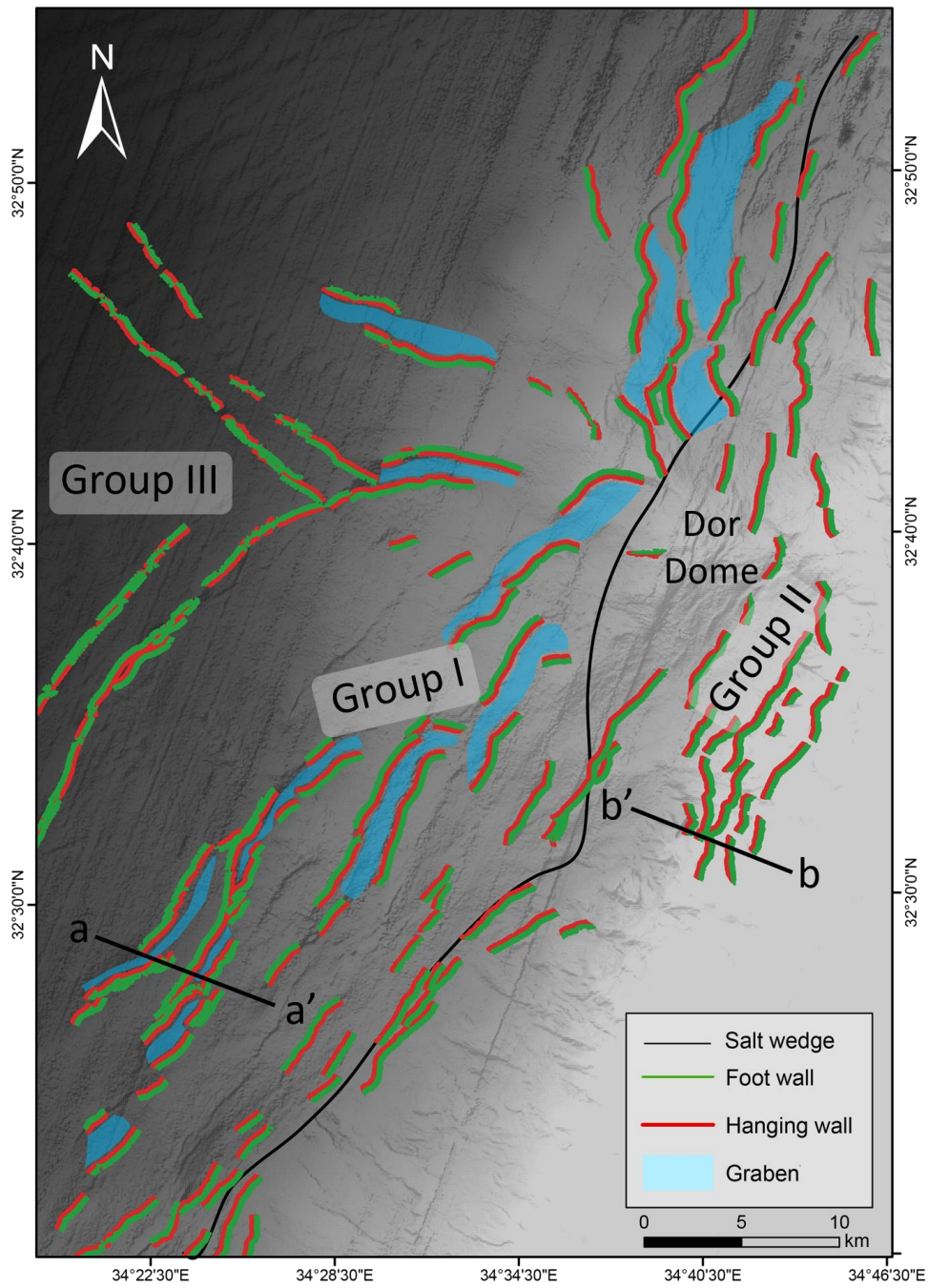
412 4.2.3. *Geometry and location relative to the salt wedge*

413 Another way for fault classification is based on their geometry and location relative to
414 the underlying salt layer (Fig. 9). Group I produce horsts and grabens (marked blue)
415 mostly along the base of the continental slope, west of the salt wedge-out line. The
416 faults of Group I displace the entire Pliocene–Quaternary section down to the top salt
417 horizon (Fig. 10a, cross-section aa'), and their dip angle varies around 45° (Fig. 11).

418 Group II consists of seaward dipping faults producing a series of down-stepping stairs
419 (growth faults, rotated blocks, and half grabens) mainly in the upper slope, east of the
420 salt wedge-out line (Fig. 9). These faults are highly listric (Fig. 10b, cross-section bb')
421 as already described above (Fig. 5). They are characterized by smaller dip angles of
422 about 30° (Fig. 11) and do not displace Unit 1 (Fig. 10b, cross-section bb').

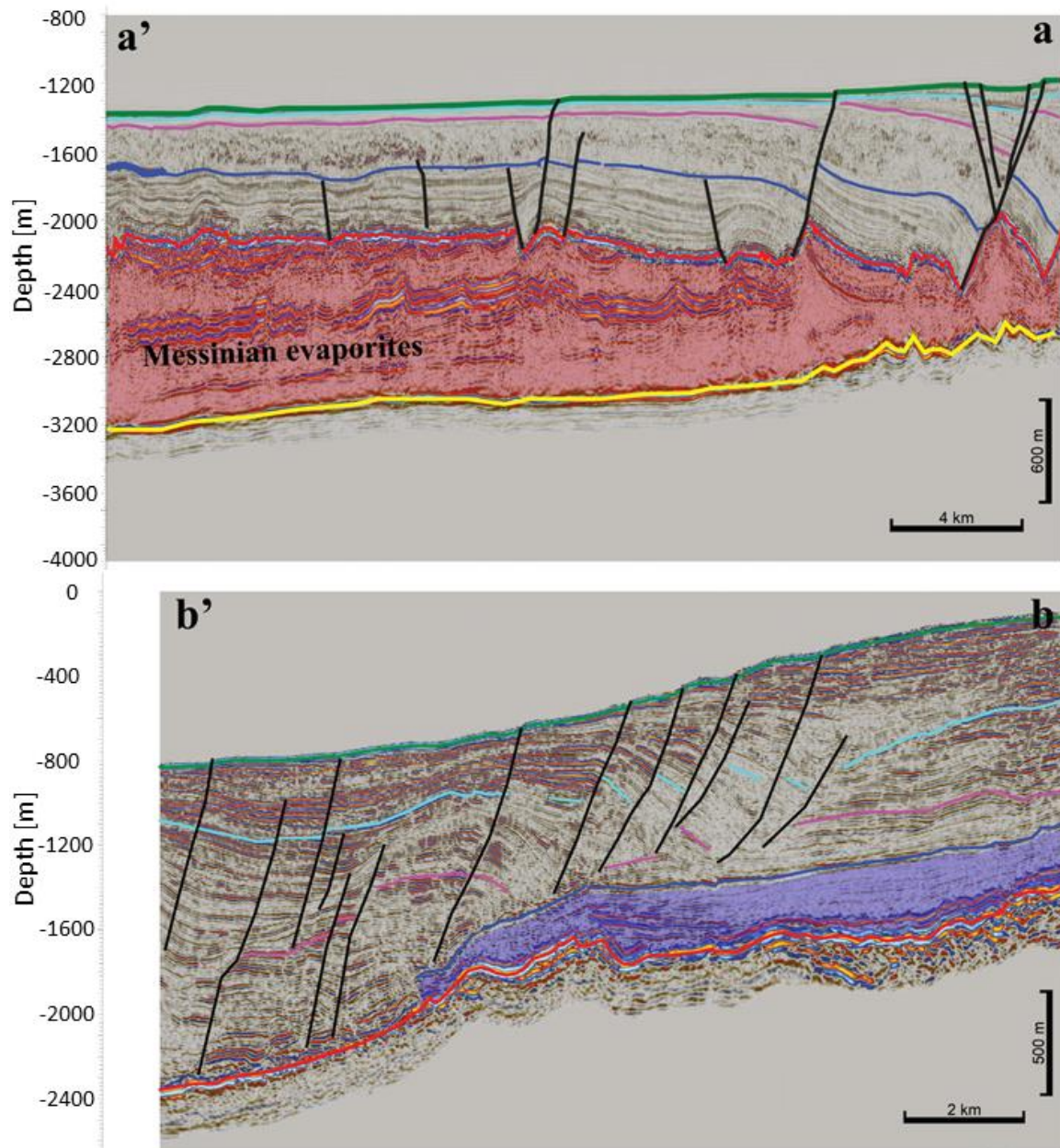
423 Group III are relatively long strike-slip faults with a few hundred meters of lateral
424 displacement (Ben Zeev and Gvirtzman, 2020). Their vertical throw is relatively small,
425 and its direction changes along the strike (Fig. 9).

426



427

428 *Figure 9: Classification of faults according to structure and location. The hanging wall in red,*
 429 *the footwall in green, and the grabens in blue. Group I consists of horsts and grabens, running*
 430 *along the base of the continental slope west of the salt wedge-out boundary (black line). Group*
 431 *II consists of down-stepping normal faults with hanging walls always on the basinward side,*
 432 *mostly located east of the salt wedge-out line. Group III is strike-slip faults. Bathymetry from*
 433 *Tibor et al. (2013).*



434

435 *Figure 10: Seismic cross-sections illustrating the difference between Group I (a-a', Sara-Mira*
 436 *survey) located west of the salt wedge and Group II (b-b', Yam-Hadera survey) located on the*
 437 *continental slope east of the salt wedge (Messinian evaporites are missing). Note that the faults*
 438 *of Group II do not displace the Top Unit 2 horizon (Unit 2 in blue). Location in Fig. 9.*

439

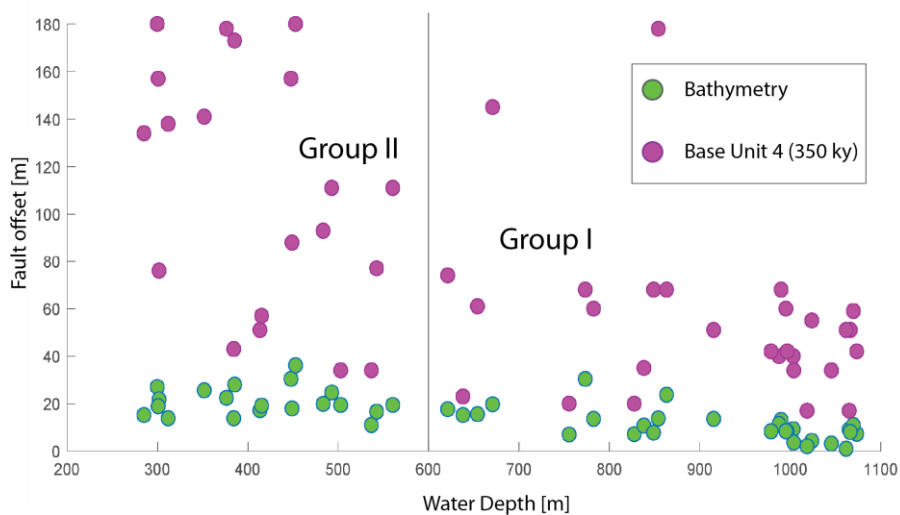
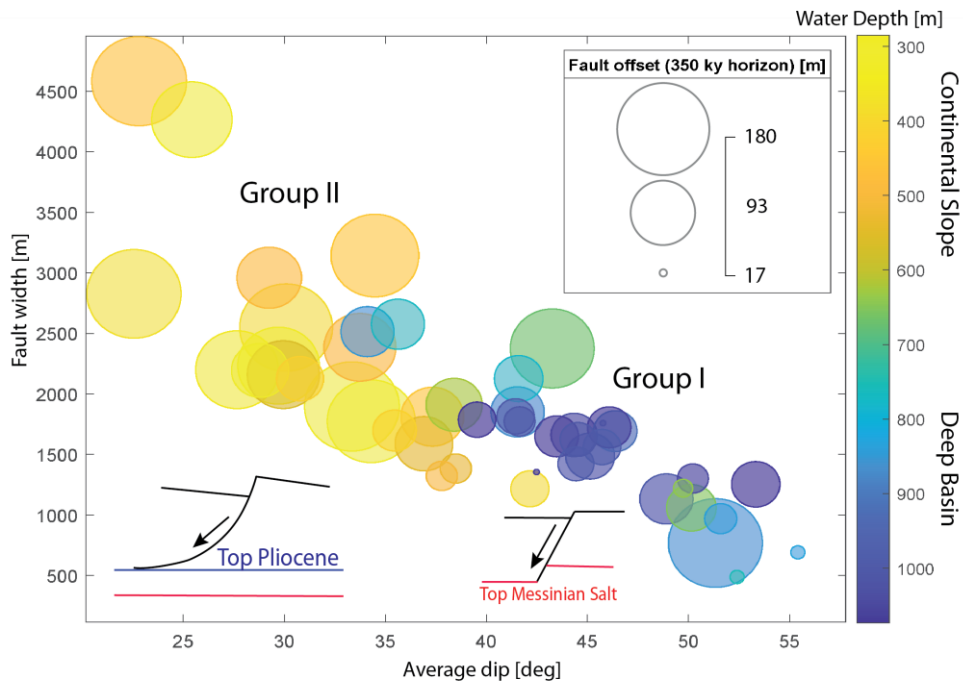
440 The high-resolution seismic volumes “Sara-Myra” and “Yam Hadera” allow detailed
 441 investigation of the difference between Group I and Group II according to three
 442 parameters: displacement (at the seabed and at the base Unit 4), fault plane dip, and
 443 fault width. The upper panel in Fig. 11 illustrates that the fault width negatively

444 correlates with the dip angle (larger width for gently dipping faults). The lower panel
445 of Fig. 11 further illustrates that displacement (seabed and base Unit 4) negatively
446 correlates with water depth (faults in shallower waters have larger displacements).

447 Group I, located in the deeper waters (blue), is characterized by relatively small vertical
448 offsets (better seen in the Base unit 4 horizon), high dip angles ($>45^\circ$), and relatively
449 short fault width (0.5-2 km). Group II (the listric faults), located in shallower waters
450 (yellow), is characterized by larger (Base unit 4) vertical offsets, lower dip angles
451 ($\sim 30^\circ$), and larger faults widths (1.5-4.5 km). These observations highlight the listric
452 faults (Group II), located east of the salt wedge-out line (Fig. 10b), which are big in size
453 and in vertical offsets.

454

455



456

457 *Figure 11: Upper panel shows the relationship between the average faults dip angle; the fault*
 458 *width; the location of the fault along the slope (water depth); and the offset of Base Unit 4*
 459 *horizon. Group II, located on the upper slope, is characterized by larger fault width (1.5-4.5*
 460 *km), gently dipping ($\sim 30^\circ$) fault planes and larger fault offsets. The lower panel shows the*
 461 *difference between the offsets as they were measured on the seabed and Base Unit 4 (cumulative*
 462 *offset). The differences in faults offsets are much larger in Group II.*

463 **5. Discussion**

464 *5.1. Seabed versus subsurface mapping of faults*

465 Detailed mapping of the seafloor has become standard practice in marine geohazard
466 assessment, and the demand for improved resolution is continuously growing. Here we
467 show that bathymetry is not enough for faults investigation, even if it is extremely
468 detailed, because fault scarps are strongly affected by sedimentation and erosion; hence
469 their heights do not represent the real offsets. In fact, the subsurface mapping may be
470 more informative even if its resolution is lower. For example, peak vertical
471 displacements of faults near the Dor disturbance are twice the size of those measured
472 along nearby faults; yet this is not observed on the bathymetry because the scarps are
473 quickly buried. Sedimentation rates averaged on 350 ky, indicate >200 cm/ky near the
474 Dor disturbance (Fig. 4c). Moreover, a 6-m-long core retrieved nearby (location in Fig.
475 4c) with sedimentation rate of >850 cm/ky (Ashkenazi et al., 2022), indicates that
476 sedimentation rate may have increased in the last couple of thousands of years. Note
477 that the sedimentation rates calculation includes all sources of material accumulated
478 due to the downslope transport of materials.

479 The drawback of these measurements is their dependency on the quality of the seismic
480 data. Where only 2D lines are available, the measured value represents the throws at
481 the survey-fault intersection, which may represent the tip of the fault; moreover, some
482 faults may not be crossed by any seismic profile.

483 Additional support for the advantage of subsurface mapping is the structural map of the
484 350 ka horizon (Fig. 4b) and the calculated sedimentation rate map (Fig. 4c). These
485 maps show that the most active regions in the study area are the half-grabens
486 surrounding the Dor disturbance from the east (Fig. 5). These half-grabens are rapidly
487 subsiding (thick Unit 4), and the faults bounding them are the most active. We suggest

488 that while the faults of Group I are driven by the salt flow that produces extension above
489 it (Hamdani et al., 2021), the faults of Group II are also affected by the gravitational
490 collapse of the continental slope.

491 5.2. *Fault classification*

492 Based on the maximal vertical displacement of base Unit 4 (Fig. 6c,d), we classify all
493 fault segments mapped on the seabed (rupturing the seabed) to three vertical offset
494 levels. Vertical offset smaller than 60 m is considered low; 60-100 m is considered
495 moderate; and >100 m is considered high (Fig. 12a).

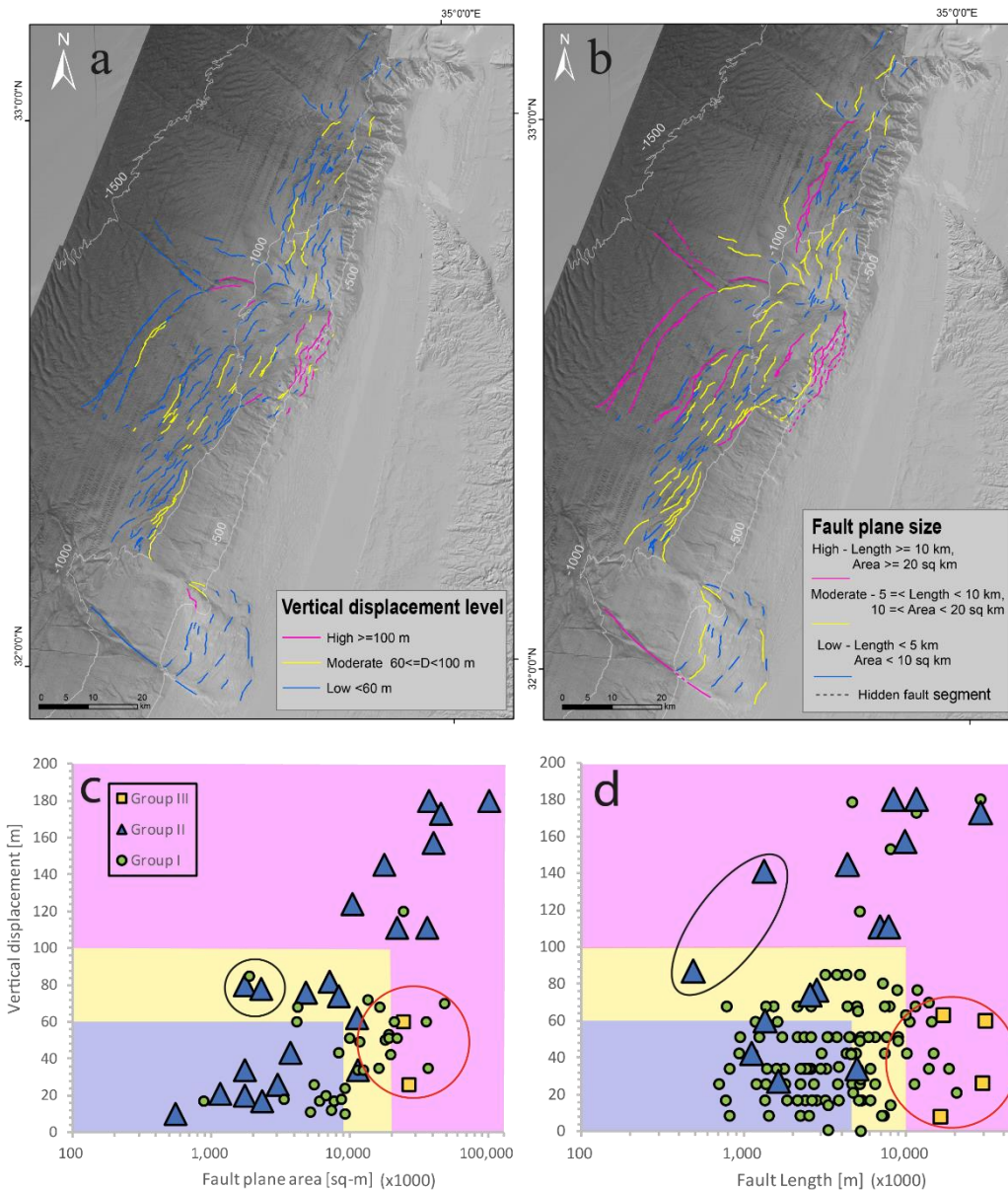
496 Based on the size (area of fault plane or its length on surface projection), we classify
497 all faults mapped at the subsurface to three levels. Fault planes smaller than 10 km² or
498 shorter than 5 km are considered small; an area of 10-20 km² or length of 5-10 km is
499 considered moderate; and an area larger than 20 km² or length longer than 10 km is
500 considered big (Fig. 12b).

501 It should be noted that unlike the classification by vertical displacement, which is
502 performed on seabed segments, the classification of faults by size is performed on fault
503 planes, and a single fault plain frequently combines many seabed segments (i.e., the
504 number of fault planes in our database is significantly smaller than the number of seabed
505 segments).

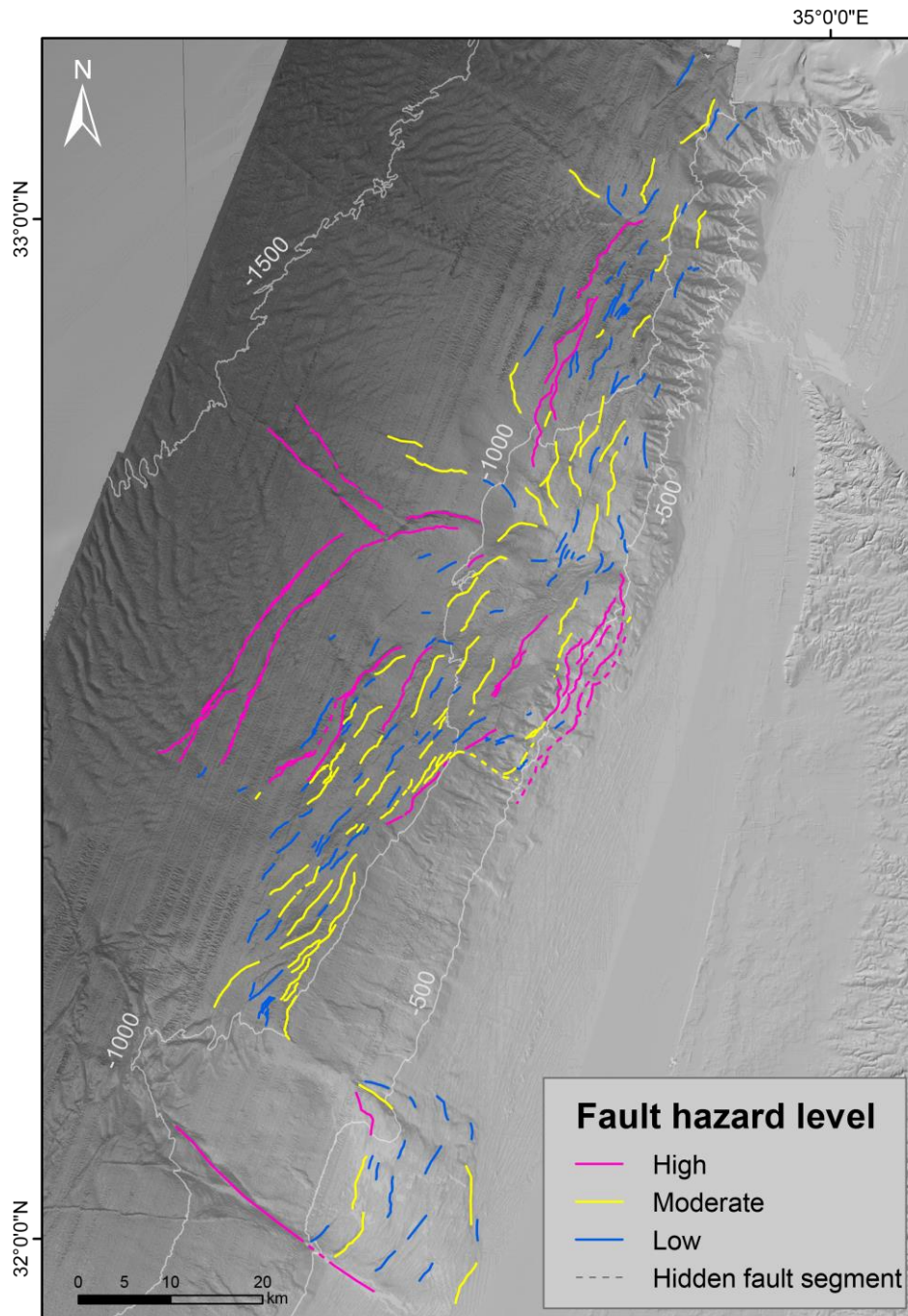
506 Though the two classification criteria are independently measured, and despite a certain
507 degree of arbitrariness in choosing the cutoff values (60 m and 100 m of vertical
508 displacement; 10 km² and 20 km² for fault plane area), it is interesting to compare the
509 resulting maps. For most faults in the study area, the two criteria yield a similar category
510 (Fig. 12c,d). That is, fault segments with high vertical displacement levels are usually
511 a part of a big fault and vice versa, similar to observations related to deep-seated
512 tectonic faults (Wells and Coppersmith, 1994). Exceptions, marked in Fig. 12c,d by

513 black circles (moderate vertical displacement and small faults), mainly belong to Group
514 II, which is exceptional in many ways, as shown above. Conversely, exceptions marked
515 by red circles (big faults with small vertical displacement) belong to Group III, which
516 are strike-slip faults whose vertical displacement is not expected to correlate with their
517 dimensions.

518 Finally, we provide a simplified map that combines the two measured parameters to a
519 single hazard level (Fig. 13). In this map, a high level is assigned to a fault segment,
520 which either is characterized by high vertical displacement or large planes; low means
521 low vertical displacement and small plane area; moderate is all the rest. This map
522 simplifies the use of our analysis for early planning of new infrastructures on the
523 seabed, which is the aim of this study.



526 *Figure 12: Fault classification by vertical displacement (a) and size (b). Each seabed fault*
 527 *segment is assigned a value based on its subsurface structure. i.e., the maximal vertical*
 528 *displacement measured along the fault segment at the base unit 4 horizon and the total area of*
 529 *all segments, connected at the subsurface. When the 3D mapping of a fault is unavailable, fault*
 530 *size is expressed by its length in a map view. (c,d) vertical displacement at base Unit 4 versus*
 531 *fault size (length/area). Pink, yellow, and blue present three levels of vertical displacement and*
 532 *size, which are proxies for surface rupture and potential earthquake magnitudes, respectively.*
 533 *While classification by the two criteria correlates for most faults, black circles mark faults*
 534 *whose vertical displacement is high relative to their size, and red circles mark faults that are*
 535 *big relative to their vertical displacement. Bathymetry from Tibor et al. (2013).*



536

537 *Figure 13: Final simplified faults displacement hazard map classified into three hazard levels*
 538 *according to a combination of the two criteria presented in Fig. 12 (i.e., vertical fault*
 539 *displacement and size). The combination is conservative, i.e., a high level is assigned to a fault*
 540 *segment, which either is characterized by high vertical displacement or belongs to a big fault;*
 541 *low means low vertical displacement and small size; moderate are all the rest. Bathymetry from*
 542 *Tibor et al. (2013).*

543

544 5.3. *Listric faults south of the Dor disturbance*

545 The listric faults south of the Dor disturbance (part of Group II) are particularly
546 exceptional. Their planes dip gently with lower angles; they have a bigger width but do
547 not penetrate Unit 1; they are located on the steep slope, east of the salt wedge; and
548 particularly important, they produce large seabed scarps despite their location in a high
549 sedimentation zone. In fact, the sedimentation rate at that location is four times larger
550 than the vertical displacement rate (~200 cm/ky vs. ~50 cm/ky, respectively. Fig. 3b,
551 4c). Allegedly, this observation indicates that these faults are creeping faster than the
552 sedimentation rate, or they slip seismically, or they operate in rapid episodes of tremor
553 and slip (ETS), or “slow earthquakes” (Ito and Obara, 2006; Ikari et al., 2011). The
554 possibility of seismic rupture was already raised by Elfassi et al. (2019) for the deep
555 basin faults of Group I in the Sara-Myra survey, where sedimentation rates are similar
556 or slightly higher than vertical displacement rates. In that case, continuous creep seems
557 unlikely because its rate is similar to the burial rate and cannot produce significant
558 seabed scarps, unless the scarps are produced by a recent rapid creep event.

559 5.4. *Earthquakes and faults*

560 If the thin-skinned faults offshore Israel are seismically active, they might produce
561 earthquakes and ground shaking in addition to surface rupture. This possibility is
562 apparently supported by the many epicenters located near the faults and particularly
563 around the Dor Disturbance (Wetzler and Kurzon, 2016). The problem is that the depths
564 of these earthquakes are much deeper (10-30 km) than the shallow thin-skinned faults
565 (1-2 km). Katz and Hamiel, (2019) argued that many hypocenters coincide with the
566 CMFZ at a depth of about 18 km, but this is inconsistent with Gvirtzman and Steinberg,
567 (2012), who showed that the CMFZ stopped operating in the Miocene.

568 The accuracy of hypocenters depths offshore Israel is highly uncertain, as stated by
569 Wetzler and Kurzon (2016), because of the lack of seismic stations at sea and because
570 of the simplified velocity model they extended from the onshore area. Therefore, at this
571 stage, we cannot determine whether the recorded earthquakes offshore Israel are
572 produced by thin-skinned faults or by deeper sources.

573 Another complication is the relations between fault plane area, which commonly
574 exceeds 10 km² and even 20 km² (Fig. 8, 12b), and earthquake magnitudes which are
575 mostly 2<M<4 (Wetzler and Kurzon, 2016). These values are inconsistent with the
576 empiric relations measured in deep-seated faults (Wells and Coppersmith, 1994), where
577 fault planes of 10-20 km² are typically associated with M~5 earthquakes (which have
578 not been recorded yet). However, deep-seated faults are different from thin-skinned
579 faults in many ways leaving us with unclearness. This short discussion indicates that
580 the seismicity of the thin-skinned faults needs more research, which is crucial for hazard
581 assessment. At this stage, we cannot tell if the thin-skinned faults creep very fast,
582 rupture seismically or produce episodes tremor and slip (ETS).

583 **6. Summary and conclusions**

- 584 1. The need for geohazard assessment in the marine environment is increasing
585 globally. Yet, in the field of hazard maps for planning and building, the offshore
586 regions are commonly lagging decades behind the onshore practice.
- 587 2. Mapping 'active' faults in the marine environment is particularly complicated. If
588 the onshore practice is followed, a Holocene horizon needs to be detected in the
589 subsurface; then, for each fault, the question whether this horizon is displaced or
590 not needs to be answered. This requires high-resolution seismic surveys and
591 numerous coring and thus cannot be done for large regions.

- 592 3. In site-specific surveys, detailed bathymetry has become the main tool for mapping
593 faults. Yet, we demonstrate that this is insufficient because fault scarps are
594 decreased by sedimentation and erosion, particularly in sediment-rich environments
595 such as continental margins.
- 596 4. Here, we take advantage of the marine environment (wealth of seismic data) to
597 produce maps that cannot be produced onshore. First, we map a subsurface horizon
598 dated to 350 ka in the entire study area. Second, we measure vertical fault
599 displacements along this horizon. Third, we map fault planes combining several
600 fault segments and measure their size.
- 601 5. By classifying all faults according to their vertical displacement and size, we
602 prepare two hazard maps, which are further combined into a single simplified fault
603 hazard map.
- 604 6. Our maps are particularly useful for master planning. The sedimentation rates map
605 alone immediately reveals tectonically active grabens, and the hazard maps help
606 define the most hazardous zones.
- 607 7. Using our maps, we revealed a particularly problematic zone in the upper slope
608 south of the Dor disturbance. In this area, a series of big listric faults are
609 characterized by large vertical displacements. The sedimentation rate in this
610 location is also exceptional - four times faster than the vertical displacement rate -
611 and still, fault scarps are prominent. We suggest that this indicates rapid creep,
612 seismic rupture, or episodic motions.

613 **7. Author contribution**

614 This study was conceptualized by ML under the supervision of ZG. Formal analysis,
615 visualization of results and writing of the original draft were performed by ML. All
616 authors contributed to the interpretation of the findings and revision of the paper.

617

618 **8. Competing interests**

619 The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

620 **9. Data availability**

621 The seismic datasets related to this article are industrial data from the Geological Survey of
622 Israel. Details can be obtained from the Israel Ministry of Energy
623 (<https://prime.energy.gov.il/>). Please contact the author via email for more details regarding
624 the fault scarps algorithm, maps, and layers.

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626

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