



NGSBA Excavation Reports

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Salvage Excavations in the Eden Heights – 2007 Final Report

Excavation Permit: B - 321/2007

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Academic Sponsor: Hebrew Union College



Introduction

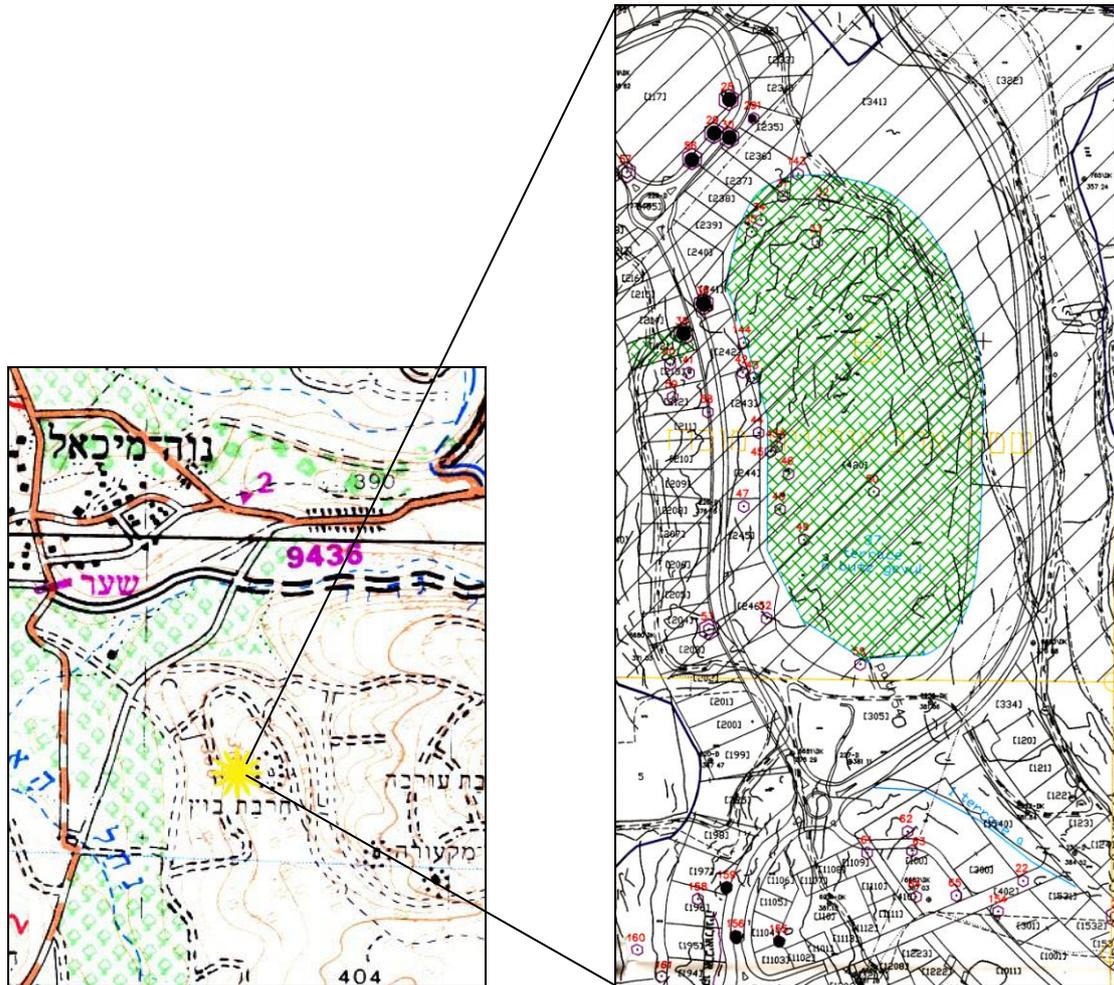


Figure 1: Location map of the Eden Heights archaeological sites (marked in black) investigated by YG Archaeology (31°39'55.4''N / 35°00'45.4''E).

The archaeological investigation and recording of Eden Heights (formerly Khirbet Makora) began in 2007. An initial survey carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) identified a large number of sites, probably reflecting the agricultural and industrial function of this hinterland of the ancient settlement at nearby Horvat Butz. The latter has not yet been excavated, and has recently been redefined as an area of open military status. Its periphery has been classified as available for appropriate development. This led to its purchase by Gvot Eden Ltd., who contracted Y.G. Archaeology to carry out the current archaeological investigations under IAA monitoring.

The project was initially directed by archaeologist Yuval Ardon (2007), and subsequently by Yehuda Govrin (2008). Site surveying and drafting were conducted by Dov Porotsky and Slava Pirsky. The project was not completed – the excavation of Site 38 being a particularly important lack – due to the Gvot Eden development project's suspension in 2008.

Site 2: Wall

Location: 201600-618250 (new Israeli grid)

A wall built from field clearance stones and located at the north perimeter of the field.

Site 3: Cup Marks

Location: 151722-118827 (old Israeli grid)

Three cup marks on a north-south axis:

Southern – 30cm diameter and 20cm deep.

Middle – 30cm diameter and 20cm deep.

Northern – 30cm diameter and 10cm deep.



Figure 2: Site 3.

Site 4: Cup Mark

Location: 151744-118806 (old Israeli grid)

A cup mark – 50cm diameter and 30cm deep.



Figure 3: Site 4.

Site 4: ‘Guard House’ 11

Location: 151383-119412 (old Israeli grid)

This structure was not recorded on our survey map of the area. It was ovoid in shape, built of roughly dressed stones and with an inner diameter of 2.8m, walls ca.50cm

thick and preserved to a height of 70cm. The entrance was on the southeast side. In the Eden Heights we gave this structure type the tentative label ‘guard house’.



Figure 4: Site 5.

Site 18: Cup Mark (basin type)

Location: 131999-118725 (old Israeli grid)

A cup mark of basin type – 50cm diameter and 25cm deep.



Figure 5: Site 18.

Site 29: ‘Guard House’ 3

Location: 151382-119442 (old Israeli grid)

This was another ‘guard house’-type structure with an internal diameter of 2.7m and 50cm-thick walls surviving to a height of ca.1m. The southeast quarter was founded directly on bedrock. The entrance was on the north side. Opposite the entrance was a

wall ca.1m wide and 1.7m long, north of which was another structure measuring 2.6 x 1.3m, depth 20-30cm, and quarried into bedrock.



Figure: 6: Site 29, 'guard house' 3.

Site 30: 'Guard Houses' 1-2

'Guard House' 1

Location: 151387-119439 (old Israeli grid)

This structure had an internal diameter of 3.6m, walls 90cm thick and was preserved to an average height of 95cm. The entrance was on the southeast side. Projecting from the northeast side of the guard-house was a 55cm-thick wall, preserved to a height of 60cm. This curved south to meet a boulder east of the guard house, creating a small enclosure (1.65 × 0.75m).



Figure 7: Site 30, 'guard house' 1.

'Guard House' 2

Location: 151390-119438 (old Israeli grid)

This structure does not appear in our survey map. It had an internal diameter of 3m, walls 30cm thick, and was preserved to a height of only 20cm. The southern side of the structure was carved from bedrock, and being therefore stronger survived to 60cm

in height. Due to the bad preservation of the other walls we can only speculate as to the entrance location (if any). This is tentatively offered as on the north side.



Figure 8: Site 30, 'guard house' 2.

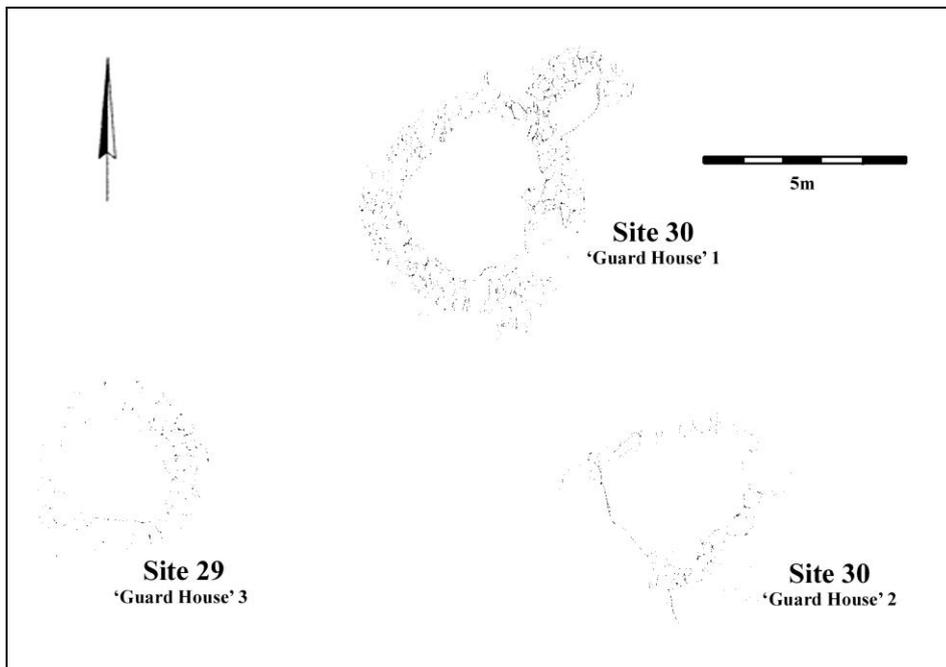


Figure 9: Plan of 'Guard Houses' 1-3, Sites 29, 30.

Site 38: Cave

Location: 201253-619251 (new Israeli grid)

This was a rounded cave, measuring ca.5 × 5m, ca.1.9m high and with multiple openings (Fig.11). For safety reasons we did not enter. From a central opening in the ceiling a fig tree grew. In addition to this opening others were located on the south, north and northwest sides. These were roughly quarried, but had become blocked by rocks, bushes and – in the case of the north aperture, which was the first sign we discovered of the cave – 10cm of soil. Partial collapse of the cave's east wall had opened two further apertures.



Figure 10: Site 38 cave.

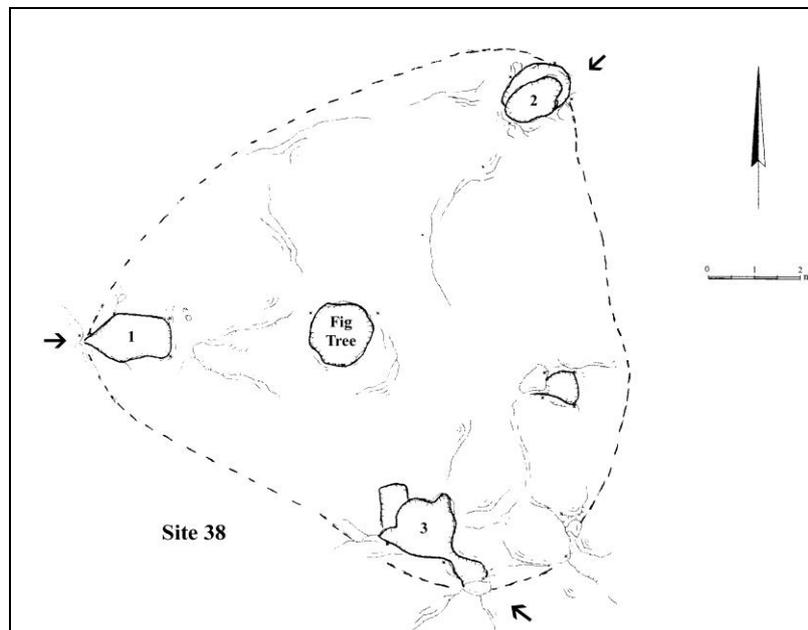


Figure 11: Plan of Site 38 cave exterior.

Site 39: Cave

Location: 201255-619253 (new Israeli grid)

This was a cave of rectangular shape, covering an area of ca. 8×4 m (Fig.12). In an area of ca. 4×2 m on the south side of the cave the ceiling had completely collapsed. West of this roofless area was a rectangular shaft in the ceiling, which was quarried into the natural rock and led to the surface 2m above. Northwest of the roofless area was an additional, rounded opening. North of roofless area a depression visible on the surface betrayed another aperture.

Where the cave's ceiling was intact, immediately north of the roofless area, a small fieldstone wall was built. This was one course high, and ran east-west for 6m before turning north for 3m. West of this wall the cave floor was filled with dirt and fieldstones. Here we found a rounded shaft that appeared to have been created by natural means (i.e. another collapse of the ceiling in this area). A complete Byzantine ceramic lamp was found in excavation nearby.

At the east end of this area the bedrock collapsed and created a sort of 'channel' extending from the built wall to the natural shaft on the north side of the cave. This channel was filled with large stones.

Northeast of the cave was found an additional rectangular shaft, 1.9m deep, leading to another cave, and round in plan with a diameter of ca.3m. As in the first cave, the shaft here was blocked.

Our excavation in the southern part of the roofless area of the first cave exposed a layer of potsherds from the Byzantine period (ca.330-638 CE) through Ottoman (1517-1917 CE) and modern times, all stratigraphically above the rock collapse. At the same level as and beneath the collapse were sherds of Iron Age date (ca.1200-586 BCE).

It therefore appears that this cave saw three archaeological phases. The first was during the Iron Age, within the cave with its roof intact and an entrance probably from a shaft on the west side of the ceiling.

During the second phase, probably in the Byzantine period, the southern section of the ceiling collapsed and the roofless area was used as a sort of courtyard, while the entrance to the cave was repositioned on the northwest side. According to further ceramic finds, the second cave to the northeast was excavated during this phase.

In the third stage of activity, probably not earlier than the end of the Byzantine period, another ceiling collapse occurred which opened the north shaft. The occupants repaired the damage but left the shaft itself open. They also covered the area between the southern collapse and the new shaft with dirt and stones (with which was mixed the aforementioned Byzantine lamp). A wall was built at the southern perimeter of this leveled area to prevent the new floor material from washing into the roofless 'courtyard'.

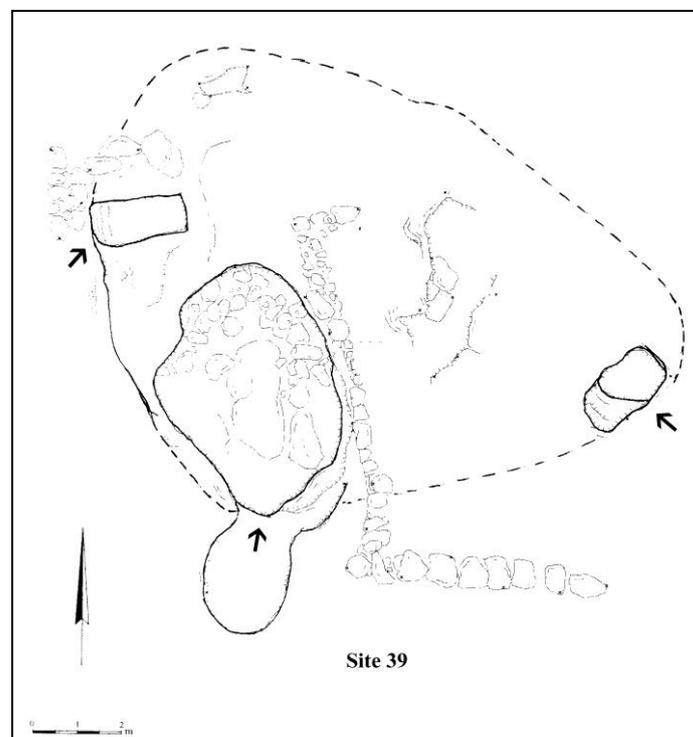


Figure 12: Plan of Site 39 cave interior.

Site 53: Water Cistern

This was a water cistern, ca.4m in diameter. The shaft to the surface was 1.3m across and ca.40cm deep. The cistern's depth could not be determined as its floor was covered with dirt and fallen stones, which for safety reasons we desisted from excavating. On the surface, east of the cistern was a circular socket in the bedrock, 80cm in diameter and ca.3cm deep. No datable finds were recovered in the vicinity.

Site 53 (1): Stone Mound

Location: 151589-118705 (old Israeli grid)

This was a stone cluster resulting from clearance of large stones from the southern section of an open field. The mound reached to a height of ca.1.7m and ca.1.5m across. At the center of the pile lay a boulder with a cup mark, diameter 36cm and depth 30cm.

Site 53: Unknown Cup Mark 2

Location: 151663-118606 (old Israeli grid)

A cup mark – 19cm diameter and 12cm deep.

Site 53: Channel-Cut Rock 3

Location: 151668-118600 (old Israeli grid)

A rock with a channel cut into it, ca.10cm long and 4cm wide.

Site 53: Wine Press 4

Location: 151668-118586 (old Israeli grid)

This was a rectangular wine press. On the south side was a hole for draining the fluids and another feature cut into bedrock. East of the wine press was a third quarried feature, rounded and 1.3m in diameter. From this a cut channel 25cm long and 10cm wide ran southwest, linking to a basin-type cup mark of diameter 55cm and depth 40cm. North of the wine press was an additional cup mark, 18cm in both diameter and depth.

Site 56: 'Guard Houses' 7-10

'Guard House' 7

Location: 151357-119420 (old Israeli grid)

This structure had an interior diameter of 1.3m, walls 40cm thick and was preserved to a height of 50cm. On the southwest side were many stones piled in a disorderly manner and not integral with the wall. The entrance was probably at this point.

'Guard House' 8

Location: 151352-119417 (old Israeli grid)

This structure had an interior diameter of 2.7m, with walls 40-60cm thick and preserved in one course of boulders to a height of 1.2m. The entrance was on the southeast side.

'Guard House' 9

Location: 151342-119407 (old Israeli grid)

This structure had an interior diameter of 2.5m, walls ca.60cm thick and was preserved to a height of ca.40cm. The north wall leaned on a bedrock outcropping, west of which was a pile of fieldstones. This undoubtedly was collapse, perhaps the

remains of an additional wall that continued westward. The entrance to the structure was on the southeast side.

‘Guard House’ 10

Location: 151322-119391 (old Israeli grid)

This structure had an interior diameter of 1.8m and walls ca.40cm thick. The structure was built of fieldstones and boulders, preserved to a height of one course (30-100cm). The entrance was from the southeast.

In some of the guardhouses jar handles from Byzantine and Late Islamic periods were recovered. In all of these guard houses we saw Jewish National Fund seed bags, indicating modern usage also.

Site 57: Cup Mark

Location: 151302-119412 (old Israeli grid)

A cup mark – 50cm diameter and 40cm deep.

Site 68: ‘Guard House’ 6

Location: 151380-119451 (old Israeli grid)

This structure had an internal diameter of 2.7m, walls 60cm thick and was preserved to a height of 70cm. The entrance was on the south side.

Site 155: Structure

Location: 151432 – 118852 (old Israeli grid)

On a moderate slope and within a pine thicket, a large pile of stones with a diameter of approximately 5m was identified during survey. The pile was built from a large fieldstone perimeter and a center of smaller stones (Fig.13).

Excavation began with surface cleaning and removal of non-*in situ* stones. A structure’s outline became clear (Figs.14-16). The interior we then dug, leaving a north-south central baulk 0.5m wide in order to retain a section view of any stratigraphy. The walls’ exterior façades were also investigated by the digging of a 1.5m-wide trench around the building.

We uncovered the remains of a small quadrangular building, measuring ca.5 × 4.5m. The structure’s large fieldstone walls were preserved to a height of two courses on the south and east sides and stood at an average height of 0.7m. The west wall did not survive. Wall thicknesses varied, the east side being 3m wide and the south 1m. Despite this, the latter wall was the best preserved. Its exterior façade was built of large fieldstones, and the interior of medium-sized stones. This wall was constructed directly on bedrock.

Outside the east wall an annex was discovered (1 × 1 × 0.3m). This was walled using medium-sized stones, and was filled with smaller stones.

The entrance to the building was probably from the north, through an opening ca.1m wide.

In places the excavation of the interior reached bedrock and in the remainder met with archaeologically-sterile subsoil. No artifacts were found, but within the central baulk a thin ash layer was identified 0.1m above bedrock.

It can be assumed that after the building went out of use the small fieldstones of the upper walls and interior façades collapsed inward.

Three phases in this building’s history are recognizable. Phase one saw the construction of the building on bedrock and subsoil, and at least partially floored with

stones. It is possible that during this initial phase the building was used as a guard house.

The second architectural phase included an interior deposit of fieldstones, perhaps to level the surface. In the northern part of the building the aforementioned accumulation of ash took place during this phase, and probably indicates repeated cooking at this point.

The third phase involved the collapse of the walls and the filling of the entire building with dirt and fieldstones to a height of about 1.5m.

From an initial inspection of the pottery the impression is that this structure was in use during the Early Islamic and Crusader periods.



Figure 14: Site 155 before excavation.



Figure 15: Site 155 after excavation.

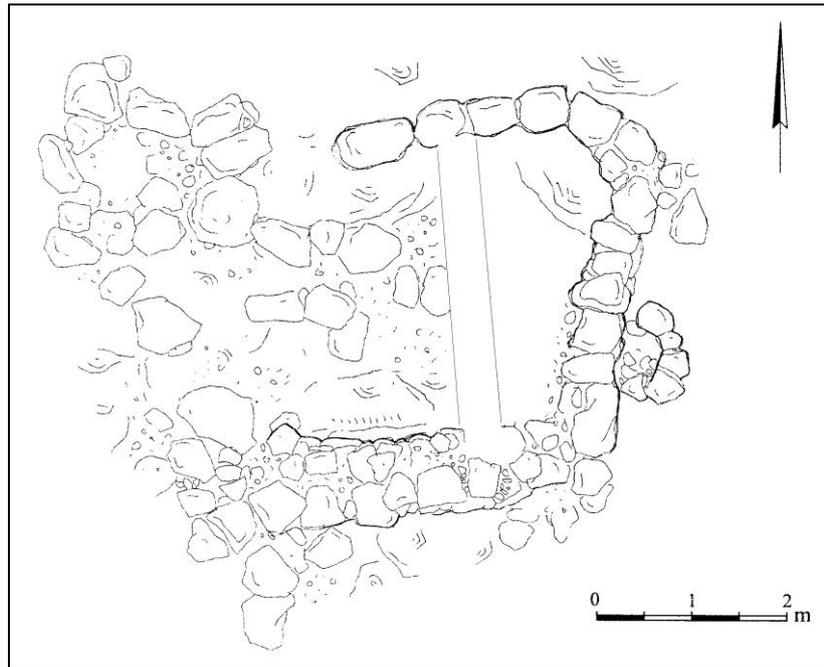


Figure 16: Plan of Site 155 structure.

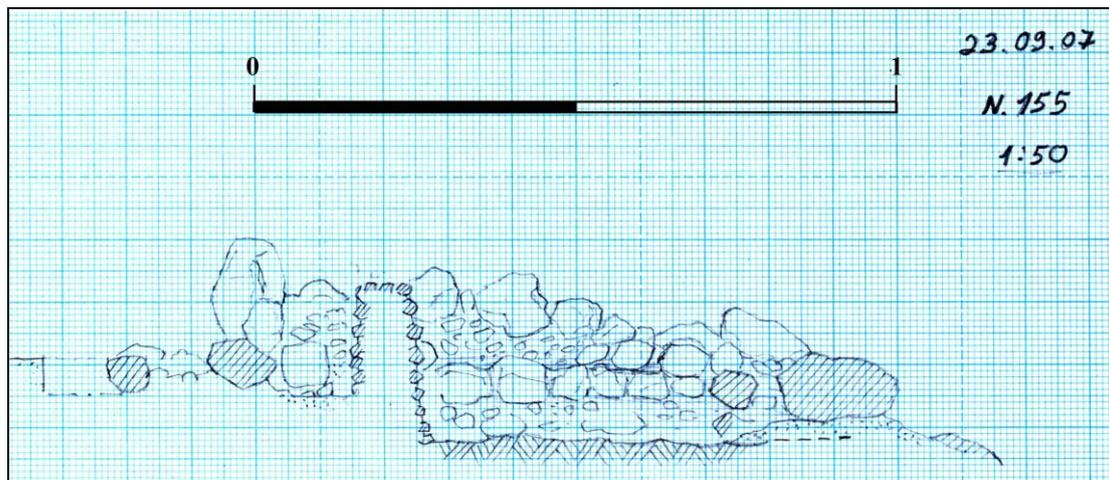


Figure 17: West-facing section of Site 155 structure.

Site 156: Cup mark (basin type)

This was a basin quarried into the rock. The feature's eastern side was damaged. The diameter was ca.0.5m and its depth ca.0.3m. No artifacts that could help date the site were found. The purpose of this feature remains unclear.



Figure 18: Site 156 basin before excavation.

Site 159: Quarried feature

This feature was quarried into a boulder and measured ca. 3×2 m. The feature included a small cup mark of 0.15 m diameter, from the east side of which projected a number of shallow channels 0.2 m long. These channels were linked to a large channel which of diameter 0.25 m which encircled the cup mark and smaller channels.

It is possible that this composite feature was used for small-quantity wine or oil pressing, with the channels serving to lead squeezed fluid into the cup mark.



Figure 19: Site 159 quarried feature.

Site 174: Cup Marks 5-8, 'Guard House' 5

Cup Mark 5

Location: 151701-118593 (old Israeli grid)

A cup mark of diameter 17 cm and depth 9 cm, carved into a larger cup mark of diameter 68 cm and depth 33 cm.

Cup Mark 6

Location: 151696-118562 (old Israeli grid)
A cup mark – 60cm diameter and 35cm deep.

Cup Mark 7

Location: 151695-118556 (old Israeli grid)
A cup mark – 60cm diameter and 30cm deep.

Cup Mark 8

Location: 151700-118557 (old Israeli grid)
A deep cup mark, of 62cm diameter and 44cm deep, west of which was another shallow cup mark of 54cm diameter and 18cm deep.

‘Guard House’ 5

Location: 151369-119443 (old Israeli grid)
This structure does not appear in our survey map. Its interior diameter was 2.5m, its walls 0.5m thick, and the structure was preserved to a height of only 20cm. The state of preservation was poor due to damage caused by large plants, complicating identification of the entrance location. We believe this to be on the northeast side, where a non-*in situ* was standing.

Site 176: Cup Mark

Location: 151706-118551 (old Israeli grid)
A cup mark – 60cm diameter and 35cm deep.

Site 177: Cup Marks (basin type)

Location: 151701-118532 (old Israeli grid)
Found here were three basin-type cup marks in non-linear formation:
Western – 52cm diameter and 54cm deep.
Eastern – 52cm diameter and 34cm deep; the southern part was damaged.
Southern – 65cm diameter and 45cm deep; the cup mark was damaged by roots.

Site 178: Cup Mark

Location: 151702-118521 (old Israeli grid)
A small cup mark – 20cm diameter and 15cm deep; this was not marked on the survey map.

Site 180: Cup Mark

Location: 151709-118508 (old Israeli grid)
A cup mark – 60cm diameter and 20cm deep.

Site 181: Cup Mark and Quarried Feature

Location: 151729-118483 (old Israeli grid)
An unusual cup mark of 70cm diameter and depth; north of this was carved into the rock a square-shaped feature measuring $1.2 \times 1.16 \times 0.04$ m.

Site 182: Water Cistern

Location: 151743-118489 (old Israeli grid)

This site consisted of a water cistern with a roughly-quarried, elongated opening, and an upper interior section measuring 1 × 2.7m, connected to the main cistern chamber by an opening of 1.7m diameter. The main chamber's dimensions could not be measured due to safety hazards that prevented entry.

Site 183: Cup Mark

Location: 151690-118466 (old Israeli grid)

A cup mark – 40cm diameter and 20cm deep; south and east sides were damaged.

Site 184: Stone Mound

Location: 151661-118472 (old Israeli grid)

This was a mound covered by fieldstones and ringed by large stones. The mound measured 10 x 7m.

Site 197: Cup Marks

Location: 151784-118498 (old Israeli grid)

Found here were three cup marks on an east-west axis.

Western – 97cm diameter and 56cm deep.

Central – 20cm diameter and 20cm deep.

Eastern – 20cm diameter and 22cm deep.

Site 197: Cup Mark 9

Location: 151755-118506 (old Israeli grid)

A cup mark – 70cm diameter and 35cm deep; this does not appear in our survey map.

Site 198: Clearance Material

Location: 151789-118503 (old Israeli grid)

This was a mound of sediment without related archaeological features or artifacts.

Site 199: Cup Marks

Location: 151799-118514 (old Israeli grid)

Found here were two adjacent cup marks:

Western – 85cm diameter and 40cm deep.

Eastern – 19cm diameter and 10cm deep.

Site 200: Cup Marks

Location: 151821-118552 (old Israeli grid)

Found here were two adjacent cup marks:

Western – 50cm diameter and 30cm deep.

Eastern – 15cm diameter and depth; within this cup mark is another, 11cm in diameter and 7cm deep.

Site 201: Cup Mark (basin type)

Location: 151836-118495 (old Israeli grid)

A basin – 65cm diameter and 20cm deep.

Site 291: 'Guard House' 4

Location: 151391-119444 (old Israeli grid)

This structure had an internal diameter of 3m, walls 50cm thick, and was preserved to a height of 70cm. The entrance was on the south side. This structure was founded directly on bedrock, which also served as the structure's floor.

Northeast of the 'guard house' was a cuboid feature quarried from the bedrock, measuring ca. $2.3 \times 1.7 \times 0.1$ m. Northeast again of this feature was a cup mark, of diameter 30cm and depth 10cm.

Conclusions

Most of the sites found at Eden Heights were simple agricultural features and installations. Quantitatively predominant were a large number of cup marks and basins cut into exposed bedrock. We do not yet have evidence that would support a conclusive date for these features, or to indicate their functions. It would be cynical to rule out a cultic function, as well as other more mundane uses. Provisionally, we have interpreted them as having served as fixed mortars for the grinding of seeds.

The circular structures were built from dry stone walls of local fieldstones. These structures were defined as 'guard houses', and were probably used on a seasonal basis for pastoral purposes by a semi-nomadic population. In the project area were also found a rock-cut water cistern and two caves with evidence of occupation. Like the 'guard houses', these caves were probably used by shepherds. Having excavated and recorded these features, we support the release of the area for development. Sites 38 and 39, however, should be further excavated and conserved.

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