

Fig. 8. Plan of Nahal Gov 3.



Fig. 9. Nahal Gov 4, general view before excavation.

Description (Fig. 11): An irregular concentration of large and medium-sized stones found resting on an area of *hamada* soil close to a wadi.

Excavation (Fig. 12): A 3.0 x 2.5m rectangle, oriented east-west was excavated. Two rows of one course of large stones were found, forming an ellipse filled with stones. The double wall's width was 0.8m, the inner diameter ca. 1.0m and the depth 0.3m. No finds were recovered.

Conclusions: This was probably a man-made feature, but without datable or indicative finds we did not venture a detailed interpretation.

Site 8 (defined in the survey as a line of stones)

Location: 162223–033344, altitude: 56.0m ASL.

Description (Figs. 13, 14): A line of stones 30.0m from and parallel to the Nahal Gov cliff, with a

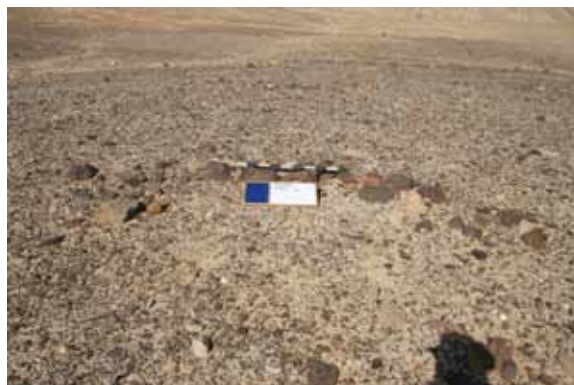


Fig. 10. Nahal Gov 4, general view after excavation (looking north).



Fig. 11. Nahal Gov 6, general view before excavation.

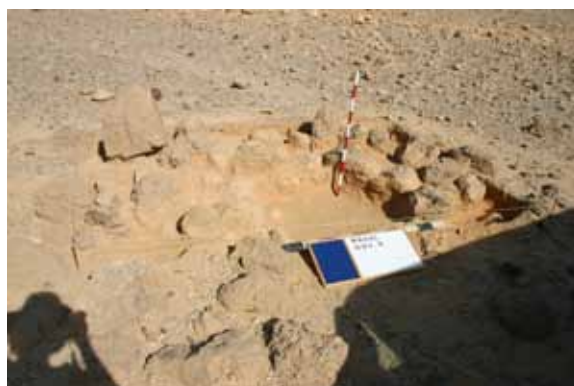


Fig. 12. Nahal Gov 6, general view after excavation (looking north).

general north-south orientation, pointing to the next line of stones (Site 9) which lie perpendicularly oriented, 25.0m southeast of Site 8.

Documentation: This line of stones was built from large and medium-sized stones, one course wide and high, and is badly preserved. The feature is



Fig. 13. Nahal Gov 8, general view (looking west).

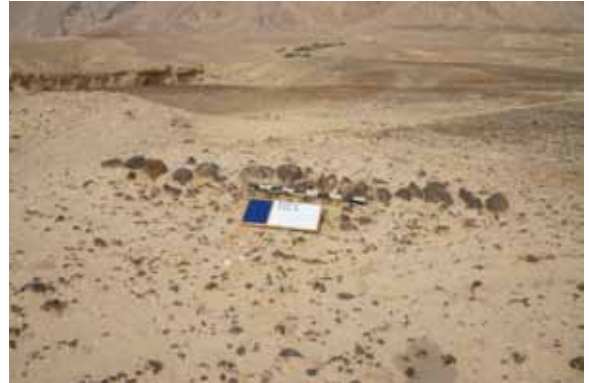


Fig. 15. Nahal Gov 9, general views (looking west).



Fig. 14. Nahal Gov 8, general view (looking south).

comprised mainly of dark-colored stones which stand out against the white surface on which the feature was built.

Conclusions: From its position and association with the topography and a nearby line of stones (Site 9) this feature was probably used as a road marking or other navigation aid. There were no associated artifacts found, so we cannot postulate a date.

Site 9 (defined as a line of stones in the survey)

Location: 162226–033365, altitude: 54.0m ASL.

Description (Figs. 15, 16): A line of stones oriented southeast-northwest. This feature is built of one course of stones, arranged in a straight line.

Documentation: The line is built from twenty brown-black, medium-sized stones, on a white lime soil surface. The wall's length is about 4.0m. The feature's orientation is approximated towards the Nahal Gov wadi, located ca. 50.0m from the line of stones.



Fig. 16. Nahal Gov 9, general views (looking south).

Conclusions: This linear feature was probably used as an ancient road marking, associable with Nahal Gov 8. The period is unknown since no artifacts were retrieved.

Site 10 (defined in the survey as a grave)

Location: 162250–033374, altitude: 52.0m ASL.

Description (Fig. 17): A number of limestone blocks projecting up from the stone-littered *hamada* topsoil.

Excavation (Fig. 18): A 1.5 x 1.5m area was excavated to a depth of 0.15m.

Conclusions: These three large stones probably split from one large rock, all being the same brown-colored hard limestone type. There were no finds from the excavation. Throughout the entire depth of the square, which reached under the *hamada* topsoil, the ground was bereft of artifacts. It appears that this was a natural site.

Site 11 (defined in the survey as a built feature)

Location: 16226–033376, altitude: 51.0m ASL.

Description (Fig. 19): A cluster of black medium-sized stones on a moderate slope close to the edge of a ridge of high ground.

Excavation (Fig. 20): A 1.5 x 2.0m rectangle running north-south was excavated. The excavation's depth

was about 0.1m. A number of large and medium-sized split brown-black flint stones were found on the *hamada* surface, creating a general outline of two parallel rows. Around the stone lumps were many flint flakes which had naturally detached from the larger pieces. Under the stones was a sterile yellowish-brown sand and a layer of white gypsum. No artifacts were retrieved.

Conclusions: This is a natural concentration of local stones with no evidence of human activity.

Site 12 (defined in the survey as a grave)

Location: 162300–033380, altitude: 46.0m ASL.

Description (Fig. 21): A natural stone circle on a moderate slope, formed from a depression in a single hard, irregular, brown limestone.

Excavation (Fig. 22): A 1.0 x 1.5m area was excavated, leaving part of the limestone rock outside the excavated rectangle. The excavation's depth



Fig. 17. Nahal Gov 10, general view before excavation.



Fig. 19. Nahal Gov 11, general view before excavation.



Fig. 18. Nahal Gov 10, general view after excavation.



Fig. 20. Nahal Gov 11, general view after excavation.

was ca. 0.1m, reaching a layer of sterile soil and stones. The internal diameter was 0.7m, and the external 1.0m. No finds were retrieved.

Conclusions: This is a large lump of limestone which fell apart naturally and stands out against the *hamada* soil background.

Site 13A (defined in the survey as a grave, along with Site 13B)

Location: 162413–033400, altitude: 28.0m ASL.

Description (Fig. 23): An ellipse-shaped structure built of small and medium-sized stones, oriented east-west on a flat surface. The north end of the feature is scattered with stones. Dimensions: 2.9m long, 1.9m wide, 0.4m deep.

Excavation (Fig. 24, 25): The interior of this the elliptical feature was excavated to a depth of ca. 0.6m. The soil was entirely sterile, with moderate stone quantities but no indicative artifact from

the feature or its surroundings was recovered. Excavation clarified the architectural remains, showing this structure to be preserved to one course high and one row wide, and constructed of local medium-sized limestone.



Fig. 23. Nahal Gov 13A, general view before excavation.

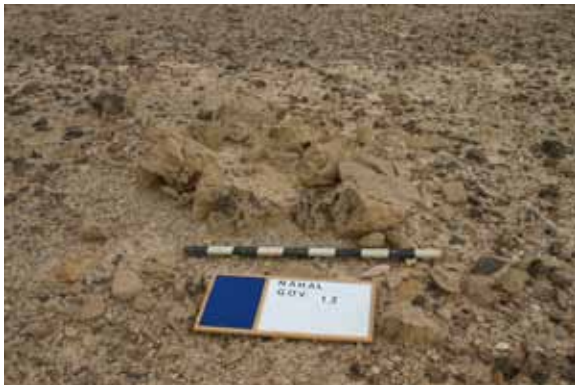


Fig. 21. Nahal Gov 12, general view before excavation.



Fig. 24. Nahal Gov 13A after excavation.



Fig. 22. Nahal Gov 12, general view after excavation.

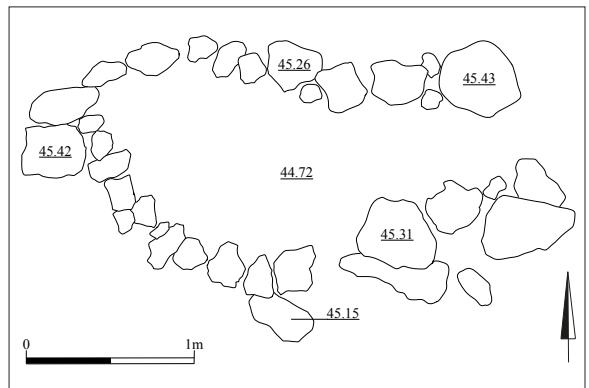


Fig. 25. Plan of Nahal Gov 13A.

Conclusions: Due to the lack of any finds beyond the simple architecture characterizing it, the identification of this feature should be altered from grave to man-made built feature, the nature and date of which are unknown.

Site 13B (defined in the survey as a grave, along with Site 13B)

Location: 12422–033400, altitude: 29.0m ASL.

Description (Fig. 26): A small stone circle measuring 1.7 x 1.2m, found approximately 5.0m east of Site 13A.

Excavation (Fig. 27): The interior of this circular feature was excavated to a depth of 0.3m; no artifacts were found, the excavated fill being comprised of well-sorted stones mixed into sterile soil. The circle's architecture is simple: one course of small and medium-sized local limestone.

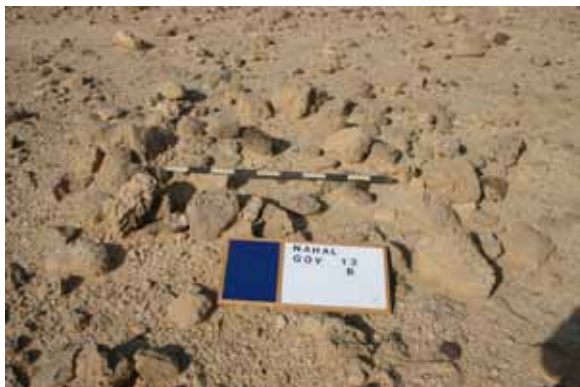


Fig. 26. Nahal Gov 13B, general view before excavation.

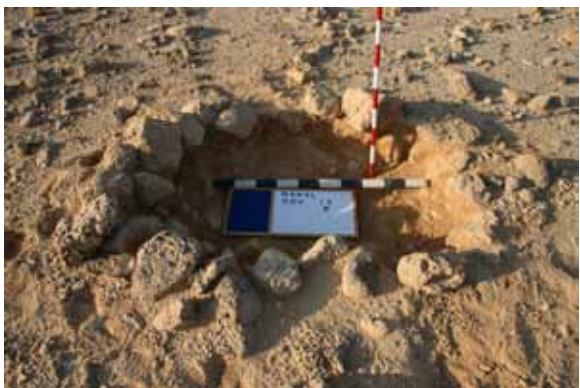


Fig. 27. Nahal Gov 13B, general view after excavation.

Conclusions: This is a small man-made stone feature, the dating and nature of which it was not possible to discern.

Site 14 (defined in the survey as a campsite)

Location: 162356–033427, altitude: 33.0m ASL.

Description (Fig. 28): An incomplete circular feature, of internal diameter 0.7m and external 1.0m. Three quarters of the feature's perimeter is extant, opening to the east. The feature is located on low ground, where the Nahal Gov wadi widens as it descends from the Gov heights to the north.

Excavation (Fig. 29): A 2.0 x 2.0m square was excavated to a depth of 0.1m. The feature was built with large and medium-sized hard limestone rocks. The fill was light brown and archaeologically-sterile down to the excavation limit of 0.15m.

Conclusions: This feature's circular form was probably breached by water flow, it being located



Fig. 28. Nahal Gov 14, general view before excavation (looking north).



Fig. 29. Nahal Gov 14, general view after excavation.

on the wadi bed. Beyond that, and the fact that it was definitely man-made, no further interpretation was justified.

Site 36 (defined in the survey as an installation)

Location: 162364–033421, altitude: 30.0m ASL.

Description (Fig. 30): A concentration of small- to medium-sized stones, ca. 10.0m east of Site 14.

Excavation (Fig. 31): A 2.0 x 2.0m square was excavated to a depth of 0.1m, down to the light brown sterile subsoil. No finds were retrieved.

Conclusions: This is probably a natural cluster of stones rather than man-made.

Site 50 Shiniyot (non-intrusive survey)

Location: 162568–033034, altitude: 33.0m ASL.

Description (Figs. 32-35): Five small stone circles in linear formation at the edge of the Nahal Gov

cliffs, near the wadi's confluence with Nahal Zin. A stone circle with a diameter of ca. 1.0m, made of black-brown rocks, is found at the western end of the line (Fig. 35) (location: 162536–033038). The stone circles are in poor states of preservation, standing two courses high at most.

Documentation: The site is outside the mining area and will remain at its location as part of the conservation of the Nahal Gov cliffs.

Conclusions: This *shiniyot* (stone heap) site was probably used as a road marker on the way to Ma'ale Akrabim (see Avner 1993; Barker and Gilbertson 2000; Everani *et al.* 1982). The location of such *shiniyot* at the edge of this prominent ridge, near the confluence of Nahal Gov and Nahal Zin, and pointing east-west all strongly support its interpretation as a signpost directing the traveler

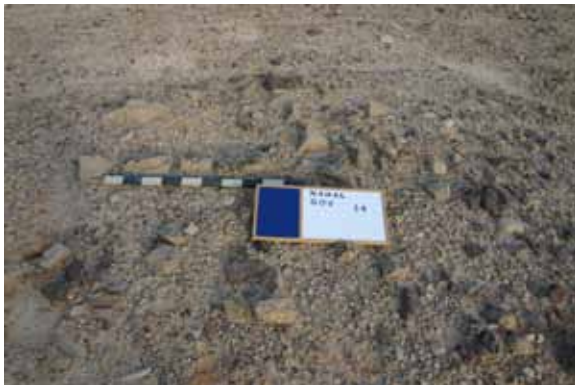


Fig. 30. Nahal Gov 36, general view before excavation.

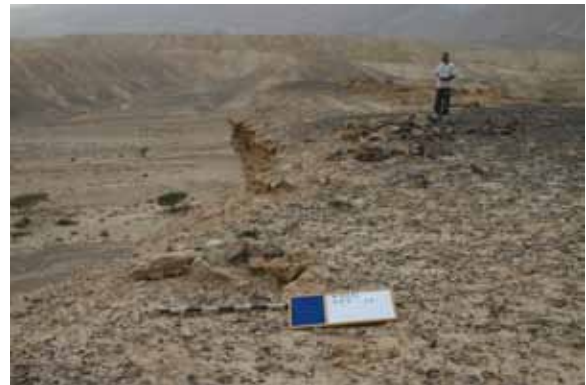


Fig. 32. Nahal Gov 50, general view of the shiniyot line (looking west).



Fig. 31. Nahal Gov 36, general view after excavation.

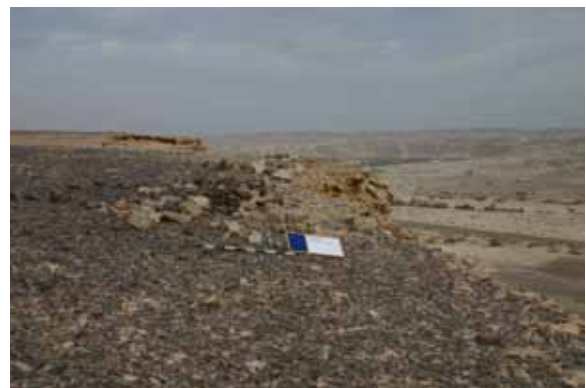


Fig. 33. Nahal Gov 50, general view of the shiniyot line (looking east).



Fig. 34. Nahal Gov 50, general view of the shiniyot line (looking south, Nahal Zin behind).



Fig. 35. Nahal Gov 50, detail of one of westernmost stone circle of the shiniyot line.

on his journey from Nahal Zin to Nahal Gov and from there to Ma'ale Akrabim. There is no way of dating these *shiniyot*, however, since no associated

indicative artifacts were recovered. It is possible that other linear stone features which we recorded (Sites 8 and 9) also made up part of this route's signage.

Summary

Of the 15 sites analyzed, six were found to be non-archaeological (1, 2, 10–12, 36). Most of these were a result of limestone outcrop fragmentation, visually conspicuous against the pale *hamada* soil of the area.

We identified nine archaeological sites over the course of this project. Six we defined as man-made built features with simple architecture (3, 4, 6, 13A-B, 14). These were mainly medium-sized stone circles (round or elliptical). No artifacts of any kind were found in these installations preventing us from dating them or interpreting their nature. From both their interiors and exteriors sterile soil was retrieved. The impression is that these structures were built directly on the surface, to a height of one course of stones.

Three sites (8, 9 and 50), recorded without excavating, were defined as features used most likely as signposts, marking the route of an ancient road passing from Nahal Zin to Nahal Gov on the way to Ma'ale Akrabim. However, the poor state of preservation of these features and the lack of associated artifacts precluded the possibility of dating them.

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