

SALVAGE EXCAVATION AT NAHAL SAYIF – 2004

Yehuda Govrin

The excavations were directed by the author in early December 2004, on behalf of Y.G. Contract Archaeology Ltd under the academic sponsorship of Hebrew Union College (Excavation Permit: B-293/2004).

In order to further their business model, Rotem Emprat Negev Corporation Ltd in 2004 commissioned an archaeological survey in the Sde Sayif area of the southern Negev (Fig. 1; carried out by Yeshayahu Lender on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and published in an IAA report dated May 2nd 2004). This survey extended over 5000 dunams (1250 acres), and fifteen archaeological sites and find points were identified. Following the survey, archaeological excavations were conducted at six of the surveyed sites (Sites 3, 4, 7, 8, 12 and 13). The extent of excavation required for each site was 2.0–4.0m².

Site 3: Stone Concentration

Location: 161995–029511

Description: A small mound of stones, diameter ca. 5.0m, found in an area of level ground between

two wadis (Fig. 2). The western and eastern stones in the pile were found standing upright. Fifteen and thirty meters west were two additional stone concentrations.

Excavation: A 4.0m² square was excavated to a depth of 0.15m (Fig. 3). No finds were recovered and the soil was sterile throughout the entire excavation depth.

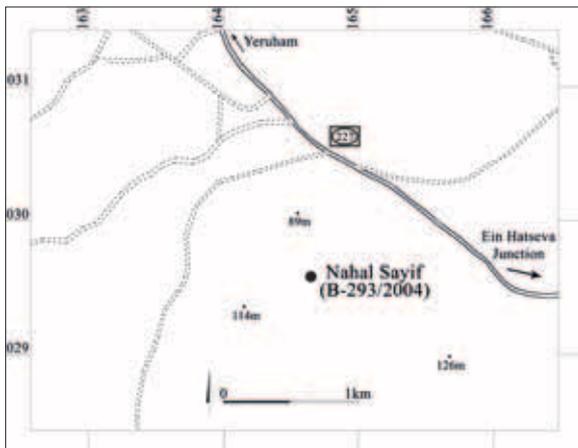


Fig. 1. Site location map (Old Israeli Grid: 161500–029500).

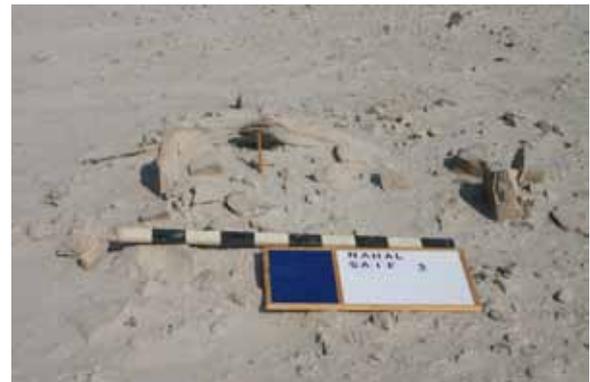


Fig. 2. Nahal Sayif 3 before excavation.



Fig. 3. Nahal Sayif 3 after excavation.

Site 4: Stone Concentration

Location: 163622–030940

Description: Twelve small piles of stones within a circular area of ca. 30.0m diameter (Fig. 4). The piles consisted of small flat limestone rocks, and as a group they formed an uneven ovoid shape in plan.

Excavation: A 4.0m² square was excavated to a depth of 0.15m at the center of the stone concentration (Fig. 5). No finds were retrieved and the soil was sterile throughout the entire excavation depth.

Site 7: Stone Circle

Location: 163668–031504

Description: Remains of a truncated circle of small stones, with an estimated original diameter of ca. 2.5m. Found on a moderate slope close to the bank of a stream (Fig. 6).

Excavation: A 4.0m² square was excavated to a depth of 0.15m (Fig. 7). No archaeological finds were recovered and the soil was sterile throughout the entire excavation depth.

Site 8: Stone Circle

Location: 164043–031158

Description: A circle of flat stones at the centre of a rock surface, as well as nearby concentrations of stones, very close to the bank of a shallow stream (Fig. 8). A small stone lying on its narrow side was seen ca. 10.0m from the site during the IAA survey and identified as a 'stela' (Fig. 9).

Excavation: A 4.0m² square was excavated down to bedrock (ca. 0.2m below surface). No archaeological finds were recovered and the soil was sterile throughout the entire excavation depth (Fig. 10).



Fig. 4. Nahal Sayif 4 before excavation.

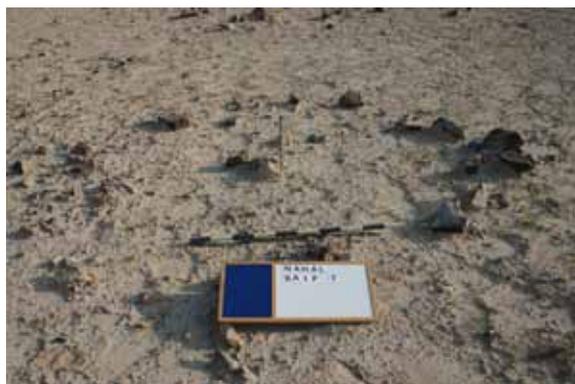


Fig. 6. Nahal Sayif 7 before excavation.



Fig. 5. Nahal Sayif 4 after excavation.



Fig. 7. Nahal Sayif 7 after excavation.

Site 12: Stone Concentrations

Location: 162342–030956

Description: Three flat stone piles spaced 15.0–20.0m apart on the east bank of a stream, each pile being comprised of one course of flat limestone rocks measuring ca. 2.5 x 1.5m (Fig. 11).



Fig. 8. Nahal Sayif 8, the 'stela'.

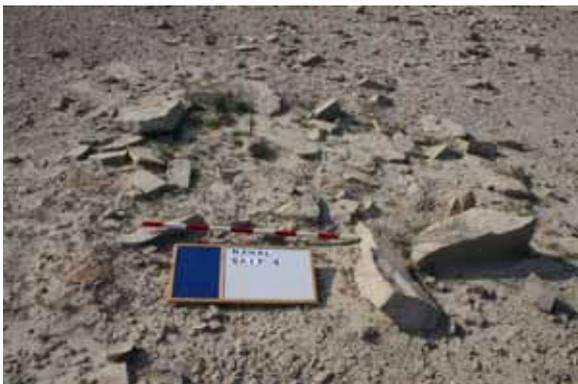


Fig. 9. Nahal Sayif 8, before excavation.



Fig. 10. Nahal Sayif 8 after excavation.

Excavation: A 4.0m² area was excavated to a depth of 0.15m beneath the limestone piles. No artifacts were retrieved and the soil was sterile throughout the entire excavation depth (Fig. 12).

Site 13: Stone Circles

Location: 161520–030285

Description: Two stone circles found on a deep stream's bank 20.0m apart. These features were arranged using unworked stones, to form ca. 2.5 x 1.5m elliptical shapes.

Excavation: A 4.0m² square was excavated to a depth of 0.2m. No artifacts were retrieved and the soil was sterile throughout the entire excavation depth.



Fig. 11. Nahal Sayif 12 before excavation.



Fig. 12. Nahal Sayif 12 after excavation.



Fig. 13. Nahal Sayif 13 before excavation.



Fig. 14. Nahal Sayif 13 after excavation.

Summary

From our excavations it appears that most of these Nahal Sayif features were natural, erosional configurations. Furthermore, no archaeological finds or signs of activity were recovered at these sites. Despite this dearth of finds, however, the

remains of the stone circle at Site 7 and the stone standing on its narrow side at Site 8 could have been man-made. In light of the paucity of archaeological activity evidenced here at Nahal Sayif, the area was released for development.

Acknowledgements

I thank the Rotem Emprat Negev Corporation Ltd for commissioning Y.G. Archaeology for this project and for their logistical help throughout the course of its execution.

SALVAGE EXCAVATION AND DOCUMENTATION OF SITES AT NAHAL GOV – 2004

Yehuda Govrin

This report concerns a series of features surveyed, plotted and excavated in the Negev. Their date is uncertain. The excavation was directed by the author in November 2005 on behalf of Y.G. Contract Archaeology Ltd under the academic sponsorship of Hebrew Union College (Excavation Permit B-292/2004).

Introduction

In an archaeological survey carried out in February 2004 by Dr. Tali Erickson-Gini (Southern Negev Supervisor, Israel Antiquities Authority [IAA]) at the request of Rotem Emprat Negev Corporation Ltd, forty-three potential archaeological sites were located in the area of Sde Gov. After further research, on October 17, 2004 the IAA reduced this number to fifteen (Table 1). These sites were excavated under the direction of Y.G. Contract Archaeology executive Yehuda Govrin in mid-November 2004 (Fig. 1).

Before excavations commenced, Yehuda Govrin and Tali Erickson-Gini surveyed the area in order to confirm the sites and their locations, and to establish what would be the satisfactory extent of excavations and recording. Altogether twelve sites were marked for excavation, and three for documenting.

Below is a table (Table 1) showing the sites, their types and the IAA excavation and recording demands of each. Site 5, initially defined as a pile of stones, was subsequently cancelled from the list, while Sites 34, 35, 43, 46 and 50 were deemed outside the client's proposed mining impact area, thus eliminating the need to investigate them.

The Sites

Site 1 (identified in the survey as a grave)

Location: 162340–033350, altitude: 43.0m ASL.

Description (Fig. 2): A cluster of stones on a slope. Fieldstones of various sizes were concentrated as a pile within a 1.3m diameter. The stone cluster

rests on *hamada* soil whose surface is covered with small stones and natural brown flint fragments.

Excavation (Fig. 3): A 2.0 x 2.0m square was excavated to a depth of 0.15m, down to the natural soil. No finds were recovered during the excavation.

Conclusion: There is no certainty that this site was man-made since no architecture or finds were recovered. It is possible that this site was a natural cluster of local limestone.

Site 2 (identified in the survey as a grave)

Location: 162345–033341, altitude: 32.0m ASL.

Description (Figs. 4, 5): A large rock broken into seven parts was found on this extended slope. The rock is brown and stands out above the ground to a

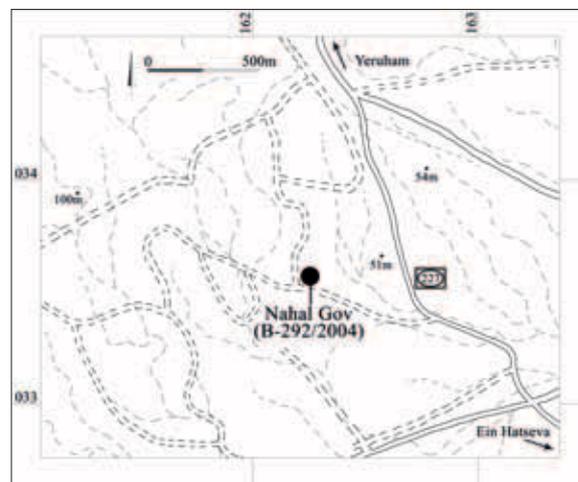


Fig. 1. Location map of the archaeological investigation area (plan no: 272/03/10 – Sde Gov).

Table 1.

Site no.	Site	Location	Requirements	Total
1.	Grave	162360–1033340	Excavation (2.0 x 2.5m)	5.0m ²
2.	Grave	162356–1033345	Excavation (2.0 x 1.0m)	2.0m ²
3.	Grave	162171–1033516	Excavation (1.0 x 2.0m)	2.0m ²
4.	Campsite	162170–1033479	Test excavation (2.0 x 2m)	4.0m ²
5.	Rogem	162788–1033536	Excavation (2.0 x 3.0m)	6.0m ²
6.	Structure	162177–1033546	Excavation (2.0 x 3.0m)	6.0m ²
8.	Stone line	162224–1033350	Recording	
9.	Stone line	162221–1033350	Recording	
10.	Grave	162251–1033371	Excavation (2.0 x 2.0m)	4.0m ²
11.	Installation	162275–1033374	Excavation (1.0 x 1.5m)	1.5m ²
12.	Grave	162308–1033381	Excavation (1.0 x 1.5m)	1.5m ²
13.	Two graves	162361–1033437	Excavation (2.0 x 2.0m)	4.0m ²
14.	Campsite	162361–1033425	Excavation (2.0 x 2.0m)	4.0m ²
34.	Grave	162411–1033419	Excavation (2.0 x 2.5m)	5.0m ²
35.	Rogem	162392–1033432	Excavation (4.0 x 4.0m)	16.0m ²
36.	Square structure	162352–1033432	Excavation (2.0 x 2.0m)	4.0m ²
43.	Structure	162493–1033909	Excavation (1.0 x 1.5m)	1.5m ²
46.	Structure	162196–1033700	Excavation (5.0 x 5.0m)	25.0m ²
50.	<i>Shiniyot</i>	162562–1033027	Recording	



Fig. 2. Nahal Gov 1, general view before excavation.



Fig. 3. Nahal Gov 1, general view after excavation.



Fig. 4. Nahal Gov 2, the broken rock, general view (looking west).



Fig. 5. Nahal Gov 2, general view of the broken rock (looking east).

height of 0.4m. The site was not excavated; it was identified as a natural rock broken into a number of fragments with no associated artifacts.

Site 3 (identified in the survey as a grave)

Location: 162186–033527, altitude: 45.0m ASL.

Description (Fig. 6): An elliptical feature oriented east-west and measuring ca. 2.9m long and ca. 1.8m wide. The feature rests on *hamada* sediment mixed with small and medium-sized stones.

Excavation (Figs. 7, 8): A 4.0 x 4.0m square was excavated to a depth of ca. 0.5m, reaching sterile gravel subsoil. We uncovered a course of large and medium-sized stones placed on a course of small and medium-sized stones.

Conclusions: No pottery or lithics were found in the excavation. Despite this the impression is that this is a man-made structure, its purpose and date unknown.



Fig. 6. Nahal Gov 3, general view before excavation.

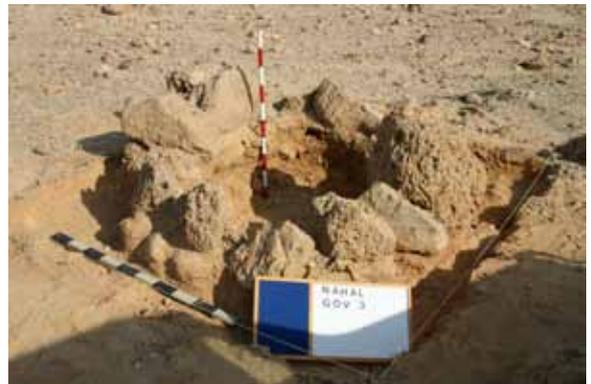


Fig. 7. Nahal Gov 3, general view after excavation.

Site 4 (defined in the survey as a campsite)

Location: 162149–033470, altitude: 46.0m ASL.

Description (Fig. 9): The remains of a stone circle preserved only in its northern section, to a height of ca. 0.25m. The circle was built from medium-sized brown flint stones set on *hamada* soil mixed with small brown-black flint stones.

Excavation (Fig. 10): An area of 2.5 x 4.0m was excavated and a section of the one-course stone circle was exposed. No finds were recovered. The soil was sterile under the layer of gravel, and its color yellowish-white.

Conclusions: This feature was probably a stone circle, the southern section of which was carried away by a shallow wadi.

Site 6 (defined in the survey as a structure)

Location: 162179–033536, altitude: 43.0m ASL.