



Fig. 44. Remains of an Iron Age tower at Khirbet al-Mukhayyat

The summers of 2016 and 2017 marked the second and third excavation seasons of the Town of Nebo Archaeological Project (TNAP). The town of Nebo (or Khirbat al-Mukhayyat as it is known today) is located at the western edge of the Madaba Plateau, overlooking the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley. Prior archaeological research at Mukhayyat has focused on the Byzantine remains at the site. TNAP was conceived to address this lacuna and explore broader themes, such as pilgrimage, economy, and landscape, across multiple cultural and historical periods. The summer of 2014 marked our inaugural season of excavation at which time three fields were opened. Since that time, excavations have concentrated on Field B, on an artificial rise to the south of the acropolis, and Field C, located north of the acropolis.

Field B produced a number of interesting finds during the 2014 season and thus was also the focus of excavations in 2016 and 2017. The presence of monumental architecture prompted initial investigations in this area. This structure has now been identified as an Iron Age tower (Fig. 44), which would have been incorporated into the defensive system identified in other areas of the site. Additional evidence of Iron Age occupation has been uncovered in Field B, namely a series of surfaces and a small northeast–southwest wall.

There appear to be two distinct Hellenistic occupation phases in Field B. The earlier phase is defensive in nature and is associated

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Fig. 45. Plaster installations surrounding the late Hellenistic miqveh

with the replacement of the masonry in the southeastern corner of the tower with large, well-cut ashlar blocks. The later phase appears to be associated with ritual activities. Since the 2014 season, over 40 intact cooking pots have been recovered from different fill layers in Field B. This ritual activity consisted of placing cooking vessels upright on the ground, regardless of the steepness of the slope. The soil that surrounds them contains a large amount of Iron Age pottery, suggesting that these cooking pots were intentionally buried using fill from earlier cultural levels in the surrounding area. These cooking pots may be associated with some type of ritual feasting activity that took place seasonally at the site.

Field C was the focus of excavations in 2014 and 2016. Initially, work began in the central part of Field C; however, it became obvious partway through the 2014 season that there were no structures or clear occupational levels here. Excavation activity then shifted to the western edge of Field C in hopes of exposing part of the site's fortification system. In addition to revealing more of the defensive wall, work in this area in 2014 succeeded in uncovering a plaster-lined, stepped ritual bath (or miqveh) dated to the Late Hellenistic period. Excavations in 2016 in the area surrounding the miqveh produced a number of plaster installations (Fig. 45) that may be associated with agricultural activities in this area. More of the Iron Age fortification wall was also found in this area.

TNAP's 2016 and 2017 seasons were an overwhelming success. We will return for a fourth season in the summer of 2019, when we will hopefully be able to answer some of the lingering questions that our excavations have produced.

Project website: www.townofneboproject.com