

FINDS FROM THE BAR KOKHBA REVOLT FROM TWO CAVES AT EN GEDI

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Finds from two caves that were excavated in Ein Gedi in 2002 are described. Eleven bronze coins of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, twelve arrowheads and fragments of two papyrus documents were recovered in the Har Yishay Cave, located along the northern slopes of Nahal David. A hoard of nine silver coins, including a Bar-Kokhba tetradrachm, were found in the Sabar Cave. This is the second Bar-Kokhba tetradrachm to have been found in the context of a scientifically controlled archaeological project. Along with it were six Roman dinars and two dinars overstruck by Bar Kokhba. From the evidence of one of the Bar Kokhba documents dated to the third year of the revolt, it is possible to estimate that when this hoard was deposited in the cave, the total value of the coins exceeded that of a house!

Since 2001, an archaeological and geographical survey of the caves along the cliffs facing the Dead Sea in the northern Judean Desert (Porat and Eshel 2002; 2003; Porat, Eshel and Frumkin 2004) has been conducted.¹ As the area between Wadi Murabba'at and Nahal Kidron is better known than the southern section, the survey was started from Wadi Murabba'at towards the south. The main purpose of the survey was to examine whether there were any refuge caves in this area previously unknown to researchers of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Before this survey, twenty-seven refuge caves, occupied at the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, were identified in the Judean Desert (Eshel and Amit 1989).

Investigation of the dispersion of refuge caves shows that, in the southern part of the Judean Desert, the area under Israeli jurisdiction until the Six-Day War (1967), refuge caves from the Bar Kokhba Revolt were found in Nahal David, Nahal Hever, Nahal Mishmar, Nahal Hardof, Nahal Se'elim, and east of Rosh Zohar; while in the northern part, under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of Jordan until 1967, only the caves of Wadi Murabba'at were identified (Eshel and Amit 1989: 15). Since we did not have an explanation for the differences between the two areas, we supposed that we should investigate whether there are additional refuge caves, of the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, in the northern part of the Judean Desert. To date, during the course of the survey, five such caves have been found with artefacts dating to the Bar Kokhba Revolt located between Wadi Muraba'at and Nahal David. Furthermore, we found that as the survey extended toward En Gedi, the quantity and the quality of finds increased.

In this paper, the finds from two caves located in the northern section of the En Gedi Oasis: the 'Har Yishai Cave' and the 'Sabar Cave' (Fig. 1), will be discussed.

I. THE 'HAR YISHAI CAVE'

The 'Har Yishai Cave' is situated on the extension of the Yishai Mountain that borders Nahal David from the north, and extends from the peak of the mountain eastward in the direction of the En Gedi Field School. The cave evolved naturally in the limestone face of the cliff, map ref.18730/09765. It is approximately 200 m south of the intersection of two trails, one of which descends from the Yishai Mountain and the second of which leads to the

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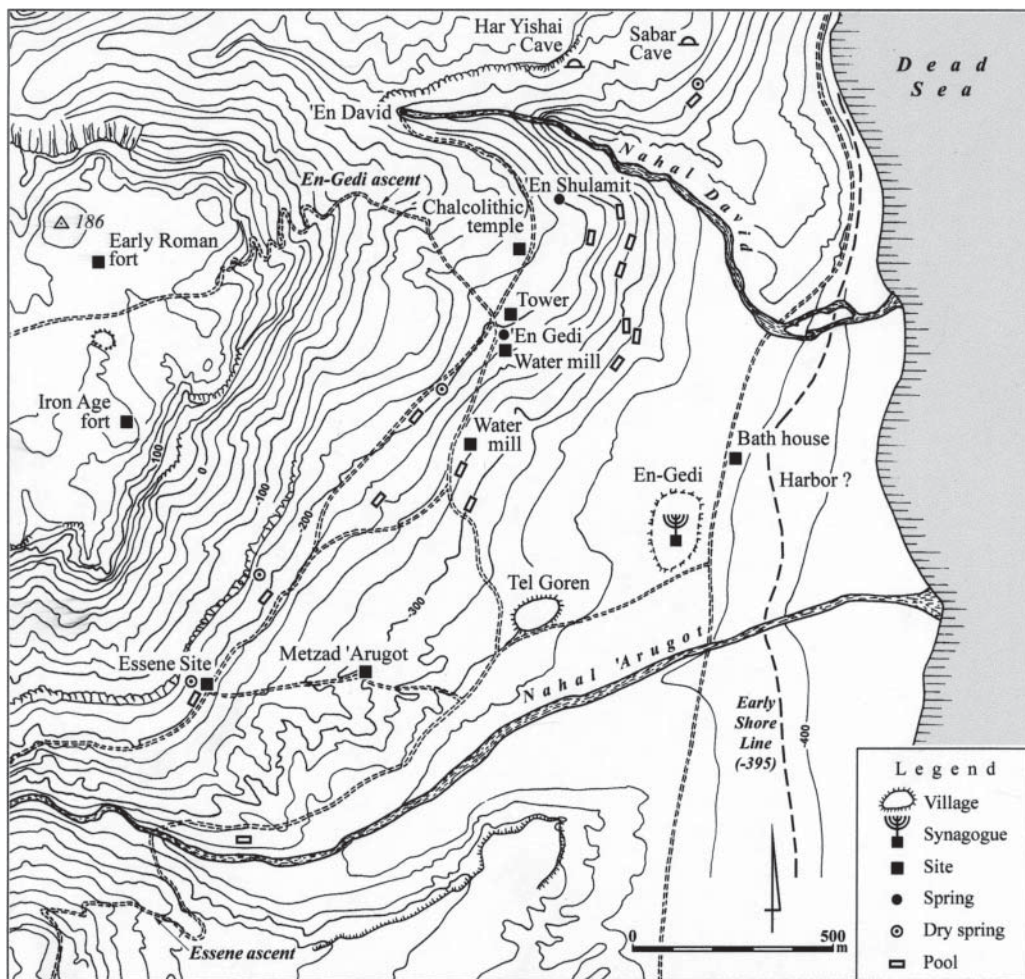


Fig. 1. Map of the area of En Gedi.

'Dry Canyon' and is known as the 'Safit Trail'. Just below the cave, at the base of the cliff, are the remains of agricultural terraces which bear witness to the fact that the area was cultivated in the past (Hadas 2002: 62). It may be assumed that, during the Early Roman period, the agricultural lands below the cave were part of the irrigated lands of the oasis of En Gedi.

The entrance to the 'Har Yishai Cave' is a 2.5 m² opening. It is located in the middle of the cliff, approximately 10 m above the terraces at the base of the cliff, and almost the same distance from the top of the cliff (Fig. 2). The opening faces to the east, is extremely obvious, and appears as a black opening that is easily identified even from afar. Under the assumption that palm trees were grown in the area below the cave, it is probable that the opening of the 'Har Yishai Cave' had been better concealed during the Early Roman Period than today. The prominence of the cave's entrance drew numerous hikers during the 1970s and 1980s.² The cave was surveyed in 1989 by Hadas (Hadas in press). As part of his survey,



Fig. 2. Frontal view of the opening of the 'Har Yishai Cave' from the east.

Hadas collected Early Roman pottery, observed the remains of textiles and organic materials, and drew up a schematic plan of the cave.³

The 'Har Yishai Cave' is V-shaped and of uneven extensions (Fig. 3). The longer of the two arms, the eastern one, is approximately 6 m long and slightly wider than 1 m. The western arm is *c.* 4.5 m long and it ends in a narrow cavity. The central space at the entrance measures approximately 2.5 m and its height is 1–1.5 m. The dimensions of the cave permit only five or six people at one time. The cave contained profuse evidence of the activity of birds of prey.⁴

At the end of October 2002, during the course of the survey, a worn three-winged arrowhead was found below the cave. This type of arrowhead was common during the Early Roman Period (Gichon and Vitale 1991; Steibel 2004: 119–121). As a result of this find, the cave was then surveyed with a metal detector during which significant artifacts were found.⁵ These discoveries led to the subsequent excavation of the entire cave.⁶ During the course of the excavation, all of the soil from the cave was removed and sifted through at the base of the cliff. The cave was divided into four areas: Area A was the eastern arm; Area B was the central space; Area C was the western arm, and Area D was the area adjacent to the opening of the cave (Fig. 3). After the bedrock was reached in these areas, the soil between them was excavated.

Excavation of the cave uncovered artifacts from both the Chalcolithic period and the Bar Kokhba Revolt. The finds dating to the Chalcolithic period were two V-shaped bowls, a shell with holes pierced through it, pieces of flint, and two bone points. From the Bar Kokhba Revolt were found: the remains of two Greek documents written on papyrus

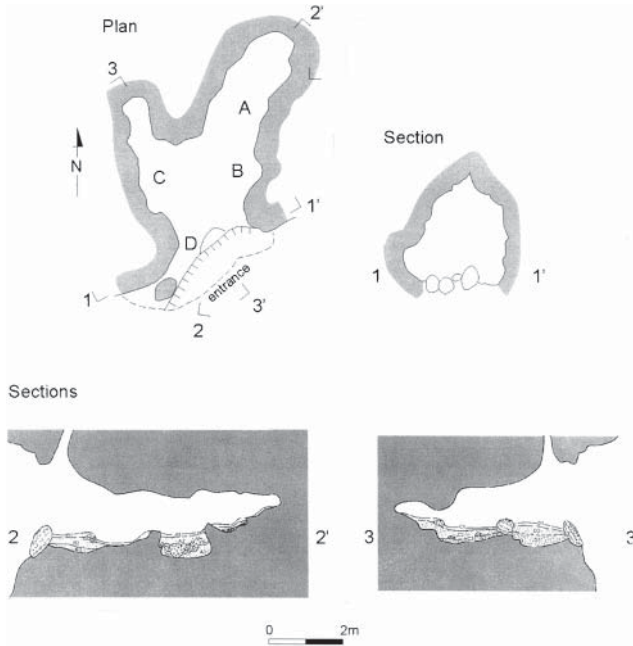


Fig. 3. Plan of the 'Har Yishai Cave'.

(Cohen 2006); eleven Bar Kokhba coins; a dozen arrowheads; arrow shafts, the front end of which are of wood and the rear end of reed; twelve pottery vessels; pieces of two glass vessels; a single stone vessel; and the remains of woven textiles and of leather, in addition to other organic materials.

The soil that had accumulated above the solid rock bottom of the cave was 60 cm deep. In Area A (the eastern arm), the upper layer of 10 cm (L.A1) was related to animal activity. Below this layer, was a layer (L.A2) of 20 cm in which some artifacts from the Bar Kokhba Revolt were found. Below this second layer, were stones that appear to have been carried onto the area deliberately, apparently from the front of the cave. Beneath the stones were more remains from the Bar Kokhba Revolt, as well as from the Chalcolithic period (L.A3).

In Area B (the central space), a beaten earth floor was identified 20 cm below the surface (L.B2). The majority of the artifacts found in this area dated to the Bar Kokhba Revolt were found on this floor. In Area C (the western arm), the Bar Kokhba remains were found beginning at 15 cm deep (L.C2). Coin No. 5 (Basket no. 0014) was found at 20 cm below the surface. At 40 cm, a beaten earth floor was uncovered, on which were found most of the remains of the Bar Kokhba period: broken potsherds, glass sherds, textiles, pieces of twined baskets, and arrow reeds. Also found at this depth, were a leather purse in which eight coins had been stored and the two Greek papyri (Cohen 2006).

Adjacent to the cave's opening, in Area D, was an accumulation of 40 cm of earth. No artifacts were found in the upper 10 cm (L.D1). Another beaten earth floor was found 15 cm below this layer (L.D2). Additional Bar Kokhba remains were found on this floor consisting of: potsherds, three arrowheads, arrow reeds, textiles, and ropes. Two foci of bonfires were discernible. Bar Kokhba remains as well as Chalcolithic pottery were also discovered 30 cm below the floor (L.D3). Along the opening of the cave on the beaten earth floor a row of rocks was discernible. These appear to have been purposefully laid in order to provide protective cover for the guards at the cave entrance.

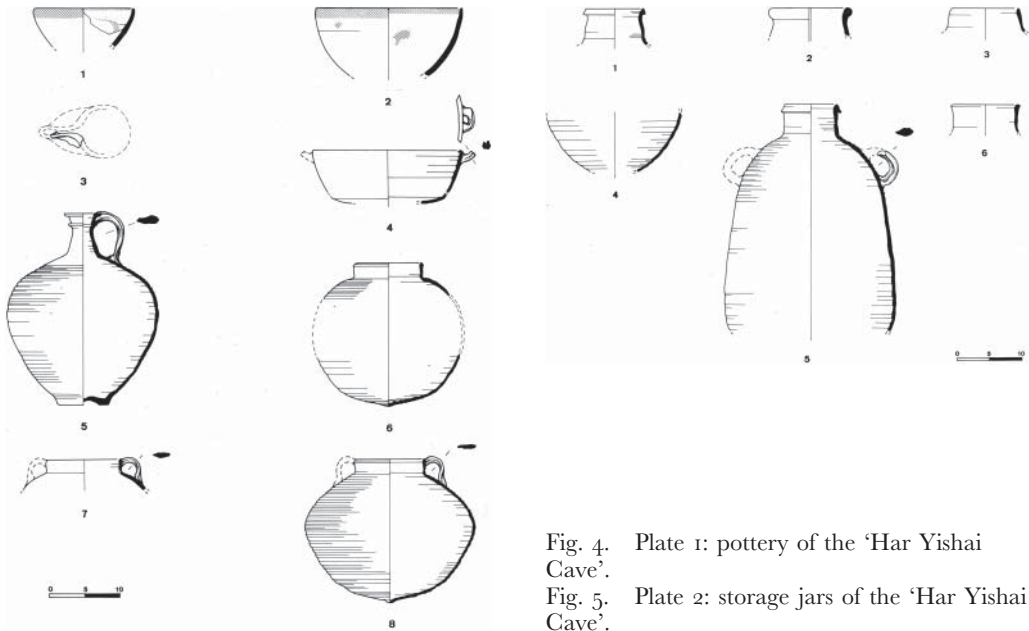


Fig. 4. Plate 1: pottery of the 'Har Yishai Cave'.

Fig. 5. Plate 2: storage jars of the 'Har Yishai Cave'.

Sherds of the same vessels, of the two glass objects and of the stone vessel were found strewn throughout the different areas and at different levels within the 'Har Yishai Cave'. This phenomenon appears to be the result of human activity rather than of animal activity. Therefore, it is possible that Roman soldiers may have entered the 'Har Yishai Cave' in 135 CE, yet we cannot deny that this may just as well have been caused by illegal excavations. Whoever the culprits were, this activity led to the complete disarray that scattered the artifacts throughout the 'Har Yishai Cave'.⁷

The pottery found in the 'Har Yishai Cave' is shown in Plates 1–2 (Figs 4 and 5; Tables 1 and 2). Two ceramic bowls from the Chalcolithic period (Nos. 1–2 in Plate 1) are of the V-shaped type. The rims of these pots were decorated with red stripes. Bowls of this type are typical of the Ghassulian culture. Similar bowls were found in the 'Cave of Treasure' (Bar-Adon 1980: 140–141). Two Chalcolithic bone points were found in the cave (these points are similar to arrows from the Chalcolithic period, see Schick, 1998, 30–33). One of the

Table 1. POTTERY FOUND AT THE 'HAR YISHAI CAVE' (ILLUSTRATED IN PLATE 1, FIG. 4)

No.	Object	Description
1.	Bowl	Brown clay, black grains, brown stripe and burnished rim
2.	Bowl	Yellow clay, white and black grains, red-brown stripe on the rim
3.	Pinched Lamp	Red clay, remnants of burning on the mouth
4.	Casserole	Brown-red clay, well levelled, signs of burning on the outside
5.	Jug	Brown-orange clay, white grains
6.	Cooking Pot	Red-brown clay, remains of burning on the outside
7.	Cooking Pot	Orange clay
8.	Cooking Pot	Brown clay, black core, white grains

Table 2. DESCRIPTION OF STORAGE JARS FROM THE 'HAR YISHAI CAVE'
(ILLUSTRATED IN PLATE 2, FIG. 5)

No.	Object	Description
1.	Storage Jar	Red clay, large black core, white grain, remnants of contents inside
2.	Storage Jar	Orange clay, brown-grey core
3.	Storage Jar	Red clay, thin black core
4.	Base of Storage Jar	Orange clay, thin black core
5.	Storage Jar	Red clay, large black core with white grains
6.	Storage Jar	Brown clay, grey core, black and white grains

points still bore remnants of the binding used to bind the point to another object (Figs 6:1 and 7). Additional Chalcolithic finds were a pierced shell that was apparently used as a bead (Fig. 6:2), and six lumps of asphalt from the Dead Sea that were used as adhesive.

Amongst the artifacts from the 'Har Yishai Cave' was the sherd of a folded oil lamp (Plate 1:3). This oil lamp is unusual and no parallels have been found from Bar Kokhba period assemblages.⁸ The remainder of the ceramics is typical of the second century CE, and has parallels in ceramic assemblages found in sites associated with the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Illustrated in Plate 1 are a jug, and five cooking pots that were found in the cave (Fig. 4), as well as a pan (No. 4; on such vessels in the Talmudic literature, see: Brand 1953: 13–26; Zevulun and Olenik 1979: 64–67, 73–7). Similar pottery was found in the 'Cave of the Horrors' (Aharoni 1962: 191 no. 4), in the hiding complex in Horvat Midras (Kloner 1987: 342 no. 17) and in the 'Cave of the Tetracharm' (Amit and Eshel 1989: 191 no. 3). Jug No. 5 is complete (Fig. 8); it has a parallel in a jug found in 'Cave of the Horrors' (Aharoni 1962: 191 no. 17). Cooking pot No. 6 is similar to one found in Araq en-Na'saneh in Wadi Ed-Daliyeh (Lapp and Lapp, 1974, pl. 20:6). Cooking pot No. 7 has a parallel that was found in the 'Cave of the Letters' (Aharoni, 1961, fig. 7:7). Cooking pot No. 8 is complete (Fig. 9) and is similar to a cooking pot found in the 'Cave of the Tetracharm' (Amit and Eshel 1989: 191 no. 13).

Plate 2 includes six storage jars from the 'Har Yishai Cave' (Fig. 5). Storage jar No. 1 is similar to a jar found in Araq en-Na'saneh (Lapp and Lapp, 1974, pl. 27:7). Storage jar No. 2 is similar to a storage jar that was found in the 'Cave of the Letters' (Aharoni, 1961,

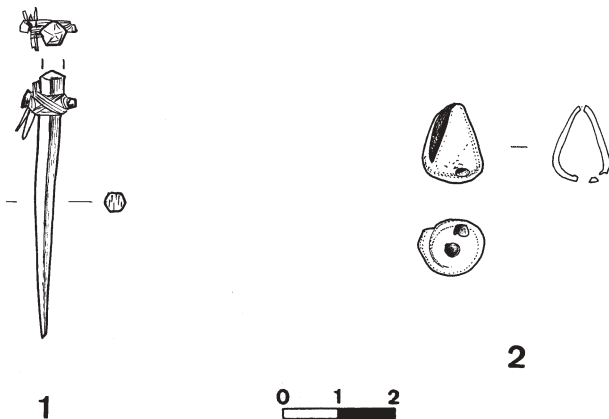


Fig. 6. Plate 3: Chalcolithic point and pierced shell from the 'Har Yishai Cave'.



Fig. 7. Photograph of the Chalcolithic point from the 'Har Yishai Cave'.

fig 7:16). Storage jar No. 3 has a parallel that was found in Araq en-Na'saneh in Wadi Ed-Daliyeh (Lapp and Lapp, 1974, pl. 24:2). Storage jar No. 5 also has a parallel in Wadi Ed-Daliyeh (Lapp and Lapp, 1974, pl. 27:11).⁹ Storage jar No. 6 is similar to one found in the 'Cave of the Tetradrachm' (Amit and Eshel 1989: 194 no. 30).

Twelve arrowheads were found in the 'Har Yishai Cave', one of which (No. 10), found at the foot of the cave's cliff, was well worn; eleven other arrowheads were found within the cave in perfect condition (Figs 10 and 11). All of the arrowheads are of the three-winged type characteristic of the Early Roman period. On four of the arrowheads the blades were drawn back (Nos. 2, 6, 7 and 9) and on the seven other arrowheads the blades were 'cut' towards

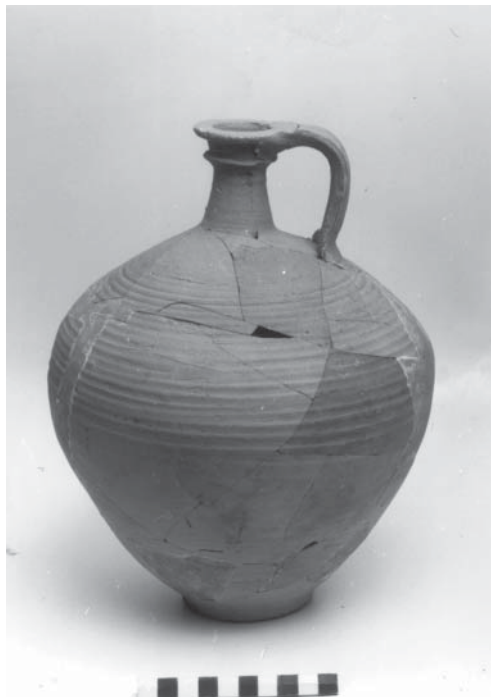


Fig. 8. Jug from the 'Har Yishai Cave'.

Fig. 9. Cooking pot from the 'Har Yishai Cave'.

the sharpened end. One arrowhead (No.1) was found still attached to the shaft of the arrow. At the point of connection between the arrow and the shaft, was wound a strap of sinew in order to strengthen the bond.¹⁰ Three of the arrowheads were found with their points intact (Nos. 2–4), as if they had never been shot or come into contact with a hard surface. On the other eight arrowheads, it was possible to discern bowed points, the result of having come against a hard surface (see Stiebel 2004: 119–121).

Two glass vessels were found in the 'Har Yishai Cave'. One is a deep bowl with a disc base and pipe rim bearing a similarity to one found in the 'Cave of Horrors' (Barag 1962: 210). The second vessel is a glass cup, similar to one found in Rejim el-Bahar in the northern part of the Dead Sea (Bar-Adon 1989: 12 no. 11). The stone vessel is a scarred bowl with a significantly low side (Fig. 12). A similar vessel was found in the Upper City of Jerusalem (Magen 2002, 98, fig 3.60:10).

Eleven coins were found in the cave, all of which are bronze coins restruck by the rebels (Fig. 13). Nine coins are of the common type on which a palm tree appears on the obverse and a vine leaf on the reverse; two of the coins are of the small type, in which a palm tree is on the obverse and a cluster of grapes on the reverse. Eight of the coins (Basket Nos. 0004–0011) were stored in a leather pouch and were found stuck together in the western arm of the cave (Area C). Above this group of coins was found Coin No.5 (Basket no. 0014). Coin No. 4 (Basket no. 0013) and Coin No. 11 (Basket no. 0015) were found in the eastern arm of the cave (Area A). Five coins belong to the common type from the second year of the revolt; six from the undated series that was minted in the third year of the revolt; four from the common type; and two from the smallest denomination. One of the coins of the smallest

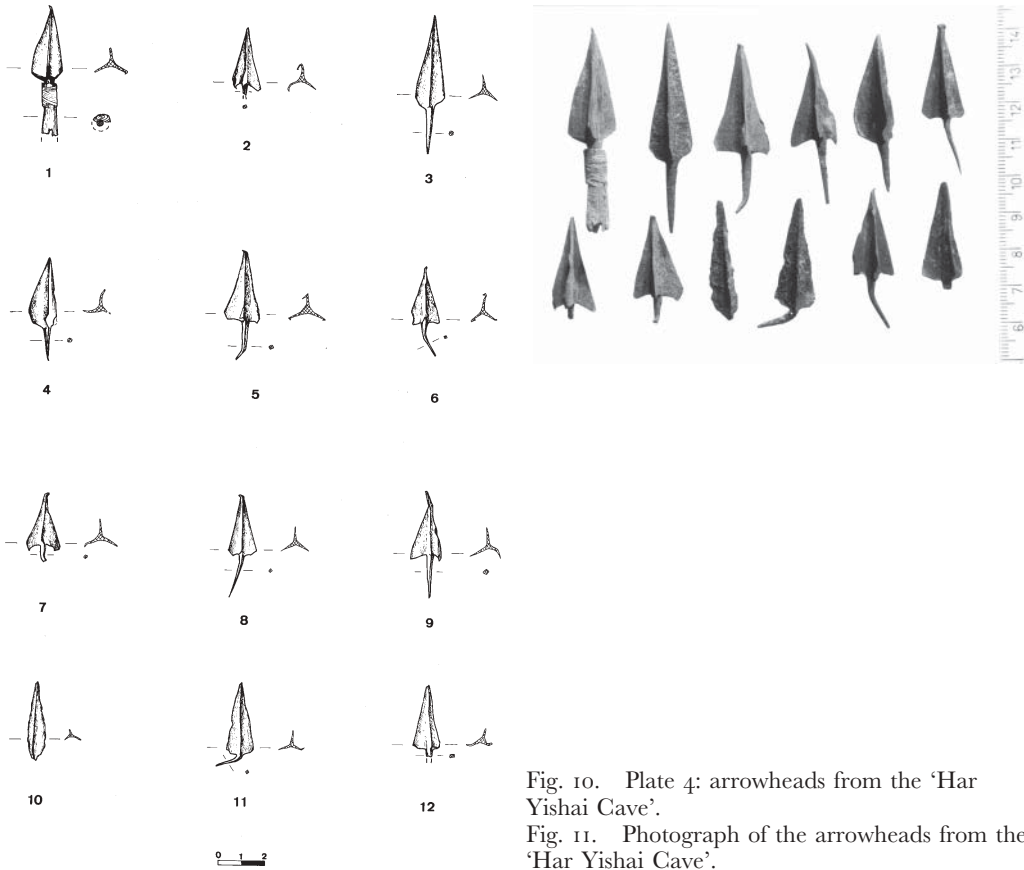


Fig. 10. Plate 4: arrowheads from the 'Har Yishai Cave'.

Fig. 11. Photograph of the arrowheads from the 'Har Yishai Cave'.

denomination (Basket no. 0011) bears the inscription 'El'azar the Priest'. This coin was struck over a coin that had a countermark for the Sixth Roman Legion. On some of the coins, it was possible to distinguish evidence of the filing before the coins' being restruck (Porat, Eshel and Frumkin, 2006).¹¹

Until the discovery of the 'Har Yishai Cave', our knowledge of the refuge caves that were used by the En Gedi residents was limited to Nahal Hever (particularly the 'Cave of Letters' and the 'Cave of the Horrors') and the 'Cave of the Pool' in Nahal David. The refuge caves typical of the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt known from the Judean Desert are large caves, or clusters of medium sized caves, considerably distanced from civilization (Eshel and Amit 1989: 13-21). The 'Har Yishai Cave' is a particularly small cave with a noticeable opening. The entry to the cave was made possible only by climbing the cliff's face, and its proximity to the Nahal David springs and to the En Gedi village must have been the only advantages of the 'Har Yishai Cave'.

It is difficult to establish what were the fates of the people who found refuge in the 'Har Yishai Cave'. The nature of the artifacts found in the cave, particularly the documents and the coins, implies that the people that fled to the 'Har Yishai Cave' were prevented from

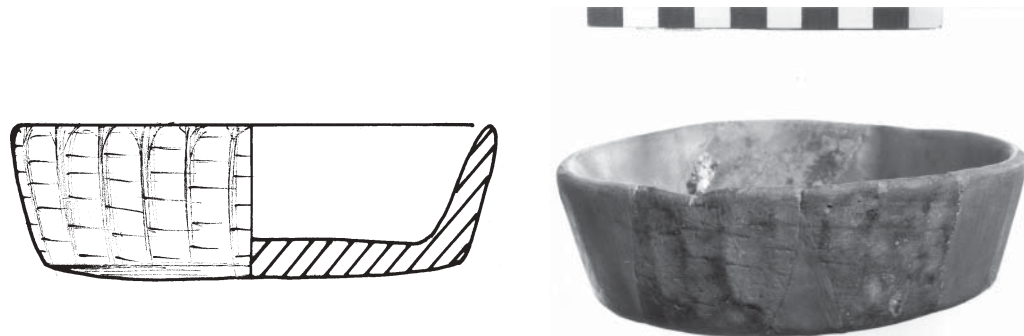


Fig. 12. Illustration and photograph of the stone vessel from the 'Har Yishai Cave'.

returning to collect their belongings and probably did not survive. On the other hand, no human skeletal remains were found in the cave. The discovery of the arrowheads in the 'Har Yishai Cave' reveals that the refugees probably did not continue in their efforts of escape further to other refuge caves. Therefore, it is plausible that the refugees that hid in the 'Har Yishai Cave' surrendered upon discovery by the Roman forces; on the other hand, it is possible that they died in the cave and were later buried by others.¹²

II. THE 'SABAR CAVE'

This cave is situated in the Oasis of En Gedi at the foot of the Yishai Mountain (map ref. 18742/09786). The cave has a small hidden opening that enters into a steep decline between two large rock masses (Fig. 14). The cave is approximately 300 m above and northwest of the En Gedi Field School, and less than 1 km northeast of the 'Har Yishai Cave'. The 'Sabar Cave' is situated on the northern edge of a cliff approximately 170 m long, beside which is a cluster of additional caves. At the southern edge of the cliff is a spring beside which two pools were built in conjunction with irrigation terraces.¹³ Pessah Bar-Adon excavated three of the additional caves along the cliff in 1968 (Fig. 15).¹⁴

The length of the 'Sabar Cave' is approximately 6 m, beginning in a narrow pass close to 2 m long, 1 m wide and 0.5 m high (Fig. 16). Further along, the cave opens up into a space that is approximately 2.5 m wide and 1 m high. From the narrow pass at the entrance, there is an extension to the northern space, which is N-shaped. Adjacent to the southern wall in the middle of the cave (marked 1 on the plan), below a large stone that was apparently positioned intentionally, 20 cm below the surface, was a group of nine coins that had been wrapped, apparently, in a cloth pouch which had disintegrated over time but its remains were found below the stone.¹⁵ The coins were found stuck together covered in green corrosion. Besides the coins and the remains of the cloth pouch no other remains were found in the cave. The Bar Kokhba administration restruck three of the coins, a tetradrachm and two denarii. All three carry the inscription 'For the freedom of Jerusalem' which was minted on coins of the third year of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. The other six coins were original silver Roman coins that were not overstruck (Fig. 17, and Table 3). This group includes: a dinar of Vespasian, a dinar of Nero, a dinar of Trajan, two drachmas of Provincia Arabia minted at Bostra under Trajan's rule, and a dinar of Hadrian (Porat, Eshel and Frumkin, 2006).

Owing to the cave's small dimensions and the relative absence of artifacts other than the remnants of the cloth pouch and the coins, it is assumed that people who fled at the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt did not use this cave as a shelter; rather, it was used to conceal an individual's money. The discovery of the coins and the cloth remains in the 'Sabar Cave' led

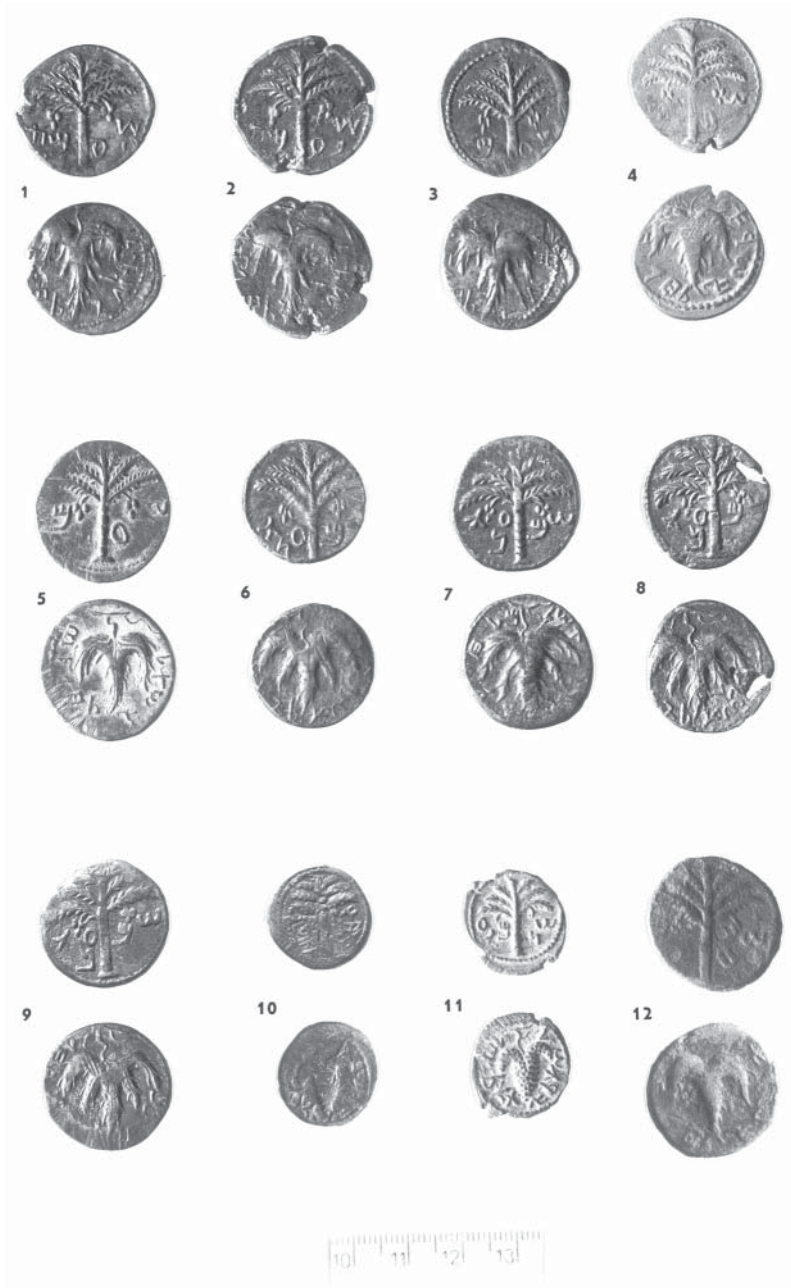


Fig. 13. Plate 5: bronze coins from the 'Har Yishai Cave' and the coin found beside the spring.

us to continue the survey of the caves along the cliff between the 'Sabar Cave' and the spring above the En Gedi Field School (Fig. 15). A levelled area near a terrace located about 20 m northwest of the 'Sabar Cave', above the cave where a nail from a 'nailed sandal' (Pl. 7:3) was found. These sandals are mentioned in several sources associated with the Bar Kokhba



Fig. 14. Opening of the 'Sabar Cave'.

Revolt (Eshel 1989). In the northern cave (181) of the three caves excavated by P. Bar-Adon (map ref.18740/09783), a three-winged arrowhead and a chain link in the shape of the figure eight (Pl. 7:1–2) were found. Some 20 m south of these caves, a niche (183) was surveyed, which was 2 × 3 m with a height of 1–2 m (map ref.18738/09779), and within the topsoil, which was 20 cm deep, a bent iron blade apparently used as a scythe blade was discovered. The blade was on the point of crumbling owing to corrosion. Its length is about 15 cm and at its widest point it is 4 cm (Pl. 4:7). Next to it was found an iron knife blade of approximately 8 cm. This blade is similar to one found in a cave in Nahal Mishmar (Bar-Adon 1980: 9), and to a knife found in the 'Cave of Letters', apart from the fact that no blade handles were found in the 'Cave of Letters' (Yadin 1963: 87 no. 28). Also found in this layer were the base and rim of a glass vessel, a piece of cloth (see Shamir 2004) and date and olive pits. In the southern part of the niche a *tabun* was discernible. In a small rock protrusion found about 15 m south of the niche in which the blades were found, was a bronze coin from the second year of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (Fig. 13:12).

The broken potsherds of four pots shown in Plate 8 (Fig. 19) were found, in the cluster of caves near the spring. Between the 'Sabar Cave' and the northern cave excavated by Bar Adon was a small niche, 1 × 1.5 m (185) in which a deep bowl was found (No. 1). The remainder of the ceramics was found together with the blades. Cooking pot No. 2 is similar to a pot found in a cave in Wadi el-Mackuck (Eshel 1989a: 86 no. 2). Cooking Pot No. 3 is similar to one found in the 'Cave of the Tetradrachm' (Amit and Eshel 1989: 191 no. 16). The upper section of the storage jar found beside the blades became distorted when it was fired. This storage jar is similar to one found in the 'Cave of the Sandal' in Ketef Yericho (Eshel and Zissu 2000, fig 13 no. 1). Sherds were found of both the rim and the base of the glass bowl. The diameter of the base is 5.5 cm. The rim is hollow and slants outward. This type of bowl is common in assemblages associated with the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

It seems that the 'Sabar Cave' was used by one of the residents of En Gedi as a hiding place for his money; it is equally, possible that he himself found temporary refuge within the cluster of caves near the spring.¹⁶ It appears that this person never returned to collect his hoard since the coins have remained undisturbed from the year 135 CE until 2002. It seems

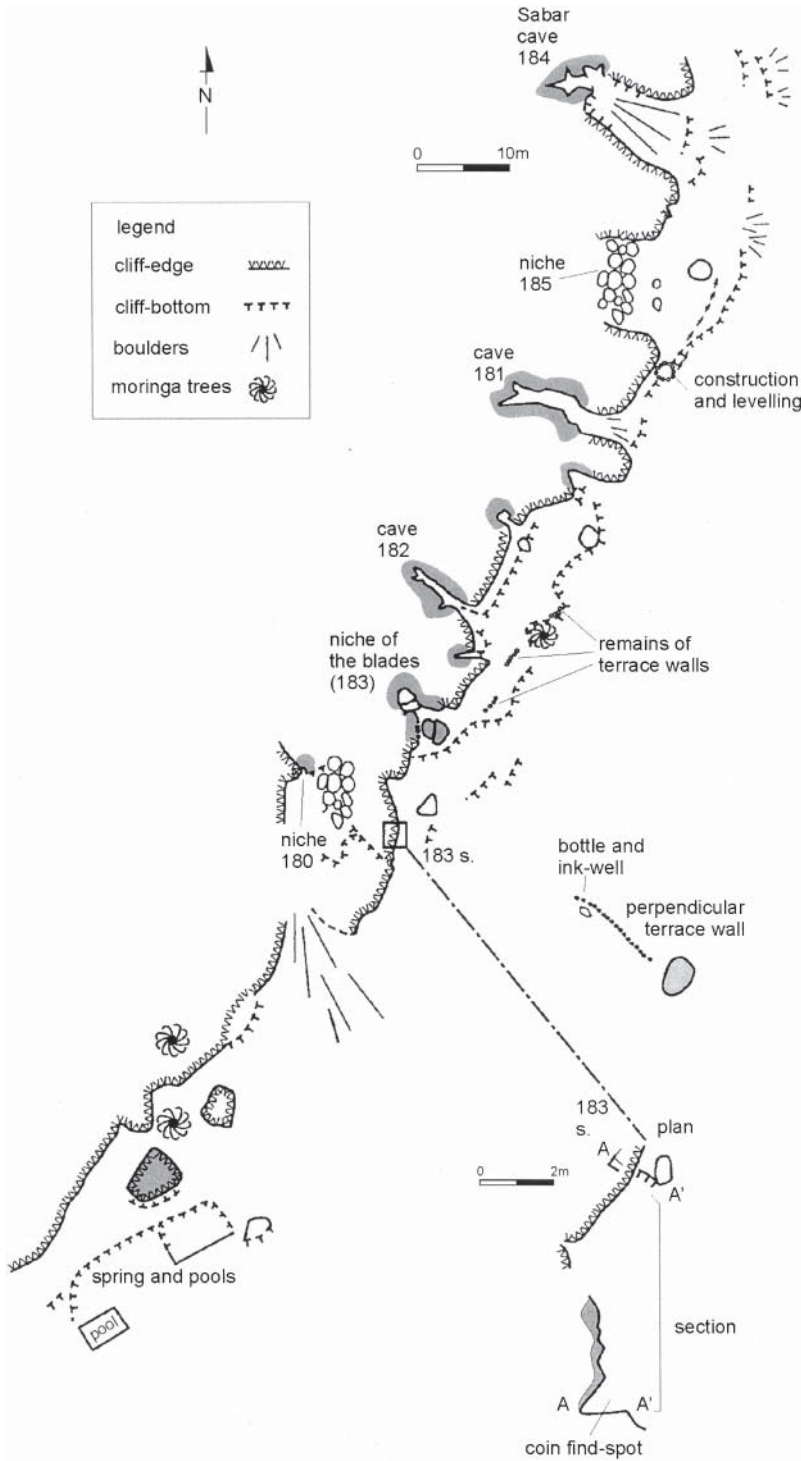


Fig. 15. Plan of the caves near the spring northeast of the En Gedi Field School.

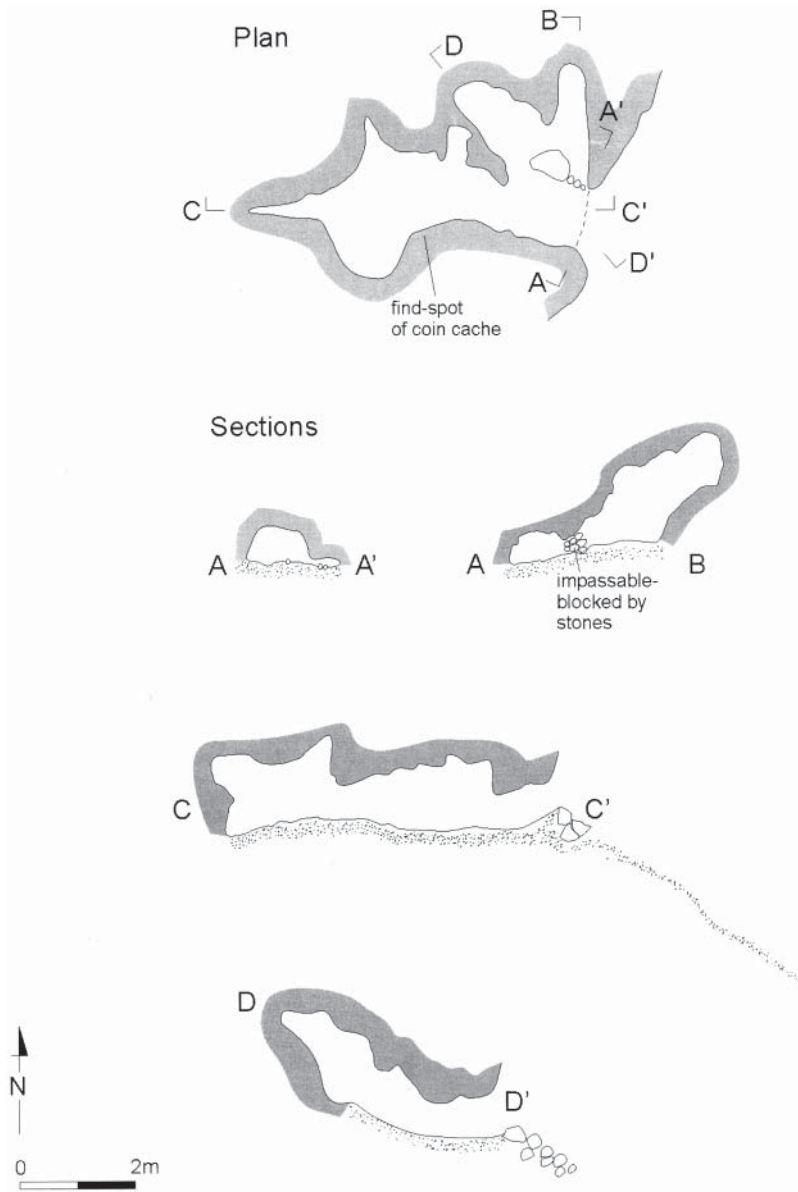


Fig. 16. Plan of the 'Sabar Cave'.

that a large part of the finds from the Early Roman Period from the caves near the spring, above the En Gedi Field School, should be associated with the phenomenon of people fleeing at the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Possibly, the caves excavated by Pessah Bar-Adon were used as temporary living spaces at the end of the war. There is no doubt that the proximity to the water sources was the primary motive for the escapees' choice of these caves for protection. Possibly, after a short span in this area, those refugees moved on to caves that

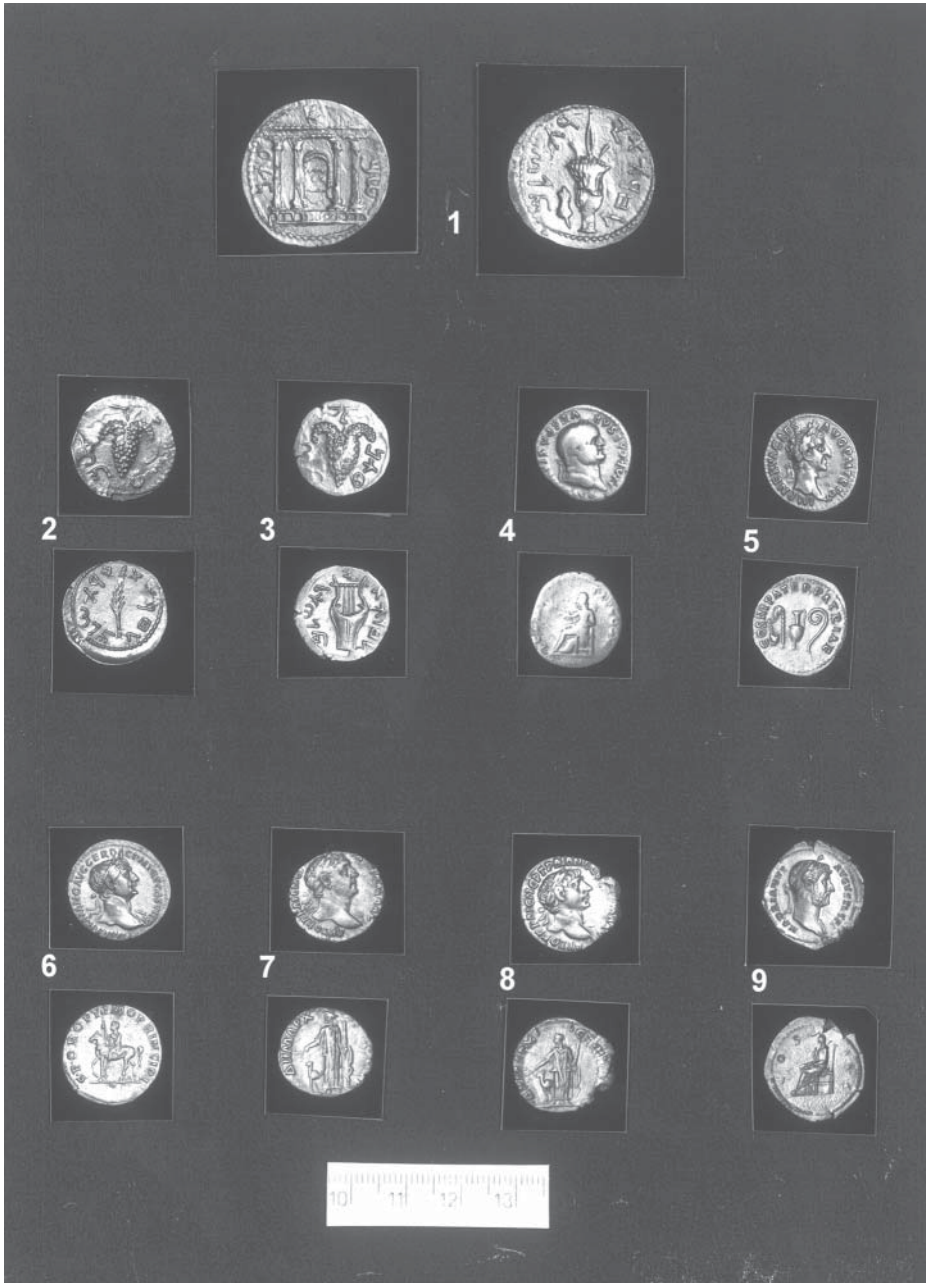


Fig. 17. Plate 6: silver coins found in the 'Sabar Cave'.

Table 3. DESCRIPTION OF POTTERY AND GLASS VESSELS FROM THE CAVES IN THE VICINITY OF THE 'SABAR CAVE'

No.	Object	Location	Description
1.	Deep Bowl	Niche 185	Red clay, signs of burning on the outside
2.	Cooking Pot	Niche 183	Brown-red clay, thin gray core
3.	Cooking Pot	Niche 183	Red clay
4.	Storage Jar	Niche 183	Brown clay, black core, white grains
5.	Bowl	Niche 183	Green-blue glass

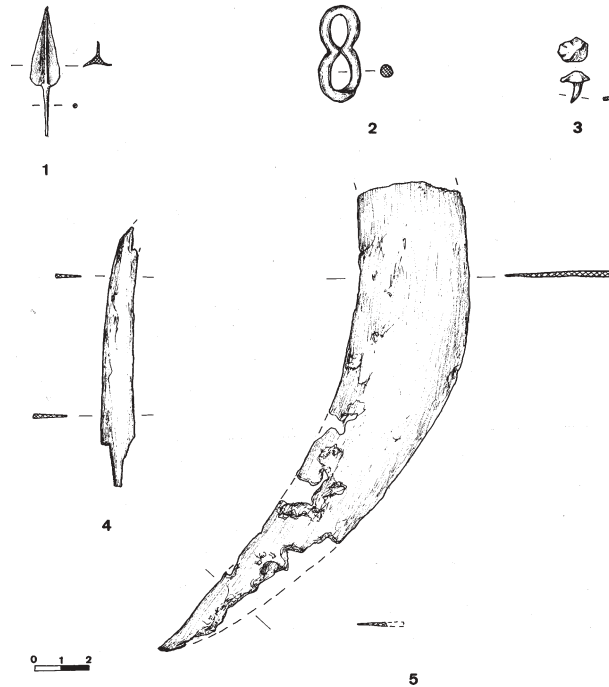


Fig. 18. Plate 7: metal objects from the cluster of caves near the spring.

were farther away, for instance the caves at Nahal Hever or the 'Pool Cave' at Nahal David. Presumably, there were connections between those who hid in the area of the spring and those who sought protection in the 'Har Yishai Cave'.

The finds from the 'Har Yishai Cave' and the 'Sabar Cave' demonstrate the importance of this survey towards advancing our knowledge of the Bar Kokhba period in the En Gedi region. All this, in spite of the intensive illegal excavations that have occurred in the Judean Desert caves during the past 50 years. It is noteworthy that as the survey moves nearer to the En Gedi Oasis, the quantity of finds from the Bar Kokhba period increases. It is our hope that in the near future, the two Greek documents from the 'Har Yishai Cave' will be deciphered and will provide further details pertaining to the history of En Gedi and its environs during the course of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (see now Cohen 2006).

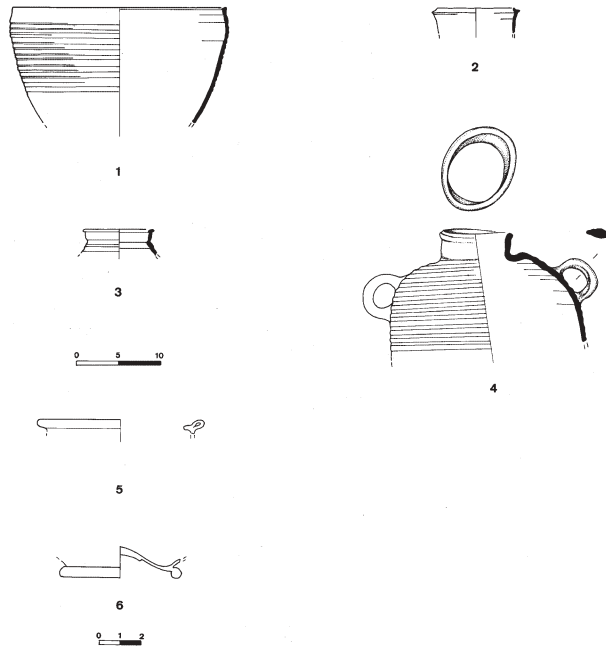


Fig. 19. Plate 8: pottery and glass vessels from the assemblage of the caves from near the spring.

NOTES

¹ The survey along the cliffs facing the Dead Sea is a joint effort between the Archaeological Institute of Bar Ilan University and the Cave Research Center of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and is supported by the Dead Sea Regional Research and Development Center. Working for the Cave Research Center participating in the survey were: Surin Lisker, Gilad Danun, and Roi Sabar. The archaeological survey licence in 2003 was G-21. We would like to thank Dr Tsvika Tsuk, the archaeologist of the National Parks and Gardens Authority, and Mr Shuka Dorfman, head of the Israel Antiquities Authority, for their cooperation to which we are indebted, particularly for enabling us to excavate the 'Har Yishai Cave' upon its discovery.

² After the En Gedi Field School moved to its present location during the early 1970s, the then head of the field school, Yossi Feldman installed a rope that hung down from the cave's opening (the rope remained in place until the end of the 1980s). Numerous hikers climbed the rope and entered the cave (verbal communications from Tsvika Tsuk and Gideon Hadas).

³ Gideon Hadas marked the cave as Site no. 77/25 on his survey map. The system of terraces below the cave are marked as Site no. 77/24.

⁴ At the entrance to the western arm there was a concentration of woven textiles, and owl pellets that bare witness that the site was the nest of a bird of prey. It is the opinion of Michael Blecher, the biologist at the En Gedi Nature Reserve, that these are the remains of the nest of a Hume's Tawny Owl. According to the examination by Ms Orit Shamir of the Israel Antiquities Authority of the textiles from the cave, these

included woven cloth from the Chalcolithic, Early Roman, Early Arabic, and modern periods. Since no other finds dating to Early Arabic and modern times were found within the cave, it is probable that the textiles associated with these periods were carried there by the bird of prey that nested there. The cave also contained a large quantity of animal bones, which were examined by Dr. Leora Kolska Horwitz of the Hebrew University. Since it is difficult to date these bones, we will not expound upon them here.

⁵ The arrowhead (Pl. 4 No. 10) was found at the foot of the cliff below the cave on 31.10.02. Following permission from the National Nature and Parks Authority, we entered the cave on 7.11.02, and surveyed the cave using the metal detector. At this time, a bronze Bar Kokhba coin (Basket no. 0013) was discovered in the eastern arm of the cave; adjacent to the coin was found a three-winged arrowhead. Further on, we discovered two similar arrowheads north of the cave's opening. A long bronze object of rectangular-shaped dissection was found in the western arm of the cave, and an additional arrowhead was found along the eastern wall. In the western space, an additional Bar Kokhba coin was found (Basket no. 0014); slightly below the coin were eight more Bar Kokhba coins stuck together (Basket Nos. 0004-0011). Apparently these coins were kept in a leather 'pocket' that tore, pieces of which were found near the coins. In the western arm, two more arrowheads were found. Altogether, on 11 November, 10 coins and six arrowheads were found in the 'Har Yishai Cave' (Nos. 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, and 12).

⁶ The cave was excavated on 10–13 November (Israel Antiquities Authority licence G-93/2002; Nature Reserves Authority licence 676/02). All of the soil from the cave was sifted through a sifter with 0.5 × 0.5 cm holes. The excavation was led by the authors, the registrar was R. Zer-Kavod; participating in the excavation were: from the Cave Research Center: G. Danun, S. Lisker, R. Sabar, and from Bar Ilan University: R. Avissar, E. Deutsch, D. Cassuto and B. Schultz. The guides of En Gedi Field School participated in the second day of excavations. In addition A. Cohen, Y. Rosenthal, and T. Sadeh took part as well.

⁷ Contrary to findings in the majority of caves in the Judean Desert, in the ‘Har Yishai Cave’ we did not find the pits and the piles of soil, the remnants of the illegal excavations well known from most of the caves in the region. The metal finds, particularly the coins and the arrowheads, show that the cave was never investigated with a metal detector before our excavation. It seems that the main reason that the ‘Har Yishai Cave’ was never robbed is its proximity to the En Gedi Field School and the fact that its opening is discernible from most of the oasis in En Gedi.

⁸ The mouth of the oil lamp from the ‘Har Yishai Cave’ is unlike the mouths of the Hasmonean ceramic ‘pinched’ lamps, which have a prominent mouth. The clay of this mouth is typical of the Roman period and, therefore, we cannot date it to the Mamluk period. We are thankful to Varda Zussman and Professor David Adan-Bayewitz with whom we conferred concerning the oil lamp sherd from the ‘Har Yishai Cave’.

⁹ Half of the storage jar was repaired. Our gratitude to Gideon Hadas who passed on to us a piece of the rim that he had collected in the cave in 1989.

¹⁰ To date, arrow shafts have been found in addition to arrowheads in the ‘Cave of the Arrows’ in Nahal Se‘elim (Aharoni 1961a: 19–20) and at the northern entrance of the ‘Cave of Letters’ (Yadin 1963: 91).

¹¹ Coin No. 10, on which was the minting for the Legion VI, was originally minted in Antioch, see:

Barag, 1967, 121, n. 20. Howgego documented 12 secondary mints of this type, 11 on coins from Antioch and one on a coin of Agrippa II, see: Howgego 1985: 250, no. 726.

¹² It is possible to find evidence of the fact that the En Gedi rebels were brought to burial by their comrades following the revolt in a Bar Kokhba coin found in Tomb No. 8 in the southern bank of Nahal Arugot (Hadas 1995: 41–44).

¹³ The agricultural remains were first surveyed by J. Naveh who designated the spring as VI in his records, and one of the pools as Pool 11; he calculated that the developed land in this area was approximately 20 dunams. In 1984 and 1985, Y. Porath investigated this agricultural system and dated it to the Late Roman and the Byzantine periods (Porath 1985: 102, 111). In 1986, excavations were conducted on the system under the direction of Y. Porath, during the course of which he discovered, lower than the first pool, the remains of a second pool (no. 18) which had been plastered by three layers of plaster; the earliest layer was dated by Porath to the Second Temple period (Porath 1987). This system has recently been described by G. Hadas (Hadas 2002: 80–81).

¹⁴ Pesah Bar Adon found in these caves pottery from the Early Roman Period, textiles, ropes, glass vessels, a woman’s sandal, and organic material, i.e. date pits, olive pits and barley (Bar-Adon 1972: 143–144).

¹⁵ The cave and the coins were discovered by Roi Porat, Roi Sabar and Yonatan Uriel.

¹⁶ It is possible that the cells excavated by Y. Hirschfeld above Nahal Arugot were used as temporary refuges at the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, in the same way that these caves above the field school were used. The size of the cells and their location is similar to the caves which we surveyed; furthermore, a bronze Bar Kokhba coin was found in them (Hirschfeld 2000: 125). Concerning the nature of Hirschfeld’s finds see: Amit and Magness 2000.

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