

A LEAD WEIGHT-LIKE OBJECT FROM 'EN MARZEV

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A free standing, lead object was found in L106 of Building 8, north of System A at 'En Marzev (Fig. 1; see Porath, this volume: Plan 16). It is roughly cylindrical, with a flat top and bottom. Its surface is severely corroded and pitted, and encrusted with a whitish deposit. On top, a semicircular, copper or bronze hoop (5–6 mm thick), heavily corroded, was inserted into the lead body. The object weighs 484 g, apparently a few grams short due to surface oxidation and disintegration. It is 40–44 mm in diameter and 40–45 mm in height (63 mm high including the hoop).

It is hard to assess the purpose that this object may originally have served. It is not very likely to have been a weight in the strict sense of “an instrument used in the process of weighing,” as it has no discernible markings, its mass does not relate to any ancient Eastern Mediterranean

weight system, and its form does not correspond to the usual form of ancient weights. It may very possibly have served as a weight, in the sense of “an object whose weight makes it useful.”¹

Lead weights had a variety of uses in ancient communities: for fishing lines and nets, on looms, at the end of plumb lines and as missiles—to name just a few of the most usual uses. The low cost and availability of lead, as well as its low melting point and easiness of working, won it an important role in the most modest of households. Lead could be melted over a domestic hearth in an iron or clay crucible, and cast in simple molds of clay, to produce all sorts of domestic implements, such as weights, inlays and votive objects.

This specimen, with its rough shape and crude finish, could have been made in any backyard, not necessarily in a commercial workshop. Similar objects were found at other ancient sites in Israel, like the surface find from Caesarea (Fig. 2; 200 g).



Fig. 1. A lead weight-like object with a bronze loop from 'En Marzev.



Fig. 2. A lead weight-like object with an iron loop from Caesarea.

NOTE

¹ For a detailed discussion of the various kinds of weights and their uses, see the introduction to Biggs and Withers 2000.

REFERENCES

Biggs N. and Withers P. 2000. *Lead Weights: The David Rogers Collection*. Powys.

Porath Y. This volume. Tunnel-Well (*Qanat*) Systems and Settlements from the Early Islamic Period in the 'Arava.