QEDEM 26 (1988)


Mampsis was the smallest of the traditional six Nabatean towns in the central Negev. The extensive exposure and exceptionally good preservation of its town plan in the Nabatean period offer a unique opportunity to study the lifestyle of its inhabitants. The defenses of Nabatean Mampsis consisted of towers, at least one of which was founded in the Middle Nabatean period. Other buildings underlying the Late Nabatean structures also belong to the Middle Nabatean period. Mampsis in the Late Nabatean period was densely covered by buildings, some of which are of an unusually high standard and demonstrate characteristic features of Nabatean architecture. They presumably belonged to wealthy citizens. One of them contains unique wall frescoes which are illustrated in color. Other structures of the Late Nabatean period include a caravanserai, a bath house, a market, and a public reservoir. The sophistication of its construction makes Mampsis an isolated Nabatean architectural jewel.

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