

The Ancient Water System of Sepphoris

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Land of Galilee 6



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Back cover: the Shaft Tunnel (photo Tsvika Tsuk), the Roman Bronze Bull (photo Tal Rogovsky).

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CHAPTER 17

THE COINS

Danny Syon

Altogether 58 coins were found in the various excavations in the Arched Reservoirs and the Pools at Sepphoris, five of which could not be identified to any degree. The remaining 53 could be identified fully or partially. There are no noteworthy coins; all are regularly found throughout Israel and most have been found in past excavations in Sepphoris, although published only partly (Ariel and Bijovsky 2018).

As a general observation, it can be stated that Roman-period coins, dated from the first to the third centuries CE, were found at all but one of the Sepphoris excavation sites, usually together with much later coins. The fact that such coins kept turning up in abundance in later periods, even if they had no economic value is simply a confirmation of Sepphoris' size and importance in that period.

THE MASHHAD POOL

This location yielded 31 coins, ranging from the Hellenistic to the Ottoman periods (first century BCE–sixteenth century CE).

Coins No. 1 and 6 were found within the plaster of the bottom of the pool, therefore coin No. 6 provides a *terminus post quem* for its construction in the early second century CE. The majority of the coins were found on the floor of the pool, or very close to it

(L434), and represent all periods. Five silver coins of the Mamluk Sultan Aynal (1453–1461 CE) were found in the northwestern corner (L414, 424), possibly forming a small hoard.

THE WESTERN POOL

Most of the seven coins come from disturbed contexts, apart from Nos. 35, 36, which were found on the plaster floor (L455) and date from the early Byzantine period.

LARGE ARCHED RESERVOIR

Out of nine coins, only three (Nos. 43, 45 and 47) were found on the floor, but they date 500 years apart and cannot aid in the chronology.

SMALL ARCHED RESERVOIR

Only two coins were found, both on the floor, dating from the fourth and the fifth centuries CE. This reservoir apparently went out of use by the fifth century CE or later.

CATALOGUE

All coins are copper alloy, and all dates are CE, unless indicated otherwise. Coins with an asterisk are illustrated.

The Mashhad Pool

Cat. No.	Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes
THE HASMONEANS <i>Alexander Yannai</i> (104–76 BCE)											
1*	439	5139	1.83	14		Star; between the rays: ...𐤓𐤁... Partly off-flan	ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ [---] Anchor	c. 85–76 BCE	Jerusalem	TJC Group K	
THE HERODIANS <i>Herod or Archelaos</i> (37 BCE–6 CE)											
2	434	5136	1.18	15		[---] Completely worn	[---] Joined cornucopias with caduceus between the horns		Jerusalem	TJC 59 or 67	
ROMAN PROVINCIAL <i>Nero?</i> (54–69)											
3	434	5102	5.87	19	↑	[---] Traces of bust r.	[---] Male figure standing r., holding scepter	68?	Caesarea?	Cf. <i>CHL</i> :26, No. 17	
<i>Autonomous Tyre</i>											
4*	434	5122	1.60	14	↑	Bust of Tyche r. veiled and with turreted crown. Behind, palm branch	Same. Across: ΛΣ-Μϙ	104/5		<i>BMC Phoen.</i> : 261, No. 305	
5	434	5179	11.84	25	↑	[ΤΥΡΟΥ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ] Head of Melqart r.	[ΚΟΙΝΟΝ] ΦΟΙΝ[ΙΚΗΣ] Octastyle temple.	195/6(?)		<i>BMC Phoen.</i> :268, Nos. 361–366	
<i>Trajan</i> (98–117)											
6	439	5147	8.69	22		[---] Traces of bust r.	[---] Palm tree		Sepphoris	<i>CHL</i> :68, No. 2	
THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE <i>Uncertain emperor</i>											
7	425	5050	0.76	13	↓	[---] Bust r.	VOT/XX/MVLT/XXX, all in wreath	347–348			Broken
8	422	5059	1.14	13	↓	Same	[SALVS REIPUBLICAE] Victory advancing l., dragging captive	383–392			Half a coin, worn
9*	434	5129	1.16	16		[---]-VS PF[AVG] Crude bust r.	No legend. Emperor on l., holding staff, being crowned by victory on r.	395–401			Crude, probably imitative
10	422	5058	1.03	13		[---] Bust r.	[---] Figure	4th c.			Completely worn
11	434	5128	1.46	13		[---] Traces of bust	Unclear type	Late 4th c.			

Cat. No.	Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes
12	424	5049	0.78	11		[---] Traces of bust	Unclear type	Late 4th-5th c.?			
13	425	5074		12		[---] Traces of bust r.	[Gloria Romanorum] Three emperors	403–408			Half a coin, worn
BYZANTINE <i>Justinian I (527–565), nummus</i>											
14	414	4099	0.31	9		[---] Bust r.	A	538–542	Thessalonika	Cf. <i>MIB</i> I:126, Nos. 178, 179	
<i>Iustin II (565–578) 40 nummi</i>											
15	434	5126	6.36	27	↓	[---] Justin and Sophia on thrones	M On l., A/N/N/O In ex., NI[KO]		Nikomedia		Broken and corroded
<i>Heraclius, dodecanummium</i>											
16*	434	5089	4.54	18	↓	[---] Two busts facing	I+B In ex., AΛEΞ	613–618		<i>MIB</i> III:231, No. 200b	
<i>Byzantine (6th c.), pentanummium</i>											
17	434	5178	2.43	13		[---] Worn	Є in circle				
EARLY ISLAMIC <i>Umayyad anonymous (8th c.), fals</i>											
18	434	5116	2.22	14		لا اله الا الله / وحده	Brockage of the obverse		Tiberias?	Cf. <i>SNAT</i> 1993, No. 346	
19*	434	5121	2.91	15		Same	[---] Five-pointed star		Iliya Filastin (Jerusalem)	<i>SNAT</i> 1993, Nos. 23–26	
MAMLUK <i>al-Zahir Sayf al-Din Barquq, first reign (1382–1389), fals</i>											
20	424	5062	2.18	17	←	[---] الملك/ابو سعيد /	[---] In circle: برقوق	1388 CE?	Dimashq	Balog 1964, No. 562	
<i>Mamluk (14th c.), fals</i>											
21	434	5087/1	1.76	16		Traces of square frame	Worn				Irregular flan
22	434	5106	0.75	16		Worn	[---] Traces of six-pointed star				Very thin, irregular flan
<i>Mamluk? (14th c.?), silver half dirham?</i>											
23	434	5115	1.09	13		Part of inscription; mostly off flan	Part of inscription; mostly off flan				Irregular flan

Cat. No.	Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes
						<i>al-Ashraf Sayf al-Din Aynal</i> (1453–1461), <i>silver dirham</i>					
24	424	5064	1.44	14	↖	السلطان الملك الاشرف In pentalobe: عز نصره	[لا اله الا الله] In cartouche: بالق/هره		al-Qahira	Cf. Balog 1964, No. 764	
25*	414	4074/3	1.46	15	↖	السلطان الملك الاشرف In nonolobe: اينال	Off flan In cartouche: ٦٠/ مشق/يد	AH 860/1456 CE	Dimashq	Balog 1964, No. 766	
26	414	4074/4	1.49	15	↘	[---] In nonolobe: اينال	[---] Worn inscription in cartouche		Same	Same	
27	424	5051	1.43	15	↙	[---] Worn	[لا اله الا الله] In cartouche: بد/مشق Date illegible		Same	Cf. Balog 1964, Nos. 766–768	
28*	414	4074/1	1.44	14	↑	Around: [---] [---]الاشرف In center: عز نصره	Circular legend illegible. In center: بالقاهرة	Illegible	al-Qahira	<i>SICIM</i> III, Nos. 772–783	
						<i>Mamluk</i> (14th–15th c.), <i>fals</i>					
29	414	4084/1	1.58	17		Illegible	Illegible				Worn; ID based on shape and size
30	434	5087/2	2.11	17		Same	Same				Same
						OTTOMAN <i>Selim I</i> (1512–1520), <i>silver akce</i>					
31*	434	5099	0.71	11	←	سلطان سليم شاه بن بايزيد خان	عز نصره ضرب [---] سنة ٩١٨	AH 918/1512 CE	Edirne(?)	Cf. Pere 1968, No. 126	Pierced

The Western Pool

Cat. No.	Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes
						ROMAN PROVINCIAL <i>Hadrian</i> (117–138)					
32*	450	5212	9.32	22	↑	AYT[---]-KAIC CEB Bust r.	TIBEP-[--]AY Zeus, seated in tetrastyle temple. Below, ET AP	120/1	Tiberias	<i>CHL</i> :71, No. 10	
						<i>Roman Provincial</i> (2nd–3rd c.)					
33	438	5176	9.12	25		[---] Traces of bust r.; Unclear countermark in rectangular punch	[---] Completely worn				
						THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE <i>Constantius II</i>					
34	450	5233	1.33	16	↑	[---]-TIVS [---] Head r.	VOT / [---] in wreath	347–348	Eastern mint	Cf. <i>RIC</i> VIII:521, No. 113	

Cat. No.	Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes
<i>Uncertain emperor</i>											
35	455	5249	1.32	15	↓	Bust r.	[GLORIA]-MANORVM Emperor advancing r., holding labarum and dragging captive	364–388			Half a coin, worn
36	455	5235	1.13	14	↓	[---] Small bust r.	VOT / [X] / MVL T / XX in wreath [--]. In ex., [--] AΓ	Late 4th c.	Antioch?		
5th c., <i>nummus</i>											
37	450	5229	0.40	9	↑	Traces of bust	Cross				ID uncertain; might be a 6th c. coin
BYZANTINE <i>Justinian I (527–565), nummus</i>											
38	452	5205	0.87	10		[---] Traces of bust	Ⲭ	538–542		Cf. <i>MIB</i> I:126, Nos. 178, 179	

Large Arched Reservoir

Cat. No.	Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes
THE HASMONEANS <i>Alexander Yannai (104–76 BCE)</i>											
39*	413	4065	1.94	12		Star	ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ [---] Anchor	c. 85–76 BCE	Jerusalem	<i>TJC</i> Group K	
ROMAN PROVINCIAL <i>Autonomous Tyre</i>											
40*	413	4064	1.45	12	↗	Bust of Tyche r. veiled and with turreted crown. Behind, palm branch	Astarte on galley, standing l., holding cruciform standard. Across: ΔΚΣ-ΜϚ	98/9		<i>BMC Phoen.</i> : 261, No. 303	
41	411	4060	5.38	18	↑	Same	[---] ΠΟ/[---] ωΣ Galley	2nd c.		<i>BMC Phoen.</i> : 262, Nos. 313–330	
42	404	4018	2.76	16	↑	Same	Ϛ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΙΕΡΑΣ Palm Tree. Date Γ-MC	117/8		<i>BMC Phoen.</i> : 266, No. 345	
<i>Severus Alexander (222–235)</i>											
43	417	5027	4.23	19	↓	[---] Bust r.	[---] Bust of Zeus-Ammon, with disk on his head		Bostra	Spijkerman 1978:80, No. 48	

Cat. No.	Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes
THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE <i>Uncertain emperor</i>											
44	411	4053/2	0.61	11		[---] Traces of bust	Unclear type	Late 4th c.			
<i>Zeno</i>											
45	419	5017	0.89	8	↓	Bust r.	Ὶ	476–491	Thesalonika?		
<i>Byzantine (6th c.), pentanummium</i>											
46*	411	4053/1	2.12	12		[---] Worn	€				
EARLY ISLAMIC <i>Umayyad anonymous (8th c.), fals</i>											
47	419	5014	1.68	18	↗	لا اله الا الله / وحده	[---] Bird to l.			<i>SNAT</i> 1993, No. 532	

Small Arched Reservoir

Cat. No.	Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes
THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE <i>Constantius II</i>											
48*	403	4011/1	1.92	15	↑	[---]-TIVS PF AVG Bust r., pearl diademed	VOT/XX/MVLT/XXX, all in wreath. In ex., SMANBI	347–348	Antioch	Cf. <i>RIC</i> VIII:521, No. 113	
<i>5th c., nummus</i>											
49	405	4022				[---]	[---] Traces of cross				Half a coin

Single finds

Cat. No.	Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes
THE ROMAN ADMINISTRATION <i>Governor under Nero</i>											
50	406	4051	1.24	15		NEP/Onω/C in wreath	LE KAICAPOC Palm branch	59	Jerusalem	<i>TJC</i> 345	
ROMAN PROVINCIAL <i>Uncertain (2nd–3rd c.)</i>											
51	264	4063	6.42	18	↓	[---] Bust r.	[---] Bust of Serapis r.			Cf. <i>CHL</i> :29, No. 76 (Caesarea)	Worn. Possibly Elagabalus

Cat. No.	Locus	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes
THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE <i>Constantine I Follis</i>											
52*	Surface	4011/2	2.18	18	↑	CONSTANTI-NVS MAX AVG Bust r., rosette diademed	GLOR-IA EXERC- ITVS Two soldiers with two standards between them. In ex., SMANΔ	330–335	Antioch	<i>RIC</i> VII:693, No. 85	
Uncertain emperor											
53	Surface	5237	1.12	15	↓	Bust r.	[SALVS REIPVBLICAE] Victory advancing l., dragging captive	383–392			Very worn



Fig. Fig. 17.1. Selected coins.

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