

LATE ROMAN–EARLY BYZANTINE BURIAL CAVES AT SHELOMI

FANNY VITTO

In June–July 1974, several burial caves were accidentally discovered in the course of the

construction of a road southwest of Shelomi, in the northern Galilee (map ref. NIG 21365/77475, OIG 16365/27475; Fig. 1). This report presents the results of a rescue excavation conducted in August 1974 in four of these burial caves (Vitto 1974).¹

These caves, hewn into the soft chalky slope of the hill, display a high standard of workmanship. They all consist of one chamber surrounded by single and double *kokhim*, with or without troughs cut into their floors. None of the slabs, which originally sealed the entrances to the caves and the openings of the *kokhim*, was found *in situ*, indicating that the tombs had all been looted prior to excavation, very likely in ancient times. The caves were found filled with earth, mud and water, which rendered their excavation very difficult. Cave 2 yielded, among other finds, a rare glass beaker decorated with incised motifs, including a cross.

The caves are described from west to east (Plan 1).

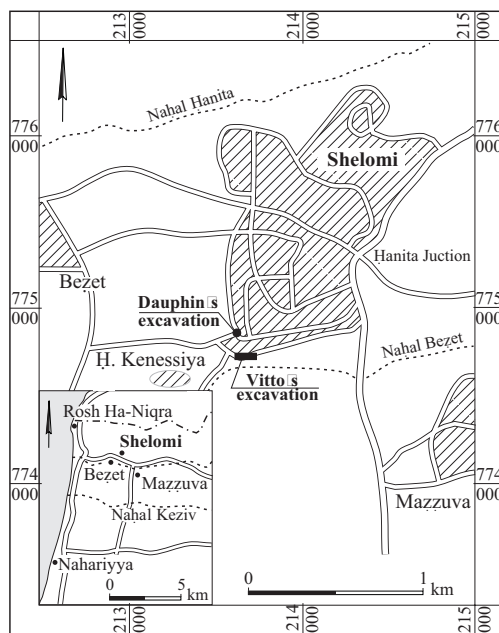
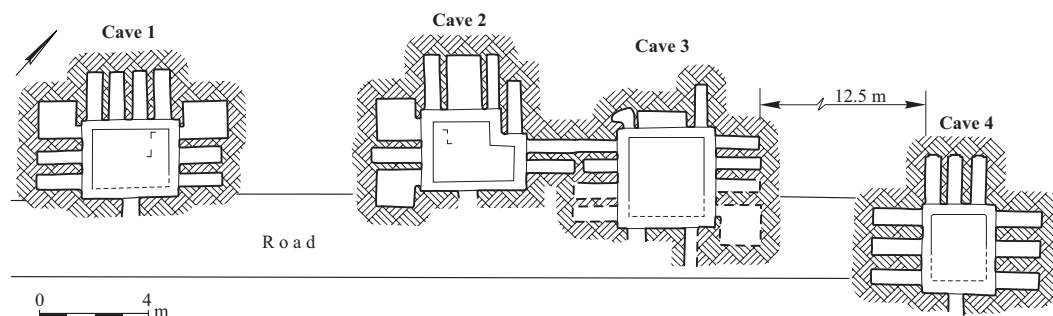
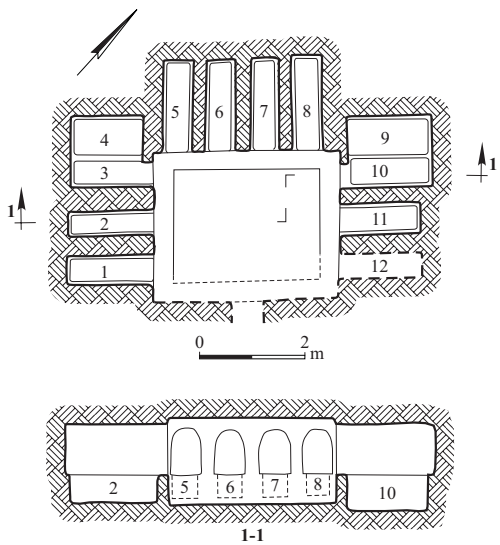


Fig. 1. Location Map.



Plan 1. Plan of the four caves.



Plan 2. Plan and section of Cave 1.

BURIAL CAVE 1 (Plan 2)

The cave consists of a burial chamber surrounded by eight single and two double *kokhim* (Table 1). The southeastern wall, including the entrance to the cave, was destroyed by the bulldozer at the time of discovery. The chamber is square (3.6 × 3.6 m, height 1.1 m), with a flat ceiling and a large central pit (3.2 × 3.2 m, depth 0.6 m), which creates a narrow shelf (0.2 m wide) on all sides. Ten vaulted openings (height 0.85 m, width 0.6 m) are hewn in the walls of the chamber. Three openings in the southwestern wall lead to two single *kokhim* (1, 2) and a double *kokh* (Troughs 3, 4); four in the northwestern wall lead to four single *kokhim* (5–8); and three in the northeastern wall lead to a double *kokh* (9, 10), and to two single *kokhim* (11, 12). Each single *kokh* has a trough (c. 0.5 × 1.6 m, depth 0.45 m) hewn in its floor, leaving narrow ledges (width c. 5 cm) on three sides. The double *kokhim* have two parallel troughs hewn in their floor.

The cave was looted in antiquity. It was found filled with mud and water and could not be excavated. A few brittle human bones were scattered throughout, but no finds were collected.

Table 1. Dimensions (m) of *kokhim* of Burial Cave 1

<i>Kokh</i>	L	W	H (with trough)
1	1.80	0.60	1.30
2	1.80	0.65	1.30
Double <i>kokh</i> with Troughs 3 and 4	1.80	1.30	1.30
5	1.70	0.60	1.30
6	1.70	0.65	1.30
7	1.70	0.65	1.30
8	1.70	0.60	1.30
Double <i>kokh</i> with Troughs 9 and 10	1.90	1.40	1.30
11	1.70	0.60	1.30
12	?	?	?

BURIAL CAVE 2 (Plan 3)

The entrance to Cave 2 is located approximately 15 m east of that of Cave 1. The area outside the entrance to the cave and the opening itself were blocked by a large quantity of earth and rocks, which could not be removed. Therefore, Cave 2 had to be entered by crawling from Cave 3 through a breach in the rear wall of *Kokh* 4, leading into *Kokh* 11 of Cave 2. The breach had obviously been opened when the hewers of Cave 3 hit Cave 2, which had been cut beforehand.

Cave 2 consists of a burial chamber surrounded by six single and three double *kokhim*, most of which have troughs hewn into their floor (Table 2). The entrance to the cave (0.9 m wide) is in the southeastern wall. The chamber is irregular in shape (3.2–4.2 × 2.2–3.0 m, height 1.4 m), with a flat ceiling and a large central pit (depth 0.35 m), which creates narrow shelves (0.3–0.4 m wide) on all sides. Nine vaulted openings are hewn in the walls of the chamber: three in the southwestern wall lead to a single *kokh* (3) and two double *kokhim* (Troughs 1, 2 and 4, 5); four in the northwestern wall lead to three single *kokhim* (6, 9, 10) and a double *kokh* (Troughs 7, 8); two in the northeastern wall lead to two single *kokhim* (11, 12). East of *Kokh* 9, the wall of the chamber forms a corner and *Kokh* 10 is not aligned with the other *kokhim*

Table 2. Dimensions (m) of *kokhim* of Burial Cave 2

Locus	L	W	Height (with trough)
Double <i>Kokh</i> with Troughs 1 and 2	1.80	1.50	1.20
3	2.00	0.65	0.70
Double <i>Kokh</i> with Troughs 4 and 5	1.70	1.55	1.20
6	2.00	0.60	1.20
Double <i>Kokh</i> with Troughs 7 and 8	2.00	1.40	1.20
9	2.10	0.70	1.20
10	2.00	0.70	1.20
11	1.70	0.65	1.25
12	1.80	0.65	1.20

of the northwestern wall. The reason for this irregularity in the plan is unknown; it may have been due to friable rock. Except for *Kokh*

3, which has a flat floor, all the single *kokhim* have a 0.45 deep trough hewn into their floor, leaving narrow ledges (0.1–0.2 m wide) on four sides. Two parallel troughs (0.45 m deep) are hewn into the floor of the double *kokhim*.

A cross-shaped mark (vertical branch 8 cm, horizontal branch 13 cm) is incised above the opening of *Kokh* 6 (Plan 3: Section 1–1).

At the time of discovery, the cave was filled with sewage, mud and water, which had penetrated through the partly collapsed rear walls of the northwestern *kokhim* and rendered excavation difficult. Scattered human bones were found in some of the *kokhim*.²

The Finds

The finds described below come from the two single *kokhim* and four troughs (Nos. 2–4, 7, 8, 10) that could be partly or entirely excavated

Table 3. Contents of Burial Cave 2

Burial Units	Osteological Remains (see n. 2)	Finds	Remarks
Trough 2	Human bones (large quantity)	Glass beaker with incised decoration (Fig. 2:4) Glass bowl fragment (not illustrated)	20 cm of earth
<i>Kokh</i> 3	Very few human bones	Two glass bowls (Fig. 2:1, 2)	
Trough 4		Glass bowl (Fig. 2:3) Bronze bracelet (Fig. 3:2) Two iron bracelets (Fig. 3:4, 5) Iron ring (Fig. 3:8) Iron blade (Fig. 3:13)	
Trough 7	A few human bones	Glass fragments (not illustrated) Bronze bracelet (Fig. 3:1)	20 cm of earth
Trough 8	Human bones	Glass beaker with pinched bifurcated ribs (Fig. 2:5) Iron bracelet (Fig. 3:3) Coin of Probus, 276–282 CE (Bijovsky and Kool, below: Cat. No. 1)	
<i>Kokh</i> 10		Glass beaker (Fig. 2:6) Coin, 383–395 CE (Bijovsky and Kool, below: Cat. No. 2) Glass bracelet (Fig. 3:7) Iron bracelet (Fig. 3:6) Glass dolphin-shaped pendant (Fig. 3:9) Two amber beads (Fig. 3:10, 11) Frit melon-shaped bead (Fig. 3:12)	

(Table 3). They include two bronze coins, a few glass vessels, various items of jewelry and an iron blade. The absence of pottery oil lamps is not surprising, considering the rarity of lamps in Late Roman burial caves in Upper Galilee and southern Lebanon (see, e.g., at Iqrit; Vitto, forthcoming).

Glass Vessels (Fig. 2)

Fragments of glass vessels were found in all the excavated *kokhim* and troughs of Cave 2. They consist of bowls and three beakers, each of a different type.

Bowls.—Fragments of shallow and deep bowls were discovered. Figure 2:1 is a shallow bowl with a pushed-in ring base, a large flat bottom thickened at the center, short outplayed sides, and a thickened and rounded rim. For parallels, see, e.g., Ḥanita (Barag 1978: Fig. 7:10) and Hurfeish (Aviam and Gorin-Rosen 1997: Fig. 5:8). Figure 2:2 is a deep bowl with a pushed-in ring base—center of bottom thickened

and convex—and almost straight walls (rim missing). For parallels, see, e.g., Ḥanita (Barag 1978: Fig. 10:33, 34), Jalame (Weinberg and Goldstein 1988: Fig. 4-3:19), Asherat (Gorin-Rosen 1997: Fig. 4:2) and Tell Shubeib (Abu ‘Uqsa and Katsnelson 1999: Fig. 4:4). Figure 2:3 is a large bowl with a pushed-in, high ring base and a very thin body wall. All the bowls are dated to the third–fourth centuries CE.

Beaker with Incised Decoration (Fig. 2:4).—Two fragments are part of a beaker (rim diam. 14 cm) that is of special interest because of its rarity. The beaker is made of a light green-yellow glass, with a thickened, slightly everted rim and an incised decoration. The decor of the larger fragment comprises, from top to bottom: (a) four parallel bands, each consisting of four wheel-incised thin lines; (b) a latticework frieze (1.5 cm wide) bordered above and below by a band consisting of eight wheel-incised fine lines; (c) a portion of the main field, which represents, from right to left, a vertical band (1.5 cm wide)

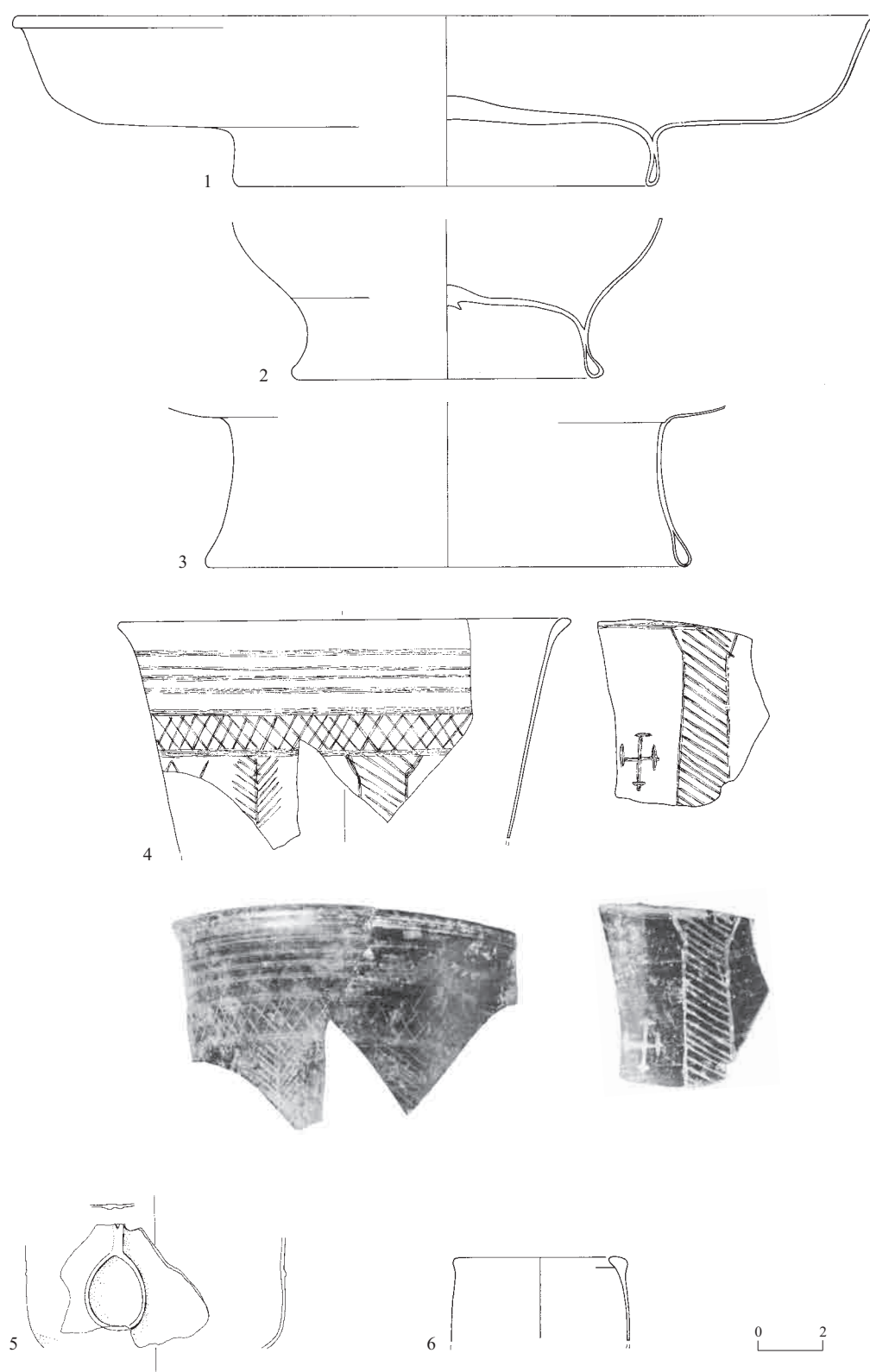


Fig. 2. Glass vessels from Cave 2.

◀ Fig. 2

No.	Reg. No.	Kokh/Trough	Type	Description	Dimensions (cm)
1	5-1	3	Shallow bowl	Greenish	D rim 26.5, H 5.2
2	5-2	3	Deep bowl	Bluish	D base 9.5
3	1	4	Large Bowl	Light greenish	D base 15
4	4	2	Beaker with incised decoration	Light green-yellow	D rim 14
5	13	8	Beaker with pinched rib decoration	Light greenish	-
6	16	10	Beaker	Light greenish glass, black weathering	D rim 5.3

in the shape of a column surmounted by a capital filled with diagonal strokes, a palm branch and a V-shaped element (omega?). The smaller fragment was broken just above the lower border of the latticework frieze. The preserved portion of the field represents, as on the larger fragment, part of a column-shaped band filled with diagonal strokes and, to its left, a small Greek cross with short perpendicular strokes at the extremities of the four branches. The preserved decoration of these two fragments suggests that the field of the beaker was divided by means of columns (two or three?) into metopes, which contained various elements, including a cross and a palm branch. The incised decoration, which is very superficial, was made using a flint or quartz point. The cross, irregular in shape, attests to free-hand execution.

Glass vessels with incised decoration are rare in Syria-Palestine, especially beakers. No exact parallel was found for the combination of motifs on this beaker, but some of the elements are known from other glass vessels decorated in this technique. The division of the field into metopes by means of columns surmounted by capitals recalls a plate discovered at Bet She'arim, decorated with a series of arches filled with diagonal strokes and containing various motifs such as gates, a tree, glass vessels, and suspended glass lamps (Barag 1976:209–213, Fig. 100, who suggests dating it to the mid-fourth century CE). Incised lattice patterns are known from several contemporaneous glass vessels: a bowl fragment found at Jalame, also decorated with a palm branch (Weinberg and Goldstein

1988:101–102, Fig. 4-53:518, who date it to the fourth century CE); a glass flask in the Constable-Maxwell Collection (1979:146–147, No. 264); a flask said by Harden (1959:14–15, Fig. 5) to have come from Syria; a bowl bearing a Greek inscription: *πίε ξήσαις* (for *ξήσης*: drink and live long), discovered in a fourth-century CE context in Köln, which Harden (1959:15–16, Pl. VIIIa) also suggests originated “in the East”. In addition, a fourth-century CE bowl kept at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, which bears the same Greek inscription (*πίε ξήσης*) surrounded by bands of wheel-incised lines, is described by Harden (1949: Fig. 3, Pl. L) as “of undoubted Syrian or Palestinian origin” on the ground of its type and weathering.

So far, no parallel to the small cross incised on the Shelomi beaker is known among contemporaneous (fourth century CE) glass vessels. However, a nearby site—a rock-cut chamber-tomb located at el-Bassa/Beznet (today within Shelomi)—yielded a bowl incised with a large Latin cross enclosed in a multi-pointed star, surrounded by a band of wheel-incised lines. Iliffe (1934b: Fig. 17) dates this bowl to 396 CE, a date later revised by Barag (1970:270; 1978:55, n. 126) to the second half of the fourth century CE. Incised crosses appear on a few glass vessels attributed to the sixth century CE, but these are more deeply incised, e.g., a wineglass from Jerash, decorated with a cross flanked by two sheep (Kraeling 1938: Pl. 139b), and a chalice of unknown provenance, with a cross within a structure, flanked by angels, and another cross surrounded by saints (Ross 1962: No. 96).

In the case of the Shelomi beaker, the very superficially incised decoration points to a rather early date in the technique of incision on glass vessels, i.e., the fourth century CE, while the presence of a cross suggests the second half of that century.

Late Roman–Early Byzantine glass vessels decorated with incised motifs appear to have been produced in several workshops, including Alexandria, Köln and Syria-Palestine (Harden 1949; 1959; 1960; Israeli 2003:297–302, Nos. 404, 405). The shape of the Shelomi beaker and its glass fabric are characteristic of local, northern Palestine manufacture (Yael Gorin-Rosen, pers. comm.). It is therefore very likely that a workshop existed in the fourth century CE somewhere along the coast of today's northern Israel and southern Lebanon, which produced, in addition to the Shelomi beaker, the incised vessels found at Jalame, el-Bassa/Bezē, Bet She'arim, and probably several other vessels kept in private and museum collections.

Beaker with Pinched-Rib Decoration (Fig. 2:5).—

A body fragment of a thin glass beaker with a decoration of pinched bifurcated ribs was found in Trough 8. For a discussion of this decoration at Jalame, see Weinberg and Goldstein (1988:80–81, Fig. 4:39). For parallels to this beaker, see Ḥanita (Barag 1978:28–29, Fig. 14:62, Pl. 5:62), where it was found in a *kokh* with coins ranging between the mid-second to the mid-third centuries CE and at 'Iqrit (Vitto, forthcoming), where it was found in a *kokh* with coins of Caracalla (211–217 CE) and Elagabal (218–222 CE). At Ḥurfeish, Gorin-Rosen (2002:158*–159*, Fig. 11:47) dates it to the third–early fourth centuries CE. The Shelomi example was found together with a coin of Probus (276–282 CE; see Bijovsky and Kool, below: Cat. No. 1).

Beaker with Flattened Rim (Fig. 2:6).—

A fragment of a thickened, flattened and slightly incurved rim belongs to a local type of beaker found at several third–early fourth centuries CE sites of northern Palestine, e.g., Ḥanita

(Barag 1978:158, Fig. 11:44) and Ḥurfeish (Gorin-Rosen 2002:154*–159*, Figs. 10, 11, with further references; for thickened, slightly incurved rims see Figs. 10:43; 11:44, 46).

Jewelry (Fig. 3)

The jewelry items found in Cave 2 consist of fragments of seven bracelets (two bronze, four iron, and one glass), an iron ring and a few beads.

Bronze Bracelets (Fig. 3:1, 2).— Figure 3:1 is a small child's bracelet (int. diam. 3.5 cm), plain with a thin oval cross-section. This type of bracelet is very frequent in north Palestinian tombs, e.g., el-Jish (Makhoul 1938–1939: Pl. 32:1d) and Kabri (Stern and Gorin-Rosen 1997: Fig. 9:22). It is dated to the third–fourth centuries CE. Figure 3:2 is a small fragment of a twisted bracelet. For parallels, see Sajur (Braun, Dauphin and Hadas 1994: Fig. 5:2) and Kisra (Stern 1997: Fig. 12:46, found in a *kokh* with four coins dated 330–375 CE).

Iron Bracelets (Fig. 3:3–6).— Two entire and two fragmentary iron bracelets were found, each a plain hoop with a circular section (c. 0.5 cm) and an internal diameter of about 5 cm. For parallels, see Bet She'arim, Catacomb 20 (Avigad 1976: Fig. 102:8, 9) and Kisra (Stern 1997: Fig. 12:52).

Glass Bracelet (Fig. 3:7).— A small fragment of a monochrome plain bracelet made of dark blue glass with a D-shaped cross-section (Spaer 1988: Type A2a) was found in *Kokh* 10. This is a widespread type of glass bracelet, which does not appear before the third century CE and is frequent in tombs of the third–fourth centuries CE in the Near East (Spaer 1988:54–55; 2001:193–195, 199, Fig. 84, Pl. 33:437).

Iron Ring (Fig. 3:8).— A fragmentary iron ring has a flat rectangular bezel which was probably originally decorated, although no traces have survived.

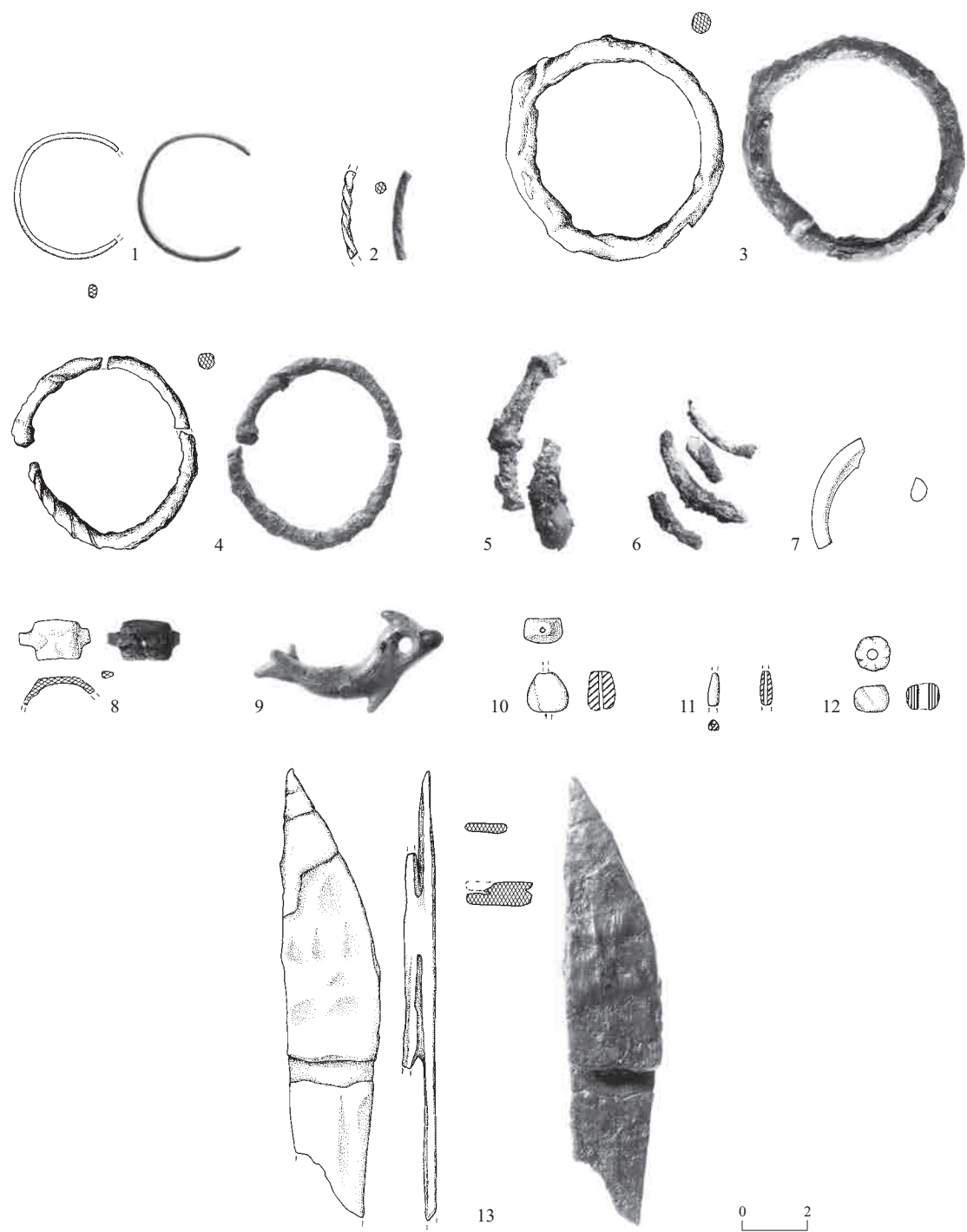


Fig. 3. Jewelry and other finds from Cave 2.

◀ Fig. 3

No.	Reg. No.	Kokh/Trough	Type	Description	Dimensions (cm)
1	12	7	Child's bracelet	Bronze	Int. D 3.5, oval cross-section 0.4 × 0.25
2	32	4	Bracelet	Bronze	Int. D c. 5, round cross-section 0.3
3	14	8	Bracelet	Iron	Int. D 5, round cross-section 0.6
4	9	4	Bracelet	Iron	Int. D 5, round cross-section 0.5
5	7	4	Bracelet	Iron	Int. D c. 5, round cross-section 0.5
6	22	10	Bracelet	Iron	Round cross-section 0.5
7	20	10	Bracelet	Dark blue glass, golden weathering	Int. D c. 5, D-shaped cross-section 0.7 × 0.4
8	10	4	Ring	Iron	Int. D c. 2.2, oval cross-section 0.4 × 0.2
9	18	10	Dolphin-shaped pendant	Dark blue glass	L 3
10	19-1	10	Bead	Amber	H 1.2, max. W 1.3, Th. 0.8
11	19-2	10	Bead	Amber	H 1, 0.4
12	21	10	Bead	Frit	H 0.8, W 1.1
13	8	4	Blade	Iron	Pres. H 14, max. W 3, Th. 0.8

Glass Dolphin Pendant (Fig. 3:9).— This small pendant is made of blue glass in the shape of a dolphin with a hole representing the eyes. Dolphin pendants are widespread in Syro-Palestinian tombs from the third to the fifth centuries CE and were probably manufactured locally. For parallels, see, e.g., Jerusalem (Hamilton and Hussein 1935: Pl. 81:13), Tyre (Chéhab 1986:167, Pl. 27:1, 3–5), and Castra (Castra 1999:6). See also Spaer 2001:188, Pl. 32:427, with further references. Dolphins are frequent in the pagan iconographic repertoire. They appear on the majority of the Tyrian lead coffins, which are dated to the late second–mid-third centuries CE (Rahmani 1999:39, 74–75). Fish and dolphins have also been used as a symbol of early Christianity (Dölger 1922–1928; Leclercq 1920; 1927; 1939).

Beads.— Three beads were found in *Kokh* 10: two of amber (Fig. 3:10, 11) and one of frit, which is melon-shaped (Fig. 3:12). For parallels of the latter, see, e.g., Ḥanita (Barag 1978: Fig. 18:134).

Weapons/Tools

A fragment of a thick (0.8 cm) iron blade (Fig. 3:13) of a knife or dagger was found in

Trough 4. The discovery of weapons or tools in Roman-period tombs is rare. Note, however, a pick-axe found in a fourth-century CE rock-cut tomb at Tarshiḥa (Ilfie 1934a: Pl. 8:14).

Coins

Gabriela Bijovsky and Robert Kool

1. Reg. No. 15, Trough 8, IAA 72261. Probus, Antioch (2nd Syrian mint), 276–282 CE.

Obv.: IMP [M AV]R PROBVS PF AVG Bust r., radiate, cuirassed and draped.

Rev.: RESTITVT ORB[IS] Female standing r. presenting wreath to emperor standing l., holding scepter. Between them, below: Γ; in exergue: XX[I]

Æ, ↓, *antoninianus*, 3.02 g, 22 mm.

Cf. *RIC* 5/2:120, No. 925.



2. Reg. No. 17, *Kokh* 10, IAA 72262.

383–395 CE

Obv.: Obliterated.

Rev.: [SALVS REIPUBLICAE] Victory advancing l., dragging captive, holding wreath and trophy. Mintmark illegible.

Æ, 0.57 g.

Cf. LRBC 2:102, Nos. 2768–2771.

BURIAL CAVE 3 (see Plan 3)

The entrance of Cave 3 is located 6 m east of that of Cave 2 and two *kokhim* of the two caves are contiguous (Plans 1, 3). The southeastern wall, including the entrance to the cave, was destroyed by the bulldozer at the time of discovery.

Cave 3 consists of a burial chamber surrounded by nine single *kokhim*, one double *kokh*, a niche and an *arcosolium* (Table 4). The chamber is square (3.5 × 3.5 m, height 1.2 m), with a flat ceiling and a large central pit (depth 0.5 m) hewn into the floor, creating narrow shelves (0.25–0.30 m wide) on all sides. Eleven vaulted openings and a rectangular one are hewn in the walls of the chamber. Four vaulted openings in the southwestern wall lead to short, single *kokhim* (1–4); in the northwestern wall, one vaulted opening leads to a rounded niche (5), one rectangular opening leads to an *arcosolium* (6) and one vaulted opening leads to a single *kokh* (7); four vaulted openings in the northeastern wall lead to three single *kokhim*

(8–10) and one double *kokh* (11); one opening in the southeastern wall leads to a single *kokh* (12), next to the entrance.

Kokhim 3 and 4 (length 1.1 m and 1.35 m respectively) are much shorter than the others, because, in the course of their hewing, the extremities of *Kokhim* 11 and 12 of Cave 2 were encountered (Plans 1, 3). This indicates that Cave 3 postdates Cave 2.

A cross-shaped mark (vertical branch 11 cm, horizontal branch 25 cm) is incised above the opening of *Kokh* 3 (Plan 3: View A), and a *lambda*-shaped mark (8 cm high), above the opening of *Kokh* 4 (Plan 3: View A).

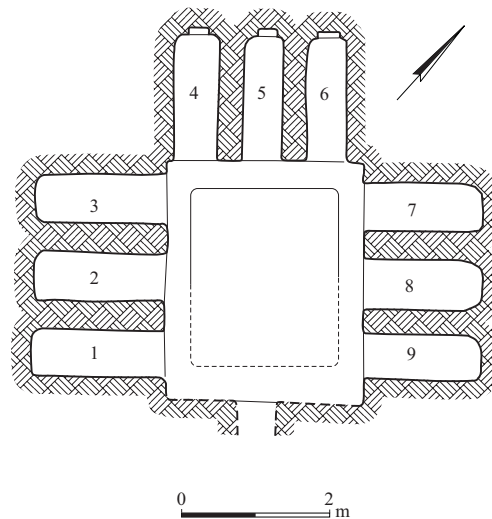
The cave had been plundered in ancient times and contained only a few scattered human bones (see n. 2).

BURIAL CAVE 4 (Plan 4)

The entrance to Cave 4 is located about 30 m east of that of Cave 3. The cave consists of a burial chamber surrounded by nine *kokhim* (Table 5). The entrance to the cave is in the southeastern wall. The chamber is rectangular (2.8 × 3.5 m), with a large central pit (2.25 × 2.80 m), creating narrow shelves (0.25–0.30 m wide) on all sides. Nine vaulted openings are hewn in the walls of the chamber, leading to

Table 4. Dimensions (m) of Burial Units in Cave 3

Burial Units	L	W	H
<i>Kokh</i> 1	1.60?	0.55	?
<i>Kokh</i> 2	1.60?	0.55	?
<i>Kokh</i> 3	1.10	0.65	?
<i>Kokh</i> 4	1.35	0.60	0.75
Niche 5	0.60	0.80	0.75
<i>Arcosolium</i> 6	0.75	1.80	0.70
<i>Kokh</i> 7	0.55	0.55	0.70
<i>Kokh</i> 8	1.60	0.55	0.85
<i>Kokh</i> 9	1.60	0.50	?
<i>Kokh</i> 10	1.60	0.60	?
<i>Kokh</i> 11	1.60?	1.50?	?
<i>Kokh</i> 12	1.45?	0.55	?



Plan 4. Plan and section of Cave 4.

Table 5. Dimensions (m) of *kokhim* in Cave 4

<i>Kokh</i>	Length	Width
1	1.85	0.75
2	1.80	0.70
3	1.80	0.70
4	1.80	0.65
5	1.80	0.60
6	1.80	0.60
7	1.70	0.70
8	1.70	0.70
9	1.70	0.75

single *kokhim*: three in the southwestern wall (1–3), three in the northwestern wall (4–6), and three in the northeastern wall (7–9). No troughs are hewn into the floors of the *kokhim*, but a small gabled recess is hewn at the extremity of each of the *kokhim* of the northwestern wall.

The cave had been looted in antiquity and, except for a few brittle human bones (see n. 2), no finds were discovered.

CONCLUSION

The dating of the Shelomi caves is primarily based on the finds discovered in Cave 2. Glass vessels, items of jewelry and coins all point to a date ranging from the late third to the late fourth centuries CE. The coin of Probus, 276–282 CE (see Bijovsky and Kool, above: Cat. No. 1), found in Trough 8, is in good condition. This may indicate that use of Cave 2 began at the end of the third century CE, although it is also possible that the coin was placed in the tomb at a somewhat later date. The coin dated to 383–395 CE (Bijovsky and Kool, above: Cat. No. 2) from *Kokh* 10 establishes that this cave was used for burial at least until the end of the fourth century CE.

Coins discovered in *kokhim* of burial caves are almost always associated with the pagan belief that the dead will need to pay the ferryman Charon in order to cross the River Styx to the netherworld (Rahmani 1993). On the other hand, the cross incised above *Kokh* 6

of Cave 2 (Plan 1: Section 1–1), and, especially, the glass vessel decorated with an incised cross found in Trough 2 (Fig. 2:4), suggest that Cave 2 contained Christian burials. If the coin of Probus does correspond to the date of a burial, it would mean that the cave was used over a rather long period of time—more than a century—and belonged to a family whose earlier members were pagan and the later ones Christian. It is, however, very possible that for some time, early Christians continued the tradition of placing coins into tombs and that the late fourth-century CE coin discovered in *Kokh* 10 also belongs to a Christian burial. Incidentally, the same *kokh* yielded a glass, dolphin-shaped pendant (see discussion above on the fish/dolphin as a possible early Christian symbol). The cross mark and probably also the *lambda* incised over *Kokhim* 3 and 4 in Cave 3 may also point to Christian burials. This is consistent with the fact that Cave 3 was hewn after Cave 2, as shown by the length of its western *kokhim*, which needed to be shortened so that they would not encroach upon those of Cave 2.

The other caves cannot be dated due to the absence of finds. However, the fact that Caves 1 and 4 are surrounded by *kokhim* and not by *arcosolia* would suggest that they date to the Late Roman period.

As noted, the tombs were found looted and without sealing slabs. This may be the reason for the total absence of gold and silver jewelry, otherwise frequent in tombs of the third–early fourth centuries CE. However, the relatively large number of iron bracelets and rings in Cave 2 is characteristic of fourth-century CE tombs, when gold and silver jewelry became much rarer (see, e.g., at Elqosh; Vitto, this volume).

Who used this necropolis? The closest site known in the area is a Byzantine monastery/ecclesiastical estate located about 100 m north of these caves, which was excavated between 1976 and 1978 by Dauphin (1998:630–631; Frankel and Getzov 1997:86*, No. 78.2, with further references).³ According to Dauphin (1998:630–631; Dauphin and Kingsley 2003),

this building was founded in the late fifth century CE, destroyed in 614 CE, and reused in the eighth century CE. Therefore, despite its proximity, it was most likely not connected with the excavated caves, as its occupation started a century later. A better candidate would be a site located c. 300 m southwest of the caves, H. Kenessiyya (see Fig. 1; Frankel and Getzov

1997:85*, No. 77.2), which Aviam (1994: 73–74; pers. comm.) describes as a relatively large site dating to the Roman and the Byzantine periods, with remains of churches. The population of this site was probably pagan during the Roman period and converted to Christianity in the fourth century CE.

NOTES

¹ In August 1974, a three-day excavation (Permit No. A-478) was conducted at the site by the author on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (now the Israel Antiquities Authority). The plans were drawn by the author (except for Cave 4, which was drawn by Joe Zias in June 1974) and these were prepared for publication by Natalia Zak. Yehuda Ben Yosef, Regional Inspector of Antiquities, assisted in the organization of the dig. The coins and metal finds were cleaned by Nena Jane. The finds were drawn by Irina Lidsky and photographed by Tsila Sagiv and Clara Amit. Irina Lidsky prepared the plates for publication. Gabriela Bijovsky and Robert Kool wrote the coin section. Yael Gorin-Rosen and Natalya Katsnelson read an earlier version of the

glass section and made useful suggestions. To all the above the author wishes to express her gratitude.

² Regrettably, no report was received on the osteological material, which was reburied shortly after the excavation. The remarks made here are based on notes made on the site by the author.

³ The correct location of Dauphin's excavation is the one indicated on the map accompanying Frankel and Getzov's (1997: No. 78.2) archaeological survey, i.e., about 100 m north of the burial caves presented in this article (see Fig. 1), and not 1.3 km north of the caves as Dauphin (1998:631, Feuille 1:11) writes, nor at map reference 162/278 (a location which would be in southern Lebanon), as it appears in most of her publications.

REFERENCES

- Abu 'Uqsa H. and Katsnelson N. 1999. Tombs of the Roman Period at Tell Shubeib. *Atiqot* 37:175–179 (Hebrew; English summary, p. 179*).
- Aviam M. 1994. *The Christian Settlement in Western Galilee in the Byzantine Period*. M.A. thesis. The Hebrew University. Jerusalem (Hebrew).
- Aviam M. and Gorin-Rosen Y. 1997. Three Burial Caves from the Roman Period at Hurfeish. *Atiqot* 33:25–37 (Hebrew; English summary, p. 9*).
- Avigad N. 1976. *Beth She'arim: Report on the Excavations during 1953–1958 III: Catacombs 12–23*. Jerusalem.
- Barag D. 1970. *Glass Vessels of the Roman and Byzantine Period in Palestine*. Ph.D. diss. The Hebrew University. Jerusalem (Hebrew).
- Barag D. 1976. Glass Vessels. In N. Avigad. *Beth She'arim: Report on the Excavations during 1953–1958 III: Catacombs 12–23*. Jerusalem. Pp. 198–229.
- Barag D. 1978. *Ḥanita, Tomb XV: A Tomb of the Third and Early Fourth Century CE* (*Atiqot* [ES] 13). Jerusalem.
- Braun E., Dauphin C. and Hadas G. 1994. A Rock-Cut Tomb at Sajur. *Atiqot* 25:103–115.

- Castra* 1999. *Castra at the Foot of Mount Carmel: The City and Its Secrets* (Exhibition Catalogue, National Maritime Museum). Haifa.
- Chéhab M.H. 1986. *Fouilles de Tyr IV: La nécropole* (BMB 36). Paris.
- Constable-Maxwell Collection 1979. *Catalogue of the Constable-Maxwell Collection* (Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co. Sale, 4th and 5th June 1979). London.
- Dauphin C. 1998. *La Palestine byzantine: peuplement et populations* (BAR Int. S. 726). Oxford.
- Dauphin C.M. and Kingsley S.A. 2003. Ceramic Evidence for the Rise and Fall of a Late Antique Ecclesiastical Estate at Shelomi in *Phoenicia Maritima*. In G.C. Bottini, L. Di Segni and L.D. Chrupcala eds. *One Land—Many Cultures: Archaeological Studies in Honour of Stanislaw Loffreda OFM* (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Collectio Maior 41). Jerusalem. Pp. 61–74.
- Dölger F.J. 1922–1928. □□□□ (4 vols.). Münster.
- Frankel R. and Getzov. N. 1997. *Map of Akhziv (1), Map of Hanita (2)* (Archaeological Survey of Israel). Jerusalem.
- Gorin-Rosen Y. 1997. Glass Vessels from Burial Caves in Asherat. *Atiqot* 33:61–67 (Hebrew; English summary, pp. 12*–13*).
- Gorin-Rosen Y. 2002. The Glass Vessels from Burial Cave D at Hurfeish. In Z. Gal ed. *Eretz Zafon: Studies in Galilean Archaeology*. Jerusalem. Pp. 140*–166*.
- Hamilton R.W. and Hussein S.A.S. 1935. Shaft Tombs in the Nablus Road, Jerusalem. *QDAP* 4:170–174.
- Harden D.B. 1949. Tomb-Groups of Glass of Roman Date from Syria and Palestine. *Iraq* 11:151–159.
- Harden D.B. 1959. The Highdown Hill Glass Goblet with Greek Inscription. *Sussex, Archaeological Collections* 97:3–20.
- Harden D.B. 1960. The Wint Hill Hunting Bowl and Related Glasses. *JGS* 2:45–81.
- Iliffe J.H. 1934a. Rock-Cut Tomb at Tarshiha. *QDAP* 3:9–16.
- Iliffe J.H. 1934b. A Tomb at el Bassa. *QDAP* 3: 81–91.
- Israeli Y. 2003. *Ancient Glass in the Israel Museum: The Eliahu Dobkin Collection and Other Gifts*. Jerusalem.
- Kraeling C.H. ed. 1938. *Gerasa—City of the Decapolis*. New Haven.
- Leclercq H. 1920. Dauphin. In *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* IV, 1. Paris. Cols. 283–295.
- Leclercq H. 1927. □□□□. In *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* VII, 2. Paris. Cols. 1990–2086.
- Leclercq H. 1939. Poisson. In *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* XIV, 1. Paris. Cols. 1246–1252.
- LRBC 2: R.A.G. Carson and J.P.C. Kent. Part 2: Bronze Roman and Imperial Coinage of the Later Empire, A.D. 346–498. In *Late Roman Bronze Coinage (A.D. 324–498)*. London 1965. Pp. 41–114.
- Makhoul N. 1938–1939. Rock-cut Tombs at el-Jish. *QDAP* 8:45–50.
- Rahmani L.Y. 1993. A Note on Charon's Obol. *Atiqot* 22:149–150.
- Rahmani L.Y. 1999. *A Catalogue of Roman and Byzantine Lead Coffins from Israel*. Jerusalem.
- RIC 5/2: P.H. Webb. *The Roman Imperial Coinage* V, II. London 1933.
- Ross M.C. 1962. *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Medieval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection I: Metalwork, Ceramics, Glass, Glyptics, Painting*. Washington.
- Spaer M. 1988. The Pre-Islamic Glass Bracelets of Palestine. *JGS* 30:51–61.
- Spaer M. 2001. *Ancient Glass in the Israel Museum: Beads and Other Small Objects*. Jerusalem.
- Stern E.J. 1997. Burial Caves at Kisra. *Atiqot* 33:103–135 (Hebrew; English summary, p. 17*).
- Stern E. and Gorin-Rosen Y. 1997. Burial Caves Near Kabri. *Atiqot* 33:1–22 (Hebrew; English summary, pp. 7*–8*).
- Vitto F. 1974. Burial Caves at Shelomi. *HA* 51–52: 7–8.
- Vitto F. This volume. A Burial Cave from the Fourth Century CE at Elqosh, Upper Galilee.
- Vitto F. Forthcoming. A Burial Cave from the Third–Early Fourth Century CE at Iqrit. *Atiqot*.
- Weinberg G.D. and Goldstein S.M. 1988. The Glass Vessels. In G.D. Weinberg ed. *Excavations at Jalame—Site of a Glass Factory in Late Roman Palestine*. Columbia, Mo. Pp. 38–102.