

## GLASS VESSELS FROM YAVNE

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During the excavation of Byzantine refuse pits and mixed, near-surface loci at Yavne (see Kletter and Nagar, this volume), 33 diagnostic glass fragments were found, the majority of which belong to the most common types dating to the Late Roman and Byzantine periods (fourth–sixth centuries CE).<sup>1</sup> This assemblage (not illustrated) includes bowls, beakers and bottles, as well as two types of oil lamps—hollow-stemmed and bowl-shaped with a wick-tube—that are similar to those found in the Byzantine baptismal font at Nir Gallim (Gorin-Rosen 2002:122–124, Fig. 2:3–5).

The most important glass find is a small body fragment of a mold-blown beaker, decorated with almond-shaped knobs, which is dated to the first century CE (Fig. 1). It is made of colorless glass and is covered with a thick, black crust and an iridescent film. The fragment, which has a rather thick wall, bears parts of three almond-shaped knobs, each with a three-tiered relief. Such beakers are well-known from glass collections all over the world, and some have been found in excavations in both the

Eastern and Western provinces of the Roman Empire (for detailed discussions of this type and its distribution, see Stern 1995:103–108; Whitehouse 2001:13–14). Although the Yavne fragment was found in a refuse pit with later glass finds, the discovery of such a vessel at the site contributes significantly to our knowledge about the distribution of this type, and might shed light on the settlement’s inhabitants.

The identification of the knobs is uncertain. Whitehouse named such vessels “Knobbed” or “Lotus-bud” beakers, while others identified the knobs as “almonds,” “knots in the trunk of a tree,” or even as “knots in the club of Hercules” (Whitehouse 2001:13–14). Price (1991:72, Pl. XIXb) referred to these vessels as “Truncated conical beakers with almond-shape bosses,” whereas Stern defined this type as a “Truncated Conical Beaker with Knot-Shaped Knobs” (Stern 1995:103–108). These beakers can be classified into several subtypes. They vary according to the size and shape of the knobs, and some have additional dots between the knobs; other minute differences exist as well. The fragment from Yavne has protruding knobs in a three-tiered relief.

Complete examples of this subtype are found in numerous collections, such as at the Corning Museum of Glass, where this vessel is dated to the first century CE (Whitehouse 2001:13–14, 27–29, Pl. 317:492, 493, 495, 496); at the Toledo Museum, Ohio, where it is assigned to the Eastern Mediterranean and dated to the second half of the first century CE (Stern 1995:103–108, Cat. Nos. 8–10); and at the Louvre Museum, where this type is dated to the second half of the first century and the first half of the second century CE (Arveiller-

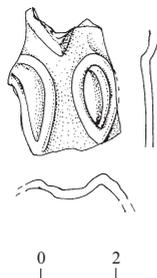


Fig. 1. Fragment of a mold-blown beaker, decorated with almond-shaped knobs (L500, B5072).

Dulong and Nenna 2005:183, 195, Cat. No. 540, Pl. 39:540).

Several mold-blown beakers with an almond-shape pattern were found in Israel, but most of them belong to other subtypes. One fragment of such a beaker with large protruding knobs, but with an additional dot, was found in Jaffa (Jackson-Tal 2009:194, Fig. 4.44:2). A complete beaker with plain knobs was found in a burial cave at Ḥorbat Qaṣṣra (Gorin-Rosen and Katsnelson 1999:27\*, iii, Color Plate 1); a similar but smaller fragment was found in the village at 'En Gedi (Jackson-Tal 2007: Pl. 4:10); several fragments were found at Masada, in contexts dating to 74–115 CE (Barag 1991:139); and a fragment with plain knobs was found in Cave VII/1 ("El-Mafjer Cave") along the eastern escarpments of Jebel Quruntul (Jackson-Tal 2002:110, Fig. 6:6). Two small fragments were found in Area E of the Jewish Quarter excavations in Jerusalem, and were dated to the first century CE, probably up to 70 CE (Gorin-Rosen 2006:254–255, Pl. 10.5:G68, G69); a contemporary fragment with a plain knob and a dot was found at Ḥorbat Meẓad in the Judean Hills (Jackson-Tal 2009:189, Fig. 4.22:6).

Outside Israel, fragments of this type of beaker have been found as far south as ed-Dur in the United Arab Emirates (Whitehouse 2000:111–112, No. 97), as far east as the north

coast of the Black Sea, and in the western provinces of the Roman Empire, such as southern Spain and England (Price 1991:72, with further references therein). They were also found in central Italy (Whitehouse 2000:113, and see further references therein), as well as in the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland (Isings 1957:45–46, Form 31; Stern 1995:104). Hayes (1975:33) suggested that this type of vessel was made both in Syrian and Italian workshops, around 50–100 CE (Hayes 1975:48, Cat. No. 83, and see further references therein).

The presence of this rather luxurious vessel at the site points to several possible lines of interpretation. First, it suggests that a first-century CE occupation level or cemetery existed at the site, and that the inhabitants or interred were rather wealthy. Since mold-blown glass vessels decorated with floral motifs and with inscribed blessings were found in the homes of wealthy Jews in the upper city of Jerusalem, it is clear that the use of such vessels did not clash with Jewish religious values (Israeli 2010:229). Therefore, this beaker might be associated with the Jewish settlement at Yavne. On the other hand, it might have been in the possession of a Roman officer, as some of the high quality mold-blown glass vessels found elsewhere are associated with the Roman army (Stern 1995:96).

#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Raz Kletter, the director of the excavation, for the opportunity to study the glass

finds, and Carmen Hersch, for drawing the glass fragment.

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