

THE MOLLUSKS FROM ḤORBAT ṬARBENET

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Two malacological remains were retrieved manually from the excavations at Ḥorbat Ṭarbenet (see Atrash and Mazor, this volume).

The malacological evidence from the site (Table 1) indicates the use of Mediterranean shells during the Roman and Byzantine periods, evidenced by the presence of *Hexaplex trunculus* and *Charonia variegata*. The *Hexaplex trunculus* shell is a bit worn and was probably collected from the seashore for its beautiful shape as an ornament. The *Charonia variegata* shell is complete and not worn. Although such shells are known as 'trumpet shells,' the shell from Ḥ. Ṭarbenet has no hole in the apex and could not have been used as a trumpet. 'Triton shells' or 'trumpet shells,' such as *Charonia variegata* and *Charonia lampas*,¹ appear in low frequencies in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea and in the archaeological sites around it. The earliest finds are from the Neolithic period in Italy, seldom found in association with human burials (Skeates 1991). During the early periods (Neolithic–Iron Ages), it had cultic meaning, serving as a trumpet to summon the gods (Åström and Reese 1990).

During the Roman and Byzantine periods, this species appears in larger numbers, but usually not *in situ*, making it difficult to determine their function. Triton shells from these periods were found at Ramat Ha-Nadiv, Jerusalem, Shuni and Qasra (Bar-Yosef Mayer 2000; Mienis 2003; Ktalav, personal observation). According to Jackson (1916), the Greeks

Table 1. The Shells from Ḥorbat Ṭarbenet

Locus	Basket	Species	Preservation	Origin
23	1070	<i>Hexaplex trunculus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	Complete	Mediterranean
12	1009	<i>Charonia variegata</i> (Lamarck, 1816)	Complete	Mediterranean

¹ Formerly known as *Charonia nodifera*.

used triton shells as trumpets in land and sea fights, and to set the watch and call together assemblies of the people. Triton shells are depicted on the Lod mosaic floor (the south panel), dated to the Late Roman period (Avisar 1998). The shell could also have been used as a container, lamp or ladle (Reese 1985).

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