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The Stone Objects from from the Hellenistic–Byzantine-Period Rural Settlement at el-Khirba, Shoham

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The assemblage of stone artifacts from el-Khirba, Shoham (see Sion, this volume) comprises both vessels and working tools. Based on the pottery and coin finds, they were dated from the Hellenistic to the Byzantine period. The artifacts are presented typologically.

Mugs (Fig. 1:1, 2)
Two hand-carved, chalkstone mug fragments were found in the assemblage: one including a ribbed wall and base (Fig. 1:1) and the other, part of a plain wall and the beginning of the handle (Fig. 1:2).

According to Magen (2002:97–99, 162), the Jerusalem stone vessel industry began in the mid-first century BCE and reached its peak in the first century CE, though vessels continued to be made during the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Mugs, ubiquitous among chalkstone vessels, were found at almost every Second Temple and Bar Kokhba-period site.

A large and varied assemblage of stone vessels was found in the Burnt House in Jerusalem, the largest such assemblage found in any Second Temple period site, which includes all known vessel types (Amit 2010; Geva 2010).[1]

Bowls
Basalt Bowls (Fig. 1:3–5).— Three basalt pedestal bowls, differing in size, apparently served as mortaria. Small bowl No. 3 has four handles projecting from the rim. Only one leg was preserved in large-sized bowl No. 4 and in bowl No. 5. Another small bowl (Fig. 1:6) is made of basalt.

Chalkstone Bowls (Fig. 1:7–9).— Bowl Nos. 7–9 are made of chalk; bowl No. 7 is square, while the other two are circular.

[1] See there Geva's extensive discussion on the stone vessel industries in Jerusalem and the Galilee, as well as parallels from Jerusalem and its environment, such as the eastern slope of Mount Scopus, and a few sites outside Jerusalem: Ḥizma, Jericho and Masada, where stone vessels have been found.

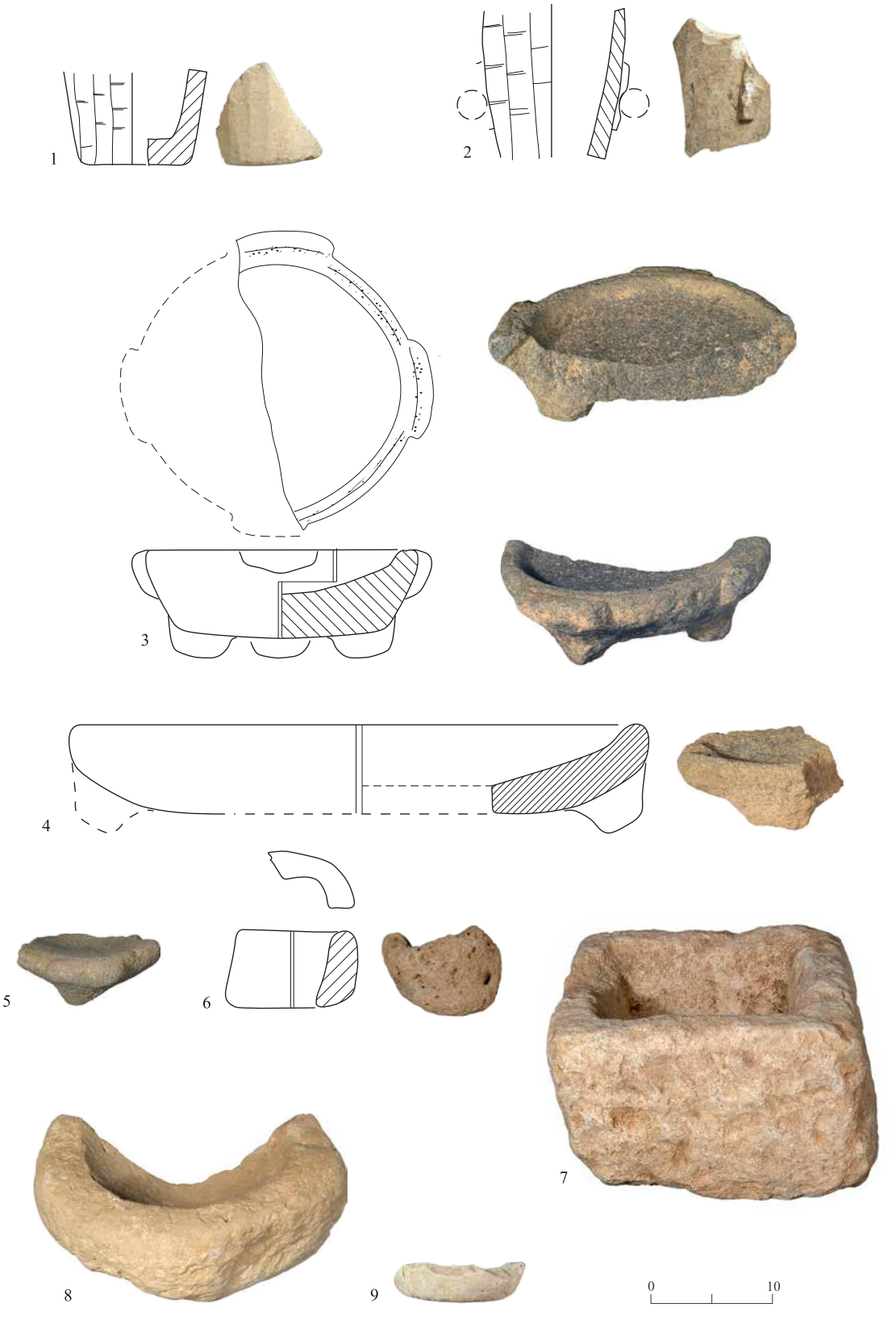

Fig. 1. Stone mugs and bowls.

◂ **Fig. 1**

No.	Object	Locus	Reg. No.	Material
1	Mug	534	1189/2	Chalk
2	Mug	1067	2338	Chalk
3	Bowl	1066	2376	Basalt
4	Bowl	1067	2345	Basalt
5	Bowl	Surface	2353	Basalt
6	Small bowl	1230	2589	Basalt
7	Bowl	1038		Chalk
8	Bowl	1282	2623	Chalk
9	Bowl	1005	1094	Chalk

Mortaria made of basalt, limestone and chalkstone were found in late Second Temple period sites in Jerusalem, such as the Jewish Quarter (Reich 2003:269, Pl. 8.5:7), the Temple Mount (Magen 2002:69) and in the Burnt House (Kol Yaakov 2000:479, 480, Nos. 21–26). Parallels to the chalkstone bowls in Fig. 1:7–9 were found at Ramat Ha-Nadiv (Sidi 2000:180–182, Pl. TI:2–6, 10), where they were dated to the late Second Temple period.

Spindle Whorls (Fig. 2:10–14)
The five whorls found in the assemblage show various shapes and are made of different materials. Whorl No. 10, adorned with incisions, is made of serpentine. Circular whorl No. 11 and irregular-shaped whorl No. 12 are made of clay; the latter was burned. Whorl Nos. 13 and 14 are made of stone, and only half of each was preserved; whorl No. 13 is square and flat, while No. 14 is circular.

At Masada, 384 stone whorls were found, the largest number of such objects ever uncovered, as well as a few glass, bone and clay whorls (Reich 2007, and see further discussion therein). Stone whorls were also found in the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem, where they were common during the Second Temple period, typical of the first century CE (Reich 2003:269, Pl. 8.5:3–6; Geva 2006:226).

Bead (Fig. 2:15)
Only a single large-sized stone bead was found in the assemblage.

Millstones (Fig. 2:16–21).
Six millstones were found in the excavation—five hand millstones (Fig. 2:16–20) and one donkey millstone (Fig. 2:21)—all made of basalt. The hand millstones include two upper stones (“Runner stones”; Fig. 2:16, 17) and three lower ones (“Bedstones”; Fig. 2:18–20). Upper stone No. 17 and lower stone No. 19 were found together. In the finely worked rectangular upper stone No. 16 there are two wide depressions in its upper part to accommodate the spindle. The walls slope toward the rectangular hole in the center,

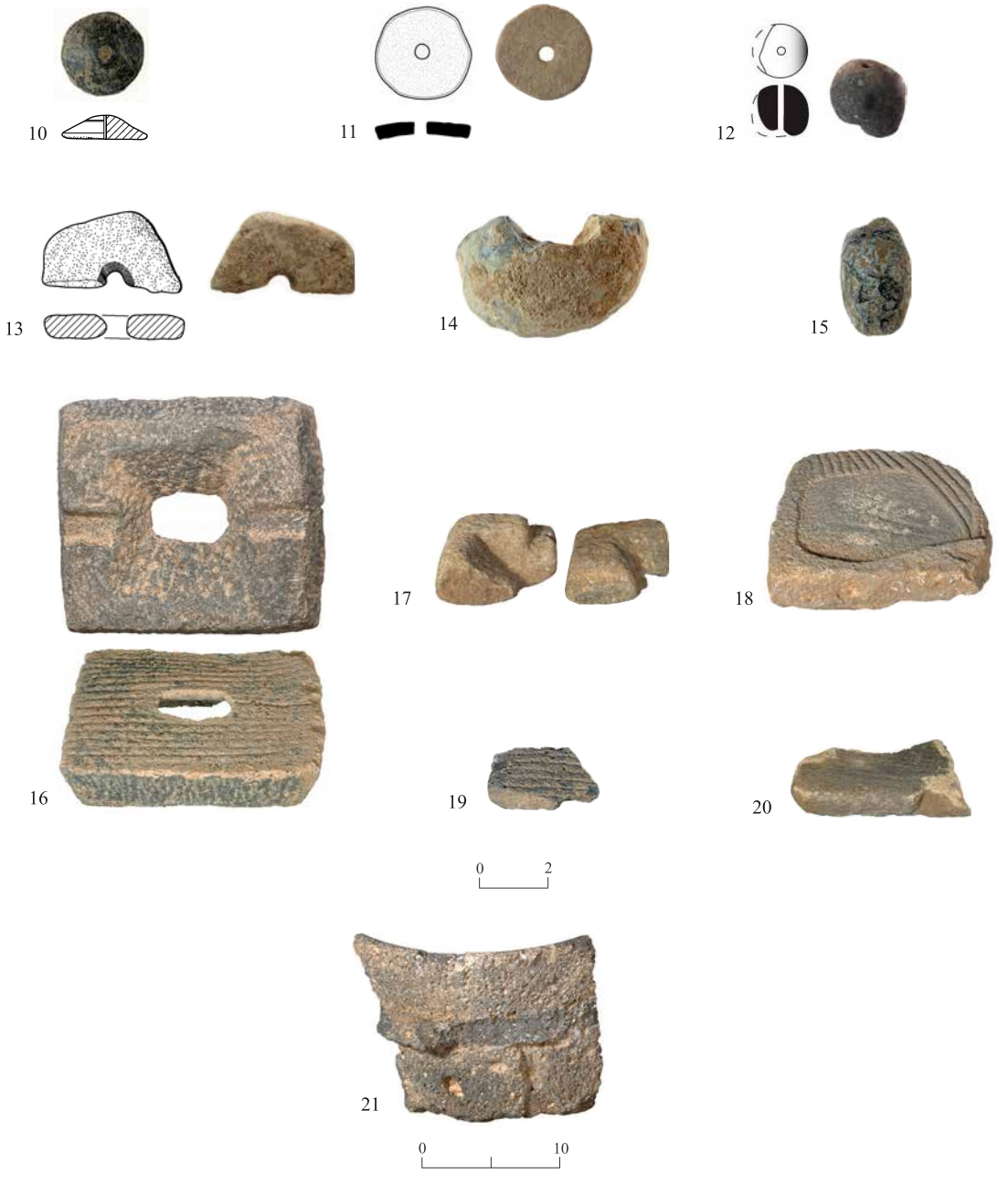

Fig. 2. Stone spindle whorls, a bead and millstones.

through which the crushed material spilled into a storage vessel. The lower part is incised widthwise. Two corners of upper stone No. 17 were preserved (17.0 × 16.0 × 12.5 cm [Reg. No. 2040/1]; 16 × 14 × 4 cm [Reg. No. 2040/3] with walls sloping toward the center, where the hole was located. The depression for the spindle is visible in one of the fragments (Reg. No. 2040/3).

◂ **Fig. 2**

No.	Object	Locus	Reg. No.	Material
10	Spindle whorl	1292	2662	Serpentine
11	Spindle whorl	1055	2664	Brown clay
12	Spindle whorl	1025	2101	Brown clay
13	Spindle whorl	1067	2367	Stone
14	Spindle whorl	1067	2338	Stone; patina
15	Bead	1292	2662	Stone
16	Hand Millstone (upper)	5526	2328	Basalt
17	Hand Millstone (upper)	1014	2040/1, 3	Basalt
18	Hand Millstone (lower)	1037	2195	Basalt
19	Hand Millstone (lower)	1014	2040/2	Basalt
20	Hand Millstone (lower)	1230	2578	Basalt
21	Donkey Millstone	1067	2321	Basalt

The finely worked square lower stone (bedstone) No. 18 (33 × 32 × 3–11 cm) has a plain surface with incised and slightly higher margins. Rectangular lower stone No. 19 (18.0 × 33.5 × 7.0 cm) is fully grooved. Stone No. 20, found broken, is also grooved.

Only part of the rim and wall of the donkey millstone (Fig. 2:21) was preserved.

The upper and lower hand millstones are parallel to Frankel's Types I.1 and II.I, respectively, and their decorations parallel his Type III; Frankel states these are the most common types (Frankel 2003:8, 9, 11–15, and see discussion and parallels therein). Both hand and donkey millstones were discovered at Ramat Ha-Nadiv, where the hand millstones, dated to the Early Roman period, are most common (Sidi 2000:177–179; Kol-Yaakov 2000:473–479). A hand millstone was also found at Qalandiya, in a late Second Temple period settlement (Magen 2004:101, Fig. 138).

Varia (Fig. 3:22–34).

The function of these artifacts is not clear. Figure 3:22 is a partially preserved rectangular and narrow basalt stone with an oval section and a small hole on its preserved end, perhaps used as a handle or a whetstone. The partially preserved artifact in Fig. 3:23, grooved lengthwise, may also be a whetstone. The stones in Fig. 3:24, 25 are conical; the latter may be a pestle.

The stone items in Fig. 3:26–31 are apparently grinding stones; those in Fig. 3:26–28 are circular or oval, while the one in Fig. 3:29 is of irregular shape. The stone item in Fig. 3:30 is smoothed on its lower and two longitudinal sides; the oval stone item in Fig. 3:31 is the largest in the assemblage. Stone Fig. 3:32 is flat and bears tiny holes, while stone Fig. 3:33 is flat in the upper part and perforated on its lower side.

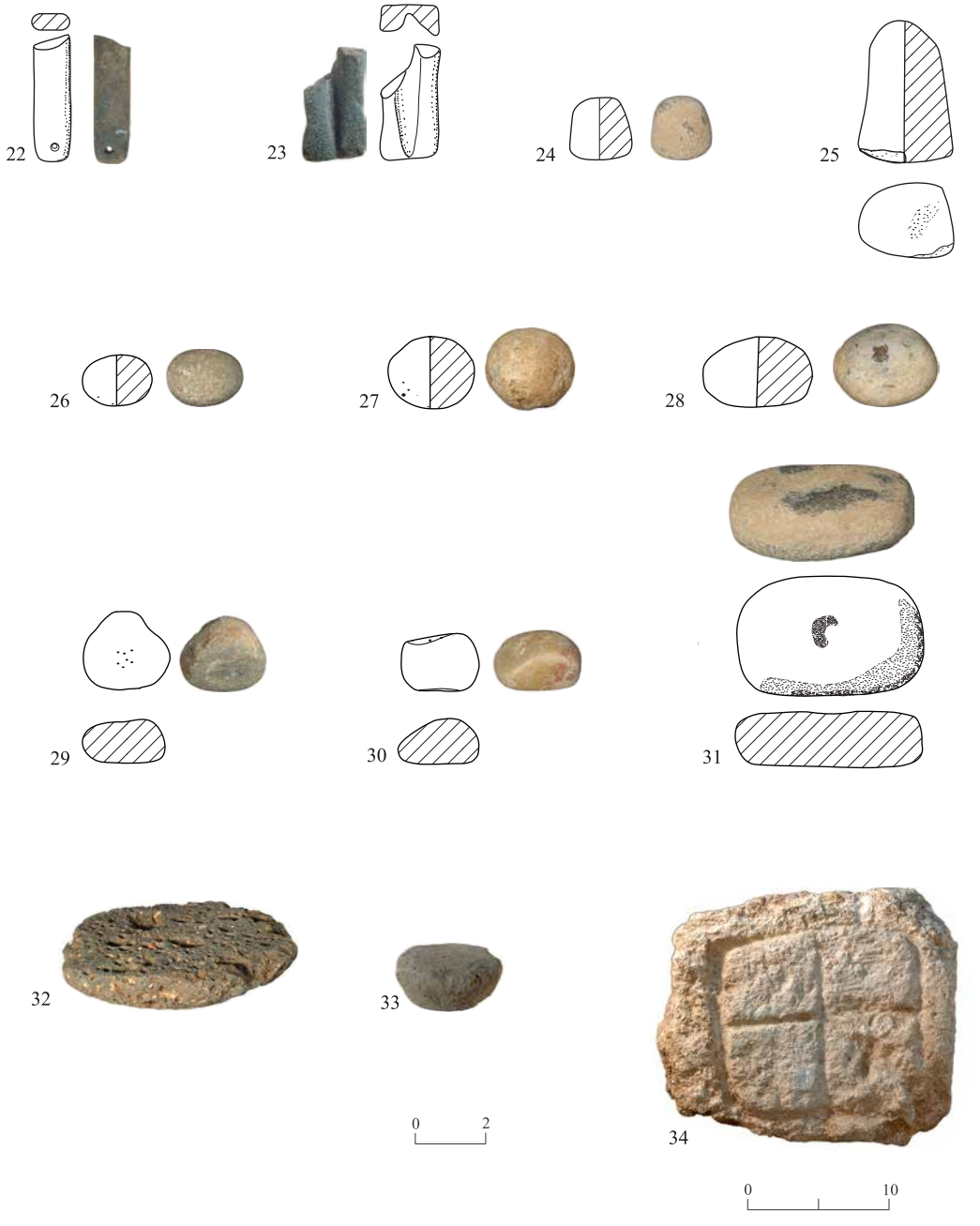

Fig. 3. Stone varia.

No.	Locus	Reg. No.	Material
22	1055	2255	Basalt
23	1253	2556	Basalt
24	1070	2327/3	Basalt
25	1253	2548/1	Chalk
26	540	1212	Flint
27	1253	2553	Flint
28	1282	2631	Flint

No.	Locus	Reg. No.	Material
29	1253	2554	Basalt
30	1070	2330	Chalk
31	1070	2323/2	Basalt
32	1027	2160	Basalt
33	1005	1094	Chalk
34	1038	2210	Chalk

A parallel for the stone object in Fig. 3:22 was discovered at Ramat Ha-Nadiv.[2] Pestles and grinding stones were found at Ramat Ha-Nadiv (Sidi 2000:182, Pl. II:7, 8; Kol-Yaakov 2000:480–484; see n. 2), all dated to the Roman–Byzantine periods, and in the Burnt House, Jerusalem (Geva 2010:160–162), where they were dated to the late Second Temple period.

Figure 3:34 is ornamented with an incised cross within a square frame separated from the higher framing border by a deep groove. It was probably an architectural item.

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[2] The stone artifacts, yet unpublished, were studied by the author (S.H.).