

## THE GLASS FINDS FROM THE MONASTERY AT HURA

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The glass finds from the Hura monastery are typical of sixth–seventh-century CE ecclesiastical complexes: the wineglass, bottles and jugs may have been used in the church liturgy; the lamps probably illuminated the monastery halls; and the windowpanes appear to have been part of the monastery building. Thus, the glass finds from Hura attest to an active Christian community, which probably ceased to be active in the Umayyad period (the eighth century CE).

*Keywords: northern Negev, Byzantine period, Christianity, monastery, glass*

### INTRODUCTION

Some 110 glass finds in a fragmentary and corroded state of preservation were recovered from the monastic complex at the Hura Interchange on Route 31.<sup>2</sup> About a third of this assemblage comprised fragments that were diagnostic of the type of vessel and its chronology. This material was unearthed in various contexts: the floor of the prayer hall (L8); the chapel (L68); the service room (L60) north of the chapel, including material from beneath its floor (L54); the southwestern service room (L65), including material from its floor (L46); a drainage channel beneath collapsed stones (L71) in the northwestern service room (L67); another service room (L62) in the monastery's western wing; accumulations in the refectory (L55); an accumulation in the entrance room, the narthex (L26); and the inner courtyard (L12, L24).

The construction of the monastery was dated to 575 CE by a Greek inscription found in the prayer hall (L8), while another inscription, uncovered in the narthex (L7), mentions the year 596 CE (see Ustinova, this volume). The pottery retrieved from the excavation dates

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<sup>2</sup> This paper was completed in April 2015 and revised in 2020. The excavation at the Hura Interchange (Permit No. A-7058/2014) was conducted on behalf of the IAA by Daniel Varga. The glass finds were restored by Adrienne Ganor and drawn by Carmen Hersch.

mostly from the sixth to the early seventh century CE, also containing a few Early Islamic-period sherds (see Varga and Talgam, this volume).

The glass finds from the site generally date from the sixth–seventh centuries CE, and include mostly bottles, jugs, lamps and windowpanes, of which seven pieces were selected for publication (Fig. 1). No glass specimens distinctly dated to the Early Islamic period were identified at the site.

## THE FINDS

### *Tableware*

Several vessels used as tableware and characteristic of the Byzantine period were recorded at the site. A thin-walled vessel with a slightly incurved, rounded rim (Fig. 1:1) probably belonged to a wineglass. Similar wineglasses were discovered, for example, at the compound of the Jerusalem International Convention Center (Gorin-Rosen 2005:202–203, Fig. 2:19) and at Khirbat ‘Adasa north of Jerusalem (Gorin-Rosen 2008:125–126, Fig. 2:7).

The bottles and jugs from the site include specimens with an upright rounded rim (L8, L62; not illustrated) or an infolded rim<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 1:2); neck fragments (L46; not illustrated); rims and mouths/necks adorned with wound thin trails (L8, L24, L71; not illustrated); jug trail handles (L8, L55; not illustrated); and concave and pushed-in bottoms (L27, L46, L62, L71; not illustrated). A pushed-in bottom (Fig. 1:5, see below) may have belonged to a bottle, yet more likely supported a lamp.

Complete jugs with a funnel-shaped mouth and an infolded rim were excavated, for example, in a fifth-century CE tomb near Kafr Dikhrin (Rahmani 1964:53–54, Fig. 2:6, 7), and rim and mouth fragments of similar jugs were unearthed in the Byzantine-period fill of a tomb at Ashqelon (Katsnelson 1999:72\*–73\*, Fig. 3:6, 7, and see therein references to examples from Nessana and ‘En Boqeq).

1. L26, B1109. Thin-walled vessel with a slightly incurved, rounded rim (D 80 mm). Greenish blue. Weathering, iridescence and pitting.

2. L47, B1106. Infolded rim (D 40 mm), funnel-shaped mouth and cylindrical neck. Greenish blue. Weathering and iridescence.

### *Lamps*

Several types of glass lamps were widespread during the Byzantine and Umayyad periods, two of which are identified in the Hura assemblage. Bowl-shaped lamps with three handles

<sup>3</sup> As this rim is broken, it is unclear if a handle was attached to the vessel; thus the rim could have belonged to either a bottle or a jug.

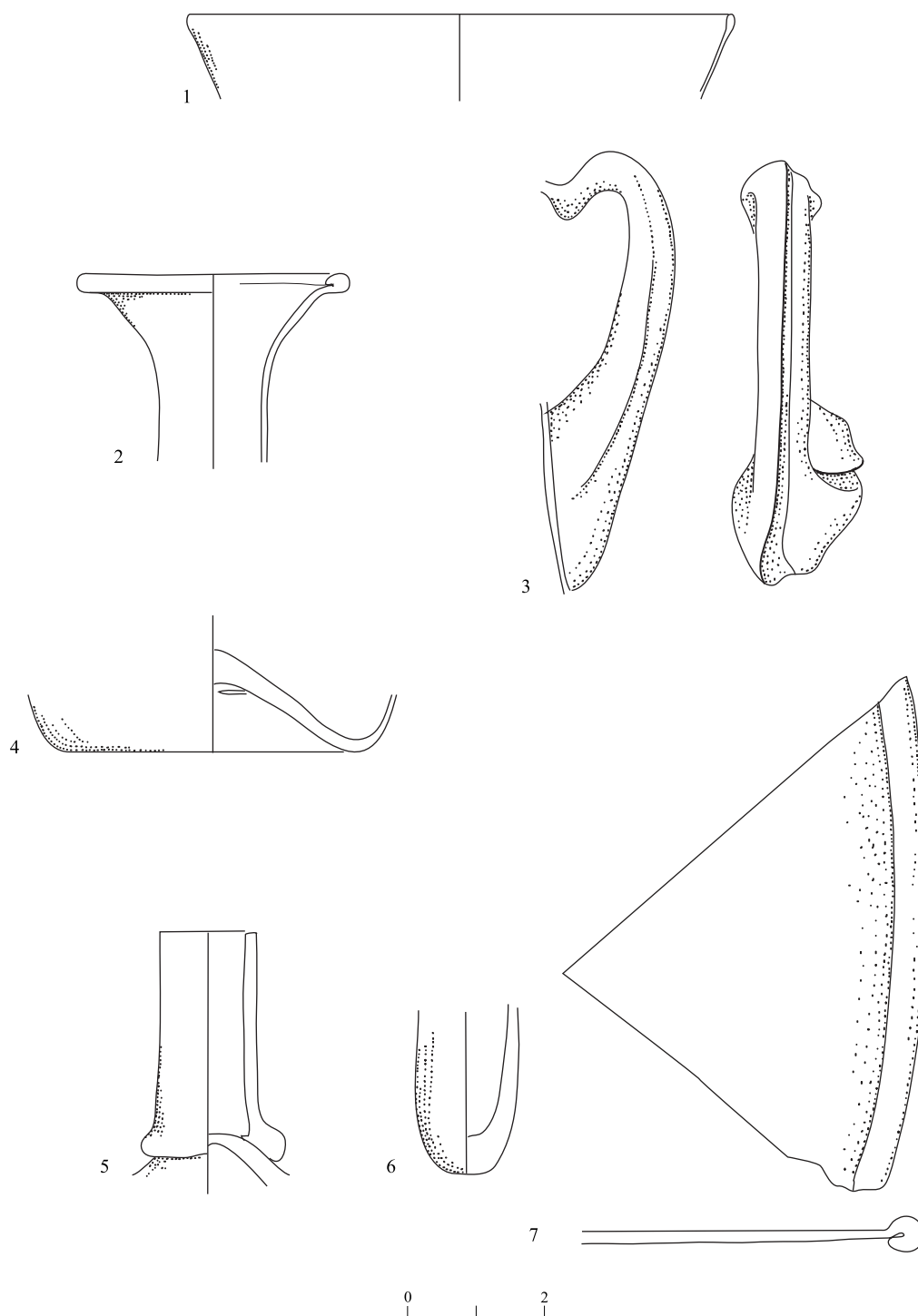


Fig. 1. The glass finds.

are represented by a large handle (Fig. 1:3); a fragment of an out-folded hollow rim with remains of a handle (L27; not illustrated); and a wick tube (Fig. 1:4) that was originally attached to the lamp floor. A pushed-in bottom (Fig. 1:5) may belong to this lamp type, although it may also belong to a bottle. Stemmed lamps are represented by a fragment of a cylindrical hollow stem (Fig. 1:6).

Three-handled bowl-shaped lamps with a wick tube were found, for example, in the Church of St. John the Baptist at Samaria-Sebaste (Crowfoot 1957:418–419, Fig. 99:2, 3). Bowl- or beaker-shaped lamps and wick-tube fragments were discovered in various sites in the Negev, for example, in a Byzantine-period context at Be'er Sheva' (Ustinova and Nahshoni 1994:169, Fig. 8:6); in the cemetery church at Ḥorbat Karkur 'Illit, in both Phase I, dated to the late fourth and the fifth centuries CE, and Phases II and III, assigned to the late Byzantine and Umayyad periods (Katsnelson 2004:268–271, Fig. 59, and see therein references to additional examples); in the northern church at Rehovot-in-the-Negev, where the lamps were dated to the fifth–seventh centuries CE (Patrich 1988:134–136, Pl. XII); and in the baptismal font at Nir Gallim, dated to the fifth–sixth centuries CE (Gorin-Rosen 2002:123–125, Fig. 2:5, and see therein references to additional examples).

Many examples of stemmed lamps, comprising fragments with rounded rims and more than 40 hollow stems, were discovered in the cemetery church at Ḥorbat Karkur 'Illit, in contexts assigned to both Phase I, dated to the late fourth and fifth centuries CE, and Phases II and III, dated to the late Byzantine and Umayyad periods (Katsnelson 2004:265, 271–273, Fig. 60, Photo 280). Hollow lamp stems from southern Israel were also unearthed in a Byzantine-period context at Be'er Sheva' (Ustinova and Nahshoni 1994:169, Fig. 8:9); in the northern church at Rehovot-in-the-Negev, in contexts assigned to the fifth–seventh centuries CE (Patrich 1988:136–138, Pl. XIII:14–16); and in the baptismal font at Nir Gallim, dated to the fifth–sixth centuries CE (Gorin-Rosen 2002:122–123, Fig. 2:3, and see therein discussion and references to additional examples).

3. L26, B1109. Trail handle broken at its upper end and attached at its lower end to a thin wall. Color indiscernible. Dark weathering and iridescence.

4. L26, B1100. Cylindrical wick tube with a cut-off rim (D 14 mm) and a small part of the thick lamp bottom. Color indiscernible. Dark weathering and iridescence.

5. L54, B1138. Pushed-in bottom (D 45 mm) with a pontil scar on its underside. Greenish blue. Weathering and iridescence.

6. L37, B1083. Thick-walled hollow stem (D c. 15 mm), cut off at the bottom. Greenish blue. Weathering and iridescence.

*Windowpanes*

Several windowpane fragments were retrieved from the site, including a circular pane with a folded rim (Fig. 1:7) and a thick piece of either a circular or a quadrangular windowpane (L12; not illustrated).

Circular and quadrangular windowpanes were installed in both public and private buildings during the Byzantine and Umayyad periods. Circular glass panes were unearthed, for example, at Samaria-Sebaste, in the church of St. John and in the monastery in Area Db (Crowfoot 1957:420–421), and in various churches and chapels in southern Sinai (Gorin-Rosen 2000:238–242, Figs. 3, 4).

7. L54, B1148 and B1153. Circular windowpane with a folded rim (D 250 mm). Colorless with a greenish tinge. Black weathering and iridescence. Mended.

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The glass finds from the Hura monastery are typical of the sixth–seventh centuries CE, and characteristic of ecclesiastical complexes of the period. The wineglass, bottles and jugs may have been used in the church liturgy. Two types of glass lamps seem to have illuminated at least some of the monastery halls; some of these specimens were probably suspended from the ceilings. Circular, and possibly also quadrangular, glass panes appear to have covered at least some of the monastery's windows.

The glass finds from Hura attest to an active Christian community, utilizing a functioning monastery during the late sixth and seventh centuries CE. Although the glass vessels from the monastery include types that continued to be produced in the Umayyad period, they did not include glass finds which may be unequivocally dated to the eighth century CE and later. This observation reinforces the excavators' conclusion that the monastery was no longer in use in the Early Islamic period (see Varga and Talgam, this volume). A similar phenomenon was observed in a monastery unearthed on the southwestern bank of Naḥal Peḥar (Geva'ot Bar), about 20 km northwest of Hura.<sup>4</sup> Unlike these monasteries, a settlement on Naḥal Shoval, near Naḥal Peḥar,<sup>5</sup> and other sites in the northern Negev, mostly farmsteads, yielded glass finds from both the late Byzantine–Umayyad periods and the Abbasid period (Winter 2021).

<sup>4</sup> The excavations at Naḥal Peḥar (Permit Nos. A-4479/2006; A-5960/2010) were directed by Nir-Shimshon Paran (Paran 2009), on behalf of the IAA, and the glass finds were studied by the author.

<sup>5</sup> The excavation at the Naḥal Shoval site (Permit No. A-6362/2012) was directed by Nir-Shimshon Paran, on behalf of the IAA, and the glass finds were studied by the author (Winter 2021: Fig. 4).

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