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Glass Finds from the Roman-Period Burial Caves near Nein

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Excavations conducted near the village of Nein have unearthed some thirty glass vessels and two lumps of glass waste that were associated with local glass production at Nein. These vessels were discovered in several clusters within Burial Caves A, B and C, and are similar to types found in burial sites located in the vicinity of the site, as well as across a wider geographical area. The vessels date to the period spanning the late first and early third centuries CE.

Keywords: Roman glass, burial caves, Galilee, candlestick bottles, small amphoriskos, glass bracelet, bead, glass debris, local glass production

Introduction

Excavations near the village of Nein, adjacent to Alon Tabor Industrial Park (see Bisharat and Alexandre, this volume), yielded some 30 glass vessels and two lumps of glass production debris.[2] The vessels were found in a few concentrations in Burial Caves A, B and C, and were mainly retrieved from the entrance shafts, since the burial chambers were mostly not excavated. Most of the vessels were shattered, and only two vessels, from different locations, were found intact and undamaged (Fig. 1:1, 2). The glassware represents types known from burial assemblages uncovered in the vicinity of Nein, as well as over a wider geographical area in the Eastern Roman provinces. The vessels date from the late first through the early third centuries CE.

All the vessels are free-blown and made of bluish green or greenish blue glass, apart from one candlestick bottle made of greenish yellow glass (Fig. 1:2) and two fragments of colorless glass (Figs. 1:8; 2:7). The glassware is characterized by a thick layer of black silvery weathering with a partial coating of lime or sand deposits; in spots where the

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weathering was removed, traces of its damage are visible on the wall surface of the vessel. Close similarities in the fabric, the workmanship, and the state of weathering of the vessels probably indicate a common production locality.

The assemblage includes several types of bottles, an amphoriskos, a flask, a jar, beakers and jewelry—a bracelet and a bead—as well as two lumps of glass-production debris. The vessels are similar to other vessels recovered from two burial complexes excavated in the nearby sites of Ḥorbat Indur and Kafr Kama. The burial cave at Ḥorbat Indur, on the northern slopes of Giv‘at Ha-More (Barshad 2004), was plundered in antiquity but yielded glassware dating from the first–second centuries CE, with a few items also continuing into the third century CE. Since the cave was probably only used for a brief period, a date in the late first and second centuries CE was proposed (Winter 2004:24). Tomb 202 in the village of Kafr Kama, located east of Mt. Tabor (Ben-Nahum 2007), yielded glass vessels dated to the third century CE (Gorin-Rosen 2007).

Most of the vessels from Nein have parallels in the Franciscan Museum Collection in Nazareth, a collection mainly composed of glass vessels retrieved in the 1920s–1930s from burial caves in Nazareth, Bet She’an, Iksal, Ẓippori and elsewhere in the region, and partially documented in a catalogue with drawings and photographs (Bagatti 1967). Although the vessels from this collection come from unrecorded contexts, the local provenance of the finds is not disputed. Excavations of tombs subsequent to the publication of Bagatti’s catalogue have repeatedly confirmed that the glassware originated in burial contexts. Other comparable assemblages have been found in burial caves on Mt. Gilbo‘a (Gorin-Rosen 1999) and in Pardes Ha-Gedud Neighborhood, Netanya (Jackson-Tal 2004).

THE GLASSWARE

The glass artifacts found in each of the three burial caves are listed herein. Cave A yielded a small bottle (Fig. 1:1), candlestick bottles (Fig. 1:3, 4, 8), a bottle or flask rim (Fig. 2:3), an amphoriskos (Fig. 2:4), a flask (Fig. 2:6), a bead (Fig. 4:2) and a glass drop (Fig. 4:4). Cave B yielded a candlestick bottle base (Fig. 1:6), a bottle rim (Fig.1:9) and another funnel-necked bottle (Fig. 2:1). In Cave C, the southern chamber contained an intact candlestick bottle (Fig. 1:2), and the antechamber contained two candlestick bottle fragments (Fig. 1:5, 7), a bottle or jar (Fig. 2:5) and a lump of raw glass (Fig. 4:3), all found together. A bracelet (Fig. 4:1) was found inside the sarcophagus in Cave C, and a small indented bottle (Fig. 2:7) and a beaker (Fig. 3:1, 2) came from the antechamber and the nearby carved recess (see Bisharat and Alexandre, this volume: Plan 2). The glass finds are presented below typologically.

Bottles

Small Bottle (Fig. 1:1).— This item comprises a partially infolded rim and a long neck, finished with slight pinching and tooling above the join with the body. The body is small, triangular in section, with a flat thickened base that retains traces of a prominent pontil scar.

Similar bottles in the Franciscan Museum collection originated from tombs in Nazareth, Ẓippori, Iksal and Bet She'an (Bagatti 1967:225, 227, Figs. 1:26, 28; 2:40, 41, 44–46, 50), and a similar small bottle was found together with a candlestick bottle in Tomb A400 in Netanya (Jackson-Tal 2004:144–146, Fig. 12:3). The bottles from the Netanya tombs were found together with other small bottles assigned to this group (although different in size and in the proportions of the body and neck), as well as with candlestick bottles, and were classified as candlestick bottles, with comparisons in a similar group from Akeldama in Jerusalem. Such bottles were also found at Flavia Neapolis (Shekhem), one within a stone

Fig. 1. Glass bottles.

◂ **Fig. 1**

No.	Vessel	Locus	Basket	Color	Weathering	Notes
1	Small bottle	130	1144	Greenish blue	Silvery black and lime crust	Intact, signs of tooling and slight pinching between neck and body; pronounced scar with traces of glass on base
2	Candlestick bottle	141	1182	Greenish yellow	Silvery black, coated with lime encrustation on lower part of vessel	Rim party folded roughly; no scar on base
3	Candlestick bottle	126	1130	Blueish green	Silvery black and sandy and lime encrustation	Complete infolded rim, flattened with hollow fold forming a mushroom-shaped rim
4	Candlestick bottle	126	1130	Light greenish blue	Silvery black and lime encrustation	Complete, thin folded and flattened rim
5	Candlestick bottle	131	1155	Greenish blue	Silvery black and lime encrustation	Lower part of bottle with no scar on base
6	Candlestick bottle	117	1183	Blueish green	Silvery black; lime encrustation; pitting	
7	Candlestick bottle	131	1169	Light greenish blue	Silvery black	Two body fragments of a bell-shaped candlestick bottle
8	Candlestick bottle	124	1151	Colorless	Black with white patches and sandy encrustation	Two body fragments of a large-bodied bell-shaped candlestick bottle
9	Bottle	104	1162/1	Blueish green	Silvery black	Complete rim; relatively high-quality glass

coffin in Cave 2, dated to the end of the first and the second centuries CE, and another in Cave 3, dated to the second and third centuries CE (Magen 2005:270–271, Figs. 64:5; 65:2).

Candlestick Bottles (Fig. 1:2–8).— The candlestick bottles are the largest group of vessels found in the excavation. The bottles have slightly everted infolded rims, one with a narrow, roughly executed fold (Fig. 1:2), and two others with a wider fold that affords the rim a mushroom shape (Fig. 1:3, 4). The bottles exhibit a few different body forms. Bottles with a squat globular body (Fig. 1:2, 5) are very common, for example, a bottle almost identical to No. 2 from a tomb at Ḥorbat Indur (Winter 2004:23, Fig. 6:6), and another, from Tomb Y at Migdal Ha-ʻEmeq (Tatcher and Gal 2009:14*, 17*, Fig. 11:3), which date from the first to the fourth century CE. Similar bottles were also retrieved from a burial cave at Kafr Kanna (Abu-Uqsa 2002:158, 160, Fig. 8:3) and from a tomb at Capernaum (Loffreda 1984: Fig.

6:1, 2, Fig. 9:1, 2), together with plates and bowls, dated to the late first and second centuries CE. Another bottle with a squat globular body was found in a Roman tomb on Mt. Gilbo‘a (Gorin-Rosen 1999:63*, Fig. 1:5, and see therein further references to similar bottles from Samaria, a Roman tomb near Kh. Farwa and a mausoleum at the foot of Tel Rosh Ha-‘Ayin, the latter assemblage dated between the late first and the first half of the second century CE; see Eitan 1969:61–62, Fig. 12:2, 3). A candlestick bottle with a rim similar to Fig. 1:3 was found in the shaft of a burial cave previously excavated at Nein (Gorin-Rosen 2018: Fig. 20:3). Bottles with rims similar to Fig. 1:3, 4 were also found in tombs at Netanya (Jackson-Tal 2004:144–146, Figs. 14; 15:1), and in Cave 2 at Flavia Neapolis (Shekhem), the latter context dated to the end of the first and the second centuries CE (Magen 2005:270–271, Fig. 64:15–18).

The largest candlestick bottles from the present excavation have a large triangular (Fig. 1:6) or bell-shaped body (Fig. 1:7, 8), usually with a pushed-in base that forms a high kick, reducing the vessel’s capacity. A bottle of this type was found in the Roman tomb on Mt. Gilbo‘a (Gorin-Rosen 1999:63*, Fig. 1:6, and see therein further references to a tomb at Ḥuqoq and caves in the Judean Desert). A candlestick bottle with a bell-shaped body in the Franciscan Museum collection in Nazareth is described as having been found at Bet She’an in 1932 (Bagatti 1967: Fig. 2:61). Based on similar examples, this type should postdate the destruction of the Second Temple, between the last quarter of the first and the second century CE (Barag 1970:209–212, 214, Type 21-5, Pl. 46).

Bottle with Double-Folded Rim (Fig. 1:9).— Bottles and jugs with a hollow annular fold, resulting from having been folded twice—downward, upward and out—are well-known in assemblages from Israel and neighboring countries. The bottles, which have a globular, pear-shaped cylindrical or square body, date from the late first to the third century CE. They represent an especially common type in the Judean Desert caves, and assemblages from other regions dated to the time of Bar Kokhba Revolt (Barag 1963:105, Fig. 38:1-7.5). A jug with the same type of rim was found in an Early Roman-period residence at Nein (Gorin-Rosen 2022:32*–33*, Fig. 1:6).

Bottles with this type of rim, sometimes narrower, appear in tombs dated to the first century CE, for example at Kibbutz Ha-Gosherim, where the bottle has an incised decoration (Ovadiah 1999:37*, Fig. 3:4, and see therein further references to tombs at Kabri and Naḥsholim). A bottle with a similar rim and an undecorated, squat globular body, was found near Tel Qedesh in Upper Galilee, in burial Cave 2 dating from the first to the second century CE (Edelstein 2002:100*–102*, Fig. 2:4). A globular bottle with a similar rim was found in Ḥurfeish Burial Cave D, dated to the third century CE (Gorin-Rosen 2002b:162*, 164*, Fig. 12:55). A rim identical to the one found in the Nein caves, was retrieved from a refuse pit in Ashqelon, together with other Roman-period finds (Katsnelson 1999:119*–120*, Fig. 9:1). Jugs with this rim type are generally more common than bottles, for example, in tombs at Netanya and in the Cave of the Letters in the Judean Desert (Jackson-Tal 2004:146–147, Figs. 3:11; 2:15).

Bottles with Funnel Mouths (Fig. 2:1, 2).— These bottles are characterized by a wide everted rim, folded in at its edge (Fig. 2:1) or rounded (Fig. 2:2), a cylindrical neck and a squat globular body. The base of Fig. 2:1 is broken, but it is probable that its center was pushed in to stabilize the vessel when placed upright. The glass quality and workmanship of these bottles resemble those of other bottles in the Nein assemblage, indicating that they were all made in the same local workshop that produced most of the glassware found at the site.

Fig. 2. Glass bottles and other vessels.

◂ **Fig. 2**

No.	Vessel	Locus	Basket	Color	Weathering	Notes
1	Bottle	104	1162/2	Light blueish green	Black with lime encrustation; pitting	Restored from numerous fragments
2	Bottle	126	1130	Light blueish green	Silvery black; pitting	Rim, neck and shoulder; funnel-mouth with rounded rim; cylindrical neck
3	Bottle/flask	124	1151	Blueish green	Black and silvery	Fragment of upright fire-rounded rim
4	Amphoriskos	126	1130	Blueish green	Hard silvery black; pitting	
5	Jar or bottle with a very wide neck and rim	131	1169	Blueish green	Silvery black, removed; pitting	Rolled, fire-rounded rim; very thin side
6	Flask	124	1151	Blueish green	Hard silvery black; completely disintegrated; severely pitted	Prominent pontil scar with glass traces
7	Small vessel with indentations	133	1174	Colorless	Rusty black	Flower-shaped section; very thin side

The rim, neck and body of one of the funnel-mouthed bottles (Fig. 2:1) are similar to those of bottles with a small nozzle from Kafr Kama Tomb 202 (Gorin-Rosen 2007: Fig. 1:1, 2), while the body and the fashioning of the rim edge are similar to another bottle from the same tomb at Kafr Kama (Gorin-Rosen 2007: Fig. 3:1). It may be concluded that the glass quality and the manufacturing method of the Nein bottles are generally reminiscent of vessels in the assemblage from Kafr Kama Tomb 202.

Bottle or Flask with an Upright Fire-Rounded Rim (Fig. 2:3).— This small fragment could belong to different vessel types. The glass quality and the weathering point to a local production.

Other Vessels

Amphoriskos (Fig. 2:4).— A fragment of an infolded flattened rim and another comprising the upper end of a handle, which used to be attached below the rim, belong to a small amphoriskos with a cylindrical body, known from funerary assemblages dating from the first–second centuries CE. A small vessel of this type was found in a tomb at Ḥorbat Indur (Winter 2004:21, 23, Fig. 6:3, and see therein further references from an Early Roman burial cave in Netanya, a tomb in the Newe Yaraq neighborhood in Lod, a collection at the National Archaeological Museum of Aquileia, Italy, and other collections). Another

example is from the collection of the Pennsylvania Museum, acquired in Jerusalem in 1913, assigned to Nazareth and dated to the second century CE.[3]

The rim and the body fragments are reminiscent of a small jar from Netanya (Jackson-Tal 2004:145–146, Fig. 13:1).

Jar or Bottle (Fig. 2:5).— This vessel has an everted rim and a very wide cylindrical neck, of which only the upper part is preserved. The vessel can be reconstructed in several ways, the most probable being a jar or a bottle with a wide upper part and a fire-rounded rim; alternatively, it may have been a vessel with a rim folded over at the edge, a relatively rare type. An example of a vessel with a similar rim attached to a wide squat body, resembling the bodies of some candlestick bottles, was found in Burial 5 in the Mausoleum at Ascar, Flavia Neapolis (Shekhem; Magen 2005:283, 491, Fig. 71:3). The glass vessels found in this burial date from the late Hellenistic to the Late Roman period.[4] An example of a Roman wide-mouthed jar, identified as a pot, was found in the excavations at Bet She'an in the early 1930s, today in the collection of the Pennsylvania Museum.[5] Although not identical, it shows a possible reconstruction of the vessel shape.

Flask (Fig. 2:6).— The flask, of which only the lower part was preserved, has an asymmetrical squat body with a lenticular section; the sides are partially pressed in, and the base is flat with a rough pronounced pontil scar. Flasks are known from funerary assemblages of the Middle and Late Roman periods, although occurring less frequently than bottles; however, several recent studies demonstrate their more frequent occurrence. A similar flask was found in Kafr Kama Tomb 202 (Gorin-Rosen 2007:115, Fig. 2:8, and see therein further references to Ḥuqoq, 'En Ha-Shofeṭ, Qasṭra and Banias, as well as flasks from tombs in Syria and others held in collections). The flasks found in various sites in Israel, especially those from Kafr Kama, are significant for indicating that flasks were produced locally at one of the Galilean glass-manufacturing centers.

Vessel with Indentations (Fig. 2:7).— A body fragment with part of a base belongs to a small vessel embellished with indentations, two of which are preserved. Four impressions can be reconstructed around the circumference of the body. It is not possible to definitively reconstruct the complete form of the vessel, but it probably had a relatively small, narrow cylindrical body. The fragment from Nein is reminiscent of a vessel from Nazareth, now in the Franciscan Museum collection (Bagatti 1967: Fig. 1:25). A complete example of an elongated small bottle with a similar body is in the Pennsylvania Museum, originating in the

[3] https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/278700

[4] Magen mentioned that the glass vessels found in this burial are dated from the second to the fourth century CE (2005:283, Fig. 71); however, one fragment of a late Hellenistic cast bowl with three horizontal cut grooves on the inner wall below the rim (Magen 2005, Fig, 71:1) is clearly of earlier date.

[5] https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/159689

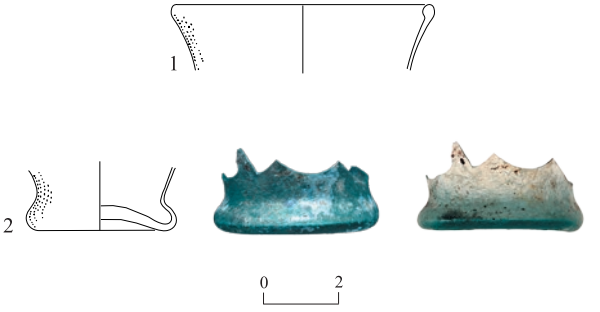

Fig. 3. Beakers.

No.	Vessel	Locus	Basket	Color	Weathering	Notes
1	Beaker?	131	1169	Blueish green		Flaring thickened rounded rim
2	Base	133	1174	Blueish green	Silvery black; pitting	Complete base with no scar

1930s' excavations at Bet She'an and dated to the Roman period.[6] A vessel decorated with indents from Ḥorbat Indur (Winter 2004:21, Fig. 6:1) probably belonged to a vessel larger than the present example, and unlike the latter, was made of colorless glass. An intact bottle with impressed decoration, the body of which is similar to the Nein fragment, was found in a tomb at Kafr Kama (Gorin-Rosen 2007:115–117, Fig. 2:9, and see therein references to a similar bottle from a second–third-century CE context at Tel Ḥalif, a winepress at Jalame, a tomb in Amman and various collections). A small bottle decorated in a similar fashion was found in a tomb at 'Ein el-Sha'ara, located east of Umm al-Faḥm and dated to the Late Roman period (Jackson-Tal 2013:59, Fig. 3:16, and see further references therein). A complete bottle with a similar body was uncovered at Dura Europos, where it was dated to the Middle Imperial period (Clairmont 1963: Pl. XVI:727).

Beaker(?) (Fig. 3:1).— This fragment comprises a slightly inverted fire-rounded rim. The angle of the rim and its workmanship are consistent with those of beakers common in the region in the second–third centuries CE. The beakers belonging to this type differ slightly in their rim angles, and some have a horizontal trail below the rim (see, for example, beakers from third-century Tomb D at Ḥurfeish; Gorin-Rosen 2002b:154*–159*, Figs. 10; 11:44–47, and see further references therein).

Base (Fig. 3:2).— This fragment was pushed in to form a slightly concave base. The body narrows toward the base, as also occurs in conical beakers with a concave base, characteristic of third-century CE tombs in Galilee, for example, Tomb D at Ḥurfeish (Gorin-Rosen 2002b:158*–159*, Fig. 11:49, and see therein further references to many other beakers from other contexts at Ḥurfeish, as well as Peqi'in, Asherat, Kafr Yasif and Pella in Jordan).

[6] https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/192900

Jewelry

Bracelet (Fig. 4:1).— This thick round bracelet with a semicircular section has no apparent seam on the exterior, where the glass cane was joined together, although the existence of a seam can be felt on the interior. It belongs to a group of bracelets that are very common in Israel ("undecorated monochrome bracelets with a semicircular section"; Spaer 1988:54–55, Type A2a, and see further references therein), dating from the third century CE onward. An identical bracelet was found in Tomb 202 at Kafr Kama (Gorin-Rosen 2007:117, Fig. 2:12, and see therein further references to a burial cave in Jordan).

Pyramid-Shaped Bead (Fig. 4:2).— The fragment is part of a pyramid-shaped bead with two parallel horizontal perforations near the base. Beads of this type have been found in burial caves in Galilee, such as an example from Ḥanita, dating from the third to the early fourth centuries CE (Barag 1978:45, Fig. 18:120, and see therein further references to Bet She'arim and Jerusalem). Two such beads were found in funerary assemblages attributed to Samaritans at Tel Barukh (Jackson-Tal 2015:110–111, Pl. 1.75:5, 6, and see further references therein).

Glass-Production Debris

Small Chunk of Raw Glass with Triangular Section (Fig. 4:3).— Chunks of this kind are the remains of raw material that was melted down in the production process of glass-made artifacts. Such chunks are usually related to local glass workshops. Traces of glass production of this kind are extremely common, occurring in numerous sites throughout the country. A complete workshop that yielded both a furnace and raw materials, including both large and small glass chunks, was unearthed at the foot of Tel Iẓṭabba in Bet She'an, and dated to the late Byzantine period (Gorin-Rosen 2000:59–60; Gorin-Rosen and Winter 2010:177–178). Remains of another workshop, dated to the end of the Late Roman period, were found at Jalame, at the foot of Mt. Carmel (Weinberg 1988). Such debris was also found in relatively small quantities at other excavations in Nein (Gorin-Rosen 2014a: Fig. 13; 2018). The debris found in one of these excavations, at the eastern part of ancient Nein, yielded two very characteristic chunks of furnace debris (Gorin-Rosen 2014a: Fig. 13:1, 2), reliable evidence for glass production activities taking place at the site. Production debris was also found in an Early Islamic context at the nearby present-day village of Sulam (Gorin-Rosen 2014b, and see therein further references to previous excavations at Sulam, which likewise yielded glass-production debris).

Drop of Cooled Melted Glass (Fig. 4:4).— This find appears to be a drop of glass collected at the end of a blowpipe or pontil that had been discarded. Debris of this kind is only found at or near sites where there was a glass workshop. Material of this nature is considered excess material, thrown at the refuse dumps of glass workshops and not intended for reuse.

The finding of this kind of industrial waste inside a tomb is unusual. Was it deliberately placed in the cave, or was it incidentally washed in from a nearby glass-working area? Glass

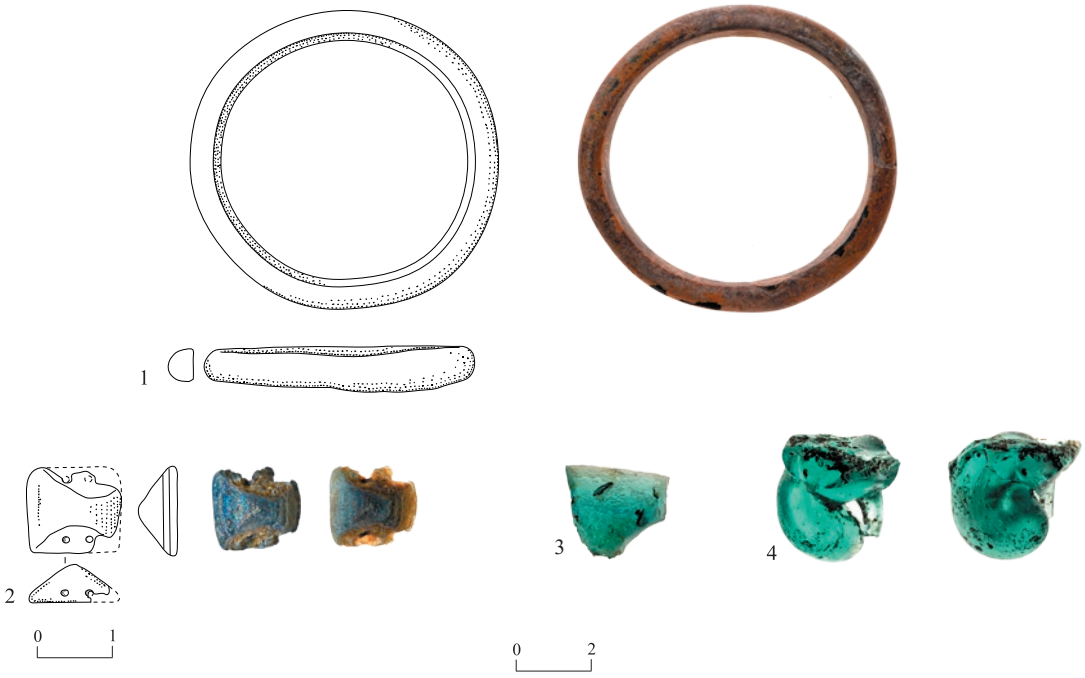

Fig. 4. Jewelry and glass-production debris.

No.	Artifact	Locus	Basket	Color	Weathering	Notes
1	Bracelet	140	1101	Dark	Enamel-like rusty crust	Indeterminate color; seam felt on interior, where bracelet cane was joined
2	Bead	124	1151	Blue	Golden weathering flaking off in layers; severely pitted	Very poorly preserved
3	Lump of raw glass	131	1169	Blueish green	Golden silvery black; pitting	Triangular cross-section
4	Drop	124	1151	Blueish green	Silvery black and sand deposits	Hot glass cooled to form a rounded drop

waste—a glass chunk and a drop—was also found in Cave 1 at Khirbat esh-Shubeika in western Upper Galilee, dated to the Late Roman–early Byzantine period; that glass waste was explained either as having been intentionally placed in the cave, or as an artifact that had washed in from the nearby settlement site (Gorin-Rosen 2002a:302–303, Fig. 8:66, 67). The latter possibility is more likely in the case of the lump of raw glass and the glass drop from the Nein caves, as neither of them appear to have an aesthetic quality that would account for their deliberate placement in the cave as grave goods. The presence of glass waste in the caves presents clear evidence of the existence of a nearby glass industry, either contemporary with the burials or later, i.e., spanning the late first and third centuries CE or later.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The disarray in which the glassware was uncovered in the burial caves at Nein, and their fragmented state, indicate that the caves were plundered in antiquity and that the finds represent only a fraction of the grave goods originally placed with the deceased. The phenomenon of cave plundering is well-known from other burial caves in the region, for example, Ḥorbat Indur (see above).

A prominent feature of the Nein glass assemblage is the fact that most of the vessels, except one beaker, are closed types—bottles, a flask and a jar—and there are no fragments of open vessels, especially bowls—one of the most common vessel forms in antiquity. If bowls had originally been placed in the cave, it is probable that their shards would have been found among the extant glass fragments. Their absence is notable when compared to other glass repertoires from Galilean burial caves of the first–fourth centuries CE, where bowls comprise the most abundant vessel type (Barag 1978:10; Gorin-Rosen 2002b:140*). Closed vessels also dominate two other Roman-period burial assemblages uncovered in the vicinity of Nein: the burial assemblage from Ḥorbat Indur, dated to the late first–second centuries CE, which included two bowls, a beaker and eight closed vessels, and the burial cave at Kafr Kama, dated to the third century CE, which contained only closed vessels. At this stage of research, it is not possible to determine whether these differences may reflect regional or chronological variability, or whether it is merely a coincidence.

The glass production debris in the Nein caves attest to a local glass production. To date, most of the evidence of glass production found in excavations at Nein dated from the late Byzantine or the Umayyad periods (Gorin-Rosen 2014a; 2018). The finds in the present excavation point to an earlier Roman-period production phase at the site. Although the evidence of glass manufacture during the Roman period is still limited, the large quantities of Roman glass vessels found in burial caves in the region and their features (Gorin-Rosen 2022:34*) indicate that it is a reasonable possibility.

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