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The Glass Finds from Naṣr ed-Din, near Tiberias

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An interesting group of 60 glass fragments was retrieved from a Roman-period Jewish rural settlement near Tiberias. The assemblage, dating mostly to the first–early second centuries CE, comprises simple, undecorated containers for every-day use, which may be clearly identified with a Jewish population in Lower Galilee.

Keywords: Lower Galilee, Roman period, between the Jewish Revolts, glass production, Jewish population

Introduction

The site of Naṣr ed-Din—a Roman-period Jewish rural settlement in the west of Tiberias—yielded a small but interesting group of glass, comprising 60 fragments.[2] Most of the finds date to the first–early second centuries CE, conforming to the main phase of the village (see Avshalom-Gorni, Leibner and Ben Nahum, this volume). A few fragments may be associated with an earlier occupation of the Late Hellenistic/Early Roman period (first century BCE–early first century CE), whereas none date clearly to the Late Roman period and several are characteristic of the Byzantine period (L153, L156, L166, L241; not illustrated). Comparable Byzantine glass vessels dated to the sixth–seventh centuries CE are known from elsewhere in Tiberias, including plain bottles and bottles decorated with a simple trail pattern, wineglasses with a hollow ring-base and bowl-shaped oil lamps with a solid beaded stem (Amitai-Preiss 2004:179–181, 183, Figs. 11.1:7, 9; 11.2:13, 15).

The Early Roman-Period Glass Assemblage

The Early Roman-period glass assemblage represents common types of local vessels, mostly blown bowls and bottles. Small fragments of two cast bowls and an inlay/implement were

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also found. The majority of the glass vessels were poorly preserved. They display mostly colorless glass with greenish or bluish hues, covered with black, silver or white weathering. The repertoire is small, consisting of simple undecorated containers for everyday use. Two comparable, richer glass assemblages from similar, neighboring Jewish sites have been recently published from Magdala (Migdal) (Jackson-Tal and Gorin-Rosen 2018) and Khirbat Wadi Ḥamam (Jackson-Tal 2018). The representative specimens discussed below are presented according to their typology (Fig. 1); all the fragments originated in well-dated floor contexts and hence, the importance of this glass assemblage.

Cast Bowl (Fig. 1:1)

Fragment No. 1 is among the earliest glass finds at the site. It belonged to a deep plain bowl, likely with a conical body. The piece has an uneven surface and traces of tooling below a rounded, ground rim, polished on the edge. Cast bowls of this type usually exhibit a grooved design on the interior. This subtype was widely spread throughout the country between the late second and the late first centuries BCE. For example, grooved counterparts of No. 1 are known from the main phase of the Magdala settlement and are dated to the mid-first century BCE–67 CE (Jackson-Tal and Gorin-Rosen 2018: Fig. 17:4–6, and see further references therein).

Plain versions similar to fragment No. 1 are rare. They include a deep cast bowl from Herodian Stratum 3 of the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem, which was described as being a "defective vessel, rather than a plain subtype" (Gorin-Rosen 2006:245, G22, and see further references therein to Dor and Ha-Gosherim). Few other plain, conical bowls were found at Gamla, a prosperous Jewish town in the Golan Heights from the late first century BCE up to 67 CE (Jackson-Tal 2009:202–203, Pl. 56.4:1, 2).

Another very small fragment of a cast bowl (not illustrated) belongs to a colorless vessel bearing remains of shallow, horizontal lines, wheel-cut on the interior. Examples of cast bowls with similar motifs, termed "linear-cut," were found in the main phase of Magdala, dated up to 67 CE (Jackson-Tal and Gorin-Rosen 2018: Fig. 18:1, 2) and in the destruction layers of 70–135 CE at Khirbat Wadi Ḥamam. The latter provide interesting archaeological evidence (unknown so far in contemporary Judean settlements) that such cast bowls continued to be used in Galilee until the beginning of the early second century CE (see Jackson-Tal 2018:467, Pl. 13.1, and further discussion therein).

Blown Bowls and Beakers (Fig. 1:2–7)

These rim and base fragments present two main versions of Early Roman free-blown bowls: one, with a flared, rounded rim and the other, with a flared, out-folded rim. Bases with a low hollow ring (Nos. 6, 7) may have belonged to a similar bowl or a beaker. Although some of the rim forms continued to appear later, in the Late Roman period, the group is dated no later than the early second century CE, based on the characteristic delicate fabric of the pieces.

Deep Bowls with a Rounded, Flared Rim (Fig. 1:2, 3)
The fragments display a thickened, rounded rim, slightly flared at the edge; No. 3 is distinguished by its nearly vertical walls. Such bowls were not widely distributed in Israel, occurring mainly in contexts of the early second century CE and later. Among the Early Roman examples are fragments from the destruction layers of 67–70 CE at Gamla (Jackson-Tal 2009: Pl. 67.4:3) and Migdal (Jackson-Tal and Gorin-Rosen 2018: Fig. 19:1), as well as from ʻEin ez-Zeituna (north of Caesarea)—a public building dated to the end of the first–second century CE (Winter 2006:79, Fig. 2:19–20, and see further references therein to refuge complexes in the Judean Desert). A fragment from an Early Roman glass assemblage at Tel Hebron provides another interesting parallel to bowl No. 3 (Jackson-Tal 2017: Fig. 12.1:6).

Bowls with Folded, Flared Rim (Fig. 1:4, 5)
Small fragment No. 4 displays a delicate, out-folded rim with a small hollow. A small part of another bowl with a similarly designed rim was found in L128, B1677, and is almost

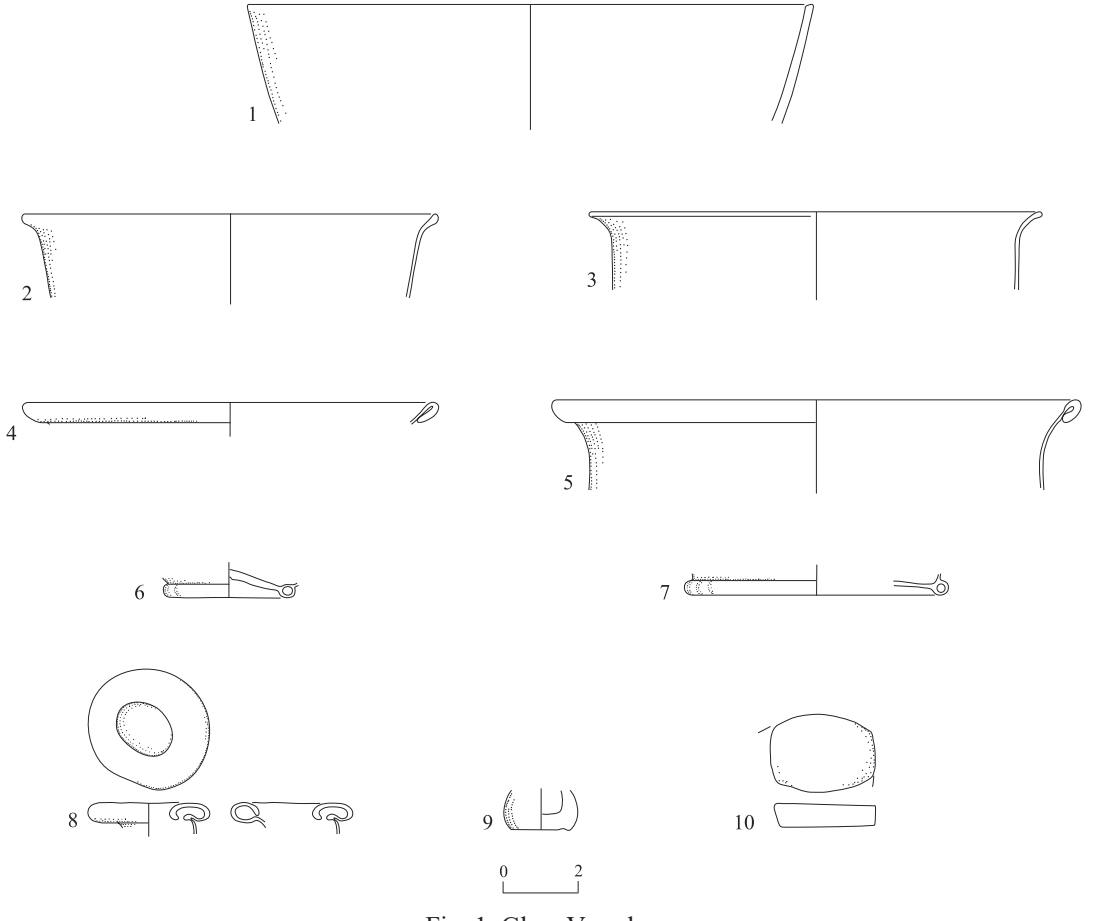

Fig. 1. Glass Vessels.

◂ **Fig. 1**

No.	Vessel	Locus	Basket	Unit	Description
1	Cast bowl	263	1894	2	Small part of rim and wall; rounded rim, thickened, ground at the edge; plain, probably conical body; uneven surface with marks of tooling beneath the rim; almost colorless with greenish tinge; weathering: black and silver patches, iridescent film, severe pitting
2	Bowl	249	1730	1	Small part of rim and wall; flaring rim, rounded, thickened at the edge; vertical wall, slightly tapering downward; color unclear; weathering: black and silver strong crust, severe pitting, soil deposit
3	Bowl	253	1808	1	Small part of rim and wall; four fragments; sharply flaring rim, rounded, thickened at the edge; thin vertical wall; almost colorless with bluish tinge; weathering: dark-yellow-silver crust, severe pitting
4	Bowl	217	1728	1	Small part of rim and beginning of wall; flaring rim, folded outward, thickened at the edge; almost colorless; weathering: black and silver crust, iridescent film, severe pitting
5	Bowl	216	1907	3	Small part of rim and beginning of wall; S-shaped rim, out-folded, thickened at the edge; color unclear; weathering: black and silver crust, severe pitting, soil deposit
6	Small bowl/ beaker	266	1923	2	Small pushed-in base with circular hollow ring; floor with central small kick; unclear pontil mark underneath; almost colorless with bluish tinge; weathering: black and silver crust underneath, iridescent film, pitting, bubbly
7	Bowl	121	1106	5	Part of pushed-in base with small circular out-splaying hollow ring
8	Bottle	210	1479	5	Rim, partly preserved; beginning of cylindrical neck; rim unevenly folded outward with large hollow, flattened at the top; colorless? weathering: strong blackening crust, silver iridescence, severe pitting, lime deposit
9	Miniature bottle	253	1945	1	Small part of base and wall; flat, thickened base; thick, convex wall; greenish-blue; weathering: light patches, iridescent film, lime deposit`
10	Inlay?	226	1619	2	Partly preserved; rounded, unevenly-shaped; greenish-blue; weathering: dark and silver crust, iridescent film, severe pitting; preserved L 28 mm; W 21 mm; Th 6 mm

colorless (diam. 17 cm; not illustrated). Bowls with similar, simple folded rims were discovered in almost every local site with an Early Roman context, including the Jewish settlement at Migdal (Jackson-Tal and Gorin-Rosen 2018: Fig. 19:3).

Fragment No. 5 displays a folded rim that is widely flared above a deep body. A group of similarly shaped bowls was found at ‘Ein ez-Zeituna, dated between the late first and

early second centuries CE (Winter 2006:77, Fig. 1:1–6, and see further references therein to burial caves at Capernaum and Akhziv).

Bases with Low Hollow Ring (Fig. 1:6, 7)
Bases of such delicate form are diagnostic of Early Roman-period bowls and beakers (see Winter 2006:77, Fig. 1:2, 9–13, and discussion therein). Fragment No. 6 may have been part of a small bowl or beaker.

Indented Beaker (not illustrated)
A small part of a concave base and a wall with scant remnants of indented decoration was retrieved from L238, B1748, and is colorless (diameter uncertain). The fragment was very poorly preserved and thus, not illustrated. Beakers with indented walls comprise a common type of Roman beakers known in the late first–early second centuries CE and onward. Among the few known examples from northern Israel is a fragment retrieved from the Roman farmstead at Naḥal Ḥaggit, in the southern Carmel (Winter 2010: Fig. 5:1, and see further references therein to necropoli at ʻAkko and Pella).

Cosmetic Bottles (Fig. 1:8, 9)

Both fragments belong to the common candlestick-type bottles appearing throughout the country with a wide chronological range, spanning the mid-first and mid-third centuries CE. This bottle type was particularly popular among Jewish populations, also in the north. A group of variously shaped bottles was found in domestic structures at Khirbat Wadi Ḥamam, dated to the Early Roman period (Jackson-Tal 2018: Pl. 13.3:19–25, and see further references therein, mainly to northern burial complexes).

Fragment No. 8 displays a flared rim, irregularly folded-in with a large hollow and flattened on the top. Candlestick-type bottles with a similar rim, identified as Early Roman-period versions, were found at Migdal (Jackson-Tal and Gorin-Rosen 2018: Fig. 20:1) and at Naḥal Ḥaggit (Winter 2010: Fig. 5.1:3, 4, and see discussion and further references therein, including to tombs at ʻArʻara, Ḥorbat Indur and Capernaum).

Fragment No. 9 belonged to a miniature rounded bottle with thick walls. Two versions of similar bottles were found within the glass assemblage from Migdal, dated to the first–early second centuries CE (Jackson-Tall and Gorin-Rosen 2018: Fig. 20:4, 5).

Roman-Period Inlay? (Fig. 1:10)

The complete shape, function and date of this enigmatic piece are unclear. It may have been an inlay, or another glass implement. The fragment is a roughly circular disc, flattened on both sides and lacking any decoration or inscription. Remains of narrow horizontal opening in the cross-section, and smoothed marks of some rough surface on one of the sides, suggest that the piece was probably tooled by folding and pressing of viscous glass.

No exact parallels were found. One possibility are the rounded, asymmetrical discs (diam. 3, 5 and 6 cm, thickness 0.6–0.8) uncovered beneath the Byzantine mosaic floor of the Ẓippori (Sepphoris) Synagogue, possibly dating to the end of the Roman period (Gorin-Rosen 2005:299, Pl. D.I:9, 10, and see further references therein to Nazareth).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Most of the glass finds discovered at the site of Naṣr ed-Din attest to a settlement dating from the Early Roman period. Their simple undecorated shapes and quality of the material suggest a local glass production. The glass assemblage consists of common Roman types, which had a wide geographical distribution in the country during the late first–early second centuries CE. The importance of this small glass group lies in the well-dated contexts of the site and its clear identification with a Jewish population. Parallels from similar contemporary sites in Lower Galilee enrich our knowledge concerning the glass repertoires of daily use in the Jewish settlements between the two Jewish Revolts.

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