*Atiqot* 55, 2007

# A Tomb from the Second Temple Period at Shoham

Alla Nagorsky

In January 2000 bulldozers exposed the remains of a rock-cut *kokh* (loculus) tomb in the new building area of the township of Shoham (Fig. 1; map ref. NIG 19517–30/6551–59; OIG 14517–30/15551–59). The Israel Antiquities Authority was notified, and a short salvage excavation was undertaken (Nagorsky 2002).[1] Badly damaged at the time of discovery, the tomb was rifled and partially looted prior to its excavation.

## The Tomb

The tomb was hewn in soft, chalky *nari* limestone, which showed signs of chisel dressing (Plan 1). It consisted of an entrance chamber (B) and a single burial chamber (A) with four rectangular *kokh*s. The roof of the entrance chamber, the western wall, and at least two-thirds of the northern and southern walls, were destroyed by the bulldozers. The width of the entrance chamber (1.65 m) was measured by following traces of the hewing visible above bedrock.

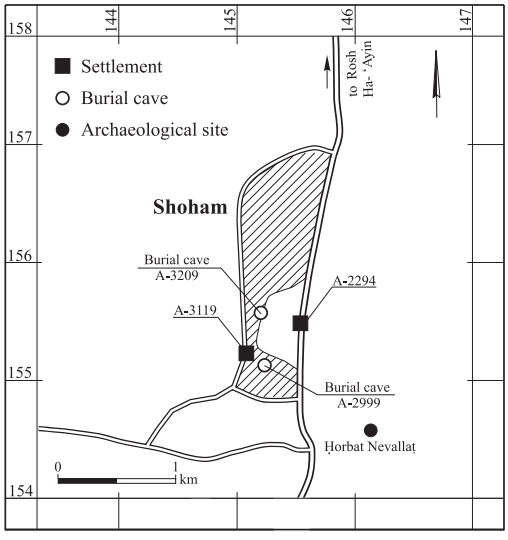



Fig. 1. Location map.

The entrance to the tomb was through the southern wall of the entrance chamber. The width of this doorway is 0.5 m; the height could not be determined. Two steps, measuring 0.65 × 0.70 m, cut just inside the doorway, led into the rectangular burial chamber (2.60 × 3.65 m). The ceiling was flat, approximately 2 m above the floor at the center.

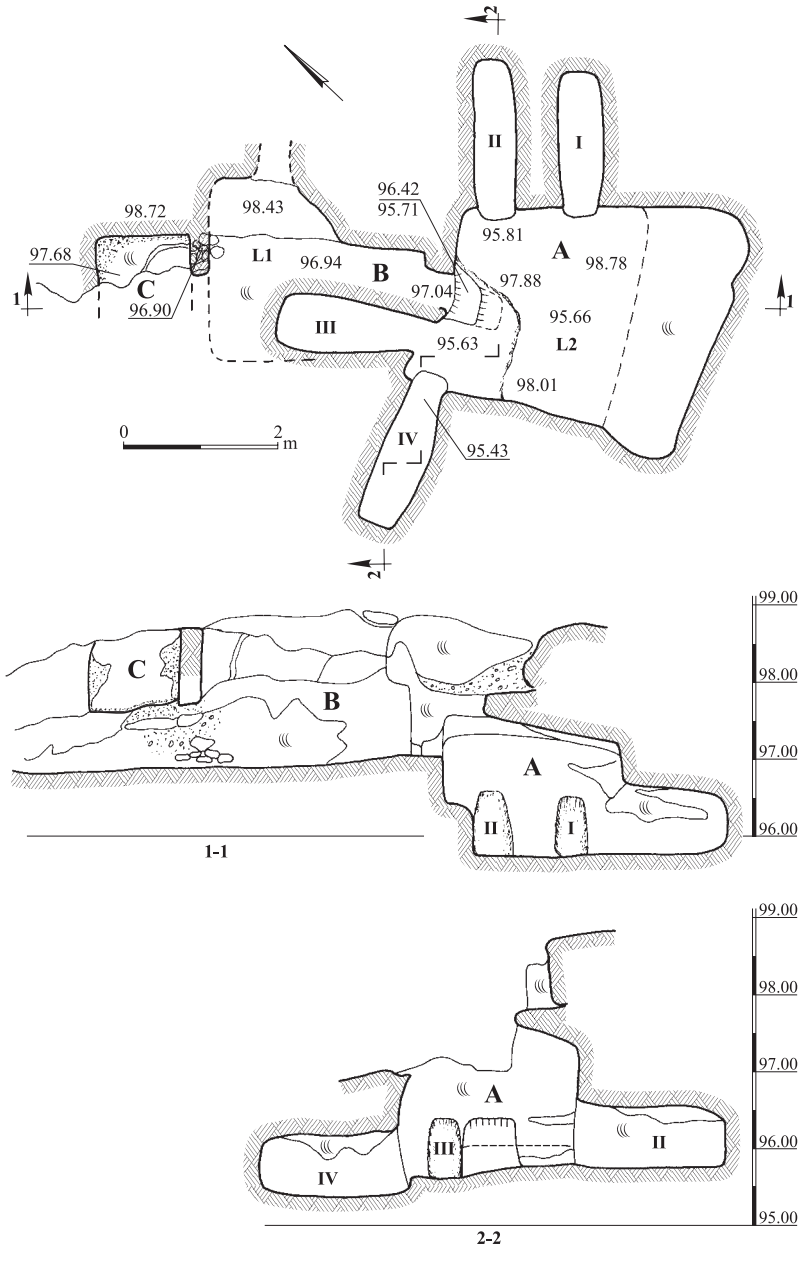
In the southeastern part of the tomb an attempt had been made to enlarge the tomb chamber, probably to provide space for more *kokh*s (Table 1). However, apparently due to the friable nature of the limestone there, the work was left incomplete. This probably explains the unusual location of *Kokh* III, which was cut (at a later stage?) between the steps and the western corner of the chamber. *Kokh*s I and II were hewn in the northeastern wall. *Kokh* IV was hewn in the western wall at a right angle to *Kokh* III, which was found sealed by a flat stone.

The floors of the *kokh*s were lower than the chamber floor and the floor of *Kokh* IV was lower toward its back wall.

The tomb contained fragments of ossuaries and human skeletal remains. In addition, a few pottery and glass fragments were found strewn throughout the entrance and central tomb chambers. Some of these may well have fallen into the burial cave when it was damaged.

### *Installation*

A rock-hewn tank-like installation (C) was exposed adjacent to the western wall of the




Plan 1. Plan and sections of the tomb.

**Table 1. *Kokh* Measurements (m)**

| *Kokh* | Length | | Width | | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Facade | Middle | Back | |
| I | 1.90 | 0.45 | 0.58 | 0.46 | Slightly vaulted ceiling |
| II | 2.10 | 0.48 | 0.54 | 0.42 | Slightly vaulted ceiling |
| III | 2.10 | 0.49 | 0.70 | 0.62 | Slightly vaulted ceiling |
| IV | 2.10 | 0.45 | 0.63 | 0.50 | Rectangular in section |

tomb's entrance chamber (Plan 1). Gray hydraulic plaster adhered to the surfaces of this 'tank', which may have functioned subsequently as the collecting vat of a wine-press. The southern part of the installation was destroyed as a result of modern quarrying activities in the area.

## THE FINDS

*Ossuaries*

Fragments of at least five ossuaries made of soft limestone were found within the *kokh*s and the tomb chamber area (Fig. 2). Six side-fragments bore incised decoration. One of them had a line frame at the base and sides (Fig. 2:2). Inside the frame were two encircled six-petalled rosettes. The lids of the ossuaries were of two common types: flat and vaulted (Fig. 2:3, 4). The bases were flat.

*Human Remains* (Table 2)

Scattered throughout the tomb, within the *kokh*s and the tomb chamber, were numerous skeletal remains in an advanced state of disintegration. The very damp condition in which they were deposited, as well as ancient and recent

**Table 2. Distribution of Skeletal Remains**

| Location | MNI | Age | Sex |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Kokh* I | - | - | - |
| *Kokh* II | 4 | 1 child (<5);<br>3 adults (>20) | 1 adult male |
| *Kokh* III | 2 | 1 infant (0–1);<br>1 adult (>20) | - |
| *Kokh* IV | 2 | 1 child (2);<br>1 adult (20–30) | |
| Central Chamber | 5 | 1 infant (<1);<br>1 child (7–8);<br>3 adults (20–30; 30–40; 40–50) | |
| *Total* | *13* | | |

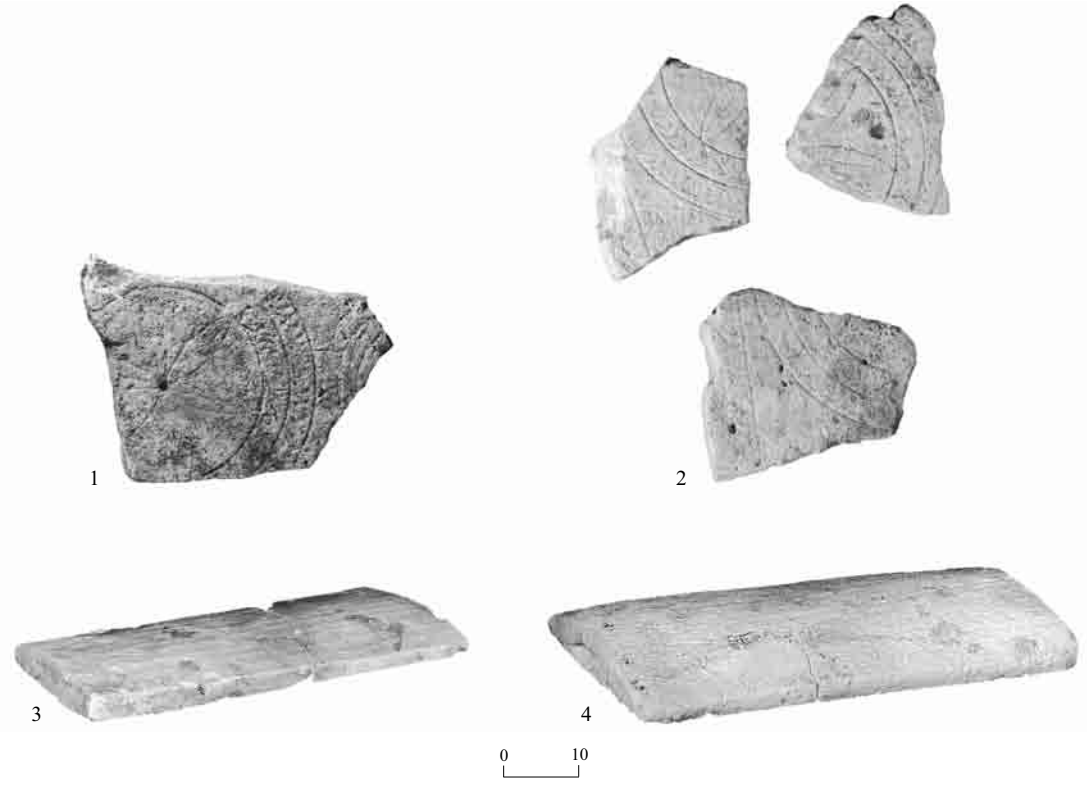



Fig. 2. Fragments of ossuaries.

disturbances by human action, precluded a detailed anthropological study of these human remains.

*Pottery* (Fig. 3)

*Jars*.— A wide-mouth jar (Fig. 3:1) with a thickened rim, cylindrical ribbed neck, a small ridge at its base and a ribbed body dates to the second–fourth centuries CE. Cf. Khirbat Ibreiktas (Kletter and Rapuano 1998: Fig. 4:3).

Six storage-jar fragments (Fig. 3:2–7) have parallels that range from the first century BCE to the fourth century CE. Figure 3:2 has a tall, convex neck narrowing to the top with a

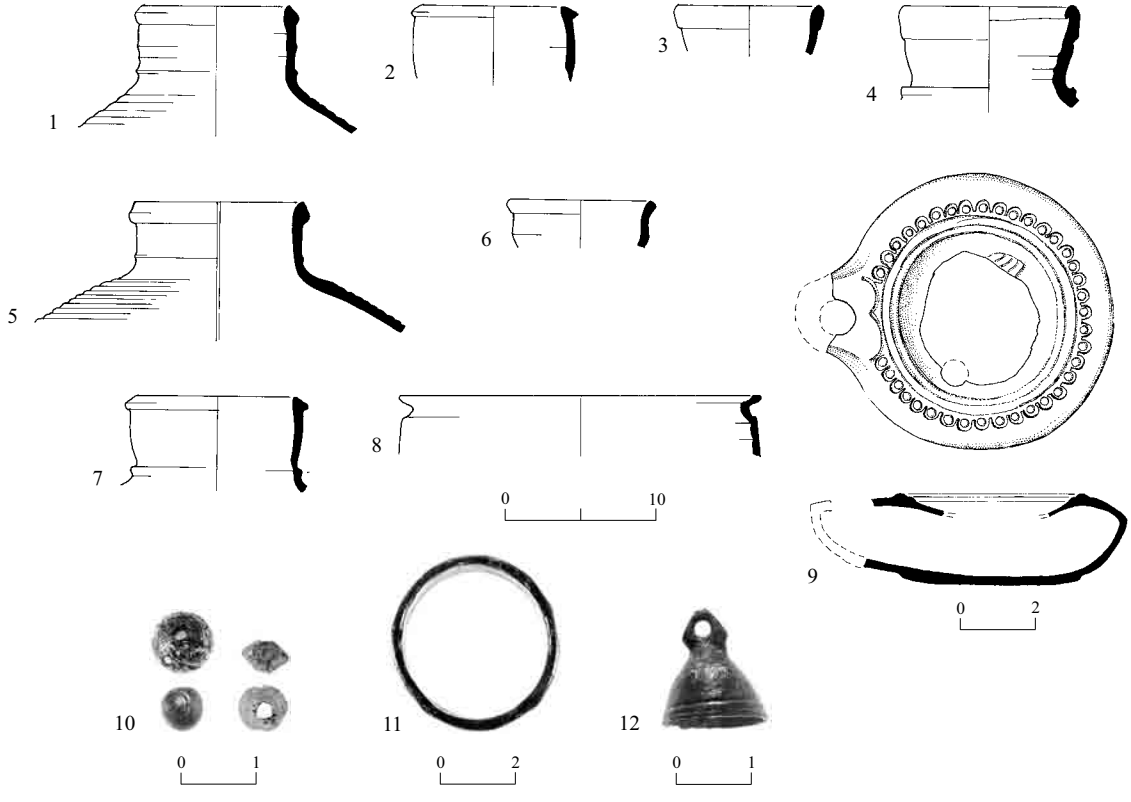



Fig. 3. Finds.

| No. | Type | Locus | Basket | Ware |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Jar | 2 | 65/1 | Coarse, brown, sandy |
| 2 | Storage jar | 2 | 65/3 | Orange |
| 3 | Storage jar | 1 | 50/4 | Coarse, orange, sandy |
| 4 | Storage jar | 1 | 50/5 | Coarse, light brown, sandy |
| 5 | Storage jar | 2 | 51/6 | Coarse, light brown, sandy |
| 6 | Storage jar | 2 | 65/8 | Light brown |
| 7 | Storage jar | 2 | 65/9 | Coarse, sandy brown |
| 8 | Cooking pot | 2 | 51/7 | Orange |
| 9 | Oil lamp | 2 | 73 | Light brown, dark brown slip |
| 10 | Beads | 1 | 61 | Blue and brown |
| 11 | Bracelet | 2 | 76 | Dark green glass |
| 12 | Bell | 3 | 74 | Bronze |

short shelf-rim. Cf. Damascus Gate, Jerusalem (Wightman 1989: Pl. 27:9), second–fourth centuries CE. Figure 3:3 has a neck widening upward and thickened rim. Cf. The North Wall, Jerusalem (Hamilton 1940: Fig. 6:6), first–second centuries CE. Jar 3:4 exhibits the characteristic fold on the inside of the rim, and a ridge at the base of the neck. The neck widens at the top with an incurved rim. Cf. Jerusalem (Magness 1993: Form 4A:2), third–fourth centuries CE.

Jars 3:5–7 are of medium height. Figure 3:5 has a straight neck and slightly incurved rim, a ridge at the base of the neck, and ribbed sloping shoulders. Cf. Tel Goded (Sagiv, Zissu and Avni 1998: Fig. 4:2), first–second centuries CE; Damascus Gate, Jerusalem (Wightman 1989: Pl. 26:13), first century BCE–first century CE; Temple Mount, Jerusalem (Mazar and Mazar 1989: Pl. 1:3), Early Roman. Figure 3:6 has an everted neck and a flared slightly thickened rim. Cf. Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem (Weksler-Bdolah 1998: Fig. 34:2), first century CE; Damascus Gate, Jerusalem (Wightman 1989: Pl. 28:10), first century BCE–first century CE. Figure 3:7, with slightly convex neck and a folded, overhanging rim that contracts inward, displays a sharp ridge at the base of the neck. Cf. Jatt, Tomb 5 (Porath, Yannai and Kasher 1999: Fig. 32:8), first–second centuries CE; Jerusalem, Giv‘at Ram (Hershkovitz 1987: A1:3).

*Cooking Pot.* A cooking pot (Fig. 3:8) with ledge-like rim and a wide ridge around it, has a short, waisted neck, and slightly carinated shoulder undercutting the rim. Cf. Tel Qiri, Stratum II (Ben-Tor and Portugali 1987: Fig. 1:14), Early Roman; Judean Shephelah (Kloner and Tepper 1987: Fig. 1:18), Early Roman.

*Lamp.* A round oil lamp (length 8.5 cm; height 2.3 cm) has a short nozzle and a rim decorated with ovoli (Fig. 3:9). There seems to be the edge of a bird’s tail on the broken disk. Cf. Kennedy 1961–1963: Type 5, Pl. XXII:507, 508; Sussman 1992:8–9; Rosenthal and Sivan 1978: Group D; Sagiv, Zissu and Avni 1998: Fig. 4:10 (first–second centuries CE).

### *The Glass Vessels*
Ruth E. Jackson-Tal

The excavation yielded 20 glass fragments, half of them non-diagnostic.[2] Five fragments, representing three vessels—a piriform bottle, a cosmetic tube, and a rounded bottle base—were selected for publication due to their good state of preservation (Fig. 4). All belong to well-known types found in the region. The vessels were free-blown of colorless and light green glass and are covered with golden, silver, and black weathering. They can be dated to the third–fourth centuries CE on the basis of typology, as well as by comparison with well dated contexts.

1. Piriform Bottle. *Kokh* IV, Basket 83. Separate rim fragment and base and wall fragment. Colorless. Severe golden and silver weathering and pitting. Rounded funnel-mouthed rim. Pear-shaped body and concave base without pontil scar. Rim diam.: 5 cm; base diam.: 4.5 cm.

Piriform bottles are known since the Early Roman period, but this type can be dated according to its distinctive shape to the Late Roman period. Similar bottles were discovered in Burial Cave 1 in Akeldama, Jerusalem, in a mixed fill of the Roman and Byzantine periods (Winter 1996:98, Fig. 5.6: 1). Others were found in Burial Cave 1 at Kabri, from the mid-third century CE–beginning of the fourth century CE (Stern and Gorin-Rosen 1997:14–17, Fig. 8:16), and in a burial cave at Kafr Yasif of the third century CE and first half of the fourth century CE (Gorin-Rosen 1997:75–76, 12*, Fig. 4:9, 10).

2. Cosmetic Tube. Locus 2, Basket 52. Separate rim fragment and wall and base fragment. Colorless with greenish tinge. Black and silver weathering. Infolded funnel-mouth rim, cylindrical neck with remains of a handle (not drawn). Elongated pear-shaped body, tubular base-ring with pontil scar (1 cm). Rim diam.: 3.5 cm, base diam.: 3.5 cm.

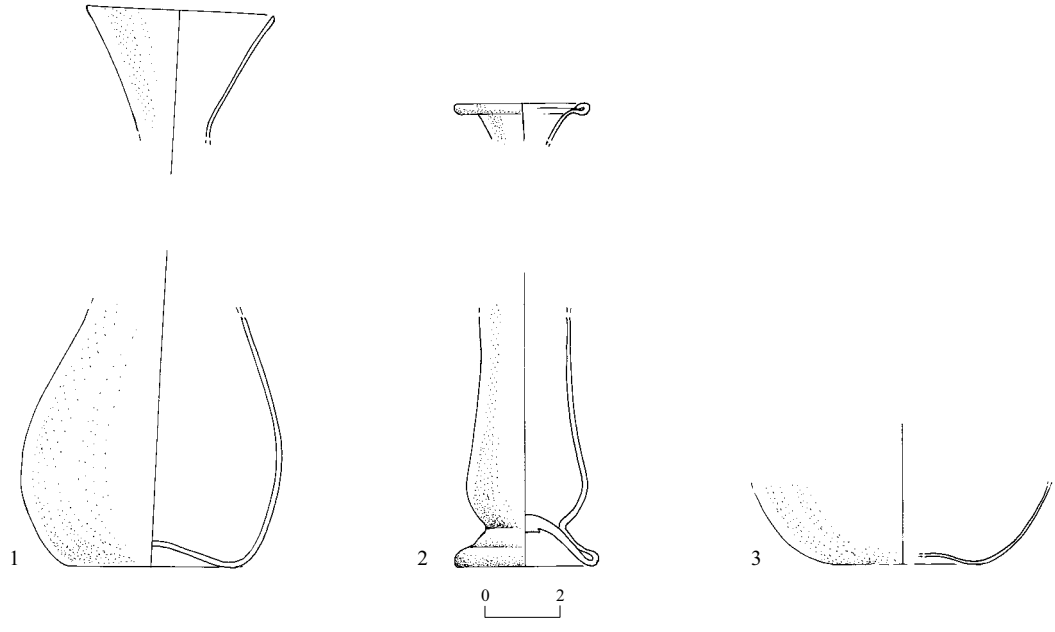



Fig. 4. Glass vessels.

Single or double cosmetic tubes are known in the country from the Late Roman and Byzantine periods. Such tubes were usually used as kohl containers, and were sometimes found with a bronze kohl stick. Similar tubes were revealed in Catacomb 12 at Bet She'arim, from the mid-third century (Barag 1976:202, Fig. 97:26), in a burial cave at Tel Ḥalif, of the second–third century CE (Gophna and Sussman 1974:74–75, Fig. 24:1–4), and in unpublished burial complexes of the Late Roman period at Ṭirat Karmel and Castra.[3]

3. Bottle Base. Locus 2, Basket 52. Base fragment. Light greenish. Some silver weathering. Concave base without pontil mark. Base diam.: 4 cm.

This base probably belongs to a rounded bottle, known in the country during the Late Roman and Byzantine periods and therefore its date is uncertain. Rounded bottles with similar bases were found in Tomb XV at Ḥanita, of the third and early fourth centuries CE (Barag 1978:23, 26–27, Figs. 12:45; 13:51), and in the painted tomb at Ashqelon, dated to the Byzantine period (Katsnelson 1999:73*–74*, Fig. 3:13–15).

*Other Finds*

A little bronze bell, four beads, and a glass bracelet are typical grave goods throughout the Roman period (Fig. 3:10–12).

## CONCLUSION

The excavated tomb is situated north of the archaeological site (see Fig. 1) excavated in the past by Dahari and 'Ad (2000; Permit No. A-2294, see Fig. 1) and subsequently by Alexander Onn and Hagit Torge (Permit No. A-3119, see Fig. 1). The ancient village existed during several historical periods, one of the most important and well-preserved stratum being that of the Second Temple period. Burial areas occupied chalky limestone hills around the village, and it is not unlikely that this tomb was used by its inhabitants.[4] The general plan of the tomb and its architecture conform to the accepted standards and layout of Jewish tombs of the first and second centuries CE (Kloner 1980:218–219, 231).

The destruction of the tomb and the intrusion of pottery and glass fragments did not allow determination of the last date of the tomb's use.

## NOTES

[1] The excavation was conducted on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority (Permit No. A-3209) for three days during February 2000, under the direction of the author. The surveyor was Avi Hajian; the field photographer, Clara Amit; the skeletal remains were examined by Yossi Nagar; the plans were drawn up by Irina Berin; the pottery drawings were by Irina Lidsky; and the glass drawings by Alina Pikovsky. The glass was studied by Ruth E. Jackson-Tal.

[2] I thank the excavator, Alla Nagorsky, for the opportunity to study the glass vessels, Alina Pikovsky for drawing the fragments, and Yael Gorin-Rosen for her helpful comments.

[3] I am grateful to the excavator of Ṭirat Karmel, Shalom Yankelevitch, and the excavators of Castra, Ze'ev Yeivin and Gerald Finkielsztejn, for allowing me to mention this unpublished information.

[4] Another rock-cut tomb was discovered by the author (Permit No. A-2999, see Fig. 1; Nagorsky 2002) south of the village (see Fig. 1).

## REFERENCES


Barag D. 1976. The Glass Vessels. In N. Avigad. *Beth She□arim* III. Jerusalem. Pp. 198–209.

Barag D. 1978. *Ḥanita, Tomb XV: A Tomb of the Third and Early Fourth Century CE* (□*Atiqot* [*ES*] 13). Jerusalem.

Ben-Tor A. and Portugali Y. 1987. *Tel Qiri, A Village in the Jezreel Valley: Report on the Archaeological Excavations 1975□1977* (Qedem 24). Jerusalem.

Dahari U. and 'Ad U. 2000. Shoham Bypass Road. *ESI* 20:56*–59*.

Gophna R. and Sussman V. 1974. A Jewish Burial Cave of the Roman Period at the Foot of Tel Halif. □*Atiqot* (*HS*) 7:69–76 (English summary, pp. 11*–12*).

Gorin-Rosen Y. 1997. A Burial Cave at Kafr Yasif. □*Atiqot* 33:71–77 (Hebrew; English summary, pp. 13*–14*).

Hamilton R.W. 1940. Excavations against the North Wall of Jerusalem, 1937–8. *QDAP* 10:1–54.

Hershkovitz M. 1987. The Pottery of the First and Second Centuries CE from Giv'at Ram. *Eretz-Israel* 19:314–325 (Hebrew; English summary, pp. 814–815).

Katsnelson N. 1999. Glass Vessels from the Painted Tomb at Migdal Ashqelon. □*Atiqot* 37:67*–82*.

Kennedy C.A. 1961–63. The Development of the Lamp in Palestine. *Berytus* 14:67–193.

Kletter R. and Rapuano Y. 1998. A Roman Well at Khirbet Ibreiktas. □*Atiqot* 35:43–59.

Kloner A. 1980. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. Ph.D. diss. The Hebrew University. Jerusalem (Hebrew).

Kloner A. and Tepper Y. 1987. *The Hiding Complexes in the Judean Shephelah*. Tel Aviv.

Magness J. 1993. *Jerusalem Ceramic Chronology: Circa 200□800 CE*. Sheffield.

Mazar E. and Mazar B. 1989. *Excavations in the South of the Temple Mount* (Qedem 29). Jerusalem.

Porath Y., Yannai E. and Kasher A. 1999. Archaeological Remains at Jatt. □*Atiqot* 37:1–78 (Hebrew; English summary, pp. 167*–171*).

Rosenthal R. and Sivan R. 1978. *Ancient Lamps in the Schloessinger Collection* (Qedem 8). Jerusalem.

Sagiv N., Zissu B. and Avni G. 1998. Tombs of the Second Temple Period at Tel Goded, Judean Foothills. □*Atiqot* 35:7*–21* (Hebrew; English summary, pp. 169–171).

Stern E. and Gorin-Rosen Y. 1997. Burial Caves near Kabri. □*Atiqot* 33:1–22 (Hebrew; English summary, pp. 7*–8*).

Sussman V. 1992. *Ornamented Jewish Oil Lamps*. Warminster.

Weksler-Bdolah S. 1998. Burial Caves and Installations of the Second Temple Period at the Har Haẓofim Observatory (Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem). □*Atiqot* 35: 23*–54* (Hebrew; English summary, pp. 161–163).

Wightman G.J. 1989. *The Damascus Gate, Jerusalem* (BAR Int. S. 519). Oxford.

Winter T. 1996. The Glass Vessels. In G. Avni and Z. Greenhut. *The Akeldama Tombs: Three Burial Caves in the Kidron Valley, Jerusalem* (IAA Reports 1). Jerusalem. Pp. 95–103.