

## POTTERY PRODUCTION AT HORBAT RODEM NEAR BET SHE'AN

KAREN COVELLO-PARAN AND DINA AVSHALOM-GORNI

### INTRODUCTION

Horbat Rodem (El-Mirdama; map ref. NIG 2477/7134; OIG 1977/2134) is located north of Tel Bet She'an and Tel Iztabba, overlooking the entire Jordan Valley (Fig. 1). The site is on the slope of a basaltic step between the Jezreel and Bet She'an Valleys and sits on brown basaltic soil. Notably, the basalt bedrock in this area is very close to the surface.

The water source of the site was most probably the nearby tributary of Nahal Harod, Qanat el-Jalud, 25 m south of the excavated area.<sup>1</sup> North of the site, there are fields suitable for agriculture and pasturage.<sup>2</sup>

Although never excavated, the site was surveyed by Nehemia Zori (1951:12; 1962:154, Site 46) who noted that the ancient occupation is characterized by three artificial mounds. Architectural elements noted by Zori include well-constructed basalt walls and signs of

stone quarrying. Zori dated the occupation to the Roman, Byzantine, and Early Islamic periods based on pottery sherds on the surface. Additional finds were slag and a fragment of a limestone sarcophagus.

The present salvage excavation took place in the easternmost area.<sup>3</sup> It revealed two occupational layers, Stratum I, dating to the Late Roman–early Byzantine periods, and Stratum II, to the Late Hellenistic–Early Roman periods.

### STRATIGRAPHY

A single square (3.0 × 6.5 m) was excavated. The architectural finds were found directly below the modern surface and protruding above it.

#### *Stratum II* (Late Hellenistic–Early Roman)

Architectural remains of a single structure are associated with this stratum (Plan 1). The architectural elements were erected on bedrock and include Walls 101 and 110, which intersect Walls 104 and 105 (Fig. 2). Wall 109, which was noted on the modern surface but not excavated, probably formed a corner with W101. An entrance at the junction of W101 and W104 was only partially preserved due to disturbance by the later Stratum I.

All the walls were constructed of basalt in the common technique of alternate courses of large stones and small flat filler stones. Wall 104 was preserved to a maximum height of four courses.

The floor of Room 102 was not preserved, however, the numerous fragments of ceramic floor tiles and small stones might have been the foundation of the floor. A well-built stone

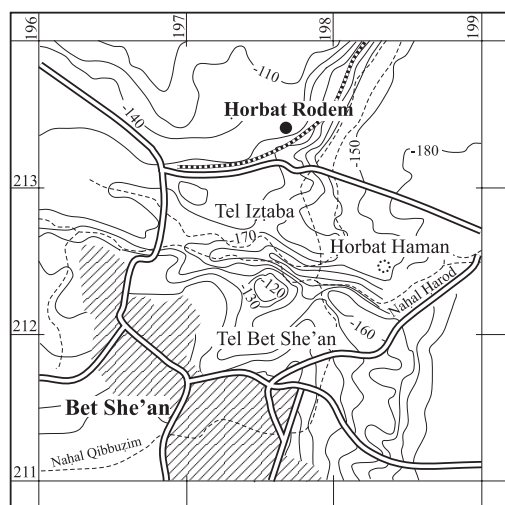
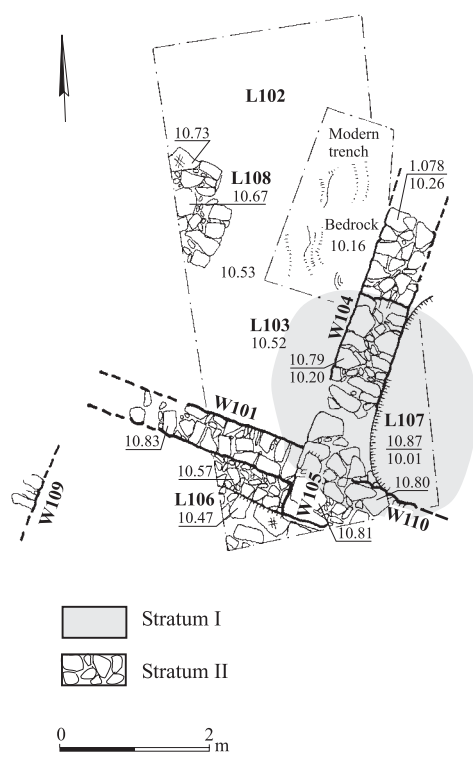


Fig. 1. Location map.



Plan 1. Plan of the excavation.

platform (L108) was only partially exposed. The function and shape of this platform is unclear. Only two courses of stones were preserved.

Floor 106, south of W101, consisted of large stone slabs, above which were smaller stones. The numerous plaster fragments in this corner suggest that these stone layers served as the foundation of a plaster floor. There were very sparse finds in L106 due to the proximity of the locus to the modern surface.

The limited area of the excavation does not permit drawing a comprehensive plan of this structure, however, it is probable that it had a central courtyard (L103) flanked by small rooms aligned along the eastern face of W104 and the southern face of W101.

*Stratum I* (Late Roman–Early Byzantine)

This stratum is identified by a single feature—a large pit that apparently cut through an earlier Stratum II floor or living surface and seems to have destroyed part of W104. It was registered as L107 east of W104 and as L103 west of

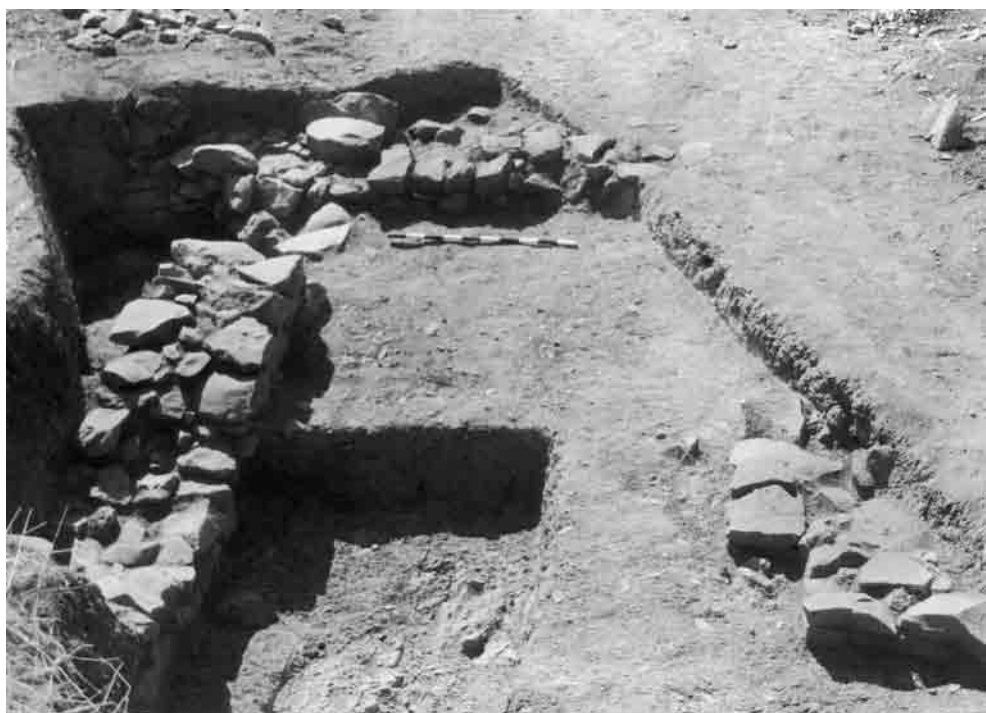


Fig. 2. General view of the excavation, looking south.

W104.<sup>4</sup> Pit 103/107 contained an extremely large quantity of pottery vessels. In addition, there were a number of pottery wasters, indicating that the pit was used to collect refuse from a potter's workshop. Although no architectural elements were exposed that could shed light on the plan of the workshop, it was clearly located within the immediate vicinity of the excavated square.

#### POTTERY

The sole finds were a large quantity of pottery sherds. The total absence of non-ceramic finds, such as animal bones or glass, should be explained by the limited excavation area and the biased sample recovered from the refuse pit (L103, L107).

The pottery assemblage presented below originated from L103 and L107. During the course of the excavation all diagnostic sherds were collected. They were later divided into typological groups and counted.<sup>5</sup> According to the pottery, the initial occupation at the site dated to the end of the Hellenistic and beginning of the Roman periods, while the potter's workshop dated to the end of the Roman and beginning of the Byzantine periods.

#### *Late Hellenistic–Early Roman Periods*

According to comparative study, three bowl types no doubt represent the earlier Stratum II occupation.

##### *Bowls*

*Fig. 3:1, 2.*— Bowls with a flat rim and a deep groove below the rim on the exterior. Lapp (1961: Type 51.1c) dates such vessels to 200 BCE–68 CE. At Herodium (Loffreda 1996: Fig. 37:1–14), they appear in Strata 1 and 2 and are dated to 90 BCE–72 CE. At Gerash (Uscatescu 1996: Fig. 38:18, 19), similar bowls are dated to 135–324 CE.

*Fig. 3:3.*— Bowls with a flat, thickened everted rim, gently splayed walls, and round base.

At Herodium (Loffreda 1996: Fig. 41:1–39), similar vessels were found in Stratum 2, and are dated to 30 BCE–72 CE.

*Fig. 3:4.*— Imported Eastern Terra Sigillata bowls with a simple rim and rounded walls. They date to the second century BCE through the first half of the first century CE (Lapp 1961: Type 253.4 A–C; Gunneweg, Perlman and Yellin 1983:86, Fig. 21:3b, 3c).

#### *Late Roman–Early Byzantine Periods*

##### *Bowls*

*Fig. 3:5, 6.*— Bowls with a rounded everted rim and a carinated wall. The bowl in Fig. 3:6 has a flat base with signs of string cutting. It appears that these bowls were produced in different sizes.

*Fig. 3:7, 8.*— Bowls with a flat rim and one (Fig. 3:7) or two (Fig. 3:8) grooves.

*Fig. 3:9.*— Open bowls with a thickened rim, decorated on the outer wall with two rows of thumb indentations. Similar vessels were found at Ḥammat Gader (Ben-Arieh 1999: Fig. II:6) and are dated to the third and fourth centuries CE.

##### *Kraters*

*Fig. 3:10.*— Kraters with a flat, thickened everted rim. The exterior side of the rim is rounded and there is a groove at the joint between the rim and the body.

*Fig. 3:11–13.*— The kraters in Fig. 3:11 and 12 have a rounded and thickened rim that extends beyond the interior and exterior walls of the vessel. The krater in Fig. 3:11 is very shallow. The outer edge of the krater in Fig. 3:13 does not have an exterior extension. Similar vessels found at Ḥammat Gader (Ben-Arieh 1999: Fig. II:11, 12) were dated to the third–fourth centuries CE.

*Fig. 3:14.*— Handmade krater with a flat triangular-profiled rim bearing two grooves.

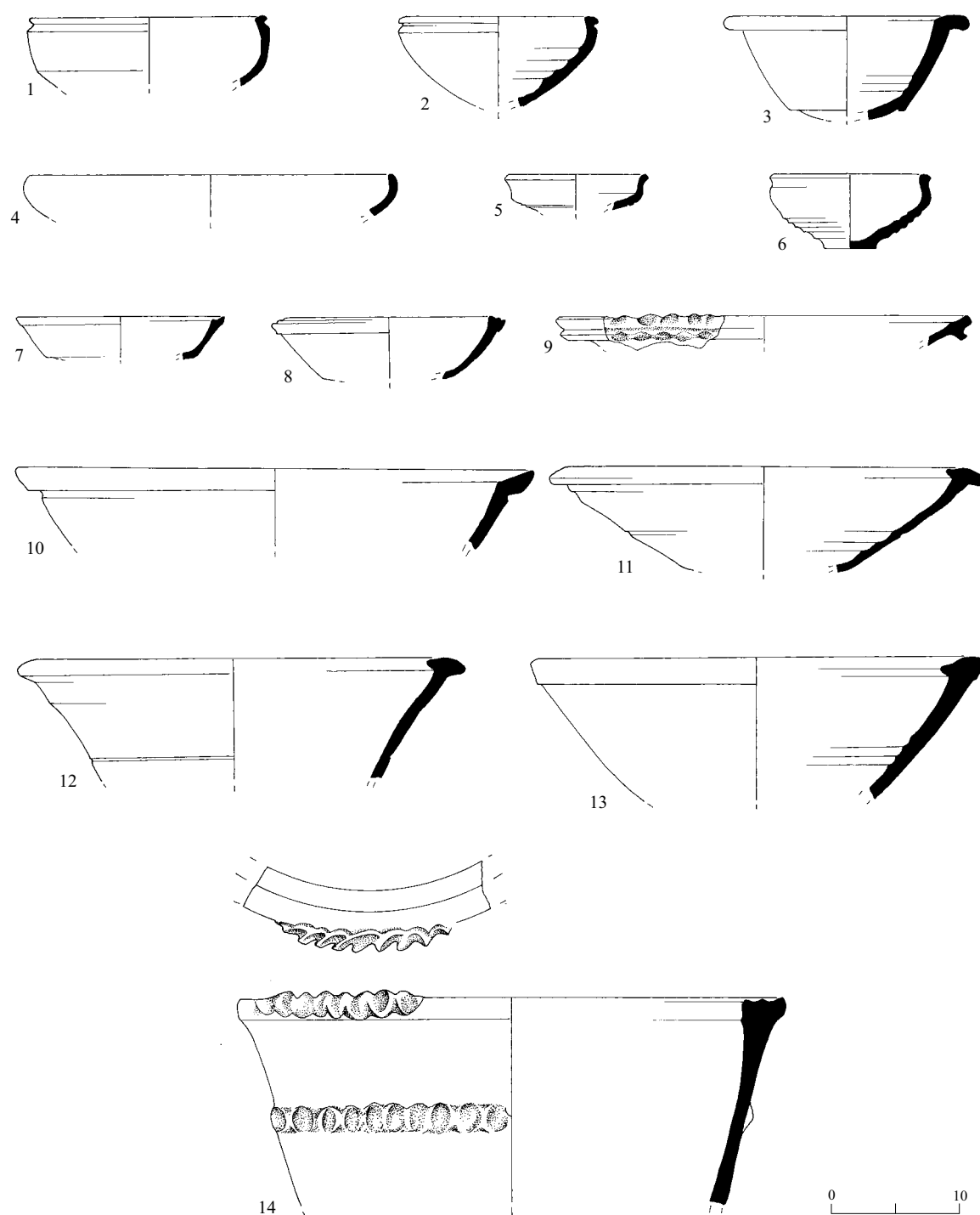


Fig. 3. Bowls and kraters from the Late Hellenistic–Early Roman (1–3) and Late Roman–early Byzantine (4–14) periods.

◀ Fig. 3

No.	Vessel	Locus	Reg. No.	Description
1	Bowl	103	1048/2	Brown with few small gray inclusions
2	Bowl	107	1041/4	Brown with few small gray inclusions
3	Bowl	103	1048/1	Brown with few small gray inclusions
4	Bowl	107	1041/6	Buff, well levigated, red-brown slip int. and ext.
5	Bowl	107	1040/2	Brown with few small and medium gray inclusions
6	Bowl	107	1039/2	Brown with few small gray inclusions
7	Bowl	107	1035/1	Brown with few small gray inclusions
8	Bowl	103	1018/3	Brown with few small gray inclusions
9	Bowl	107	1033/1	Brown with few small gray inclusions
10	Krater	107	1025/1	Brown with few small gray inclusions
11	Krater	107	1041/3	Brown with few small gray inclusions
12	Krater	107	1041/5	Brown with few small gray inclusions
13	Krater	107	1042/11	Brown with few small gray inclusions
14	Krater	103	1040/1	Brown with many gray, brown, white, and black small-to-large inclusions

The rim is decorated on the outside with thumb indentations. Such kraters vary in size, are fabricated from coarse ware, with thick walls and a flat base. They first appear in the Roman period and continue through the Byzantine period. For example, at Naẓerat (Bagatti 1969: Fig. 232:3–8) they are dated to the Roman and Byzantine periods; at Capernaum (Loffreda 1974: Fig. 14:6–16), to the end of the Roman and the Byzantine periods; and at Pella (Watson 1992: Fig. 7:52–56), to the fifth–seventh centuries CE. Similar kraters were found at Ḥammāt Gader (Ben-Arieh 1999: Pl. II:9) and in a Byzantine-period tomb at Bet She'an (Avshalom-Gorni 2000: Fig. 8:2–7).

#### *Cooking Pots*

The two examples of cooking pots are necked, with a rounded shoulder and handles that extend from the rim to the shoulder.

*Fig. 4:1.*—A rim with one wide groove. Similar pots are known at Gerash (Uscatescu 1996: Fig. 38:31) and are dated to 135–324 CE.

*Fig. 4:2.*—A rim with two narrow grooves. A single sherd of this type of pot was found.

#### *Juglets*

*Fig. 4:3.*—Juglets with a simple rim, no neck, a ribbed cylindrical body, and a thickened button base. Such vessels are known at Bet She'an from the Roman and Byzantine period strata (D. Sandhaus, pers. comm.).

*Fig. 4:4.*—Juglets with a simple rim, straight neck, and handle that extends from the ridge below the rim to the shoulder. Fernandez (1983: T8.3) dates this type of juglet to 75–300 CE.

*Fig. 4:5.*—Juglets with a rim extending slightly above a high neck and a handle that extends from the rim to the rounded shoulder. The body is cylindrical and ribbed with a rounded omphalos base.

*Fig. 4:6.*—Juglets with a flattened rim that has a deep groove and is pinched at one end. The

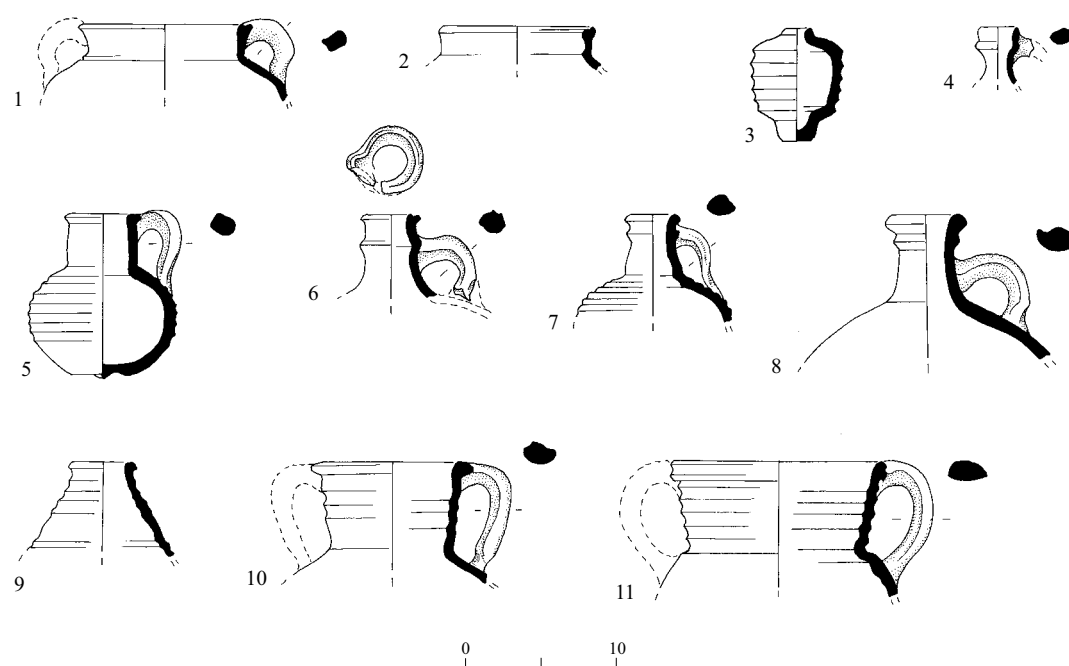


Fig. 4. Cooking pots and small storage vessels from the Late Roman–early Byzantine periods.

No.	Vessel	Locus	Reg. No.	Description
1	Cooking pot	107	1033/2	Brown with few small gray inclusions
2	Cooking pot	103	1036/1	Brown with few small gray inclusions
3	Juglet	107	1040/4	Brown with few small gray inclusions
4	Juglet	107	1037/1	Brown with small gray and medium white inclusions
5	Juglet	103	1044	Brown with few small gray inclusions
6	Juglet	107	1042/2	Brown with few small gray inclusions
7	Juglet	107	1042/20	Brown with small gray and medium white inclusions
8	Jug	107	1041/1	Brown with few small gray inclusions
9	Jug	107	1033/3	Brown with few small gray inclusions
10	Small jar	103	1018/1	Brown with few small gray inclusions
11	Small jar	107	1025/2	Brown with small gray and medium white inclusions

handle extends from a ridge on the high neck to the shoulder of the vessel. Similar juglets were found at Gerash (Uscatescu 1996: Fig. 38:26, 27) and are dated to 135–324 CE.

*Fig. 4:7.*— Juglets with a rounded rim, a ridge below the rim, and a handle that connects the ridge on the high neck to the rounded ribbed shoulder. This type of juglet is similar to Fig. 4:8 (below), but smaller.

#### Jugs

*Fig. 4:8.*— Jugs with a rounded rim, a ridge below the rim, and a handle that extends from the ridge midway down the neck to the rounded ribbed shoulder. These jugs are similar to juglets, such as Fig. 4:7 (above), but larger. Comparisons from Herodium (Bar-Nathan 1981: Fig. 1:13) were dated to the first century CE.

*Fig. 4:9.*— Jugs with a rounded everted rim, a narrow mouth, and a high sloping neck.

#### *Small Jars*

These vessels have a high ribbed neck and a wide diameter. Two handles extend from the rim to the shoulder. Two rim types were identified: a flat rim (Fig. 4:10), and an externally folded rim (Fig. 4:11)

#### *Storage Jars*

*Fig. 5:1.*— Jars with a flattened everted rim and a ridge at the base of the neck.

*Fig. 5:2.*— Jars with an externally folded rim with a triangular profile and a high neck.

Similar storage jars were found at Tel Dover (Avshalom-Gorni, in prep.) and dated to the end of the Roman period.

*Fig. 5:3.*— Jars with a thickened rim with a rectangular profile, a ridge at the base of a high neck, and rounded shoulders with close ribbing. Similar vessels were found in Stratum 2 at Herodium where they were dated to 30–72 CE (Loffreda 1996: Fig. 10:1–28), and Tel Dover where they were dated to the end of the Roman period (Avshalom-Gorni, in prep.). Similar storage jars are known from Deir 'Ein 'Abata, southeast of the Dead Sea, in Jordan, where they were dated to the fifth–eighth centuries CE (Joyner and Politis 2000: Fig. 5). The

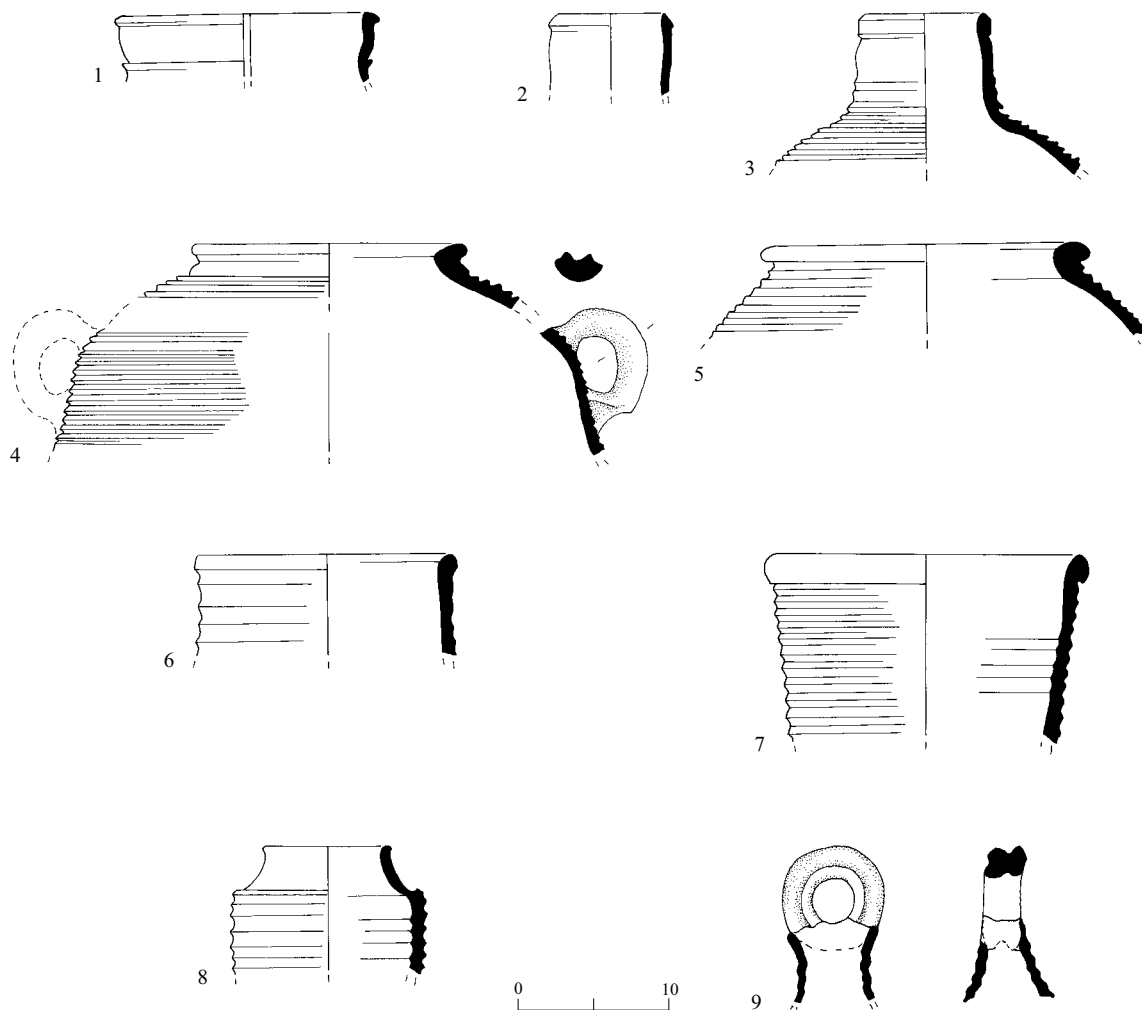


Fig. 5. Large storage vessels and miscellaneous pottery finds from the Late Roman–early Byzantine periods.

◀ Fig. 5

No.	Vessel	Locus	Reg. No.	Description
1	Storage jar	107	1041/2	Brown with small gray and medium white inclusions
2	Storage jar	103	1018/2	Brown with few small gray inclusions
3	Storage jar	107	1025/3	Brown with few small gray inclusions
4	Storage jar	107	1040/3	Brown with few small gray inclusions
5	Storage jar	107	1042/1	Brown with few small gray inclusions
6	Storage jar	107	1035/2	Brown with few small gray inclusions
7	Storage jar	107	1025/4	Brown with few small gray inclusions
8	Pipe	103	1030/1	Brown with few small gray inclusions
9	Lamp handle	107	1025/5	Brown with small gray and medium white inclusions

excavators suggested that the jars of this type at Deir 'Ein 'Abata were produced at Safhi, just a few kilometers away.

*Fig. 5:4, 5.*— Storage jars with a flat rounding-out rim and no neck. There is an additional ridge below the rim. The shoulders of the vessel have tight ribbing with two handles.

*Fig. 5:6, 7.*— Jars with a rounded rim and a tall, ribbed wide neck. Of the rim, only small sherds of this type jar were found.

#### *Ceramic Pipe*

*Fig. 5:8.*— Pipe with a simple slightly everted rim, an attached expanding neck, and a cylindrical ribbed body.

#### *Lamp Handle*

*Fig. 5:9.*— The ceramic ring with two ridges is a lamp handle and the only piece of lamp retrieved in the excavation. Similar vessels are known from Gerash (Uscatescu 1996: Fig. 17:1, Group XXIII) and are dated from the fifth to the middle of the seventh centuries CE.

### DISCUSSION

In the excavation, 1572 diagnostic sherds (rims) were collected (Table 1). The vessels attributed to the earlier Stratum II make up only 3% of the sherds. The rest of the sherds are associated with Stratum I. Most of the Stratum II vessels

are well documented in the pottery assemblages from excavations at Bet She'an where they were dated to after the earthquake of 363 CE (D. Sandhaus, pers. comm.).<sup>6</sup> Similar vessels are very rare at sites other than Ḥorbat Rodem and Bet She'an. However, since comparisons were found in third–fourth-century CE levels at Gerash (Uscatescu 1996), Ḥammat Gader (Ben-Arieh 1999) and other sites in the Galilee (Fernandez 1983), it is suggested that the potter's workshop at Ḥorbat Rodem began producing these vessel types prior to the earthquake of 363 CE.

A study of the frequency of the pottery types indicates that this workshop specialized in producing storage vessels, since they constitute 76.1% of the total assemblage (including the small amount of Stratum II pottery). The storage vessels include small vessels, such as juglets, jugs, and small jars (54.5%), and large jars (21.6%). Although bowls and kraters were also produced at the workshop, they account for only 17.6% of the assemblage. It seems that this workshop did not specialize in producing cooking vessels, since cooking pans and cooking bowls were absent while only eight sherds of cooking pots (0.5%) were found.

A recent study suggests that ancient potters marketed wares to consumers far beyond adjacent urban centers (Avshalom-Gorni and Getzov 2001). It is therefore surprising that there are few analogous vessels from sites dating to the Late Roman and early Byzantine

**Table 1. Pottery Vessel Frequencies**

Fig. No.	Vessel	L103	L107	No. of Sherds	% of Assemblage
3:1–4	Early vessels	47	-	47	3.0
3:5, 6	Bowl	8	42	50	3.2
3:7, 8	Bowl	-	14	14	0.9
3:9	Bowl	1	2	3	0.2
3:10	Krater	18	78	96	6.1
3:11–13	Krater	20	87	107	6.8
3:14	Krater	1	5	6	0.4
4:1	Cooking pot	2	5	7	0.4
4:2	Cooking pot	1	-	1	0.1
4:3	Juglet	7	31	38	2.4
4:4	Juglet	3	11	14	0.9
4:5	Juglet	3	2	5	0.3
4:6	Juglet	16	31	47	3.0
4:7	Juglet	24	70	94	6.0
4:8	Jug	120	381	501	31.8
4:9	Jug	5	15	20	1.3
4:10	Small jar	11	90	101	6.4
4:11	Small jar	25	11	36	2.3
5:1	Storage jar	4	13	17	1.1
5:2	Storage jar	-	3	3	0.2
5:3	Storage jar	87	220	307	19.5
5:4, 5	Storage jar	-	9	9	0.6
5:6, 7	Storage jar	-	4	4	0.2
5:8	Pipe	13	17	30	1.9
5:9	Lamp	-	1	1	0.1
	Various	6	8	14	0.9
	<i>Total</i>	<i>422</i>	<i>1150</i>	<i>1572</i>	<i>100.0</i>

periods outside of Bet She'an. We therefore suggest that the number of the customers in the adjacent urban center of Bet She'an was large enough to support the pottery workshop at Horbat Rodem.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The present excavation at Horbat Rodem indicates the site was settled from the Late Hellenistic–Early Roman (Stratum II) through the Late Roman–early Byzantine (Stratum I) periods. The small scale of the excavation prevents us from elaborating on the nature of

the Stratum II building. In the later Stratum I occupation, the site was the location of a pottery workshop that specialized in producing storage vessels. The pottery workshop was typically located on the outskirts of the site to prevent environmental disturbance to the local inhabitants and to conveniently access the road by which products were transported to the adjacent urban center at Bet She'an (Adan-Bayewitz 1995). The finding of slag from metal production in the earlier surface survey (Zori 1951), together with the pottery workshop, sheds light on the industrial activity of settlements in the vicinity of and interconnected with ancient Bet She'an.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Zori's review of Nahal Yizre'el and Nahal Harod tributaries (Zori 1951).

<sup>2</sup> Cattle grazed on the mounds of the site and adjacent slope throughout the excavation.

<sup>3</sup> The excavation, directed by Karen Covello-Paran on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority (Permit No. A-3324) and financed by the Israel Electric Company, was carried out during October 29–November 9, 2000, prior to the installation of an electric pylon. Additional participants were Yossi Yaakobi (administration), Vadim Essman and

Viatcheslav Pirsky (surveying), and Hagit Tahan-Rosen (drawing of finds).

<sup>4</sup> Separate locus numbers were given to the sections on either side of W104 to be able to trace and salvage information on the Stratum II floors.

<sup>5</sup> Preliminary investigation of the fabric groups was conducted by Anastasia Shapira.

<sup>6</sup> The pottery was compared to the yet-unpublished assemblages from the Bet She'an expedition directed by G. Mazor on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

## REFERENCES

- Adan-Bayewitz D. 1995. A Lamp Mould from Sepphoris and the Location of Workshops for Lamp and Common Pottery Manufacture in Northern Palestine. *JRA* 14:177–182.
- Avshalom-Gorni D. 2000. A Burial Cave of the Byzantine Period at Bet She'an. *Atiqot* 39: 49\*–60\* (Hebrew; English summary, p. 198).
- Avshalom-Gorni D. In preparation. Tel Dover: The Pottery from Stratum X.
- Avshalom-Gorni D. and Getzov N. 2001. Evidence for Production Strategies from Pottery Kiln Dumps. In I. Bordowicz and A. Faust eds. *Technology, Craft and Industry in the Land of Israel*. Ramat Gan. Pp. 16–18 (Hebrew).
- Bagatti B. 1969. *Excavations in Nazareth 1: From the Beginning till the XII Century*. Jerusalem.
- Bar-Nathan R. 1981. Pottery and Stone Vessels of the Herodian Period. In E. Netzer ed. *Greater Herodium* (Qedem 13). Jerusalem. Pp. 54–71.
- Ben-Arieh R. 1999. The Roman, Byzantine and Umayyad Pottery. In Y. Hirschfeld ed. *The Roman Baths of Hamat Gader*. Jerusalem. Pp. 347–381.
- Fernandez F.D. 1983. *Ceramica Comun Romana de la Galilea*. Jerusalem–Madrid.
- Gunnweg J., Perlman I. and Yellin J. 1983. *The Provenience, Typology and Chronology of Eastern Terra Sigillata* (Qedem 17). Jerusalem.
- Joyner L. and Politis K.D. 2000. Catering for Pilgrims: Petrographic Analysis of Late Antique Kitchenware from the Monastery of St. Lot at Deir 'Ain 'Abata, Jordan. *Internet Archaeology* 9 (November). [http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue\\_9/daa/toc.htm](http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue_9/daa/toc.htm). (accessed February 28, 2008).
- Lapp P.W. 1961. *Palestinian Ceramic Chronology, 200 B.C.–A.D. 70*. New Haven.
- Loffreda S. 1974. *Cafarnao II: La Ceramica*. Jerusalem.
- Loffreda S. 1996. *La Ceramica di Macheron e dell'Herodion (90 a.c.–35 d.c.)*. Jerusalem.
- Uscatescu A. 1996. *La Ceramica del Macellum de Gerasa (Yaras, Jordania)*. Madrid.
- Watson P. 1992. Change in Foreign and Regional Economic Links with Pella in the Seventh Century A.D.: The Ceramic Evidence. In P. Canivet and J.P. Rey-Coquais eds. *La Syrie de Byzantée à l'Islam VII–VIII Siècles*. Damascus. Pp. 232–248.
- Zori N. 1951. Nahal Yizrael. *No'm* 3:3–18 (Hebrew).
- Zori N. 1962. *The Archaeological Survey of the Beth-Shean Valley*. Jerusalem (Hebrew).