

THE COINS FROM MOSHAV HA-BONIM

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A total of eight coins were unearthed during a salvage excavation at Moshav Ha-Bonim (see 'Ad, this volume). Of these, four were identified and are included in the catalogue below. The coins are few, considering the fact that some 35 squares in three areas (A–C) were excavated.¹ This distinct paucity of coins is probably due to the limited use of metal detectors on site, rather than to actual lack of coins.

Only three of the identified coins originated in a significant archaeological context: a bronze *nummus* of Constantine I, minted in Rome in 315–316 CE (No. 2), was found in the fill near the wall of an agricultural structure, together with ceramics and glass of the Late Roman period; and two Byzantine-period coins (fourth–sixth centuries; Nos. 3, 4), from a contaminated fill over the foundation layer of a large church building from the fifth century CE.

Noteworthy is the relatively rare find of a bronze coin that was minted at the ancient port city of Dora, c. 2.5 km south of the excavation (No. 1). It is a quasi-autonomous coin—minted under Roman rule, but without the usual depiction of the emperor's portrait. The obverse shows a (common) bust of Tyche, turreted and veiled, while the reverse depicts the syncretistic goddess Tyche-Astarte with cornucopia, combining Phoenician and Roman elements of the female divinity (Meshorer 1995:360). This coin, found in the hinterland of the city, belongs to others of its kind which were unearthed in the area. These are relatively abundant—by 1994, twelve excavation seasons at the site had already yielded at least 65 coins minted locally at Dora—indicating that the coins must have been produced primarily for

the local economy.² The quantity of these coins was small compared with the massive issues of other contemporary provincial city mints, like Ascalon or Caesarea, but nevertheless surprisingly extensive.³ This distribution seems to have been related to their use by the numerous Roman military units active during the First Jewish War and its aftermath, rather than to the continuous economic importance of Dora during the first century CE (Meshorer 1995:355).⁴ It also explains better the relatively numerous finds of Dora coins in Jerusalem and along the Dead Sea coast (Qumran, 'En Gedi, Masada) where the Romans mopped up the last pockets of Jewish resistance in 70–73 CE.

CATALOGUE

1. Reg. No. 1136, L119, IAA 119982.

Autonomous, first century CE, Dora.

Obv.: Bust of Tyche r., turreted and veiled.

Rev.: [- - - ΔΘPEITΘN] Astarte facing, turreted head r., wearing long chiton and peplos, resting r. on standard, l. holding cornucopia.

Æ, 7.7 g, 195 mm.

Cf. Rosenberger 1975:33, No. 10.



2. Reg. No. 1057, L120, IAA 119893.

Constantine I, 315–316 CE, Rome.

Obv.: IMP CONSTANTINVS PF AVG Bust r., laureate, draped and cuirassed.

Rev.: SOLI INV-I-CTO COMITI Sol radiate stg.
l. raising r. hand, globe in l., chlamys across l.
shoulder. In fields: C-S; in ex.: R P
Æ, 3.75 g, 20 mm.
RIC VII:298, No. 19.

Obv.: [- -] AVR C Bust to front.

Rev.: M to l.: A/N/N/O; to r.: 4; below: B; in
ex.: NIKO

Æ, 40 *nummus*, 10.45 g., 26/28 mm.

DOC 1:325, No. 96b.1-4.

3. Reg. No. 2051, L229, IAA 119895.

Byzantine, fourth century CE.

Obv.: [- -] AVG Bust r.

Rev.: Illegible.

Æ, 1.20 g, 13 mm.

4. Reg. No. 2050, L229, IAA 119894.

Maurice Tiberius, 587/8 CE, Nicomedia.



NOTES

¹ The coins were cleaned in the IAA laboratory under the direction of Lena Kupferschmidt and were photographed by Clara Amit.

² See Stern 1994:264-267.

³ Based on information from the IAA computerized database: some 61 coins of the 71 registered coins of Dora date to the first century CE.

⁴ I am indebted to D.T. Ariel for sharing his thoughts and referring me to his research on the subject.

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