

FOUR INSCRIBED BRONZE RINGS FROM GANE ṬAL

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Four bronze rings were retrieved from the excavation at Gane Ṭal (Fig. 1; see Arbel and ‘Ad, this volume).¹ The rings were made of a copper alloy; one bears an inscription and two are decorated with simple geometric patterns. The small size of the four rings indicates that they belonged to adolescent or young-adult females. The material and simple design of the rings indicate that their owners belonged to the lower social classes. The rings appear to be mold-made and locally manufactured.

Area D1

Ring No. 1.— This ring comes from a topsoil locus, lacking a clear stratigraphic context. It is inscribed with an Arabic religious phrase. Similar rings have been attributed to a Jerusalemite workshop of bronze rings that operated between the last decades of the seventh and beginning of the eighth centuries CE (Amitai-Preiss and Wolfe 2011: Pl. 9, No. B3).



Fig. 1. Bronze rings.

No.	Context	Area	Locus	Basket	Measurements (cm)
1	Unclear	D1	1000	10098	Diam. 1.5, width 0.6
2	Mamluk layer	E3	1501	15058	Diam. 1.3; broken shank
3	Mamluk layer	E3	1501	15008	Diam. (bezel) 1.8
4	Mamluk layer	E3	1501	15002	Diam. 2.5; broken shank

¹ I thank Dr. Kate Raphael for her assistance in preparing this article.

Ring No. 1 may, therefore, date to the same period. The inscription appears in two lines on the bezel: الله/بسم 'In the name of Allah'. A ridge occurs below the bezel, where it connects to the shank. On the surviving part of the shank, next to the inscription, there is a thick inverted 'V'. Based on examples of other such rings, a similar mark must have also appeared on the opposite, unpreserved part of the shank.

Area E3

Ring Nos. 2–4 come from three different baskets in L1501, which is dated by the ceramic, glass and numismatic finds to the Mamluk period (see Arbel and 'Ad, this volume). The geometric designs displayed on Nos. 3 and 4 are similar to those known from Mamluk-period bronze coins, further indicating that the rings are of this period.

Ring No. 2.— The bezel of this ring is elliptical and is divided horizontally by a high ridged line to two segments: one segment displays two thick, closely spaced wavy lines and a groove in the middle, while the other displays a single larger wavy line and a triangle below it. Similar designs, but with shorter wavy lines, appear on two rings from Yoqne'am, although the wavy lines on those rings occurred within a rectangular central segment (Khamis 1996:229, Nos. 59, 60). One of the Yoqne'am rings (Khamis 1996: No. 60) was dated to the Early Islamic period, while the other (Khamis 1996: No. 59) was of an unclear date; the decorative features on the latter's shank are attributed to either the eleventh or twelfth–fifteenth centuries CE.

Ring No. 3.— The bezel of this ring is elliptic, and like Ring No. 2, it is segmented. In its central, horizontal triangular segment, which is bordered by incised lines, is a design of incised wavy lines.

The division to segments is also known from Mamluk-period bronze coins: the coins minted by al-Nāṣir Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad (third reign, 709–741 AH/1309–1341 CE), including a horizontal band of stripes on the right or left side (Balog 1964:157, No. 245; 158, No. 250), an undulated cable (Balog 1964:157, No. 246), or a horizontal flexed cable (Balog 1964:160, Nos. 254–255) on the left side; a coin of the subsequent Sultan al-Manṣūr Salāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad (762–764 AH/1361–1363 CE), including a central segment and a bendy of eleven pieces on the left (Balog 1964:206, No. 394); and a coin of Sha'bān II (764–778 AH/1363–1377 CE; Balog 1964:222, No. 462). Segmented designs are also found on medallions of Mamluk-period textiles and metal vessels, but these contain different designs than the ones on the rings from Gane Ṭal.

The designs on the rings vaguely resemble those adorning official heraldic blazons on Mamluk-period bronze coins, textiles and metal objects (Mayer 1933; 1937:392; Atil 1981); however, no precise parallel for the rings can be cited among these objects, and it is unclear whether their designs are heraldic as well. Another type of Mamluk-period bronze ring, displaying an amuletic design of the Arabic digits 9 and 1 in a *tête-bêche* arrangement, differs from both Nos. 2 and 3. An example of this type of ring, where the numerical design

on the bezel is repeated four times, was found in the Old City of Jerusalem, on Shone Halakhot Street; it is dated to the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries CE. This ring may represent a type of amuletic ring.²

Ring No. 4.— This specimen, in which the shank is broken, is too fragmentarily preserved to be identified.

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² The excavation was conducted in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. I would like to thank Kate Raphael, the excavator, for providing this information.

