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The Coins from the Synagogue at Ḥorbat Merot, Upper Galilee

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Introduction

A total of 1886 coins were discovered in the Merot synagogue excavations carried out in 1983–1985 and 1989 (see Damati, this volume). The 1152 identifiable coins included 310 isolated coins (Nos. 1–310); 127 coins in Foundation Deposit L29 (Nos. 311–437); 137 coins in Foundation Deposit L167 (Nos. 438–574); 96 coins in Foundation Deposit L157 (Nos. 575–670); and 482 coins in the synagogue's community treasury (*quppa*), 244 of which were gold (Nos. 671–914) and 238, copper (Nos. 915–1152).

The coins were originally identified by Arieh Kindler, who published a preliminary report of the synagogue treasury coins, without a catalogue (Kindler 1986). This report is the full publication of all 1152 identifiable coins. The coins are presented in six catalogues (Catalogues 1–6), which are appended to the online version of the article. Photographs of selected coins from these contexts appear in the figures below; they are marked by an asterisk in the text and in the catalogues.

The Isolated Coins (Catalogue 1; Fig. 1)

All the 310 isolated coins are bronze, with four exceptions: a silver *denar* of Antoninus Pius (No. 16*), a small lead flan (No. 230) and two silver *deniers* of Balian and Hugh III (Nos. 308*, 309). The coins date continuously from the Ptolemaic to the Ottoman period (Table 1).

The earliest coins support the excavators' understanding that the settlement began in the second century BCE,[1] probably during the Hasmonean period. These include a Ptolemaic coin (No. 1), six early Seleucid coins (Nos. 2–6), an autonomous pre-Colonial type from 'Akko-Ptolemais (No. 7) and three *pruṭot* of Alexander Janneus (Nos. 8, 9*, 10). The

[1] All the dates in the article and tables are CE, unless specified BCE.

Fig.1. Isolated coins.

Fig. 1. Isolated coins (cont.).

transition from the first century BCE to the first century CE is represented by a worn Nabatean coin (No. 11) and a Procuratorial coin dated to year 54 under Claudius (No. 12).

Fifteen coins from the Roman period were discovered, six of which were minted in Tyre (Nos. 18–23). The predominance of coins from this mint at sites in Upper Galilee is well-known (Bijovsky 2010:98; Syon 2015:219−220). Noteworthy is a coin of Gordian III from Tyre, depicting a male figure throwing a stone at a serpent (No. 19*). The scene

Table 1. Isolated Coins

Period	Total
Ptolemaic	1
Seleucid	6
Hasmonean	3
Nabatean	1
Roman Governors in Judea	1
Roman Imperial and Provincial (2nd–3rd c. CE)	15
Roman Imperial *antoniniani* and *folles*	4
Late Roman 1 (324–408)	167
Late Roman 2 (408–491)	30
Uncertain 4th–5th c.	57
Uncertain 5th–6th c.	1
Byzantine 6th c.	8
Arab-Byzantine 1 (647−680)	1
Umayyad post-Reform (696/697−750)	2
Crusader (1099−1291)	2
Ayyubid (1171−1250)	9
Mamluk (1250−1517)	1
Ottoman (1284−1917)	1
Total	*310*

refers to the fight between Qadmos and the serpent, guardian of Ares' well, the place chosen by this hero for the foundation of Thebes. Whilst most known specimens of this type are dated to Gallienus, those dated to Gordian III are also quite numerous (Bijovsky 1999:85–87, Appendix A). Qadmos appears on seven different types minted in Tyre, indicating his popularity as a Tyrian hero (Bijovsky 1999:79).

Another notable Roman Provincial coin found in the excavations, is a rare civic issue minted in Caesarea Paneas in 169, showing the bust of Tyche on the obverse and an inscription within a wreath on the reverse (No. 24*). This coin marks the resuming of minting activities in the city under Marcus Aurelius, and it is the largest type in a series of three denominations (Meshorer 1984–1985:40). Next are three *antoniniani* of Probus and Diocletian (Nos. 28*, 29, 30) and an early coin of Constantine I of the *Soli Invicto Comiti* type from Rome (No. 31).

In all, 254 isolated coins dating to the fourth and fifth centuries were retrieved. The coin types are conventional and do not merit special discussion. The main mints represented are the common eastern ones: Antioch, Constantinople and, to a lesser extent, Nicomedia, Cyzicus, Alexandria, Heraclea and Thessalonica. Only a few coins arrived from western mints: Rome (No. 40) and Aquilea (No. 115).

There is an increase in the number of coins toward the last quarter of the fourth century, followed by a sharp decrease or paucity during the fifth century (Table 2). This is the common picture of coin finds from sites in Israel and elsewhere in the Mediterranean (Bijovsky

Table 2. Isolated Coins from the Fourth and Fifth Centuries CE[i]

Type	Date	No. of Coins
She-wolf with twins	330–337	1
GLORIA EXERCITVS one standard	335–341	4
VN MR	341–346	3
Vota types	341–346	2
FEL TEMP REPARATIO FH3-FH4 fallen horseman	351–361	17
SPES REIPVBLICE Virtus with spear and globe	355–361	7
SECVRITAS REIPVBLICAE	364–375	13
GLORIA ROMANORVM (8)	364–375	12
Vota types	378–383	10
VICTORIA AVGG (1) two Victories	378–383	1
CONCORDIA AVGGG (1) Constantinopolis	378–383	1
VIRTVS EXERCITI (1) emperor stg., foot on captive	383–392	2
GLORIA ROMANORVM (15) emperor stg. with Victory behind	383–392	2
GLORIA ROMANORVM (17) emperor stg. with seated captive	383–392	3
SALVS REIPVBLICAE Victory dragging captive	383–395	58
CONCORDIA AVGG cross	400–402	2
VIRTVS EXERCITI (2) Victory crowning emperor	395–408	21
GLORIA ROMANORVM (21) three emperors stg.	395–408	7
GLORIA ROMANORVM two emperors stg.	408–423	8
GLORIA ROMANORVM two emperors stg. with globe	408–423	2
Cross within wreath	425–455	11
Imitative issues	First half 5th	3
Theodosius II monogram	425–450	1
Marcian monogram	450–457	3
Leo I	457–474	3
Uncertain type	4th–5th	57
Total		*254*

[i] Coin types are cited by reverse inscription, description and subtype according to *LRBC* I and II.

2000–2002), and the disparity calls for an explanation. Most scholars attribute the monetary paucity during the fifth century to imperial political and economic developments, the process starting in 395 with the division of the Roman Empire into two separate parts, the Eastern and Western Empires. The political situation exerted a direct influence on monetary currency: while the Eastern Empire remained stable and free of barbarian occupation, the Western Empire eventually fell into the hands of Germanic invaders in 476 (Grierson and Mays 1992:5). As a consequence, the volume of the imperial minting first decreased in the West (Hendy 1985:395), whilst in the East, bronze coinage continued to be struck irregularly at least until the days of Zeno, but on a reduced scale (Hendy 1985:397; Grierson and Mays 1992:11, 13). Indeed, the above-mentioned "monetary paucity" relates specifically to this unstable period.

There are two additional methodological factors to be considered, which may modify the above general presumption. Although the official minting was reduced, the demand for small change in the market remained considerable. Consequently, old coins, which would have otherwise gone out of circulation, remained in use for longer periods. This fact may explain the extensive use of fourth-century coins throughout the fifth century, and almost certainly also during the first half of the sixth century. The second factor to be considered is the commonly found large number of unidentifiable numismatic material that sometimes surpasses that of the identifiable ones. Furthermore, almost every site yielding fifth-century coins, includes a significant number of unidentifiable coins that can be attributed to that century. This is particularly true concerning fifth-century bronze coins, which are tiny and of poor manufacture (Bijovsky 2012:165–170). By the second half of the fifth century, huge issues of *nummia* spread to the markets of the Eastern Empire and ultimately led to Anastasius I's monetary reform in 498.

Based on the large number of Byzantine coins discovered in the synagogue's community treasury (*quppa*; see below), one would also expect many isolated coins from this period. This, however, is not the case, as only nine isolated Byzantine coins, all dated to the sixth century, were discovered in the excavations (Nos. 286–294).[2] They include four issues of Anastasius I: a small *follis* dated to 498–512 (No. 286), a *follis* of the large module dated to 512–518 (No. 287*) and two small-module half *folles* of the early series from 498–507 (Nos. 288*, 289). These are followed by a half *follis* of Justin II from Cyzicus dated to 575/576 (No. 290*) and a *follis* of Tiberius II struck in Constantinople in 580/581 (No. 291*). The latest Byzantine coins are two *folles* of Maurice Tiberius from Antioch dated to 588/589 (Nos. 292, 293) and a half *follis* of the same ruler dated to 587/588 (No. 294). In this respect, the latest isolated Byzantine coins are contemporary with the treasury's latest coppers (Nos. 1148–1150), but the treasury also yielded eleven gold coins of Phocas (Nos. 902–912) and a *solidus* of the Rebellion of the Heraclii in 608 (No. 913*), all dating from the beginning of the seventh century (for the treasury coins, see below). The only isolated coin attributed to the seventh century is an Arab-Byzantine 1 *follis* roughly dated to the years 647–670 (No. 295).

A few isolated Islamic coins were discovered in the excavation, including two post-reform Umayyad *fulūs* (Nos. 296, 297); nine Ayyubid coins (Nos. 298*, 299–306); a Mamluk *fals* (No. 307) and an Ottoman coin of the sixteenth century (No. 310). In addition, a Baronial denier of Balian from Sidon (No. 308*) and a denier of Hugh III from Cyprus (No. 309) were found.

[2] Also included in the Byzantine coins is a lead blank flan roughly dated to 450–550 (Coin No. 230; Bijovsky 2012:129).

The Foundation Deposits

Three foundation deposits were discovered in small probes excavated under the synagogue's stone-paved floor: L29, L167 and L157 (see Damati, this volume: Plan 2). In the preliminary report, Zvi Ilan refers to a deposit of 520 Late Roman and Early Byzantine *minimi* discovered beneath the Phase 2 synagogue stone floor (Ilan 1989:27–28, followed by Magness 2001:28), this deposit marking the beginning of Phase 2, which was dated to 500–620 CE.[3] Elsewhere, however, the excavators state that this deposit consisted of about 320 coins (Ilan and Damati 1987:127). The three foundation deposits together yielded 360 identifiable coins (Table 3).[4]

Table 3. Comparison between the Coin Types in the Isolated Coins and the Three Foundation Deposits

Coin Types and Dates	Isolated Coins	Foundation Deposits		
		L29	L167	L157
Uncertain Macedonian, 3rd c. BCE			1	
Uncertain Ptolemaic, 3rd c. BCE	1			
Seleucid	6			
Hasmonean	3			
Nabatean	1			
Autonomous, Tyre, 46/47			1	
Roman Governors in Judea	1			
Trajan, Tiberias, 99/100		1		
Roman Imperial and Provincial, 2nd–3rd c.	15			
Roman Imperial *antoniniani*, 3rd c.	4			
GLORIA EXERCITVS two standards, 330–335			2	
GLORIA EXERCITVS one standard, 335–341	4	2	2	1
She-wolf with twins, 330–337	1			
Vota types, 341–346	2			2
VICTORIAE DD AVGGQ NN, 341–346			2	
VN MR, 341–346	3	1		
FEL TEMP REPARATIO, FH, 351–354		5		

[3] The stratigraphy and chronology of the synagogue (Stratum II) is divided into four subphases: Phase 1A, the construction of the synagogue, dated to the end of the fourth century; Phase 1B, the laying of the mosaic floor, dated to mid-fifth century, based on a single isolated coin from the first half of the fifth century (No. 220*), found underneath the mosaic floor (L21); Phase 2, the laying of the stone-paved floor, dated to the beginning of the sixth century by the latest coin found in Foundation Deposit L157, a small *follis* of Anastasius I dated 507–512 (No. 670*); and Phase 3, the new synagogue building, dated by Ilan to 620–1200 (Ilan 1989:371), but dated in this final report between the 749 earthquake and the tenth century (see Damati, this volume: Table 1).

[4] The total numbers of identifiable coins in the three foundation deposits differ from those that I previously published; Coin No. 670 of Anastasius I belongs to Deposit L157, and not to Deposit L167, as noted there (Bijovsky 2012:94).

Table 3. (cont.)

Coin Types and Dates	Isolated Coins	Foundation Deposits		
		L29	L167	L157
FEL TEMP REPARATIO, FH, 351–361	17		5	2
SPES REIPVBLICE, 355–361	7	1	7	5
SECVRITAS REIPVBLICAE, 364–375	13	3	7	3
GLORIA ROMANORVM (8), 364–375	12	1	3	3
Vota types, 378–383	10		2	3
CONCORDIA AVGGG (1) Constantinopolis, 378–383	1			
VICTORIA AVGG (1) Two Victories, 378–383	1			
Vota types, 383–392		3	7	1
VICTORIA AVGG Victory 383–392		1		
VIRTVS EXERCITI (1), 383–392	2	32		1
GLORIA ROMANORVM (15), 378–392	2	47	3	
GLORIA ROMANORVM (16), 383–392			1	
SALVS REIPVBLICAE, Victory dragging captive, 383–392/395	58	6	29	36
Aelia Flacilla, SALVS REIPVBLICAE, 376–386		6	1	
GLORIA ROMANORVM (17), 383–392	3	7		
CONCORDIA AVGGG, cross, 400–402	2	2	1	1
VIRTVS EXERCITI (2), 395–408	21	3	5	5
CONCORDIA AVGG, Constantinopolis, 395–408			2	
GLORIA ROMANORVM (21), 395–408	7		9	5
GLORIA ROMANORVM (22), 410–423	8	1	1	
GLORIA ROMANORVM (23), 410–423	2			7
VICTORIA AVGG, Victory, Rome, 410–423				2
Cross within wreath, 425–450	11	1	1	6
Imitative issue, Victory, first half 5th c.	3	1	3	
Theodosius II, monogram, 425–450	1			
Marcian, monogram, 450–457	3	1	3	1
Leo I, monogram, 457–474	2			
Leo I, lion, 457–474	1		1	1
Leo I, Verina, 457–474				2
Uncertain type, 4th–5th c.	57	3	37	8
Uncertain type, 5th–6th c.	1			
Anastasius I, 491–518	3			1
Justin II, 565–578	1			
Tiberius II, 578–582	1			
Maurice Tiberius, 582–602	3			
Arab-Byzantine, c.647–670	1			
Umayyad	2			
Ayyubid	9			
Mamluk	1			
Crusader	2			
Ottoman	1			
Total	*310*	*127*	*137*	*96*

Foundation Deposit L29 (Catalogue 2; Fig. 2)

Foundation Deposit L29 (Basket No. 1254) yielded 127 identifiable coins, most of which are fourth-century *minimi*, as well as a single coin of Trajan struck in Tiberias (No. 311). The latest coin is a *nummus* of Marcian (No. 434*), dated to the mid-fifth century. The

Fig. 2. Foundation Deposit L29.

two dominant types in this assemblage are 32 coins of VIRTVS EXERCITI (1), 'Emperor holding standard and globe, spurning captive with foot' (e.g., No. 328*), and 47 coins of GLORIA ROMANORVM (15), 'Emperor on galley with a small Victory behind him', with all the eastern mints represented (e.g., No. 351). Both these types, dated to 383–392, are rare finds in excavations in Israel. Their large number here compared to the other coins in the deposit, and the fact that both types were struck contemporaneously, may suggest that they were deposited by a single individual. By contrast, this deposit included only six coins of the type SALVS REIPVBLICAE, 'Victory dragging captive' (Nos. 349, 381–384, 414), a type which usually constitutes the bulk of the coins in fifth-century hoards (Bijovsky 2012:75–76). Two other types dated to the same period are almost exclusive to Deposit L29: six coins of the Aelia Flaccilla SALVS REIPVBLICAE, 'Victory writing on shield' (Nos. 398*–403), and seven coins of the type GLORIA ROMANORVM (17), 'Emperor holding standard and shield with captive kneeling' (Nos. 407–411, 412*, 413). In respect to the types specified here, Foundation Deposit L29 shows a different typological composition from the two other foundation deposits and from the isolated coins (Table 3).

FOUNDATION DEPOSIT L167 (Catalogue 3; Fig. 3)

Foundation Deposit L167 (Basket No. 1729) consists of 137 identifiable coins, mostly fourth-century issues (Nos. 440–528; illustrated Nos. 440*, 471*, 474*, 483*, 493*, 510*), also including an extremely worn third-century BCE Macedonian coin (No. 438) and an autonomous Roman Provincial coin from Tyre (No. 439). The predominant coin type is

Fig. 3. Foundation Deposit L167.

SALVS REIPVBLICAE, 'Victory dragging captive,' with 29 coins (Nos. 473–480, 486–490, 506–521; illustrated Nos. 474*, 510*). A total of 37 coins are roughly dated to the fourth–fifth centuries; 12, to the first half of the fifth century (Nos. 529–537, 539–541; illustrated No. 530*); and 5, to the second half of the fifth century, including an illegible monogram (No. 538), three coins of Marcian (Nos. 542–544) and the latest coin of Leo I (No. 545), dated 457–474, which provides the *terminus post quem* for the deposition of the coins. In terms of coin types, L167 is a typical foundation deposit of the fifth century.

Foundation Deposit L157 (Catalogue 4; Fig. 4)

Foundation Deposit L157 (Basket No. 1693) yielded 96 identifiable *minimi*, most of which are fourth-century types. The earliest coins in the group are dated to the first half of the fourth century. The latest coins are three *minimi* of Leo I (Nos. 659–661) and a small *follis* of Anastasius I dated to the second phase of his monetary reform, namely 507–512 (No. 670*) which provides the *terminus post quem* for the deposition of the coins, the latest foundation deposit in chronological terms.[5] Regarding the coin types, with the exception of the Anastasius I coin, the deposit is a typical fifth-century assemblage. The most popular type is the SALVS REIPVBLICAE, 'Victory dragging captive', with 36 coins (Nos. 592–596, 599–606, 609–615, 619–634). Noteworthy is a group of eight coins of Honorius, depicting popular types of the first quarter of the fifth century (Nos. 638–645; illustrated No. 641*).

Fig. 4. Foundation Deposit L157.

[5] This coin dates the laying of Phase 2 synagogue stone-paved floor (see Damati, this volume: Table 1).

Summary: Foundation Deposits L29, L167 and L157

The three foundation deposits have a very similar composition: a bulk or mass of worn fourth-century *minimi* that may include, on one hand, a few obsolete coins that physically recall contemporary issues, and on the other hand, a few *nummia* dated to the second half of the fifth century. In the case of Deposits L29 and L167, this last component provides the *terminus post quem* for the deposition of the coins before the laying of the synagogue's stone-paved floor. The deposition of L157 is dated slightly later by the presence of the small *follis* of Anastasius I. Theoretically, it is quite possible that all three foundation deposits were buried in the same circumstances at the same period of time, i.e., sometime after 507–512 CE.

Accumulations or assemblages of tiny, low-value copper coins in archaeological contexts, and the custom of deliberately burying them during the construction or renovation of buildings, are quite a common phenomenon in Byzantine Palestine and the Levant. Many of these accumulations are of ritual or apotropaic character, such as foundation deposits in synagogues and other buildings, and in wishing wells.[6] Although the coins were still in circulation at the time of their deposition, they were deliberately buried without the intention of being retrieved. Other well-known examples were documented in the synagogues of Capernaum and Korazim around the Sea of Galilee, Bar'am in Upper Galilee, and Ḥorbat Kanaf and Qaṣrin in the Golan.

Nili Ahipaz studied the subject of foundation deposits in ancient synagogues and reached the conclusion that this custom was practiced during the fifth and the first half of the sixth centuries in northern Israel, predominantly in the eastern Galilee and the Golan (Ahipaz 2015:94, 97–98; Ahipaz and Leibner 2020).

THE SYNAGOGUE COMMUNITY TREASURY (Catalogues 5, 6; Figs. 5–16)

The synagogue community treasury (*quppa*) constitutes one of the most important numismatic discoveries of sixth–seventh-century coins in the Eastern Empire. Its importance lies in its chronological and typological composition, reflecting the proportions of gold and large copper denominations in circulation in the currency of ancient Palestine. The treasury was preliminarily studied by Kindler (1986), but no catalogue was published. It was discovered within a concealed niche (L93), hewn in the rock at a depth of 0.95 m, within a vaulted storeroom (L78) adjacent to exterior of the western wall of the synagogue (W504; Fig. 5; see Damati, this volume: Plan 2). A few scattered gold coins and a pair of small bronze scales[7] were discovered outside the niche (Fig. 6). These finds suggest that the place was abandoned hastily, and that an attempt was made to remove the coins

[6] This subject was comprehensively studied by the author (Bijovsky 2012:90–99, and see references in the index entry 'foundation deposits'); see also Ahipaz 2015, and Ahipaz and Leibner 2020.

[7] The scales were recovered here, and the scale pan was found elsewhere in the excavation.

Fig. 5. The niche of the Merot synagogue treasury (*quppa*), view from above.

Fig. 6. The scales found outside the niche.

from the treasury (Ilan 1995:273). The adjacent scales attest that the coins were not only counted, but also weighed.[8]

[8] Interestingly, small scales were also found together with another mixed hoard of gold and copper coins, the Dragojnovo hoard in the Balkans (Morrisson and Ivanišević 2006:129, No. 15).

The entire hoard comprises 482 gold and copper coins (Figs. 7, 8), which are discussed here together chronologically, according to rulers. They are presented in two separate catalogues for the sake of simplicity (Catalogue 5: Gold coins, Fig. 9; Catalogue 6: Copper coins, Figs. 10–16).

A few copper coins predate the Byzantine period: a *pruṭah* of Alexander Janneus (No. 915*) and nine Late Roman fourth-century coins (Nos. 916–924). Later intrusions are a gold *dinar* of the Abbasid caliph, Muhammed al-Mahdi, dated to 783 (No. 914*), and a copper Ayyubid coin of al-‘Aziz ‘Uthman, dated to 1193 (No. 1152*).

Fig. 7. The gold and copper coins in the treasury.

Fig. 8. The gold coins from the synagogue treasury.

Fig. 9. The synagogue treasury: selected gold coins.

835

837

839

854

875

900

901

902

903

904

905

906

908

913

914

0 1

Fig. 9. (cont.).

Fig. 10. The synagogue treasury: selected copper coins.

Fig. 11. The synagogue treasury: selected copper coins.

Fig. 12. The synagogue treasury: selected copper coins.

Fig. 13. The synagogue treasury: selected copper coins.

Fig. 14. The synagogue treasury: selected copper coins.

Fig. 15. The synagogue treasury: selected copper coins.

Fig. 16. The synagogue treasury: selected copper coins.

Table 4. Contents of the Community Treasury according to Ruler and Denomination

Ruler	Gold			Copper		Total coins (Gold and Copper)	Value in *solidi*
	Sol.	*Sem.*	*Trem.*	M	K		
Anastasius I			1	88	8	97	13 *solidi* + 1 *semissis*
Justin I				37	1	39	c. 6 *solidi*
Justinian I	14	12	52	54	2	134	c. 45 *solidi*
Justin II	9	8	31	24	5	77	27 *solidi*
Tiberius II	7	3	7	2		19	11 *solidi*
Maurice Tiberius	21	12	54	5	1	92	45 *solidi*
Phocas	4	2	5			11	8 *solidi* + 1 *tremissis*
Rebellion of the Heraclii	1					1	1 *solidus*
Total	56	37	150	210	17		156.3 *solidi*
	243			227		470	

The overwhelming bulk of the treasury comprises 470 Byzantine coins, ranging in date from Anastasius I to Heraclius: 243 gold (56 *solidi*, 37 *semisses* and 150 *tremisses*) and 227 copper (210 *folles* and 17 half *folles*) coins (Table 4). Almost all the coins are sixth-century types, the latest coin being a *solidus* of the Rebellion of the Heraclii dated to 610/611 (No. 913*). Based on the evidence, my understanding is that the treasury ceased to function in the early seventh century, following which its existence was almost certainly forgotten, although the synagogue continued to function (see above, n. 4). Were this not the case, more coins of a later sequence of Islamic coins dating from the eighth century onward, until c. 1202, would have been found in the *quppa*. In effect, the treasury is entirely homogeneous, and the presence of the Abbasid gold dinar (No. 914*) and the copper Ayyubid coin (No. 1152*) should be regarded as intrusive.

Interestingly, there are no *minimi* in the treasury. The chronology of the coins in the treasury begins at the same point in time that Foundation Deposit L157 ends. It can therefore be understood that, when the *quppa* was set up at the time of Anastasius I's first monetary reform, the *minimi* in the possession of the synagogue congregation were buried in the foundation deposits, as they had almost no monetary value. In other words, *minimi* were intentionally not included in the treasury due to their low value. Moreover, the *quppa* only contained coins of significant value: gold coins, bronze *folles* and a few half *folles*, and no denominations lower than the half *follis*. Nonetheless, a few obsolete coins made their way into the *quppa*: a *pruṭah* of Alexander Janneus (No. 915*), six fourth-century coins (Nos. 916–921) and three illegible fourth-century *minimi* (Nos. 922–924).

Anastasius I (491–518)

Gold coins from the fifth century, including the reign of Anastasius I are a rare find in Israel, and only 20 such coins are registered in the IAA National Coin Database. Most of them are *tremisses* coming from hoards, such as the single one found in the hoard from Merot (No. 671*; Bijovsky 2012:65–66, Table 2; 176, Table 23).

In 498, Anastasius I introduced his first monetary reform as a solution for the serious debasement of the copper coinage based on the tiny *minimi*, whose use in the payment of substantial sums of money had become problematic (Grierson 1967:287). The new system was still based on the *nummus* as the lowest denomination and consisted of a number of multiples equivalent to 40 *nummia* (*follis* M), 20 *nummia* (half *follis* K), 10 *nummia* (*decanummium* I) and 5 *nummia* (*pentanummium* E). The monetary changes were applied in two reforms based on the weight of the *follis*: the early one (subdivided into two typological series, dated 498–507 and 507–512), here referred to as 'small module' (M = 1/36 to the pound, around 9.03 g), and the second reform, here referred to as 'large module' (dated 512–518, M = 1/18 to the pound, around 18.4 g). This last standard was in use until 538/539, during the reign of Justinian I (Bijovsky 2012:176–183).

Of the 88 *folles* of Anastasius I in the treasury, 73 belong to the small module (33 to the early series and 40 to the late series; illustrated Nos. 927*, 947*–952*, 954*, 956*, 957*,

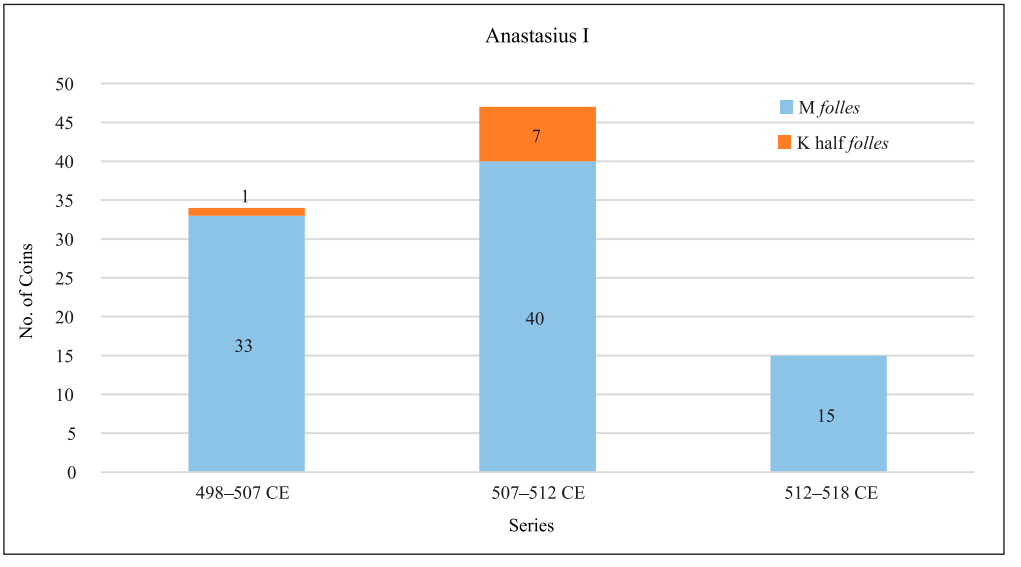

Fig. 17. Coppers of Anastasius I in the treasury according to chronological series and denominations.

960*, 968*, 981*, 985*, 987*, 990*, 992*, 997*). Another 15 *folles* belong to the second monetary reform (e.g., No. 1010*). Of the eight half *folles* of this emperor, one belongs to the first series of the first reform and seven, to the late series of the first reform (Fig. 17). In fact, *folles* of Anastasius I comprise the largest number of all the *folles* in the hoard, representing about 46.5% (Bijovsky 2012:184).

Numismatic scholars have concluded that the output of the series dated to 507–512 is larger than the one dated to 498–507 (*MIBE* 1:29). This assumption is also valid for Merot, as seen in Fig. 17. The graph also shows the absence of half *folles* of the large module. This picture also aligns with the patterns of circulation of coins of Anastasius I's second reform, when *folles* are much more common than their fractions (Bijovsky 2012:180–181). The reason for the absence of fractions is that coins of the early small module remained in circulation devalued at half their nominal value, meaning that small-module *folles* were equivalent to the half *folles* of the second monetary reform (Bijovsky 2012:180, esp. Table 24).

The Merot treasury is the third hoard in importance in Israel containing coins of Anastasius I, after the Jerusalem and Caesarea hoards (Bijovsky 2012:184). The presence of large quantities of coins of both modules suggests that they circulated together, at least for a certain period. However, the substantial presence of coins of the small module in the Merot treasury may also suggests that the influx of small module coins for circulation in the region was more substantial.

According to the IAA National Coin Database, the highest concentrations of small module coinage of Anastasius I are located in the Galilee, in the territories of Palaestina Secunda. Moreover, I suggested elsewhere that the influx of these coins into Palestine originated from Lebanon in the north, based on the large quantities of small module *folles*

discovered in excavations in Beirut (Bijovsky 2012:185–186, 196). The predominance of coins of the small module in this region may suggest that less coinage of the large module was needed to be sent or dispatched in consignments since there was no real demand to replace or withdraw the older smaller module (Bijovsky 2012:184–185; 195: Map 5).

This idea is reinforced, in my opinion, by the use of punchmarking. This very unusual practice was confined to coins of the small module of Anastasius I, especially the *folles*. The majority of punchmarks were applied on the reverse, most probably expressing a change in the value of the coin by the same emperor who struck the host coins. Many coins bear more than one punchmark (e.g., No. 951*). They are of simple design based on basic shapes such as circles, crescents, stars, squares and crosses. The punchmarks were used to mark revalidation. They were stamped after the introduction of the large module of Anastasius I to indicate the new value of the old coins (Bijovsky 2012:189–197). Of the 73 small-module *folles* in the Merot treasury, 22 bear punchmarks, and five of the eight small half *folles* were punchmarked (Nos. 1014*, 1016*, 1019*).[9] These figures suggest the intensive use of this practice, but if so, why were not all coins of the small module stamped with punchmarks? One answer might be that punchmarks were applied during a short transitional period until enough coins of the large module entered circulation. Once the population was accustomed to the new currency, revalidation by punchmarking was no longer necessary (Bijovsky 2012:193).

On a geographical level, it is noteworthy that most of the coins of Anastasius I with punchmarks found in Israel, come from the Galilee (Bijovsky 2012:195: Map 5).

Justin I (518–527)

A total of 41 coins of this emperor were discovered in the treasury: 1 gold *semissis*, 39 *folles* and 1 half *follis* (Fig. 18). The *semissis* is not only a unique gold coin of this emperor in the Merot treasury but also the only one registered in the IAA National Coin Database (Bijovsky 2012:197–198). In general, very few gold coins of this emperor have been found in Israel (Bijovsky 2012:198: Table 27).

In all, 30 of the 39 *folles* of Justin I were minted in Constantinople, 2 were struck in Nicomedia, 1 in Cyzicus and 1 in Antioch. The *follis* from Cyzicus (No. 1054*) is noteworthy, as it belongs to an unusual dated series bearing the exergue inscription INSΔ for *indictionis*, namely 525/526, and the mint letters K-Y flanking the **M** (*MIBE* 1:102, Nos. 53, 54; Bates 1968:68–73).

Only one half *follis* minted in Constantinople was identified (No. 1058*). The picture revealed by the coins of Justin I in the treasury complies with the general patterns of circulation of coins of this emperor in Israel, with a clear predominance of the *follis* (Bijovsky 2012:203).

[9] The quantities previously published in Bijovsky 2012:193 were not exact.

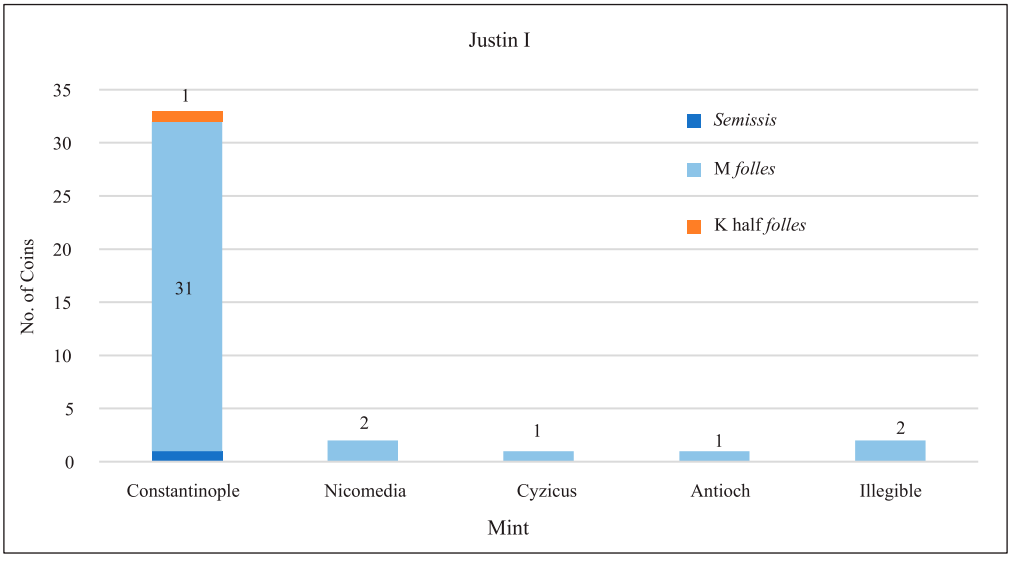

Fig. 18. Coins of Justin I in the treasury, by mint and denominations.

Justinian I (527–565)

The coins of this emperor show a dramatic increase in the number of both gold and base metal coins: 78 gold and 56 copper coins. Figure 19 displays the breakdown of the coins according to mint and denomination, presenting a clear majority of coins from Constantinople, while other mints, such as Thessalonica and Carthage, make their appearance for the first time in small numbers.

All 14 *solidi* were minted in Constantinople (e.g., No. 673*) and belong to the later type of *solidus* struck by this emperor and dated to 542–565 (*MIBE* 1:112, No. 7). The reverse of this type depicts an angel holding a long staff surmounted by a christogram. Of the 15 *semisses* registered in the IAA National Coin Database, 12 come from the Merot treasury (Bijovsky 2012:212) and 11 were struck in Constantinople and dated based on the direction of the ₽ symbol on the reverse, inverted in 552 (e.g., Nos. 688*, 693*). *Semissis* No. 698* seems to be a unique specimen, attributed to the mint of Thessalonica, based on stylistic considerations (*MIBE* 1:212). The 52 *tremisses* prevail as the most numerous denomination (e.g., Nos. 699*, 716*).

The 54 copper coins of Justinian I in the hoard comprise one of the largest groups in the treasury (e.g., Nos. 1061*, 1067*, 1070*, 1082*, 1084* 1085*, 1086*, 1088*, 1093*, 1098*, 1100*, 1104*, 1110*, 1112*, 1113*). Also noteworthy is that despite the fact that the *nummia* of Justinian I were so popular in the local currency in circulation, not a single specimen was found in the treasury. Only *folles* and two half *folles* were inserted into the *quppa*, i.e., only copper coins of the largest denominations were retained.

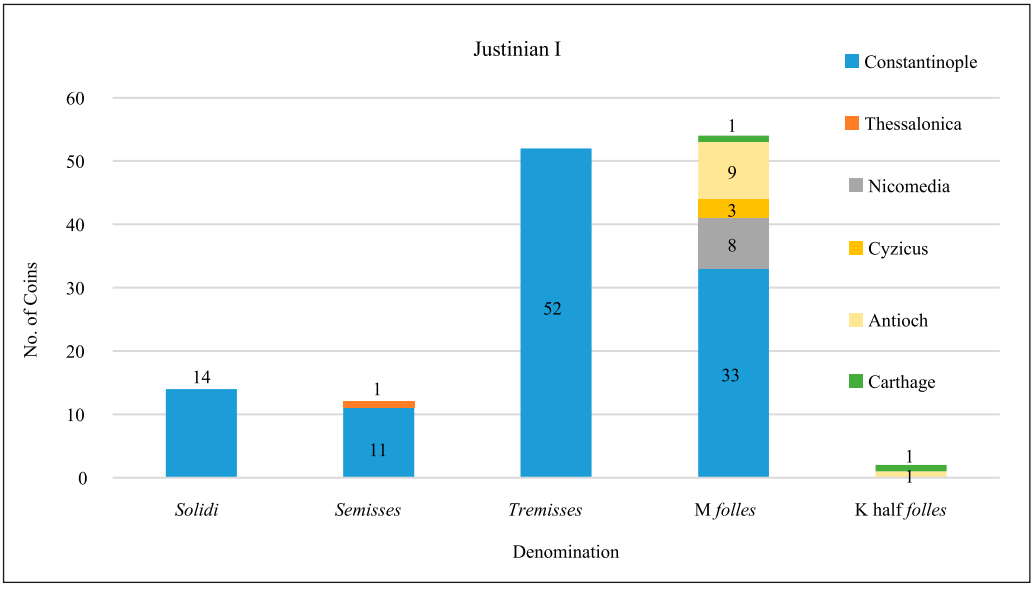

Fig. 19. Coins of Justinian I in the treasury, by mints and denominations.

The reign of Justinian I was characterized by monetary reforms that changed the weight standard of the *follis* (Bijovsky 2012:209–211, 214–227). All these changes are reflected in the treasury. As seen in Fig. 20, the group of undated coins (dating between 527–538; Nos. 1059–1083, 1092–1097, 1103–1109, 1113; illustrated Nos. 1061*,1067*, 1070*, 1082*, 1113*) retains the weight standard of its predecessor, c.18 g, and is the most plentiful, attesting to a period of imperial prosperity (Bijovsky 2012:216–220). The coins follow the prototypes of Anastasius I and Justin I. *Follis* No. 1081 belongs to a rare type depicting the M on the reverse flanked by a star and a cross on globe, and dated to 537–538 (*MIBE* 1:127, No. 85). All seven undated *folles* from Antioch belong to the latest mintmark type ΘΥΠΟΛS, dated to the period 537–539 (Nos. 1103–1109; illustrated No. 1104*). Also, worthy of mention is coin No. 1113*, a half *follis* from Antioch attributed to the period 532–537, which depicts on the obverse the emperor enthroned instead of the usual bust in profile (Bijovsky 2012:218–219).

Natural disasters, military and financial events—all had direct impact on the volume and character of the dated coinage, as also reflected in Fig. 20 (Bijovsky 2012:214, 247–256). Radical changes were introduced with the monetary reform which followed Novel 47 of Justinian, dated to 537. Regnal years of the emperor were added to the reverse of the copper coins, and the portrait on the obverse was changed to a facing armored bust of the emperor on the *folles*, half *folles* and some types of *nummia*. The most striking change, however, is the weight and diameter of the *follis*, which increased to c. 21.65 g, reaching 40 mm between the years 538 and 542 (Bijovsky 2012:214: Table 31). This standard was

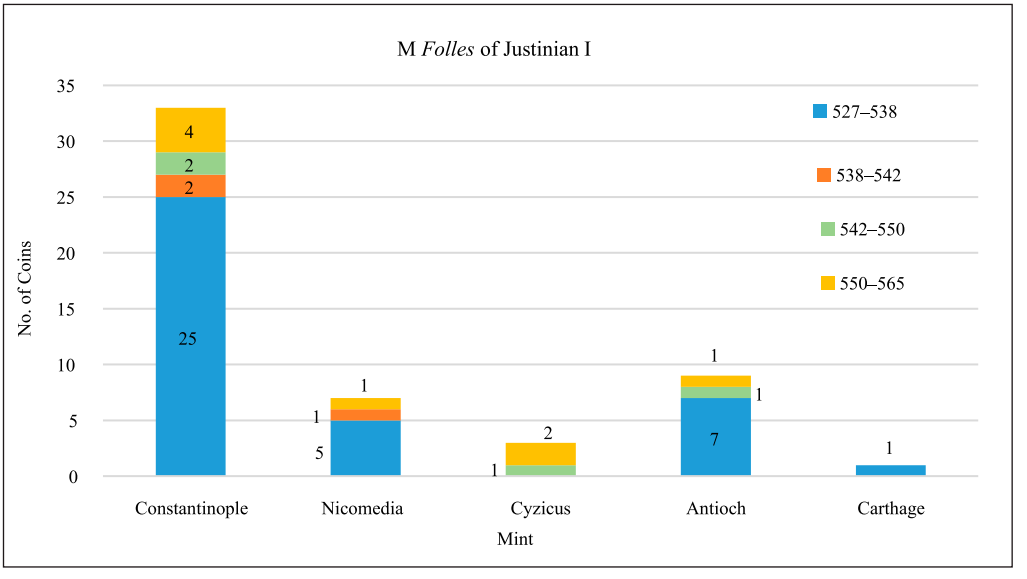

Fig. 20. *Folles* of Justinian I by mints, according to his monetary reforms.

maintained with minimal changes during 542–550, returning to the standard of the undated series (c. 18 g for the *follis*) in 550–565. Scholars agree that there was a decrease in the production of copper coins in general, and of *folles* in particular, toward the last years of Justinian I (Bijovsky 2012:223). And indeed, dated *folles* and half *folles* of Justinian I are rarely discovered in excavations and hoards in Israel (Bijovsky 2012:247). The evidence from the Merot treasury is rather unusual, especially since the most numerous group is the latest, dated to 550–565 (Fig. 20).

Coin No. 1086* is a large *follis* from Constantinople dated to 543/544, bearing an additional dot over the date which belongs to a supplementary issue (*MIBE* 1:57 and 131, No. 95b). Coin No. 1114, the only dated half *follis* in the treasury, was minted in Carthage in 539/540.

Dated *folles* of Justinian I are also recorded from a number of hoards in Israel—Qaẓrin, Qedumim, Bet She'an and Kabri (Bijovsky 2012:251–254)—and they were an integral part of the coins in circulation in the Southern Levant.

Justin II (565–578)

The coins of Justin II in the hoard show a decrease in the number of coppers (n = 29) compared to gold coins (n = 48) , a tendency that is emphasized by the latest coins in the hoard (see Fig. 25, below). Figure 21 displays the breakdown of the coins according to mint and denomination, presenting a clear majority of coins from Constantinople, followed by Nicomedia and Antioch, and to a lesser extent, Thessalonica (for the half *follis*).

Gold coins of Justin II are an extremely rare find in Israel. All 49 gold coins of this emperor registered in the IAA National Coin Database came from the Merot treasury, with one exception: a *tremissis* from the Third Wall excavations in Jerusalem (Bijovsky 2012:261–262). All nine *solidi* from Merot belong to a new type depicting 'Constantinople seated facing' instead of the 'Victory/angel type' (e.g., Nos. 752*, 757*, 758*, 759*). Coin No. 757* is a rare issue bearing the letter Z at the end of the exergue inscription, CONOB. This letter probably refers to the beginning of the second lustrum of the indiction, namely year 572 (*MIBE*C:22, 80 No. 4). Two of the *solidi* are lightweight types of the 22-carat standard (Nos. 758*, 759*), as attested by the star to the left of the seated Constantinople, the reverse inscription ending with the letters ΘS and the exergue inscription reading OB*+* (Bijovsky 2012:261–262, Fig. 89).

All eight *semisses* registered in the IAA National Coin Database attributed to Justin II are from the Merot treasury (e.g., Nos. 766*, 767*). The direction of the *rho*-cross to the left (ϟ) distinguishes them from those of Justin I. *Semissis* No. 767* is a unique specimen from the mint of Alexandria bearing the exergue inscription, CONOB (*MIBE*C:23, 83, No. N15). *Tremisses* constitute the majority of gold issues, as usual during the sixth century. In this case too, the most of the *tremisses* of Justin II registered in the IAA National Coin Database (31 out of 32) originated in the Merot treasury (e.g., No. 785*).

In contrast to the rarity of the gold coins, Justin II's coppers are very common, and the *folles* from Constantinople and Nicomedia in the treasury span all the years of his reign. Worthy of mention is *follis* No. 1131*, struck in Cyzicus, which shows on the obverse an

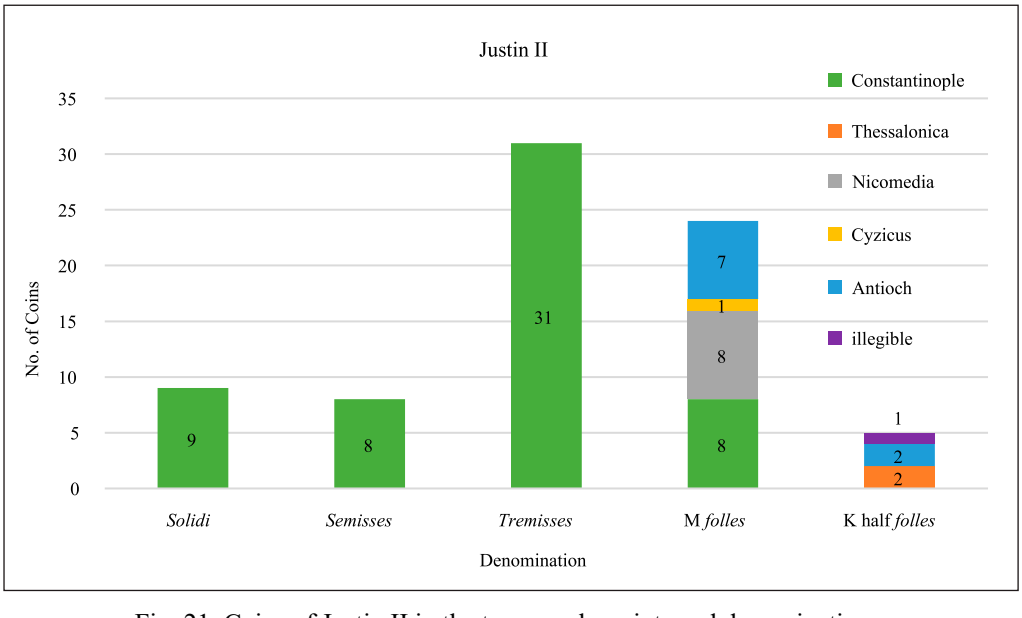

Fig. 21. Coins of Justin II in the treasury, by mints and denominations.

ornamented band of triangles and dots below the seated figures of the emperor and his wife Sophia. Also noticeable is the increase in the number of coins from Antioch: Coin Nos. 1132* and 1133 of this mint are rare types of the first year of reign 565/566, using the frontal bust of the emperor on the obverse (instead of the seated figures of Justin II and Sophia) the consulate of 566 marked by stars above and below the date (*MIBE*C:29). Coin No. 1136 is a *decennalia* issue from Antioch, celebrated by the addition of a star below the year eleven (*MIBE*C:30). Of the five half *folles* in the treasury, two are from Thessalonica and two, from Antioch.

Tiberius II (578–582)

The Merot treasury contains 19 coins of this emperor: 17 are gold (e.g., Nos. 801*, 808*, 813*) and 2 are copper *folles* (Fig. 22). Tiberius II introduced several innovations that eventually became standard. All reverse types of the gold coins were changed: the *solidi* depict a cross on four steps; the *semisses*, a cross on a globe; and the *tremisses*, a cross alone. Seventeen of the 18 gold coins of Tiberius II registered in the IAA National Coin Database come from the Merot treasury. They were all minted in Constantinople and include seven *solidi*, three *semisses* and seven *tremisses*.

The copper coins are two *folles* from Constantinople (No. 1144) and Antioch (No. 1145*). Tiberius II was also responsible for innovations in the base metal coinage; one of them is the replacement of marks of value: **m**, **XXX**, **XX**, **X** and **Y** (Bijovsky 2012:274).

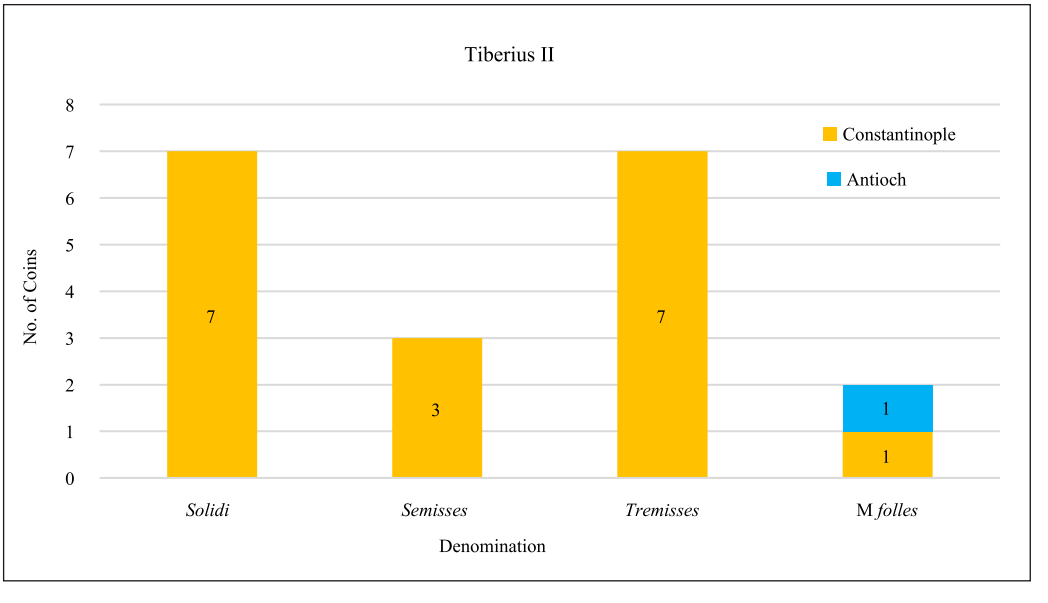

Fig. 22. Coins of Tiberius II in the treasury, by mints and denominations.

Maurice Tiberius (582–602)

The coins of this emperor mark a third peak in the number of coins, after Anastasius I and Justinian I. The treasury contained 86 gold coins (Nos. 816–901) and 6 coppers. Maurice returned to the Justinianic iconography with the 'angel/Victory type' on *solidi*, the helmeted frontal bust on copper, and the use of Greek numerals as marks of value.

The gold coins comprise 21 *solidi*, 12 *semisses* and 54 *tremisses* (Fig. 23); 17 out of the 20 regular *solidi* registered in the IAA National Coin Database were found in the Merot treasury, all minted in Constantinople (e.g., Nos. 818*, 828*). The other four *solidi* found in the treasury belong to a new type of lightweight *solidus* of 23 carats, weighing 4.35 g, known in Israel only from the Merot treasury (Nos. 833, 834, 835*, 836; *MIBE*C:132, No. 11). This type is distinguished from the 20- and 22-carat types by the addition of a star on the reverse right field and a globe cruciger instead of the normal globe in the hands of the angel. Of the 13 *semisses* registered in the IAA National Coin Database, 12 belong to the Merot treasury. Coin No. 837* keeps the earlier obverse inscription dated to 582/583, while the rest (e.g., No. 839*) follow the later version minted from mid-584 onward (Bijovsky 2012:281). As usual, most gold finds of Maurice Tiberius are the *tremisses*; of the 57 specimens recorded in the IAA National Coin Database, 54 are from the Merot treasury (e.g., Nos. 854*, 875*, 900*, 901*). They all follow the type introduced by Tiberius II, showing a cross on the

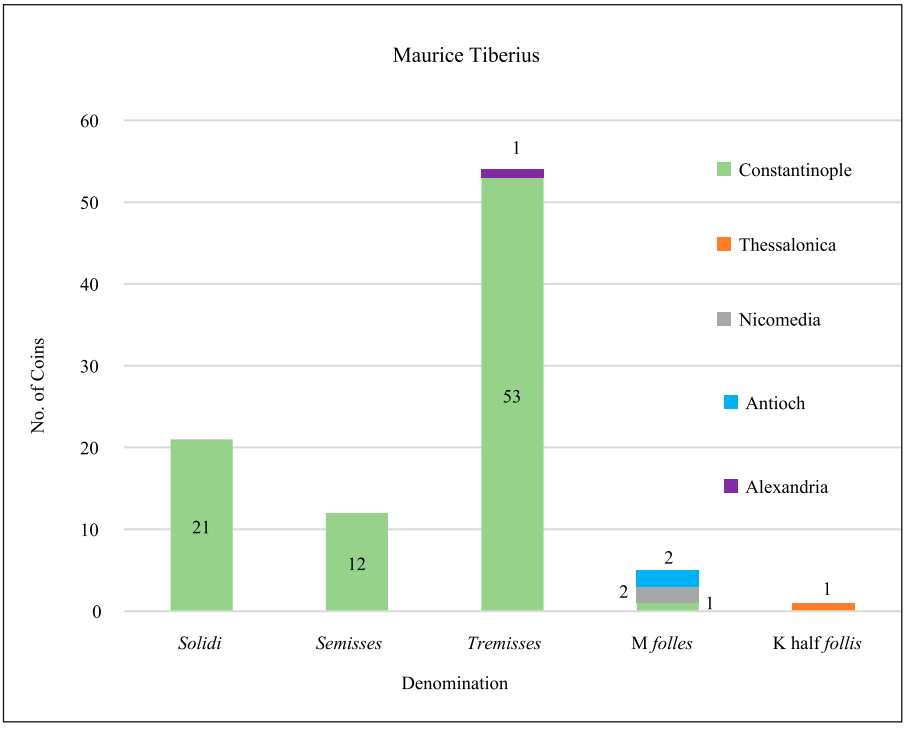

Fig. 23. Coins of Maurice Tiberius in the treasury, by mints and denominations.

reverse. Coin No. 901* was attributed to the mint of Alexandria as it combines both names of the emperor on the obverse, DNTIbER mAVR AVG, and the name Maurice Tiberius on the reverse, VICTORIMAVRIAVGS (*MIBE*C:48).

Only six copper coins of Maurice Tiberius were found in the Merot treasury, and these are the latest copper coins in the treasury. Despite the small number of these coppers, five different mints are represented: a *follis* of Constantinople (No. 1146); two from Nicomedia (Nos. 1147*, 1148); and two from Antioch, bearing his latest date, 588/589 (Nos. 1149, 1150*). In addition, there is a single half *follis* from Thessalonica dated to 583/584 (No. 1151). This is not surprising since this mint was the principal manufacturer of half *folles* during Maurice's reign (Bijovsky 2012:284).

Phocas (602–610)

A total of 11 gold coins of Phocas, minted in Constantinople, were discovered in the Merot treasury (Fig. 24): 4 *solidi*, 2 *semisses* and 5 *tremisses*. In the course of Phocas' reign, there was an increase in *solidi* compared to its fractions, a tendency further strengthened in the seventh century (Bijovsky 2012:361). This tendency, however, is not attested in the Merot treasury, where the presence of fractions of the *solidus* is still significant. In terms of typology, gold coins remained as under Maurice Tiberius, i.e., an angel for *solidi*, Victory for *semisses* and a cross for *tremisses*. Coin No. 902* is a rare *solidus* dated to 602/603. Coin Nos. 903* and 904* belong to the most common of the series, dated to 603–607, and Coin No. 905* is an example of the latest series dated to 607–610. *Semisses* of Phocas are

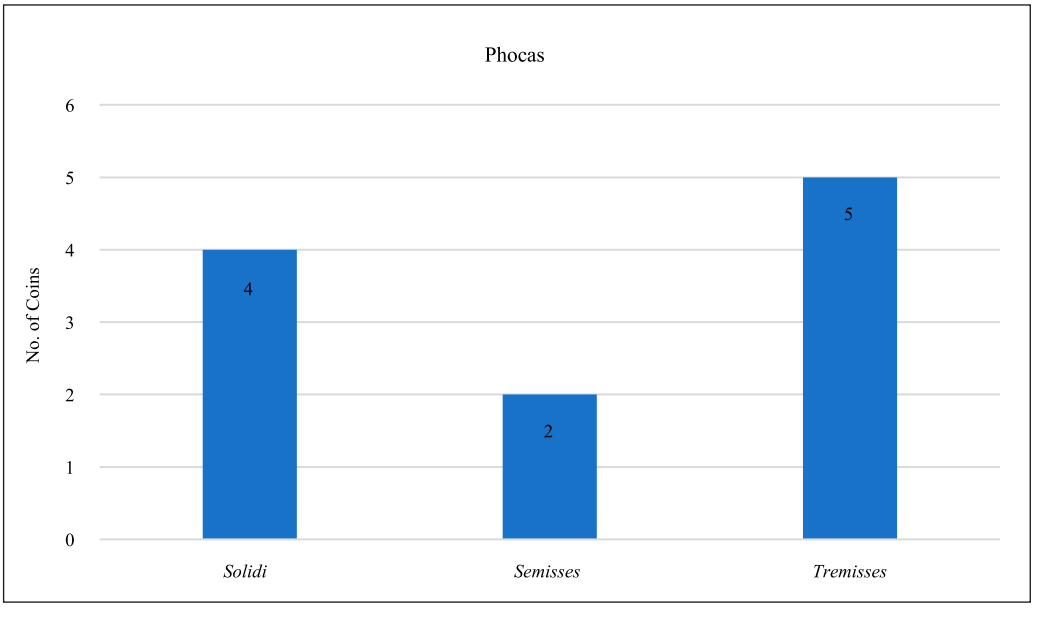

Fig. 24. Coins of Phocas in the treasury by denominations.

extremely rare in Israel; of the four specimens recorded in the IAA National Coin Database, two belong to the Merot treasury (e.g., No. 906*; Bijovsky 2012:363). Compared to the fifth and sixth centuries, the number of *tremisses* also decreases; only five coins of Phocas of this denomination were found in Merot (Nos. 908*–912).

Rebellion of the Heraclii (608–610)

Phocas' unpopular reign culminated with his deposition and execution in 610 following a rebellion instigated by Heraclius the Elder, the exarch of Africa, which began in 608 in Carthage and spread to Egypt and Palestine (Bijovsky 2012:360). The rebels issued a series of anomalous gold, silver and copper coinage that enables tracing their progress on their way to Constantinople.

Coin No. 913* is a *solidus*; it is the only one of this series to be found in the country. The coin is the latest in the assemblage, providing the *terminus post quem* for the concealment of the *quppa*. It shows on the obverse the bearded busts of the Heraclii—the father exarch of Africa and his son, the future emperor—in consular robes encircled by the inscription, dN ERACLIO CONSULIBA. The reverse depicts a cross on steps encircled by VICTORIA AVCCΓ and CONOB in the exergue. The date and place of issue of this series is still under debate. Here I follow Hahn and Metlich's suggestion of Cyprus as the mint of origin and the letter Γ on the reverse standing for year three of the rebellion, namely 610/611 (*MIBE*C:70, 203, No. 4).

Summary of the Synagogue Community Treasury

The community treasury contained a sequence of coins starting from Anastasius I, spanning all sixth-century emperors, down to Phocas. The latest coin is a very rare *solidus* dated to the Rebellion of the Heraclii, c. 608–610, which provides the *terminus post quem* for the concealment of the treasury. I consider that the synagogue community treasury was active throughout these years and that the coins were put in the *quppa* close to their date of issue.

The unique composition of the Merot treasury, which combines large quantities of gold and copper coinage, provides a reliable picture of the proportions and types of currency in circulation in Upper Galilee during the sixth and the beginning of the seventh centuries.

The classification of the coins within the treasury is most particular (Fig. 25). While coppers appear exclusively in the earliest quarter of the treasury (from Anastasius I to Justin I), gold coins become overwhelmingly dominant in the last quarter of the treasury (from Tiberius II to Heraclius). This change does not seem to be coincidental, and it should be explained in relation to the monetary background. The large quantities of copper issues of Anastasius I indicate that his monetary reforms have been successfully implemented. Gold coins dated to the first half of the sixth century are very rare, mostly coming from mixed hoards containing Valentinianic fourth-century *solidi* (Bijovsky 2012:328–332; Bijovsky, Sandhaus and Milevski 2014:193–211); the presence of the old coins may indicate that the influx of new gold coinage into the region was low or slow. During the reigns of Justinian

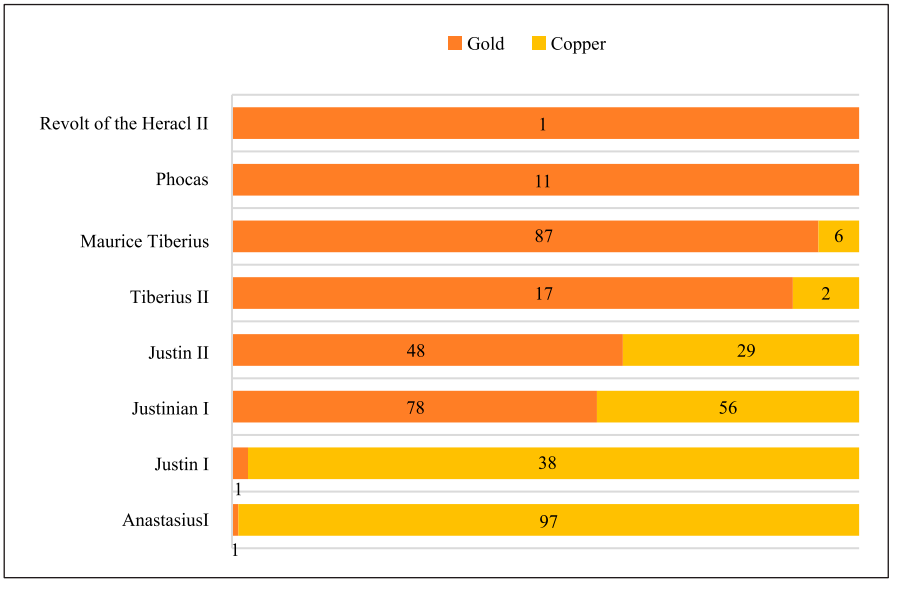

Fig. 25. Quantities of gold and copper coins in the Merot synagogue treasury, by emperor.

I and Justin II, the proportions of gold and copper coins are reverted, exhibiting a dramatic rise in the number of gold coins. The quantities seem to align with the length of these rulers' reigns, but the rise may also correspond to the expansion of the empire at a time of relative peace with the Persians (Bijovsky 2012:350). From the reign of Tiberius II onward, there is a clear increase in the influx and availability of the gold coinage, possibly due to a progressive decline in the weight of the *follis* (Bijovsky 2012:358). During the reign of Phocas, huge sums of money, especially gold coins, were needed to finance military expenses (Bijovsky 2012:441). This explains the sharp rise in the number of gold hoards dated to the seventh century, especially of *solidi*, whose concealment is directly related to specific events, such as the Persian invasion in 614 (Bijovsky 2012:422–436, 460).

Only coins of value, such as gold (*solidi* and its fractions), and large copper denominations (*folles* and half *folles*), were retained in the synagogue treasury, indicating that the *quppa* stored the savings of the community. In terms of monetary value, the sum in the treasury was equivalent to 156.3 *solidi* (Table 4).[10] This is not such a large sum of money, considering for instance, that in 523–526, the price of liturgical objects, such as a golden chalice, was 360

[10] I am grateful to Bruno Callegher for his helpful comments.

solidi; a silk garment cost 72 *solidi* by the end of the sixth century; and the salary of a stone cutter was 12 *solidi* a year (Morrisson and Cheynet 2002:851, 856: Table 15; 864: Table 18).

The treasury fortunately preserved a great variety of coin types, some appearing exclusively at Merot. Noteworthy are the many punchmarked small *folles* of Anastasius I, and the considerable number of large *folles* of Justinian I. Rare coins that were noted in this discussion include, among others: Justin I's *follis* from Cyzicus dated according to the indiction (No. 1055*), Justinian I's *semissis* attributed to the mint of Thessalonica (No. 698*), Justin II's *semissis* attributed to the mint of Alexandria (No. 767*) and the *decennalia* issue from Antioch (No. 1136), Maurice Tiberius' lightweight *solidi* of 23 carats (Nos. 833, 834, 835*, 836), the two *semisses* of Phocas (Nos. 906*, 907) and finally, the *solidus* dated to the Rebellion of the Heraclii (No. 913*).

Hoards made up of coins of different metals (gold and silver, gold and copper, silver and copper) constitute an exceptional phenomenon in the Byzantine period (fourth to seventh centuries), especially in the East. Kent, for example, lists only two examples in his fifth-century hoard summary of both parts of the Empire (*RIC* 10:clxxvi). Three sixth-century hoards including gold and copper coins are mentioned by Morrisson and Ivanišević in their inventory of hoards from the Balkans and Asia Minor: Dragojnovo, Novo Selo and Grnčar (Morrisson and Ivanišević 2006: Nos. 15, 93 and 253). In this context, the Merot synagogue treasury in the Upper Galilee is not just the only mixed hoard of gold and copper coins discovered in excavations in Israel, but also in the entire Southern Levant.

CONCLUSIONS: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE COINS FROM MEROT

According to the numismatic data, the synagogue flourished in the sixth century, when the community treasury was concealed; it was subsequently forgotten at the beginning of the seventh century. The fact that the *quppa* was only partially full, and that some coins were discovered scattered around its opening, may indicate that the synagogue was abandoned in haste, and that only part of the coin treasury was recuperated and rescued from the invaders or looters. The reason for this crisis was not established; it may be associated with the Rebellion of the Heraclii.

The distribution of the numismatic evidence in the synagogue, and specifically that of the Byzantine coins, is unique. Whilst the isolated coins covered the entire Byzantine period, there is a clear chronological and typological distinction between the coins in the foundation deposits and the treasury, pinpointing the time of the monetary reform of Anastasius I in 498. The foundation deposits yielded *minimi* that were not intended to be recovered, whereas the community treasury's earliest coins date to the monetary reform of this emperor. In my opinion, this distribution was not coincidental; the few obsolete coins (Nos. 915–921) discovered at the bottom of the *quppa* do not change the general picture.

In contrast to the large quantities of sixth-century coins discovered in the *quppa*, only nine isolated ones were discovered in other locations in the excavations. Interestingly, the latest isolated Byzantine coins are two *folles* of Maurice Tiberius dated to 588/589 (Nos.

291*, 292), while the two latest copper coins in the treasury are from the same year (Nos. 1149, 1150*). The 11 gold coins of Phocas (Nos. 902–912; illustrated Nos. 902*–906* and 908*) prove that the treasury continued to be active for nearly another decade. According to the excavators, the building continued to function as a synagogue until the earthquake of 749 (end of Phase II) and later (Phase III). According to the gold coin of the Rebellion of the Heraclii (No. 913*), however, the community treasury was abandoned shortly after 610/611 to be eventually forgotten, although the synagogue continued in use until the earthquake of 749.

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