

THE COINS FROM A ROMAN-PERIOD FARMSTEAD AT EL-QABU, SOUTH OF ASHQELON

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Fifty-seven bronze coins were found during excavations of several structures, installations and tombs located in the northern section of El-Qabu (see Sion, this volume).¹ Fifty-three of the coins, including a hoard of 23 bronzes, were identified. They are presented here in two separate catalogues, one devoted to scattered finds and the other, to the hoard assemblage. Illustrated items are indicated by an asterisk in the catalogues.

Isolated Finds (Catalogue 1; Fig. 1)

With the exception of two Hellenistic (Cat. 1:1, 2) and three Early Roman (Cat. 1:3–5) specimens, as well as a single Byzantine piece dated to the first half of the sixth century (Cat. 1:30), all the coins fall between the second half of the second century and the reign of Maximinian Herculeius (286–305 CE).

The majority of the coins were retrieved in and around the excavated structures and the winepress located on the Northern Hill, and from Winepress 1 on the Southern Hill. Most were either surface finds or collected from the fill above the floor, indicating their use at the site during the third–fourth centuries (see Sion, this volume).

Among the early coins is a rare flan (Cat. 1:5), collected from Winepress 1. The flan has a trapezoidal section and is likely to have produced a beveled coin (Mørkholm 1991:12). Beveled coins were not characteristic of the Ascalon mint after the third quarter of the second century BCE (Kushnir-Stein 2000–2002:79). The only mint that continued the use of beveled flans in this period (Kushnir-Stein 2000–2002:80–81) was in Jerusalem.

Moreover, other elements of the flan type—its 17 mm diameter, the central protrusion and opposing flanges, are typical of the flans produced from soft limestone molds in Judea (Ariel 2003). The fact that the flan was found together with a small bronze (Cat. 1:3), minted in 24 CE by the Roman procurator of Judea, Valerius Gratus (15–26 CE), further corroborates the suggestion that the flan originated in Jerusalem.

Another interesting and rare early find is a lead token minted under the Roman administration in Egypt in the first–second centuries CE (Cat. 1:6). The obverse portrays Serapis wearing the *kalathos*, and the date, Year 1; on the reverse, the river god Nilus is reclining to left. The token—a surface find—was unearthed in Building 3 (L103) together with a small bronze of Agrippa I minted in 41/42 CE (Cat. 1:4). Similar tokens were found in the North Sinai survey, conducted along the coastal plain between Suez and Wadi Gaza from 1972 to 1982 (Kool, in prep.), and hint at the continuous commercial connections between the two provinces (Arthur and Oren 1998:193–203).

Significantly, the majority of the coins (89%) form a single, continuous chronological group, spanning some 150 years, between the second half of the second century and the end of the third century CE. This concentration of coins seems to indicate that the establishment and occupation of the site occurred mainly within that period. The latest coin, a billon of Maximinian Herculeius dated c. 293 CE (Cat. 1:23), may indicate that the occupation of the site ended sometime after this date, at



Fig. 1. Isolated coin finds.

the beginning of the fourth century. This is reinforced by the total absence of the numerous fourth–fifth-century small bronzes frequently found in excavations.

A single Byzantine bronze *nummus*, dated to the first half of the sixth century (Cat. 1:30), possibly represents a stray-loss, which was left by a passerby two centuries later.

CATALOGUE 1. ISOLATED COIN FINDS

Cat. No.	Basket No.	Locus	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes	IAA No.
Seleneids												
Antiochus IV (175–164 BCE)												
1	276	141	3.22	14	↑	Diademed head r.	[BAΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ] Zeus stg. facing			Cf. SNG <i>Israe</i> I:164, No. 1193	108430	
Tyre												
Semi-autonomous (1st–2nd c. BCE)												
2		Surface	2.88	18		Head of Tyche wearing turreted crown	Galley l.			Cf. BMC <i>Phoen</i> .:255, No. 255	108425	
Roman Procurators in Judea												
Tiberius–Valerius Gratus (15–26 CE)												
3	307	141	1.98	17		[TIB]KA[CAP] Inscription in wreath	[ΙΟΥ]ΝΙΑ Palm branch across field.	Year 11 = 24 CE		Cf. TJC:258, No. 329	108420	
							Date: 1/A					
Agrrippa I (37–43 CE)												
4	260	103	1.57	15		ΑΓΡΙΠΠΑ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ Canopy	Three ears of grain issuing from between two leaves. In field: [L – S]	Year 6 = 41/2 CE	Jerusalem	Cf. TJC:231, No. 120	108410	
Roman — Coin Flan												
5*	307	141	6.32	17–25		Central protrusion		1st c.		Found with No. 3	108418	
Roman Egypt — Token												
6*	260	103	2.51	18	↑	Bust of Serapis r.	Nilus reclining l.	1st c.				
Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE)												
7*	286	146	10.80	19	↑	[...]ΝΙΝΟϹ ΚΕΙΒΑϹΤΟϹ] Laureate	Derketo, wearing long chiton and peplos; she holds dove and leans on scepter	c. 150– 161	Ascalon	Cf. Rosenberger 1972:38, No. 175	Unpublished size	108432

CATALOGUE 1 (cont.)

Cat. No.	Basket No.	Locus	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes	IAA No.
8*	314	147	8.56	20	↑	[...]TOK[- -A]NTWNINOC Laureate bearded head r.	EIC - [AZA City goddess, sig. facing, head l., wearing long chiton and peplos; besides her, heifer	Year 215 = 154/5	Gaza	Cf. Rosenberger 1975:60, No. 93	Unpublished date	108416
Septimius Severus (193–211 CE)												
9*	316	138	13.28	26	↑	Bust r.	Derketo, wearing long chiton, rests on long scepter, holding dove		Ascalon	Cf. Rosenberger 1972:61, No. 198		108426
Caracalla (211–217 CE)												
10*	200	100	3.33	18	↘	Bust r.	SPQR Eagle holding wreath with inscription		Caesarea	Cf. Kadman 1957:112–113, No. 72		108411
Elagabalus (217–222 CE)												
11	274	139	6.78	17	↑	Bust r.	Head of Serapis r.		Caesarea	Cf. Kadman 1957:114, No. 83		108431
Alexander Severus (222–235 CE)												
12*	Surface	9.60	23	↑		Laureate bust r.	CIFA[VFC – CAESA] Roma helmeted, seated l. on throne holding Nike and standard, beside, shield		Caesarea	Cf. Rosenberger 1975:78, Supplements		108415
13*	Surface	8.70	20	↑		[IMP]SIE ALEXANDR[VSSE] Laureate bust r.	[- -]CACI[- -] Tyche seated on throne, holding cornucopiae and small bottle		Aelia Capitolina	Meshorer 1989:108, No. 148		108417
14*	240	232	1.16	10	↑	Dove sig. r.	[ACK]A\W] Aphlaston		Ascalon?	Cf. Rosenberger 1972:65, No. 23		108423

CATALOGUE 1 (cont.)

Cat. No.	Basket No.	Locus	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes	IAA No.
Philip II (247–249 CE)												
15	248	103	16.64	28	↑	Bust r.	Head of Serapis r.		Caesarea	Cf Kadman 1957:114, No. 83		108431
Trajan Decius (249–251 CE)												
16	230	124	6.90	21	↑	Bust r.	Bust of Tyche r., wearing turreted crown		Caesarea	Cf Kadman 1957:122– 123, No. 125		108414
17*	311	159	4.59	18	↑	Bust r.	Bust of Tyche r., wearing turreted crown		Caesarea	Cf Kadman 1957:122– 123, No. 126		108428
Gallienus (253–268 CE) — <i>Antoninianus</i>												
18	315	136	3.40	22	↓	IMP C P LIC GALLIENVS PF AVG Radiate bust r.	VICTORIA AVG Emperor stg. l., holding spear, receiving wreath from Victory stg. r. In ex.: *	260	Samosata	<i>MJR</i> 47: No. 1702		108421
Probus (276–282 CE) — <i>Antoninianus</i>												
19	256	105	2.86	21	↑	IMP C M AVR PROBVS PF AVG Radiate bust r.	RESTITVTOR-BIS Female stg. r., presenting wreath to emperor stg. l., holding globe and scepter. In field: € In ex.: XXI		Antioch	Weder 1984:210		108408
Carinus (283–285 CE) — <i>Aurelianus</i>												
20	217	113	3.66	22	↑	IMP C M AVR CARINVS PF AVG Radiate bust r.	VIRTVS AVG Emperor stg. r., receiving Victory from Jupiter stg. l., holding scepter	284	Same	Pink 1963:56		108407

CATALOGUE 1 (cont.)

Cat. No.	Basket No.	Locus	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	Notes	IAA No.
Diocletian (284–296 CE) — <i>Aurelianus</i>												
21*	217	113	3.58	21	↓	IMP CC VAL DIOCLETIANVS AVG Radiate bust r.	CONCORDIA MILITVM Emperor stg. r., receiving Victory from Jupiter stg. l., holding scepter. In ex.: XXI		Antioch	Cf. RIC V/II: 253, No. 306		108405
22*	Surf.	2.48	22	↑		IMP CC VAL DIOCLETIANVS PF AVG Radiate bust r.	CONCORDIA MILITVM Emperor stg. r., receiving Victory from Jupiter stg. l., holding scepter. In field: HA In ex.: XXI		Heraclea?	Cf. RIC V/II:249, No. 284	Unpublished variant	108419
Maximinian Herculeius (286–305 CE) — <i>Billon</i>												
23*	267	138	3.27	22	↓	IMP C MA MAXIMIANVS AVG Radiate bust r.	CONCORDIA MILITVM Emperor stg. r., receiving Victory from Jupiter stg. l., holding scepter. In field: Δ In ex.: XXI	c. 293	Cyzicus?	Cf. RIC V/II:291, No. 606	Unpublished variant	108422
Roman Imperial — <i>Antoninianus</i>												
24	267	138	2.28	21	↓	Radiate bust r.	Figure stg.	250–296				108427
Roman Provincial												
25	276	141	1.68	15		Bust r.	Obliterated	1st–2nd c.				108429
26	267	138	5.74	20		Bust r.	Figure stg.	2nd–3rd c.				108413
27	311	159	6.46	20×23		Laureate bust r.	Obliterated	2nd–3rd c.				108424
28	286	146	4.15	18	↓	Bust r.	Head r.	2nd–3rd c.				108433
29*	220	110	2.37	13		Bust r.	Bust of Tyche wearing turreted crown and chiton	First half of 3rd c.				108406
Byzantine												
30	300	147	0.60	9		Obliterated	Cross	First half of 6th c.				108434

The Hoard from Building 4 (Catalogue 2; Fig. 2)

The above dating is further reinforced by the similar periodization provided by a hoard of 23 bronzes discovered in Building 4. The hoard was found concealed in a small cavity that had been dug 0.3 m into a floor of beaten earth, in the northeastern corner of the structure (L133). It consisted of a homogenous group of imperial and provincial bronzes struck in a limited time-range between the mid-second and mid-third centuries CE.

The hoard contains a mixture of imperial *asses* and *sestertii*, with bronzes from

regional ‘provincial’ mints (Gaza, Ascalon, Caesarea Maritima, Aelia Capitolina, and Nysa-Scythopolis), many of which are countermarked. It thus reflects the typical token bronze currency circulating during this period in the central and southern part of the Roman province of Palestina.² The manner in which this hoard was concealed—interred in a corner of the floor of a room—and the small monetary value of its contents, both seem to hint that it was deposited by the occupants of the structure.



Fig. 2. The coin hoard from Building 4.



Fig. 2 (cont.).

CATALOGUE 2. HOARD OF BRONZE COINS FROM BUILDING 4 (L133)

Cat. No.	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	IAA No.
Roman Imperial										
1*	253/3	23.23	29	↑	DIVA [-FAV/STINA] Bust of the empress r.	[AE]TER-NITAS] Juno, veiled and draped, sig. front, head l., raising r. hand and holding transverse scepter in l.		Rome	CRE 4.238, No. 1480	97920
2*	253/5	15.27	30	↑	IMP GORDIANVS PIVS[- -] Laureate bust r.	[PM]TRP VII COS II PP Mars advancing r., holding shield and spear. In field: S – C	July 244	Rome	RIC IV/III:52, No. 339	97910
3*	253/8	15.9	28	↑	HERENNIA ETRVSCILLA AVG Bust of empress r., draped.	PVDICITIA AVG Pudicitia, veiled, seated l. with veil, holding scepter. In field: S – C		Rome	RIC IV/III:137, No. 136	97913
Roman Provincial										
4*	253/2	9.64	22	↑	IOYΛΑΔΩΜΝΑ CEB] Bust of empress r.	[- - -] Dionysius nude, holding thyrsus with l. hand, with r. hand pouring wine from a cantharus for a panther sitting l.	215/216	Nysa-Seythopolis	Barkay 2003.212, No. 45	97907
Elagabal (218–222 CE)										
5*	253/22	12.5	20	↑	Laureate bust r.	Derketo wearing long chiton and peplos, with crescent on head, holds dove in r. hand and scepter in l.		Ascalon	Rosenberger 1972.64, No. 219	97927
6*	253/3	8.67	22	↑	Bust r.	Egyptian deity, wearing short kalathos and short chiton to l., standing over three lions		Ascalon	Rosenberger 1972.65, No. 228	97908
7*	253/20	8.9	21	↑	Laureate bust r.	Figure stg. with scepter				97925
Maximinus (235–238 CE)										
8*	253/12	11.02	22	↑	[- - -] Bust r.	[- - -] Bust of Isis l., wearing Atef crown holding flail		Ascalon	Cf. Rosenberger 1972.66, No. 234	97917
Gordian III (238–244 CE)										
9*	253/18	10.77	22	↑	[- - -] Bust r.	[FAZA]-W[N] Marnas nude, stg. l., r. Hand raised holding thunderbolt; he is crowned by Nike stg. on column		Gaza	Cf. Rosenberger 1975.75, No. 189	97923

CATALOGUE 2 (cont.)

Cat. No.	Basket	Weight (g)	Diam. (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date (CE)	Mint	Reference	IAA No.
Herennia Etruscula (249–251 CE)										
10*	253/1	16	24	↑	HERENNIA ETRV[IS]CILLA AV[G]	[COL PR FAV FC] CAES [METRO] Dionysius sig. to l. with panther		Caesarea	Cf. Kadman 1957:130–131, No. 167	97906
Trajan Decius (249–251 CE)										
11*	253/16	-	-		[IMP C G] MES Q TRAI[DECIVS AVG] Laureated bust r., draped	COL AEL [KA - -] Tyche stg. l. wearing short chiton holding scepter; in r. hand small bust; in front eagle		Aelia Capitolina	Meshorer 1989:110–111, No. 153	97921
Hostilian (251 CE)										
12*	253/23	6.6	19	↓	[- -] Laureated bust r.	Serapis sig. r.		Caesarea	Kadman 1957:136–137, No. 195	97928
Trebonius Gallus (251–253 CE)										
13*	253/14	12.04	25	↑	KAI Γ ΟΩΕ TPEB ΤΑΛΟ[C CEB]	ΦΛΝΕΑC – [ΠΟΛΕWC]		Neapolis	Rosenberger 1977:23, No. 112	97919
Roman Provincial										
14*	253/10	9.71	25		Bust r., below, rectangular countermark with head wearing turreted crown(?)	Obliterated	2nd–3rd c.		Howgego 1985:143, No. 202	97915
15*	253/19	8.6	21	↑	Obliterated	Obliterated, below, rectangular countermark with head r.	200–250		Cf. Howgego 1985:132, Nos. 139–141	97924
16*	253/17	6.4	22	↑	Laureate bust r.	Figure stg., below, rectangular countermark with bust r.	Same		Cf. Howgego 1985:132, No. 141	97922
17*	253/11	8.93	23		Laureate bust r.	Obliterated	Same			97916
18*	253/21	8.00	22		Same	Same	Same			97926
19*	253/7	9.26	24		Bust r.	Figure stg.	Same			97912
20*	253/4	10.34	25	↑	Bust r.	Obliterated	Same			97909
21*	253/9	8.69	20		Bust r.	Same	Same			97914
22*	253/13	8.05	22		Bust r.	Same	Same			97918
23*	253/6	7.15	25		Bust l.	Same	Same			97911

NOTES

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

² Considering the enormous quantities of such token money that must have circulated in the province, there are relatively few registered or published deposited hoards from this period: Silat-a-Dahar (94 coins; Spijkerman and Starkey 1958); Kalansuwa (19 coins; Meshorer 1963); Sheikh Zueid (850 coins;

Coin Hoards 1975: No. 124); Bet She'an (43 coins; Bland 1981); Tel Hefer A and B (6 and 9 coins; Bijovsky, in prep.); Gelilot (13 coins; unpublished). Hoards with a more northern provenance, and usually containing larger quantities of coins from the northern mints of Phoenicia, are Migdal (188 coins; Meshorer 1976) and the mixed silver-bronze hoard from the shipwreck off the Carmel coast (162 coins; Meshorer 2010).

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