

## CERAMIC OIL LAMPS AND VESSELS FROM THE BURIAL CAVE AT ‘EN YA‘AL, JERUSALEM

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Most of the ceramic lamps and vessels from the burial cave at ‘En Ya‘al (see Abu Raya and Weissman, this volume)<sup>1</sup> were retrieved from the courtyard (L3, L4), while only a few originated in the standing pit inside the cave (L10, L11). The majority of the lamps were unused, with only a small number showing burning signs on the nozzle. The fragmentary pottery assemblage includes mainly small vessels, such as bowls and juglets, as well as some larger bowls and mortaria. No storage vessels were recovered. This assemblage is dated to the Byzantine period, with a few Early Islamic fragments originating in the standing pit.

### THE LAMPS

The large number of lamps found in the tomb is noteworthy, although they present little variety, comprising three main variants of the candlestick-type lamp: the small candlestick lamp, the large candlestick lamp, and the large pinched candlestick lamp. Additional variants of the large candlestick lamps are that with a Greek inscription on the rim and a later variant, with a channel. A lamp with a tongue handle, from the Early Islamic period, was found as well.

Candlestick lamps were the most common lamps during the Byzantine period. They are found at many sites in the Jerusalem region. A large assemblage of lamps, including many lamps similar to ours, were found in a burial cave at Ḥorbat Gores, in the Gonen Quarter of Jerusalem, dated to the Byzantine period (Solimany, Winter and Vincenz 2006). Another burial cave, in the Naḥalat Aḥim Quarter in Jerusalem, yielded similar candlestick lamps (Kogan-Zehavi 2006).

Since this lamp type is so widespread, it has been studied by many scholars, both within collections (e.g., Rosenthal and Sivan 1978:116–121) and from excavations (e.g., Hadad 2002:66–68; de Vincenz 2007:267–268; Sussman 2008:250–251), as have the decorations (Nitowski 1974) and the inscriptions (Loffreda 1989; 1990) they bear.

The large variant was produced in the Jerusalem area, as first claimed by Barag (1970) and later by Magness (1993:174–176). During a survey in the vicinity of ‘En Ya‘al, a pottery kiln was discovered at Zuba, containing many fragments of large candlestick lamps (Gibson, Dar and Clarke 2000:29). This kiln is dated to the late Byzantine period, and may have been one of the kilns that produced the lamps in the ‘En Ya‘al tomb. Candlestick lamps are also found at sites in the north of the country (Hadad 2002:66–68, with further references therein).

### *Small Candlestick Lamps* (Fig. 1)

This variant usually does not exceed 8.5 cm in length, and has an ovoid body that is flat in section. The filling hole is large and surrounded by two ridges, of which the inner one is higher. The wick-hole is also relatively large and surrounded by a ridge. The rim is decorated with a radiating pattern, which is sometimes combined with ‘V’s (Fig. 1:1). The handle is usually absent in these lamps, the space filled in with a decoration, such as a ‘V’, or simply with the radiating pattern. Some lamps have loop handles. The nozzle is decorated with a palm branch (Fig. 1:2) or a cross—either simple (Fig. 1:1) or with decorated branches (Fig. 1:3–5). Tzaferis has demonstrated that the cross first appears as a decorative motif in

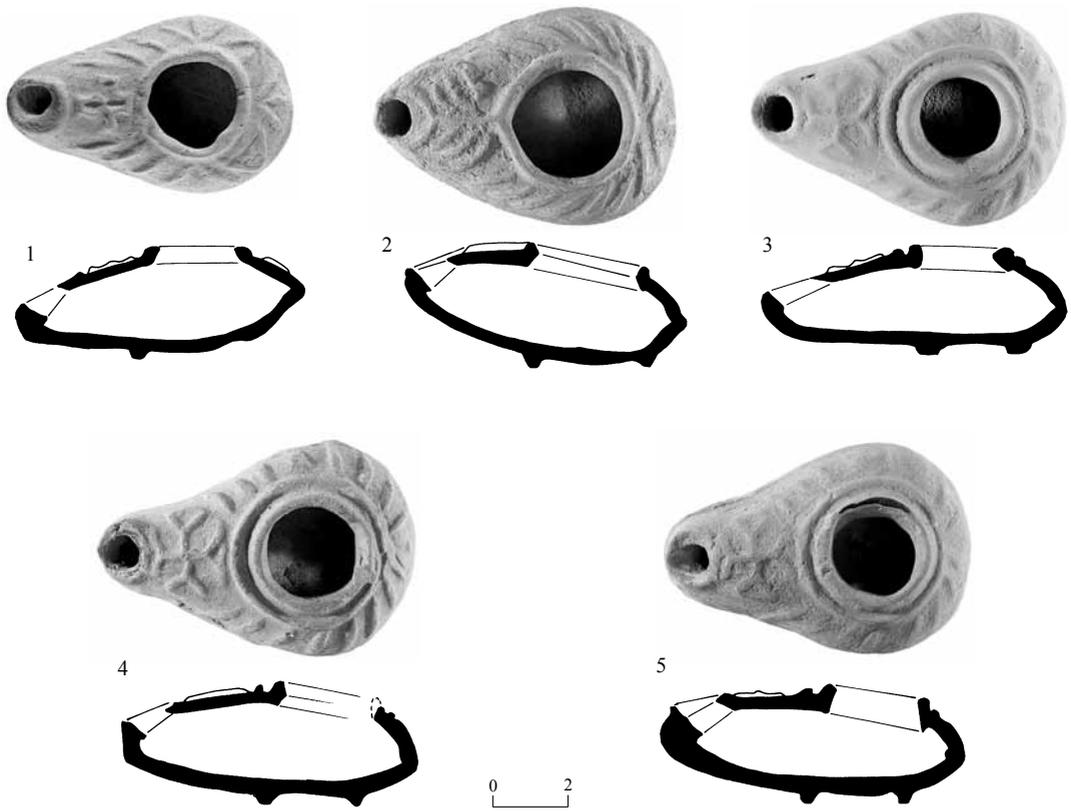


Fig. 1. Small candlestick lamps.

No.	Basket	Locus	Ware	Dimensions (cm)	Description
1	108/6	4	10YR 7/4, very pale brown with many black and white inclusions	8.0	Complete; radiating pattern and 'V's on rim, cross on burnt nozzle
2	110/6	3	10YR 6/4, light yellowish brown with few white inclusions	8.0	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, palm branch on nozzle
3	110/8	3	5YR 6/8, reddish yellow with few white inclusions	8.5	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, four-petaled rosette on nozzle
4	111/4	4	10YR 6/4, light yellowish brown with white inclusions	8.5	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, dot instead of handle, cross on burnt nozzle
5	111/2	4	7.5YR 6/4, light brown with white inclusions	8.5	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, cross on nozzle

the mid-fourth century CE (Tzaferis 1971; see also Barag 1970). Both the simple cross and the Greek cross are found as stamp impressions on Late Roman C plates (Hayes 1972:364–366, Figs. 78:69; 79:71). As such, they are common during the fifth century and continue into the sixth century and later, on the LRC vessels. Thus, it is possible that cross stamps were a

standard decorative pattern used on plates, as well as on lamps.

#### *Large Candlestick Lamps* (Fig. 2:1–7)

The large candlestick lamp is the most common variant at 'En Ya'al. It ranges in size from 9.5 to 11 cm, and is ovoid or pear-shaped and flat in section. Sometimes the base is slightly

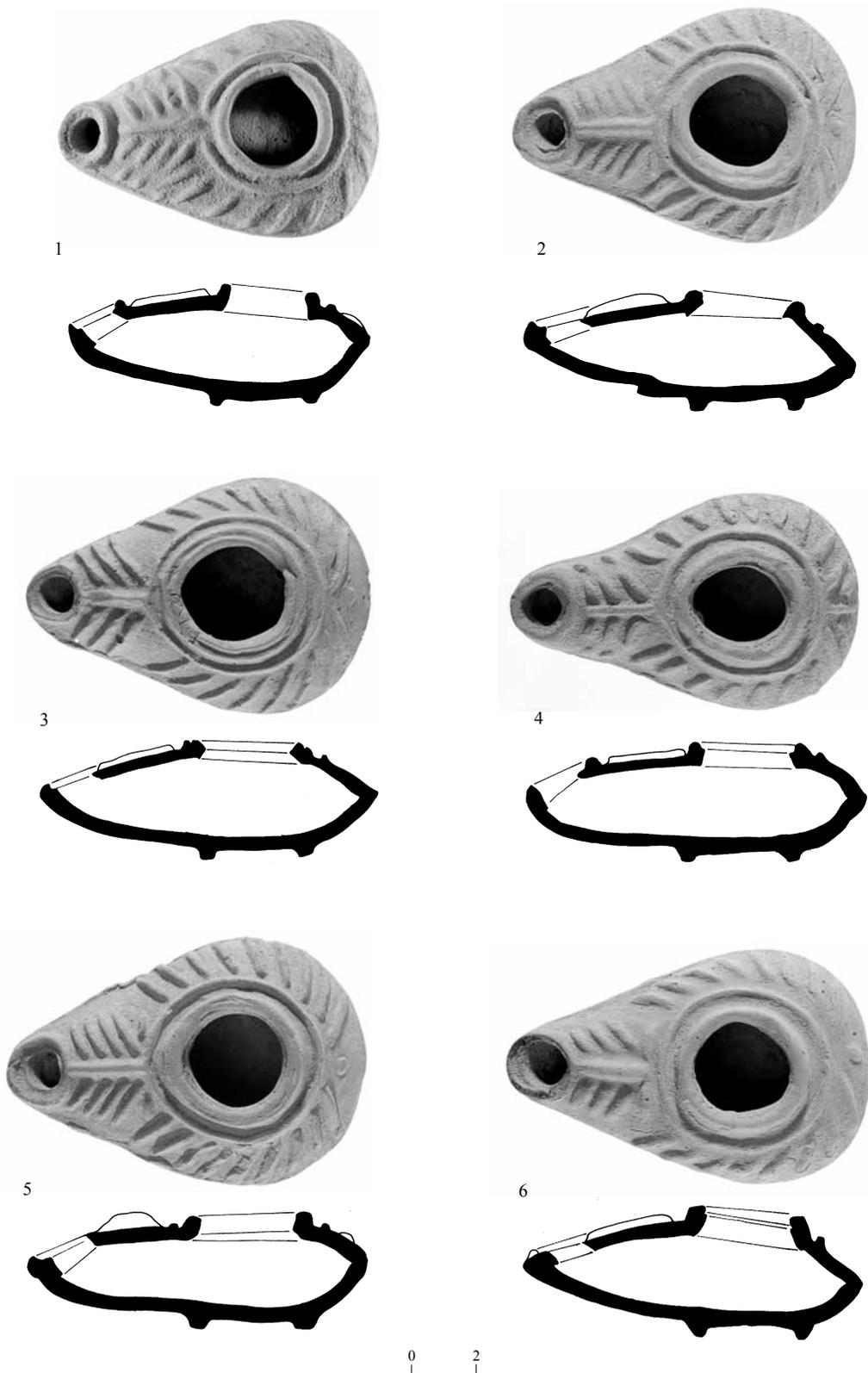


Fig. 2. Large candlestick lamps.

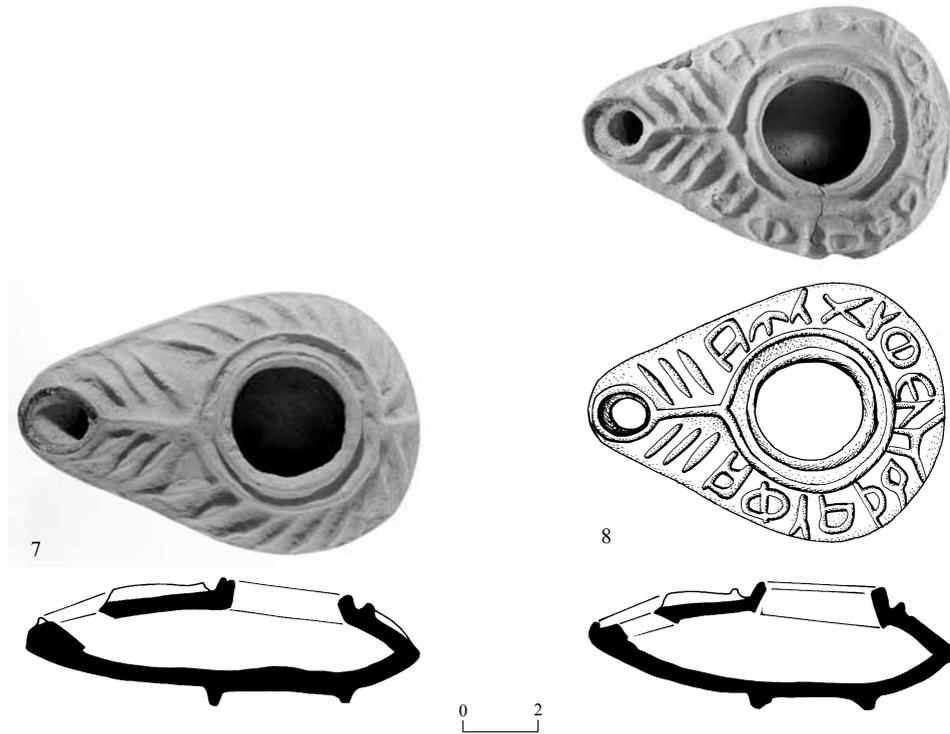


Fig. 2. (cont.)

No.	Basket	Locus	Ware	Dimensions (cm)	Description
1	108/2	4	10YR 6/4, light yellowish brown with white inclusions	9.5	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, palm branch on burnt nozzle
2	111/3	4	7.5YR 6/4, light brown with white inclusions	10.5	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, dot instead of handle, palm branch on nozzle
3	126/A2	11	5YR 6/6, reddish yellow with white inclusions; surface 7.5YR 6/6, reddish yellow	10.5	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, dot instead of handle, palm branch on nozzle
4	108/13	4	10YR 6/3, pale brown with white inclusions	11.0	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, palm branch on nozzle
5	107/3	3	10YR 6/2, light brownish gray with black and white inclusions	11.0	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, dot instead of handle, palm branch on burnt nozzle
6	107/5	3	10YR 6/3, pale brown with black and white inclusions	11.0	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, dot instead of handle, palm branch on burnt nozzle
7	110/3	3	7.5YR 7/6, reddish yellow with white inclusions	11.0	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, palm branch on burnt nozzle
8	110/11	3	7.5YR 6/6, reddish yellow with black and white inclusions	10.5	Greek inscription on rim, palm branch on burnt nozzle

raised, but it is always outlined with a ridge. Two ridges surround the filling hole, the inner one higher than the outer one. The outer ridge usually continues toward the wick-hole and surrounds it. Handles are always absent, the space filled in with various decorations such as dots or 'pellets' (Fig. 2:2, 5, 6). Other lamps are decorated with anchors, V's, circles and other motifs (for decorations on the backs of lamps, see Nitowski 1974:31–32). The rim is always decorated with the radiating pattern, and the nozzle—with a stylized palm branch. The latter decoration has been interpreted as representing the Jewish menorah or candlestick (thus the name of the lamp). In some cases, it appears to depict a candlestick with a base, but in others, it seems rather to be a palm branch. Some have even interpreted it as a representation of the 'tree of life' (Loffreda 1989:215–218); however, it may be that we attribute too much symbolism to these lamps, and perhaps these decorations were simply meant to be decorative?

The large candlestick lamps begin to appear around the mid-sixth century, as Magness has demonstrated based on evidence from the City of David and the Jewish Quarter (Magness 1993:174) in Jerusalem. They continue into the Umayyad period with examples bearing illegible inscriptions.

*Large Candlestick Lamp with Greek Inscription* (Fig. 2:8)

Greek inscriptions on candlestick lamps are definitely Christian in nature, as is the example of the large candlestick lamp in Fig. 2:8. Loffreda claims that Greek inscriptions first appeared on the small variant in the fourth and fifth centuries, although inscriptions are more common and obviously also longer and more elaborate on the larger variant (Loffreda 1995:12). During the sixth century, a large variety of these lamps were produced with different types of inscriptions. Due to the popular nature of the script, the diversity of the script directions and the rotation of the letters, the reading and understanding of these inscriptions have posed problems to scholars.

The inscription on the lamp from 'En Ya'al bears the formula  $\varphi\omega\varsigma$  Χριστου φαινει πασιν (the light of Christ shines for all), which is the most common formula. Loffreda classifies the inscription as Type B 3.2 and describes it as follows: "Type of lamp L 9.3. Script direction SD 1. Instead of πασιν we find παααν. Probably the triple *alpha* bears a Trinitarian symbolism, in the same way as the triple *omega* in A 6.6" (Loffreda 1990:485). Lamp Type L 9.3 of Loffreda's classification is the most common candlestick lamp with the ridge connecting the filling hole to the wick-hole. The characteristic decoration is the palm branch with three branches (see Loffreda 1989:7). Script direction SD 1 is clockwise with the base of the letters facing the center of the lamp, except the *omega* of the word  $\varphi\omega\varsigma$  and the *v* of the word πασιν, which are upside-down (see Loffreda 1990:476). The formula Χριστου φαινει πασιν in Loffreda's Group B 3 contains the same ladder symbol as our example and the additional double *alpha*. The ladder symbol appears frequently on candlestick lamps and is usually positioned symmetrically next to the nozzle of the lamp. The ladder symbol seems to be associated with Christian baptism as has been demonstrated by Bagatti (1965:203) and Loffreda (1989:218–220). Loffreda dates this type of inscribed lamp to the seventh century CE (see Loffreda 1989:206).

*Large Pinched Candlestick Lamps* (Fig. 3)

This is the second most numerous type of lamp in the tomb of 'En Ya'al, ranging in size from 9 to 10.5 cm, and characterized by its pinched nozzle, outlined by a ridge. As with the large candlestick lamp, the filling hole is surrounded by two ridges, the inner one being higher than the outer one. The outer ridge usually continues toward the wick-hole and surrounds it. The rim is decorated with a radiating pattern, or a radiating and zigzag pattern (Fig. 3:4), and the nozzle bears a stylized flower (Fig. 3:1–3), sometimes combined with a palm branch (Fig. 3:4), or just a palm branch (Fig. 3:5, 6). Handles are absent, as in the previous types. When the

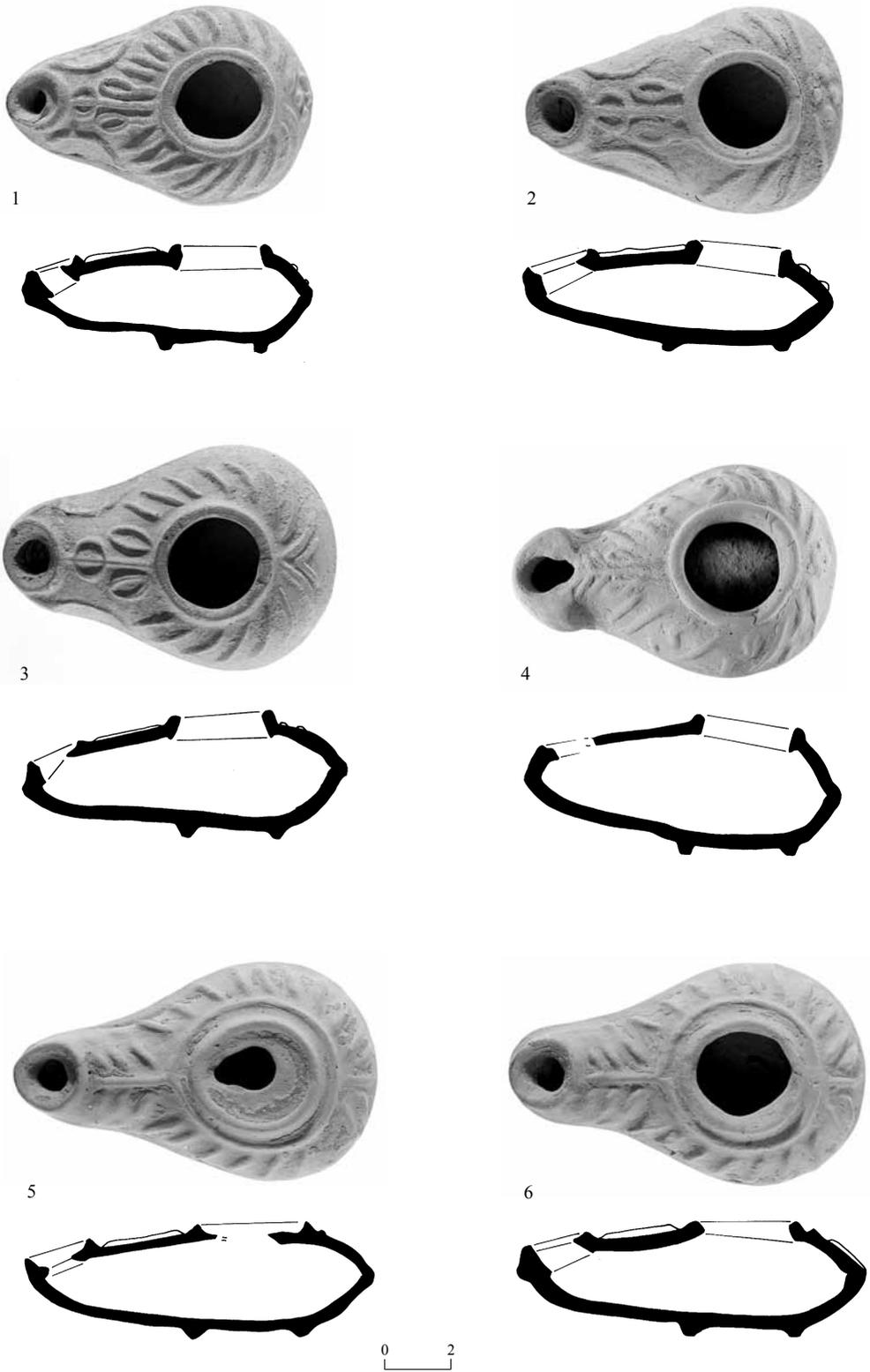


Fig. 3. Large pinched candlestick lamps.

◀ Fig. 3

No.	Basket	Locus	Ware	Dimensions (cm)	Description
1	108/5	4	10YR 6/4, light yellowish brown with few white inclusions	9.0	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, four dots instead of handle, pinched and burnt nozzle with stylized flower
2	108/1	4	10YR 7/3-6/3, very pale brown to pale brown with black and white inclusions	9.5	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, four dots instead of handle, pinched and burnt nozzle with stylized flower
3	126/B1	11	5YR 6/3, light reddish brown with small black inclusions	10.0	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, pinched nozzle with stylized flower
4	108/18	4	5YR 6/6, reddish yellow with large black and white inclusions	10.0	Complete; radiating and zigzag pattern on rim, four dots instead of handle, pinched nozzle with stylized flower
5	108/7	3	75YR 6/4, light brown with black and white inclusions	10.5	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, pinched nozzle with palm branch, discus not entirely broken
6	110/4	3	75YR 7/4, pink with black and white inclusions	10.5	Complete; radiating pattern on rim, line instead of handle, pinched and burnt nozzle with palm branch

nozzle is decorated with a stylized flower, there are four dots on the back of the lamp where a handle would have been. The lamp in Fig. 3:5 was unused, since the nozzle is not burnt. The discus of this lamp had been incompletely broken, a procedure well-known in Discus Lamps, where the discus was often deliberately broken. Two explanations have been put forth for this phenomenon: the discus was broken to delete figurative images (Brand 1953), although this is obviously not the case here since the discus was undecorated; or to enlarge the very small filling hole which would open the lamp and guarantee its purity, according to Jewish customs (Sussman 2008:230). Large pinched candlestick lamps have been found in the burial complex in the Naḥalat Aḥim Quarter in Jerusalem (Kogan-Zehavi 2006: Fig. 15:82–85), and lamps with similar nozzles and body shape, but with an undecorated rim and a handle in the shape of a cross, appear in a collection in the Israel Museum (Israeli and Avida 1988: Nos. 429–431). The large pinched lamps from 'En Ya'al are highly decorated with radiating patterns, stylized flowers (tree of

life?) and palm branches. A date in the sixth–seventh centuries seems most likely, based on the size, decoration and parallels.

#### *Lamps with a Channel* (Fig. 4:1, 2)

This late variant of the large candlestick lamp has features that are seen in the earlier lamps, as well as features that will become common in Early Islamic lamps. Two fragments of such lamps were recovered in the standing pit of the tomb, both characterized by the channel that surrounds the filling hole and continues toward the wick-hole, a characteristic of Early Islamic lamps. The channel is decorated with a stylized palm branch. Based on a lamp with a similar channel decoration from a collection (Rosenthal and Sivan 1978: No. 496), it can probably be assigned to the type of candlestick lamps with a channel. A fragment from Bet She'an also has a channel, as well as Greek letters on the rim (Hadad 2002:67, No. 298). Considering that the channel is a characteristic feature of Early Islamic lamps, this lamp can probably be dated to the seventh–early eighth centuries.

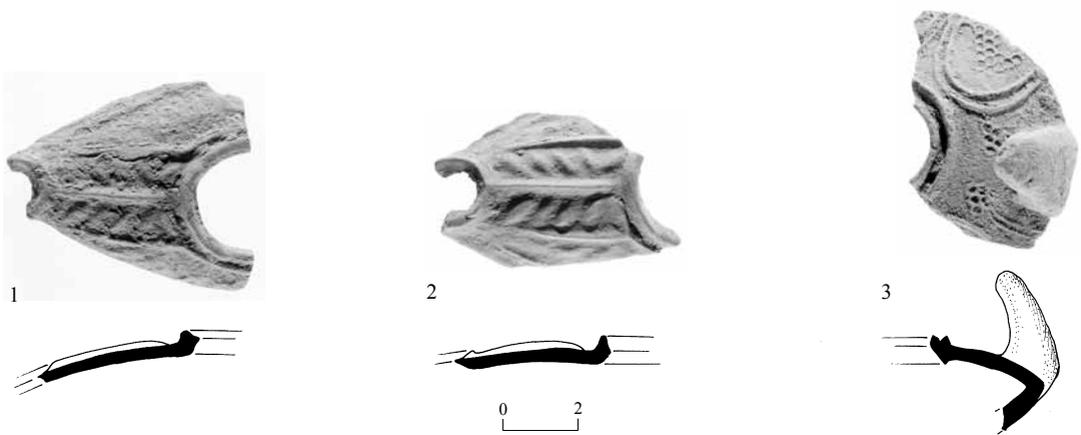


Fig. 4. Other lamps.

No.	Basket	Locus	Ware	Description
1	124/52	10	5YR 6/6, reddish yellow with white inclusions	Fragment; palm branch in channel
2	124/73	10	5YR 6/8, reddish yellow with white inclusions	Fragment; palm branch in channel
3	124/44	10	7.5YR 6/4, light brown with few white inclusions	Fragment; rear part of lamp with grape clusters in double semicircles, curved tongue handle

#### *Lamp with a Tongue Handle* (Fig. 4:3)

This fragment of an Early Islamic lamp was recovered in the standing pit, and is dated to the Abbasid period. It is characterized by the curved tongue handle and the decorative pattern of grape clusters in semicircles. This is probably the most common decoration on Early Islamic lamps and is found at many sites with Abbasid occupation levels. Examples with grape patterns have been reported from the Byzantine Monastery at Deir Ghazali in Jerusalem (Avner 2000: Fig. 22:8–10). Lamps with tongue handles are discussed at length by Hadad (2002:95–106), in her report on the oil lamps from Bet She'an, with a comprehensive list of sites where these lamps have been discovered. According to the finds from Bet She'an, these lamps can be dated from the mid-eighth century, probably until the eleventh century (Hadad 2002:106).

#### POTTERY VESSELS (Fig. 5)

Most of the sherds were heavily worn, probably due to water penetrating into the tomb. The pottery consists mainly of bowls and juglets, as well as other forms such as mortaria and lids. A selection of the pottery is illustrated in Fig. 5.

#### *Bowls* (Fig. 5:1–6)

The many fragments of bowls made of finely levigated clay belong to the group of Fine Byzantine Wares, although the surfaces are very worn. The incised wavy line, a characteristic of FBW bowls, is also found on the bowls from 'En Ya'al. Bowls of this type from various locations in Jerusalem have been studied extensively by Magness, who proposed that Jerusalem and its vicinity was a center of production for this distinctive ware (Magness 1993:166–171). Three types of FBW bowls are

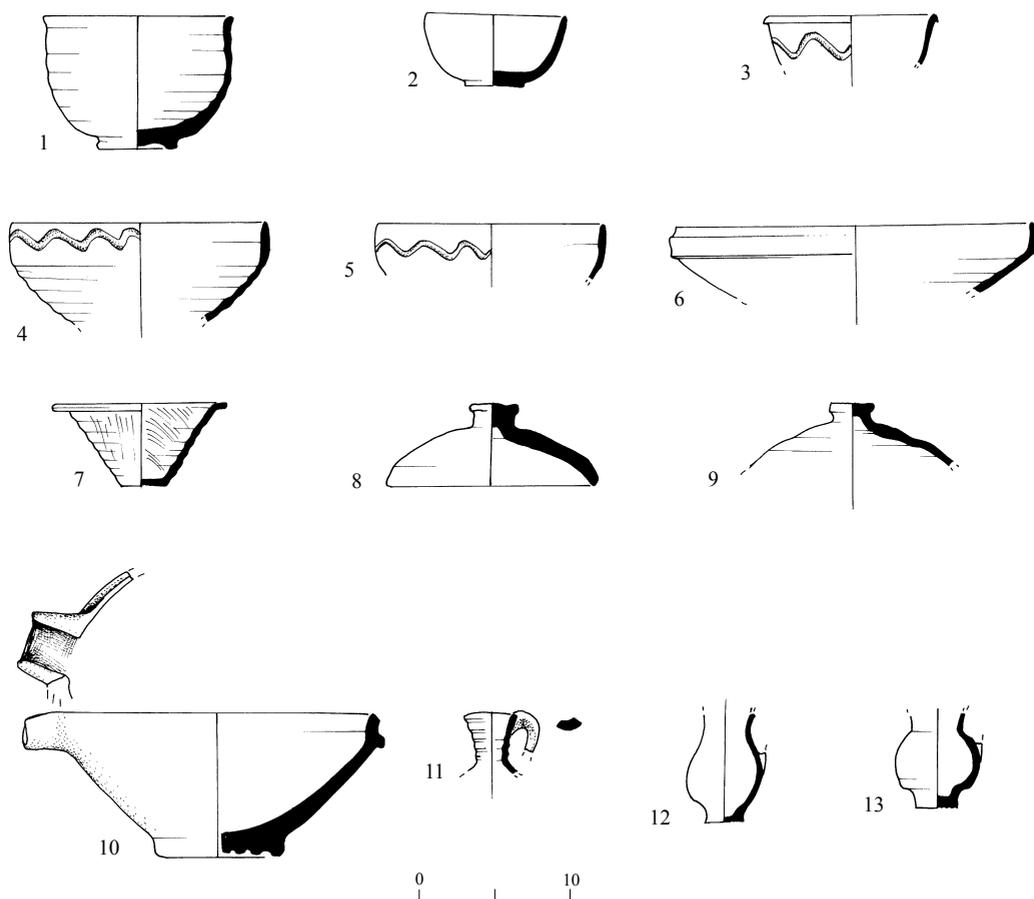


Fig. 5. Pottery.

No	Basket	Locus	Type	Ware	Description
1	111/9	4	Bowl	5YR 6/6, reddish yellow with black and white inclusions	Fragment; rounded with slightly everted, thickened rim
2	110/12	3	Bowl	75YR 6/3, light brown with white inclusions	Fragment; simple rounded rim, low ring base
3	111/21	4	Bowl	75YR 6/3, light brown with few white inclusions	Fragment; everted, externally pinched rim, incised wavy line on body
4	110/A9	3	Bowl	10YR 6/3, pale brown with few white inclusions	Fragment; everted carinated wall and simple rounded rim, incised wavy line under rim
5	107/13	3	Bowl	10YR 6/3, pale brown with few white inclusions	Fragment; carinated wall, simple rounded rim, incised wavy line on body
6	111/A13	4	Bowl	10YR 7/4, very pale brown with black and white inclusions	Fragment; rounded wall, incurved, externally thickened rim
7	111/8	4	Bowl/lid	75YR 6/6, reddish yellow with black and white inclusions	Complete; ledge rim
8	107/A1	3	Lid	5YR 6/6, reddish yellow with few white inclusions	Fragment; thick knob handle
9	124	10	Lid	75YR 6/3, light brown with black inclusions	Fragment; knob handle

◄ Fig. 3 (cont.)

No	Basket	Locus	Type	Ware	Description
10	107	3	Mortarium	5YR 6/6, reddish yellow with black and white inclusions	Fragment; thick wall, pinched flanged rim, spout, deep ridges on base
11	107/28	3	Juglet	75YR 7/6, reddish yellow with thick core and black inclusions	Fragment; slightly flaring, ribbed neck, simple rounded rim, one handle attached at rim
12	110/5	3	Juglet	75YR 6/6, reddish yellow with few white inclusions	Fragment; one handle, flat base
13	124/8	10	Juglet	75YR 6/3, light brown with few Black inclusions	Fragment; small handmade(?) with flat base, handle attachment

present at 'En Ya'al: simple rounded bowls with a slightly pinched rim (Fig. 5:1) or a simple rounded rim (Fig. 5:2), belonging to Magness' Type IB; simple bowls with a slightly everted rim and a incised wavy line on the body (Fig. 5:3), Magness' Type 1A; and two carinated bowls with incised lines on the upper part of the body (Fig. 5:4, 5), Magness' Type IC (Magness 1993:193–195). It seems that the FBW bowls appeared in the Jerusalem area around the mid-sixth century and continued into the seventh century. The FBW bowls from the Early Islamic period, which have a different ware color and vary in morphology, do not appear in the 'En Ya'al assemblage.

The bowl in Fig. 5:6 has an inverted, externally thickened rim, and resembles in shape the fine ware bowls of the Cypriot Red Slip (CRS) type, especially Hayes' CRS Form 9 (Hayes 1972:379–382, Fig. 81:7). This fragment lacks the characteristic surface treatment of the CRS bowls, and its ware is that of the other FBW bowls from the tomb. It is possible that it is a local imitation of this imported ware. The prototype is dated to the sixth–seventh centuries and thus, a date for our bowl in the seventh century or slightly later is suggested.

#### Lids (Fig. 5:7–9)

Two different types of lids were recovered from the tomb. The first type (Fig. 5:7) is a small,

deep bowl-lid with a flat base and a ledge-rim. Similar bowl-lids, made of relatively fine clay as that of the FBW bowls, have been found in the Jerusalem area and are dated to the sixth–seventh centuries (Magness 1993:247, Lids and Stoppers Form 1). The second type (Fig. 5:8, 9), made of fine ware with rounded walls and a heavy knob handle, is also related to the FBW bowls. Similar lids were found in large quantities in the excavation of the Roman villa at 'En Ya'al.<sup>2</sup>

#### Mortarium (Fig. 5:10)

This large bowl has rounded walls, a pinched, externally flanged rim, and a wide spout situated on the rim. The base is decorated with deeply incised ridges. The clay is similar to that of the FBW bowls, but coarser with more inclusions, as would be expected for such a large vessel. The technique of decorating the base with deep ridges recalls that of the Early Islamic FBW bowls. The method of manufacturing the spout, which formed an overlapping channel, is the same method used during the Hellenistic period, (Guz-Zilberstein 1995: Fig. 6.10:1, 5, 9, 10). A date in the seventh century CE is suggested.

#### Juglets (Fig. 5:11–13)

The juglets from the tomb are made of fine, well-levigated clay and belong to the group of FBW vessels. A fragment of a juglet has a slightly flaring, ribbed neck and one handle

extending from the rim to the upper body (Fig. 5:11). No exact parallels have been found, but a date in the sixth century CE seems reasonable. The lower part of a juglet has a flat, string-cut base and one handle (Fig. 5:12). The juglet in Fig. 5:13, retrieved from the standing pit of the tomb, is small and handmade, and appears to belong to the repertoire of Early Islamic pottery.

## SUMMARY

The ceramic assemblage from the 'En Ya'al tomb is homogeneous. The variants of candlestick lamps and the FBW vessels all date to the Byzantine period, no later than the seventh century CE. Later activity is attested by the lamp with a tongue handle (Fig. 4:3) and the juglet (Fig. 5:13).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Rafah Abu Raya for allowing me to study the assemblage. The photographs are by Tsila Sagiv and Clara Amit. The drawings are by Alina Pikovsky.

<sup>2</sup> I wish to thank Gershon Edelstein for allowing me to mention these finds. The pottery report of the Roman villa at 'En Ya'al is being prepared by the author.

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