

New Hiding Complexes in Beth She'arim and Their Dating

Adi Erlich^a, Danny Binshtok, and Ran Kaftory

Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa

^a aerlich@research.haifa.ac.il

Abstract

Beth She'arim was a Jewish town in the Galilee during the Roman period. Besides ritual baths, stone vessels, and synagogues, all present at Beth She'arim, a key property of Roman-period Jewish settlements is underground complexes. The precise time and duration of these hiding complexes in the Galilee are controversial since there is only little reliable evidence upon which to establish a date. Recent excavations at Beth She'arim have discovered three new hiding complexes that join another previously discovered complex. Two of the three complexes were excavated and documented, and the results shed light on the historical circumstances in which these complexes were hewn. It seems that the Beth She'arim hiding complexes should be dated to the 2nd century CE and thus are probably related to the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Therefore, the Beth She'arim hiding complexes constitute an important contribution to the study of the Galilee during the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Keywords: Bar Kokhba Revolt; Roman period; Galilee.

1. Introduction

Ancient Beth She'arim is located in the southwestern part of the Lower Galilee, between the Jezreel Valley and the Carmel ridge. The name appears first in Josephus's *Life* (118–19), where he mentions that Queen Berenice of the Herodian dynasty owned an estate at the site (Besara in the Greek version). Later, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, Beth She'arim became a renowned Jewish town, home of the Jewish Council (*Sanhedrin*) and of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, who compiled the compendium of Jewish law known as the *Mishnah* (for the history of Beth

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She'arim, see Mazar 1973: 1–12; Avigad 1976: 1–4). After Rabbi Judah's death and burial, the site became a favored cemetery for Jews from across the Land of Israel and the eastern diaspora.

The site was excavated in the 1930s and 1950s by B. Mazar and N. Avigad (Mazar 1973; Avigad 1976). Their excavations focused mainly on the elaborate cemetery on the slopes of Sheikh Abreik Hill and, to a lesser extent, on the town, where they discovered a synagogue, houses, a basilical building, and an olive press near a gateway, all published in brief notes only. Further small excavations at the site were conducted in the 1980s (Vitto 1996), revealing a Byzantine mosaic building.

Excavations at Beth She'arim were renewed in 2014 on behalf of the Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa. These excavations, which are still ongoing, focus on the ancient town located on Sheikh Abreik Hill, within the area of the Beth She'arim National Park and the village of Bet Zaid. The excavations uncovered architectural remains and small finds from the Hellenistic, Roman, early Byzantine, Mamluk, and Ottoman periods, as well as modern times (Erllich 2021).

Beth She'arim is built on chalk (*kirton*) of the Maresha Formation, a soft, easy-to-quarry calcareous rock overlaid by a hard *nari* crust (Potchter 2004: 41–43). Like other sites built on chalk, Beth She'arim features numerous ancient underground facilities that served as storerooms, water installations, ritual baths, and, above all, burial sites. This paper is dedicated to one kind of underground facility—the hiding complex—that was common in Jewish settlements throughout Israel during the Roman period, especially during the revolts against the Romans.

Hiding complexes were first identified and studied in the Judean foothills (Shephelah) by Kloner and Tepper (1987; for an update, see Kloner and Zissu 2003). Hundreds of underground complexes comprising tunnels, small halls, shafts, and other features were hewn into the rock beneath Jewish settlements. It is widely accepted that they had a part in the Jewish revolts against the Romans. Shahar (2003) identified a similar, albeit more modest phenomenon in Galilee, which Shvitzel (2019a) has been studying closely for the past decade.

Hiding complexes are hard to date because they were used for an extended period of time spanning the Hasmonean period and the Bar Kokhba Revolt (Shvitzel 2019b: 622) and were often subjected to subsequent reuse and looting (Kloner and Zissu 2009: 17–19; Shvitzel 2021: 462). Their creation, however, is associated with rebels who sought to use them for hiding (hence the term *hiding complexes*) or escape. While the role of the Jewish Galilee in the Bar Kokhba uprising against Rome is still obscure, the Galilean hiding complexes help establish their level of involvement (Raviv and Ben David 2021; Shvitzel 2021). However, not all hiding complexes are related to the Bar Kokhba Revolt; some date from the Great Revolt or even the Hasmonean period (Shvitzel 2018). In this paper, we present the hiding complexes of Beth She'arim and provide new evidence on their context and date.

2. The Hiding Complexes of Beth She'arim

At least four hiding complexes have been identified so far at Beth She'arim, all belonging to the type Shvitiel (2019a: 100) defined as “underground cavities hewn into installations used on a daily basis.” The first was recorded by Avigad under a building, some 40 m southwest of the synagogue. It consists of a shaft and a tunnel that was cleared over a 3 m distance (Avigad 1955: 208–211; Shvitiel 2019a: 184). The tunnel, which is now inaccessible, was empty, save two 2nd-century BCE Rhodian stamped handles.

The renewed excavations have uncovered at least three more hiding complexes in three areas: A, C, and D (Fig. 1). Further, underground cavities in Area B might have also been hiding complexes. However, this is presently uncertain and, therefore, will not be discussed further. The three complexes from Areas A, C, and D will be discussed below; the first was identified but not excavated, while the other two were excavated for the most part.



Fig. 1. Aerial view of the Beth She'arim national park and Bet Zaid village; Latin letters mark the excavation areas on the Sheikh Abreik hill (Courtesy of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority).

2.1. Area A

Area A is on the west side of Sheikh Abreik Hill near the summit, and it includes the basilica excavated by Mazar (1957) and the area east of it, where the renewed excavations are conducted. The specific zone discussed below was excavated in the past but only briefly published (Mazar 1957). The information presented here draws on remains already discovered by Mazar, albeit so far undocumented, and a limited sounding made by us.

A north-south alley runs along the eastern wall of the basilica, separating it from the *insula* to its east (Fig. 2). Mazar (1957: 159, Fig. 1) excavated a small part of this *insula* and discovered a benched room that opens to the alley (Fig. 2a), a few walls, and a massive threshold in secondary use (Fig. 2b). This area remained in use during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods (Tepper and Baruch 2012), and the threshold was probably the basilica's reused door jamb. It was laid over an ancient wall, on both sides of which were openings to a cistern (Fig. 2c, d). The opening north of the wall (now covered by stones; Fig. 2c) leads to a shaft that connects with the cistern, while the 8-shaped opening south of the wall leads to the cistern directly (Figs. 2d, 3).



Fig. 2. Aerial view of Area A, looking south: (a) the benched room, (b) the massive threshold, (c) the shaft leading to the cistern, (d) the cistern's main opening (Photo: Michael Peleg).

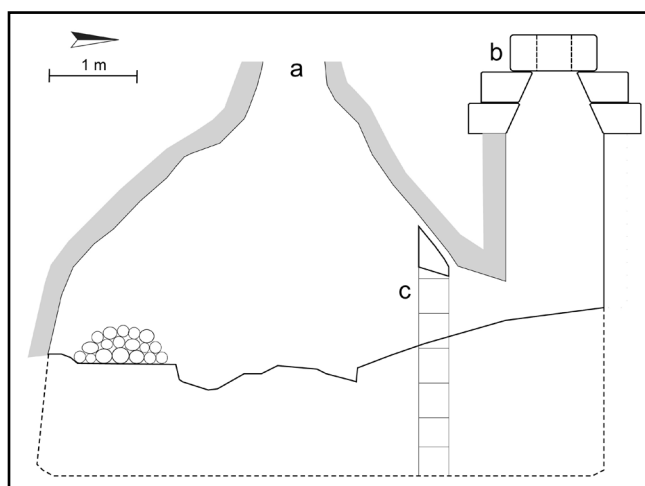


Fig. 3. Cistern in Area A, west-facing section: (a) main opening, (b) side opening through a shaft, (c) built arch (Survey: Danny Binshtok).

The cistern is bell-shaped and coated with a white-on-gray plaster, typical of the water installations at Beth She'arim (e.g., the water reservoirs in the cemetery; Tsuk, Bordowicz, and Kohn-Tavor 2017: 549, 555). Oddly, a freestanding arch was constructed on the northern side of the cistern. It was oriented east-west and measured 2.8 m high and 2.2 m wide (Fig. 4). A section dug into the fill down to the cistern's floor demonstrated that the lower part of the arch's pillar was plastered. The arch's upper side does not reach the cistern's wall, leaving a 0.2 m gap between them (Figs. 3c, 4, 5). Thus, the arch's purpose is unclear. Perhaps, its builders sought to reinforce the cistern's wall, and the gap between them was once packed with fieldstones.



Fig. 4. The arch in the cistern in Area A, looking north (Photo: Danny Binshtok).

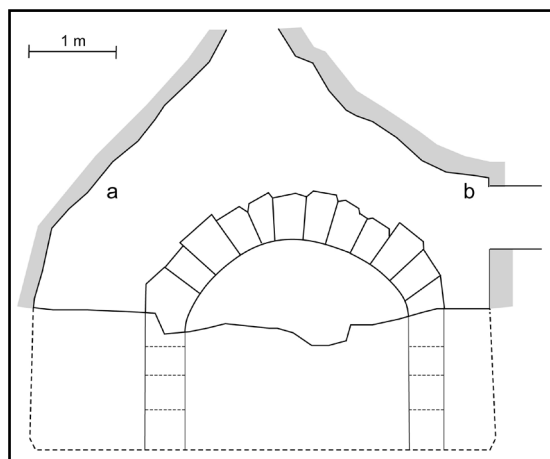


Fig. 5. Cistern in Area A, north-facing section; note hiding tunnel on the right and the asymmetry of the cistern's west (a) and east (b) walls (Survey: Danny Binshtok).

Approximately 2.5 m above floor level and near the ceiling, a breach through the cistern's eastern wall was observed (Fig. 5b). It is ca. 55 cm in diameter and cuts through the plaster, leading to a narrow tunnel curving southeast. The tunnel was traced over a distance of 3.5 m before coming upon an earth blockage (Figs. 6, 7). A close look at the tunnel's opening suggests that the wall was replastered after the tunnel went out of use and later broken through again. The section (Fig. 5) shows that the cistern's eastern and western walls are uneven: While the western side curves and widens gently (Fig. 5a), the eastern is cut at a right angle and forms a square shape (Fig. 5b). Perhaps, the right angle of the eastern wall was designed to hide the tunnel from those looking into the cistern from above.



Fig. 6. The arch and the opening to the tunnel in the cistern in Area A, looking east (Photo: Danny Binshtok).



Fig. 7. A view into the tunnel in the cistern in Area A, looking east (Photo: Danny Binshtok).

Elsewhere in the Galilee, hiding tunnels have been shown to begin in the upper section of water cisterns in order to retain these installations' capacity to hold water (e.g., Ḥorbat Mushta, Ḥorbat 'Ammudim; Shvitiel 2019a: 140–141; Shvitiel and Osband 2019: 46*). Notably, the tunnel reported by Avigad also cuts through a cistern but, in this case, seems to have decommissioned it. Conversely, the tunnel from area A coexisted with the cistern, which was useful to the people hiding in the tunnel. Perhaps, the freestanding arch served as a scaffold while quarrying the tunnel or a bridge for accessing the tunnel when the cistern was full of water. Unfortunately, since it remains unexcavated, we have no chronological data with which to date this complex.

2.2. Area C

Area C is located on the southeastern slope of Sheikh Abreik Hill, near the sheik's tomb (Fig. 1). Its southern part, Area C2, includes three main phases. The earliest, dated to the 2nd century CE, comprises debris layers on the bedrock; the second phase, dated to the 3rd century CE, includes patches of floors, walls, and a street, and the latest phase, which is Byzantine and dated to the 5th–6th centuries CE, consists of a stone-paved floor.

On the western side of Area C2, a hiding complex was unearthed underneath the architecture. It consists of three halls (nos. 1–3), a water cistern (no. 4), a narrow tunnel (no. 5), and two entrances (I and II) (Fig. 8). Entrance I on the complex's north end is reached through a shaft, whereas Entrance II on the south end is accessed via Water Cistern 4, a bell-shaped cistern with a rectangular plastered

opening. This cistern was only partly visible before excavation and was found full of modern waste. Like the hiding complex in Area A, Entrance II is a round, ca. 0.5 m-wide opening in the north wall of Cistern 4, leading to Hall 3. The complex, especially the southern part (Cistern 4 and Hall 3), was visited and probably also looted. Therefore, our excavations focused on the northern part (Entrance I, Halls 1 and 2, and Tunnel 5) that was not looted to the ground.

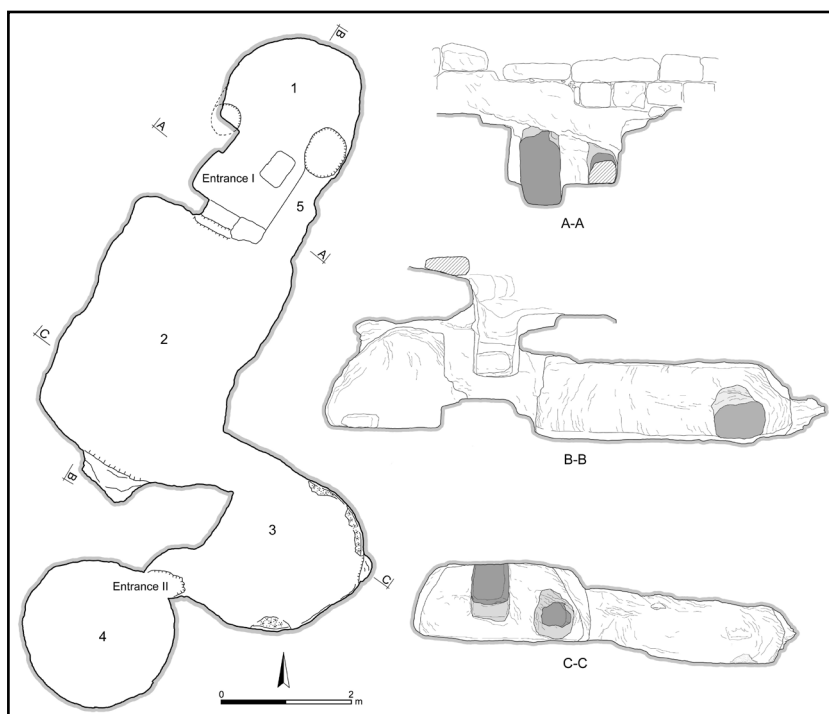


Fig. 8. The hiding complex in Area C, plan and sections (Survey: Slava Pirsky and Sergei Alon).

Entrance I is a small space between Halls 1 and 2, connected to the surface through a rock-cut shaft (Fig. 8B–B). Hall 1, north of Entrance I, is bell-shaped and has a square pillar supporting the ceiling, splitting its entrance in two (Figs. 8A–A, 9). Two shallow depressions in the floor flank the pillar; they were probably used to support storage jars. An arched opening on the south side of Entrance I leads to Hall 2, while Tunnel 5 bypasses Entrance I from the east and connects the two halls directly (Fig. 8C–C). The narrow and roughly hewn Tunnel 5 suggests that Hall 2's arched opening could have been blocked, retaining Tunnel 5 as the only passage through the hiding complex (Fig. 10). A short passage in the southeastern corner of Hall 2 leads to irregularly and roughly hewn Hall 3 and, through Entrance II, to Water Cistern 4.



Fig. 9. Shaft of Entrance I of the hiding complex in Area C, looking northeast; note the pillar between the openings into Hall 1 (Photo: Vera Lehem).



Fig. 10. North wall of Hall 2, looking northeast; note Tunnel 5 on the right (Photo: Adi Erlich).

The following features of Area C's hiding complex are typical of hiding complexes more broadly: narrow tunnels and passages connecting preexisting installations (Water Cistern 4), indications of entrance blocking while maintaining alternative pathways inside the complex (Tunnel 5), and access to water through a breach in the upper reaches of a cistern's walls (Entrance II). Furthermore, although not exclusive, a niche for an oil lamp in the southern wall of Hall 2 is also typical of hiding complexes.

Halls 1 and 2 were excavated to their floor. Hall 1 was full of debris that had accumulated over the years. In both halls, the pottery on the floor dates from the Byzantine period, 5th–6th centuries CE, presumably marking the latest use of the underground complex. Concerning when it was quarried, there is no direct evidence to draw on. Nevertheless, this project must have been undertaken during one of the site's Roman phases, when the structures of Area C2 were being built. More specifically, the earliest remains on the surface are attributed to the 2nd century CE, offering a *terminus post quem* for the hiding complex.

2.3. Area D

Area D is located on the southwestern side of Sheikh Abreik Hill. The area consists of houses, streets, and installations dated to the Roman and Byzantine periods, including a couple of underground installations for collecting water: a bell-shaped water cistern, a cistern with a side shaft, and several plastered halls. Another underground system is a hiding complex, most of which was systematically excavated and nearly entirely documented.

The hiding complex stretches between two units: a room crossed by an arch (henceforth *the Arch Room*) on the south (Fig. 11a), where the complex's original entrance was located (Fig. 11b), and a bell-shaped cistern on the north, where we first entered (Fig. 11d). It consists of two entrances on its southwest (I, II), six variably shaped (square, round, and irregular) halls (1–6), one of which is a water cistern (Hall 5), and five passages or corridors (10–14) (Fig. 12). Below, we describe the complex from south to north.



Fig. 11. Orthophoto of Area D with the plan of the hiding complex (in yellow): (a) the Arch Room's arch, (b) Entrance I, (c) Entrance II, (d) the cistern's opening (Photo: Slava Pirsky and Sergei Alon; survey: Danny Binshtok).

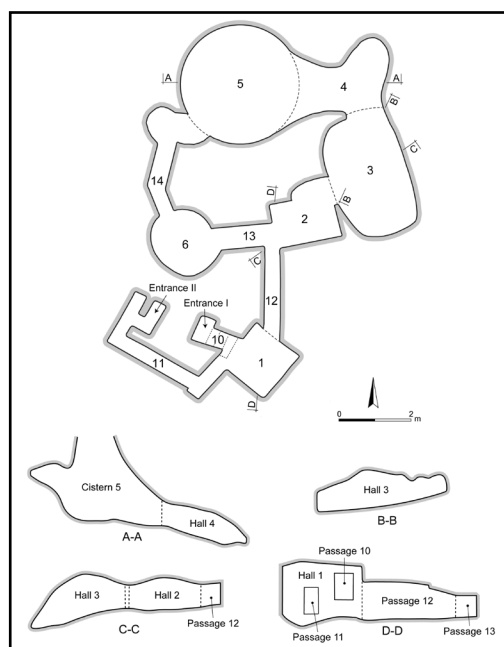


Fig. 12. Hiding complex in Area D, plan and sections (Survey: Slava Pirsky and Sergei Alon).

The underground system was quarried from the partially sunken Arch Room; its lower part is cut into the bedrock, while its superstructure is built of stones. The arch spanning the room is made of ashlar, and its pillars are attached to the wall (Fig. 13). Two shafts were cut in the bedrock on either side of the arch's southern pillar, leading into the hiding complex and constituting Entrances I and II (Fig. 14). It is unclear whether the arch was built before or after the entrances.

Entrance I in the room's southeast corner was sealed with soil and a stone slab (Fig. 13). It comprises a shaft (Fig. 15) followed by stepped Passage 10 and Hall 1 (Fig. 16). Small niches are carved in the shaft's walls and near the entrance to Hall 1. Entrance II is another shaft (Fig. 17). It leads to a tunnel that turns northwest and then branches in opposite directions. The northeast branch culminates in a dead end while the southwest branch—Passage 11—makes two sharp left turns over a distance of 3.2 m (Fig. 18). This part of the hiding complex was carefully excavated, and its finds are discussed below.



Fig. 13. Area D, the Arch Room, looking south; note the stone slab in the room's corner, sealing Entrance I (Photo: Tanya Sokolsky).

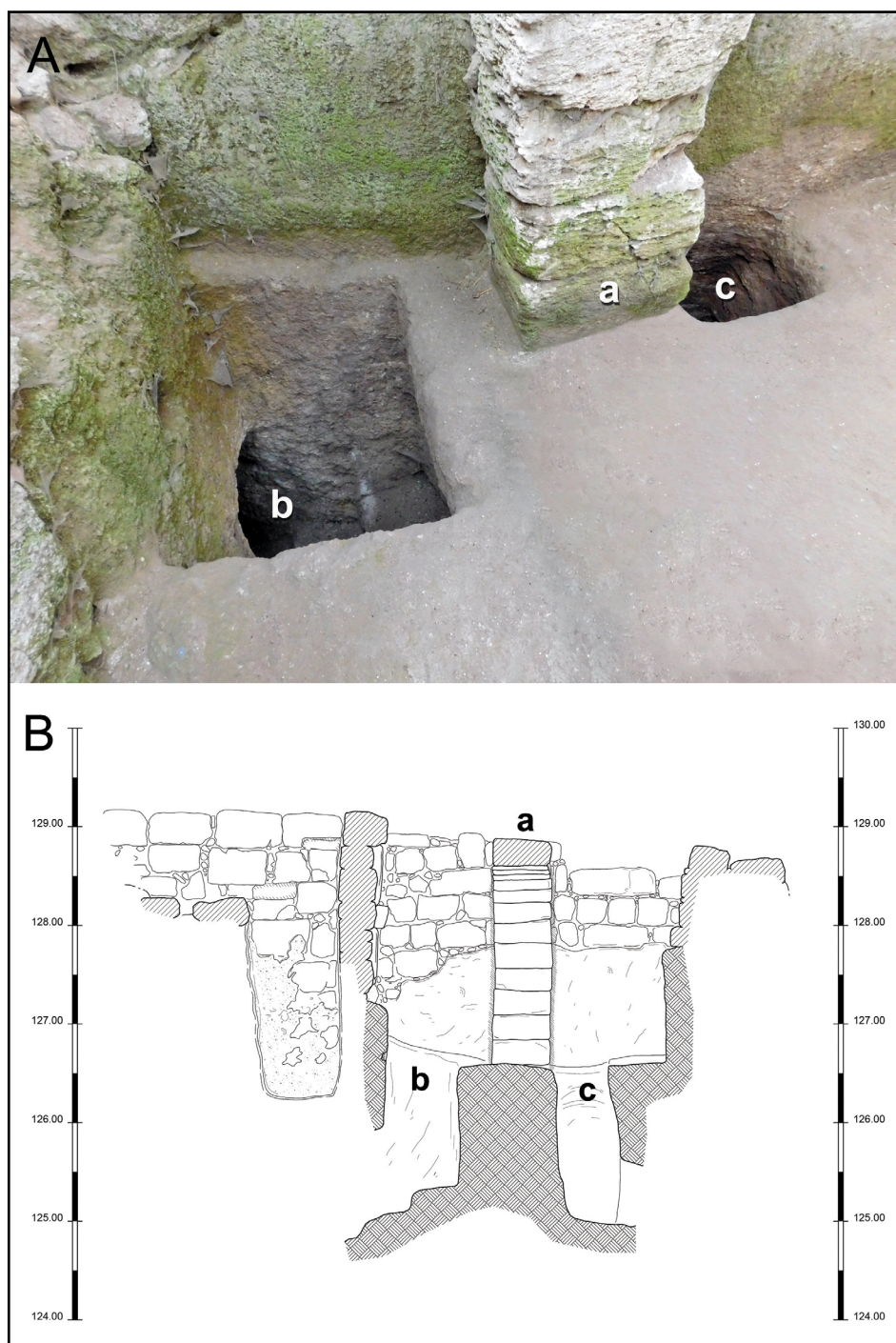


Fig. 14. Area D, the Arch Room and the two entrances, photo and section, looking south:
 (a) arch, (b) Entrance I, (c) Entrance II
 (Photo: Tanya Sokolsky; Section: Slava Pirsky and Sergei Alon).

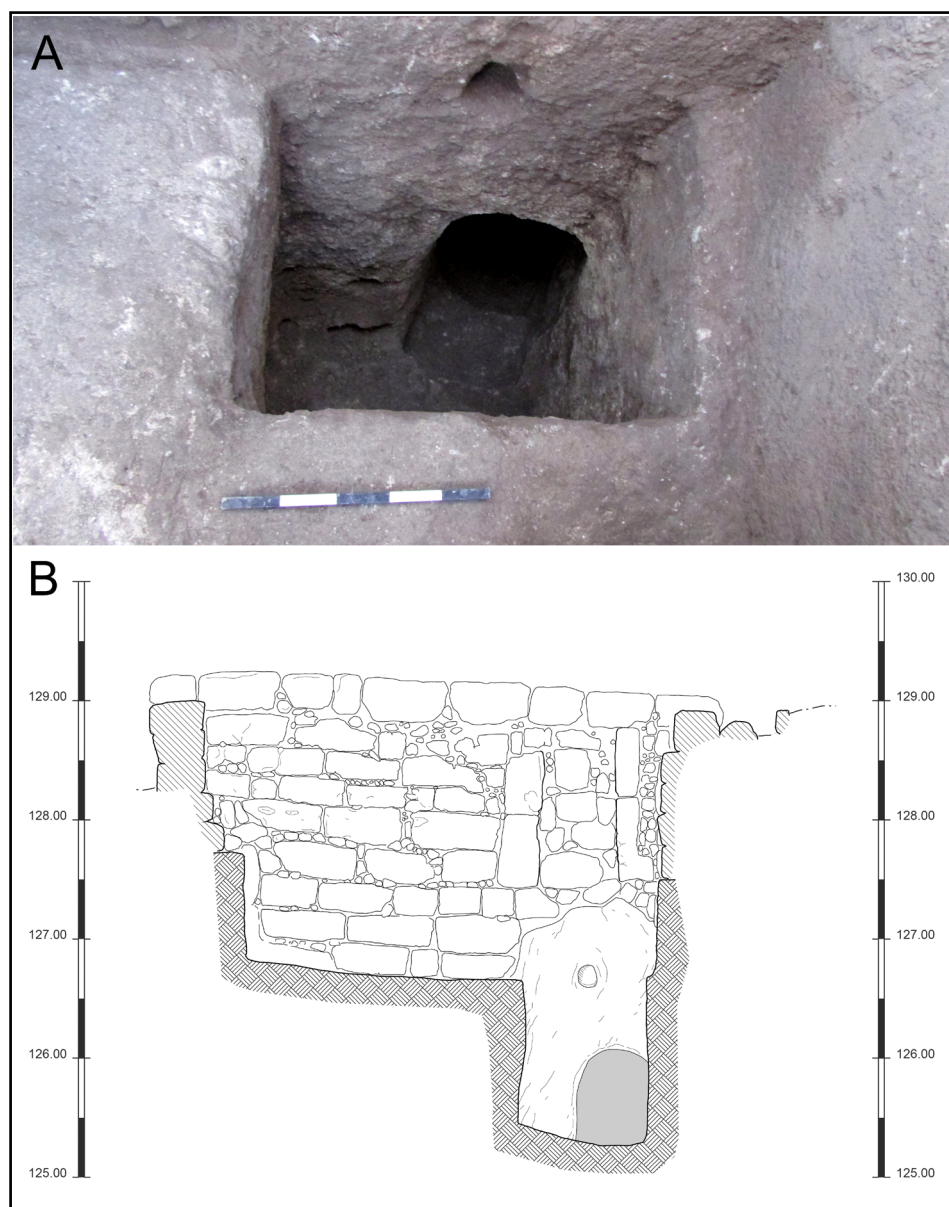


Fig. 15. Area D, Entrance I, photo and section, looking southeast (Photo: Tanya Sokolsky; Section: Slava Pirskey and Sergei Alon).

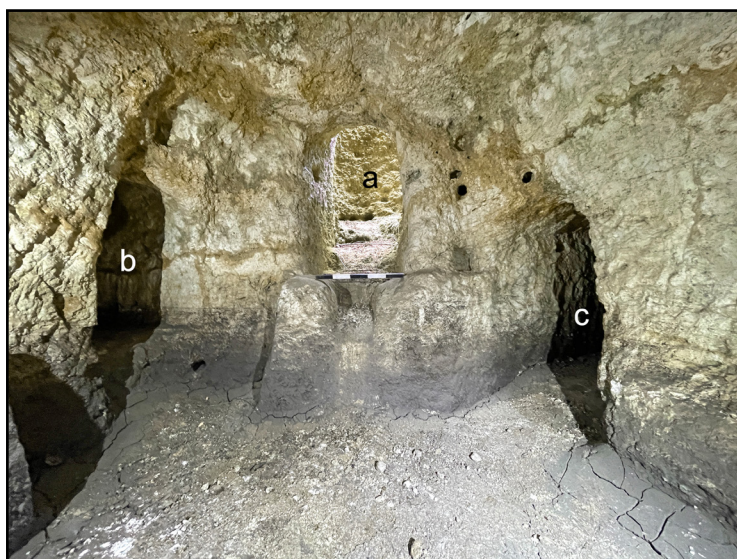


Fig. 16. Area D, Hall 1, looking west: (a) Passage 10 and Entrance I, (b) Passage 11, (c) Passage 12 (Photo: Danny Binshtok).



Fig. 17. Area D, Entrance II, looking southwest (Photo: Tanya Sokolsky).



Fig. 18. Area D, Passage 11, looking northwest (Photo: Danny Binshtok).

From Hall 1, Passage 12 leads north, deeper into the complex. It is 2.5 m long, coming upon a ring of halls (2–6) and passages (13, 14). Several observations concerning this ring are noteworthy. Passage 14 is blocked with earth and was not excavated, but on one end, we could see the light of a torch shined from the other. Hall 5 was a cistern, but unlike those of Areas A and C described above, the tunnels adjoining it were hewn at floor level, thus putting it out of use. We did not excavate the fill inside the cistern, but it seems to be mainly comprised of accumulated winter wash. Finally, it should be noted that the walls of most of the halls crumbled and collapsed, obscuring the original quarry marks and rendering them morphologically irregular.

The underground complex in Area D has all the characteristics of a hiding complex: Its entrance is concealed inside a house, narrow and low passages cut across preexisting installations (e.g., Cistern 5), variably shaped halls, shifting floor levels, slabs for blocking entrances and passages (Fig. 19), niches for oil lamps (Fig. 20), and entrances that could also serve as air shafts.



Fig. 19. Area D, Hall 1, Passage 11 and blocking slab beside it, looking southwest (Photo: Danny Binshtok).



Fig. 20. Area D, Hall 2, looking southwest; note Passages 12 and 13 in the background and the oil lamp niche to the right (Photo: Danny Binshtok).

It is worthwhile mentioning that if the hiding complex was quarried when Area D's orthogonal plan was already in place, then the complex connects two houses on either side of a street, stretching underneath a public domain. This renders the hiding complex a communal venture, not a private one, or a project that served at least two households, utilizing installations and rooms of more than one property.

The hiding complex of area D provides valuable information concerning its date and, by extension, the date of other hiding complexes at Beth She'arim. Broadly speaking, it was quarried in the 2nd century CE and went out of use in the early 4th century CE. Let us first examine its final phase.

The Arch Room went out of use at some point at the beginning of the 4th century CE, thereafter becoming a site of waste disposal and amassing a fill of earth, stones, and small finds. The pottery from this fill includes many diagnostic sherds of Kefar Hananya types; most date from the 2nd–mid-4th centuries CE (1B, 1D, and 3B), while fewer date from the 3rd–early 5th centuries CE (1D, 4D). The oil lamps draw a similar picture: of nine oil lamps in the fill, eight are dated to the 1st–3rd centuries CE (mostly Broneer XXV type) and one to the 3rd–4th centuries CE (Fig. 21a). It seems that the room went out of use by the beginning of the 4th century CE and was filled to its top by the middle of that century. Interestingly, the pottery from Hall 1 presents a similar chronological distribution (Fig. 21b; Appendix A). Furthermore, similar ceramic assemblages and fragments of one specific cooking pot were found in the shaft of Entrance II, Passage 11, and Hall 1. The stone slab in the Arch Room's corner might have also been placed there at that time, if not earlier.



Fig. 21. Area D, oil lamps found in the Arch Room (a) and Hall 1 (b) (Photo: Maria Bukin).

The picture emerging in the north part of the complex is similar. The upper opening of the cistern (Hall 5) was blocked by a wall in the early–mid-4th century CE when the architectural layout changed and new rooms were constructed (Fig. 22). Thus, by the beginning of the 4th century CE, the hiding complex went out of use, and by the middle of the century, it was no longer accessible, buried under thick layers of earthen debris or sealed beneath later buildings.



Fig. 22. The cistern's opening, Area D: (a) sealed below a 4th-century CE wall, looking northwest (Photo: Tanya Sokolsky); (b) after the removal of the 4th-century CE wall, looking northeast (Photo: Vera Lehem); (c) from below, looking west (Photo: Adi Erlich).

What can we say about when the complex was quarried? First, Hall 5's stratigraphy and the few pottery sherds found on bedrock near its opening on the surface suggest it was quarried in the Middle Roman period. Second, the fill in the shaft of Entrance I (L248) produced Roman-period pottery spanning the 2nd and 4th centuries CE (Appendix B). As such, it is much like the assemblages of the Arch Room's fill. However, while the Arch Room's assemblage—and those of Entrance II and Hall 1, for that matter—includes ceramic types that are 3rd century CE or later, the assemblage of Entrance I seems slightly earlier (L249; Appendix A) and, therefore, could predate the 3rd century CE. Thus, although, strictly speaking, the shaft of Entrance I could have been sealed at any time between 100 and 350 CE, its stratigraphic position below the Arch Room's fill and the difference between their assemblages suggest that an early date is more probable, possibly during the first half of the 2nd century CE.

Under these circumstances, we can postulate that Entrance I was the complex's original entrance, which was later blocked and replaced with Entrance II. Presumably, the motivation behind this move was to conceal the entrance to the complex, replacing a conspicuous and conveniently accessed opening with a better camouflaged, narrower, and steeper one. Therefore, we suggest that the complex was quarried from the southeast corner of the Arch Room in the first half of the 2nd century CE, establishing Entrance I as the primary access point and Entrance II as the secondary access point. At some stage, still in the 2nd century CE, Entrance I was blocked (L249), and the less conspicuous shaft of Entrance II was used instead. Given these dates, we suggest that the hiding complex of area D was quarried in relation to the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Further support for this conclusion is provided by a unique find from the shaft of Entrance II (L267): a decorated accessory of a bronze vessel, probably part of a jug handle, depicting a nude Eros holding a spear with a silver stripe decoration (Fig. 23). This rare find recalls the Middle Roman-period bronze jugs found in the Judean desert caves that served the Bar Kokhba refugees (Yadin 1963: 63–83, Pls. 18–23). Recently, in December 2021, the Robbery Prevention Unit of the Israel Antiquities Authority captured similar items presumed to have been robbed from a hiding complex in the Judean Shephelah (Tress 2021). This almost anecdotal find reinforces the association of the Area D complex with the Bar Kokhba Revolt.



Fig. 23. A bronze and silver accessory, probably a jug handle from the debris in Entrance II (Photo: Liran Yochanna).

3. Conclusions: The Beth She'arim Hiding Complexes in Historical Context

The underground complexes in Beth She'arim are typical Galilean hiding complexes. They are found in a Jewish settlement equipped with a Jewish necropolis, a synagogue, and ritual baths. The underground complexes are related to Roman-period houses and appropriate preexisting underground installations. The hiding complex in Area D is of the meticulously hewn type (Shivtiel and Osband 2019: 252–254). Unfortunately, its walls crumbled due to the local chalk's poor quality, obscuring their originally smooth surfaces. Quarrying and setting

up these complexes seem to have been a collective endeavor, not a mere whim, requiring the participation and agreement of several households, perhaps even the town council.

Dating a hiding complex is a complicated matter. Only a handful of Galilean complexes can be attributed to the Bar Kokhba Revolt, and less than a quarter yielded 2nd-century CE finds (Raviv and Ben David 2021: 590, n. 22; Shvitzel 2021: 461–471). Thus, the hiding complexes of Beth She'arim constitute a significant contribution. Notably, these complexes do not predate the 2nd century CE, as is clearly observed in Areas C and D. Strikingly, in Area B, a 1st-century CE estate or fort was revealed (Erich 2021), including underground installations but no hiding complexes. This observation is in line with Josephus's testimony that during the Great Revolt, Beth She'arim was an estate of the pro-Roman queen Berenice and a stronghold of Ebutius, a Roman commander whom Josephus defeated (Josephus, *Life*, 118–19). Thus, it is unlikely that the site constituted a Jewish town at this time, not to mention its inhabitants quarrying hiding complexes under Roman noses. It seems that Beth She'arim was in Roman hands until Josephus's abovementioned victory over Ebutius.

It seems that Beth She'arim became a Jewish town only after the Great Revolt, featuring many buildings, ritual baths, and Jewish stone vessels (Erich 2021).¹ However, finds attributable to the period between the revolts are few. Surely, this is because later activities and ongoing occupation removed, obscured, and camouflaged earlier traces. Thus, the renewed excavations at Beth She'arim produced 128 Middle and Late Roman-period coins, most of which date from the 3rd century CE, and only nine (7%) are assigned to the period between the revolts.² The excavation of the *Slik* Reservoir near Catacombs 1–4 in the cemetery proved that this giant water installation was built between the revolts (Tsuk, Bordowicz, and Kohn-Tavor 2017). The historical evidence about Beth She'arim between the revolts is also scant: We are told of Rabbi Johanan ben Nuri, one of the Galilean sages, who lived at the site before the Bar Kokhba Revolt (Mazar 1973: 4; Safrai 2004: 55; Tepper and Tepper 2004: 72–73). Thus, the evidence at hand seems to indicate that the Jewish settlement of Beth She'arim came into being between the revolts, probably in the early 2nd century CE.

1 Mazar (1973:17) attributed the beginning of the 2nd century CE to the Early Roman period (Period I) as a continuation of the Early Roman period; our excavations, however, show that the Early Roman period is a separate phase in the site's life.

2 We are grateful to Danny Syon, who has studied the coins. The 128 Middle and Late Roman coins span the end of the Great Revolt in 70 CE and the beginning of the Constantine dynasty, ca. 306 CE. The nine coins from between the revolts or the Bar Kokhba Revolt are as follows: one Agrippa II coin dated to 85/86 CE, two Autonomous coins dated to 87/85 and 107/8 CE, four Trajan dated to 98–117 CE, and two Hadrian coins dated to 117–138 CE. Of the last two, one is specifically dated to 134–138 CE.

Notwithstanding the scant and flimsy evidence at hand, the Bar Kokhba Revolt or its anticipation is the most probable cause for the hiding complexes at Beth She'arim. Some supporting evidence includes the following observations. The cisterns incorporated into the hiding complexes were coated with the same gray-on-white plaster that coated the *Slik* Reservoir mentioned above and was typical of the 1st–2nd centuries CE. The pottery in the fill sealing Entrance I of the hiding complex in Area D is contemporaneous with the Bar Kokhba Revolt, although it can also be later, and the stratigraphy of the nearby features supports this date as well. Lastly, the decorated bronze handle found in the complex resembles prestige vessels from the Bar Kokhba time. Therefore, it is most likely that the hiding complexes of Beth She'arim were quarried in association with the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

Beth She'arim also offers evidence of the hiding complexes' fate after the time of Bar Kokhba. The complex in Area D was accessible and perhaps also in use throughout the Middle Roman period and well into the 3rd century CE. Continued use of hiding complexes throughout the Roman period is well-known in the Galilee, as Shvitzel (2021: 461–471) has already pointed out. By the beginning or middle of the 4th century CE, the whole complex fell into disuse and was sealed, as was also the case with the hiding complex in 'Enot Sho'im in the Lower Galilee, which was also used for two or more centuries (Leibner, Shvitzel, and Distelfeld 2015).

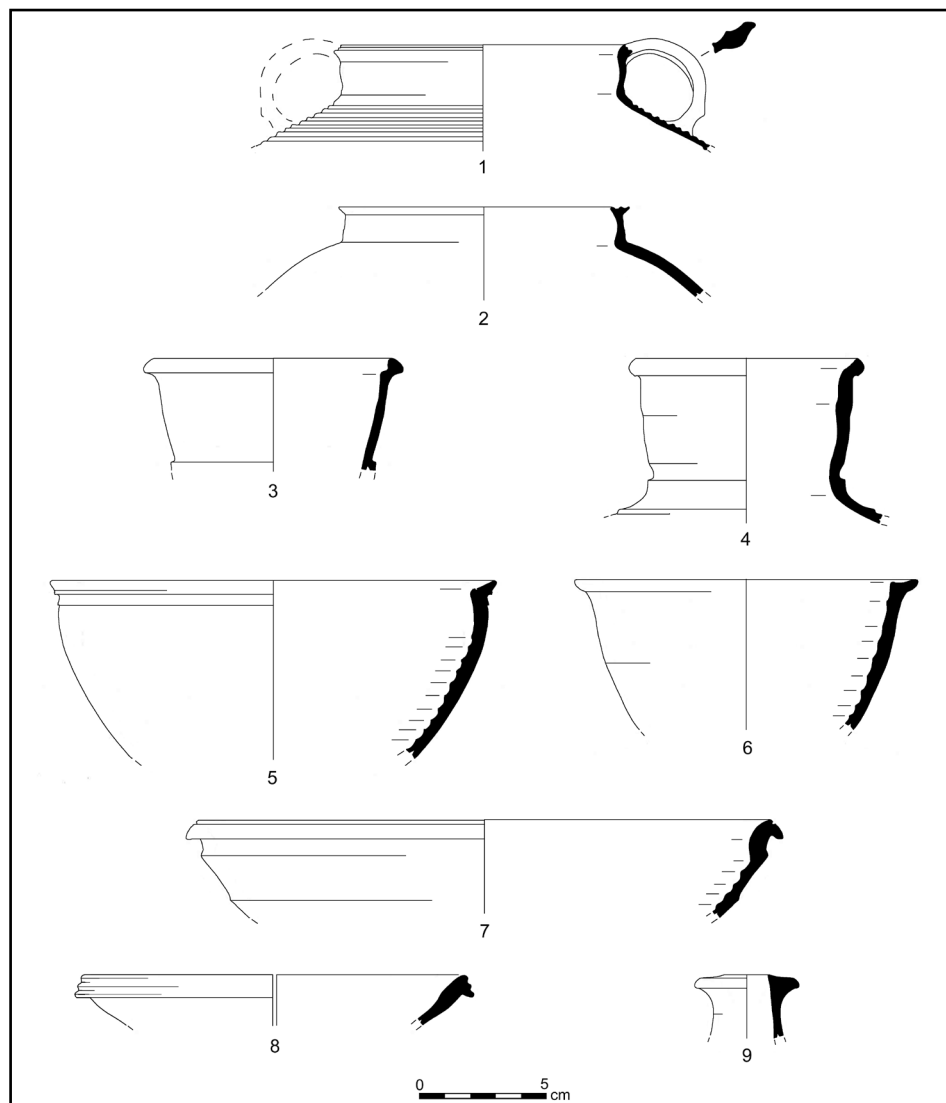
If the complex of area D was still in use in the mid-4th century CE, it might have also served the rebels in the Gallus Revolt (352 CE), of which we have very little evidence. This may have also been the case in other Galilean hiding complexes, which were still active during the 4th century CE, such as Ḥorbat Qisi, Ḥorbat Mishkena (Shvitzel 2019a: 198–204), and Ḥuqoq (Shvitzel 2016). Beth She'arim's involvement in the Gallus Revolt is debated. Mazar (1973: 76–77) believed the town was destroyed in the revolt, but Bijovsky (2007) has since disproved this claim (see also Leibner 2009: 375–376). Still, if the Gallus Revolt affected Beth She'arim to some degree, this could have been the last occasion of the hiding complex's reuse.

There is an ongoing debate on the role that Jewish Galilee played in the Bar Kokhba Revolt, and recent studies have been pointing to growing evidence in favor of active Galilean participation (Raviv and Ben David 2021: 594–495; Shvitzel 2021). Beth She'arim humbly contributes towards an answer to this intriguing question and provides more food for thought about the hiding complexes in Galilee.

Appendices: The Pottery from Area D

By Vladimir Lehem

Appendix A: The Floor of Hall 1, Locus 249

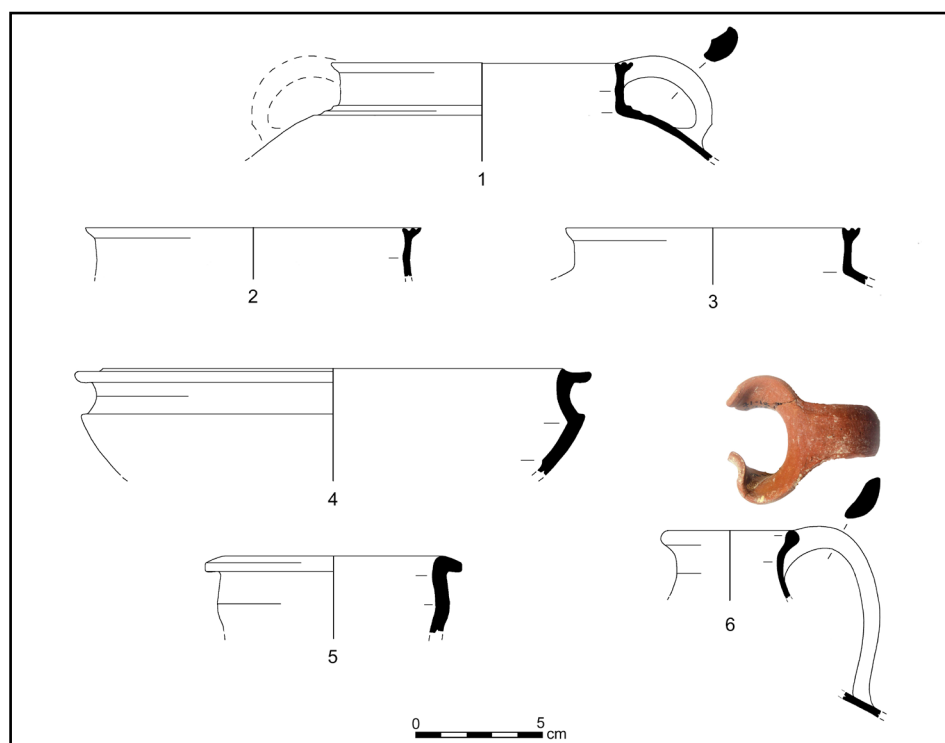


No.	Basket	Vessel type	Description	Type, parallels, dating
1	519	Cooking pot	Dark brown clay with a brownish gray core, small and medium white grits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diez-Fernandez's Form T 10.4, late 1st century BCE–late 2nd century CE (Diez-Fernandez 1983: 119) ▪ <i>Capernaum</i>, Type PENT 6, Early Roman to 1st decade of Middle Roman period (Loffreda 2008: 176).
2	518	Cooking pot	Metallic smooth brown fabric, gray near the rim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Kefar Hananya</i> Form 4C, early 2nd–mid-4th centuries CE (Adan-Bayewitz 1993: 128–130) ▪ <i>Sepphoris</i>, mid-2nd–early 4th centuries CE (Balouka 2013: 22).
3	518	Jar	Metallic smooth pale brown surface, grey core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Shikhin Jar” ▪ <i>Capernaum</i>, Type ANF 10, Early Roman to beginning of the Middle Roman period (Loffreda 2008: 117–118) ▪ <i>Sepphoris</i>, Type SJ2, 1st–late 3rd centuries CE (Balouka 2013: 37–38) ▪ <i>Khirbet Wadi Hamam</i>, pre-130 CE (Leibner 2018: 309)
4	519	Jar	Pinkish fabric, pale buff surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Shikhin Jar” ▪ <i>Capernaum</i>, Type ANF 11, Middle Roman period (Loffreda 2008: 118–119)³ ▪ <i>Sepphoris</i>, Type SJ3, 2nd–late 3rd/early 4th centuries CE (Balouka 2013: 37–38) ▪ <i>Khirbet Wadi Hamam</i>, early 2nd–late 3rd centuries CE (Leibner 2018: 312)
5	519	Bowl/lid	Metallic smooth pale brown surface, gray core, calcareous inclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Bell Lid” ▪ <i>Jalame</i>, 3rd–4th centuries CE (Johnson 1988: 220, Fig. 7–55:828) ▪ <i>Sepphoris</i>, mid-2nd–4th centuries CE (Balouka 2013: 52)
6	518	Bowl/lid	Buff fabric, small and medium white and gray inclusions, gray core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Bell Lid” ▪ <i>Jalame</i>, 3rd–4th centuries CE (Johnson 1988: 220, Fig. 7–55:828) ▪ <i>Sepphoris</i>, mid-2nd–4th centuries CE (Balouka 2013: 52)
7	519	Bowl	Dark brown, exterior unevenly fired dark gray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Kefar Hananya</i>, Form 1C, mid-3rd–late 4th centuries CE (Adan Bayewitz 1993: 98–100) ▪ <i>Sepphoris</i>, mid/late-3rd–4th centuries CE (Balouka 2013: 33)

3 Alternatively, the fragment belongs to a Middle Roman vessel (Type ANF 11 of Capernaum or Type SJ3 of Sepphoris).

No.	Basket	Vessel type	Description	Type, parallels, dating
8	519	Bowl	Brown clay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Kefar Hananya</i>, Form 1D, mid-3rd–late 4th centuries CE (Adan Bayewitz 1993: 100–103) ▪ <i>Sepphoris</i>, mid-/late 3rd–late-4th centuries CE (Balouka 2013: 33)
9	519	Unguentarium	Pink/yellowish clay with numerous white inclusions	-----

Appendix B: The Fill in Entrance I, Locus 248



No.	Basket	Vessel type	Description	Type, parallels, dating
1	515	Cooking pot	Metallic smooth reddish brown fabric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Kefar Hananya</i>, Form 4C, early 2nd–mid-4th centuries CE (Adan-Bayewitz 1993: 128–130) ▪ <i>Sepphoris</i>, mid-2nd–early 4th centuries CE (Balouka 2013: 22).
2	515	Cooking pot	Metallic dark brown fabric, exterior fired dark grey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Kefar Hananya</i>, Form 4C, early 2nd–mid-4th centuries CE (Adan-Bayewitz 1993: 128–130) ▪ <i>Sepphoris</i>, mid-2nd–early 4th centuries CE (Balouka 2013: 22).

No.	Basket	Vessel type	Description	Type, parallels, dating
3	515	Cooking pot	Metallic smooth reddish brown fabric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Kefar Hananya</i>, Form 4C, early 2nd–mid-4th centuries CE (Adan-Bayewitz 1993: 128–130) ▪ <i>Sepphoris</i>, mid-2nd–early 4th centuries CE (Balouka 2013: 22).
4	515	Casserole	Metallic smooth brown fabric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Kefar Hananya</i>, Form 3B, early 2nd–late 4th centuries CE (Adan-Bayewitz 1993: 119–124) ▪ <i>Sepphoris</i>, mid-2nd–early/mid-4th centuries CE (Balouka 2013: 28)
5	515	Jar	Pale brown fabric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extended Rim Jar, early 2nd–late 3rd centuries CE (Osband 2014: 56, with data from el-Arais and Hippos)
6	515	Jug	Brown fabric, smooth, traces of manual processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trefoil-Rim Jug ▪ Diez-Fernandez's Form 9.8, late 1st–late 3rd centuries CE (Diez-Fernandez 1983: 152) ▪ <i>Hammat Gader</i>, no date (Ben-Arieh 1997, pl. V:2) ▪ <i>Nahal Haggit</i>, Middle Roman (Seligman 2010: Fig. 3.10:7–8)

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