

“Along the Road to Bet Shemesh”

(I Samuel 6:12)

Archaeological Studies of the Ramat Bet Shemesh Region

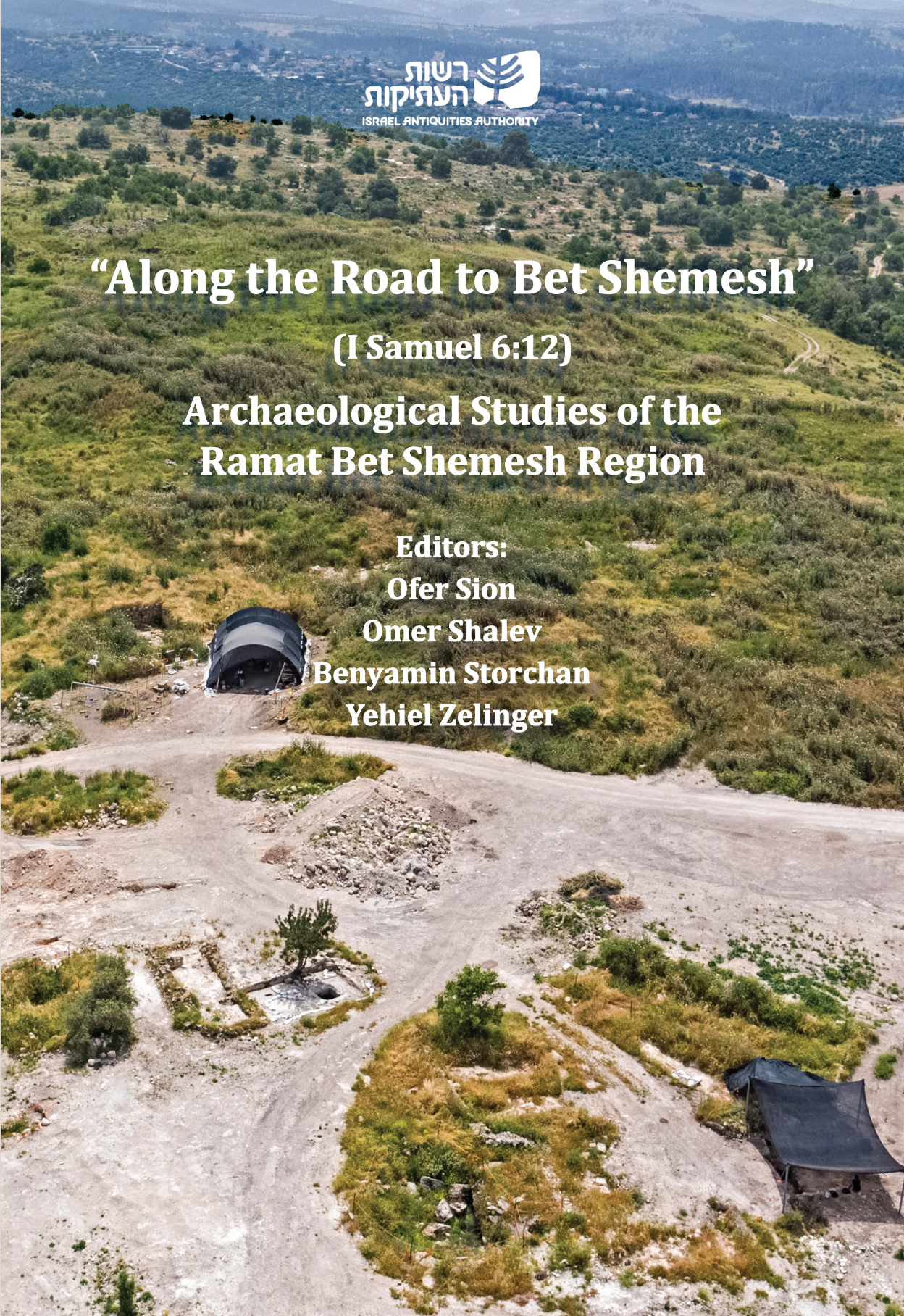
Editors:

Ofer Sion

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Jerusalem 2023

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Front and Back Cover: Aerial view of excavations at Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif, looking southeast (photography: Asaf Peretz); insert—a watercolor impression of the landscape near the Church of the Glorious Martyr, on the outskirts of Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif (drawing: Michelle Lyszyk)

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List of Abbreviations

AA	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i>
ACOR	American Center of Oriental Research
ADAJ	<i>Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ʿAtiqot (ES)	English Series
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAIAS	<i>Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society (Strata BAIAS from 2009)</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BAR Int. S.	British Archaeological Reports (International Series)
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BMB	<i>Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth</i>
CAENL	Contributions to the Archaeology of Egypt, Nubia and the Levant
ESI	<i>Excavations and Surveys in Israel</i>
HA-ESI	<i>Hadashot Arkheologiyot-Excavations and Surveys in Israel (from 1999)</i>
IAA Reports	Israel Antiquities Authority Reports
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
INR	<i>Israel Numismatic Research</i>
JAS	<i>Journal of Archaeological Science</i>
JEMAHS	<i>Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies</i>
JFA	<i>Journal of Field Archaeology</i>
JIPS	<i>Journal of the Israel Prehistoric Society (Mitekufat Haeven)</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSP	Judea & Samaria Publications
JWP	<i>Journal of World Prehistory</i>
LA	<i>Liber Annuus</i>
LIMC	<i>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</i>
NEA	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
NEAEHL	<i>E. Stern and A. Lewinson-Gilboa eds. The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land 1-4. Jerusalem 1993</i>

<i>NEAEHL 5</i>	<i>E. Stern ed. The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land 5: Supplementary Volume. Jerusalem 2008</i>
<i>PEFA</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Fund Annual</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>QDAP</i>	<i>Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine</i>
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue archéologique</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>SAOC</i>	<i>Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization</i>
<i>SBF</i>	<i>Studium Biblicum Franciscanum</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

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EDITORIAL

The early nineteenth century explorers of the Land of Israel, Edward Robinson and Eli Smith, documented their impressions of the Bet Shemesh region in *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea*, published in 1841:

This may be called the hill-country, in distinction from the higher mountains on the East. It is the middle region between the mountains and the plain, stretching as we have seen far to the North and South, except where interrupted north of the mouth of Wady es-Sūrâr [Soreq]. This region is for the most part a beautiful open country, consisting of low hills usually rocky, separated by broad arable valleys mostly sown with grain, as are also many of the swelling hills. The whole tract is full of villages and deserted sites and ruins; and many olive-groves appear around the former (p. 341).

Since their visit, and especially over the last decades, the landscape of Bet Shemesh has changed dramatically. The once green hills have now been replaced with modern buildings, and the open valleys—with paved roads. As a product of intensive development works, the Bet Shemesh region has become an archaeological microcosm, with constant archaeological monitoring of the extensive development work, leading to numerous salvage excavations. These excavations have uncovered a rich tapestry of remains representing many aspects of ancient life, including settlements, farmsteads, stone quarries, agricultural terrace walls, winepresses, limekilns, columbaria, cisterns and burial caves. While most of the excavations have been undertaken by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), university institutions and private archaeology companies have played a vital role in the fieldwork and scholarly impact of these excavations. Additional IAA projects in the region have been undertaken for conservation, restoration, community education and tourism development purposes.

The huge volume of research emanating from the Bet Shemesh region could not have been accomplished without the Ramat Bet Shemesh Regional Project, spearheaded by Y. Dagan. The cumulation of the project was published as a two-volume report (IAA Reports 46 and 47) comprising a gazetteer compiled from

surveys and excavations and a volume dedicated to thematic studies. In many ways, the field methodologies developed during this project and its database serve as the backbone for all subsequent research, including the studies presented in this book.

The fieldwork conducted over the last several decades in Ramat Bet Shemesh has uncovered a plethora of finds from prehistoric times to the British Mandate period. While most of the research is still ongoing, some excavations have already been published as final reports, articles and dissertations.

Ramat Bet Shemesh has clearly defined geographical boundaries, with Naḥal Soreq on the north, Naḥal Zanoaḥ and Judean Hills on the east, and the Naḥal Ha-Ela on the south. The western border of this region extends along Naḥal Yarmut and Naḥal Yish'i, both of which flow alongside Road 38, the main thoroughfare that traverses the Judean Shephelah from north to south. Ramat Bet Shemesh, as a modern city, can also be defined by the municipal boundaries of the city of Bet Shemesh, including areas zoned for new neighborhoods. These conditions have made the archaeology of Ramat Bet Shemesh a unique test case, in which extensive archaeological research has been conducted within a relatively small geographical unit and has provided an abundance of data, which is still unclear in other areas in the Judean Shephelah.

The articles in this book are presented chronologically, painting a comprehensive and diverse archaeological picture. Some articles offer expansive overviews of the region during specific periods, while others focus on individual sites, finds or on a distinctive phenomenon. In the opening article, Shadman presents the complex relationship between the archaeological and developmental agencies. He elucidates the planning and development processes for Ramat Bet Shemesh and the considerations for preserving archaeological sites and the region's cultural heritage. He further describes the creative solutions implemented on-site to preserve archaeological remains despite modern development.

The article by Ben-Ari and Eirikh-Rose opens the first section of the book, which covers prehistoric through biblical times. The article focuses on the late prehistoric, Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods. It places a central emphasis on the sites recently uncovered around Ramat Bet Shemesh, but also examines other sites in the surrounding area. The authors summarize the finds, classifying them into sub-periods during which permanent settlements first appeared in the region and when the 'agricultural revolution' took place. Alongside a review of material culture from each period, the authors highlight changes in settlement distribution that occurred over time.

During the Early Bronze Age, one of the largest and most significant city-states in the Land of Israel was established at Tel Yarmut. Two articles focus on this

site through different prisms. The article by Paz and Mizrahi discusses caves and subterranean complexes excavated outside the city walls. These served as dwellings and burial sites, shedding new light on the relationship between the urban center on the tell and its agricultural periphery. The article by Shalev et al. explores Tel Yarmut from the present to the past. It describes the process of developing public access to the site and within it by overviewing the challenges and dilemmas related to the preservation and presentation of the archaeological remains.

The article by Paz et al. focuses on the Intermediate Bronze Age remains in the Bet Shemesh region, after Tel Yarmut declined from its prominence. It discusses the cemetery at the foot of Khirbat el-'Alya, one of the largest cemeteries in the Land of Israel during this period, where approximately 200 shaft tombs were discovered. By illuminating the archaeological finds, the spatial distribution of the tombs, their orientations and the burial offerings they contained, the authors seek to glean information on the social relationships of the people of this era.

Wiegmann's article explores the domestic architecture of Khirbat Qeiyafa during the Iron Age IIA. The article explores possible environmental factors that influenced the planning of the structures at the site and compares them with other known Iron Age dwelling types, thus shedding light on the family structure of Khirbat Qeiyafa's inhabitants.

The article by Sion et al. opens the second section of the book, which covers Classical through Modern times. During this time span, the settlement at the site of Bet Naṭif was the central settlement in the region, serving as a district town (*toparchy*) in the Roman period. The article is the initial publication of the recent excavations conducted at the site and of the re-exposure of the famed water cisterns originally excavated by Baramki almost a century ago. Based on the renewed excavations, the authors seek to establish the site's chronological sequence and outline the characteristics of the settlement in each period.

Two articles provide a comprehensive overview of the periods during which Bet Naṭif was at its zenith. The first of the two, by Shalev, Benenstein and Tal, examines the settlements surrounding Ramat Bet Shemesh from the Hasmonean period up to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, when a Jewish population inhabited the area. By examining a series of sites and focusing on features such as *miqva'ot* (ritual baths), hiding complexes and burial caves, the authors shed light on various aspects of Jewish life in the region. They further explore the chronology of the settlement pattern under the influence of two major historical events—the Great Revolt and the Bar-Kokhba Revolt. The second article, by Klein and Levy-Reifer, examines the demographic changes and the actions of the Roman administration in Ramat

Bet Shemesh during the late Roman period, following the Bar-Kokhba Revolt. According to their research, this period saw the settlement of a diverse foreign population, characterized by Roman cultural and material influences, in the Ramat Bet Shemesh region.

Two additional articles delve into the Roman period with a more focused perspective. The article of Betzer, Radashkovsky and Albag presents two mausolea—impressive burial structures—that were uncovered at Khirbat Umm edh-Dhiyab. Using advanced three-dimensional modeling and archaeological parallels from across the Roman world, the researchers present plausible reconstructions for these structures. These reconstructions rank the mausolea among the most splendid burial sites in the southern part of the Land of Israel during the Roman period.

While Betzer, Radashkovsky and Albag remain uncertain about the ethnic identity of the interred—Jewish or pagan—Storchan's article takes a decisive stance. Storchan presents two Beit Naṭṭif lamps that have been recently uncovered in excavations at the site of Bet Naṭif. The iconography on these lamps, which lacks parallels in the known repertoire of this family of lamps, reflects a distinct pagan worldview influenced by the popular iconography prevalent throughout the Roman Empire at the time.

The book concludes with an article by Ayalon and Gross, which discusses oil-press installations that operated in caves during the late Ottoman period in the village of 'Ein Shems, the last permanent settlement at Tel Bet Shemesh. The authors present a detailed description of these installations and compare them to cave oil presses at contemporary sites, both in the immediate vicinity and beyond. Olive-tree cultivation and olive-oil production by the residents of 'Ein Shems continued a tradition that endured over two millennia at Tel Bet Shemesh, as evidenced by ancient installations for the production of olive oil dating back to the Iron Age.

This book could not have been published without the dedicated work of numerous people and many thanks are due. Firstly, we would like to thank the field workers—excavators, supervisors, surveyors and conservators; the articles in this book are a direct result of their hard work. Thanks to the administrative personnel of the IAA Jerusalem District—Amit Re'em, Amit Shadman, Anna Eirikh-Rose and Semyon Gendler—for their assistance in the field and for their support of this publication. We also wish to thank the researchers who read, reviewed, questioned, corrected and improved the articles; Miriam Feinberg Vamosh for translating

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The words *thank you* are not enough!

The editors

Two Lamps with Pagan Iconography from the Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif Lamp Workshop

Benyamin Storchan

Introduction

This article presents a complete oil lamp and a fragment of an oil lamp, both decorated with unique iconography, recently uncovered during excavations at the Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif¹ terra-cotta workshop (Sion et al., this volume: Figs. 21–23).² The workshop was first identified nearly a century ago, after excavations within the Arab village of Beit Naṭif uncovered two hewn cisterns filled with ceramic production waste, including mold-made oil lamps and figurines (Baramki 1936). The Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif terra-cotta industry is dated to the Late Roman period (third–fourth centuries CE) and is a hallmark of the local material culture of Judea. Although the location of the cisterns was lost after the abandonment of the village, recent expansion of Ramat Bet Shemesh led to their rediscovery (Shalev et al. 2022). Since the initial discovery, research of the Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif terra-cotta industry has focused on lamp typology (Sussman 1985–1986; 2017) and decorative schemes (Sussman 2011), figurines (Lichtenberger 2016), lamp molds (Storchan 2019) and the correlation with other contemporaneous workshops in the region (Storchan 2017; Storchan and Lichtenberger 2019). The rediscovery of the cisterns and the consequent excavation have provided an unparalleled opportunity to examine the context and layout of the workshop and reassess our chronological understanding

¹ The reader should note that various spellings are used for this site. Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif is a transliteration from Hebrew and refers to the archaeological site, while Beit Naṭif, transliterated from Arabic, refers to the Ottoman-period Arab village. As the Late Roman oil lamps produced at the site were first discovered within the village, the term ‘Beit Naṭif lamps’ uses the transliteration from Arabic that has become standard terminology.

² I would like to thank O. Sion and N. Benenstein for allowing me to publish these lamps from their excavations.

of the Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif terra-cotta products. The excavations have also widened our understanding of the workshop's iconographic repertoire, such as that on the lamps presented in this paper.

Iconographic Repertoire of the Beit Naṭṭif Lamps

The vast majority of the lamps produced at the Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif workshop are aniconic. Instead, the lamp makers favored decorations of geometric patterns and designs. The near absence of iconographically loaded imagery on these lamps may be ascribed to morphological factors, as the lamp corpus from the workshop shows an overwhelming preference for lamps produced with large filling holes. This preference essentially eliminated the central discus and pushed the available decoration space to the lamp shoulders, which are suitable for bands of geometric patterns. Not all lamps were produced with a large fill hole, and a small number of items feature a solid flat discus with a small fill hole (Sussman 1985–1986: Type 1; 2017: Type LLR1). It is not surprising that the Beit Naṭṭif discus lamps are the most iconographically developed of all lamp types produced at the workshop. Unfortunately, this type is the least common of the Beit Naṭṭif lamps and, to date, has only been found within the workshop. These lamps have a large circular body, a rounded nozzle and a pyramid-shaped handle. Their discuses are usually decorated with a single subject as the main showcase, surrounded by geometric designs on the shoulders. A previous study of these lamps focused on their rather exceptional stylistic and iconographic attributes, incorporating Western and Oriental elements (Sussman 2011:519). The discus decorations include human forms (theater mask[?] or gladiator/s), birds (peacocks, cockerels or ostriches), vegetal motifs (stylized rosettes) and geometric designs (e.g., swastikas or wreaths). The shoulder designs of these lamps are most often composed of repeating patterned band hatching, wreaths or lace. They usually contain two patterns separated along the lamp's central axis, dividing the lamp into upper and lower shoulder motifs. The division is often marked with a double-axe, pyramid or medallion, but sometimes the two halves meet directly.

The study of the Beit Naṭṭif terra-cotta style has given rise to various interpretations regarding the ethnic identity of both the lamp makers and consumers (see Sussman 1985–1986; 2005; 2017; Klein 2010; 2012:167–171, 221–224). For example, a few lamps were decorated with religiously specific features, such as the seven-branched menorah (Baramki 1936: Pl. X:24; Sussman 2005). Though these lamps seem to indicate the existence of some Jewish lamp customers in the region, they are proportionally insignificant. The new excavations have uncovered

a number of new decorations not represented in the previous workshop assemblage. The most interesting of this new material are two lamps presented here (Lamps 1 and 2) that show that the Beit Naṭṭif lamp producers were influenced by Roman mythological iconography from other areas of the Roman Empire.

Lamp 1

Lamp 1 (L6361, B62549/3; Fig. 1) is a complete Type 1 (Sussman 1985–1986) lamp, decorated with a fingernail pattern around the shoulders. The nozzle is separated from the body by a line of dots, and in the back, the lamp has an undecorated, almost pyramid-shaped handle. The fill hole on the lamp's discus was pierced offset to the right, leaving ample space for the main decoration, which depicts the profile of a man holding the antlers of a deer. The left-facing figure has curly hair and a beard executed in detail. The realistic detail given to this figure is rather uncharacteristic of the Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif workshop products, including figurines. The man is grabbing on to an antler in each hand, and the deer has a disproportional body with an elongated torso and is depicted running to the left.

This scene depicts Herakles grabbing the golden antlers of the Cerynitian hind. The scene represents the third of twelve mythological tasks performed by Herakles at the request of King Eurystheus of Mycenae (Apollodorus 2, 5, 184–236).



Fig. 1. Lamp 1, decorated with Herakles and the Cerynitian hind (photography: D. Gazit).

While the story of Herakles and the twelve labors originates in Greek mythology, scenes depicting these stories appear in various media during the Roman period (Boardman 1990:51–52). For example, scenes of the twelve labors were a popular decorative scheme used on marble sarcophagi dating from the second century CE from Rome, Athens and Asia Minor (Jongste 1992:13). A marble sarcophagus from Genzano di Roma, currently kept in the collections of the British Museum (Museum No. 1873,0820.760), features the third labor, with Herakles grappling the Cerynitian hind on one side.³ Similarly, this scene was used on mosaic floor at a Roman villa in La Bombilla, Spain, dating from the third century CE (Balil Illana 1978). Due to the small size of terra-cotta oil lamps, depictions of Herakles' labors were limited to a single task on each item. Oil lamps with depictions of the first task involving the Nemean lion (see also Jongste 1992:14) and the second, with the Hydra of Lerna (Jongste 1992:16), are well known. However, oil lamps depicting the third task are rare, though there is one example dated to the first half of the second century CE from Kenchreai near Corinth (Williams 1981: 29–30, No. 138, Plate 6:138).⁴

Context of Lamp 1

In addition to the peculiar iconography of Lamp 1, its context at the site is also unique. While most of the lamps and fragments uncovered in the workshop were related to production waste, Lamp 1 was found with six additional complete Type 1 lamps inside a small clay *ṭabun* (L6346; Sion et al., this volume: Figs. 19, 20). Three of the lamps from the *ṭabun* were decorated with geometric designs on the shoulders and discus (B62549/4, 6 and 7). Another two lamps (B62549/1 and 5) depict two nude male boxers fighting on the discus and were apparently made in the same mold. The boxer on the right, either falling or in mid-kick stance, balances himself on one hand and one foot planted in the ground, while the other foot is in the air striking the opponent. The collection included another lamp (B62549/2) decorated with a peacock on the discus. All seven lamps found in the *ṭabun* lack traces of burning on the nozzles and were likely never used. Moreover, the *ṭabun* lacked any features indicative of a kiln. While the location of the lamp cluster in the cooking

³ The sarcophagus can be viewed online (https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1873-0820-760).

⁴ Williams provides parallels for this lamp found in the collections of the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum in Mainz (Menzel 1969: No. 519) and the National Museum in Prague (Haken 1958: No. 48). The lamp from Mainz is signed on the base by the well-known lamp maker ROMANESIS (Heres 1968: No. 52).

installation is puzzling, the lamps were of no doubt intentionally placed within it. Given this abnormal storage, it should be considered that the lamps may have been deposited as a ritual or magical act. Evidence of the use of oil lamps in votive rituals during the Late Roman period is widespread. The use of lamps for rituals is usually evidenced by larger assemblages, such as that found in a well at Ramat Mamre (Mader 1957: Plan II:K, Figs. 101, 102, 160–171), the baths of Ḥammat Gader (Coen-Uzzielli 1997:319), the 'En Zūr spring (Hirschfeld 2000:336–337), the Te'omim Cave (Zissu et al. 2011; 2017) and the Bet Guvrin amphitheater sacellum (Kloner and Hübsch 1996). With the exception of Bet Guvrin, these sites are all located near water sources, suggesting that the lamps were used for lecanomancy practices rather than illumination (Tal and Taxel 2017:182). In addition to the lamps found at these sites, other examples, including unused lamps found in disproportional quantities in trash heaps, may also have been ritually deposited rather than simply discarded (see discussion in Tal and Taxel 2017:182–184).

Lamp 2

The second lamp (Lamp 2), exhibiting exceptional iconography, is represented by a fragment of a broken lamp disc decorated with two human figures embracing one another (Fig. 2). The figure on the right is a bust of a bearded male wearing a cloak; the very top portion of his head is missing. To the left, another figure is depicted, too fragmentary to determine its gender. This figure is facing right, abutting the cheek of the bearded figure, and embracing him with the right arm over his shoulder. The arm is covered with lines to portray the fabric of a cloak. Just below the arm, a small fill hole was pierced in the lamp disc.



Fig. 2. Lamp 2 disc fragment, possibly decorated with Isis embracing Serapis (photography: D. Gazit).

Though the fragment of Lamp 2 is too small to preserve enough clues to securely decode the depicted scene, it bears great resemblance to lamps found in Egypt, which depict Helios or Isis embracing Serapis (Kiss 1995: Fig 1; Museum der Universität Tübingen MUT: Cat. Nos. KLA-Or-2039 and KLA-Or-6975⁵). Lamp 2 is missing the indicative attributes of both figures, possibly deities, mainly the tops of their heads. For example, if the bearded man on the lamp is indeed Serapis, then he would be wearing a basket (*kalathos*) or modius on his head. Similarly, the other figure on the left is missing the rays, which would allow a decisive association with Helios, as suggested by Kiss, who studied a similar lamp from Alexandria. In most cases, when Serapis is depicted with another deity, it is with Isis, as a divine couple. In many instances, Isis is depicted with radiating rays from her head, but sometimes Serapis appears as Serapis Radiatus, his most common formulation in North Africa (Podvin 2019:116; see examples in Derksen 1978: Pls. XLI, XLII, XLIV–XLVI). Another possibility worthy of consideration is that the couple Isis and Serapis represent an emperor and empress, both embodied as deities. For example, Julian, who reigned between 361 and 363 CE and “tried to renew and revive the worship of the traditional gods, particularly that of Helios-Sol and the Egyptian deities, used to style himself as Helios-Sarapis and his wife Helena, as Isis” (Kajava 1985:50; for further discussion, see Budde 1972). While other rulers could have been personified by these deities, the mid-fourth-century CE date of Julian’s reign is contemporaneous with Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif lamp production.

On oil lamps Serapis is most often depicted as standing, enthroned or as a frontal or side-facing bust (Podvin 2019:112). When Serapis appears on lamps, it is usually on a delta-shaped handle in the rear of the lamp, although occasionally he is depicted on the discus as well. Lamps decorated with Serapis alone have been found in North Africa (Derksen 1978), Egypt (Podvin 2019) and Syria (Norris 1982:195–196, 207). Serapis can also be found depicted alongside other deities, such as Isis or Helios, which are also most commonly found on delta-shaped lamp handles (Tran Tam Tinh 1970:59–62). One lamp signed by the lamp maker Annius Serapiodorus from Ostia bears a depiction of Isis embracing Serapis on the handle, while the discus is decorated with Helios-Serapis (Squarciapino 1962:35; Tran Tam Tinh 1970:59, Fig. 9).

In the region of Syria-Palaestina, depictions of Serapis and Isis have been found on various media, including sculpture, coinage and jewelry (for an overview, see Belayche 2007). In one example, he appears on a boat-shaped lamp from

⁵ Both lamps can be viewed via the museum’s online catalog (<https://www.emuseum.uni-tuebingen.de/collections>).

Ashqelon (Johnson 2008:130, No. 385; for more boat-shaped lamps of this type, see Podvin 2019:118). Additionally, a bronze figurine of Serapis dated to the second century CE was uncovered in a shipwreck near Haifa (Galili, Rosen and Sharvit 2010:96–97, Fig. 46). Various depictions of Serapis appear on regional coins from the early second–late third centuries CE minted at Eleutheropolis (Bet Guvrin), Lod, Aelia Capitolina, Caesarea, Tiberius, ‘Akko-Ptolemais, Neapolis and possibly Ashqelon (Bricault 2006). Most often Serapis is depicted as a side-facing bust, although sometimes he stands or sits on a throne. Moreover, the depictions of these divinities on material culture are mentioned in the Talmudic prohibition of images of a woman breastfeeding a child (most likely representing Isis) or of Serapis (TB, *Abodah Zarah*, 43a; see Ulmer 2009:230–232). This newly uncovered lamp fragment from Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif can now be added to the small but growing corpus of Isis/Serapis imagery in the region during the Late Roman period.

Conclusion

The recent excavations at Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif have revealed a wealth of new artifacts, shedding new light on many aspects of the terra-cotta workshop. While the study of these items has just begun, the two lamps presented here provide an extraordinary glimpse into the potential contributions of this new data. Moreover, the lamps have widened our understanding of the iconographic repertoire of the lamp workshop. Both Lamps 1 and 2 have no iconographic parallels in the existing corpus of Beit Naṭif lamps. The iconography on both further testifies to the notable degree of familiarity of the local population of Judea with pagan imagery commonly found on lamps produced in other regions of the empire, notably Egypt. Although some researchers have interpreted the mask decorations found on some Type 1 lamps as a representation of Dionysus (Sussman 2011:524), these new lamps prove an unquestionable link with pagan imagery. While the identification of Lamp 2 seems to suggest a depiction of Isis and Helios-Serapis, based on iconographic parallels, it remains uncertain because of the lack of detail or indicative attributes. Nevertheless, details on this lamp fragment find parallels on similar lamps found in Egypt and North Africa, dated mainly to the third century CE. Similarly, Lamp 1, depicting the third labor of Herakles, coincides with the increased use of this motif during the third–fourth centuries CE throughout the empire in other media as well. Together, the lamps indicate that the Ḥorbat Bet Naṭif workshop produced items influenced by and attesting to awareness of popular iconography that was being used in wide areas of the Roman Empire. The pagan imagery lamps produced simultaneously alongside Jewish iconography reflect the multi- and mixed-cultural nature of the region at the dawn of the Byzantine Empire.

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