



The Numismatic Finds from the Qumran Plateau Excavations 2004–2006, and 2008 Seasons

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Abstract

This article contains the preliminary report of nine coins, ranging from the second century B.C.E. to the fourth century C.E., that were found during the 2004–2006 and 2008 seasons of the 2002–2008 excavations at the Qumran Plateau, carried out under the direction of Dr. Randall Price of Liberty University with the assistance of Israeli archaeologists Dr. Oren Gutfeld and Yakov Kalman.

Keywords

Coins; numismatics; Qumran plateau

1. Preface

Excavations on the southern Qumran plateau were carried out from 2002–2008 under the direction of Dr. Randall Price of Liberty University with the assistance of Israeli archaeologists Dr. Oren Gutfeld and Yakov Kalman.¹ The excavation on the southern plateau had two goals: (1) to

¹ The renewed excavations followed those of James Strange (1996) whose primary purpose was the investigation of anomalies discovered by GPR that were thought to indicate a subterranean paleo-chamber. No such structure was found, although two pieces of an ostraca were recovered in the excavation debris as workers were cleaning the site, see Cross and Eshel 1997. The renewed excavations also are related to those of Yitzak Magen and Yuval Peleg, see Magen and Peleg 2008.

determine the use of the plateau during the periods of habitation at Qumran, and (2) to understand the practice of animal bone deposition at Qumran. The final report of the seven seasons of excavations is in preparation for publication with Eisenbrauns Publishers. This article will contribute a preliminary report on the coin finds from these excavations.

2. The Numismatic Finds

The following report presents nine coins that were found during the 2004–2006 and 2008 seasons of excavations at the Qumran Plateau. The coins, which range in time from the second century B.C.E. to the fourth century C.E., are presented and discussed chronologically in the following table and discussion.²

3. Numismatic Discussion

The coins found at Qumran during Roland de Vaux's excavations have been discussed many times.³ In a recent publication (Lönnqvist 2007), dedicated to the Amman lots of the silver coins from Qumran, it was suggested that the hiding date of this hoard (or parts of it) is much later,

² The coins were cleaned by M. Lavy and photographed by G. Laron, both at the laboratories of the Hebrew University. We wish to thank D. Syon for drawing the monograms for coin No. 6 and for his useful comments. We also wish to thank J. Higgins, senior geologist for the Qumran Plateau Excavation Project, for his comments. We are grateful to H. Eshel for reading the draft of this paper.

Abbreviations used in the table:

Reg. No. = Registration (basket) Number.

l. = left

r. = right

stg. = standing

Coins bearing an asterisk are illustrated, according to their numbers, in Plate 1. The image of coin No. 1 is 1.5:1 and images 2–9 are 2:1.

³ The last comprehensive discussion regarding the Qumran coins was done by K. Lönnqvist and M. Lönnqvist (2006). In addition to this publication and several former publications which are mentioned by these authors (*ibid.*: 122 n. 8) see: Donceel and Donceel-Voûte 1994:3–6; Leonard 1997; Ciecielag 1998 (reviewed by Leonard 1998); Meshorer 2006.

Table 1: The coins from the Qumran Plateau excavations, seasons 2004–2006 and 2008

No.	Dig. Ref. (locus; Reg. No.)	Metal	Weight (gm)	Diameter (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date of coin	Mint	References	Notes
Seleucid:											
1*	L. 166 Reg. No. 0943	AR	12.48	27	12	Diademed, beardless bust of Demetrius II r.; dotted border.	[ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ] ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ[Y]. B.C.E.	129	Tyre	Lönnqvist 2007:38, Nos. 54–55, 57–58; <i>SNG Ismed</i> I: 294–95, No. 2218.	Tetradrachm. Found in topsoil 3 cm beneath surface.

Table 1: (cont.)

No.	Dig. Ref. (locus; Reg. No.)	Metal	Weight (gm)	Diameter (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date of coin	Mint	References	Notes
Hasmonean:											
2*	L. 155 Reg. No. 0931	Æ	0.72	11–12	—	Anchor surrounded by a circle; around it border of dots.	Six-pointed star surrounded by a border of dots.	After 80/79 B.C.E.	Jerusalem	Cf. <i>TJC</i> : 210, No. L8.	half- <i>prutah</i> ? Found in rocky soil, 44 cm beneath surface.
3*	L. 031 Reg. No. 101	Æ	0.34	9–11	—	[ΑΑΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ] [ΑΑΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ] Same. Illegible inscription.	Same? Same?	Same	Same	Cf. <i>TJC</i> : 210, Group L.	half- <i>prutah</i> ? Found in fill, 5 cm beneath surface. Same (?) Disintegrated.
4	L. 301.1C Reg. No. 1321	Æ	—	—	—	Same (?)	Same (?)	Same (?)	Same (?)	Same (?)	Same (?)
Herodians:											
5*	L. 302.1C Reg. No. 1344	Æ	2.10	16–17	11	Vine branch with bunch of grapes and small leaf; above: H[PWA]	Crested helmet with two cheek pieces; below, small caduceus	4 B.C.E. —6 C.E.	Jerusalem	Cf. <i>TJC</i> : 226, No. 73a.	Found in fill, 22 cm beneath surface.
						OY, border of dots.	and inscription: [E]ΘNAPP[XOY]; border of dots.				

Table 1: (cont.)

No.	Dig. Ref. (locus; Reg. No.)	Metal (gm)	Weight (gm)	Diametre (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date of coin	Mint	References	Notes
Autonomous:											
6*	L. 301.1C Reg. No. 1346	AR	5.46	19	12	Bust of Melqart-Heracles r., laureate, wearing lion-skin knotted round neck; border of dots (effaced).	Eagle standing l. on stylized ram, c.e. palm branch along its front leg and behind its body; ⁴ in field l., date PMA (144) and club; between legs of eagle Phoenician letter š; in field r., monogram: ♀ and above it the letters KR; around: TYPOY IEPA[Σ KA]I ΑΣΥΛΟΥ ("of Tyre the holy and city of refuge"; border of dots.	18/19	Tyre	<i>BMC Phoen.</i> : Didrachm 252, No. (half-sheqel). 237; <i>RPC I</i> : Found in fill, 657, No. 4689.	

⁴ It should be noted that in previous descriptions of Tyrian sheqels (as well as Seleucid tetradrachms of the same type) the palm branch is described as located over the shoulder of the eagle (see for example: *BMC Phoen.*: 233; Lönnqvist 2007: 36, 38, 41) or on the wing (*RPC I*: 656). It was recently noticed (Farhi, et al. forthcoming) that the palm branch is quite long and located alongside the front leg of the eagle, continues behind its body, and appears again behind his neck. As was noted by Hill (*BMC Phoen.*: cxxxvii) the eagle is probably a legacy from the Ptolemaic coinage. But while the Ptolemaic eagle is depicted standing on thunderbolt

Table 1: (cont.)

No.	Dig. Ref. (locus Reg. No.)	Metal (gm)	Weight (gm)	Diameter (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date of coin	Mint	References	Notes
Roman Prefects and Procurators in Judaea:											
7*	L. 031 Reg. No. 102	Æ	1.30	14	12	Inscription in wreath: [T]IB/ KA/C[AP]	Palm branch; across field: [I]OY AIA	17–24 c.e. Date obliterated.	Jerusalem (?)	Cf. <i>JJC</i> : 257, Nos. 327–329.	Found in fill, 5 cm beneath surface.
8*	L. 031 Reg. No. 104	Æ	1.62	14–15	12	Simpulum; [TBEP]IOYKA- IC-A]POC L[Iq]	Three ears of grain tied together; IOYIAK[A] CA-[POC].	29 c.e.	Same	Cf. <i>JJC</i> : 258, No. 331.	Found in fill, 5 cm beneath surface.

(see for example: Barag 2008:38–48, Nos. 1–34) the Seleucid eagle is usually standing on palm branch (see for example: ibid.: 48–50, 53, Nos. 35–41, 50). In some cities in which the Seleucid eagle is depicted as standing on stylized ram (ibid.: 50–52, Nos. 43–46, 49) or even on a thunderbolt (ibid.: 51–52, Nos. 47–48) the palm branch is located alongside his front leg, continues behind its body, and appears again behind his neck. Thus it is clear that the long palm branch was added to the Seleucid eagle in order to distinguish between it and the Ptolemaic one.

Table 1: (*cont.*)

No.	Dig. Ref. (locus; Reg. No.)	Metal	Weight (gm)	Diametre (mm)	Axis	Obverse	Reverse	Date of coin	Mint	References	Notes
Late Roman:											
9*	L. 209 Reg. No. 1063	Æ	1.85	16	12	CONSTANTINVS P F VICTORIAE AVG Bust r., draped and cuirassed.	347–348 c.e. DD AVGGQ NN	Aquileia	Cf. <i>RIC</i> <i>VIII</i> : 322, No. 77.		Found in soft brown dirt above large stones, 47 cm beneath sur- face.

sometime around 210 c.e. (*ibid.*: 32–34). This claim is based on the inclusion of several Roman Imperial *denarii* from the days of Nerva, Trajan, Septimius Severus and Caracalla in the Qumran lots which are in Amman (Lönnqvist 2007:51–53, Nos. 347–354). But, these *denarii* were never mentioned in any of the former publications dealing with the Qumran coins (e.g., de Vaux 1996:127; Humbert and Chambon 1994:329–30; *idem* 2003:52),⁵ according to which the most recent coin in the hoard is a tetradrachm of Tyre from the year 9/8 b.c.e (de Vaux 1973:34–35). In addition, it is known that the hoard has gone through many hands since its discovery, and as Lönnqvist noted “by 1973 altogether 58 of the original silver coins had either been scattered or lost” (2007:3). Moreover, Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist claimed that “modern contamination of the Qumran hoards is also possible” (2006:138), and they admit that the inclusion of Trajanic *denarii* in the Qumran coin assemblage is not certain (2006:139 n. 104). Due to all these reasons, we find it hard to believe that these coins are an original and integral part of the Qumran hoard, and they should be regarded as later intrusions (see also Donceel and Donceel-Voûte 1994:4 n. 12).

The following numismatic summary will discuss the coins from the Qumran Plateau excavations in light of de Vaux’s finds as well as coins found at Qumran during new surveys and excavations.⁶

The coins from the Qumran Plateau excavations range from the second century b.c.e. to the middle of the fourth century c.e. Two of the coins (Nos. 1, 6) are silver and the rest are bronze. The earliest coin (No. 1) is a Seleucid tetradrachm of Demetrius II from the year 129 b.c.e. Out of forty-two coins (didrachms and tetradrachms) of this ruler that were published so far from Qumran, forty-one coins derived from the silver coin hoards A-C, discovered at Qumran in locus 120 in the year 1955 (Humbert and Chambon 1994:329–330; *idem* 2003:52). One of these coins is at the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem (Sharabani 1980:276, No. 3)

⁵ On this issue see also the discussions by Magness (1998:40–42; 2002:58, 188–93).

⁶ As far as we are aware, only two excavation projects, conducted after the de Vaux excavations, published their coins so far (see below), i.e., the excavations by Broshi and Eshel and those by Magen and Peleg (for the latter only a preliminary report has been published so far). In addition, one bronze coin (and not silver as was mentioned in Donceel and Donceel-Voûte 1994:4 n. 13) of Antiochus IV was found by a tourist during a visit to the site in 1961 (Williams 1962).

while the others are at the Amman Museum in Jordan (Lönnqvist 2007:38–39, and pls. 4–5, Nos. 51–90), some of which (Lönnqvist 2007:38, and pl. 4, Nos. 54–55, 57–58) are identical in both date and monograms to the coin presented here. In addition, according to de Vaux's notes, out of eight silver coins found in contexts outside the hoards (Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist 2006:146), there is one didrachm of this ruler that was found in locus 77 (Humbert and Chambon 1994:317; Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist 2006:123, 153 No. 293). It seems certain that the similarity in the fabric between this type of coin and the autonomous Tyrian tetradrachms (sheqels), as well as their value, led to the continued use of the Seleucid tetradrachms into the first century C.E.

Because of the size and value of these coins they were not often lost or misplaced, thus they are not very common as stray finds in archaeological excavations.⁷ That fifteen silver coins have been attributed as stray finds at Qumran,⁸ a relatively small site, raises the possibility that these specific coins should not be treated as lost. It is possible that at least some of these silver coins may derive from other hoards which were scattered around during or after the destruction of the site by the Romans.

The Hasmonean period is represented by three coins (Nos. 2–4), all from a well-known type,⁹ usually attributed to Alexander Jannaeus. These coins are of a very small denomination, and as was noted by Meshorer (2006:19) may have been used as half-*prutot*. These specific coins are usually dated to the last days of Jannaeus (Shachar 2004:7) however, it is possible that they circulated over a long period of time and were in use until the end of the Second Temple Period (Meshorer 2006:19). According to Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist (2006:123), the one hundred forty-five coins of

⁷ For comparison, similar numbers of silver coins (from the same periods), were found as stray finds, in eleven major excavations, and thirty-three minor sites, excavated in Jerusalem and its immediate vicinity before 1979 (Ariel 1982:312–15).

⁸ Eight silver coins were found by de Vaux (Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist 2006:147–61, Nos. 34, 165, 219, 248, 293, 294, 407, 628), three were found by Broshi and Eshel (1999:345–46; Eshel and Broshi 2003:70, No. 2); two silver coins were found by Magen and Peleg (2008:375, pl. 6:3–4) and two others by Price (presented here).

⁹ Coin No. 4 totally disintegrated during its cleaning and thus some information about it is missing. Based on the flan size it was probably similar to coin No. 3.

this ruler found during the de Vaux excavations and some of the eighty Hasmonean coins found during Magen and Peleg's excavations, date from the reign of Jannaeus (Magen and Peleg 2008:374). However, it is difficult to determine from these publications how many of them are of our type (i.e., *TJC* group L). Two more coins of our type were found by Broshi and Eshel (1999:344, 348 pl. 7:4–5) along the path which led from the site to some nearby residential caves.

Coin No. 5 is a common bronze coin minted under Herod Archelaus (4 B.C.E.–6 C.E.), and thus belongs to the reoccupation of Qumran (Period II). On this coin, as on Archelaus' other coins, he is termed “Herod the ethnarch.” According to Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist (2006:123), sixteen coins of this ruler were found during the earliest excavations at the site, eight of them of a type similar to our coin. Four more coins of this ruler derive from Magen and Peleg's excavations (2008:374 and 375, pl. 6:6).

Our second silver coin (No. 6) bears the mint mark and name of Tyre. The coin is dated, according to the year of Tyre, to 18/19 C.E.¹⁰ Out of eight silver coins, which according to de Vaux's notes were found in contexts outside the hoards (Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist 2006:146), two are Tyrian tetradrachms (*ibid.*: 125 and note 42), one from 29 B.C.E. (*ibid.*: 152, No. 219) and the other was dated to 33/34 C.E. (*ibid.*: 157, No. 467). In addition, three Tyrian half-sheqels were found by Broshi and Eshel; one is dated to 16/17 C.E. (1999:345–46, 348 pl. 7:6),¹¹ the date on the second is illegible (*ibid.*, pl. 7:7) while the third was intentionally defaced (Eshel and Broshi 2003:67 fig. 6:2; 70–71, No. 2), probably in order to use it as a weight (see below). Two other Tyrian half-sheqels (on both the date is effaced) were found by Magen and Peleg (2008:375, pl. 6:3–4). Thus, based on published material from Qumran it seems that our coin is the first of this type, dated to 18/19 C.E. to be discovered on the site, and is only the third Tyrian silver coin, from the first century

¹⁰ The date on the coin is according to the local era of Tyre which was established in the year 125 B.C.E. when the city was freed from the yoke of the Seleucid rule and became autonomous (*BMC Phoen.*: cxxv, cxxiv, 233; Syon 2008:296).

¹¹ According to Broshi and Eshel (1999:346) this coin is dated according to the era of Tyre to year 142. This date is equal to 16/17 C.E. and not to 25 C.E. as was published by them.

C.E., to be found at Qumran.¹² It is interesting to compare the Tyrian sheqels and half-sheqels from Qumran and Masada. At Masada two Tyrian sheqels (Meshorer 1989:121, Nos. 3667–3668) and two half-sheqels (Meshorer 1989:122, Nos. 3669–3670) were found, one of each denomination was deliberately defaced, probably in order to convert them into weights (Meshorer 1989:76; 121, no. 3668; 122, no. 3670). In addition seventy-three silver sheqels and half-sheqels of years one to five of the Jewish War have been found at Masada (Meshorer 1989:73). At Qumran, not including the hoards, two Tyrian sheqels and six half-sheqels have been found, one of which was deliberately effaced. No silver sheqels of the Jewish War were found so far in Qumran. It is possible to assume that the above effaced coins found at Masada and Qumran were defaced after 66 C.E., when the Tyrian sheqels were replaced by the silver sheqels minted by the Jewish War rebels (see above).

Two coins, minted in the days of the emperor Tiberius and traditionally called “procuratorial” (Nos. 7–8),¹³ seem to belong to the last stage of the sectarian settlement at the site, which, based on the historical and numismatic finds, probably ended in 68 C.E. (de Vaux 1973:40–41).¹⁴ Out of 104 “procuratorial” coins found during the de Vaux’s excavations (Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist 2006:124) 50 are dated to the days of Tiberius. In addition, three coins from the same period were published by Magen and Peleg (2008:375, pl. 6:8–10) and one coin by Broshi and Eshel (2004:330, Fig. 10:3).¹⁵

The coin of Constans (No. 9),¹⁶ belongs to a small group of Late Roman, Byzantine and Islamic coins from the site (Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist

¹² These three coins are one Tyrian tetradrachm (Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist 2006:125 n. 42 and 157, No. 467—dated to 33/34 or 34/35 C.E.) and two Tyrian didrachms: one was found by Broshi and Eshel (1999:346—dated to 16/17 C.E.) and the second is the one presented here (No. 6—dated to 18/19 C.E.).

¹³ For a new classification of this type of coins see: Kushnir-Stein 2007.

¹⁴ For the suggestion that the site was destroyed by the Romans only in 72/3 C.E. see: Lönnqvist and Lönnqvist 2006:142–44; Meshorer 2006.

¹⁵ If the date on the coin is indeed “year 17” of Tiberius it should be dated to 30 C.E. and not to 23 C.E. as was published by Broshi and Eshel.

¹⁶ Though the youngest of the coins found, it was uncovered at the deepest level (47 cm) below the current surface. This strongly suggests that the coin was buried in antiquity at its location of discovery.

2006:125–126), which serve as evidence that travelers or transients visited Qumran or passed through it during these periods.¹⁷

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¹⁷ It should be noted that according to recent studies, some of the graves at Qumran that were thought to belong to the nomadic Bedouin (Zias 2000:225–30) are now dated (based on jewelry found in them) from the Late Roman and Byzantine periods to the Early Islamic period (Clamer 2003; Avni 2009:52, 57).

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No. 1



No. 2



No. 3



No. 5



No. 6



No. 7



No. 8



No. 9



