

Press Release

Monday, December 22, 2014

Happy Holiday:

A Fragment of a 1,600 Year Old Glass Bracelet, Adorned with *Menorah* Motifs, was Uncovered during Hanukkah in the Mount Carmel National Park

The discovery was made in an excavation by the Israel Antiquities Authority prior to the construction of a reservoir for the city of Yoqne'am, at the initiative of the Mekorot Company

A fragment of a bracelet bearing motifs of the seven-branched candelabrum (*menorah*) from the Second Temple was discovered during the Hanukkah holiday in work the Israel Antiquities Authority conducted near Eliakim, in the Mount Carmel National Park. Archaeological excavations were carried out there in recent weeks prior to the construction of a water reservoir for the city of Yoqne'am, at the initiative of the Mekorot Company

During the excavation an industrial region and refuse pits were exposed which were part of a large settlement that existed in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods (end of the fourth century–beginning of the fifth century CE).

According to Limor Talmi and Dan Kirzner, excavation directors on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, “Last Thursday, at the end of the excavation, we began the initial processing of the finds. While examining the contents of one of the boxes which contained hundreds of glass fragments that had been discarded in the refuse pit, we found to our surprise a small fragment of a bracelet. Naturally it was extremely dirty, but still, you could see it was decorated. After cleaning, we were excited to discover that the bracelet, which is made of turquoise colored glass, is decorated with symbols of the seven-branched *menorah* – the same *menorah* which according to tradition was kept alight in the Temple for eight days by means of a single cruse of oil.” The researchers said, “It seems that the bracelet was embossed with the decoration while the glass was still hot. Stamped impressions of two *menorot* survived on the small fragment that was found – one a plain seven-branched *menorah*, of which only the surface of the *menorah* is visible and the other one consisting of a seven-branched *menorah* with flames depicted above its branches.”

According to Yael Gorin-Rosen, head of the Ancient Glass Department of the Israel Antiquities Authority, “Bracelets and pendants made of glass that are decorated with symbols of a *menorah* or lion or different images of gods and animals, are known during these periods in Israel, Lebanon and Syria. So far, three fragments of bracelets with *menorah* decorations have been discovered in archaeological excavations in the country: in an excavation at Bab el-Hawa in the northern Golan Heights, at Banias, and another bracelet that was discovered years ago in the excavations at Shiqmona, Haifa. The Shiqmona bracelet is also adorned with an image of a

menorah that has flames above it.” Rosen-Gorin added, “Jewelry such as this was found in excavations, usually in the context of funerary offerings. It is unusual to find such objects in settlement strata, and even rarer to discover them in an ancient refuse pit.”

According to the researchers, "The question now is - Is this definite proof that Jews lived in the ancient settlement? Perhaps, but it is also possible that Samaritans resided there or a pagan or Christian population. Another hypothesis suggests that the bracelet comes from a workshop operating in the area and was intended for other markets. This possibility is based on other glass debris that was exposed in the refuse pit, among them beads and bracelets. Glass jewelry was used extensively in the Late Roman period and we can reasonably assume that those items that were specially decorated were more expensive than the plain unornamented ones. The refuse that was discovered in the pit included numerous glass vessels and fragments of glass window panes, as well as a selection of jewelry, indicating of a population that lived a life of comfort and affluence. Conceivably, the large industrial area that was located there supported the residents of the nearby settlement.”

In recent years the national water company, Mekorot, initiated the construction of a new reservoir in order to provide water to the region of Yoqne'am and the upper Carmel. The optimal location, which was selected after examining alternatives together with the Nature and Parks Authority and the Jewish National Fund, was a declared antiquities site. Mekorot financed the activities of the Israel Antiquities Authority in the region and there is currently an approved detailed plan that includes landscape rehabilitation which is slated to receive a building permit.

[Click here to download high resolution pictures.](#) Photographic credit: Yoli Shwartz, Israel Antiquities Authority:

- 1–4. Pictures of the fragment of a glass bracelet adorned with *menorah* symbols.
5. One of eight boxes of glass fragments that were removed from the ancient refuse pit.
6. Archaeologist Limor Talmi of the Israel Antiquities Authority holding the base of a large glass bowl.
7. A lump of debris from a glass kiln. Pieces of glass in various stages of production were found in the refuse pit.

For further details, kindly contact Yoli Shwartz, Israel Antiquities Authority spokesperson, 052-5991888.