

In Centro

Collected Papers
Volume I

Motion, Movement and Mobility

Editors:
Guy D. Stiebel
Doron Ben-Ami
Amir Gorzalczany
Yotam Tepper
Ido Koch





Central Region



TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY

The Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology

The Jacob M. Alkow Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures

The Chaim Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies and Archaeology

The Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Contributors and Editors</i> | iv, iv* |
| <i>Preface</i> | vii, vii* |
| | |
| 1 Travelling with Subarctic Hunter-Gatherers Adrian Tanner | 1* |
| 2 Domestic Animal Mobility during the Bronze and Iron Ages: Insights from Ancient DNA Research on Pigs and Cattle Meirav Meiri and Israel Finkelstein | 1 |
| 3 Rise and Fall: Changes in the Symbolic Perception of Donkeys during the Bronze and Iron Ages Lidar Sapir-Hen | 9 |
| 4 The Way to the Next World? An Enigmatic Structure from the Chalcolithic Period Gilad Itach | 19 |
| 5 On the Way to the City: The Central Role of ‘Ein ‘Esur (‘Asawir) in the EB IB Settlement Pattern in the Coastal Plain of Israel Itai Elad and Yitzhak Paz | 25* |
| 6 Hellenistic Hip Baths in Hasmonaean Farmsteads Avraham S. Tendler | 37* |
| | v* |

| | | |
|----|--|----------|
| 7 | Trade in Antiques during the Early Islamic Period Hagit Torgë | 35 |
| 8 | Between the Citadel and the Temple: On Administration and Worship on the Shores of Nahariya Ron Be'eri, Nimrod Getzov and Yair Amitzur | 47 |
| 9 | Glycymeris Shell-Paved Floors from Meşad Ḥashavyahu: A Continued Local Architectural Tradition? Daniel Ein-Mor, Michal Mermelstein and Federico Kobrin | 51* |
| 10 | A Roman Merchant Ship Cargo of Scrap Metal and Raw Materials in the Caesarea Harbor: Preliminary Report Jacob Sharvit and Bridget Buxton | 75* |
| 11 | Maritime Activity at Jaffa during the Mamluk and Early Ottoman Periods: The Ceramic Evidence from Ramla Edna J. Stern | 93* |
| | <i>Abstracts</i> | 67, 117* |

Hellenistic Hip Baths in Hasmonaean Farmsteads

Avraham S. Tandler | Israel Antiquities Authority and Bar-Ilan University

Background

The Hellenistic hip bath is a small, shallow bathing installation in which the bather would sit on a step and pour on himself heated water, which would reach hip height. Such baths were used both in private homes (Trümper 2010: 531; 2014) and in public bathhouses—*balaneia* (Fournet *et al.* 2013)—throughout the Hellenistic world from the 5th through the 2nd century BCE. In the Land of Israel they were found at a variety of sites, populated by the various ethnic groups of the times (Adler 2018: 13–14), including Tel Beth Yerah–Philoteria (Tal and Reshef 2017: 19, Fig. 3.6), Shiqmona (Elgavish 1974: 24, Pl. V), Mt. Gerizim (Magen 2008: 90–91), Rosh Ha-‘Ayin (Hadad *et al.* 2015: 57; Tandler and Shadman 2015: 195), Maresha (Kloner and Zissu 2013: 56–57), Kh. Burnat Southwest (Torgö 2012: 26*–27*), Kh. Umm el-‘Umdan (Onn *et al.* 2002: 65*) and Qalandiya (Magen 2004: 50). In the following paper I present and discuss nine hip baths from the late Hellenistic/Hasmonaean period recently excavated at two farmsteads in the Modi’in region.¹

1 The excavations (License Nos. A7484/2015 and A7647/2016) were directed by the author on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The areas presented in this paper were supervised by Y. Elisha, J. Marcus-Peretz, D. Masarwa and E. Zwiebel. Additional assistance was provided by S. Terem (ceramics), S. Krispin and M. Johananoff (metal detection), M. Kahan, R. Mishayev and R. Liran (surveying and drafting), A. Peretz (field photography) and Griffin Co. (aerial photography). The author is grateful to the late A. Kloner and well as to P. Gendelman, A. Shadman and R. Friedman for enlightening discussions on this topic. This research was supported by the Krauthammer Cathedra for the Land of Israel and Archaeology Studies at Bar-Ilan University.

The Excavations

Ḥorvat Ashun

The excavations at Ḥorvat Ashun/Kh. el-Wasūn (map ref. 198534/645673; Fig. 1) exposed most of a rural settlement, with strata ranging from the early Hellenistic period to the late Roman period (Tendler and Elisha 2017).

During the early Hellenistic period (3rd–early 2nd centuries BCE) a farmstead was established at the site. Remains of a farmhouse (Building A, 14.20 × 15.20 m) with an adjacent courtyard were uncovered; the courtyard enclosed a voluminous

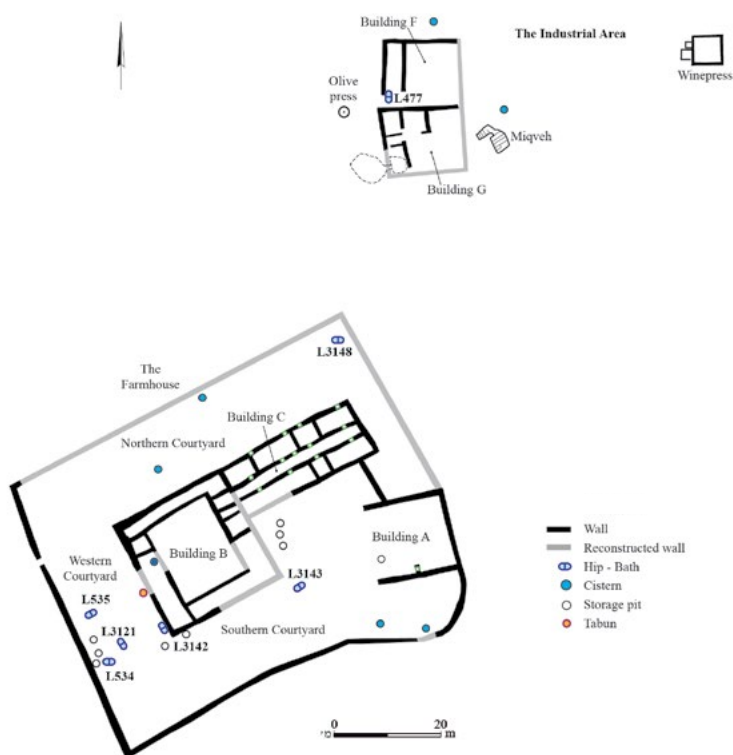


Fig. 1: Schematic plan of the main structures and installations from the Hellenistic period at Ḥorvat Ashun, note the location of the hip baths (prepared by D. Porotzki, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority)

cistern. The structures from the subsequent periods had a different orientation from the building and courtyard.

During the Hasmonaean period (mid-2nd century BCE) a “protected farmstead” was established at the site.² A spacious farmhouse (54 × 70 m) with massive external walls was constructed on the summit of the hill. The farmhouse was composed of two buildings, called B and C, surrounded by courtyards. An industrial area was constructed on the northeastern shoulder of the hill. Building B (22 × 22 m) consisted of an internal courtyard flanked by rows of rooms on all sides. The external walls of the building were built from massive boulders (ca. 0.70 × 0.80 × 1.70 m). A rock-cut cistern was installed at the western edge of the internal courtyard and a *bodeda*—a small installation for extracting olive oil—at its eastern edge. Building C (13 × 25 m), constructed directly to the east of Building B, was an elongated building consisting of two rows of rooms divided by a corridor. Each of the rooms in the northern row could be accessed from the courtyard to the north as well as from the corridor to the south; the rooms in the southern row were entered via the corridor. This architectural plan is typical of storehouses later known as corridor *horreum* (Patrich 1996: 150), and indeed, that seems to have been the function of Building C. Courtyards served an essential function in ancient farmsteads: within them produce was processed, packaged and stored. The main features of the courtyards at Ḥorvat Ashun were rock-cut installations: cisterns, storage pits, grinding basins and the six hip baths described below (Figs. 2:1–6, 3:1–4,6–7).

The industrial area on the northern shoulder of the hill included: an olive press, an adjacent building, an industrial wine press, a *miqweh* (ritual bath), cisterns and storage caves. The round crushing basin and three beam weights are the only components of the olive press that survived. A building constructed immediately to the east of the olive press, probably functioned in conjunction with it. The building had two levels, founded on two natural bedrock terraces. The lower level consisted

2 Zissu (2001: 249–270; Eshel and Zissu 2015: 18–23) discussed the typology and hierarchy of the rural settlements of the Second Temple period. He classified protected farmsteads as farmsteads with a basic defensive tower at one of their corners (Zissu 2001: 255–256). I would include in this classification farmsteads with external walls built of massive boulders.

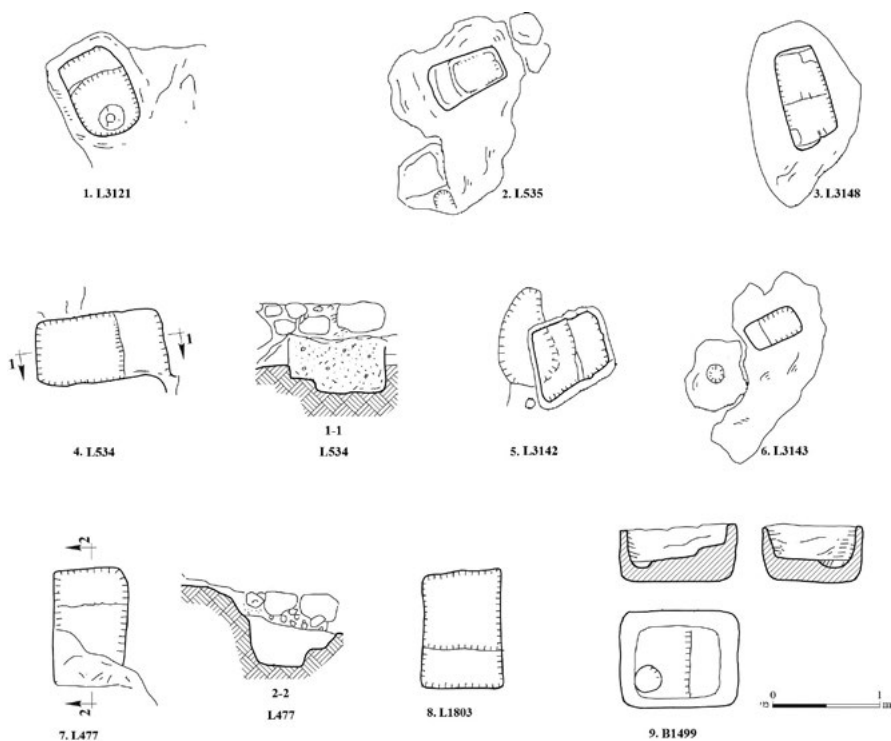


Fig. 2: Plans and sections of the hip baths from Ḥorvat Ashun and Ḥorvat HaMutzav presented here (prepared by D. Porotzki, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority)

of one elongated room (f; 4 × 11 m), probably used for storage. A rock-hewn hip bath was installed at the southern end of the room (Figs. 2:7, 3:5). The upper level (g; 9 × 13 m) consisted of four rooms. The southwestern room contained a rock-hewn antechamber, which led into a cave (ca. 5 × 7 m), not excavated due to safety concerns. It is possible that the olive press was inside the cave. Just east of the upper level a *miqweh* was exposed; its date of installation could not be determined with certainty. Since the phenomenon of *miqwa'ot* began towards the end of the Hasmonaean period and became widespread during the Herodian period (Reich 2013: 209; Adler 2018: 10), the *miqweh* at Ḥorvat Ashun was presumably a later addition to the industrial area. An industrial wine press lay southeast of the *miqweh*.



Fig. 3: Photographs of the hip baths from Ḥorvat Ashun (photographs by A. Peretz and the author, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority)

In subsequent periods the farmstead underwent changes. During the end of the 1st century BCE–1st century CE, wings were added within the northern, western and southern courtyards. In some cases the floors of these rooms were laid on top of the installations of the late Hellenistic period courtyards, sealing them. In the industrial area the hip bath was buried beneath three floor levels, and in the early 1st century CE the building in the industrial area (g, f) had fallen into disuse. The farmstead continued to function during the Middle Roman period—between the revolts. There is evidence that its residents prepared for the Bar-Kokhba Revolt (132–135 CE) by fortifying its external walls and hewing underground refuge complexes. As a result of the revolt the protected farmstead was abandoned.

Ḥorvat HaMutzav

The excavations at Ḥorvat HaMutzav (map ref. 197698/646322) exposed one wing (17 × 13 m; Fig. 4) of a large farmhouse constructed in the late Hellenistic period (Tendler and Elisha 2017). Its walls were built of large boulders, and it seems that the site should also be classified as a protected farmstead. The southeastern room of the excavated wing may have functioned as an internal courtyard. Smoothened bedrock served as its floor, into which a *bodeda*— a small installation for extracting olive oil—and a hip bath were hewn (Fig. 2:8). An additional hip bath was discovered among the massive stone collapse in the room north of the courtyard (Figs. 2:9, 5); it was monolithic and was theoretically portable, as opposed to the other hip baths, which were rock-hewn installations.

During the Early Roman period, a *miqweh* was added to the building and some of the floors were raised. The smoothened bedrock floor, the *bodeda* and the hip bath were covered by a packed earth floor. The building was damaged during the late 1st century CE, but was rehabilitated and continued to function until the Bar-Kokhba Revolt (132–135 CE). In preparation for the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, the residents hewed beneath their home a refuge complex, accessed through a rock-hewn shaft in the center of the building. The subterranean complex led to refuge rooms and to the *miqweh*.



Fig. 4: Aerial photograph of the exposed wing of the Ḥorvat HaMutzav farmstead; note location of hip bath L1803, the *bodeda* and the stairs leading to the *miqweh* (photograph by Griffin Co., courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority)



Fig. 5: The monolithic hip bath B1499 from Ḥorvat HaMutzav during excavation (photograph by the author, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority)

Discussion

The installations identified as hip baths are mostly rock-hewn installations with one step used as a seat and a depression in the floor in which dirt could settle and which could subsequently be cleaned. Patches of white plaster were preserved in three of them. They are big enough for even a large adult to sit and bathe (Table 1).

As described above, hip baths have been found in a variety of sites settled by the various ethnic groups in the Land of Israel during the Hellenistic period. As such they may be viewed as typical of the material culture of the Hellenistic period. However, the hip baths at Hasmonaean period sites identified as Jewish, such as Ḥorvat Ashun and Ḥorvat HaMutzav, share a unique characteristic: their location or context.³ In the Hellenistic world in general, hip baths were located in bathrooms or bathhouses built for this purpose, or, at the very least, in domestic contexts related to body care and hygiene. According to Trümper, in contrast to the many multifunctional rooms in Greco-Roman houses, “bathing facilities and latrines commonly rank among the few purpose-built, function specific rooms that are seemingly easily recognizable” (Trümper 2014: 87). This is also the case in many of the excavated examples of hip baths in the Land of Israel. For example, the hip bath excavated by Shadman at the late Persian–early Hellenistic estate east of Rosh HaAyin was located in a bathroom with plastered walls and possibly a stone-built toilet seat (Hadad *et al.* 2015: 57; Tandler and Shadman 2015: 195). In contrast, the hip baths found at the Hasmonaean farmsteads described here were not found in bathrooms or in domestic contexts; instead, they were found in agricultural contexts, in large open courtyards, in storerooms and in close proximity to installations for agricultural production or storage. This context begs explanation.

The relationship between Hellenistic hip baths and *miqwa'ot* is also worthy of consideration. *Miqwa'ot* are stepped, plastered bathing installations that facilitate

3 The identification of these sites as Jewish is based upon several factors: their historical-geographical setting; the fact that they were settled consecutively from at least the Hasmonaean period until the Bar-Kokhba Revolt; the use in the Early Roman period of *miqwa'ot* and chalk-stone vessels—ethnic markers of Jewish residents who adhered to the purity laws; and the finding of hundreds of coins minted by the various Hasmonaean rulers, as well as coins minted in the two revolts. For recent research on the identification of Jewish sites in the Hellenistic period, see Raviv 2018: 21–29, 32–35.

Table 1: Details and dimensions of the hip baths

| Locus | Dimensions | Maximum Depth | Location of Step | Width of Step | Location | Description | Illustrations |
|-------|---------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|--|--|----------------|
| L3121 | 0.57 × 0.83 m | 0.30 m | Northern edge | 0.17 m | Horvat Ashun, western courtyard | | Figs. 2.1, 3.1 |
| L3142 | 0.57 × 0.89 m | 0.30 m | Northern edge | 0.20 m | Horvat Ashun, western courtyard, | White plaster; small <i>tabun</i> uncovered near bath, possibly used to heat water; damaged by refuge complex entrance | Figs. 2.6, 3.2 |
| L534 | 0.46 × 0.90 m | 0.40 m | Eastern edge | 0.20 m | Horvat Ashun, western courtyard | | Figs. 2.4, 3.3 |
| L535 | 0.50 × 0.90 m | 0.40 m | Western edge | 0.26 m | Horvat Ashun, western courtyard | | Figs. 2.2, 3.4 |
| L3143 | 0.47 × 0.85 m | 0.26 m | Western edge | 0.25 m | Horvat Ashun, southern courtyard. | Preserved patches of white plaster; small round basin found nearby may be related | Figs. 2.6, 3.6 |
| L3148 | 0.52 × 1.02 m | 0.40 m | Eastern edge | 0.35 m | Horvat Ashun, north-eastern corner of northern courtyard | | Figs. 2.3, 3.7 |
| L477 | 0.80 × 1.6 m | 0.50 m | Northern edge | 0.50 m | Horvat Ashun, Building F in industrial area | | Figs. 2.7, 3.5 |
| L180 | 0.62 × 0.90 m | 0.30 m | Southern edge | 0.30 m | Horvat HaMutzav | | Figs. 2.8, 4 |
| B1499 | 0.85 × 1.10 m | 0.45 m | Not applicable | 0.30 m | Horvat HaMutzav | Monolithic bathtub with white plaster | Figs. 2.9, 5 |

complete immersion of the body in water. They were used in Jewish settlements to obtain ritual purity. A critical examination of the archaeological record to date shows that the earliest *miqwa'ot* were found in contexts dated to the beginning of the 1st century BCE and that soon afterwards they became widespread throughout Judaea (Adler 2018: 7–10). It may be concluded that the *miqweh* was an innovation of the period and that prior to this people would purify themselves without a designated installation. The relevant textual evidence—at least up to the 2nd century BCE—also implies that ritual purification could be obtained by washing in water without immersion of the body (Adler 2018: 2–7). Adler recently proposed that the introduction of the hip bath in the Hellenistic period generated a change in bathing culture, which subsequently led to a change in how people conceived of the washing necessary for purification. Adler theorized that the Hellenistic hip baths found in Jewish contexts were used for both conventional and purificatory washing (Adler 2018: 16). At a later stage, through a process of ritualization, purificatory washing was differentiated from conventional washing in that the former required full-body immersion in a *miqweh* (Adler 2018: 15).

The fact that the hip baths presented here were found in agricultural contexts—in Hellenistic period farmsteads—may support their use for purificatory washing. From the inception of the *miqwa'ot* there is a clearly recognizable archaeological phenomenon of their proximity to olive and wine presses (Zissu and Amit 2008: 54–57; Adler 2008: 63–65; Reich 2013: 253–256). This phenomenon is also mentioned in rabbinic literature (*ibid.*). These *miqwa'ot* served an important function—to facilitate the purification of the workers in the olive and wine presses before they would handle the olives/oil or grapes/wine. This would ensure that the olive oil and wine would be produced and subsequently consumed or marketed as ritually pure.⁴

4 Adler (2008: 69–70) noted that this seems to be in accordance with the Pharisaic-rabbinical ruling according to which immediately following purification in the *miqweh* even before the setting of the sun, the person (*tevul yom*) obtains a status of intermediate purity whereby he does not contaminate unsanctified food and drink (*hullin*). According to biblical, Sadducee and Qumranic rulings, the individual is only pure once the sun sets, and there would be no reason for the workers in agricultural installations to purify themselves immediately before producing the olive oil or wine.

At a Judaeian farmstead established with the express purpose of the production and marketing of agricultural produce to its Jewish surroundings, this would be of utmost importance. The one *miqweh* discovered at Ḥorvat Ashun, for example, was located not in a domestic area, but in the industrial area of the site—between the olive press and the wine press. If the Hellenistic hip baths found at Jewish sites were used for purificatory washing, one could understand their location in the courtyards and industrial areas where the produce was handled. Indeed, as described above, this was the case with the hip baths from the Hasmonaean stratum at Ḥorvat Ashun and Ḥorvat HaMutzav.

Further logical support for the possibility that the hip baths from the Hasmonaean farmsteads were used for purificatory washing is the fact that the hip baths in the Hellenistic world in general were eventually succeeded by the Roman hypocaust bath (DeLaine 1989: 111, 124). No remains of Roman baths were found at the farmsteads discussed here and the bathing installation that succeeds the hip baths in the Early–Middle Roman period is the *miqweh*.

Conclusion

At their core, the hip baths of the Hasmonaean period farmsteads presented here are not extraordinary; they are compatible with the Hellenistic bathing culture on both sides of the Mediterranean—their function was washing. They may also have been used for Jewish purificatory washing, and that possibility would explain their somewhat extraordinary agricultural context. It is possible that the dichotomy between conventional and purificatory washing is a modern concept and that the Jews of the Hellenistic period did not view them as significantly different activities.⁵

5 Z. Amar (2006: 21) has shown how the escalation in purification laws and the development of installations for ritual bathing in Judaea towards the end of the Hellenistic period is related to substantial advances in medicine, health and hygiene that took place in the Hellenistic world. On the relationship between the Roman bath and the *miqweh*, see Reich 2013: 245–251 and references therein.

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