

LATE ROMAN TO LATE  
BYZANTINE/EARLY  
ISLAMIC PERIOD LAMPS IN  
THE HOLY LAND

THE COLLECTION OF THE ISRAEL  
ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

**Varda Sussman**

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# Introduction

We may describe the Byzantine period, based on the variety of the lamps, as a symphony played by a self-conducted orchestra, where new soloists rise and add a different motet, creating stormy music that expresses the rhythm of the era. Only one pattern, the palm branch, lasts from Hellenistic period, all the way to the Islamic period. This was an era when the Levant, and especially the Holy Land, became the cradle for four leading faiths and cultures: the oldest, Judaism, the Samaritan (which had separated from the Jewish faith), newly born Christianity (taking over the former pagan and other religions) and the last, Islam, at the end of the era. In one sense the cultural transition of lamp production into the Islamic period and culture was calm and gradual one; the shape and part of the decoration lingered on during the early Islamic period, unlike the break between the lamps of the Roman Period and those of the Byzantine period. Arabic script with the name of Allah written in Arabic letters mingled, on Candlestick type, with the inscription in praise of Christ.

In the second and last part of the Roman period, local political history in the Holy Land was different to that of the Early Roman period. A change can be seen in the regional cultural divisions, which is particularly attested in the material remains, especially in the miniature art of the fashioning of lamps, carvings, paintings and the style of mosaic pavements, burial customs and in architecture. The period encompasses the second half of the second century CE, which followed the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 CE), and which saw the changes in the balance of powers. Pagan Roman culture was overcoming the Jews in vast parts of the country, resulting in the change in the regional resettlement of the population, which included diminishing numbers of Jews in some parts of the country such as Jerusalem, and their growing number in outlying areas, in the South (Judean Shephelah) and later in the Northern part of the country. The seat of the leadership also changed, moving from Jerusalem to Yavne and from Yavne to the North, to Sepphoris and Tiberias. These movements clearly manifested themselves through artistic expression, particularly in synagogue mosaic pavements and only slightly in the decorated oil lamps. The regional division of the country was now more evident, for example in the spread of the Samaritans over a large portion of the centre and plains to the Northern part of the country and their concentration in the region of Samaria with the cultural centre focused on Mount Gerizim (Map 6). This is evident also from the study of the decoration applied to the mosaic pavements and oil lamps made in Samaria.

The spread of Christianity (Map 4) and its overgrowing power in Jerusalem and the rest of the country, especially

to the Southern and Northern parts of the country, is indicated by the growing number of churches and monasteries and by Christian burials.

Just like earlier Roman lamps served as a mirror of pagan and Jewish cultures, the small artifacts serve as a very handy medium to convey cultural changes among Samaritans, Christians and Muslims. This function is in addition to the daily use of the vessels, both private and public, and as a sacred item in the different houses of worship, as offerings to the dead to light their way and in funeral rituals and yearly commemorative visits.

Although there was no drastic change in the physical shape of some of the lamps, we do witness a fundamental cultural revolution that changed the face of the oil lamps.

The third century CE shows deterioration in artistic ability. The last manifestation of the high local artistic wave was in the fashioning of the Darom-type oil lamps, which for the first time artistically reflected local popular arts that were also connected to the Jewish nationalistic hope for the redemption of the Temple. This artistic outlet found refuge and comfort in works of art, from which we learn for the first time about the daily lives of the people who had previously appeared to us only from literature – the Mishnah and later the Talmud. This prosperous period in lamp decoration is followed by decline and deterioration, and there may have been a brief gap before the introduction of a new style. We have no clear evidence of the length of this gap, which involved the time needed for resettlement and the revival of cultural activities. The disc lamp, decorated with a pattern that followed the Classic Roman lamps after Greek culture, also gradually faded away.

There is no ‘official’ typological separation in local lamp production from some oil lamps regarded as belonging to the Late Roman period, and published in the previous catalogue (Sussman 2012), and those entering and emerging into defined Byzantine and Early Islamic types. Typologically the lamps form an uninterrupted chain of gradual physical and cultural change. The new established world of lamps did not deviate typologically from the previous lines of production; however, the lamps differed entirely in their cultural content.

During the Roman period, but even more so during the Late Roman and Byzantine periods, we witness an increase in the number of regional types of oil lamps, which were sometimes restricted to certain areas such as city boundaries, which also manifested independent ethnic, cultural and perhaps also economical affinities, in a manner similar to the minting of city coins.



The next wave of lamp-fashioning reveals an independent school of art that differed from the previous western tradition, although western traces still remain. The cradle of the second wave, like the first one during the Roman period if we are not mistaken, was once again in the Northern part of the country. The Southern workshop or workshops, situated in Judea, produced oil lamps (I. LR5) that gained popularity throughout most of the country. They were copied and imitated in other regional workshops and probably served a large portion of population. The shape of these lamps which followed both the western short convex shape nozzle and the local arched type of nozzle became the basic shape for further variations of the lamp. Only one physical element was separating new lamps from the western types of the Roman period; it was the departure from the classic ledge handle, solid or pierced, and the invention of new shapes of handles, such as the pyramid-shaped handle, which became the basic link to improvisations in other local-regional workshops, with each workshop finding it necessary to deviate a little from the main pyramid. Thus the handle becomes one of the characteristic elements identifying the different workshops, the regions and the period and in many cases became an integral part of the lamp (Figure A).

The handle became part of both the decoration and the shape, rather than being the means for holding or suspending the lamp when not in use (with several exceptions where loop handles were applied to large and heavy lamps). This style is entirely foreign to the west and points to the artistic fantasy of the east, especially to this country, part of the ancient Levant.

In contrast to the South, the common handle in use in the Northern part of the country, including Samaria and Bet She'an, was wing-shaped and was executed in many variations, which resulted in a real imitation of a bird's tail (Figure 201:2). This may have been the inspiration for the shape the handle in the first place, which eventually transformed into other, more complicated shapes. All lamps were decorated, some with the same pattern applied either on, or opposite the nozzle or on the shoulders (Figure B: 4, 5). No wonder one finds a mixture of both types, for example in Samaria, as well as a wing handle carrying a star-shaped lug (Figure B:1).

The other popular handle in the North may have also been based on the pyramid turning into a triangle, placed behind the disc or being a part of it (Figure C).

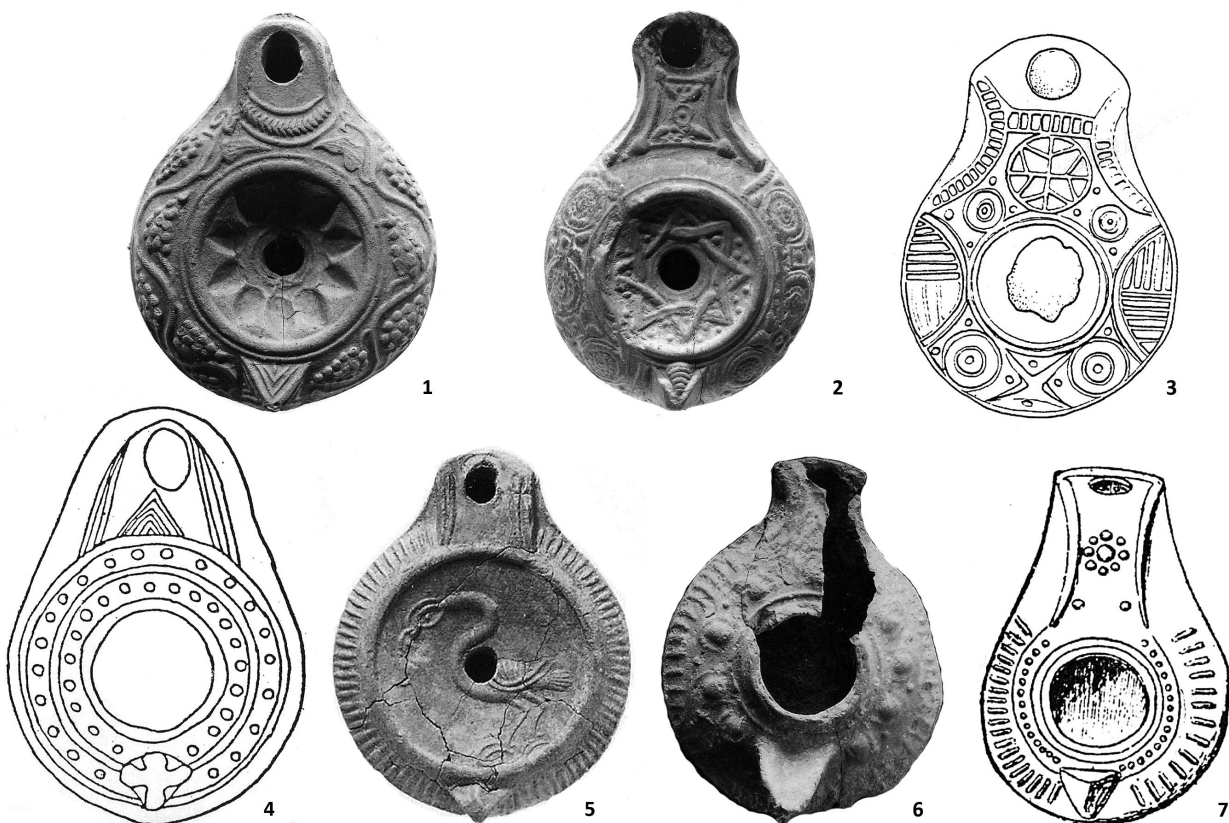


FIGURE A. VARIATION ON THE PYRAMID (1 AND 2) PYRAMID SHAPED HANDLE, BEIT NATTIF I. LR1-I.LR5); (3) STAR SHAPED HANDLE, SAMARITAN (V.LR20); (4) CROSS-SHAPED HANDLE, CAESAREA (VI. I.B32); (5) TRIANGULAR WITH A CENTRAL VEIN; (6) TRIANGULAR, PHOENICIAN VI. I.B33 AND B34); (7) TRIANGULAR, GEZER (I.B10).



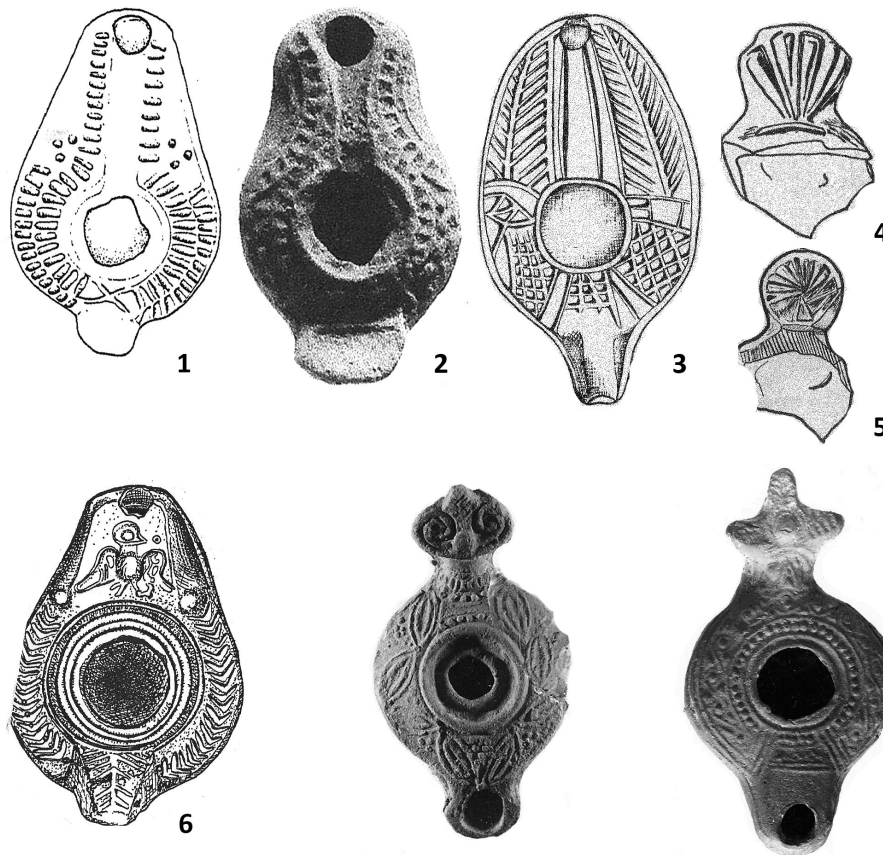


FIGURE B. (1, 2) PLAIN WING-SHAPED HANDLE, SAMARITAN LAMPS (V.LR 21–V. B29); (3) WITH A HEAVY AND WIDE RAISED CENTRE; (4, 5) BIRD TAIL SHAPED HANDLE, BET SHE'AN (VII.B50); (6) RAISED HEAVY WING WITH A BRANCH, BET SHE'AN VII. B47



FIGURE C. (1) TRIANGLE AS PART OF THE DISC, PHOENICIAN NORTHERN STAMPED LAMPS (VI. II.LR34–VI. II.B45); (2) TRIANGULAR, BET SHE'AN (VII.B54); (3) TRIANGULAR NORTHERN PHOENICIAN LAMP DECORATED WITH RELIEF (VI. III); (4) POINTED EXTENSION, BILANCEOLATE, BET SHE'AN STAMPED LAMP (VII.B49)

The only lamps that were fashioned with the Western lug handles are those that were fashioned after the imported North African type, made in the Northern part of the country (Phoenicia).

The blister-shaped handle (#1652) was typical in the South, in the Yavne region (Type II. LR11), and for some

lamps made in the Bet She'an region. This type of handle gradually turned into just a globule on the Candlestick type (III. B13 and III. B14) or was replaced by only a stroke, being just a suggestion of the globule and to mark the centre opposite the wick-hole. We would suggest that this happened for technical reasons, to ensure that the strokes or other patterns would be symmetrical. The

globule, as well as other marks were avoided when there was an inscription. Omitting a handle probably also made the lamp cheaper to produce as did the 'humble' radial strokes (expressing rays of light). Even the inscribed phrases in Greek letters on these lamps look like a geometrical pattern.

Special and large lamps or lamps with multiple wick-holes were made with a loop handle, which seldom survived and was intended to help hold or hang the lamp, or to support the projections at the rear – the cross or the menorah. This was also the case for Roman oil lamps supporting a projection and for bronze lamps, as well as for the wheel-made lamps of IV WB15 and IV. WB17 types which resemble household teapots used daily.

The effort and thought invested into a secondary element like the handle is a good example of the change of style in the new eastern lamp industry.

The changes made in the different workshops, were noticeable with the introduction of minor and gradual typological changes such as the above mentioned handle, to keep up with the fashion. This is in contrast to developments in the west, for instance in Greece, where in the takeover of Corinthian lamp-fashioning in the fifth century, almost all products were copies of Athenian, Asia Minor or North African lamps. The potters did not try to introduce or create something new; all the Corinthians cared about was quality and quantity, not change. This may be explained by the fact that Corinth maintained the same cultural and political affinities, and only the ownership changed. In the east, however, and especially in the Holy Land, the Late Roman and Byzantine periods underwent very stormy cultural change and the establishment of different cultural entities. Jews, Samaritans and Roman pagans were taken over by Christianity and later by Islam (Arabic). The lamp industry was now cut off from the western world with new influences coming from eastern artistic centres such as Palmyra and the Parthians bringing with it a change in sculpture, architecture, the style of mosaic pavements and coins. The lamps were intended entirely for use in the vast *Palaestina Secunda* only. Their artistic appearance satisfied local customers, so much so that imported oil lamps became scarce (close to nil). For the first time, imported lamps now arrived mainly from North Africa, by means of Phoenician maritime traders.

The establishment of a clear break between the three main faiths, Jewish, Samaritan and Christian, and the rivalries among them contributed to the flourishing of artistic expression, which was probably strengthened after Christianity gained recognition in the mid-fourth century CE. We should keep in mind that all three sprouted from the same basic culture, as is illustrated by the use of some shared symbols, such as the menorah. This led the Jews to depict the classical seven-branched menorah with the attributes

alongside it as their own symbol on mosaic pavements in synagogues; the number of the menorah on the lamps is rather small. The menorah is more abundant on Samaritan lamps and appears also on Samaritan synagogue pavements. The menorah on the Samaritan lamps takes different shapes and often appears without the attributes, the lulav, mahta and shofar. The same appearance can be found on lamps made in North Africa (without the attributes and as the Christian candlestick-type lamps, they bear a candlestick that resembles a palm branch). The candlestick type lamps had inscriptions added, the most common of which is the one in praise of Jesus, while other inscriptions concern the Christian faith. On Samaritan lamps, inscriptions praise God, and other verses, taken only from the Pentateuch, were added on the main part the nozzle. In addition to inscriptions in praise of Jesus, lamps made for the Christian community were decorated with numerous crosses. The potters who produced Islamic lamps featured inscriptions in Arabic script on their lamps.

It is important to point that the human figure is almost absent from the decorations of the lamps fashioned in the country. We may count their number on ten fingers (**Figures 161 and 162**). The choice seems to have been influenced by mosaic pavements, choosing warriors (**#1092, #1245, #3016 and #3017**) or saints (**#2901 and #2902**), playing the harp (**#2388** with a cross on the nozzle), and a fisherman on **Figure 163** from Asqelon. This may suggest that for some reason the human figure in general was not chosen for lamp decoration although it was often depicted on mosaic pavements and had a big role in the choice of the ornaments. The ability of the artists to portray the human being at that time was not at its best.

Almost the same findings concern the appearance of quadrupeds, they are scarce: leopard on lamps LR3 (**#1245**) and a horse (**#1251**), the horse on Phoenician lamps of type VI (**#2384**), lioness on Northern Stamped lamps (**#2826**). On lamps of type VI.III depictions of domestic animals such as the dog and the donkey (**#2912**), the gazelle and bear (**#2910**) were used.

Among the most popular motifs, on both Beit Nattif types I.LR5 with a single wick-hole and I. LR7 with multiple wick-holes, as well as on the Samaritan type lamp V/ LR20, a shrine appears – the holy place in the Temple. On the single-nozzle lamp the shrine is depicted as a single vault supported by a pair of columns, and on the other lamps, of type I.LR7 and some of type V.LR20, an arcade appears. A few Samaritan lamps depicted the Temple that stood on Mount Gerizim. The Samaritan structures differ from those of Beit Nattif. The shrine appears also on the wall paintings at Dura Europos and mosaic pavements such as at Beit Alpha synagogue, churches in Jordan, and oil lamps in North Africa. Illuminations of key biblical scenes painted in the Roman period are known from the wall paintings at the Dura Europos synagogue. They inspired Christian artists

first and became common especially on Late Roman and Byzantine lamps, particularly in North Africa during the fourth–fifth centuries CE. It seems that this tempted both Jews and Samaritans to decorate mosaic pavements with illustrations from the Bible, such as David playing the harp, Jonah and the whale, the story of the *Akeda* (the binding of Isaac). These stories played an important role in all faiths – Jewish, Samaritan, Christian and Islamic, and appeared on mosaic pavements in the synagogues of the fifth and sixth centuries CE (Bet Alpha and Sepphoris). The mosaics appealed to an audience that probably did not remember the protagonists in the scenes, which is why these figures had to be labeled with names. A mosaic pavement in Huqoq depicting the story of Samson was discovered recently. The *Akeda* was depicted on a Samaritan oil lamp without the presentation of the human figures, whose depiction was prohibited according to the Second Commandment which the Samaritans strictly observed. It is important to note that these depictions all come from the Northern part of the country (**Figure 122**).

The only decorated oil lamps that included illustrations of daily life are Samaritan lamps of V.LR20 type, which could be compared with earlier Darom lamps and may indicate a similar emotional drive behind the urge to create them.

Two main lines of production were: (1) following the Roman disc lamps, first with a small protruding nozzle like the Western types (I.LR1) and the others with rounded body and arched voluted top nozzle – lasting to the fifth–sixth centuries CE and (2) following the pear-shape, becoming almost almond-shape which outran the first types in quantity and continued to the tenth–eleventh centuries CE. Deviation from these two are (3) bilanceolate lamps (VII.B49) and (4) the reappearance of oil lamps turned on the wheel (IV.BW16 and IV.BW17), which resemble other domestic vessels in daily use, serving briefly and in a limited region in the late Byzantine period (sixth century CE).

The importance of keeping in line with other workshops by using some of the current elements and inserting only minimal physical/typological deviations may be explained by the intention to satisfy the customers asking for the latest fashion. The potters could not restrain themselves from introducing a personal artistic touch or trademark, like turning the pyramid-shaped handle into a cross (VI. B28), a star (V.LR18), or a triangle (V.B29).

This catalogue attempts to trace different types of oil lamps, those that were marketed beyond their place of manufacture and origin (according to their greatest number, as very few workshops were discovered), and of which copies were made, or those that served as a model for local manufacture. The latter is an indication of the popularity of the Beit Nattif type (I.LR5), and the

Candlestick (III.B14) type, which had almost the same distribution. Some lamps were restricted to a region, (II LR11 (Yavne) and Gezer (I.B10), (both types were found together at Nia'na which lies at the border of that region), some even to a city such as VI.B31 (Caesarea), VII.LR45 and VII.B52 (Hamidge a site near Bet She'an). Jerusalem, Caesarea and Bet She'an, were central towns; the first was a religious and political centre, the second was a political centre and port, and the third, Bet She'an, was the main city of the Decapolis on the western side of the Jordan River. Each developed their own typical oil lamp that was marketed in the neighbouring villages only.

Regional oil lamps from Samaria (V.LR18–V.B27) also reflected a cultural entity. The distribution contrasted with the large-size Candlestick types, which freely demonstrated a Christian identity and were found almost everywhere during the second half of the Byzantine period, with local workshops producing more or less identical lamps and not trying to produce local versions. We may compare their distribution to the earlier Herodian (RWH3) and the Provincial Roman disc lamps (R24) of the first part of the Roman period. The Phoenician coast, which remained an autonomous territory, had its own lamp sources. The number of lamps among the finds in the Phoenician region, like the earlier Herodian and the later Beit Nattif and even the Candlestick lamps, is rather small, especially considering that the Phoenician region was known for its dense and large Christian communities. The Northern Stamped lamps were typical for Phoenicia, Upper and Lower Galilee and the Golan Heights, which was annexed by Phoenicia in the third century CE and also had a large Jewish population. The North became a rabbinic centre, which moved from Yavne after the Bar Kokhba Revolt. This is attested also in the distribution of the Northern Stamped oil lamps and the later lamps decorated in relief (VI. III.B39 and VI.III. B41–VII.III. B54). The Northern Stamped lamps were artistically regarded as unsophisticated, and bore no ethnic symbols. Rather, they served all the ethnic groups, whether these lived side by side or in separate cities, probably in harmony.

Both the Northern Stamped lamps and the Candlestick type were decorated with the palm branch as their main pattern, a pattern that decorates local lamps of the Late Hellenistic period made in Jerusalem. This pattern may also have been a symbol accepted by all ethnic groups (it is one of the species that make the Jewish Lulav), unlike the Candlestick lamps which emphasized Christianity by adding a cross (replacing the palm) and inscriptions without artistic ambitions. The palm does not play a central role in the decoration of the Samaritan oil lamps, it appears only on the base of lamp #2119. On the Phoenician lamps of type VI.I with the gable, palms stand as the main subject. The palm is also absent on lamps made in workshops in the area of Bet She'an.



The intensive use of the ‘Samaritan’ lamps at least in the large cities known to also have had Jewish population, may suggest that both ethnic groups (and others) were using the same lamps, as they were fashioned according to the same legal part of the Jewish traditional literature – the Halacha. Another unifying character, was within the burial customs used first in the Roman period and is found among the burials in Kokhim (loculi). It was the introduction of arcosolia at their side or pure arcosolia, with a courtyard at the entrance (Kefar ‘Ara, Nahlat Aahim) that served all communities. The burial in large, decorated sarcophagi, with Samaritan Christian or Jewish character enables us to suggest ethnic association. As most of the burials were found disturbed, the original placement of the offerings could not be established. Niche hewn in the wall for placing a lamp and other glass vessels (Kefar ‘Ara; Sussman 1976 :92 and 93) was still in use like in ancient times.

A feature of Phoenician oil lamps was that they could be held either in the former, western way, with the nozzle facing the holder, whereas for lamps from the other local workshops, the nozzle faced away from the holder, which may point towards foreign influence, ie that of the Factory type (R2) and the North African products (VIII.7).

It is important to note that in terms of distribution, the small oil lamps made and used alongside the large-sized lamps (I.LR2, III.LR12 and III.B13) had a different fate – they remain a local-regional item – a satellite, while larger lamps had wider circulation.

A striking amount of regional history and knowledge is revealed to us as reflected by the different oil-lamp industries noted above; large cities or other sites with a central administrative role, or those situated on trade routes, produced different assemblages of lamps (see maps). These included many types purchased in local stores which were selling various current types of lamps from which the customer could choose, or lamps brought home by people visiting other regions, who selected different lamps to ‘import’ according to their artistic taste. They may sometimes have been brought as gifts or souvenirs of pilgrims and travellers, as Magness suggested was the case for Candlestick-type oil lamps, especially with inscriptions, which were lit on the Festival of Lights in Jerusalem.

I have chosen to start the catalogue with workshops belonging to the Southern part of the Land of Israel – the Judean Shephelah, where the Beit Nattif-type oil lamps (I. LR1–I. LR5) and moulds were found together. This, as I understand it and suggested in the catalogue of the Roman period, views the South as the cradle of both political and cultural revolutions. The lamps found at Beit Nattif present us with an artistic style unparalleled in the western world of lamps. Among them are disc

lamps made under an artistic influence originating in Palmyra, Syria. Such an influence could have been a direct one, through foreign potters, artisans who settled in the region and whose work was inspired by the practice of decorating stonework, funerary sculpture showing richly decorated garments, and jewellery. The designs used works were also applied to small artifacts such as pottery, clay lamps, vessels and figurines. Contacts with the eastern side of the Jordan River where imperial artistic tradition known from Jerash was strong, suggest an influence on lamps of type I.LR5. From the workshop of Beit Nattif, only lamps of type I.LR5 which also differ from the rest became popular during a longer period, as attested by their wide distribution and the copies made in different workshops.

We were tempted to create a kind of a ‘family tree’ (not a chronological tree), starting with Beit Nattif lamps and showing changes made over time yet preserving elements connecting them to the authentic, original Beit Nattif lamps and still resembling western lamps. The second half of the fourth century CE, the time of Constantine I, brought a significant cultural change. Lamps were now made to suit different customers through the choice of decorative motifs. Symbols of each group were added to the lamps (see above). This was also true with regard to lamps made outside of the Land of Israel. Owing to the style of the lamps we are able to show that the same ethnic groups lived in different regions. For example, lamps made at Yavne (II. I.LR11) and those found in Caesarea (V.LR18), are not copies but share typological and decorative elements which attest to the existence of Samaritan population in both towns, also known from literary sources.

Moulds have so far been found only for three types of lamps: Beit Nattif I.LR2– I.LR4, I.LR5, Caesarea (VI. B31), Candlestick, lamps III.B13 and III.B14. A mould for a Samaritan lamp was shown to me recently (if it is genuine, from a private collection) of type V LR20.

From the existing finds, based on the catalogue, including published lamps that are not included in the catalogue, we are able to deduce a fairly clear picture – the existence of five major groups of lamps. Among the largest (309 lamps in the catalogue) is the Southern lamp and its descendants I.LR1–I.LR10, of which I.LR5 constitutes the largest number, close to a third of the group (113 lamps). The second group is the Candlestick type (III.B13 and III.B14) believed to have originated in Jerusalem (442 lamps). Most (342) of these are of the larger type III. B14. The number of lamps from Samaria (Type V) was 231. The Northern part of the country yielded the largest number of oil lamps from the various Phoenician workshops; from region VI come 723 lamps, almost half of which are Northern Stamped Lamps. The fifth group – VII, Bet She’an – with only 190 lamps – does not illustrate the real numbers. The

physical boundaries in many occasions fit the boundaries mentioned in the ancient manuscript known as the Bereita and the inscription on the mosaic floor at Tel Rehov (Bet She'an region). Only 44 lamps are imports (see appendix).

The size of the wick-hole in most of the lamps is narrow, which may point to the use of very thin wicks, perhaps due to a shortage of raw material and oil (?).

Endless aspects and evidence can be deduced from studying the oil lamps; not all could be covered in this catalogue and those not covered here will contribute to further studies.

The lamps have been divided into regions and types according to shape, and in some cases according to decoration. The dating of the lamps remains arbitrary, in contrast to coins, which bear a date or commemorate a special event. Most of the lamps were retrieved from burials. Lamps found in burials cannot be precisely dated because burials served for generations. In some we may suggest a change in cultural-ethnic attributions, usually depending on the decoration. The type of burials in the Byzantine period basically did not change from the *kokhim*-type burials to which *arcosolia* were added on which the corpse was laid, and the addition of burial in coffins made of wood, clay, lead, or stone sarcophagi like at the catacombs at Bet She'arim, and near Shekhem (Samaria). Most of the lamps were not found next to the deceased; they were probably used in funerary ceremonies or feasts. The number of oil lamps is very large in the burials in the Northern part of the country especially in Phoenicia from the third to the sixth/seventh centuries CE, where stamped lamps were in use, and also in tombs where the dominant type of lamps were of the Candlestick type, found mainly in Jerusalem and Judea in both Jewish and Christian burials. Not all the lamps found bore traces of burning.

Everyday lamps found in public buildings and places of worship were also in use for several decades. We will not always know whether lamps found in tombs were the same ones used in dwellings, or whether they were made specifically for burials. Lamps with multiple wicks, of the kind that logically would have been used in public buildings, were also found in tombs, such as those from Tell en-Nasbeh and Gezer alongside other artifacts, mainly glass vessels may have found their way to the burial with their owner, and may reveal the deceased's importance or wealth.

Many oil lamps, especially the Samaritan types, were found in pits or cisterns, such as the two large cisterns at Apollonia and the two at Beit Nattif – alongside with coins dated from the Early Roman period to the beginning of the fourth century CE. Throwing lamps into pits may point either to some kind of worship involving casting

oil lamps into wells, fountains or springs as offerings, or as debris that accumulated when no longer in use or when another ethnic group settled at the site.

Several small articles discussing the regional picture presented by oil lamps have been written by the author and recently a more extensive by Da Costa emphasizing their economic connections – and their distribution. It seems that besides economic connections provided by the local workshops, the distribution points towards a cultural role. Lamps that had no boundaries were the Beit Nattif I. LR5 and the Candlestick types, as well as the earlier Herodian lamps of the Roman period, and they served a large portion of the population on both sides of the Jordan River. Egypt on the other hand was 'left out' although there is a resemblance between the Northern Stamped lamps and the Egyptian Frog type lamps.

### The Catalogue

As there is no break between the Roman/Late Roman and Byzantine period in some of the sites or burial offerings, the numbered designation of the oil lamps in this catalogue follows the previous Roman period catalogue, and the lamps were added to the index table of the Roman period and to the burials where the previous lamps were registered. This was done in order to complete the cultural picture.

Lamps are listed as follows: **I** – the South, Judean Shephelah; **II** – Yavne region; **III** – Jerusalem; **IV** – Southern (Negev) wheel-made; **V** – Samaria; **VI** – Phoenicia; **VII** – Bet She'an; and **VIII** – imported lamps.

The letters refer to the periods: **LR** meaning Late Roman, creeping into the early Byzantine period and **B** Byzantine. The letter **W** signifies that the lamp was wheel-made.

The following introduction from the previous catalogues fits this catalogue as well:

The lamps are those registered with the Israel Antiquities Authority until 1988 (IDAM) found in the various excavations and some acquisitions. The catalogue includes oil lamps excavated by the Mandatory Palestine Department of Antiquities and Museums (PAM) where the first number indicates the year of the excavation separated from the serial number by a period, and the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (IDAM) where the first number indicates the year of the excavation and the serial number is separated by a dash.

The collection attempts to present a more complete picture than can be drawn from studying individual published excavations, by adding some of the unpublished excavation results with the permission of the excavators. The catalogue features the wide variety



of oil lamps used during the Late Roman and Byzantine periods penetrating into the Early Islamic period (like in the previous catalogue of lamps of the Roman period we did not abruptly end as the lamps penetrated the Late Roman –Byzantine period). The large number of oil lamps precludes a description of each individual item, and certain lamps are compared with lamps from other sites in order to establish more accurate dating, relationships, and influences. No petrographical analyses were conducted and not all sizes are exact.

The oil lamps are generally listed in the typological order preferred by the author, which does not always coincide with the chronological order. The lamps and their characteristic types were separated in such a way that oil lamps found in the same structure or burial cave are sometimes listed with oil lamps typologically similar to them. In the Index the finds from a given locus or burial-cave were reunited.

The Index of Sites gives the official place name in alphabetical order, with the alternative Arabic or Hebrew name in parentheses where relevant, and with the identifying map coordinates of the Survey of Israel grid, from the Southwestern to the Northeastern extent of the site. The official name is not always the same as it was written by the excavator.

### Legend

1. The present catalogue serial number of the item.
2. The identifying registration number of the oil lamp in the stores of the Israel Antiquities Authority.
3. The official place name of the site where the oil lamp was found. (Note: Due to a confusing multiplicity of local Arabic, Hebrew, biblical, and other names and orthography for the same place, the official name can differ considerably from the site name in the excavation reports and in the references.)
4. The physical description of the oil lamp according to its parts: general manufacture and form; base; walls; rim; nozzle and wick-hole; the condition of the lamp if incomplete.
5. The composition, colouration, and quality of the clay of which the oil lamp is made; slip, finish, traces of soot and the like, if available.
6. The dimensions. A + sign indicates that the item is not entire and precise dimensions cannot be determined or are not available.
7. Dating, usually as ascribed by the excavator, or according to more recent reports, and, especially when unpublished according to comparable material from other sites and typology.
8. Publication history of the oil lamp (if published) of the name of the excavator.

9. Excavation provenance of oil lamp: area, stratum, locus, etc., and excavation number when possible.
10. Notes, remarks, and comments with comparison of the oil lamp with other lamps, and relevant remarks.

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### Dedication

I dedicate this catalogue to the artists and craftsman of the Byzantine period; without their inspiration the work could not be done.