

BE'ER SHEVA', NAHAL 'ASHAN (NEVE MENAHEM B): TWO METAL ARTIFACTS

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A brass coffee pot and a fragment of a silver bracelet were found in Area B prior to construction north of the Nahal 'Ashan (Neve Menaḥem B) neighborhood in Be'er Sheva' (see Eisenberg-Degen 2017).¹ The coffee pot was discovered in Building B2, which was probably used for receiving guests, and the bracelet was found in Building B1. Both items were found covered with a thick layer of rust. These two items testify to the Bedouin material culture during the late Ottoman period and the early years of the British Mandate in the vicinity of Be'er Sheva'.

COFFEE POT

The pear-shaped coffee pot with a handle, a lid and a long, pointed spout (height 19.3 cm, base diam. 10 cm, thickness 0.31 cm; Fig. 1) was produced on an anvil from a brass sheet. The brass has green weathering stains on the surface. The body has several dents, with the most significant damage underneath the spout. There are also a few creases on the base of the pot. The original spout was broken; it was then repaired by attaching a longer spout (length 9 cm, thickness 0.3 cm) with rivets onto the original spout. Two perforations across the rim and the spout indicate that a filter was probably present prior to the breakage of the original spout. The handle is hollow, square in section, and has a nonsymmetrical S-like shape with a central protruding rib. The upper part of the handle terminates in two outspread, wing-shaped bands with rivets that attached the handle to the rim. The lower part of the handle is leaf-shaped, and was soldered to the pot. Traces of straw thread are wrapped around the handle. The base of the pot is flat and disc-shaped.

The lower part of the body was decorated with a pair of incised circles made with a lathe. The upper part of the body was decorated with three rows of a beehive pattern of trapezoids—formed by double and triple lines—made with a chisel. Below this decoration is the signature of the artist within a scale-shaped form.

The lid was originally made from a hammered brass sheet with a hollow globular knob at the center; its conical termination is missing. The lid was decorated with two tendril-shaped settings, one of which is missing. The lid was restored from several fragments, and about half is still missing.



Fig. 1. Coffee pot (L204, B2035).

This type of coffee pot was abundant in Syria (Bouchman 1934:84–90, Pl. VII), Jordan (Weir 1990: Figs. 11, 12) and Israel (Brosh 2003:16–17; Avner 2007: Fig. 19:5) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Most of these coffee pots were produced in Damascus and Aleppo in Syria. Like this pot, they were made of a hammered brass sheet produced on an anvil, and were decorated with a chisel. The handle and the lid were produced separately. These coffee pots bear a signature under the decoration, indicating the name of the artisan or the place of production.

The coffee pot (*dalleh* p. *dilāl*) is part of the traditional Bedouin hospitality. Guests are served tea, which is poured into glasses from a pot, and then coffee is prepared. The preparation of the coffee is a ceremonial process, which includes the grinding of the coffee beans followed by boiling them in a pot with water. Milled cardamom seeds are prepared in boiling water in a separate pot. The coffee and the cardamom and water would be strained into a third pot and then poured into small porcelain cups (*finjan/finjal* p. *fanājīn/*

fanāgīl; Wier 1990:19–25). Thus, each family tent had several such pots of various sizes, but they were all uniform in shape. Our coffee pot should be dated to the late Ottoman period or the early years of the British Mandate. Other pots have been reported from the beginning of the twenty-first century, as this type of pot continued to be used for at least 150 years.

SILVER BRACELET

The excavation yielded a small fragment of a bracelet (width 4.2 cm, thickness 0.1–0.3 cm; Fig. 2) made of a silver sheet. Its unbroken end has a design reminiscent of an envelope tongue, bearing three plain marks, probably testifying to the quality of the silver and the silversmith's personal seal. It is also decorated in the center and along the rims. The central pattern, produced in the *champlevé* technique, was composed of a central, round protrusion flanked by dots and two pairs of upper and lower butterfly antenna-like protrusions. This floral pattern was probably consolidated under late Ottoman-period influence. It might also be a representation of a scorpion, thus having a talismanic significance against evil, like other pieces of Bedouin jewelry (Weir 1990:79–82). The rims are decorated with a band of diagonal hatchings made with a chisel. It terminates with a pinpoint line hammered from the inside.

Silver bracelets were always worn in pairs, one on each wrist. Such silver bracelets are known from Israel and Jordan, dating from the first half of the twentieth century. Comparable examples—referred to as *saba' wīyāt* by the Bedouin population (Weir 1990: Fig. 84)—are known from the Negev.



Fig. 2. Bracelet (L209, B2010).

NOTE

¹ The two items were cleaned and restored at the Metal Laboratories of the IAA by Lena Kupershmidt. Daphna Tuval-Marks, Ilana Peters and Dafnah Strauss edited the article.

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