

COINS FROM THE 1968 EXCAVATIONS AT HESHBON*

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Among the "small finds" of an excavation, coins are important for helping provide requisite chronological information. As they are not far removed from their approximate dates, coins discovered in a stratigraphical excavation help date other finds within their strata. There are relatively few inconsistencies due to lengthy circulation on the one hand and occasional disturbances of strata on the other. Meanwhile, wear and corrosion add much to the problems of identification, which is indeed the basis of interpretation.

The coins of the 1968 Heshbon excavations pose the following unusual difficulties: (a) of the 78 coins discovered, 32 are in very poor and mostly unrecognizable condition; (b) each of the remaining 46 pieces represents an altogether separate type—a fact which has lengthened the study; and (c) the one gold coin (No. 20), the one silver coin (No. 36), and the 76 copper pieces stretch from the 1st century B.C. to the 15th century A.D. (see Table I). This wide distribution poses severe limitations on interpretation. However, our understanding of the occupational history of post-Biblical Heshbon would gain little if the coins were catalogued without being subjected to a historical analysis that leads to some conclusions.

Coins are history incarnate. Of particular interest to Bible students are the coins related to ancient Palestine. A *leptos* of Pontius Pilate (No. 5) is reminiscent of the widow's mite

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in Mk 12: 41-44. A *sestertius* of Antoninus Pius (No. 8) commemorates the founding of Aelia Capitolina by Hadrian in A.D. 135 on the site of ancient Jerusalem, following the suppression of the Bar Kochba revolt (132-135). Another shows Mount Gerizim with a shrine atop (No. 9)—it is a *sestertius* of Neapolis in Samaria, one mile west of ancient Shechem.

As for the Islamic coins, many are mutilated and worn almost beyond recognition.¹ Some are only part of a coin, e.g., No. 42, which is compared with a whole coin of the same type in Plate II. Copper coinage had a poor start in Islam and so it continued, despite the enviably excellent *dinars* that were struck occasionally.² Of the Islamic coins only one (No. 21) of surpassing interest has come to light. It is a pictorial-type Umayyad *filis* issued prior to the monetary reform of 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwān (696/7).³

The religious element is prominent in Islamic coinage. Many of these coins bear the Moslem profession of faith, either in part or in whole (Koran ix. 33): "There is no god but God [No. 26] alone [Nos. 22-24]; He has no associate [No. 25]." Others bear the continuation of the text, usually on the reverse: "Mohammed is the apostle of God [Nos. 22-27, 37, 45] whom He sent with guidance [No. 36] and the religion of truth to make it prevail over all other religions [No. 42]." Koran cxii. 1-3 is another text quoted on coins: "God is one; God is the eternal; He begets not, neither is

¹ Their seemingly impossible identification demanded most of the time allotted to this study.

² Of particular interest are the coins of the Byzantine-Arab transition and the barbarous imitations of Imperial Roman coinage. See A. S. Kirkbride, "Coins of the Byzantine-Arab Transition," *QDAP*, XIII (1947), 59-63; John Walker, *Catalogue of the Muhammadan Coins in the British Museum*, Vol. II: *A Catalogue of the Arab-Byzantine and Post-reform Umayyad Coins* (2 vols.; London; 1956), xv-liii.

³ The post-reform coins have only inscription, more in keeping with the principles of Islam. A few Umayyad coins of Spain and rare Abbasid specimens are among the exceptions. Pictorial-type Islamic coins reappeared among the Turkomen, and were frequently issued by the Mongol dynasties descended from Genghis Khan (d. 1227).

He begotten [No. 25, rev.]." Other inscriptions include the following designations preceding the rulers' names: "the Sultan [Nos. 35, 44]," "the king [Nos. 28, 29, 31, 45]," "the Sultan, the King [Nos. 37-39, 41, 42, 46]," "the Imam [Nos. 29, 31, 34]." Several adjectival names either precede or follow the rulers' names.⁴ Another common designation reads on the reverse: "In the name of God; this *fi*ls was struck at . . . in the year . . ."

In the following description of the individual coins, great care has been taken lest there be more than a minimal risk of error.⁵ It is admitted that in a study of such isolated pieces some oversights will likely be found.

Phoenician

1. (291—A. 4:18, along the E. balk).⁶ Tyre, 96/5 B.C.

Obv. Head of Tyche r., wearing turreted crown with veil; border of dots.

⁴ These are among the pitfalls to the amateur in Oriental numismatism. Adjectival names may easily lead to misidentifications.

⁵ The following catalogues were checked to verify certain identifications: Alfred R. Bellinger and Philip Grierson, eds., *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection* (2 vols.; Washington D.C., 1966-68); S. W. Grose, *Catalogue of the McClean Collection of Greek Coins* (3 vols.; Cambridge, 1929); George F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Phoenicia* (London, 1910); *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia* (London, 1922); Harold Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, Vol. III: *Nerva to Hadrian* (London, 1966); Vol. IV: *Antoninus Pius to Commodus* (London, 1968); *Roman Coins from the Earliest Times to the Fall of the Western Empire* (2d ed.; Chicago, 1960); J. W. E. Pearce, *Valentinian I—Theodosius I*, Vol. IX of *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, ed. by Harold Mattingly *et. al.* (9 vols.; London, 1962); Stanley L. Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, ed. by Reginald S. Poole (10 vols.; London, 1875-90); A. Reifenberg, *Ancient Jewish Coins* (4th ed.; Jerusalem, 1965); Walker, *op. cit.* The following Nos. do not have exact parallels in the catalogues cited above: 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 21, 28-30, 32-38, 40, 43-45.

⁶ Within the parenthesis, the excavator's registration number is given first; the letters A-D designate the areas; the following numbers refer to the squares within an area; while the last numbers following a colon refer to the loci numbers. This is followed by a brief description. Unless otherwise indicated, all coins are of copper.

Rev. War-galley with both ends curved in a volute; between ends of galley: IEPAΣ; above: ΑΛ (year 30), Π Y (monogram); beneath galley: לִצֹר⁷.

Nabataean

2. (201—B. 1:14, rock fall). Aretas IV, 9 B.C.-A.D. 40
 Obv. Busts of Aretas Philopatris (obliterated) and wife; border of dots.
 Rev. Two crossed cornucopias; two lines of inscr. between them above, and one line below: לִת / שְׁקִי / חֲרַתָּה.
 3. (134—C. 2:6, layer of wash). Rabbel II, A.D. 71-106.
 Obv. Obliterated.
 Rev. Two crossed cornucopias; two lines of inscr. between them: רְבִיאֵל / גְּמִלָּה.

Greek?

4. (130—C. 2:1, topsoil). Uncertain.
 Obv. Obliterated.
 Rev. Nude deity r., seated l., conducting serpent beneath to *cista mystica* above with lid half-open; l., illegible Gr. inscr. outwards.⁸

Provincial Roman

5. (139—D. 1:1, topsoil). Judaea; Pontius Pilate, A.D. 31/2.
 Obv. Lituus; around: TIBEPIOY KAICAPOC.
 Rev. Within wreath: LIH (year 17 of Tiberius' accession).⁹
 6. (295—D. 1:31, layer of earth at level 4c threshold). Trajan, ca. A.D. 107.
 Obv. Head of Nerva (96-98) r., laureate; l.: DIVINERVA; ¹⁰ r. obliterated.

⁷ The second era of Tyre's autonomy began after the assassination of Demetrius Nicator in 126/5 B.C. Hill, *Phoenicia*, pp. cxxv, 255 f.

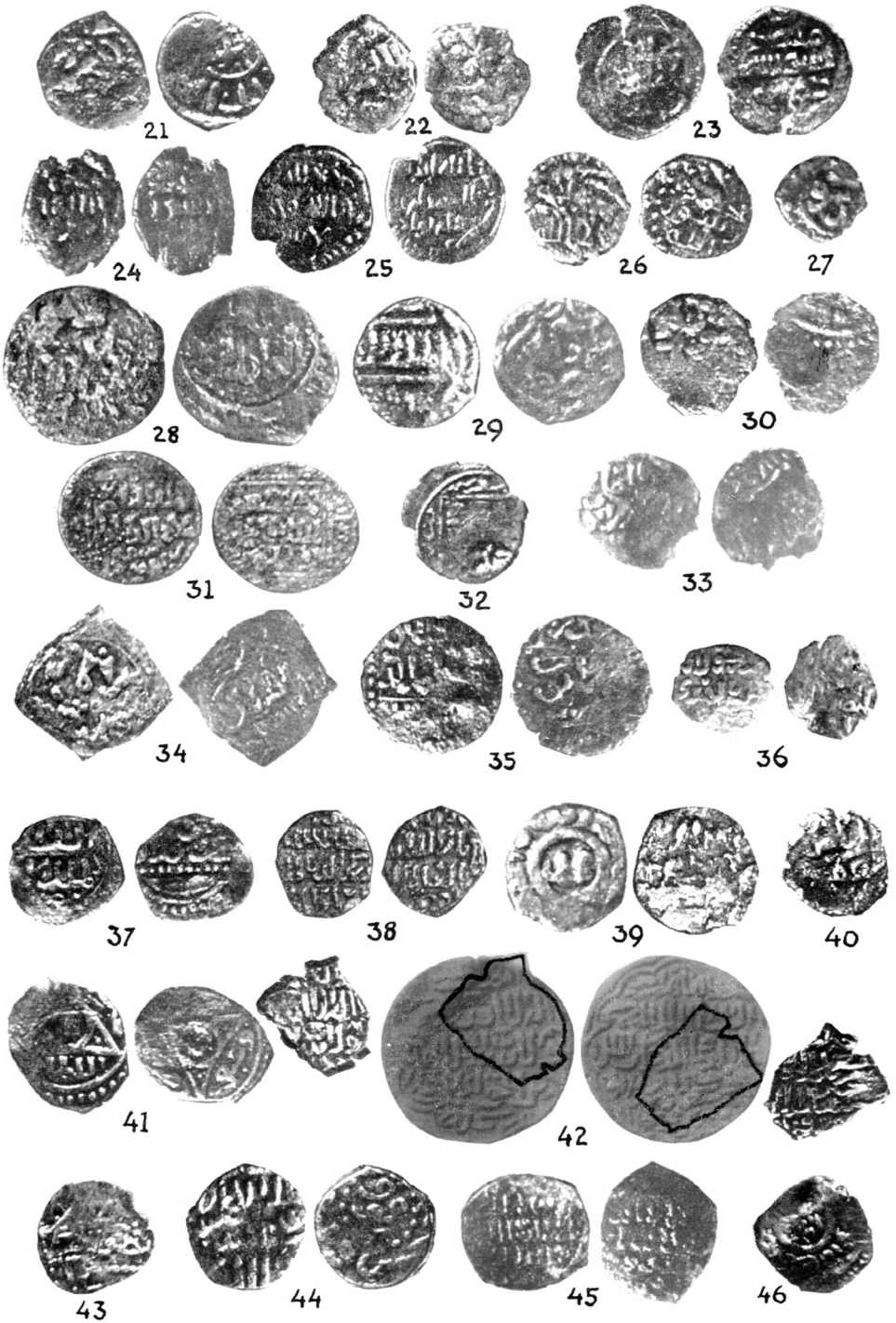
⁸ The so-called "serpent type" coinage often denotes a Mysian origin. Cf. S. W. Grose, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-73. However, its identity with city coins of Arabia is also probable; cf. Hill, *Arabia*, p. xxxiii, n. 6.

⁹ A. Reifenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 56, No. 133.

¹⁰ The epithet denotes that this unusual coin was not issued during the reign of Nerva, for it was after his death that the Senate pronounced him *divinus*. A. E. R. Boak and W. G. Sinnigen, *A History of Rome to A.D. 565* (5th ed.; New York, 1965), p. 323. It must have been issued during Trajan's "restoration" of A.D. 107, when "portraits of all the 'divi' and 'good' Emperors, from Julius Caesar to Nerva" were represented. Caligula, Nero, Otho, Vitellius, and Domitian were excluded. Mattingly, *Nerva to Hadrian*, p. xxiii. The DIVI legend appears on the reverse of these types minted in Rome—as it also appears on those issued later by Hadrian (117-138). *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101, 241, 378. The appearance of the legend on the obverse of this coin could be explained by the simple fact that variants of Roman coinage were not uncommon in the provincial mints.



Greek, Roman and Byzantine Coins from the 1968
Excavations at Heshbon
(Photos: Avery V. Dick)



Islamic Coins from the 1968 Excavations at Heshbon
 (Photos: Avery V. Dick)

Rev. Aequitas (or Moneta) standing, draped, holding scales in r. hand and cornucopia in l.

7. (202—B. 1:14, layer of Roman contexts near the kiln). Aelia Capitolina; Antoninus Pius, A.D. 138.¹¹

Obv. Head of Antoninus Pius r., bareheaded; obliterated inscr. around: [IMPCT AEL. ANT].

Rev. Bust of Serapis r., hatted; inscr. begins on r. below and reads outwardly: COLAE CAPIT (Colonia Aelia Capitolina); border of dots.

8. (141—C. 2:7, layer of wash). Neapolis; Diadumenian, A.D. 217-218. Obv. Bust of Diadumenian, bareheaded; around: ... [A]NTONINVS.¹²

Rev. Mount Gerizim showing temple at the summit, steep stairway on r. slope, colonnade below, and an eagle (?) at the bottom; obliterated inscr. around.

Late Roman

9. (290—C. 4:5, 3d layer of earth). 3d century A.D.

Obv. Bust r., radiate; blundered and illegible inscr. around.

Rev. Concordia standing r., draped and turreted, presenting two ensigns to Sol—standing half l., r. hand raised to receive ensign, l. holding spear; around: CON[CORDIA]AVG; obliterated inscr. in segment below.

10. (115—B. 1:4/5, cobblestones underneath topsoil). Procopius (?), A.D. 365/6.¹³

Obv. Obliterated.

Rev. Emperor standing, head r., holding *laburum* in r. hand and resting l. on shield; around: [RE]PARATIO FELT[EMP].

11. (105—A. 1, unstratified topsoil). Valentinian II, A.D. 375-392.

Obv. Bust of Valentinian II r.; around: DNVALENTINIANVS....

Rev. Obliterated.

12. (311—C. 3:5, level underneath topsoil).

Obv. Bust of Valentinian II r., with pearl-diadem and cuirass.

Rev. Emperor advancing r., dragging a captive with a transverse spear; l.: PRINCI[PIVM...].

13. (111—A. 1:13, debris of destroyed church).

Obv. Bust of Valentinian II r., draped; l.: DNVAL....

Rev. Cross within wreath.¹⁴

¹¹ Antoninus Pius became Hadrian's partner in the Principate early in 138. Like his earlier coins, this was struck prior to Hadrian's death on July 10, 138.

¹² Cf. Hill, *Palestine*, p. 60, where the coins of Diadumenian differ from the above specimen in that their obv. inscr. is in Gr. and the rev. shows a temple with four columns, pediment, and central arch; city-goddess within.

¹³ Cf. Pearce, *op. cit.*, p. 215, No. 18.

¹⁴ It could also be attributed either to Honorius (395-423) or to Valentinian III (421, 423-455).

14. (247—B. 1: 4/5, cobblestones underneath topsoil). Valentinian II and Victor (usurper), A.D. 387.¹⁵
 Obv. Bust of Valentinian II r., with diadem and draped; around, r.: . . .NIANVS; above, in a straight line: VICTO[R], overstruck.
 Rev. Uncertain mint marks.
15. (253—A. 3: 11, plaster floor). Honorius, A.D. 395-423.¹⁶
 Obv. Obliterated.
 Rev. Three Emperors standing, scepters in r. hand and l. resting on shields; youngest in center nimbate, his two colleagues look towards him; border of dots.¹⁷
16. (200—C. 2: 5, layer of wash). Uncertain.
 Obv. Bust r., with pearl diadem; around: . . .ON . . .FAVG.
 Rev. Obliterated.

Byzantine

17. (117—C. 1: 1, top soil). *Follis* of Anastasius I, A.D. 498-518.¹⁸
 Obv. Bust of Anastasius I (491-518) r., with diadem and draped; around: DNANASTA SIVSPPAVC; border of dots.
 Rev. M (prominent mark of value—40 *nummi*); within: € (official code No.); above: cross; star and dots in l. and r. segments; CON (Constantinople) in segment below; border of dots.
18. (249—C. 1: 6, layer of wash). *Pentanummium* of Justinian I, A.D. 527-565.
 Obv. Head of Justinian I r., l.: DNIVSTINI . . .
 Rev. Obliterated.
19. (125—C. 1: 5, layer of wash). *Follis* of Justin II, A.D. 572/3.
 Obv. Justin II (565-578) and Sophia seated on double throne, holding scepters in their hands and a large *globus cruciger* between them; blundered inscr. on l. and r.; border of dots; pierced.

¹⁵ Victor was the son of Maximus, a general in Britain who crossed to Gaul in 383 and assassinated Gratian (375-383), the elder brother of Valentinian II. Maximus crossed the Alps in 387, but was defeated and beheaded by Theodosius I, who had been appointed Eastern Emperor by Gratian and Valentinian in 379. However, when the Italian mints came under the possession of Maximus in 387, he struck coins in the name of his son Victor, whom he hoped to elevate to the Western throne. See Pearce, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii. It is difficult to tell whether such overstruck specimens are hitherto published or not.

¹⁶ Mattingly, *Roman Coins from the Earliest Times*, p. 301, Pl. LX, No. 16, dates it A.D. 407.

¹⁷ Reminiscent of the reigns of Honorius' predecessors: Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius I.

¹⁸ This was the centerpiece of the reformed copper coinage of 498. See Bellinger, *op. cit.*, I, 21.

Rev. M; within: Γ; above: cross; l. segment: ANNO; r. segment: S II (572/3); [TH]EUP' (Antioch) in segment below; border of dots; pierced.

20. (Surface find before excavations). *Solidus* (gold, 4.238 gm.) of Constantine IV, A.D. 674-681.

Obv. Bust of Constantine IV (654-685) facing slightly r., bearded, with cuirass, wearing plumed helmet and diadem with ties to l.; r. hand holds spear transversely behind head; shield showing horseman on l. shoulder; r.: A NUSP.

Rev. Cross atop four steps; to l. and r. the Emperor's two brothers—Heraclius and Tiberius (shorter)—draped, crowned, and holding *globus cruciger*; l.: VICTOIA; r.: A VϚUA+; CONOB in segment below.

Umayyad (661-750)

21. (127—C. 1:5, layer of wash).

Obv. Traces of a small circle, top; a duck within, facing l.; obliterated inscr. around.¹⁹

Rev. Traces of a small circle, bottom; within: [ا] يلى [ـا]; around, bottom: . . . ملك الله [ا]; traces of border.

22. (103—A. 2, dump).

Obv. [بسم الله / لا] اله [الا / الله وحده].

Rev. Starlike flower; beneath: [محمد رسول الله].

23. (107—A. 1:5, debris of destroyed church).

Obv. لا اله الا الله / وحده. border.

Rev. محمد / رسول الله / دمشق. border.

24. (104—A. 1:10, unstratified topsoil).

Obv. Similar to No. 23; obliterated inscr. around.

Rev. بسم الله . . . around, top: محمد رسول الله.

25. (254—A. 2:11, cistern).

Obv. [محمد رسول الله . . . لا اله الا] الله وحده / لا شريك له].

Rev. [بسم] الله ضرب الله احد [الله] الصمد لم يلد / ولم يولد هذا [. . .]

¹⁹ "An interesting specimen with a duck within a circle on the obverse and ايلييا on reverse area is illustrated by Stickel in *ZDMG* [*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*], 1889, p. 698." N. G. Nassar, "The Arabic Mints in Palestine and Trans-Jordan," *QDAP*, XIII (1948), 123, n. 2. The above coin is perhaps the second such specimen hitherto published. Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 224, Nos. 730-733, enumerates four somehow similar coins with the following differences: (a) the word is الله instead of ايلييا and (b) the ducks are smaller and facing r. on two of them.

26. (278—D. 1:10, N.-S. wall).
Obv. Similar to No. 23, last word omitted; border of dots.
Rev. Similar to No. 23, last word omitted; border of dots.
27. (118—C. 1:4, layer of wash).
Obv. له . . . / . . . و . . . / ا . . . ; traces of border, bottom l.
Rev. Obliterated.

Ayyubid (1171-1342)²⁰

28. (258—D. 3:9, pit against the N. balk). Al-‘Adil, 1196-1218.
Obv. Above, a rose; beneath, semicircular, illegible inscr.
Rev. العادل / الملك / العادل بن ايوب; illegible margin around dotted border, bottom.
29. (204—D. 1:8, platform). Al-Manṣūr Muḥammad I or II (Ḥamāh Branch), 1191-1220 or 1244-1284.
Obv. [ب/ضرب] / الملك العزیز / المنصور م[حمد]; two separating lines across; traces of border.
Rev. [ال] منصور محمد / [ال] المستعصم / [ال]امام; arabesque and border, bottom.
30. (132—C. 2:1, topsoil). Al-Manṣūr Muḥammad I (Egyptian Branch)? 1198/9.
Obv. [د[محمد] / المنصور]; third of a flower, l.
Rev. traces of borders, the outer dotted.
31. (121—C. 1:2, L-shaped wall). Al-Naṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf (Ḥalab Branch), 1236-1260.
Obv. الملك الناصر / صلاح الدنيا و / [لد] - بن يوسف بن محمد within square; in l. segment between square and outer border: [وار] يعين.
Rev. الامام / المستعصم / بالله ابو احمد / امير المؤمنين within double square (the outer dotted); in r. segment between square and outer border: لا اله الا ا . . .
32. (206—C. 1:6, layer of wash). Ḥamāh Branch, 1275/6.
Obv. Top l., in segments between corner of square and third of outer circle: ضرب . . . / [ار]بعة وسبعين (i.e. [6]74 A.H.); bottom r., overstruck mint mark?
Rev. Obliterated.
33. (122—C. 1:4, layer of wash). Abū 'l-Fidā' (Ḥamāh Branch), 1310-1332.
Obv. Above: . . . الف . . . l., within traces of arabesque: . . . ابو . . .
Rev. Traces of dotted border, l.; date: ٧١١ (711 A.H., A.D. 1311).
34. (197—C. 1:2, layer of wash). Uncertain.
Obv. Arabesque; beneath: الامام المستعصم; traces of border; slightly double-struck.
Rev. Within arabesque: [اسمع] ميل? traces of wreath, bottom.

²⁰ End of the Ḥamāh Branch.

35. (256—D. 2:16, pit along S. balk). Uncertain.
 Obv. Within part of dotted square: بامرالله / [. . .] سلطان.
 Rev. Within traces of dotted square and circle: / [. . .] محمد بن . . .
 . . . / منين . . . / ث

Mamlūk (1250-1517) ²¹

36. (114—B. 1:1, unstratified topsoil). Silver *Dirham* of al-Manṣūr Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī, 1257-1259.
 Obv. محمد رسول الله / ارسله بالهدى .
 Rev. [ا] لمنصو [ر . . .] لدين .
37. (116—B. 1:2, small cobblestones underneath topsoil). Al-Zāhir Bībars, 1260-1277.
 Obv. السلطان [ن] للملك [الظا] / هر .
 Rev. Above: محمد رسول الله; beneath: blank segment between dotted line of square and outer circles, the outermost dotted.
38. (285—C. 4:5, 3d layer of earth).
 Obv. [الصالح] ي / [السلطان الملك] / [الظاهر] مر ركن الدنيا والدين / [. . .] .
 Rev. ضرب . . . / . . . بامرالله امير . . . / [ابو العباس احمد] .
 mint mark: m.
39. (131—C. 2:1, topsoil). Al-Naṣir Muḥammad, 1293-94, 1299-1309, 1310-41.
 Obv. Within small circle: محمد; around: السلطان الملك الناصر ناصر الدنيا والد .
 Rev. Obliterated.
40. (113—B. 1:2, small cobblestones underneath topsoil).
 Obv. Above: الناصر; arabesque beneath.
 Rev. Obliterated.
41. (193—A. 2:11, cistern). Al-Manṣūr Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad, 1361-1363.
 Obv. Small circle within equilateral triangle; within: محمد; in segments between triangle and outer circle: السلطان / [الملك] اله .
 [ر] ; border of dots.
 Rev. Similar, but inscr. within small circle: ضرب; in segments: دم [شق] ثلاث وستين / وسبعمئة (763 A.H.).
42. (106—A. 2:6, water channel). Al-Manṣūr ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī, 1377-1381.²²

²¹ Bahrī Mamlūk (1250-1382), Burdji Mamlūk (1382-1517).

²² Cf. the illustration (Plate II) from Poole, *op. cit.*, IV, 186 f., Nos. 607-610. He designates this type as silver. However, tests at the Physics Department of Andrews University show that No. 42 is made of an alloy with more copper content than silver. It was a

- Obv. [الله/ وما النصر ا] لا من [عند الله] / لا اله الا الله [محمد / رس] - حول الله
[ارسله بالهدى / ودين الحق ليظهره على / الدين كله].
- Rev. ضرب به . . . / السلطان الملك المنصور / علا الدنيا والدين على بن الملك
[الاشرف] شعبان بن حسن بن الملك الناصر محمد²³ / وثما / نين وسبع[مئة].
43. (199—C. 1:6, layer of wash). Uncertain.
Obv. Overstruck traces of hexagram, dotted lines, and circle; r.:
[ال]منصور . . .
Rev. Obliterated.
44. (120—C. 1:4, layer of wash). Al-Zahir Barḳūḳ, 1382-1399.
Obv. السلطان / [اب] و سعيد برة[وق] / [خلد] الله [ملكه].
Rev. Within dotted circle, above: برقوق; beneath: خمس . . .
[و]ـ[ح]ـ[ا]ـ[نين] . . .
45. (195—B. 1:4/5, small cobblestones underneath topsoil). Al-Ashraf
Sayf al-Din Iynāl, 1453-1461.
Obv. [ا] لناصر اينال ا . . . / [ا] الملك الا[شرف].
Rev. ولا اله . . . / [م]ـ[ح]ـ[مد] رسول . . . / بدمش[ق].
46. (255—A. 2:11, cistern)
Obv. Obliterated.
Rev. Within small circle: اينا/ل; around, bottom: [ال]لمطان
[ال]ملك . . .

Table 1 illustrates the wide distribution of the 78 coins. Each *plus* represents a coin enumerated in this report, and each *minus* stands for a relatively dated coin neither enumerated nor illustrated because of its very poor and hardly recognizable condition.²⁴ Coins belonging to reigns that overlap two centuries are ascribed to the second century of the

common practice in ancient times to mutilate gold and silver coins. This was prohibited in Islam. See A. J. Wensinck, "Coins," *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Traditions* (Leiden, 1960), p. 47.

²³ This line in the illustrated coin reads: . . . بن حسن بن محمد قلاون . . .

²⁴ Despite the absence of obvious identification marks, the following observations were possible: 12 of these are Roman *Aes* IV type (smaller module, ca. 10-12 mm; 1-1.5 gm.) and seem to belong to the 4th-5th centuries A.D.; there are 4 Byzantine *pentanummi* probably from the 6th-7th centuries A.D.; 6 appear to be Mamlūk *fulūs*—and rightly so when compared with their and related loci of discovery; the remaining 10 are diversely grouped into centuries. The earliest appears to belong to Tigranes, King of Armenia (97-56 B.C.), whose distinct *tiara* is barely discernible. (He annexed Greater Cappadocia and Syria in 83 B.C. and thereby ended the Seleucid rule.)

two. The hypothesis that some coins could have enjoyed several centuries of circulation applies at best to gold coins. Though not considerable in number, the grouping of coins at certain centuries and their apparent absence in the intervening 9th-12th centuries are noteworthy.

TABLE I

1st cent. B.C.	+ --
1st cent. A.D.	+++---
2d cent. A.D.	++++---
3d cent. A.D.	++
4th cent. A.D.	+++++-----
5th cent. A.D.	++-----
6th cent. A.D.	+++---
7th cent. A.D.	+--
8th cent. A.D.	+++++---
9th cent. A.D.	
10th cent. A.D.	
11th cent. A.D.	
12th cent. A.D.	--
13th cent. A.D.	+++++---
14th cent. A.D.	+++++---
15th cent. A.D.	++-

At this juncture it is interesting to compare Table I with the references to Heshbon in the non-Biblical literary sources.²⁵ The references in the works of Josephus extend from the 2d century B.C. to the 1st century A.D.²⁶ There are documented references to the city in every succeeding century until the middle of the 7th century.²⁷ Eshbus (Heshbon) then disappears from the literary sources, only to reappear in its Arabic form—Ḥesbān. The earliest Arabic reference, however, derives from the writings of Abū Dja'far Muḥammad aṭ-Ṭabarī

²⁵ See Werner Vyhmeister, "The History of Heshbon from Literary Sources," *AUSS*, VI (1968), 158-177.

²⁶ *Ant.* xii. 4. 11; xiii. 15. 4; xv. 8. 5. *Wars* ii. 18. 1; iii. 3. 3.

²⁷ Ptolemy *Geog.* v. 17 (130-60); coins of Elagabalus (218-222); Roman Milestones 5, 6, Eshbus-Livias road (219, 236, 288, 364-75); Council of Nicaea (325); Eusebius *Onomasticon* 84:1-6; pilgrim Etheria of Aquitania (ca. 400); Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451); Notitia Antiochena (ca. 570); capital in Ras eṣ-Ṣiāgha church (ca. 590); Georges of Cyprus (ca. 605); letters of Pope Martin I (649); Mosaic of Ma'in (6th-8th centuries).

(839-923). He mentions *Djabal* (Mount) *Ḥesbân* in recounting Israelite history.²⁸ It is doubtful that this scant reference speaks of a contemporary city; it speaks rather of a *tell*. The next Arabic reference clearly indicates the existence of a *Ḥesbân* village in 1184.²⁹ This reveals a renewed beginning at the end of the 12th century. It is exactly the same period of restoration as indicated through the coin evidence. References to the city are abundant in the Bahri Mamlūk period (1250-1382).³⁰ They disappear again at the close of the 14th century, at about the time of the latest coins found at Heshbon.

However few, the Heshbon coins represent an extensive geographical range of provenance. But it is rather strange that except for the two Nabataean coins (Nos. 2, 3) which were presumably struck at Petra,³¹ there are no apparent indications of coins struck at the ancient mints of Trans-Jordan. After the fall of the Nabataean Kingdom and the founding of *Arabia Provincia* in A.D. 106, several cities issued their local coinage—especially Bostra, which at first issued coins for the entire province.³² Like its neighboring cities of Madeba, Philadelphia (Amman), and Gerasa (Jerash), Esbus had its city coinage for a considerable period under the Roman mandate.³³ No specimens of this coinage were found in 1968. Moreover, of the Byzantine mints that came into the possession of the Moslems, the Amman forge continued to beat Islamic coins throughout the Umayyad (661-750) and the

²⁸ Vyhmeister, *op. cit.*, p. 171, citing a letter from Fritz Steppat, Director of Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Beirut, Jan. 2, 1967.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, citing Behâ Ed-Dîn, *The Life of Saladin* (London, 1897), p. 97.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 172 f., citing: ha-Parchi (ca. 1314), Sanuto (ca. 1321), Abu el-Feda (d. 1331), Dimisqi (d. 1327), al-ʿUmari (1301-1348), Qalqaşandî, and az-ẓahirî.

³¹ Hill, *Arabia*, p. xii.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. xxii-xliv, 14-44. The latter did not bear a mint-name, but carried the province name—ARABIA—on the reverse; p. 14.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. xxxiii, 29-30.

Abbasid (750-1258) periods.³⁴ None of these coins was found either. It remains to be seen whether these lacunas will ever be filled by new discoveries.

Generalizations must be made cautiously when we bear in mind the ratio of coins to the number of centuries. For example, the 3d century A.D. cannot be dismissed as an insignificant period in Heshbon's history merely because only two coins (Nos. 8, 9) of that century were found. History tells that at that time the city was elevated to municipal status by Elagabalus (218-222).³⁵ The Esbus-Livias road was well traversed, as the inscriptions on the Roman Milestones 5 and 6 indicate. Likewise, the 7th century yielded only three coins, but this does not negate the fact that a prosperous city existed at that time, flourishing in the glamor of its important bishopric.

The coin evidence, the pottery, and the historical sources make it clear that the city was devastated sometime during the 8th century A.D. Vyhmeister suggests that it could have been destroyed during a war that affected the Balqā' in ca. 790.³⁶ It is doubtful that this could have been so destructive. On the other hand, there occurred in 747 (130 A.H.) a devastating earthquake that shook all of Palestine and Trans-Jordan.³⁷ It is very likely that Heshbon was destroyed

³⁴ N. G. Nassar, "The Arabic Mints in Palestine and Trans-Jordan," *QDAP*, XIII (1948), 121-22. It should be cautioned that Umayyad coins bearing the mint-name ٱلٱوردن (Jordan) were struck at Tiberias, capital of the Jordan Province, n. 4.; Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 228, n. 2.

³⁵ Vyhmeister, *op. cit.*, p. 167, citing Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1966), p. 117.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 171. The strife was between the former subjects of the Umayyads (661-750) and the new Abbasid (750-1258) rulers. It was bitter during the governorship in Damascus of a certain ٱbrāhím (ca. 790). "In Damascus, Ḥawrān, al-Balqā', the Jordan and Ḥims blood was shed." W. Vyhmeister, "The History of Heshbon from the Literary Sources" (unpublished B.D. thesis, Andrews University, 1967), pp. 72 f., quoting Philip I. Hitti, *History of Syria Including Lebanon and Palestine* (New York, 1951), p. 541. It must be noted that no Abbasid coins were found at Heshbon.

³⁷ The Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem, Kaṣr Hishām (Khirbat al-Mafdjar) near Jericho, and Jerash with its magnificent churches were among the numerous places destroyed at that time.

at that time and then abandoned for nearly four centuries. This does not rule out the possibility that there were either short periods of nomadic settlement or a lengthy sparse occupation during the 9th-12th centuries. During the 13th-14th centuries the city experienced its last revival, as evidenced by the comparatively larger number of Mamlūk coins. The latest of these derive from the first half of the 15th century, at about the very time when Heshbon faded away from history. Its continuity may not have been more than a nominal existence—barely holding together “the things which remain, that are ready to die.”³⁸

³⁸ Rv 3:2.