



Abstract

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22012/baf.2018.12>

Purity without Borders: Material Culture and Jewish Diaspora in the Late Second Temple Period

Early Jewish Diaspora is highly debated and hard to determine due material culture or given texts. While in biblical Israel, ‘common’ Jews tended to obey the laws of levitical (priestly) purity during the late Second Temple Period, those practices are not documented for the Diaspora Jews. New findings on Tall Zira’a in Northern Jordan show an assemblage of over 80 fragments of chalkstone vessels. Those can be compared to the typical chalkstone vessels found in Jerusalem and the Israeli region during excavations conducted the recent years. Chalkstone vessels as well as ritual stepped pools fit well into the picture of the purity observant Jew at that time. While stepped pools were used to practice rituals of immersion, the stone vessels can be set in context with literary sources like the Mishna and Tosefta, that states in several sections that vessels and utensils of dung, stone and earth are pure.

How does the case of Tall Zira’a, that lies outside biblical Israel, suit into the Jewish material culture connected to the Temple cult in Jerusalem and the Land of Israel?

During the research for the PhD regarding the chalkstone vessels in Jordan it became obvious that more settlements in Transjordan show these objects. The material culture clearly expanded over the Jordan River to the East. Now we have to find out, what this distribution means for our understanding of Diaspora Jews during the Second Temple Period. Above – what did those items meant for their identity?