

THE STRATIGRAPHY OF TELL HESBÂN, JORDAN, IN THE BYZANTINE PERIOD

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Problem. The purpose of the present study was to identify the Byzantine evidence from the Tell Hesbân Excavations in Jordan and to delineate site-wide strata parameters within this period.

Method. The Byzantine remains from the site were identified through an analysis of the excavators' field notes and balk drawings. Field ceramic readings and stratigraphic relationships determined the period, stratum, and stage to which a locus belonged.

Results. The Byzantine evidence from Tell Hesbân fell into four strata. The transition from the Late-Roman period was not very distinct from a cultural viewpoint and came about the middle of the fourth century A.D. Stratum 10 was the earliest Byzantine stratum. The dates assigned to the four strata were as follows: Stratum 10, A.D. 363-408; Stratum 9, A.D. 408-527; Stratum 8, A.D. 527-614; Stratum 7, A.D. 614-636.

Heavy commercial activity took place during the time of Strata 10 and 9, but decreased sharply in the later strata. A church was constructed on the Acropolis in the middle of the fifth century A.D. It was probably destroyed by an earthquake early in the sixth century. During the Stratum-8 period, this church was rebuilt and two other churches were added to the site. The Acropolis Church was again destroyed early in the seventh century A.D. Stratum 7 was a period of decline in both the population and the extent of the settlement.

Conclusion. The findings of this study seem to support the broad outline of Byzantine history in Palestine as known from other excavations and the literary sources. This includes the economic and religious situations.