

FLASK WITH JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

Byzantine, Late 6th -7th century A.D.

Glass

Height: 8.9 cm

Reference: 28402



Small hexagonal flask with a flat base, a wide mouth and a rounded rim. Each of the six sides of the flask is decorated with a symbol: an ornament in the form of a cross adorned with heart-shaped patterns at the end of each arm, a stylized palm tree, a shrine represented by two columns with stylized capitals supporting an arch, twice the motif of concentric lozenges and, finally, a menorah on a tripod base with its seven lamps lit.

This artifact is one of a large number of glass vessels produced in Israel and in Syria and intended for the pilgrims. In his exhaustive study, Barag identified fifty-five hexagonal and four octagonal examples and classified them in two main forms, the bottles and the flasks (our specimen would be classified in type B5). Although almost all the vessels feature the same iconographic elements as the ones visible here, it seems that the flasks would have been favored by the Jewish clientele, while the bottles would have attracted mainly Christian clients (Hachlili 2001, pp. 105-108 and 347-353).

The closest parallels for our piece are an almost identical artifact housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, dated between 578 and 636 A.D. (inv. 1972.118.180; Evans and Ratliff 2012, p. 110), and three flasks in the Toledo Museum of Art (Stern 1995, nos. 171-173, pp. 249 and 338-341).

Exhibited: Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York, September 1997-November 2001. The Collector's Room: Selections from the Michael and Judy Steinhardt Collection, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, 1993, no. 103.

Published: GROSSMAN C., The Collector's Room: Selections from the Michael and Judy Steinhardt Collection, 1993, p. 34, no. 103.

CONDITION

Virtually intact

PROVENANCE

Ex-Michael and Judy Steinhardt Judaica Collection, New York; probably ex-Zagayski Collection; ex-Davidowitz Collection.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BARAG D., Glass Pilgrim Vessels from Jerusalem, in *Journal of Glass Studies*, XII, 1970, pp. 35-63.

EVANS H.C. and RATLIFF B. (eds.), *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition*, New York, 2012.

STERN E.M., *Roman Mold-Blown Glass: the First through Sixth Centuries*: Toledo Museum of Art, Rome, 1995.