

Rachel Hachlili

Ancient Mosaic Pavements

Themes, Issues, and Trends



BRILL

חומת שיש עליו זכריות יוצרים

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Themes, Issues, and Trends
Selected Studies

by

Rachel Hachlili



BRILL

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To my beloved granddaughter

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FOREWORD

דכיר לטב אומנה דעבד חדה אבידתה

“Remembered be for good the artisans who made this work”

(Aramaic Inscription on the Beth Shean small synagogue pavement, fig. XII-2a)

Mosaic pavements were the normal medium for decorating the floors of synagogues, churches, monasteries and chapels as well as public and private buildings. Inscriptions found on many of the pavements commemorate the donors, refer to the artists, and sometimes date the mosaics

The present publication is fundamentally engaged in issues, trends and themes depicted on mosaic pavements discovered in Israel, the Gaza Strip and Petra (the provinces of ancient Palaestina Prima, Secunda and Tertia) with comparable floors in Jordan (Arabia). These names are used alternatively throughout the work. The majority of the mosaic pavements discussed in this study are dated to the 4th-6th centuries CE, continuing into the 8th century (uninterrupted by the Arab conquest of 636 CE).

This study is intended to focus attention on the iconography and on some of the traditional details concerning images and their worship. It is not meant to provide an overall picture of the mosaics, a chronological review, or a comprehensive story of the evolution of mosaics.

This endeavour is a result of researching and collecting material on specific subjects in the past several years, and is accomplished through compilation of the material excavated in the past few decades, especially the most recent finds, together with previous materials and studies by many scholars. A large body of new material has come to light which now allows ample treatment of Late Antique ancient mosaic pavements.

The ornamentation of the mosaics in this region is remarkable, rich and varied in its themes and provides many insights into the contemporary artistic and social cultures.

The discussion takes the form of a general comparison, divided according to topics such as Jewish symbols, biblical episodes, Nilotic scenes, personifications, a comparison of synagogue and church images on mosaics, and other specific subjects. Together these create what I hope is a wide-ranging understanding of the artistic heritage left to us by our ancestors, which can help to penetrate the mists of time separating us from those periods.

I should like to acknowledge my gratitude to my late teacher, Prof. M. Avi-Yonah, whose pioneering work in mosaic art will long remain the basis for all further studies in this field.

I am likewise indebted to those who have helped me prepare this book: warm thanks are due to Murray Rosovsky for his diligent work on the English. To Ranin Noufi, the Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa, for the computer adaptation and processing of the illustrations published in this book; to Dr. Vered Raz-Romeo, my research assistant, for her help with some technical aspects. To Arieh Rochman-Halperin, Sylvia Krapiwko and Yael Barschak of the Israel Antiquities Authority Archive for their help and assistance.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant and fruitful times in the history of the Land of Israel in late antiquity is the Byzantine period. The Land of Israel was mainly important in being a thoroughfare in a sensitive and military imperial area. It suddenly was transformed from an insignificant province to the Holy Land. This dramatic turn was the consequence of the rise of Christianity from a persecuted faith to the official one (in 312 CE), and soon after to the state religion (324 CE). This transition had far-flung implications: the Emperor Constantine established another capital at Constantinople, a move that had significant influence on the Land of Israel's political and economic status. From the 4th century on churches were built at various sites, first in areas where Jesus and his disciples had worked, acting according to Christian tradition. At the same time the pilgrimage movement to the Holy Land began to flourish, and many of the pilgrims settled in the country and made the land the centre of the Christian world. As a result the country thrived and the population expanded. This brought about the construction of a growing number of monasteries, churches and synagogues located all over the land, many of them paved with highly ornate mosaic decorations. Many of these pavements have survived, some of them with dated inscriptions, which facilitate researching the history and development of mosaic art in the area.

The mosaic art which evolved between the 4th and the 8th century was primarily a popular art, founded on a definitive spiritual outlook. Its study enables us to reconstruct a vivid picture of the past, in which the spiritual and material nature of Judaism and Christianity are disclosed.

In Byzantine art of the 4th century to the 8th century, Jews and Christians employed figurative images and symbols. They did so with rabbinic tolerance or even approval. The initiative for the growth of a versatile art, especially its figurative and symbolic aspects, lay with the population itself, with the local communities.

This study sets out to examine some of the available data, concentrating on selected studies of themes and issues in mosaic art determining and interpreting the meaning and significance of the material presented. It discusses the symbolic

and iconographic vocabulary of mosaic art and some characteristic themes, and assigns them to their proper context. It endeavours to examine the forces of the religions' tradition and local influence, thereby drawing attention to what is truly distinctive in the mosaic art of synagogue and church.

The elaborate decoration of mosaic art reflected the natural wish of society to live in a visually pleasing environment, as well as the human desire to conquer material and mould it to people's needs. Moreover, it provided an outlet for the human weakness of wishing to impress and attract attention, and to demonstrate power through symbols and motifs, through magnificence and beauty.

The mosaic pavements discussed in this study were discovered in Israel, the Gaza Strip and Petra (the provinces of ancient Palaestina Prima, Secunda and Tertia) with comparable floors in Jordan (Arabia). They are chronologically and generally divided into three parts:

- I The earlier Hellenistic-early Roman periods, illustrating the beginning of the use of mosaics to pave rooms in palaces, houses and bathhouses, dating to the late 1st century BCE—1st century CE. Discussed in Chapter I.
- II The middle and late Roman period (late 2nd century CE, but most of the mosaics date to the first half of the 3rd century) found in Roman public, private buildings and villas, at 'En Yael, Lod, Sepphoris (the House of Dionysos and the Orpheus house), and Shechem; the mosaics generally decorate a triclinum or a hall depicting mythological scenes, marine themes and various plant and geometric patterns (see Talgam and Weiss 2004: 1-16 for a general description of these mosaics). These mosaics are not discussed in this study.
- III The later Roman and Byzantine periods (4th to 8th century CE); the mosaics adorn religious structures—churches and synagogues—and a few secular buildings. Most of this study is devoted to themes

and issues associated with the mosaic pavements of this period.

The selected studies are compiled into several chapters. Chapter I describes the mosaic pavements adorning buildings in the Hellenistic–early Roman period with some comparisons to contemporary mosaic pavements in other regions. Chapters II to IV survey and discuss the panel themes according to the order of the tripartite composition of some of the synagogue mosaic pavements. This carpet has a field usually divided lengthwise into three panels, each thematically distinct with a recurring design and theme: chapter II is devoted to the Jewish symbols panel, situated before Torah shrine, containing a depiction of a Torah shrine or ark flanked by a pair of menoroth, each menorah in turn being flanked by two or four ritual objects. Chapter III discusses the zodiac scheme of the second panel, composed of the seasons, zodiac signs, and the Sun and moon (Chapters II and III are updated articles, Hachlili 2000, 2002). Chapter IV examines the narrative themes and images of biblical scenes sometimes depicted on the third panel. Compositions and styles are analyzed and the meaning and interpretations are discussed; sources and origins are also commented on. Chapter IV is assigned to the description and interpretation of biblical scenes, some appearing on the third panel. Chapter V deals with the iconographic elements of Nilotic scenes on mosaic pavements (updated article, Hachlili 1998a). In chapter VI the 6th-century trend of the inhabited scrolls design, featured on many of the mosaic pavements of synagogues and churches, is explained, while chapter VII examines the iconographic aspects of rural life, pastoral scenes, episodes of daily life, vintage, harvesting, animal chase and hunting, which are rendered mostly on church mosaics. Chapter VIII shows images of personification of natural forces such as Earth, Sea, rivers, labours of the months, the signs of the zodiac, seasons, and the sun and moon, which are common themes on secular and Christian mosaic pavements. Chapter IX describes the symmetrical representations of animals in an antithetic heraldic composition flanking inscriptions and various objects, which is popular on mosaic floors panels. The concern of chapter X is the distinguishing signs in the mosaics of the iconoclasm crisis: the destruction of images of living creatures, human or animal, from the decorative repertoire

of many Church floors and some synagogue pavements. Chapter XI compares the synagogue and church pavement decorations, which show interesting similarities and contrasts—apparently determined by the religious convictions of the Jewish and Christian communities. Chapter XII focuses on the artists and workshops that created the mosaic art and probes the sources of the repertoire and the transmission of motifs. The book's contents are summed up in Chapter XIII, with a review of some of the evidence presented, and conclusions about the mosaic pavements created during Late Antiquity in this region.

Terminology

Terms for mosaics appear in a number of pavement inscriptions.

The words used for mosaic were the Greek ψήφος *psephos*, meaning pebble (of which the earlier mosaics were made), and the Hebrew and Aramaic פסיפס.

In synagogue inscriptions the Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek words for mosaics appear on several mosaic pavements:

Some variations of the Hebrew and Aramaic term פסיפס appear in synagogue mosaic inscriptions. פסיפס occurs on a Hebrew dedicatory inscription on the mosaic pavement of the south portico of the courtyard at the Susiya synagogue (Gutman et al. 1981: 127-8, inscription no. 4; Naveh 1978: no. 75). A similar word is spelt in Aramaic, פוסה [פסי] on the mosaic inscription at the entrance to the Beth 'Alpha synagogue; פסיפס appears in the mosaic inscription of the north panel of the nave of the Hammath Gader synagogue, and פסיפס is found in the mosaic inscription before the hall façade of the Na'aran synagogue and on the mosaic pavement at the entrance to the 'En Gedi synagogue (Naveh 1978: Nos. 35, 43, 58, 69). The odd פספה is present in the mosaic inscription in front of the apse at the Ma'on synagogue, probably written by a mosaicist who did not know or understand the language (Naveh 1978: No.57).

The same word in Greek ψήφωσίν is found in the mosaic inscription within the vine scroll at the Gaza synagogue; an interesting variation is ἐψήφωσεν, which appears in the mosaic inscription of the central panel of the Beth Leontis, a Jewish house at Beth She'an. On a mosaic

pavement at Caesarea the word is spelled $\psi\eta\phi\theta\epsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (Roth-Gerson 1987: nos. 7, 21, 27)

In Greek church inscriptions many variations of $\psi\eta\phi\omega\varsigma$ are found. Examples are $\psi\eta\phi\omega\sigma\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ in the inscriptions of the mosaic pavements at Hazor-Ashdod (Ovadia 1987: 68) and Kissufim (Cohen 1980: 18); $\psi\eta\phi\acute{\iota}\sigma\iota\nu$ in the inscription on the El Maqerqesh small chapel floor at Beth Guvrin

(Avi-Yonah 1932: 147, No.23,8); $\psi\eta\phi\acute{\iota}\delta\iota$ in the Ophel, Jerusalem (Avi-Yonah 1932: 175, No.146); $\psi\eta\phi\acute{\omega}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ in an inscription at Emmaus (Avi-Yonah 1933: 53, No.346,5); $\psi\eta\phi\acute{\omega}\sigma\epsilon\omega\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ at Hazor-Ashdod (Ovadia 1987: 67); and $\acute{\epsilon}\psi\iota\phi\acute{\omega}\theta[\eta]$ in an inscription at the chapel of ‘Ain el Jedide (Avi-Yonah 1935: 187, No.363,2b).

CHAPTER ONE

MOSAIC PAVEMENTS ADORNING BUILDINGS IN THE HELLENISTIC–EARLY ROMAN PERIOD

The Land of Israel in the Second Temple period was first under Hellenistic dominion, and later under Roman. Herod and his dynasty ruled Judaea, with sporadic rule by Roman procurators between 37 BCE and 70 CE. Herod the Great, the son of Antipater, an Edomite, succeeded the last of the Hasmonaean kings and High Priests, Mattathias Antigonus, becoming king in 37 BCE with the support of the Romans. He was able to extend his rule over most of the Land of Israel and even beyond; he built extensively in other countries as well as at home. The Jews greatly disliked Herod because of his foreign origin, and his being an usurper who had replaced the legitimate Hasmonaean kings. Educated in Rome and admiring Graeco-Roman culture, Herod began his building projects accordingly: luxurious palaces, as well as towns with institutions such as theatres, hippodromes and gymnasia were constructed. The Herodian period is remarkable for its extensive building and its ornamental art. Herod's dynasty continued to exert power in Judaea and several other provinces. Agrippa I ruled in 44-41 CE, and Agrippa II from 50 to ca. 100 CE.

Hellenistic-Roman culture greatly influenced the upper classes (of all the Near Eastern countries), as attested to by the predominance of Hellenistic-Roman architecture and by the use of Greek language and institutions, which affected many aspects of everyday life. However, resistance to the intrusive culture was strong, because of the force and vitality of the Jewish religion which controlled the community's activities. Judaism also conceptually dominated its decorative art so that neither figurative nor symbolic representations were depicted.

Second Temple period mosaic art is characterized by a mixture of local traditions and Hellenistic-Roman features and is purely decorative (Hachlili 1988: 65-67). The various ornamental devices and the repertoire of motifs were part of the general stream of Roman art, especially its

provincial and eastern tributaries. Decoration in Herodian architecture attests to the influence of Roman art. Hellenistic tradition, moreover, survived into the later Herodian period. A locally developed style is encountered in mosaic art as well as funerary art, on tomb façades, on ossuaries and on sarcophagi. The style of Jewish art followed the basic Oriental elements such as the 'endless' and 'all-over' patterns; symmetrical stylization and *horror vacui*.

Decoration of buildings, palaces, houses and bathhouses of the Second Temple period was mainly by wall paintings, stucco-plaster mouldings, and ornamental floor pavements. The decorative elements, motifs, and designs are characterized by aniconic designs, a total lack of animate motifs, and symbolic emblems. This stems from the reluctance of all Jews, including the ruling families such as that of Herod and his dynasty, based on the biblical prohibition of 'no graven image' (Ex. 20: 4; Deut. 4: 16; 27: 15), to decorate any building or tomb with religious or iconic symbols.

A. Floor Pavements

Mosaics were first used to decorate floors in the late 2nd century BCE–1st century CE (Hellenistic-early Roman periods, Second Temple period) in palaces, houses, and bath buildings.

Two types of floor pavements are found in such buildings: mosaic pavements and floors paved in *opus sectile*.

Mosaic pavements were most frequently used in bathhouse rooms and vestibules, where water flowed.

Mosaics

Mosaics decorated the floors of Second Temple period structures, in Herodian palaces as well as

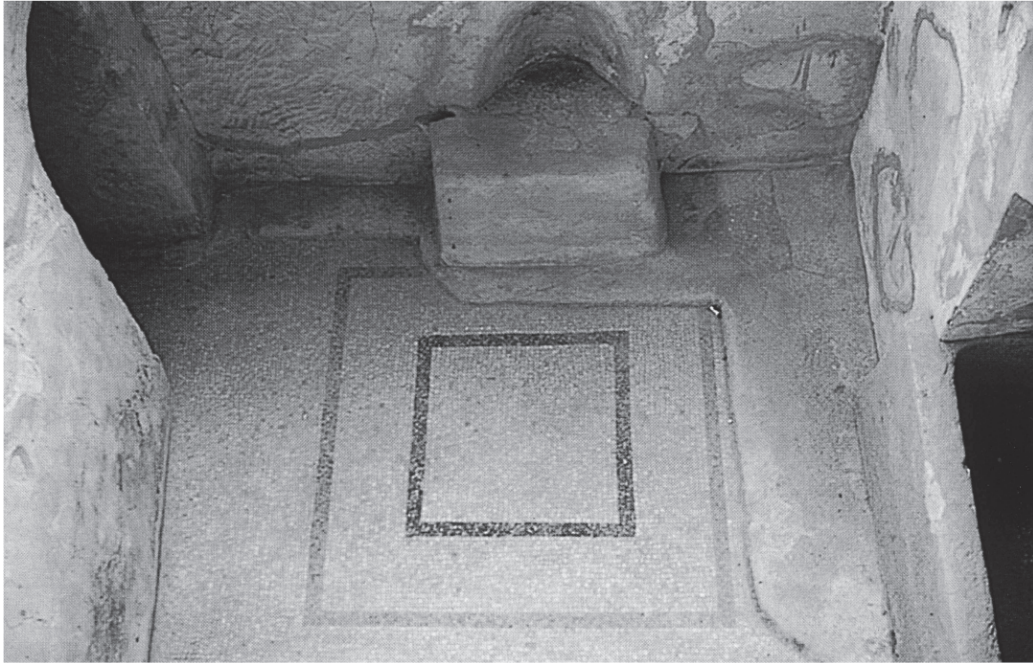


Figure I-1. Masada, mosaic pavement Bathroom 447.

in the private homes of the upper class Jerusalemites.¹

The earliest mosaic pavement (mid-1st century BCE) was discovered in the main room (a sort of tepidarium) of the Hasmonaean bathhouse at Jericho (Netzer 2001: 39, fig. 39); it consists of a crudely-fashioned and simple mosaic floor with geometric design in black and red on a white ground (pl. I.2a). The mosaic was framed by a red monochrome band; a central panel contained a chessboard lozenge framed by a red band with another frame of serrated sawtooth pattern with chessboard squares at the corners. Two side panels had a design of alternating black, red, and white squares.

Mosaic Pavements Decorating Herodian Palaces

Masada

Several mosaic pavements were found at Masada, among them three polychrome mosaic paved rooms at the Western Palace (Yadin 1966: 84, 124-5, 129; Foerster 1995: 140-158, figs. 252-259, pls. XII-XV).

The first is an anteroom (Oecus 456) leading to a reception hall, paved with a half destroyed

mosaic floor consisting of a reddish tessarae ground with polychrome central panel (pl. 1a); the inner panel on a black ground contains a square with a circle rendered with interwining six-petals rosettes; the corner spaces are decorated with palmettes. This square was enclosed by a schematic floral scroll border band containing alternating vine leaves, pomegranates, and bunches of grapes (or ivy leaves). Thirteen additional geometric frames on a white ground surround the inner panel.

The second mosaic is located in the bathhouse corridor of the Western Palace (room 449) and portrays a square medallion of black tessarae circling an eight-petalled heart shaped rosette enclosed within a square (pl. I. 1b). Four geometric pattern frames on a white ground surround the inner square panel.

The third pavement, in bathroom 447, is a simply designed mosaic depicting two frames, the outer red, the inner black, on a white ground (fig. I-1) (Foerster 1995: pl. XV: 15a).

In the Northern Palace and bathhouse, four simple black and white mosaics of black hexagons cover the upper terrace floor (fig. I-2).

¹ Some mosaic fragments, mostly tesserae were discovered at Tel Anafa (Upper Galilee) and a mosaic of black and white tesserae was found in the bathhouse of the

Stucco House dated to the late 2nd century BCE (Weinberg 1971: 97-98; Herbert 1994: 64-65, pls. 38,40).



Figure I-2. Masada, black and white mosaic pavement.

An identical mosaic is found in the bathhouse court (Foerster 1995: 151-158)

Lower Herodium

Simple black and white mosaic floors originally decorated most rooms in both phases of the bathhouse of the Lower Herodian Palace. Polychrome mosaic pavements decorate four rooms which belong to the second phase of the palace bathhouse (Netzer 2001: 111-112, figs. 145-147; 2005: 33, 35-36): in the main tepidarium, a polychrome panel with geometric design was found, a white mosaic containing a panel with a round inner circle rendered with a polychrome geometric design formed by intersecting six-petalled rosettes bordered by a round guilloche pattern border (pl. I.2b). The four corners are decorated with a single pomegranate or a group of three pomegranates; a narrow black square frame encloses the circle. The central intersecting rosette panel is similar to the Masada carpet.

In the adjacent small tepidarium, a geometric panel with lozenges in black and red resembling opus sectile was found (pl. I.2c). In the elongated room a mosaic panel is adorned with a red and white geometric star-shaped design, framed by a floral scroll with leaves and fruit.

The laconicum mosaic floor did not survive in situ but the fragments show a round coloured frame, decorated with a vine scroll with clusters of grapes (pl. I.2d).

At *Jericho*, a mosaic paved Hypocaust 19 of Herod's first palace (Gymnasium) (Pritchard 1958: 11, pl. 11: 1,2,5).

A mosaic carpet, a later pavement of the triclinium, was found in the Herodian palace at

Caesarea-Maritima (pl. I.2e), decorated with a geometric design of squares and lozenges similar to and probably imitative of opus sectile floors such as at Jericho (Levine & Netzer 1978: fig. on p. 74; Netzer 2001: 121, figs. 159, 160).

Mosaic Pavements Revealed in Private Houses

Jerusalem

Mosaic pavements were discovered in the Upper City, the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem (Avigad 1983: 144-146, figs. 150-151, 160-165; 1989). Ten ornamented and plain mosaic pavements, several of which paved bathrooms, were found in these houses. The central motif of the floors is usually a six-petalled rosette, but in one case it is a three-petalled rosette (Avigad 1983: figs. 162, 163).

Of the ten polychrome mosaics found in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem only three mosaic floors have survived in living rooms, while the others decorate bathhouses.

The palatial mansion has three surviving mosaics: the vestibule (room 2) had a mosaic pavement with a coloured panel with charred cubes and has only partly survived; the almost completely destroyed center of the carpet apparently consisted of a large rosette design, enclosed in a circular frame with a guilloche pattern within a square frame of an intertwined fret pattern (pl. I.3a). Pomegranate motifs filled the corners between the round and square borders (Avigad 1983: 98, figs. 84, 108-109).

Another mosaic is found in a small bathroom (room 8) of the palatial mansion (pl. I.3b) paved with a six-petalled black and red rosette, formed by means of compasses, within a red square frame (Avigad 1983: 104, figs. 92, 97, 162).

On a mosaic found in a bathroom in the west of the mansion (Area F-4) a three-petalled rosette encircled by a red frame is depicted (pl. I.3c) (Avigad 1983: 144, fig. 163).

In the same building a corridor to a vaulted ritual bath in the basement of the mansion (room 12) is paved with a simple black chessboard design within several red frames (Avigad 1983: 106, fig. 100).

A bathing complex with the stepped ritual bath has two preserved mosaic pavements: the bathroom has a mosaic floor with a 'wave-crest' border pattern. The vestibule has a mosaic panel rendered with a destroyed circle of multi-coloured multi-petalled rosettes framed by a square



Figure I-3. Cypros, mosaic pavement of apodyterium and caldarium.

wave-crest pattern (pl. I.4a). In two of the corners between the circle and the frame two palmette leaves are rendered, and there is a unique motif of a spindle bottle in another spandrel (Avigad 1983: 144, figs. 160, 161; 1989: 28, 29).

A small polychrome mosaic (Area 0-2) has a central complex rosette enclosed by a square frame (pl. I.4b). The corners bear a geometric pattern similar to the 'gamma' motif (Avigad 1983: 146, fig. 164). The same patterns appear on a Jerusalem ossuary (see below, discussion of the 'gamma' motif).

A beautiful large mosaic floor which has partly survived (area F, probably in a central room of the house, D3), bears a central carpet (pl. I.4c) of intertwined meanders forming swastika designs framed by wave-crest, guilloche and triangular 'crow-step' (serrated sawtooth) patterns (Avigad 1983: 144, 146, fig. 165; Avigad 1989: 50-52). A ruined mosaic pavement was found in room D1 in the middle block building consisting of a central circle with a multicoloured six-petalled rosette within a square frame of wave-crest pattern in two colours, black and red (Avigad 1989: 49-50).

Mosaics Discovered in Desert Fortress Palaces

At the bathhouse on the mountaintop at *Cypros*, a simple geometric mosaic floor of black squares on a white ground was found in the apodyterium of the bathhouse in the lower-lying level area (fig. I-3) and a geometric design on the pavement of the caldarium (Netzer 1975b: pl. A, fig. I. 27; 2001: 74, figs. 89, 91).

A crudely made and simple mosaic paved the centre of the peristyle hall at *Alexandrium* (Sartaba) (Tsafrir & Magen 1984: 31). At *Machaerus*, the bathhouse tepidarium had a mosaic floor (Corbo 1979: 323-324, pl. 44B).

Opus Sectile Floors

Floors in opus sectile were made of coloured stone tiles forming geometric designs and were found in several Herodian structures dated to the 1st century BCE. Usually, all that remains of these pavements is a few tiles found in the debris of the structures; most of them have frequently disappeared. Only the bedding has survived, and it is this which contains the impression of the tiles which formed the design. From this impression the patterns may be reconstructed.

Floors in opus sectile were found in the triclinium reception hall in the Third Palace's north wing at Jericho; a mosaic may have filled the space of the destroyed centre (Netzer 2001: 54, fig. 62). At Masada, three of the bathhouses were paved with an opus sectile floor (Yadin 1966: 81; Foerster 1995: 158-161). A floor was discovered in the bathhouse caldarium at the desert fortresses of Cypros, where a few tiles remained almost intact (Netzer 1975b: 57-58; 2001: fig. 63, 89), and another pavement at Machaerus (Corbo 1979: 322). At Jerusalem, a floor with traces of opus sectile tiles was found in a room of one of the Upper City houses (Avigad 1983: 146, fig. 152).

B. *Motifs*

The repertoire of Second Temple period mosaic art consists of ornamental motifs which can be divided into the following types (Hachlili 1988: 79-83): geometric patterns, plant, floral and vegetation motifs, and unique designs of the spindle bottle motif and the 'gamma'. All the mosaic panels have a white ground with polychrome (red, black, brown) designs.

Geometric Patterns

Rosette

The rosette is the most prominent motif in Jewish art and may be said to exemplify it. Executed with the aid of compasses, the rosette developed from a traditional geometric motif (Avi-Yonah 1950: 67-72). Three, six, or multi-petalled rosettes, interlaced six-petalled rosettes, and polychrome

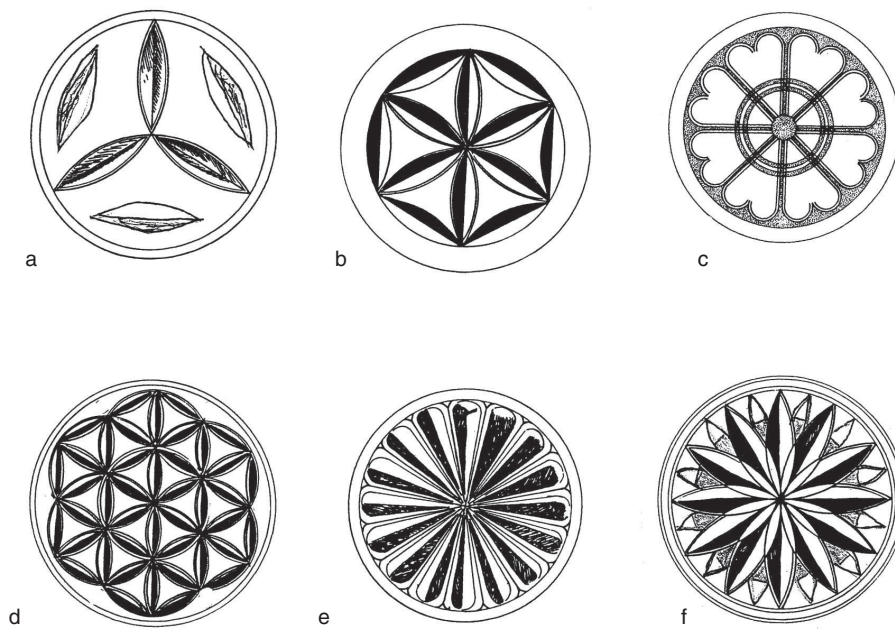


Figure I-4. The rosette motif on mosaic pavements.

schematic rosettes enclosed in a circle occur in almost all aspects of Jewish art: on mosaics from Jerusalem and Masada (pls. I.1-4), in architectural decoration (Avi-Yonah 1950: 69-72; Rahmani 1994: 39-41, figs. 74, 76, 77, 78; Foerster 1995: 149-50; Hachlili 2005: 100-102), on stone tables, and on a sundial from Jerusalem (Avigad 1983: figs. 116, 185). In funerary art the rosette fills the spaces in Doric friezes on tomb façades such as the Frieze Tomb, and appears on sarcophagi (Hachlili 2005: figs. III-29-32, 34). It is also the most frequent motif on ossuaries (Rahmani 1994: 39-41; Hachlili 2005: 100-102).

Mosaic pavements are decorated with several designs of rosettes:

- a. A three-petaled rosette with three petal-tips (fig. I-4a): on a mosaic pavement in Jerusalem, area F-4 (Avigad 1983: fig. 163); on Jerusalem ossuaries (Rahmani 1994: nos. 37, 74, 106, 583, 603).
- b. A six-petaled rosette with segments and linked petal-tips in two colours (fig. I-4b): on a mosaic in the bathroom of a mansion, in room D1, and in Area 0-2, Jerusalem (Avigad 1983: fig. 162, 164; 1989: 49-50); on Jerusalem ossuaries (Rahmani 1994: nos. 1, 15 central rosette, 69; 147, 231, 248, 375, 448, 460-461, 469, 591, 593, 692, 701).
- c. A rosette composed of eight petals shaped as ivy leaves and a central circular disc (fig. I-4c):

on the mosaic of the apodyterium (Oecus 449) in the core bathhouse of the Western Palace, Masada (Netzer 1991: 251-2, ill. 397, 399; Foerster 1995: 149-50 ills. 256-258, pl. XIV); on Jerusalem ossuaries (Rahmani 1994: fig. 73, nos. 37, 69, 583, 603, 643, 881).

- d. Rosettes formed by interlaced six-petaled rosettes within a circle creating multiple and interlaced rosettes (fig. I-4d):
 1. The central panel of the mosaic of the antechamber leading to the reception room (Oecus 456) at the Western Palace, Masada (Netzer 1991: 249-250, ills. 393-394; Foerster 1995: 149-50, ills. 252-255, Pl. XIII).
 2. A mosaic at the Herodium bathhouse caldarium (Corbo 1962-3: fig. 15).
 3. The mosaic in the centre of the bathhouse main tepidarium at Lower Herodium (Netzer 2001: 111, figs. 145; 2005: 32-33).

Comparable rosettes appear on Doric friezes at Masada (Foerster 1995: 123-129, 150) and on Jerusalem ossuaries (Rahmani 1994: 39, fig. 74; nos. 105, 406, 653).

- e. Multi-petaled rosette (fig. I-4e): on a mosaic of a vestibule of a bathhouse complex, Jerusalem (Avigad 1983: fig. 160-161); on Jerusalem ossuaries, though most have fewer petals (Rahmani

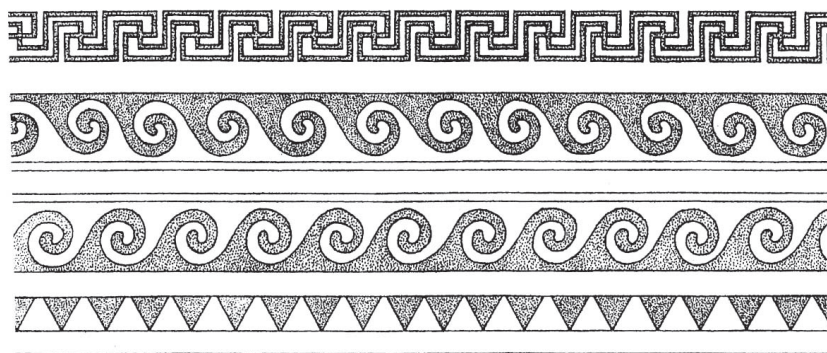


Figure I-5. Geometric motifs on mosaic pavements.

1994: nos. 213, 291, 302, 378, 387, 489, 518, 602, 723).

- f. A large rosette (fig. I-4f) appears on the mosaic of room 2 of the Palatial Mansion in Jerusalem (Avigad 1983: 98, fig. 161). A possible comparable rosette is carved on Jerusalem ossuaries (Rahmani 1994: nos. 359, 399).

At Delos similar designs appear on mosaic floors, with slightly different six-, ten-, and twelve-petalled rosettes; most of these are bordered by the wave design (Bruneau 1974: figs. 102-104, 229-231, 234-236, 260-262). A similar rosette occurs on a mosaic at Apamea (Balty 1981: pl. V,3).

Other geometric motifs include meanders, waves, guilloches, lozenges, and hexagons. They are depicted in mosaics as borders, as at Masada and Jerusalem, or in the centre of mosaic pavement, as in the Upper City of Jerusalem.

The two mosaics at Masada (Oecus 456 and room 449) (pl. I.1a,b) have similar frames of monochrome bands, serrated sawtooth with the corners rendered with small chessboard-patterned squares and wave patterns (Foerster 1995: 143-151, ills. 253-258, pls. XIII-XIV); the same pattern is depicted on two pavements in the Upper City, Jerusalem (pl. I.4b,c) (Avigad 1983: figs. 164-165).

The single wave pattern is a common motif in the Hellenistic period and is depicted also on mosaics (fig. I-5). The wave motif is unusually rendered in alternating red and black colours on a mosaic pavement in a room in Area F and in the bathhouse vestibule pavement in the Upper City of Jerusalem (Avigad 1983: 144, figs. 161,165). The same wave pattern is depicted on the mosaic pavement of Hypocaust 19 of the Early Palace (Gymnasium) at Jericho (Pritchard 1958: 11,

pl. 11: 1,2,5) and in the tepidarium of the bathhouse at Machaerus (Corbo 1979: 323-324, pl. 44B). At Delos such a wave design is the most dominant pattern for the borders of many of the mosaics (Bruneau 1972: figs. 49, 85, 92-93, 102-104, 229-231, 234-236, 260-262). Similar wave borders in different directions appear on Hellenistic mosaics from Arsameia (Balty 1981: pl. II, 1-2).

Swastika-meanders with single returns and straight-tongued double guilloche frame the larger and more elaborate mosaic of the ante-room (Oecus 456) at Masada (pl. I.1a; fig. I-5). The swastika-meander pattern in various forms is depicted on several other floors: in the vestibule (room 2) of the Palatial Mansion in the Upper City, Jerusalem (pl. I.3e) the mosaic pavement is rendered with a meander-swastika frame with squares in each of the spaces (Avigad 1983: 98, figs. 108-109); in a room in Area F, Jerusalem, the central part of the panel appears with intertwined meander forming complex swastika patterns (pl. I.4b) (Avigad 1983: 144, figs. 151, 165). A similar swastika-meander with squares in each of the spaces is rendered on the frame on the pavement of a later addition to the public reception room and/or triclinium of the palace at Caesarea (pl. I.2d) (Netzer 2001: 121, fig. 160). These motifs also occur in fresco and stucco (Avigad 1983: figs. 90, 91, 174; Mazar 1975a: 28-29; Ben-Dov 1982: 138). A capital from the synagogue of Gamla is ornamented with a meander design (Maoz 1981: 36). Similar meander borders appear on a Hellenistic mosaics from Arsameia (Balty 1981: pl. II, 1-2).

The guilloche pattern (pl. I.4b) appear on a frame of the mosaic of area F, Jerusalem (Avigad 1983: 144, fig. 165) and a double guilloche frames the inner panel of the tepidarium in the bathhouse

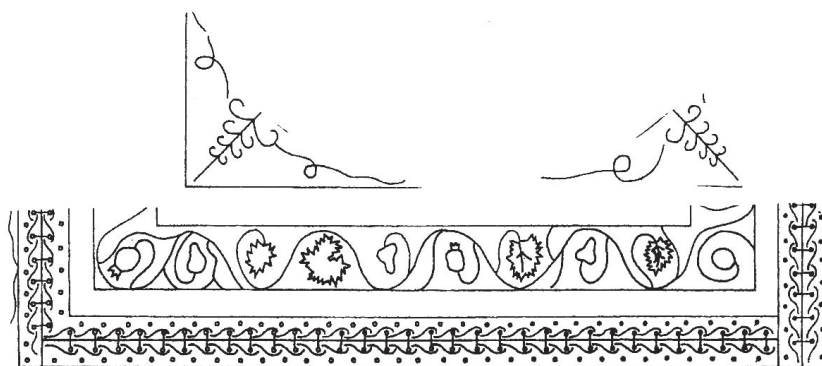


Figure I-6. Plant motifs: floral scrolls on mosaic pavements.

at Lower Herodium (Netzer 2001: 111, fig. 145). A vaulted sarchopagus lid from the Tomb of Helene of Adiabene ('the Tomb of the Kings') is rendered with the straight-tongued double guil-loche (Hachlili 2005: 122, fig. III-35).

Other geometric patterns, especially those imitating or resembling an opus sectile floor, are rendered on the mosaic pavement of the small tepidarium in the bathhouse at Lower Herodium (Netzer 2001: 112, fig. 146), and on the mosaic pavement of a later addition to the public recep-tion room and/or triclinium of the palace at Caesarea (Netzer 2001: 121, fig. 160).

A star-like design framed by a floral scroll band containing alternating leaves and fruits appears on a mosaic at Lower Herodium (Netzer 2005: 35); the scroll is similar to the design decorating the inner frame of the Masada mosaic (pl. I.1a).

Plant Motifs

Plant motifs were common designs in ancient orna-mental art (Avi-Yonah 1948: 146-165; 1950: 49-58). They were used in architectural orna-mentation and mosaic pavements, and as funerary orna-ments. These motifs were adopted from earlier Oriental designs or were imitations of local flora. Their form and composition are sometimes styl-ized into abstract or geometric patterns. Floral and vegetation motifs were considered suitable for aniconic expression, for repetitive patterns, and for filling spaces. They include floral scrolls, the palmette and the vine scroll, bunches of grapes, pomegranates, and vine and ivy leaves. They are found on mosaic pavements and in other Second Temple art and architecture, on Jerusalem tomb façades, and in ossuary decoration.

A spindly palmette appears on the Masada mosaic (Oecus 456) in the corners of the inner

panel (fig. I-6); a quite similar motif is found on the upper corner of an ossuary (Rahmani 1994: 44, figs 98, ossuary no.136). Stylized palmette leaves are depicted in two corners of the bath-house vestibule mosaic in Jerusalem (pl. I. 4a) (Avigad 1983: 144, figs. 160, 161) and are compa-rable to corner decorations on ossuaries (Rahmani 1994: 44, ossuaries nos. 204, 371, 816). Palmettes pointing outward with ribbons are rendered in the corners of the inner panel with the multi-petalled rosette in Oecus 456 of the Western Palace at Masada (pl. I.1a). They also occur in corners of the panels on the mosaic of Lower Herodium.

Comparable palmette motifs appear in archi-tectural art, on funerary art on a sarcophagus from the Tomb of Herod, and in the central scroll of the decorated sarcophagus lid from the Mount of Olives (Dominus Flevit) (Hachlili 2005: 118, 123, figs. III-29, 35). A similar design with pal-mettes in four corners of a mosaic with a six-pet-alled rosette in the centre is depicted on a mosaic floor at Delos (Bruneau 1972: figs. 229-231).

Pomegranates (fig. I-6) appear in the floral scroll of the mosaic of the Western Palace at Masada and on mosaics and in wall paintings of the houses of the Upper City in Jerusalem (Avigad 1983: figs. 108, 166). Pomegranates are rendered on a few Jerusalem ossuaries (Rahmani 1994: 44, fig. 94, ossuaries nos. 209, 308, 758 lid). One and three pomegranates are rendered in the corners of the mosaic panel in the main tepidarium at Lower Herodium (pl. I.2a) (Netzer 2001: 112, figs. 145; 2005: 33). Similar depictions of three-pomegranate motifs filled the corners between the round and square borders (pl. I.3e) of the Palatial Mansion vestibule mosaic (room 2) at Jerusalem (Avigad 1983: 98, figs. 108-9).

Vine branches, leaves, and grapes are a popular motif decorating several architectural fragments

from Jerusalem (Avigad 1983: 184). It is found even more in funerary art: in the wall painting in the Goliath family tomb in Jericho (Hachlili 2005: fig. IV-5), on tomb façades in Jerusalem, on sarcophagi, and on some ossuaries (Hachlili 2005: figs. III-29, 35).

Floral scrolls bordering a central schematic design are depicted on several mosaics (Avi Yonah 1948: 149-150; 1961: 65-69):

A schematic floral scroll on a dark ground, consisting of alternating vine leaves, bunches of grapes (or ivy leaves), and pomegranates, ornaments a band framing the inner panel on the Western Palace antechamber (Oecus 456) at Masada (Foerster 1995: 148-149). The vine scroll probably originated in the Hellenistic East and was widely used in architectural elements, pottery, and funerary art. A vine scroll with clusters of grapes within a round coloured frame decorates the round laconicum mosaic floor in the second phase of the Lower Herodium bathhouse (Netzer 2001: 112, figs. 147; 2005: 36). A schematic floral scroll rendered with various leaves and fruits as a square frame of the inner round panel appears on the main frigidarium pavement in the second phase of the Lower Herodium bathhouse. The central design in the square panel consists of a star-like motif in red and white; the background is white (Netzer 2005: 35). The scroll is quite similar to the Masada floral scroll on the Oecus 456 mosaic. The floral scrolls motif appears only on the mosaic pavements at Masada (Foerster 1995: XXI) and Lower Herodium.

A comparable schematic floral scroll decorates a sarcophagus lid (no. 1 from Dominus Flevit: Avi-Yonah 1961: pl. 23). A vaulted sarcophagus lid from the tomb of Helene of Adiabene ('the Tomb of the Kings') is rendered with several similar floral scrolls (Hachlili 2005: 122, fig. III-35). The motif also appears on Jerusalem ossuaries (Rahmani 1994: no. 587, gabled lid, a running scroll, each spiral ending in a lily).

Varia

Exceptional motifs appear on a mosaic pavement at Jerusalem: the spindle bottle motif and the 'gamma'.

The Spindle Bottle Motif

The spindle bottle motif appears in the upper left corner of the mosaic panel of the bathhouse vestibule in the Upper City in Jerusalem (pl. I.4a)

(Avigad 1983: 144, figs. 160, 161); this is a new motif on mosaic pavements, and represents a common type of bottle used in the 1st century BCE–1st century CE in the Hellenistic-Roman world, quite frequently in a burial context.

The 'Gamma' Motif

The 'gamma' motif, an angled pattern with denticulated ends, resembling the Greek letter *gamma* (angular corner, L-shaped design) appears on a small polychrome mosaic panel in area 0-2 of the Upper City in Jerusalem (pl. I.4c) (Avigad 1983: 146, fig. 164); the mosaic has a central complex rosette enclosed by a square frame. The corners bear a geometric pattern similar to the 'gamma' motif. The same patterns appear on a Jerusalem ossuary (Avi-Yonah 1950: 74, fig. 29, pl. 22,6; Rahmani 1994: 37-38, fig. 67). On the basis of textiles found in the Judean desert caves, Yadin (1963: 227-232) proved that these gamma signs differentiated between male and female costumes. On wall paintings at the Dura Europos synagogue on panel WC4, the female himatia bear the same sign, in the shape of the Greek Γ , while the male sign is straight (Hachlili 1998: 140, fig. Fig. III-25, III-29a). This motif became popular in the Roman-Byzantine period on robes identified as *gammadia*.

Black and White Mosaics

Black and white mosaics decorate several rooms at Masada (fig. I-2): cubacula 78, 88 and antechambers 87 and 79, of the building on the upper terrace of the Northern Palace and the palaestra 101 of the bath building (Foerster 1995: 151-158, figs. 260-264). The designs rendered on these floors are simple geometric patterns consisting of remains of an all-over pattern and interlacing circles in black on a white floor (bedroom 78); remains of frames and a panel with a black all-over hexagon pattern on a white floor (bedroom 88, palaestra 101 of the bath building), a simple rectangle formed by a black band (antechambers 87, 79).

These black and white mosaics have apparently no direct predecessors in the Hellenistic period in the East. They are typical of Roman mosaics and were probably created by Roman craftsmen brought in from Italy (Parlasca 1967: 548; Balty 1981: 359; Foerster 1995: 156; Dunbabin 1999: 188).

Comparable mosaic pavements in form, motif and date are those dated to the Hellenistic and early Roman periods at Apamea (dated to the 1st century CE: Balty 1981: 360, pl. V, 2, 3). The various motifs, the assortment of borders, the small tesserae in the inner panels, and the use of a dark ground on Masada and Jerusalem mosaics may have analogous mosaics at Delos, Greece, dated to the late 2nd century BCE, and at Arsameia, Commagene, dated to the 1st century BCE (Balty 1981: 354-5, pl. II.1,2; Dunbabin 1999: 187).

C. *Conclusions*

Most of the mosaics consist of a reddish or white tesserae carpet with a central panel, almost square; the inner panel comprises typically a round circle with a geometric design, often a rosette surrounded by one or more arranged frames in various combinations.

Some carpets consist of a rectangular panel with a geometric design in its central part. Two of these mosaics were found in the Upper City of Jerusalem: a fine mosaic covering the floor of a main room in area F, and a bathroom floor in a bathhouse complex (Avigad 1983: 144, figs. 151, 160, 165). At Masada, the simple pavement of bathroom 447 consists of a black square frame surrounding a red frame on a white ground (Foerster 1995: 143, figs. 259). Two other mosaic panels on a white ground show geometric patterns resembling *opus sectile* floors: the tepidarium at Lower Herodium and a room in the palace at Caesarea Maritima (Netzer 2001: 112, 121, figs. 146, 160).

The motif of a small flower consisting of five black and red tesserae appears on Jerusalem mosaics; they fill the background of one mosaic, and the corners of two other pavements (Avigad 1983: pls. 108, 162, 164). On the mosaic on the laconicum at Lower Herodium they fill the space between the floral scrolls (Netzer 2001: fig. 147).

The mosaic pavements found at Masada, Jerusalem, Jericho, and Lower Herodium date to the Herodian period, namely the later 1st century BCE–1st century CE. The polychrome mosaics from the Herodian palaces, private houses, and bathhouses had similar composition and content, consisted of generally geometric and floral designs, and were aniconic in subject matter in accordance with Jewish beliefs of the period.

Some differences are noted between the two polychrome mosaics at Masada (figs. I-1,2) and one mosaic at Jerusalem in which the inner square panel is rendered with a black ground and the central design mostly in red and white tesserae, while the other mosaics at Jerusalem, Lower Herodium, and Caesarea-Maritima have a white ground with the central design mostly in red and black tesserae. The Masada and the Jerusalem polychrome mosaics show the use of smaller tesserae in the central panel.

These pavements indicate the existence of a local tradition of Hellenistic derivation, while the black and white mosaics attest to work created by craftsmen from Italy.

The polychrome mosaics at Masada are quite similar in composition, with use of the same tesserae indicating that probably the same workshop or artists produced it. The composition and especially the motifs are apparently influenced by local art, which followed the post-Hellenistic tradition, with similar pavement designs in contemporary mosaics at Delos and Commagene (Balty 1981: 358-359); conceivably they were influenced by one of the mosaic workshops of the East, maintaining the traditional repertoire but enriching it with new elements of local art. It seems that the mosaic craftsmen who created the polychrome designs at Masada with an oriental local tradition worked concurrently with artists who came from Italy and produced the black and white mosaics.

The designs on the mosaic pavements, like Jewish funerary art, are part of an ensemble of decorative patterns used in the art of the Second Temple period and the Hellenistic-Roman world, even though some of the motifs are found only in funerary art. The motifs are not connected with Jewish or the court's everyday life, and no symbols are depicted. Since mosaics bearing different designs are found in the same building, the ornamentation seems to have been chosen by the Herodian court, the house owners, or the artists.

Patterns may have been copied from a common sketchbook by the artists, who introduced their own changes into the ornamentation of the mosaics. The artisans and craftsmen were probably local, though they might have been from various workshops and were itinerary craftsmen who worked at Masada, Jerusalem, and elsewhere. Some of the Jerusalem mosaics seem to have been created by the same workshop or artisans,

as evinced by the wave pattern alternating in red and black on two mosaics, the chessboard pattern as a circle enclosing a six-petalled rosette, which is also similar in each mosaic, and the serrated saw-tooth pattern outer band on two of the Jerusalem mosaics and the two Masada pavements.

Motifs in mosaic art derived from traditional elements in local, native art, although they were occasionally taken from Hellenistic-Roman art and from that of the neighbouring cultures. A further source of inspiration was the natural environment from which floral and faunal subjects were borrowed and adapted.

Most conspicuous by its absence in the Second Temple period ensemble of motifs is any figurative representation or any motif indicating symbolic significance. Only later, in the third century CE, do motifs acquire a symbolic status. Consequently it can be stated that the Jews of the Second Temple period refrained from representations of humans and animals in their art, probably in obedience to the prohibition of the second of the Ten Commandments (*Exodus* 20: 4-5; *Deuteronomy* 5: 8-9).

Whereas official and public art was strictly aniconic, private dwellings did sometimes use ornamentation which portrayed figurative motifs, usually birds.

The mosaic art of the Second Temple period that developed in the 1st century BCE–1st century CE exhibits several characteristic features:

The mosaic pavement was one of the most prevalent crafts of the arts which flourished in Herodian times. It utilized the locally available stone, and created a new type of ornament. The designs such as the rosettes were sometimes sketched in by means of compass and ruler in a stylized manner.

The repertoire of ornamental motifs reflects a rigid aniconic choice of floral, geometric, and architectural patterns, some of which were adopted from Hellenistic art.

The mosaic art style displays many oriental elements. These characterize all the art of the age, including the simple local art encountered mainly in the palaces as well as in funerary art. The difference lies usually in the quality of execution and in the attention paid to decorative detail.

In conclusion, Jewish art of the Second Temple period includes the ornamentation and embellishment of structures. It shows connections with the neighbouring Graeco-Roman culture. Yet Jewish art withstood foreign influences by evolving strictly aniconic features; it is characterized, like the other arts of the period, by highly skilled indigenous work, by the predominant Oriental elements of endless patterns, by *horror vacui*, by plasticity of carving, and by symmetrical stylization (Hachlili 1988: 401). It is based on the ability and skill with which the artists treated the needs and requirements of their clientele whose requirements were mainly decorative.

The strictly aniconic and non-symbolic art characterizing the Second Temple period is the outcome of Judaism's struggle against paganism and idolatry. Through rigid observance of the prohibition against animate images, the Jews retained their own identity and distinctiveness.

Thus a local Jewish art evolved, strictly aniconic, using neither figures nor symbols, and eschewing animate motifs and representational art. Only with the decline of paganism during the 3rd century CE did the attitude of Jewish art change, resulting in the use of figurative motifs.



Map of sites with mosaic pavements.

CHAPTER TWO

THE JEWISH SYMBOLS PANEL

Introduction: Jewish Figurative Art

Jewish art in Late Antiquity encompassed figurative art as an extensive and essential part. A major, conceptual change occurred at the end of the 2nd century CE, and particularly during the 3rd century, when representational art began to flourish. During this period the Jews developed their own figurative and imagery art, acquired customs and decorative elements from the surrounding cultures, and used pagan motifs, figures, birds, and animals in synagogue and funerary art.

The development of Jewish figurative art is all the more surprising in light of the previous attitude to animated art. The art of the Second Temple period is purely aniconic and no figurative designs are depicted, probably due to the prohibition of the second of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 4-5; Deuteronomy 5: 8-9). Archaeological evidence also confirms that during the Second Temple period representations of animated beings were avoided (Hachlili 1988: 65-83; 103-119; 1998: 237-8).

Following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (70 CE), stern rabbinical attitudes began to give way to greater tolerance. Such changes, reflected in Talmudic literature, were the result of political, economic and social circumstances. The Jews of this period no longer feared idolatry. The leading rabbis emphasized the latter part of the commandment, 'Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them', and tended to enforce the prohibition only where the danger of idolatry was present.

By the 2nd–3rd centuries Jewish religious leaders apparently permitted iconic, representational decoration, and the sources testify to a policy of religious pragmatism and avoidance of the formulation of binding teachings. Scholars have considered the relationship between the second of the Ten Commandments and its visual dimensions in Judaism (Urbach 1959: 204; Gutmann 1971b; 1984a: 1328-1330; Avi-Yonah 1973: 133; Avigad 1976: 280-284; Kraeling 1979: 343-345). Blidstein (1973: 19-24) surveys Tannaitic teachings

regarding plastic art and maintains that 'the rabbis were quite aware of the difference between an image that was worshipped and one that served a decorative function alone'. Rabbinical evidence suggests that figurative art was tolerated if it did not encourage cultic worship. A further reason for the lenient attitude to figurative art was that no Jewish law forbids the depiction of religious subjects. On the contrary, they were allowed.

The Jewish figurative repertoire includes themes such as biblical narrative scenes, motifs of animals and humans, and a few mythological designs and other pagan motifs, in the decoration of mosaic pavements. Similar themes appear in Jewish poetry. The Jews' attitude to art was basically decorative, to add beauty and ornamentation to their buildings. The significance of the symbolic and iconographic themes on early mosaic pavements of the 4th-5th centuries was in contrast to contemporary aniconic Christian mosaic art, and was a means of emphasizing the difference between the Jewish and Christian notion of mosaic pavement ornamentation.

The theory accepted by most scholars is that pagan motifs used in Jewish representational art lost their original, symbolic, idolatrous significance and evolved merely into ornamental motifs (Avigad 1976: 282, 285; Avi-Yonah 1973: 126). Certain pagan mythological and symbolic motifs were acquired by the Jews through the influence of Jewish legends and Midrashic literature; however, the vast majority of the appropriated pagan motifs served solely as ornamental designs, considered as a means of decoration, to add beauty and embellishment to a structure.

Between the 4th and the 7th century the floor of the synagogue became an important location for elaborate mosaic decorations. Often, each mosaic pavement was planned as one framed unit, but was divided geometrically into panels.

A distinctive systematic scheme of nave carpet design appears on several synagogue pavements, consisting of symbolic and narrative panels; these are at Beth 'Alpha, Beth She'an A, Hammath Tiberias, Na'aran, Sepphoris and Susiya,

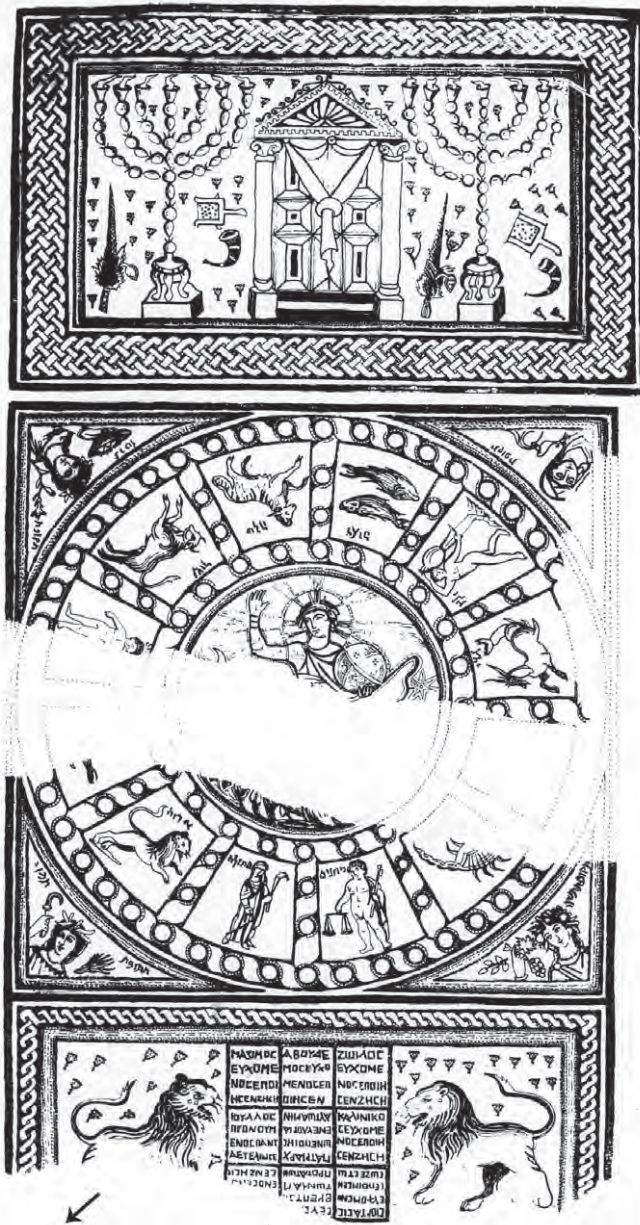


Figure II-1. Hammath Tiberias synagogue: tripartite nave mosaic pavement.

also Hammath Gader, Huseifa, and probably Yaphi'a (Hachlili 1988: 347, 352-354, Scheme A; Figs. VIII.6, 7; IX.35, 39; XI, 1-6). This carpet has a field usually divided lengthwise into three (or seven at Sepphoris) rectangular carpets (bands or panels), each thematically distinct and appropriate to its position in the construction, in a recurring design and theme (scheme A) which is repeated on the different synagogue floors (figs II-1-8). The panels are usually divided into (a) a Jewish symbols panel, which is situated in front of the Torah shrine, (b) a central panel decorated with a zodiac

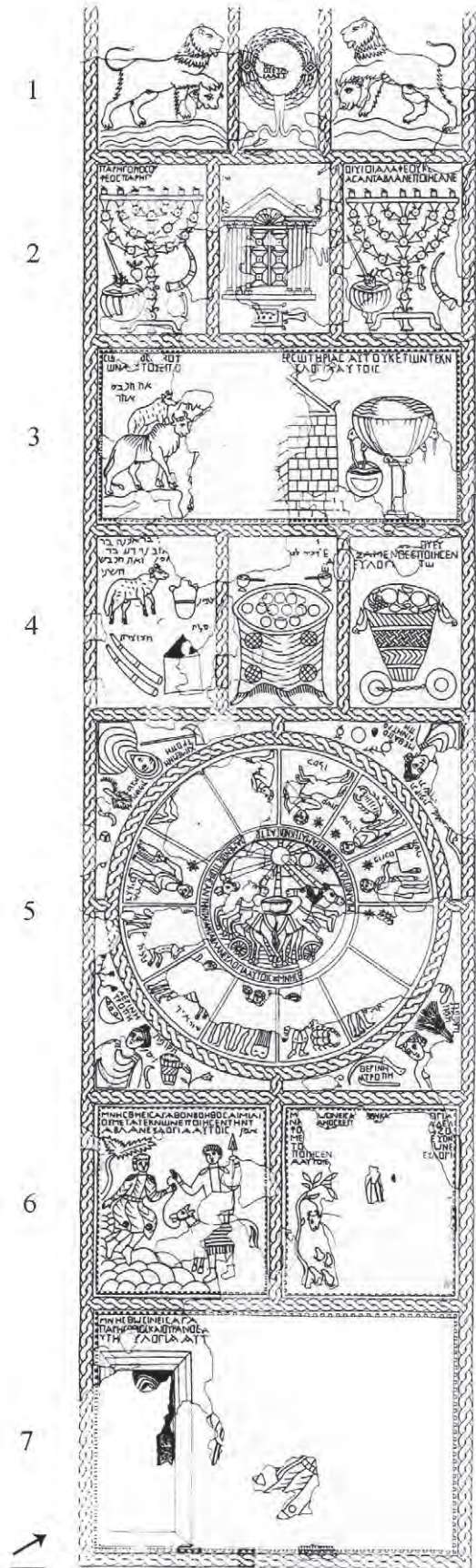


Figure II-2. Sepphoris synagogue: seven-band nave mosaic pavement.



Figure II-3. Beth 'Alpha synagogue: tripartite nave mosaic pavement.

scheme, and (c) a third panel, sometimes with a biblical scene (or a geometric design).¹

This Jewish iconographic scheme of the tripartite panel design stimulates various queries as to the meaning and significance of each panel as well as the whole composition. Scholars have tried to interpret them in various ways: Roussin (1997: 93) states, 'the overall composition of the synagogue pavements are analyzed in terms of the structure of the *Sefer HaRazim* the symbolism becomes clear. The lowest level represents the earthly realm, the Helios-in-zodiac panel in the center represents the celestial sphere, and in the highest sphere is the Torah Shrine panel, symbolic of the seventh firmament, where according

¹ At Susiya the floor of the hall was divided into three panels (Gutman at el 1981: 126) of which the western part, almost completely destroyed, had three scenes, one of them

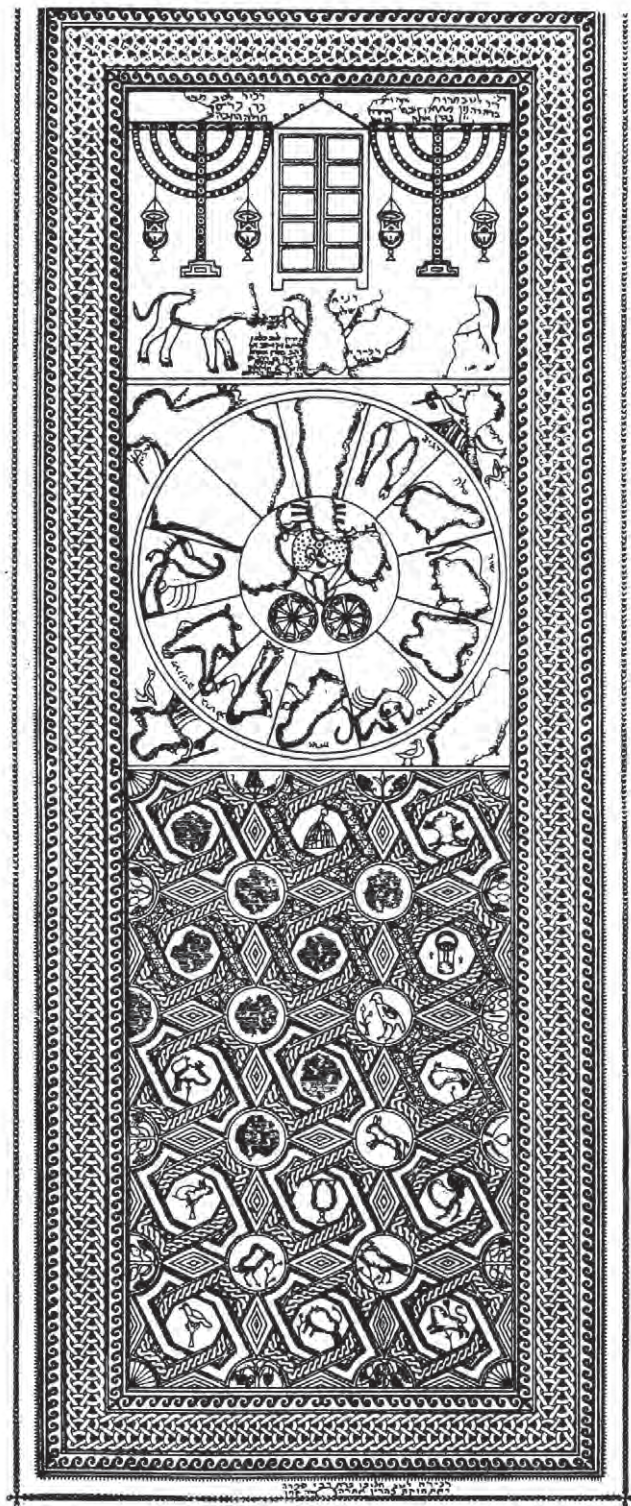


Figure II-4. Na'aran synagogue: tripartite nave mosaic pavement.

Daniel in the lion's den; the central panel was originally a zodiac design and the eastern panel contained a geometric carpet.

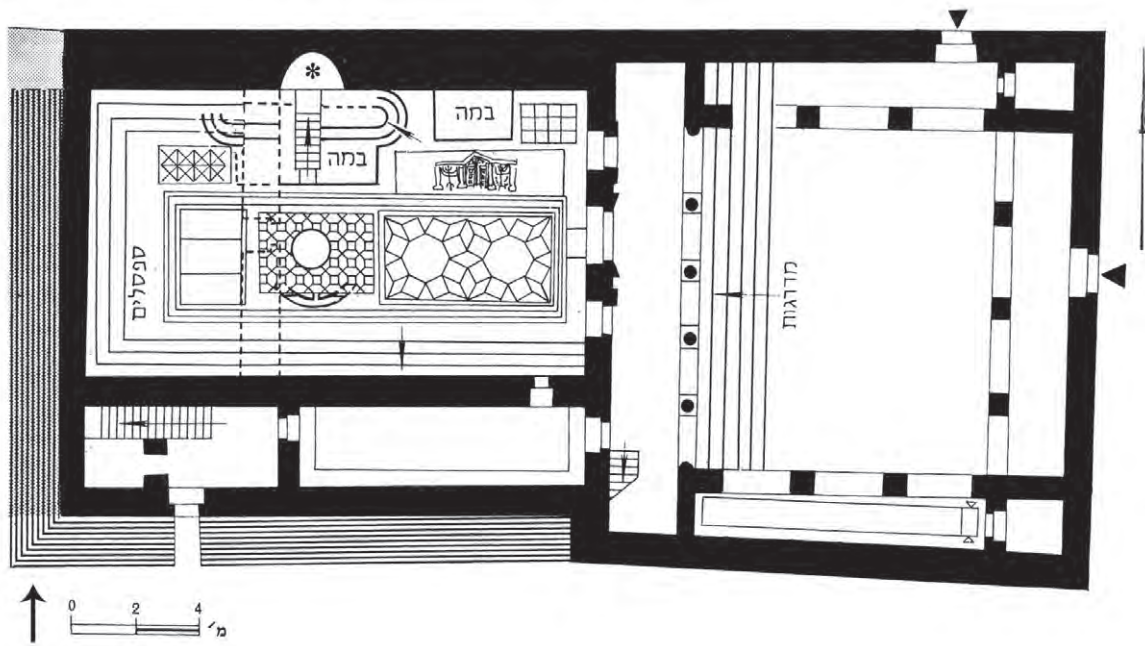


Figure II-5. Susiya synagogue plan.

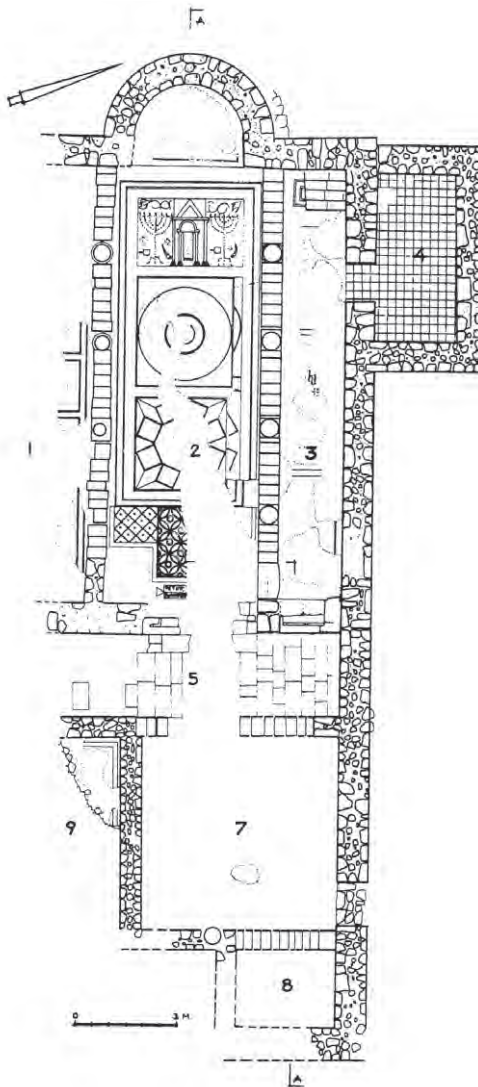


Figure II-6. Beth She'an A synagogue plan with tripartite nave mosaic pavement.

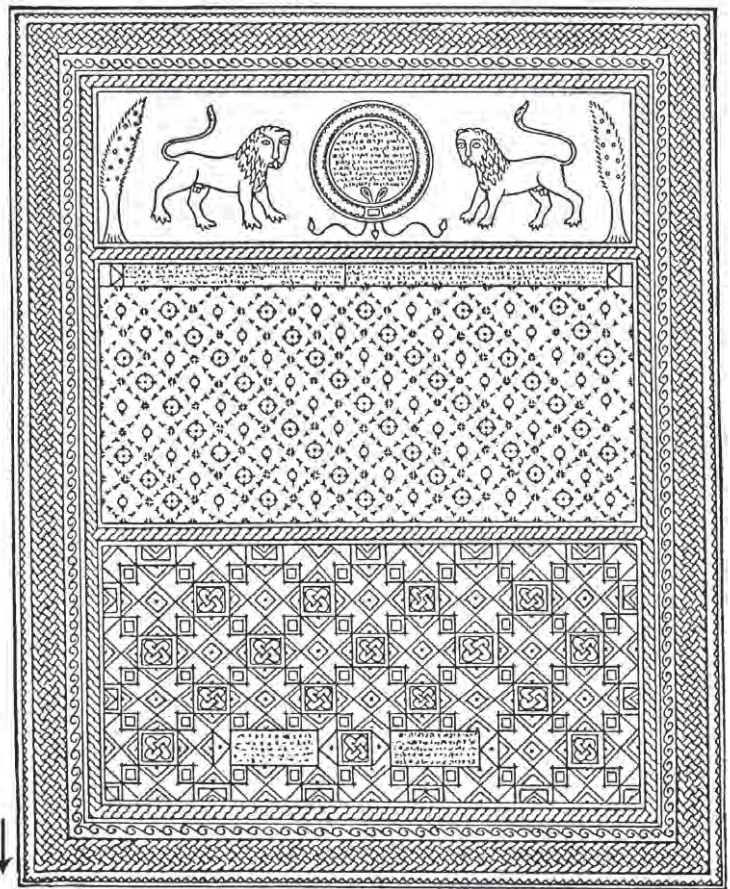


Figure II-7. Hammath Gader synagogue tripartite nave mosaic pavement.

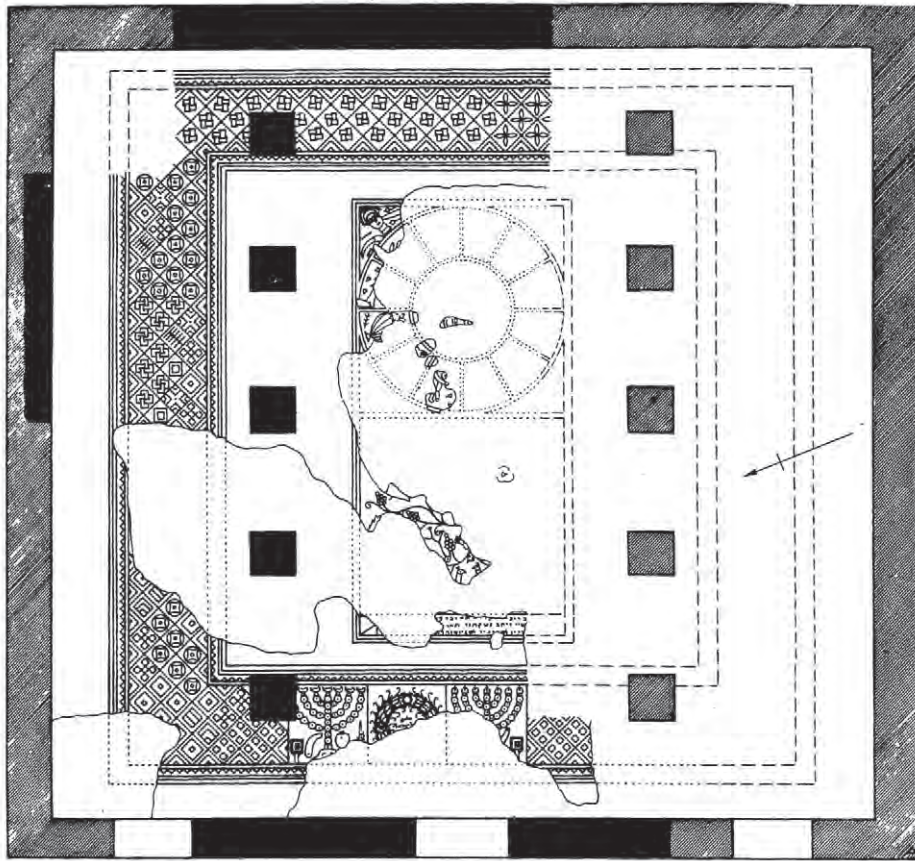


Figure II-8. Huseifa synagogue plan with tripartite nave mosaic pavement.

to the *Sefer HaRazim* Yahoweh resides'. Berliner (1994: 213-215) maintains that the tripartite panel design has a permanent formulation of three topics: the Temple, the wheel of the zodiac, and salvation—all three regarded as part of the Creation pattern. Sed Rajna (2000: 49) claims that the design probably reflects a visual transcription of a philosophical theory of the tripartite division of the universe according to the metaphysical (the Torah ark), the cosmic (the zodiac), and the terrestrial (the '*Aqedah*: the Binding of Isaac) realms. Kühnel (2000: 41, 43) maintains that in the Beth 'Alpha mosaic 'each of the components of the composition emphasizes a complementary aspect of the same idea: the upper part insists on the continuity of cult as a warrant of fulfillment; the zodiac wheel dwells upon the eternity of natural phenomena by God, and the binding of Isaac is a historical message'.

The structured design of seven panels at Sepphoris is interpreted by Weiss and Netzer (1996: 38-39; Weiss 2005: 239-249, fig. 5) as containing a programmatic layout. The lions flanking an inscription represent verification and validation;

the architectural façade and other symbols associated with the Tabernacle and Temple represent the future redemption; the zodiac expresses God's centrality in creation, in his promise, and in redemption; the Angels' visit to Abraham and Sarah and the Binding of Isaac symbolize the promise. Weiss (2005: 243) believes that the Sepphoris mosaic expresses by visual means redemption motifs and the longing for the re-establishing of the Temple cult, a concept which is also verbally articulated in prayer, midrash, and *piyyut*. Furthermore, Weiss (2005: 255) contends that the entire iconographic composition at Sepphoris conveys a religious and social message and reflects the main issues at the core of the contemporary Judaeo-Christian controversy. Some scholars assert priestly circles influence on the ornamentation of the synagogue, especially generating and inspiring the renditions of the Tabernacle and Temple (Rutgers 1999; Yahalom 2000: 90-91; Levine 2003: 121-127; but see Weiss [2005: 247-249] for a rejection of the proposal of priestly influence).

Though these scholars try to elucidate the tripartite design through deeply contemplated inspirations and a programmatic layout, it seems more reasonable to assume that the popularity of this scheme of panel divisions on synagogue floors derives from the desire of the Jewish community to incorporate into their synagogue decoration a balanced and harmonious design containing iconography and symbolic patterns, which demonstrated the Jewish character of the synagogue as a place where the community gathered for cultic and liturgical objectives. This general scheme, with its tripartite panels, each with its own motifs rendered on synagogue pavements, with considerable gaps in dates and geographical areas, was presumably chosen from the repertoire of existing pattern books containing uniquely Jewish subjects.

The following chapters survey and discuss the symbolic and narrative panel themes according to the order of the tripartite composition:

- Chapter II The Jewish symbols panel, situated in front of the Torah shrine
- Chapter III The zodiac scheme, usually in the central panel
- Chapter IV Biblical scenes sometimes depicted on the third panel.

The Jewish Symbols Panel

After the destruction of the Temple, the late antique synagogues operated as a combination of congregational assembly hall. Torah reading was emphasized and prayer was now obligatory. With the lack of a religious and cultic centre, the synagogue became the focus, the symbol of the community's uniqueness.

² In synagogues in Galilee and Golan the Torah shrine was located on the south wall, while in Judaea and the south of the Land of Israel it was on the north wall. In the synagogues of Syria, Apamea and Dura-Europos it was on the south or south-west wall of the synagogue; in the western Diaspora the Torah shrine was usually on the east wall. Exceptions are the Sepphoris synagogue, which has an aedicula in the western end of the hall, and the Hammam-Lif synagogue, which has a niche in the western wall that may have served a different purpose.

³ This contrasts with the now unaccepted scholars' premise (Sukenik 1934: 52-53; Goodenough 1953, I: 210; II: 91; Avi-Yonah 1961: 172; Avigad 1960: 30) that in early Galilean synagogues in the Land of Israel there was no permanent structure for the Ark of the Scrolls, and that the scrolls were placed in a portable, wheeled chest that was moved into place whenever necessary, and that only later, in the fourth century, was a fixed repository built.

These synagogues contained a distinctive feature, a predetermined, permanently-built focal point. This was the Torah shrine, an architectural structure which contained the Ark of the Scrolls and set in the Jerusalem-oriented wall. Archaeological evidence proves that only now had the orientation to Jerusalem become important. In fact, the synagogue orientation was most likely determined by the position of the Torah shrine structure. The congregation inside the hall prayed facing the Torah shrine, hence facing Jerusalem (Hachlili 1976: 52; 1988: 231-232; 2000: 146). This emphasis placed on the Torah shrine and the Jerusalem orientation symbolized the sanctity of the place and acted as a reminder of the Temple.

Reading the Torah has been the most important duty in the synagogue from ancient times until the present day, and a major factor in the life of the Jews. It has become a symbol of survival and preservation for Judaism throughout the ages, and is a major constituent of the Jewish spirit. Clearly, the most prominent architectural feature of ancient synagogues was the Jerusalem-oriented Torah shrine.²

In excavations of most synagogues in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora, the important fact has emerged that nearly every excavated synagogue yields fragments, traces of a site, or the actual site of the Torah shrine as early as the 2nd century CE.³ The Torah shrine structure in ancient synagogues in the Land of Israel (and the Diaspora) took one of three forms: aedicula, niche, or apse (Hachlili 1988, 166-187; 2000: 147-151).⁴ Each of these had its own structural form,

⁴ Some exceptions do exist: in the Land of Israel synagogues without any trace of a permanent place for the Torah shrine in the building architecture include 'Assaliyye, Hirbet ed-Dikke, Huseifa ('Usufiya), Kanef, and Yaphi'a. But most of these are either unexcavated or destroyed to such an extent that it is impossible to locate the site of the Torah shrine. The existence of an aedicula in unexcavated Galilean synagogues such as Kafr Bar'am is theoretically possible if one takes into account that the southernmost columns were erected far enough away from the entrance to allow room for an aedicula abutting onto the inner southern façade. Remains drawn by Kohl and Watzinger (1916: Pl. XII) seem to support this conjecture, as do the remains of Umm el-Kanatir. As the *Hirbet ed-Dikke* plan (Kohl and Watzinger 1916: Pl. XVI) shows that the central section of the south wall is completely destroyed, we can only surmise that an aedicula was situated there, although it would not have been on the façade wall, which is the western wall in this Golan synagogue. For the Torah shrine in Diaspora synagogues see Hachlili 1998, 67-79.

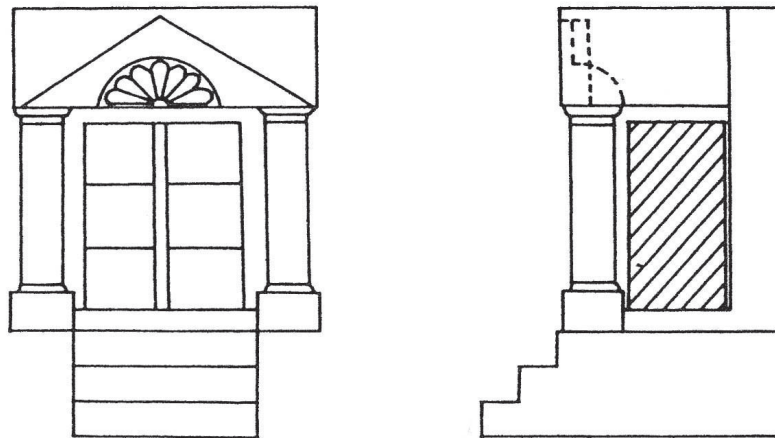


Figure II-9. Schematic form of the Torah shrine façade enclosing the Ark of the Scrolls.

but all served as repositories for the Ark of the Scrolls.

The Torah shrine structure can be reconstructed from those found in synagogue excavations. Artistic renditions on mosaic pavements, stone or basalt reliefs, wall paintings, tombstones, lamps, and gold glasses augment what is known from the excavations. Examples of Torah shrine depictions appear on mosaics and reliefs from synagogues in the Land of Israel, but in the Diaspora depictions are restricted to funerary art and lamps where only the Ark of the Scrolls is portrayed.

A. *The Torah Shrine and Its Artistic Depiction*

On several synagogue mosaic floors the most prominent panel is that portraying the Jewish ritual objects. It is situated in front of the Torah shrine, which probably contained these same objects of the synagogue cult. The mosaic panel is composed of a symbolic, antithetic design; that is, similar but non-identical objects are arranged symmetrically: a Torah shrine or ark flanked by a pair of menoroth, each menorah in turn flanked by two or four ritual objects (Hachlili 2001: 59). The synagogue mosaic panels of Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris and Susiya depict the Torah shrine with the Ark of the scrolls within (pl. II. 1; figs. II-8) while at Beth 'Alpha, Na'aran, and Jericho only the ark is rendered (pl. II.2; fig. II-10).

Artistic Renditions of the Torah Shrine Enclosing the Ark of the Scrolls

The general outline and scheme of the mosaic panel is largely uniform, but marked differences exist among the depictions in the artists' diverse creations and also in the concept.

The artistic renditions portray a uniform Torah shrine consisting of the following elements (Hachlili 1976: 43-49; 1988: 268-172; 2000: 154-155): a façade of two, four, or six columns on pedestals or on a base which carry an arcuated lintel (straight or a Syrian gable) with a conch that decorates the vaulted upper part of the gable; (fig. II-9); a base on which the Torah shrine is built and a flight of stairs leading up. Inside the façade the Ark of the Scrolls is shown in the shape of a pair of decorated closed doors. This Torah shrine form is somewhat similar to other sacred niches and aediculae in the pagan Hellenistic-Roman world (Hachlili 1980: 57-58).

The location and form of the Ark of the Scrolls can be deduced from inscriptions that mention the ark, from remains found in synagogues of the Land of Israel, and from the depiction of the ark on objects and mosaic pavements (Hachlili 2000: 157-158). The Ark of the Scrolls was a chest or an ark, commonly of wood and containing shelves to hold the Torah scrolls, which was placed inside the Torah shrine. The Ark of the Scrolls in the Land of Israel is usually depicted as a chest with closed double doors decorated with a conch (Hachlili 1988: 272-278, 1998: 366-350; Safrai 1989: 71-73). In the Diaspora the Ark of the Scrolls is rendered as an open chest containing scrolls placed on shelves; no indication appears of the form of the Torah shrine (fig. II-14).

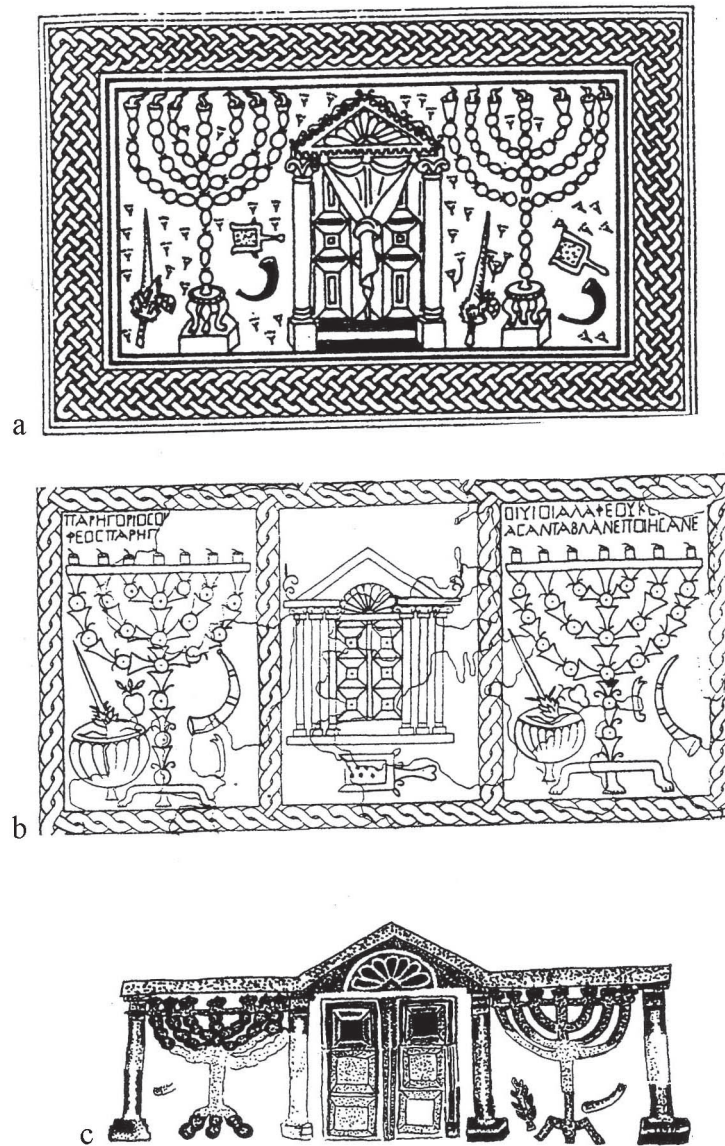


Figure II-10. Mosaic panel of the Torah shrine enclosing the Ark of the Scrolls flanked by pairs of menoroth and ritual objects: a. Hammath Tiberias; b. Sepphoris; c. Susiya.

Synagogue architecture containing actual aediculae and niches such as Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, and Susiya also show in their mosaic renditions an Ark of the Scrolls standing within the Torah shrine in the form of an aedicula or niche (pl. II.1, fig. II-10), whereas the synagogues with apses such as Beth 'Alpha, Na'aran, and Jericho (pl. II.2, fig. II-11) portray on their mosaic pavements the Ark of the Scrolls standing inside the apse independent of any enclosure.

The panel with the Torah shrine façade containing the Ark of the Scrolls is rendered on three mosaic pavements: Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, and Susiya (pl. II.1, fig. II-10):

The mosaic pavement of Hammath Tiberias (Dothan 1983: 33-39, pl. 27) shows a façade of two columns, each standing on a pedestal supporting a pediment decorated with a conch (pl. II.1a, fig. II-10a). Three steps between the columns lead up. The structure of the Torah shrine containing the Ark of the Scrolls is depicted as double carved doors partly hidden by the *parochet* (veil).

The menoroth portrayed in the synagogue mosaic floor at Hammath-Tiberias have an elaborated tripod base consisting of a concave plate terminating in animal legs (Hachlili 2001: 135, fig. III, 10c). The menorah arms are particularly ornate, composed of a sequence of alternating

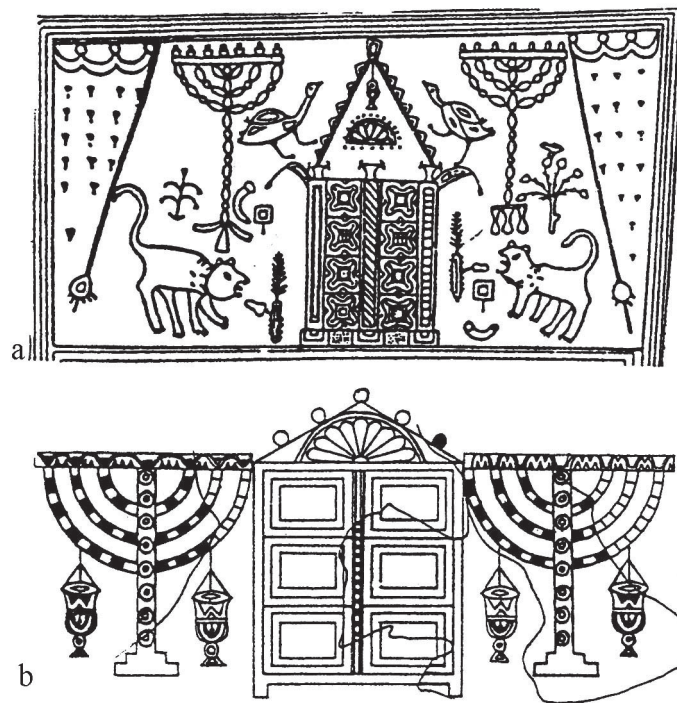


Figure II-11. Mosaic panel of the Ark of the Scrolls flanked by pairs of menoroth and ritual objects: a. Beth 'Alpha; b. Na'aran.

pomegranates and cups (Hachlili 2001: 149, IS3.1, ornamentation b). They are strikingly similar to those of the stone menorah found at Hammath-Tiberias, and to other examples such as the menorah depicted in the Samaritan synagogue mosaic floor at el-Hirbeh. This has similar arms, as does the menorah carved on the 'Eshtemo'a lintel (Hachlili 2001: fig. VII-1, pl. II-3, IS2.1, IS3.20, IS4.2). The glass containers are depicted on the arms without a crossbar, and the flames in the light fittings face the central arm and the Torah shrine/ark that they flank.

At Sepphoris, a similar design of the Torah shrine, partly destroyed, is depicted in the central panel of the second band (Weiss & Netzer 1996: 18-19; Weiss 2005: 65-77); the panel is divided into three parts: the central one renders the Torah shrine portrayed as a façade of six columns, three on either side, each placed on a pedestal, all six placed on a stylobate (pl. II.1b, fig. II-10b). The columns with stylized Ionic capitals support a Syrian gable decorated in its centre with a conch and acroteria at the corners. Steps might have been rendered between the columns. Within this façade, two doors decorated with square panels, three on each side, lending a three-dimensional illusion simulating wooden doors, represent the ark.

An incense shovel is depicted below the Torah shrine, which is an unusual and unique position. Each of the two flanking panels depicts a menorah with arms decorated with an elaborated kind of the capital-and-flower design and a tripod base with stylized animal feet (Hachlili 2001: 148, 161, IS3.7). The menoroth have a horizontal crossbar with round glass containers serving as light fittings; the illuminating flames of the right menorah lean towards the centre, to the Torah shrine; the left menorah is depicted identically, namely the flames tend outwards, away from the centre. Each menora is flanked by ritual objects, the one on the left by a lulav bound together with the other three species and ethrog, all placed in a bowl, while the menorah on the right is flanked by a shofar and tongs.

At Susiya the mosaic panel, placed before the secondary bema, shows the Torah shrine as a wide façade with four columns, each resting on a pedestal (Gutman et al 1981). The two central columns support a Syrian gable decorated with a conch (pl. II.1c, fig. II-10c). Between these columns two partly destroyed doors embody the Ark, decorated with square panels, three on each side; they are quite similar to the Sepphoris rendition. The pair of menoroth flanking the Torah shrine on the Susiya pavement differ entirely,

particularly in their arms and bases. The menorah on the left has a base and arms decorated with globular balls, whereas the right one has base and arms decorated with simple lines. Both have a crossbar holding glasses as light fittings. The menoroth seem to be flanked by only two ritual objects, the shofar and lulav. A pair of stags and plants flank the Torah shrine and menoroth panel; the mosaic shows repairs following accidental or intentional damage.

A different design, but still similar, appears on the mosaic pavement of the Beth She'an A synagogue (Zori 1967: 152, pl. 29,5), showing a structure with a double façade. The outer façade, closer to the viewer, consists of two columns with stylized Ionic capitals, each resting on a pedestal and supporting a gable. The inner façade has two similar columns supporting an arch decorated with a conch (pl. II-2b). A *parochet* is shown hanging on a rod between the columns. No ark is depicted, which is one reason for some scholars' argument that this Beth She'an A synagogue was a Samaritan building (Avi-Yonah 1973: 42; Pummer 1999: 131-132). A veil covers the Torah shrine and a pair of menoroth flank the ark, each accompanied by only two ritual objects, a shofar and an incense shovel.

Artistic Renditions of the Ark of the Scrolls

A different concept guided the artistic rendition of the mosaic panels of the Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran synagogue floors: the design of the mosaic panel in the Beth 'Alpha synagogue shows the Ark of the Scrolls as a chest with a carved and decorated double door, standing on three legs (pl. II-2a, fig. II-11a). The Torah shrine is indicated symbolically by the conch depicted inside the ark's gable (for the symbolic representation of the conch see Hachlili 1980). A lamp is suspended from the centre of the ark's gable and is part of the repertoire of ritual items symbolizing its use in the synagogue.

The ark is flanked by an unidentical pair of menoroth with unusual tripod bases, round arms decorated by a stylized form of the capital-and-flower, and glasses and flames on the crossbar. The menoroth themselves are each flanked by the four ritual utensils, with the addition of a pair of lions, a pair of birds placed on the edges of the two acroteria, and a pair of plants. A *parochet* is portrayed at both ends of the panel, apparently representing the veil that covered the area of the Torah shrine and separated it from the synagogue hall.

The Na'aran mosaic panel depicted on the main hall of the mosaic pavement of the synagogue has a different design. It shows the partly destroyed Ark of the Scrolls as a chest with double doors standing on two legs with a gabled top decorated with a conch (pl. II-2b, fig. II-10b). The ark is flanked by a pair of menoroth of unique style and decoration: the round arms are adorned by alternating square patterns, and the central stem is adorned with a series of round discs; notable are the stepped bases of the menoroth and the glass containers on a specially stylized ornate crossbar (Hachlili 2001: 135, 161, fig. III-10d). Instead of the usual accompanying ritual objects, two lamps hang from each menorah.

A similar stylized ark is shown on the mosaic of the Jericho synagogue (Baramki 1938: pl. 19). The Ark of the Scrolls has a decorated double door standing on four legs; above the ark appears the conch, signifying the Torah shrine (pl. II-2c).

The Ark of the Scrolls representations in the Land of Israel is shown either independently free-standing, or inside the Torah shrine façade. The form of the ark portrayed inside the façade of the Torah shrine is usually a chest with closed doors (fig. II-12); this depiction appears on the mosaic pavements of Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, and Susiya, and on reliefs from Peki'in and Beth She'arim (Hachlili 1980: 59-60; 1988: 272-278; 280-285; 2000: 158, figs. 12: 1-7; 14: 2, 4, 5).

The form of the ark depicted independently is a free-standing chest with a double ornamented door, set on two to four legs, surmounted by a gable or round top, sometimes with a symbolic conch referring to the absent Torah shrine within which the ark stood (fig. II-13); these arks are portrayed on mosaic floors at Beth 'Alpha, Jericho, and Na'aran, and on reliefs from Capernaum and Na'ana (Hachlili 2000: 158, fig. 15). The Beth She'an A mosaic portrays a *parochet* (veil), which may indicate an ark (pl. II-2b) (Zori 1967: 152, 164). There is no proof of any preference for one form over another as these ark forms are rendered in all periods.

In the Diaspora the ark is carved or painted as a free-standing open chest, roofed by a gabled or round top, without legs; through the open doors of the ark shelves are visible, on each of which are set two to three circular, oval, or square scrolls (fig. II-14). The ark appears painted on catacomb walls, carved on tombstones and on gold glasses found in the Jewish catacombs in Rome. It also appears on lamps found in the synagogue at the Roman port of Ostia. On a stone slab at Sardis, an

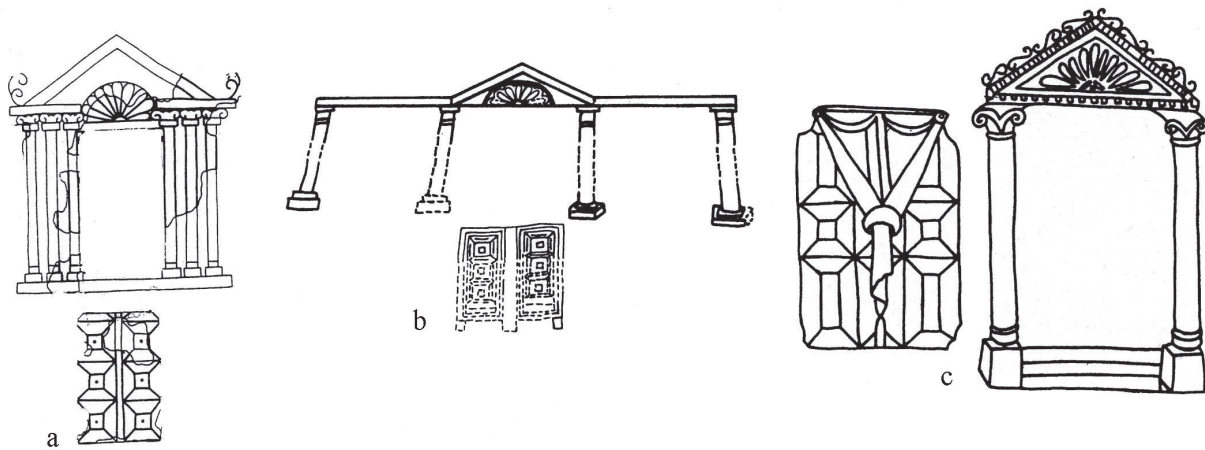


Figure II-12. Representation of Torah shrine with the Ark of the Scrolls rendered inside the façade.

open ark with scrolls is depicted, with an inscription (Hachlili 1998: 366-370, Figs. VII-46-48; 2000: 159, figs. 16, 17).

The general similarity observed among depictions of arks in Diaspora catacomb art, with only slight variations, seems to prove the existence of a single prototype for the Diaspora examples, consisting of an open-door ark and scrolls lying on shelves. The design of an ark with arched roof, open doors, and scrolls is treated more elaborately on gold glasses than on catacomb tombstones, which are usually simple, incised renditions. It is quite possible that a similar prototype was used for depicting scroll chests and arks in Jewish and pagan art alike.

The difference in the way the ark is represented in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora is interesting. In the examples from the Land of Israel the ark has closed doors, while the Diaspora images have open doors revealing scrolls lying on shelves. The question arises as to whether this is due to different traditions and customs involving the Torah-reading ceremony, or different geographical origins, or to the fact that in the Land of Israel they are mostly depicted in synagogal art, whereas in the Diaspora the arks are portrayed in funerary art.

The ark with the closed door is the prevalent type in synagogal art of the Land of Israel. It is often depicted on synagogue mosaic pavements, and treading on representations of Torah scrolls, were the doors open, would be unacceptable. In the Diaspora, where the ark usually appears in funerary art and on lamps rather than floors, this precaution was unnecessary.

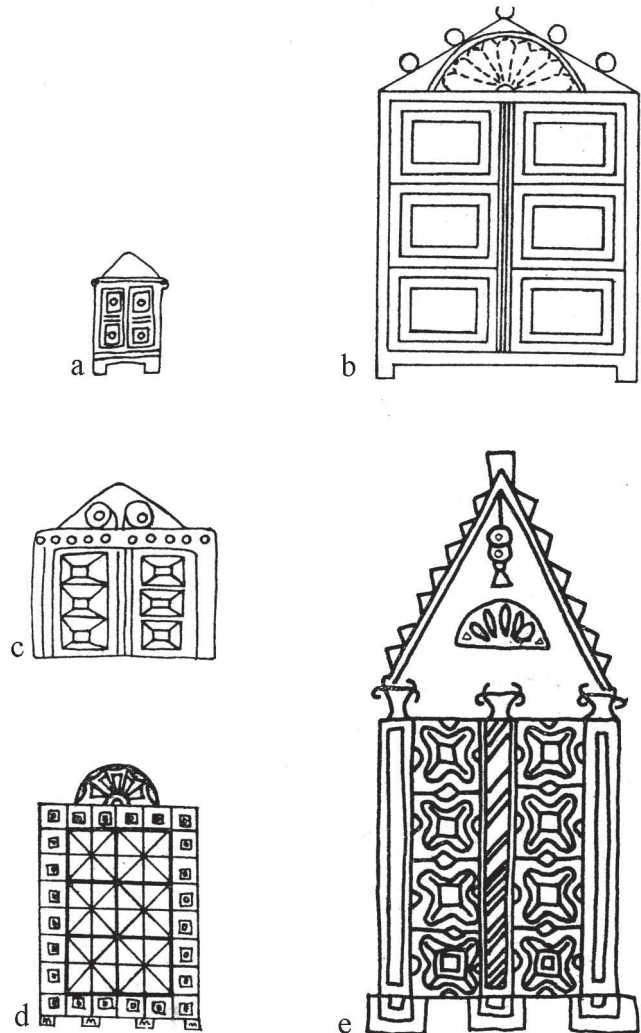


Figure II-13. Representation of the Ark of the Scrolls.

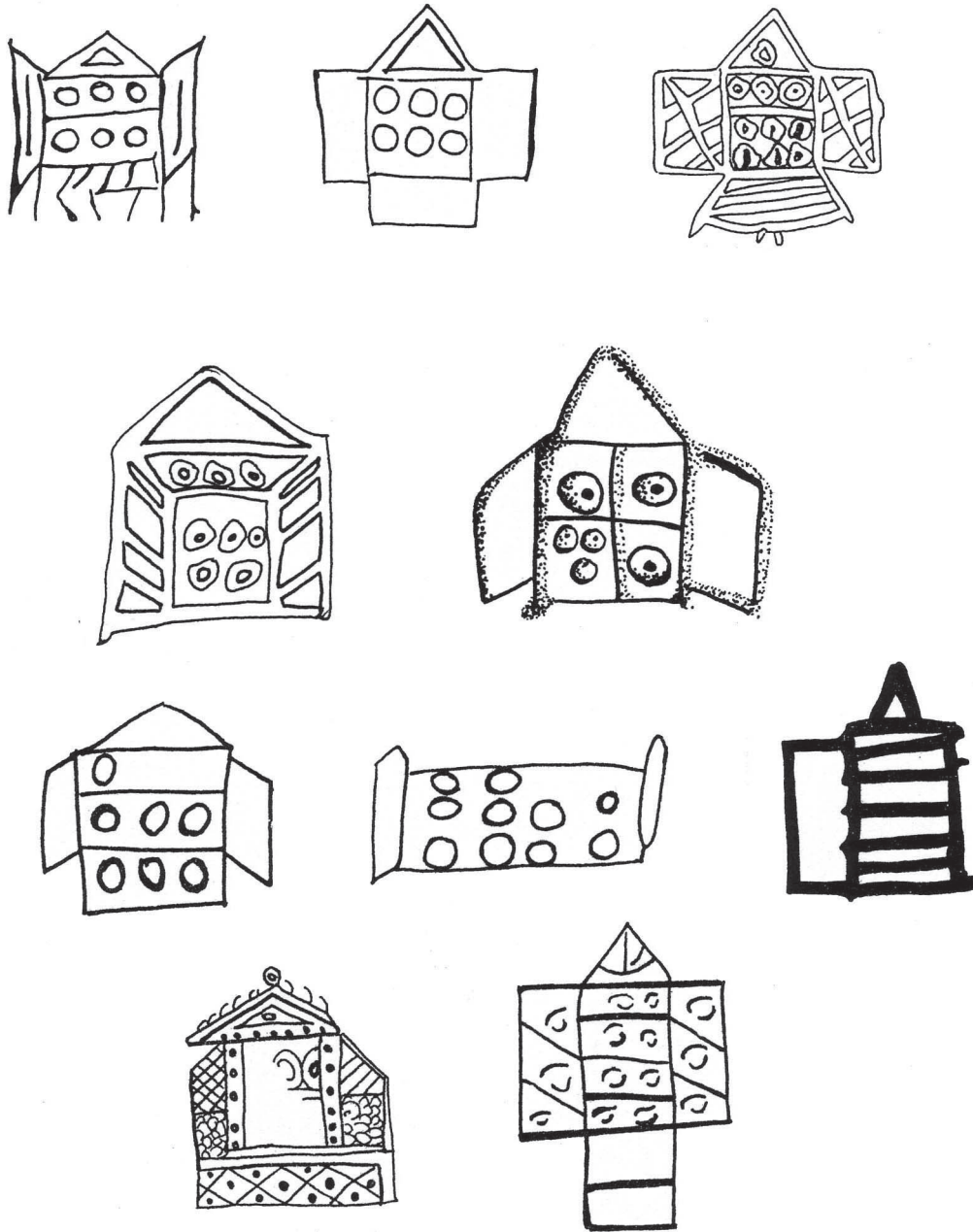


Figure II-14. Diaspora representations of the Ark of the Scrolls.

The location of the wooden Ark of the Scrolls inside the stone-built Torah shrine in all its forms (aedicula, niche, apse) in the synagogues of Late Antiquity is confirmed by the representations of the ark in Jewish art. Some of these render the actual setting and design of the ark in synagogue architecture. Yet the ark was also part of the symbolic repertoire of Jewish art, depicted, as noted, in funerary art and on lamps. The ark represented much deeper connotations, being an integral part of the focal point of Jewish worship, the Torah, also symbolizing the place of the Scriptures, their study, and prayer.

B. *Accompanying Ritual Objects*

The mosaic panel shows a symmetrical composition, in which the accompanying pair of menoroth are depicted one on either side of the Torah shrine, each flanked by four or two ritual objects (Hachlili 2001: 59-61, Fig. II-13).

The Menorah

The common rendition of the mosaic panel is two menoroth flanking a Torah shrine or an Ark of the Scrolls. Some of these elements, including the menoroth from Beth 'Alpha, Huseifa, and Susiya,

are rendered in non-identical symmetry. Portrayals of pairs of menoroth flanking the ark occur most frequently on synagogue mosaic pavements at Beth-'Alpha, Beth She'an A, Hammath-Tiberias, Na'aran, Sepphoris, and Susiya (pls. II.1, 2a,b) (Hachlili 2001: IS3.1-4, 6-7).

The menorah, the seven-armed candelabrum, flanking the Torah shrine or the ark, has a general elementary shape consisting of a vertical central shaft with a base in various forms. This supports six arms, three of which are attached to each side of the shaft. On top of these arms light fittings are portrayed (Hachlili 2001: 61,121, figs. III, 2-3). The majority of menoroth portrayed on the mosaic panels have a tripod base entailing three more or less similar straight or rounded legs connected by a horizontal bar. Many of the menoroth appearing on mosaic pavements, such as the ones from Beth She'an A, Beth She'an B, Hammath Tiberias B, Huldah, Huseifa, Ma'on (Nirim), Sepphoris, and Susiya, depict beautiful glass containers with flames emanating from the crossbar (pls. II.1, 2, XI.1; figs. II-10-11).

Although many menoroth are depicted on mosaic pavements, sometimes with similar designs, each is rendered in a wholly different fashion. The model for all of them was just the elementary form of seven arms and tripod base, and artists were free to elaborate on this shape. Sometimes the two menoroth in the pair differ in their bases, arms, and light fittings.

The form of the menoroth on the mosaic pavement panels (Hachlili 2001: 121, 133, 139, 148,149) is seven round and decorated arms with an alternating design of capital-and-flower, which usually is also the ornamentation of the central stem. An elaborate kind of the capital-and-flower design is depicted on the arms of the pair of the flanking menoroth on the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic (pl. II.1b). The menoroth shown flanking the ark on the Beth 'Alpha synagogue mosaic (pl. II.2a) are equipped with round arms in variation of this kind of stylized form of capital-and-flower. A particularly ornate menorah is found on the Hammath-Tiberias synagogue mosaic floor: each of its arms and the stem are composed of a sequence of alternating pomegranates and cups. The menorah arms portrayed at the Hammath-Tiberias stone (Hachlili 2001: pl. II-3) are strikingly similar. The menorah depicted on the Samaritan synagogue mosaic floor at el-Hirbeh has similar arms (pl. II.3a; fig. II-17).

The most common form of stylized menorah base consists of a simple tripod. Many variations on this form are observed, among them some terminating in animal legs and a concave plate. The most elaborate tripod bases are shown on synagogue mosaic pavements (Hachlili 2001: Fig. III-2,3), where some terminate in animal legs or paws. A stylized portrayal of animal feet is seen on the Beth She'an A, Sepphoris, and Susiya synagogue mosaic pavements. The menorah on the Hammath Tiberias mosaic has a base consisting of a concave plate borne by three animal legs (pl. II-1a) (similar to the ivory plaque from Beth She'an: Hachlili 2001: pl. II-78). The menoroth of the Beth 'Alpha mosaic (pl. II-2a) are particularly interesting because of the unusual way the artist chose to portray the tripod bases. Notable are the unusual stepped bases of the menoroth from Na'aran (fig. II-11b).

The Four Ritual Utensils

A group of cult utensils is frequently represented with the menorah on the Torah shrine mosaic panel, among them the four ritual utensils: shofar, lulav, ethrog, and incense shovel, separately or together. The first three of these are associated with the Feast of Tabernacles (*Succoth*) (Hachlili 2001: 211-228). In some instances another object, the hanging lamp, is shown adjacent to the menorah. Animals such as lions and birds are at times integrated into the scene around the menorah also (Hachlili 1988: 267-268; 1998: 347-355; 2001: 211-227).

The *shofar* is portrayed in the form of a ram's horn, open and wide at one end, narrowing and with a knob-like protuberance at the other end. The shofar form as a rule is realistically rendered, although occasionally it is shown stylized, and is commonly shown paired on synagogue mosaic pavements: for instance, with the incense shovel at Hammath Tiberias, Beth 'Alpha, and Beth She'an A; with the lulav at Susiya; with tongs at Sepphoris (pls. II-1, 2a-b). The shofar played a ceremonial and ritual function in the Temple, together with a pair of trumpets, and was especially associated with the New Year (*Rosh HaShannah*) and Yom Kippur.

The *lulav* (palm branch) is one of four ritual plants associated with Tabernacles. The others are the ethrog, the myrtle (*hadass*), and the willow (*arava*). The lulav is presented in various forms; realistically it features mostly on mosaic pavements. At times it appears on mosaics as a stylized

incised branch or palm branch, or in a bundle with branches of myrtle (*hadass*) and willow (*arava*), and often with the ethrog. At Sepphoris the bundle is set in a bowl.

The *ethrog* (citron) is a citrus fruit, prevalently designed in Jewish art as a circular or ovoid object with a small stem. As noted, it is commonly connected with or bound to the lulav. The ethrog, with the lulav and the shofar, is generally shown flanking the menorah. At Sepphoris, non-identical ethrogim are set close to the lulav bundle.

The *incense shovel* is a rectangular fire-pan with a handle, used by the High Priest on Yom Kippur. Such incense shovels formed part of the accessory utensils of the menorah, used to remove ash and clean the menorah lamps in the Temple (Ex. 25: 38). Commonly paired with the shofar, it is the rarest of all four ritual objects and appears mostly on synagogue mosaic pavements and on some synagogue architectural elements. On the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic floor the incense shovel is unusually placed beneath the Torah shrine (pl. II-1b). Incense shovel is represented only in the Land of Israel; in the Diaspora it is replaced by a vase.

The ritual objects flanking the menorah are represented on account of their above-mentioned connection to Tabernacles, which during the Second Temple period came to be the most important of the three annual pilgrimage feasts (attested already by Zechariah, 14: 16-18). Tabernacles was referred to as 'The Feast' (Jos. *Ant.* 8. 100) and *asif* (the final harvest of the year) (Hachlili 1988: 267-8; 1998: 359-360). A Tabernacles ritual in the Temple was the rite of the four plant enumerated above. Later they came to symbolize this important annual festival, and to recall the Temple rites. The Jews could remember and celebrate the national, communal, and agricultural activities of the festival.

The antithetic symmetrical composition of the Torah shrine panels is a distinctive feature of Jewish art occurring in many figurative and decorative subjects; it is also one of the basic features of art in the Near East. Jewish art has a propensity to portray two similar but non-identical objects in pairs, namely to produce the non-identical symmetry effect. This holds for the depiction of pairs of menoroth too (Hachlili 1988: 253-254; 376-378; 1998: 419-420; 2001: 191-194).

An important issue is the explanation of the symmetry that appears in mosaic pavement panels, such as a pair of menoroth flanking the

Torah shrine or the Ark of the Scrolls. It might, in fact, have special significance (Hachlili 1988: 367; 2001: 198-200). The simple answer lies in the tendency to symmetrical composition in Jewish art, as influenced by Levantine oriental art. The occurrence of two menoroth, however, may reflect the actual function of the menorah in the synagogue. Such portrayals very often reflect the use of actual objects; they illustrate the internal arrangement of the synagogue, with the ark in a central position, flanked by menoroth. They may also have been placed together with the ark in the niche or apse of the synagogue, for example, the three built niches of the 'Eshtemo'a synagogue which probably held an ark and two menoroth (Hachlili 1988: 255, Fig. VIII,5; 2001, fig. IV-3). These portrayals of pairs of menoroth may indicate that some time during the 3rd and 4th centuries a change in the synagogue ritual occurred, requiring the use of two menoroth functioning simultaneously. In the mosaic floor depictions other innovations at this time are, for example, zodiac representations and additional ritual utensils. The proliferation of Christianity, and its inherent challenge to the established Jewish religion, may have been the cause of the increasing ceremonial content in synagogue ritual and art (Hachlili 2001: 199-200).

The composition of the Torah shrine panel is generally uniform on numerous mosaic pavements (and reliefs). It is unique, and is found in various sites separated by distance and time. Slight variations notwithstanding, this seems to prove the existence of a prototype (Hachlili 1988: 391-394). The styles of the mosaic pavements, however, differ completely as each synagogue's artist added to, and changed the basic pattern.

Their proximity to the Torah shrine reinforces the hypothesis that the ark and menoroth were actually placed in the niche or apse of these synagogues (see, for instance, the reconstruction of the Beth Alpha interior in Sukenik 1932: Fig. 17).

Synagogue mosaics that show these objects have a twofold function: to show their actual use and to suggest their symbolic connotations. As these objects were in the past connected to the Temple, they probably expressed a longing for the Temple rites and ceremonies, which could be satisfied by the depiction of the objects on the synagogue floor.

A different design, in the form of a symbolic temple or sanctuary façade, appears on mosaic

pavements of Samaritan synagogues and two Christian chapels.

Examples of such designs of tetrastyle sanctuary façades decorate the floor mosaics of two Samaritan synagogues. The 4th-century Samaritan synagogue at Khirbet Samara shows two designs. One found between the row of benches along the southern wall (Magen 1993b: 64 fig. 1; 1993a: 231- figs. 10,12-13,14a,b) renders an elaborate structure consisting of four Ionic columns, with a Syrian gable decorated by a large conch in the centre and three rosettes in the three corners of the gable. A structured double door, decorated with panels and rings, is closed by a lock. The door is partly covered by a curtain hanging from rings along a rod attached to one of the columns on the left. The other smaller structure, less ornately represented, is found in the nave's mid-section geometric mosaic (Magen 1993b: 63, figs. 5). It depicts a sanctuary façade consisting of four columns, with a Syrian gable decorated by a small conch and a veil tied to one of the columns to the left concealing the door.

On the mosaic floor of the other 4th century el-Hirbeh Samaritan synagogue, in a rectangular panel in the centre of the nave appears a slightly different design of a sanctuary⁵ (Magen 1992: 71-72, fig. pp.69,70; 1993a: 241, figs. 19-23; Hachlili 2001: 264-266).

The mosaic floor consists of three designs: on the left is depicted a sanctuary with a four-columned façade and a gabled tile roof, a pediment decorated with a conch; over the entrance a veil hangs, wrapped around a column to the right. In the centre is the shewbread table topped with various objects: bowls, goblets, and loaves of bread; on the right appears a seven-branched menorah flanked by two trumpets, an incense shovel, a shofar (and probably remains of a lulav and ethrog). A similar showbread table is rendered in the centre of Band 4 of the Sepphoris synagogue.

In the Samaritan synagogue mosaics at el-Hirbeh and Hirbet Samara, the structures' double door in the centre is covered by a veil similar to the one covering the ark in the mosaic of Hammath Tiberias. The sanctuary designs on these two Samaritan synagogues are very similar, which

might indicate an identical model or that the depictions were created by the same artist.

Comparable designs appear on the wall paintings from the third century CE Dura Europos synagogue (pl. IV.4). A sanctuary façade is portrayed on the arched lintel of the Torah niche (Kraeling 1979: 54-65; Hachlili 1998: 98-101, 155-56, pl. III-1; Figure VII-41a). The outer frame of the façade consists of two pairs of fluted columns and an Egyptian-style capital, surmounted by a moulded architrave. Within this is another structure consisting of two columns, supporting an arch decorated with a conch. A door with two leaves ornamented with bosses is portrayed within. Scholars interpret this type of sanctuary as related to the design on a Bar Kokhba coin representing the Temple façade.

A different sanctuary is represented similarly in two panels, WB2 and WB3, of the Dura Europos wall paintings (Kraeling 1979: 125-131; Hachlili 1998: 157-158, pls. III-11, 12; figs. III-38, VII-41a; 2000: fig. 18: 1-7) as the façade and side of a peripteros structure, with Corinthian columns mounted on a stepped crepidoma supporting an entablature and a tiled roof (pl. IV.4; fig. II-15). The Corinthian columns are four (WB2) and seven (WB3) along the side; with four (WB3) and two (WB2) columns across the façade supporting a pediment, its tympana decorated with a rosette (WB2) and a rosette and rinceaux (WB3). The cella is shown as a black interior framing a veil and the Ark of the Covenant (WB2). Closed double doors with panelled leaves are depicted in WB3. The panels are interpreted by most scholars as representing the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple respectively.

The sanctuaries portrayed on the Dura Europos synagogue wall paintings as well as the mosaics of the Samaritan synagogue pavements might be interpreted as describing the Jerusalem Temple façade and its vessels (Hachlili 1998: 360-363). Yet while the Dura paintings symbolize the Jerusalem temple, the sanctuary design in the Samaritan synagogues was more likely copied from, or influenced by Jewish art, and might have symbolized the façade of the Samaritan temple on Mount Grizim; but note that Magen (1992: 72) suggested that this is a rendition of the Tabernacle and its vessels.

Symbolic motifs and religious elements are rarely depicted on church floors, in view of the risk of their being trodden upon (Hachlili 2000: 155). Nevertheless, three examples of a kind of shrine

⁵ Magen 1992, 70-72; figures on pp. 80, 88. A similar design of an ark is found on a stone relief from Hirbet Samara and Kefr Pahma as well as on Samaritan clay lamps.

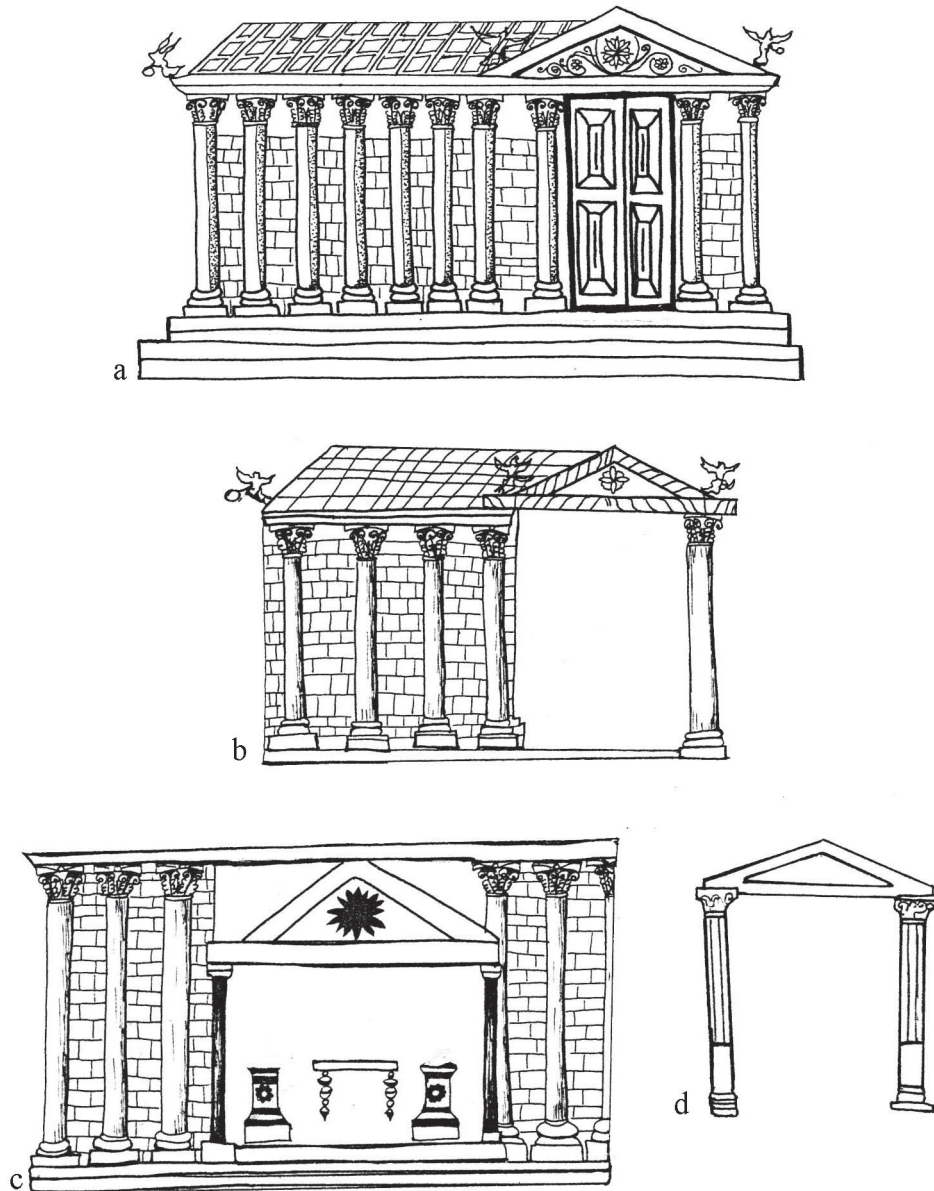


Figure II-15. Sanctuaries on the Dura Europos wall paintings, panels WB2, WB3, WB4.

similar to the synagogue Torah shrine panel are depicted on Christian mosaic floors in Jordan (pl. II.3). The mosaic of the eastern part of the central carpet at the 6th-century Chapel of Priest John at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat, Mount Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 174, fig. 228), shows a gabled, four-columned shrine decorated with a conch in its tympanum. In the centre between the two inner columns is a dedicatory inscription (not doors of an ark), flanked by two candlesticks; two roosters perch on the tympanum corners and two peacocks and a two trees flank the shrine (pl. II.3a).

A different architectural structure of two columns carrying an arcuated lintel decorated with

a conch is rendered in the presbytery of the Theotokos chapel in 'Ayn al-Kanish (Piccirillo 1998: 359, fig. 228); between the two columns a curtain is suspended from a horizontal rod. Sheep (disfigured) in front of small trees flank the structure, which evokes the edifice with the curtain on the panel of the Beth She'an A synagogue, and also slightly the Susiya Torah shrine panel (pls. II.1c, II.2b).

Another example shows a completely different structure rendered on a rectangular mosaic panel in front of the altar of the early 7th-century Chapel of Theotokos at Mount Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 151, fig. 200). It depicts a stylized shrine

of two columns surmounting an arched top, with an altar and fire within, flanked by two bulls, two gazelles, and two flower clusters (pl. II.3b); the shrine is interpreted as the Temple in Jerusalem and the scene's meaning is suggested by the inscription of Psalm 51: 21 above the scene.

It seems reasonable to infer that the structures depicted in these examples are intended to represent the Jerusalem Temple, either as conceived by an artist consulting a pattern book or as representing an ideal. The iconography differs from the Ark of the Scroll and Torah shrine examples but is similar to the sanctuaries; the Temple structures are usually depicted with a gate while the façades on the synagogue mosaics show double decorated doors of an ark. The basic elements of these sanctuaries including the general form, the columns, the panelled doors, and the decorating conch appear also in Torah shrine architecture and depictions in synagogues of the Land of Israel.

*

The major architectural feature of the synagogue was the Torah shrine, which became a permanent fixture in the synagogue building from its inception following the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. Typological differences in the Torah shrines should be attributed to local preferences, popular vogues, or historical development. Built usually on the Jerusalem-oriented wall, the Torah shrine took the structural form of aedicula, niche or apse. All three types of repositories were constructed of stone, were elevated on bases and were approached by steps. The Torah shrine was the receptacle for the Ark of the Scrolls, which was probably made of wood (Hachlili 2000: 161-163).

The earliest artistically rendered examples of the Torah shrine and ark appear in the Land of Israel during the 3rd-4th centuries in both synagogal art (on the Hammath Tiberias mosaic) and funerary art (inscribed on walls and painted on stones at Beth She'arim). In the Diaspora, representations of the Ark of the Scrolls alone, likewise dated to the 3rd-4th centuries, appear on funerary art (on objects and wall paintings of the catacombs of Rome) and on lamps.

Often the Torah shrine and the ark are flanked by other images: a pair of menoroth and ritual

objects on synagogue mosaic pavements at Beth 'Alpha, Hammath Tiberias, Na'aran, Sepphoris, and Susiya. In the Diaspora the ark, sometimes flanked by a menorah and ritual objects, is found on tombstones, in wall paintings, and on gold glasses from the catacombs in Rome (Hachlili 1997, pls. VI-15, 18, 19, 26-28); sometimes the ritual objects only appear, without a menorah. At other times the ark is also flanked with animals. Two lions and two birds flank the ark and the menorah on the mosaic at Beth 'Alpha and on gold glasses from the catacombs of Rome (Hachlili 1997, nos. 3, 4, 5 and 7; figs. VI-20, 22, 24). These depictions of the Torah shrine with the two flanking menoroth may represent the actual position of the Torah shrine and menoroth in their prominent place in the synagogue building.

The Torah shrine designs appearing in synagogue and funerary art throughout the Land of Israel and the Diaspora are reminiscent of Temple designs (Hachlili 2000: 155-157, figs. 18). Some scholars argue that the designs discussed here as depictions of the synagogue Torah shrine and ark are in fact representations of the Jerusalem Temple. However, the designs differ: in the Temple designs, the structure has a tiled roof and inside the façade and a decorated double closed gate, which sometimes has a lock, rings, and a veil. In the Torah shrine designs the structure is usually depicted as a columned façade with decorated double closed ark doors in the Land of Israel renditions, further proved by the depictions of the ark in the Diaspora examples where the open doors of the ark show clearly the scrolls on the shelves (fig. II-14; Hachlili 2000: 159, figs. 15-17).

The Torah shrine and ark representation in Jewish art, especially on the mosaic pavements of synagogues, had symbolic connotations: first, they symbolized the actual form and position of the Torah shrine and the ark in synagogue architecture; second, they were spiritual and religious symbols of the Torah. Torah reading conducted in public was a most important element in synagogue life and ceremonial. The location of the Torah shrine, which is the focal point of the ceremony in the synagogue on the Jerusalem-oriented wall, and its similarity in design to the assumed Temple façade, indicate the relations between them. The connection is enhanced by the aspiration to arouse the memory of the Temple.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ZODIAC PANEL AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

A group of ancient synagogues discovered in Israel, ranging in date from the 4th to the 6th century CE, contain mosaics showing very similar zodiac cycle designs (Hachlili 1977; 1988: 301-309; 2002). This is surprising in view of the pagan origin of the zodiac, and all the more so as the mosaics would have been immediately visible to anyone entering the synagogue as they lay inside the main entrances. This widespread use, over two centuries, of a 'pagan' motif invites many questions as to its meaning and function in the synagogue.

The zodiac panel has been found in a group of synagogues whose mosaic floors display a typical tripartite scheme composition. The zodiac is the central panel, except at Sepphoris.

These synagogues are: The Severus synagogue of Hammath-Tiberias is the earliest with mosaic pavements, dating to the 4th century (Dothan: 1983: 39-49). The zodiac is the central panel of the tripartite nave design (fig. II-1; pl. III.1). The Sepphoris synagogue mosaic floor dates to the 5th century (Weiss & Netzer 1996: 14-15; Weiss 2005: 104-141); the zodiac is depicted on the fifth of the seven bands of the nave hall (fig. II-2; pl. III.2).

According to the Aramaic inscription the Beth 'Alpha synagogue dates from the time of Justin I (518-527 CE; the preferred date) or Justin II (565-578) (Sukenik 1932: 57-58); the zodiac is the central panel of the tripartite nave design (pl. III.3; fig. II-3). In the late 6th-century Na'aran synagogue the zodiac is the central panel of the tripartite nave design (Vincent: 1919; 1921; 1961) (pl. III.4a). At Huseifa, a late 5th-century synagogue (Avi-Yonah: 1934), the zodiac is rendered on the upper panel of the nave mosaic (figs. II-8; III-1).

The 6th century Susiya synagogue (Gutman et al. 1981: 126) did contain at one time a mosaic floor with a zodiac panel, which was later changed into a geometric pattern (figs. II-5, pl. III.4b). The only surviving part is the corner of the zodiac showing a wing, possibly of one of the seasons.

To this group of mosaic pavements should be added a Hebrew inscription discovered on the 'En

Gedi synagogue mosaic floor (Barag et al. 1981: 118) dating to the late 6th century. It contains the names of the signs of the zodiac, followed by the names of the corresponding Jewish months in the second panel of the western aisle (pl. III.4c; fig. XI-4).

The mosaic floor at Yaphi'a shows a similar design of a square containing two circles, a large



Figure III-1. Huseifa, remains of the zodiac panel.

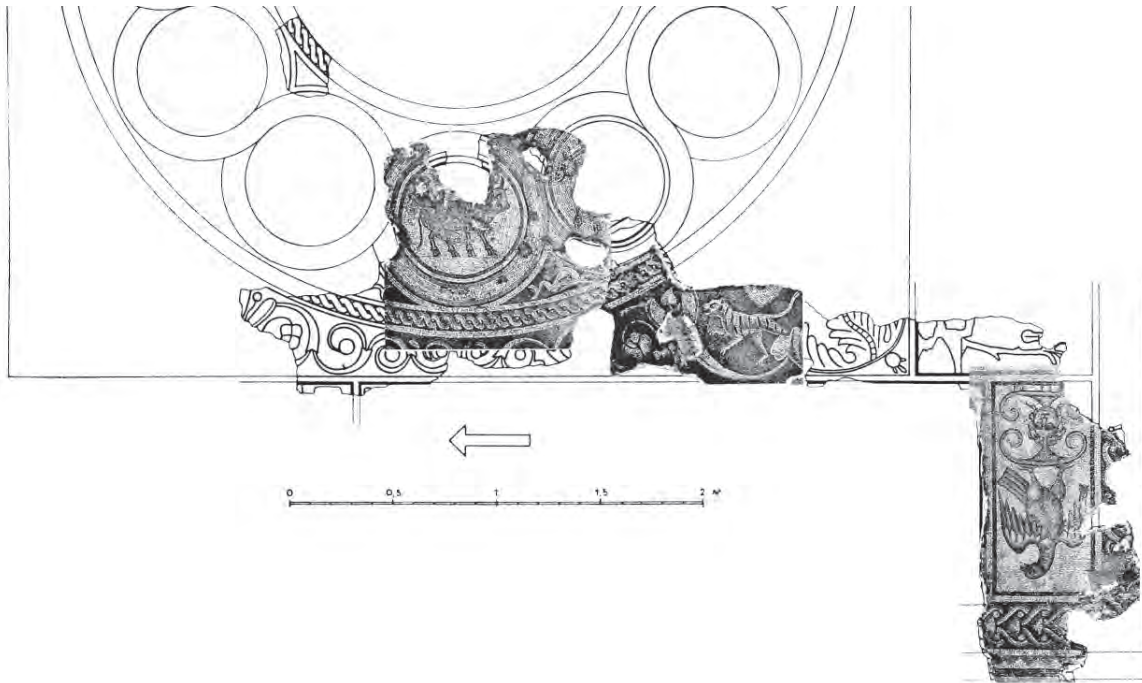


Figure III-2. Yaphi'a mosaic fragment.

one and a smaller one; between them twelve small interlacing circles are rendered (fig. III-2). The two surviving circles contain a bull and the head of a horned animal. Sukenik (1951: 18-23, followed by Foerster 1967: 218-224) claims the circles contain the symbols of the twelve tribes. Goodenough (1953, I: 217-218; 1964, VIII: 168) argues that this mosaic portrays a zodiac. However, the Yaphi'a circle design differs from the other zodiac schemes (Hachlili 1988: 295-297).¹

The recurrence of the zodiac design in a number of synagogue mosaics indicates its relevance to religious thought, and calls for analysis of its place and importance in synagogal art.

The Jewish designs evince differences in the depiction and the execution of the figures in each of the zodiacs; these underline the development of a distinctive scheme and model.

The zodiac is designed as a square frame containing two concentric circles. The innermost circle portrays the sun god Helios in a chariot. The outer, larger, circle is divided into twelve radial units, each containing one of the signs and bearing its Hebrew name. Outside the zodiac

circle, in the corners of square frame, busts of the four seasons are portrayed symbolically. These are named in Hebrew, after the month with which the season begins. At Sepphoris synagogue the zodiac panel is similar to the others in the group in form and content, but it shows some additions, changes, and innovations (Weiss & Netzer 1996: 26-29; Weiss 2005: 104). The composition of each mosaic is harmonious and balanced, each section having a significant and integral place in the design (figs. II-9-12).

By studying the representations of the various figures and parts, as well as their parallels in Roman art, we may learn their origin, how they were influenced, and the uniqueness and significance of the Jewish design.

A. Description of the Zodiac Panels

The zodiac circles at Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, and Beth 'Alpha counter-clockwise, whereas at Na'aran and Huseifa they run clockwise. The signs correspond to the seasons at Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris, while at Huseifa, Beth 'Alpha, and Na'aran they do not (pls. III.1-3a; figs. III-3,4; Table III-1). At Hammath Tiberias and Huseifa the zodiac figures are directed in-

¹ Signs of the zodiac on three arch slabs were found at Meroth (Ilan & Damati 1987: 47).

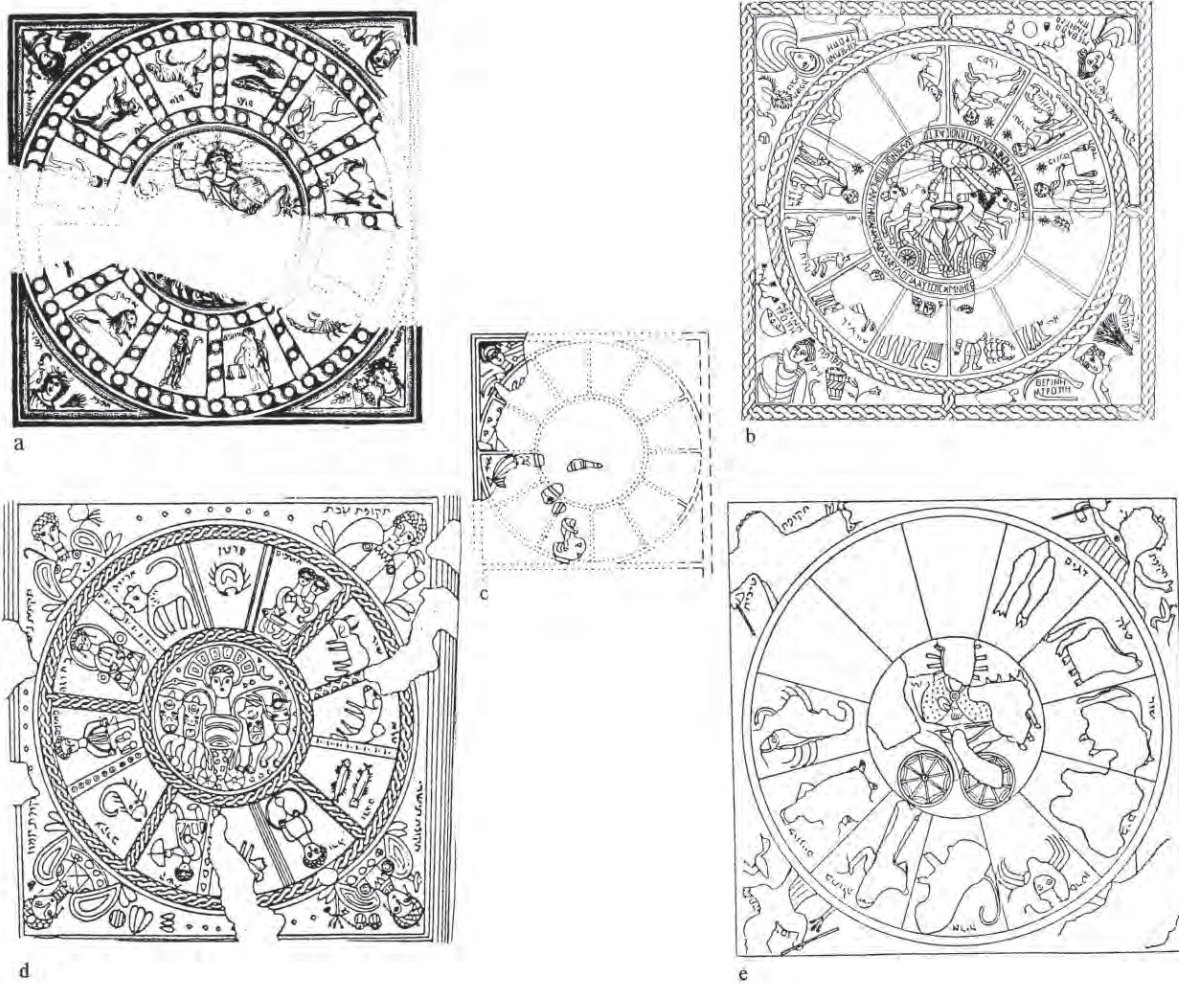


Figure III-3. Illustrations of the zodiac panel: a. Hammath Tiberias; b. Sepphoris; c. Huseifa; d. Beth 'Alpha; e. Na'aran.

wards, with their heads towards the central circle while at Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran they are directed outwards with their feet toward the central circle. The sizes of the zodiac panels differ slightly: the Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris panels are almost the same size, Huseifa has the smallest and Na'aran has the largest of all. Comparing the zodiac circles we find that at Huseifa and Na'aran simple lines frame them, and each of the signs. At Beth-Alpha the outer square is bordered by several lines, and the guilloche pattern frames the two circle and some of the signs. At Hammath Tiberias the scheme is bordered by simple lines, whereas the two circles and the signs are framed by a patterned twisted ribbon design. At Sepphoris the guilloche design borders the square and the outer circle; two black lines separate each of the twelve signs. The inner circle

is bordered by black lines framing a Greek dedicatory inscription. In comparable schemes the zodiacal signs are continuous, or separated only by simple lines, as at Na'aran (see the zodiac at Münster, pl. III.12a).

The Central (Inner) Circle: Helios, the Sun God

Each of the Jewish zodiacs has a central circular motif: an image of the sun god in frontal position (*en face*), a crown on his head and a nimbus with rays emanating from it; he is riding his *quadriga* (fig. III-5; pl. III.5). His frontal chariot has two wheels in front and is drawn by four horses, two on either side. At Sepphoris, however, the sun itself is riding the chariot.

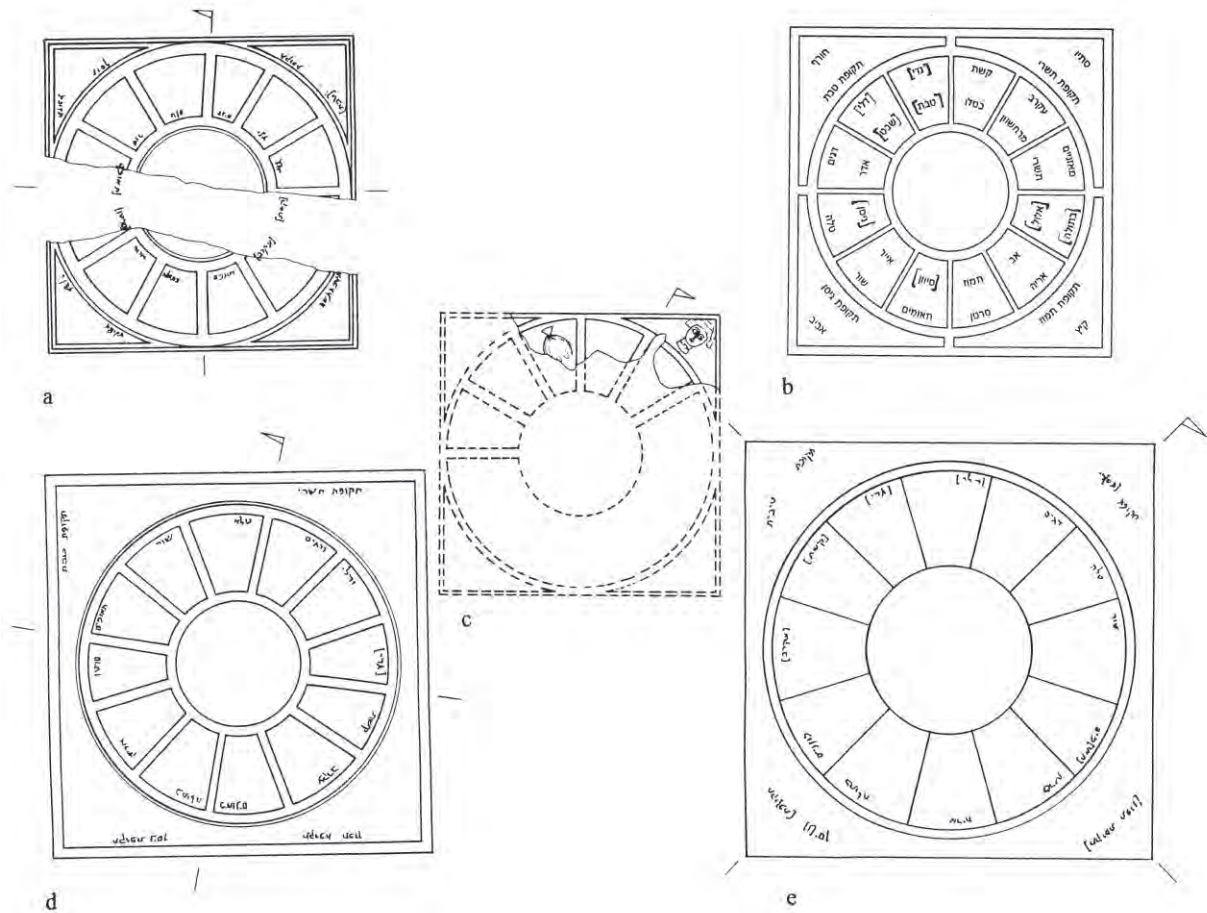


Figure III-4. Schematic illustrations of the zodiac panel: a. Hammath Tiberias; b. Sepphoris; c. Huseifa; d. Beth 'Alpha; e. Na'aran.

The representation at Hammath Tiberias shows the central figure driving the solar chariot (pl. III.5a; fig. III-5a): a young man with a crown and a halo with rays emanating from it. He looks up towards his raised right hand; in his left hand he holds a globe and whip. A star and the crescent moon are rendered in the upper background; very little remains of the chariot, only tips of hooves in the lower part have survived (Dothan 1983: 39-43). The Hammath Tiberias sun god has all the attributes of *Sol invictus* (as suggested by Dothan 1967: 132-134; 1983:41-43; see also Levine 2003: 103-108); he appears in a similar posture to the Helios depicted as *Kosmokrator* on a 1st-century CE Pompeian fresco, and on a wall mosaic of the 3rd-4th-century Tomb of the Julii (pl. III.6a) beneath the Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican, Rome (Levi 1944: 302-4, Fig. 21; Stern 1953: pls. 29: 1, 6, 31: 6, 10, 11). A similar sun god driving a *quadriga* (pl. III.12b) is depicted in

the astronomic text of Ptolemy (ms. 1291, a 9th century copy of a 3rd-4th-century original).

At Sepphoris, however, the central circle zodiac instead of the sun god riding the chariot, the sun itself is shown with ten rays of light, suspended in the centre; its central ray is attached to the chariot (Weiss & Netzer 1996: 26; Weiss 2005: 104-110). A chariot in frontal position is rendered with two wheels harnessed to four galloping horses in profile, two to the right and two to the left. Wavy blue lines are shown on the lower part between the horses' legs (pl. III.5b; fig. III-5b). The horses are presented in profile resting on their hind legs; the heads of the two horses in the middle are turned back to face the sun, while the heads of the outer horses point outwards. The depiction and posture of the Sepphoris horses is comparable to the 3rd-century mosaic from Münster-Sarnheim in Germany (pl. III.12a; Parlasca 1959: 86-7, 123, pl. 84,2).

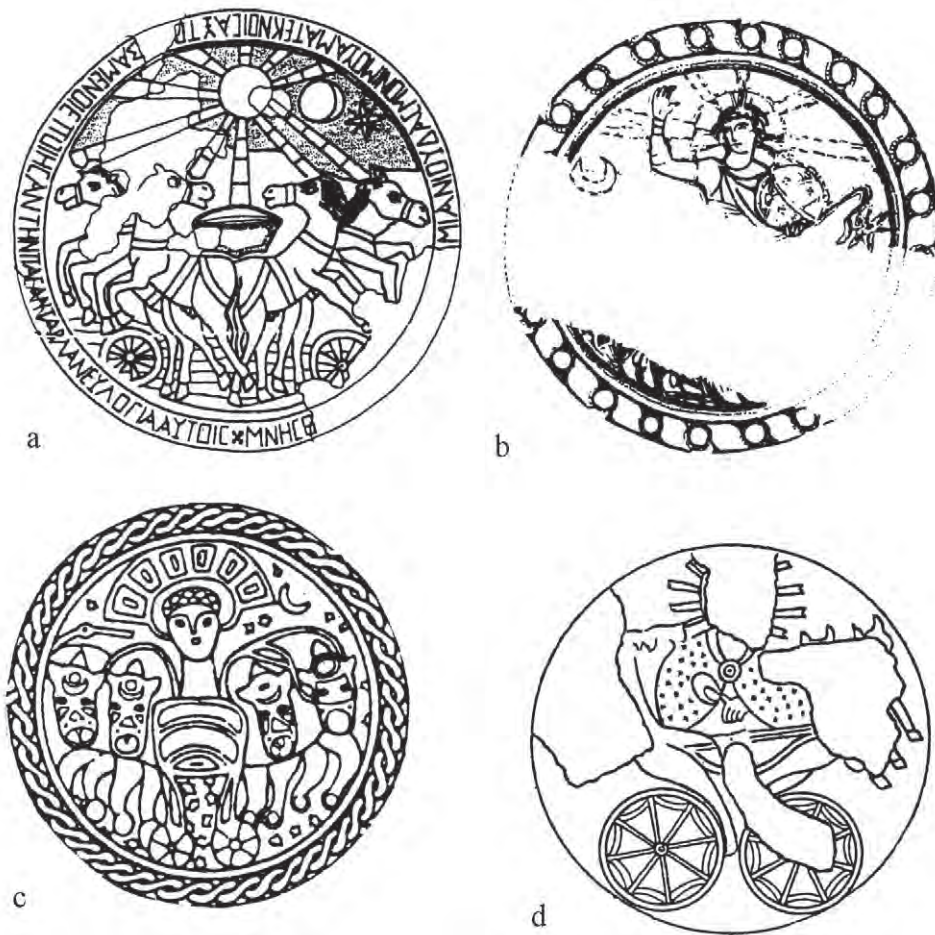


Figure III-5. The sun god schematic design: a. Hammath Tiberias; b. Sepphoris; c. Beth 'Alpha; d. Na'aran.

At Beth-'Alpha and Na'aran (pl. III. 5c-d; figs. II 5c-d) the sun god is represented only by his bust and crown with rays, the chariot by its front and unproportional two wheels, and the horses by their heads and legs. At Huseifa the inner circle did not survive.

The background of all these Jewish mosaics shows a crescent moon and one or more stars. A star to the right of the whip and the crescent moon to the left, at the tip of the ray, are rendered in the Hammath Tiberias representation. At Sepphoris, a moon and a star are shown to the right of the sun, the moon rendered as a full circle with its crescent highlighted. At Beth 'Alpha the background is dark, a crescent moon is rendered in the right corner, and the stars are dispersed around. At Na'aran, the celestial bodies are on the figure's cape, with the crescent moon near his thumb. This schema is used for similar

figures in Roman art and is often connected to solar iconography (Dunbabin 1982: 84-85). None of the many extant parallels for these representations of the sun god (Levi 1944: fig. 21; Stern 1953: pls. 29: 1, 6, 31: 6, 10, 11; Dothan 1966-67: 131-132) includes the background of the crescent moon and stars as depicted in the Jewish design.²

Thus, the earliest depiction of the Hammath Tiberias sun god in Jewish zodiacs is similar to renditions in Roman art. But it eventually develops into a stylized design, which is more abstract and restrained. The depiction of the Hammath Tiberias sun god is natural and full-featured, like

² Foerster (1985: 388, n.100) records only examples on two gems and a copper tablet, but not on mosaic pavements.

a picture placed in the centre of a frame with specific details related to Sol Invictus. The sun god of Beth 'Alpha, however, is integrated totally and is harmonious with the rest of the design. The Sepphoris inner circle is unique in the rendition of the sun instead of the sun god.

The Outer Circle: the Signs of the Zodiac

The outer circle is apportioned into twelve radial units, one for every zodiac sign, each of which matches precisely one of the twelve months of the Jewish year. Each sign is followed by its name in Hebrew; at Sepphoris alone the Hebrew name of the month is added.

Aries is the first sign, being the first month of spring. The signs (representing months) correspond to the seasons at Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris but not at Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran.

The zodiac signs show a wide range of styles from synagogue to synagogue. In all the zodiacs the animals are drawn in profile, facing forwards (figs. III-3,4; Table III-1). At Hammath Tiberias, Huseifa and Sepphoris the zodiac figures are directed inwards, their heads towards the central circle. At Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran the signs are directed outwards, with their feet towards the central circle. In every synagogue zodiac, all the human figures for the signs and seasons have the same features of face and body and similar hairstyles. The figures of the upper half face the viewer, but in the lower half they are sometimes inverted. All the human and animal figures of the Hammath Tiberias floor are in motion; the male figures are similar in their features and are naked; at Beth 'Alpha, Sepphoris, and Na'aran, on the other hand, they are clothed and standing. At Huseifa, the remains of the figure of Sagittarius show that he too was apparently naked (Avi-Yonah 1934: 125).

At Sepphoris the zodiac signs (of which only four are well preserved) are each accompanied by a star at the top and by figures of draped, or almost naked, young men, all barefoot except one; all have the same facial features and hairstyle. Some of these are part of the sign and show an active posture: for instance, the sign of Libra shows the youth carrying a pair of scales; in that of Pisces the youth holds two fish on a hook. The other youths are depicted simply standing next to the sign, such as Cancer and Scorpio, or in

front of the animal signs of Taurus, Aries, and Leo (pls. III.7-10).³ At Huseifa only fragments of five signs were found and no inscriptions, and at Na'aran little survived as most of the signs had been damaged by iconoclasts.

Aries (lamb, *Tale*) (pl. III.7a; fig. III-6). At Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris the lamb is shown in profile running while at Sepphoris the sign shows the lamb and the remains of a youth standing in front of the animal. At Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran the ram is standing. The last letter of the sign's Hebrew name at Beth 'Alpha is *aleph* instead of *he*. Two hind legs of the lamb have remained at Huseifa.

Taurus (Bull, *Shor*) (pl. III.7b; fig. III-6). At Hammath Tiberias the bull in profile is rendered running left; at Sepphoris only the forelegs of the destroyed running bull survived, and the remains of a youth holding a staff appears standing in front. At Beth 'Alpha the bull is shown in profile standing.

Gemini (Twins, *Te'omim*) (pl. III.7c; fig. III-6). At Hammath Tiberias only one naked youth remains intact, whereas at Sepphoris, the remains of two naked youths are shown, one on the right holding a lyre and the other on the left holding a club; this is quite similar to the posture of the two embracing youths depicted at Beth 'Alpha. At Huseifa and Na'aran the sign is destroyed.

Cancer (Crab, *Sartan*) (pl. III.8a; fig. III-7). At Hammath Tiberias only the end of the crab's claws have survived, whereas at Sepphoris the crab turns to the right, accompanied by a youth dressed in a tunic and black shoes. At Beth 'Alpha

³ An interesting comparison can be seen in 2nd-3rd-century mosaic floor at Hellin (Spain, Albacete province). The mosaic composition consists of geometric patterns of octagons, circles and ellipses (Stern 1981: 442, Table 1, Pls. X, XI, 26-27; Gundel 1992: No. 212). Each of twelve octagons contains a winged allegorical personification of the month holding or resembling a zodiac sign, accompanied by the appropriate figure of the god and the name of the month. Some of the months in the octagons have been destroyed; the remaining ones are April, represented by Venus assisting Taurus; May, with Mercury holding the Gemini twins; September, with a figure holding scales and being assisted by Vulcan; October, with a figure holding a scorpion accompanied by Mars; November, with Sagittarius and Isis.

	Hammath-Tiberias	Sepphoris	Huseifa	Beth-'Alpha	Na'aran
Aries Ram טלה ♈					
Taurus Bull שור ♉					
Gemini Twins תאומים ♊					

Figure III-6. Illustrated table of three zodiac signs—Arias, Taurus, and Gemini—on mosaic pavements at Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Huseifa, Beth 'Alpha, and Na'aran.

	Hammath-Tiberias	Sepphoris	Huseifa	Beth-Alpha	Na'aran
Cancer Cancer סרטן ♋					
Leo Lion אריה ♌					
Virgo Virgin בתולה ♍					

Figure III-7. Illustrated table of three zodiac signs—Cancer, Leo, and Virgo—on mosaic pavements at Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha, and Na'aran.

and Na'aran the crab is shown frontally as if walking forward, a posture that some scholars consider important (Sonne 1953-4: 10). At Huseifa the sign is destroyed.

Leo (Lion, 'Arye) (pl. III.8b; fig. III-7). Leo is leaping forward at Hammath Tiberias, similarly to his representation in Calendar 354 (Stern 1953: pl. 7.2; Hachlili 1977: fig. 14) and at Tivoli (Lehman 1945: fig. 10); at Beth 'Alpha he is walking and at Na'aran sitting. In all these examples the lion's tail is turned up; only at Sepphoris, from the little that has survived, does the tail appear to be down. A youth stands next to it. At Huseifa and Na'aran the sign is destroyed.

Virgo (Virgin, *Bethulah*) (pl. III.8c; fig. III-7). In the Hammath Tiberias mosaic Virgo is shown robed in a Greek *kore* with a covered head and holding a torch. At Sepphoris only two ears of wheat and part of a star have survived. In Beth 'Alpha the figure of Virgo is unique, shown wearing red shoes and seated on a throne indicating royal rank (Sukenic 1932: 37). At Na'aran Virgo stands holding a plant. At Huseifa and Na'aran the sign is destroyed.

Libra (Scales, *Moznayim*) (pl. III.9a; fig. III-8). In all the synagogue mosaics, the sign of Libra is shown as a human figure holding a pair of scales. At Hammath Tiberias the naked figure is represented with the addition of a sceptre (pl.), while at Sepphoris the youth wears a cloak. In the Beth 'Alpha mosaic Libra holds the scales very awkwardly, standing on one leg; the artist omitted the second leg to allow enough room for the scales. From the remains of Libra at Na'aran the figure seems to be standing holding the scales in his right hand. At Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, and Na'aran the Hebrew name of the sign, מוֹזְנַיִם *Moznayim*, is inscribed with a *vav* instead of an *aleph*—מֵאֲזַנַּיִם as at Beth 'Alpha. At Huseifa and Na'aran the sign is destroyed.

In examples of Roman art, as in the Palmyra stone ceiling, Libra stands between the claws of the Scorpion (fig. III-11). The representation of Libra as a figure holding scales is also found in Manuscript gr. 1291 (pl. III.12b) in Calendar 354 (Stern 1953: pls. 7: 37; 5; Hachlili 1977: fig. 14) and on a 3rd-century coin (Sternberg 1972: pl. 4: 2a). In early Roman art, however, Libra is depicted only

as the scales, without a human figure: at Dendera (Lehman 1945: fig. 7), at Tivoli, on the Bir-Chana mosaic floor (fig. III-13; Lehman 1945: figs. 7, 10), and on a Roman tombstone (Cumont 1919: fig. 7598). This representation continues into the Middle Ages in manuscripts (Webster 1938: pls. 12: 26 and 13: 27).

Scorpio (Scorpion, 'Aqrab) (pl. III.9b; fig. III-8). At Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris Scorpio is moving forwards to the right, with the addition of a cloak-wrapped youth walking behind. At Beth 'Alpha, the Scorpion is moving to the left, its tail almost touching its body, as in Calendar 354 (Stern 1953: pl. 7.2; Hachlili 1977: fig. 14). The Na'aran scorpion is depicted frontally, standing on its tail. At Huseifa the sign is destroyed.

Sagittarius (Archer, *Qashat*) (pl. III.9; fig. III-8). Pagan representations of Sagittarius usually show a centaur, a half human-half animal figure, shooting with an arrow from a bow. Such is his depiction at Sepphoris, as a leaping centaur archer. At Huseifa, the surviving figure of the archer is portrayed naked, 'turning right and shooting with his right arm raised' (Avi-Yonah 1934: 125). A similar depiction of a naked archer appears on the zodiac of the 2nd-century altar from Gabii (Gundel 1992: No.27, Figs.33, 49). At Beth 'Alpha the archer is shown in human form, holding a bow and arrow in his left hand. The Jewish communities at the two sites of Beth 'Alpha and Huseifa might have been reluctant to depict Sagittarius in its pagan form of a centaur, and preferred a human archer, which would have been adequate to symbolize the Hebrew name of Sagittarius קָשָׁת *Qashat*, archer; or the artist might have made the sign as a human archer because he took the meaning of *qashat* literally.

The portrayal of Sagittarius as a centaur, shooting with a bow and arrow, can be traced to the Babylonian representation. This depiction is found at Dendera (Hachlili 1977: fig. 15) and in Roman reliefs. These are mostly of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, at Aion (Goldman 1966: 22b), Atlas supported by Jupiter (Glueck 1965: pl. 40: a), and also in a tombstone relief (Cumont 1919: fig. 7598). There are also Mithra reliefs with zodiac belts portraying the archer as a centaur, as in the relief at Dura Europos (Goldman 1966: pl. 20a). The archer-as-a-centaur motif is















	Hammath-Tiberias	Sepphoris	Huseifa	Beth-Alpha	Na'aran
Libra Scales מאזניים 					
Scorpio Scorpion עקרב 					
Sagittarius Archer קשת 					

Figure III-8. Illustrated table of three zodiac signs—Libra, Scorpio and Sagittarius—on the mosaic pavements at Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Huseifa, Beth 'Alpha, and Na'aran.

also to be found on Roman ceilings, such as the Palmyra ceiling (fig. III-11), in mosaic floors, as at Tivoli (Lehman 1945: fig. 10), and also in manuscript 1291 (pl. III.12b). In some cases the figure is winged, as in the Bir-Chana mosaic floor (fig. III-13). At times he wears a cape, as in the Athens relief (Webster 1938: pl. 1) and Calendar 354 (Stern 1953: pl. 12: 2, p. 198). The depiction of Sagittarius as a centaur continues into the Middle Ages in the zodiacs of various manuscripts and in other art forms (Webster 1938: pls. 12: 26 and 13: 27).

Capricorn (Goat, *Gedi*) (pl. III.10a; fig III-9): Capricorn is depicted as a horned goat with a fish's tail, on the Hammath Tiberias mosaic, which is the common pagan form in Roman art, such as the ceiling at Dendera (Lehman 1945: fig. 7) and the relief from Hagios Eleutherios (Webster 1938: 117-119, pl. 1). Other examples are found in Calendar 354 (Hachlili 1977: fig. 14) and the Bir-Chana mosaic floor (fig. III-13) (Gundel 1992: 33,47,53,54, 73). At Sepphoris a kneeling youth,

holding a kid's hindquarters has survived, while only the raised horns of Capricorn remain in the Huseifa mosaic. At Beth 'Alpha, where the sign is partially destroyed, a kid is depicted.

Aquarius (Water-bearer, *Delì*) (pl. III.10b, fig. III-9). The sign is depicted differently in each of the zodiac mosaics. At Hammath Tiberias a naked figure pours water from an amphora, following most of the common depictions of Aquarius in Roman art, such as those of Palmyra (fig. III-11), Calendar 354 (Stern 1953: 199, pl. 37: 3, 5-7), and Manuscript 1291 (pl. III.12b), where Aquarius is represented as a Phrygian figure. The latter representation of Aquarius extends into manuscripts of the Middle Ages (Webster 1938: pls. 12: 26 and 13: 27). At Sepphoris only flowing water at the lower edge has survived. The Huseifa *Aquarius*—better preserved than the other signs—is represented by a large amphora with water pouring out of it. Very few examples of this representation of Aquarius exist. The Beth 'Alpha sign is unique in that Aquarius is shown as a figure

	Hammath-Tiberias	Sepphoris	Huseifa	Beth-Alpha	Na'aran
Capricorn Goat גדי ♄					
Aquarius Water-Bearer דלי ☎					
Pisces Fish דגים ♛					

Figure III-9 Illustrated table of the zodiac signs—Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces—on the mosaic pavements at Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Huseifa, Beth 'Alpha, and Na'aran.

drawing water from a well with a bucket, which is the illustration of the Hebrew word *דלי* *deli*. Comparable depictions in which a bucket is lowered from a well occur on 13th- and 14th-century Jewish *mahzôrîm* from Germany and on a 17th-century illuminated Jewish *Sefer Evronot* (Fishof 2001: 139, fig. 19, figs. on pp. 134, 138). This is a literal depiction of *דלי* *deli* (Aquarius) as a container of water and its carrier, like the amphora and water at Huseifa and the drawing of water at Beth 'Alpha. At Hammath Tiberias Aquarius is represented similarly to the depictions generally found in Roman art. Here the Hebrew word *דלי* *deli* is depicted in mirror writing, which might have had some magical effect, adding strength to the text (Naveh 1989: 303).

Pisces (Fish, *Dagim*) (Fig III-9; pl. III.10). At Hammath Tiberias and Beth 'Alpha the sign is rendered similarly as a couple of fish shown head to tail. At Sepphoris a cloaked youth holds two suspended fish, while at Na'aran only a similar pair of suspended fish appears; at Sepphoris the Hebrew sign name is misspelled, *דגגים* *Dgagim*

instead of *דגים* *Dagim*. A fragment of a triangular tail and a small fin are all that have survived from the Huseifa sign.

The Four Seasons

The third part of the zodiac scheme, the four seasons, is placed diagonally in the four spandrels of the outer square. Each season is represented by a bust of a woman wearing jewellery, and is equipped with attributes and objects representing the activities of the season; with the exception of the example at Huseifa, all are accompanied by the month's Hebrew name, which stands for the appropriate season (Fig III-12; pl. III.11). At Beth 'Alpha the figures are winged (Suknik 1932: 39; Goodenough 1953, I: 249; Hachlili 1977: 70-71; 2002: 225-226; Dothan 1983: 43-45; Weiss & Netzer 1996: 27-28; Weiss 2005: 123-139). At Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris the heads of the busts, in the corners of the square, turn towards the central circle, whereas at Beth 'Alpha, Huseifa, and Na'aran the busts are reversed, facing outwards. At Hammath Tiberias and Beth 'Alpha

the bust of the season *Nisan* (Spring) is placed in the upper left corner, with *Tammuz* (Summer) and *Tevet* (Winter) following counter-clockwise. At Sepphoris and Na'aran *Nisan* (Spring) is in the lower left corner, with the other seasons following counter-clockwise. At Huseifa the only preserved representation of the seasons is *Tishri* (Autumn) and it is located in the upper left corner (Avi-Yonah 1934: 126-27).

The postures of the Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris figures, with their left-turned faces, and the seasonal attributes, are quite similar. The Sepphoris seasons are attired in sleeveless dress, except for *Tevet* (Winter), which is draped in a dress that also covers her head. The Beth 'Alpha seasons are winged figures depicted frontally, with richly coloured jewellery and ornamentations.

As noted, except at Huseifa the seasons are accompanied by the Hebrew name of the first month, which stands for the appropriate season (*Tekufah* in Hebrew): *Tekufat Nisan* = Spring, *Tekufat Tammuz* = Summer, *Tekufat Tishri* = Autumn, *Tekufat Tevet* = Winter (pl. III.11; fig. III-10). The names of the seasons are inscribed in each synagogue in the same fashion and are located in the same place, usually beside or on either side of the head of the season; only at Beth 'Alpha are the names inscribed next to the left wing of the season, with one exception, *Tammuz*, which is inscribed next to the right wing. At Sepphoris each season is also accompanied by the name of the season inscribed in Greek (as in other mosaics: see Antioch—fig. III-14).

The four seasons' representations in each zodiac are similar in appearance; the faces' features, eyes, and some of their jewellery and dress are alike. Only their divergent attributes identify them.

The Hammath Tiberias four seasons' faces are very much alike; they have oval-shaped heads, large open eyes gazing towards the upper right. All have their heads crowned by wreaths, with different plants characterizing each of the seasons (pl. III.11). All the seasons wear a sleeveless tunic, fastened at the shoulders by a clasp; all are adorned by a necklace, earrings, and bracelets; they hold in their right hand an object appropriate to each, and another object is placed at their left. The exception is the partly damaged season of *Tevet* (winter), which wears a mantle (*pal-lium*), also draped over the head, and is adorned with earrings.

The Sepphoris the four seasons are depicted

in the same manner. The heads turn left; Spring and Autumn have the same hairstyle, with the hair combed to the sides and clasped at the top with a clip, and they are adorned with a small earring (pl. III.11). Summer, albeit with the same facial features, wears a round hat with a button on the top. The *Tevet* season (Winter) is different here too, wearing a cloak that covers her head, as at Hammath Tiberias. All the seasons have their attributes portrayed alongside their heads; they hold no object in their hands, although the assemblage of attributes at Sepphoris is richer than in the other mosaics.

The four Beth 'Alpha seasons are all rendered *en face* in the same style, as winged stylized and schematic female busts, richly jewelled with necklaces and earrings (pl. III.11); they are depicted in frontal view, their features and hairstyles are identical; only the accompanying attributes rendered around them identify them.

The four Na'aran seasons (pl. III.11) are badly damaged, but even in what is left they show similarity in their general shape and dress; the figures are associated with the appropriate symbol, they all seem to hold a wand in their right hand, and an inverted bird appears at their left.

The following descriptions of the seasons emphasize the similarities and differences in the separate mosaic figures and their attributes (see comparable seasons and discussion in Chapter VIII, pp. 184-191):

Spring (Nisan) (pl. III.11; fig. III-10). The figures at Hammath Tiberias and Beth 'Alpha are adorned with necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. The Hammath Tiberias figure is crowned with a wreath of two large flowers and holds a bowl of fruit in her right hand with a rose placed next to heron the left. The *Nisan* figure at Sepphoris has wavy hair gathered with a clip, a wreath beneath the hair, an earring in her left ear, and wears a sleeveless tunic; a bowl with flowers and a rose branch are on the left (quite similar to Hammath Tiberias), a sickle, a flower basket and lilies are on the right. The Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran Springs show similar attributes: the Beth 'Alpha winged figure has a shepherd's crook (*pedum*) and a bird. At Na'aran the figure holds a shepherd's crook, with a sheaf of corn and an upside-down bird placed on either side of the image.

In the Jewish mosaic design, the symbol of Spring is the plate of fruit or the shepherd's crook. The plate of fruit as depicted at Hammath








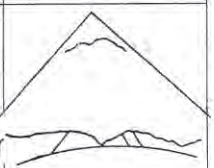




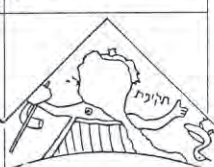




	Hammath-Tiberias	Sepphoris	Huseifa	Beth-Alpha	Na'aran
Spring <i>Nisan</i> תקופת ניסן					
Summer <i>Tammuz</i> תקופת תמוז					
Autumn <i>Tishri</i> תקופת תשרי					
Winter <i>Tevet</i> תקופת טבת					

Figure III-10. Illustrated table of the seasons on the mosaic pavements at Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Huseifa, Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran.

Tiberias and Sepphoris also symbolizes Spring on the 4th-century Daphne (Antioch) mosaic floor (Hanfmann 1951: II, 64, n. 23), on the 5th-century mosaic floor at El Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin, (pl. VIII.2b) (II period; Avi-Yonah 1933: 146, no. 23, pl. 2), on mosaic II of the 6th-century Petra church (pl. VIII.2c) (Waliszewski 2001: 251-252), and on the mosaic floor of the 6th-century church at Qabr Hiram (fig. VIII-9). The Hammath Tiberias spring is similar in jewellery, wreath and dress to the winged Spring with a basket and roses rendered on a 5th-century dining hall pavement at Caesarea (Holum et al. 1988: 171, fig. 122; Spiro 1992: 250, 254, 257, figs. 12,13) and the head crowned with a wreath of flowers is similar to spring head on mosaic II of the Petra Church (pl. VIII.2c) (Waliszewski 2001: 251). The shepherd's crook, which is the Spring attribute at Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran, appears on the 3rd-century mosaic floor at Ostia (Hanfmann 1951: II, 114, n. 151), on the 3rd-century mosaic floor at Zliten, North Africa, and on the mosaic floor of the 5th-century Deir es-Sleib church (figs. VIII-7,8) (Hanfmann 1951: II, 121, n. 192; Donceel-Voûte 1988: fig. 35).

Summer (Tammuz) (pl. III.11; fig. III-10). The representation of Summer in the mosaic of Hammath Tiberias is a jewelled female bust crowned with olive branches, holding a sickle in her right hand; a sheaf of corn is at her left. The upright finger of her right hand has a parallel rendition in the personification of Ge on the El Maqerqesh mosaic at Beth Guvrin (pl. VIII.2b). The Sepphoris figure wears a cap over her wavy hair, and she is dressed in a tunic which leaves her right breast bare; a sheaf of corn and some fruits are on the right, a sickle and another tool on the left, similar to Sepphoris. The almost complete figure of Summer on the church mosaic from Petra (B8) has comparable features: her right breast is bare, she wears a similar hat, and she holds the same objects, a sickle and a sheaf of wheat (pl. VIII.2c) (Waliszewski 2001: 255-256,319). The Beth 'Alpha figure is a jewelled female bust, with fruits and field produce before and beside her. The Na'aran figure is completely destroyed. The Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris Summers are illustrated with the same objects while the Beth 'Alpha figure displays different attributes.

The Summer attributes, the sickle and sheaf of wheat, at Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris are comparable to those on the mosaic at El Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin (pl. VIII.2b) (Vincent 1922: pl. 10: 1) and at Daphne (Hanfmann 1951, II: 100). By contrast, the Summer attribute at Beth 'Alpha is fruit. Summer (B14) on mosaic II at the Petra church is the bust of woman exposing the right breast and shoulder, holding a sickle in her right hand, a bunch of twigs, and sheaf of wheat. There is an identifying inscription in Greek (pl. VIII.2c) (Waliszewski 2001: 255-6, 320).

Autumn (Tishri) (pl. III.11; fig. III-10). The Hammath Tiberias mosaic portrays a jewelled figure holding a cluster of grapes and crowned with pomegranates and an olive branch. The figure at Sepphoris is similar to *Nisan* in her dress and wavy hair gathered with a clip, and an earring on her left ear; two pomegranates, a fig, and a round fruit are beside the figure on the right, only a vine branch has survived on the left. The representation of Autumn at Huseifa is the only season left. She wears a necklace and a crown and is accompanied by pomegranates, ears of corn, and a sickle (perhaps a shofar) or palm leaf on the left and a long object on the right. Avi-Yonah (1934: 126) suggested that this 'was meant for a shade(?) or wings(?)', and Weiss (2005: 137) supposes it is a plowshare similar to the one depicted beside Winter at Sepphoris. At Beth 'Alpha the bust is jewelled and crowned, surrounded by pomegranates, figs, apples, a cluster of grapes, a palm tree, and a bird. The Na'aran figure with her face damaged holds a crook and shofar in her right hand and has a bird at her side. The pomegranate recurs in all personifications of Autumn except that at Na'aran.

The same attributes of pomegranates and a cluster of grapes carried by the figure in her shawl are found together with Autumn at El Maqerqash, Beth Guvrin, though inscribed Ge (Earth) (pl. VIII.2b), at Daphne (Antioch), and on mosaic II at the Petra church (pl. VIII.2c) (Waliszewski 2001: 257, 321).

Winter (Teveth) (pl. III.11; fig. III-10). The figure of Winter at Hammath Tiberias is draped, with a scarf over her head, and she has an amphora with water flowing from it at her left. At Sepphoris the fully draped figure has a double-bladed axe on the left, and a sickle, a tree with a fallen branch, and a ploughshare on the right. The jewelled figure at Beth 'Alpha is accompanied only by a branch with two leaves and a cylindrical object;

her wings are much darker than those of the other seasons. The Na'aran figure is almost completely destroyed. She holds a wand in her right hand and an upside-down bird is to her left.

The Winters at Hammath Tiberias and at Sepphoris are similar to the winged bust on the mosaic of the church at Qabr Hiram (fig. VIII-8). In the margin of the mosaic at El Maqerqesh Beth Guvrin, Winter is wrapped in a scarf and holds two ducklings (pl. VIII.2b); likewise on the 5th-century church mosaic at Deir es-Sleib (fig. VIII-7). The mosaics at Zliten (figs. VIII-6) and Ostia (Hanfmann 1951, II: 114) have similar draped figures, but without the amphora. The winged Winter at Caesarea is different: she wears a crown of reeds, has earrings, and holds a stalk (pl. VIII.2a). Several of the seasons' attributes have comparable objects in the rendering of Labours of the Months at the Villa of the Falconer, Argos (Åkerström -Hougen 1974: Ills. 6,9-11, Tabs.II-IV), and in the 6th-century Beth She'an Monastery, Room L (pl. VIII.9).

The symbols and representations of the figures of the seasons in the Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris zodiacs are similar to those on Roman and Byzantine floors, as seen above, whereas the seasons on the mosaic floors at Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran have unique attributes and representations, underlining a distinctive Jewish style.

The general form and content of the Sepphoris zodiac is similar to the other synagogue zodiacs, yet some featural variations and different iconographic details at Sepphoris are noteworthy (pl. III.2):

- The Sepphoris zodiac is located rather differently in the composition from the zodiacs in the other synagogues, where they are in the central panel of a three-panel mosaic carpet. The long narrow hall of the Sepphoris synagogue is paved with a mosaic carpet divided into seven horizontal bands. The centre of the mosaic, the broadest fifth band, depicts the zodiac (Weiss & Netzer 1996: 14; Weiss 2005: 104).
- The central zodiac circle at Sepphoris (Fig. III-5; pl. III.5), like those elsewhere, renders a chariot with two wheels harnessed to four horses, with a moon and a star shown on the right of the sun. However, instead of the sun god riding the chariot, the sun is shown suspended in the centre; ten rays radiate light, the central one being joined to the chariot (Weiss & Netzer 1996: 26; Weiss 2005: 104-110).

- The zodiac signs are accompanied by figures of draped or almost naked young men, all barefoot except one; they appear uniform. Some of these—Aquarius, Libra, Sagittarius and Pisces—are an integral part of the sign and are rendered in an active posture, holding the same objects as in other synagogue zodiacs. The other youths are depicted simply in front of signs Aries, Taurus, and Leo or standing next to signs Cancer and Scorpio. Weiss (2005: 122) maintains that the youths personify the months in addition to being part of the zodiac sign.
- A star accompanies each zodiac sign on the right or left at the top (Weiss [2005: 122] contends that the stars serve as an astral symbol). A similar appearance of a star rendered next to each of the four surviving zodiac signs is noted in the 1st-century CE stone ceiling relief from Palmyra (fig. III-12; Gundel 1992: no. 45).
- Each sign is accompanied by its Hebrew name, with the addition of the appropriate name of the month in Hebrew.
- The names of the zodiac signs are more randomly located, below or beside the figure and not above as in the other pavements.
- The names of the four seasons appear in Greek as well as Hebrew. The seasons, named *tropai*, are similar to the seasons' names in the mosaic of the 'Calendar House' at Antioch.

A distinctive development of a Jewish design is discernible in these zodiac panel mosaics, although there are differences in the depiction and execution of the figures at each synagogue. The exceptional and unmistakable conception of the figures in the three parts of the design, the sun god (or sun) in the central circle, the zodiac signs in the outer circle, and the seasons in the square corners—all point to their meaning and significance for the Jewish worshippers.

The basic form of the Jewish zodiac design and its preceding Roman art examples is the same: a square with two concentric circles within the square; this was termed an 'abstract' type by Hanfmann (1951: 246-247), and it 'expresses the annual course of the sun by placing a circle of zodiacal signs or the months (or both) around

the central figure of the sun and distributing the seasons in the four corners of the panel'.

The zodiac forms on the synagogue mosaics are alike and were probably based on a common prototype. The signs and seasons did not follow the same model; they have little in common except for the obvious meaning of each sign or season.

There is a development in stylistic execution of the Jewish calendar from the naturalistic ideal style of the earliest synagogue (Hammath Tiberias) to the reserved-stylization at Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran during the period of the 4th to the 6th centuries (Hachlili 1977: 74,76). Outstanding stylistically is the Beth 'Alpha calendar which defies placement in any artistic category of this period (Shapiro 1960: 9-13; Kitinger 1965: 22).

Two changes mark the transition in Jewish calendar design. The first is from the natural-voluminous to the ornamental-linear style. The second is from the imitation of nature to stylistic description with emphasis on the outline of the design. At Hammath Tiberias (pl. III.1), the Hellenistic influence is clear; the figures and their movements are natural and the faces are full featured and expressive. A three-dimensional appearance is created through the artist's use of shadowing. In the linear style, at Beth 'Alpha, the figures are *en face* and two-dimensional; their limbs have a doll-like appearance (pl. III.3). The legs are directed to the side, not oriented frontally with the upper trunk of the body. There is no indication of age or sex, women differ from men by wearing jewelry, and color is used only to emphasize the different parts of the body. The artist used only the essential lines to portray the figures; the human face is expressed by one continuous line outlining the eyebrows and nose, a square for the mouth, and simple circles for the eyes. Generally, the style is standardized disproportionate, and lacking in anatomical concern.

The stylistic feature of the zodiac mosaics is their frontality, part of the Roman and Byzantine heritage. The human figures are portrayed with no individuality; at Hammath Tiberias the figures are shown in movement and the two surviving males are portrayed nude. At Huseifa the remains indicate that the figure of Sagittarius (*Qashat*) also was naked (Avi-Yonah 1934: 125). At Sepphoris the figures are in action and are draped, although some are almost naked. The figures at Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran, are shown as static portraits and are fully clothed. In all the zodiacs the animals are depicted in profile, facing forwards. Hebrew names are rendered above the zodiac signs, except

Table III-1. Comparative chart of the zodiac panels in the synagogues.

<i>Mosaics</i>	<i>Zodiac parts</i>	<i>Hammath Tiberias</i>	<i>Sepphoris</i>	<i>Huseifa</i>	<i>Beth 'Alpha Na'aran</i>
<i>Date</i>		<i>4th cent.</i>	<i>5th-6th.</i>	<i>Late 5th</i>	<i>6th cent</i> <i>6th cent</i>
Inner circle	Sun god in chariot	-x			x -x
	Sun in chariot		x		
Signs of the Zodiac outer circle	<i>Aries</i> , Ram	x	-x	x	x -x
	<i>Taurus</i> , Bull	x	-x		x -x
	<i>Gemini</i> , Twins	-x	-x		x -x
	Cancer		x		x -x
	<i>Leo</i> , lion	x			x -x
	<i>Virgo</i> , Virgin	x			x -x
	<i>Libra</i> , Scales	x	x		x -x
	<i>Scorpion</i>	-x	x		x -x
	<i>Sagittarius</i> , Archer		x	-x	x
	<i>Capricorn</i> , Goat	x		-x	-x
	<i>Aquarius</i> , Water-Bearer	x	-x	-x	x
	<i>Pisces</i> , Fish	x	x	-x	x -x
	Youth		x		
	Star		x		
	Name of sign, Hebrew	x	x		x x
Name of Month, Hebrew			x		
The seasons	Spring, <i>Nisan</i>	x	x		x -x
	Summer, <i>Tammuz</i>	x	x		x
	Autumn, <i>Tishri</i>	x	x	x	x -x
	Winter, <i>Tevet</i>	-x	x		x -x
	Name of seasons, Hebrew	x	x		x x
	Name of seasons, Greek		x		
Zodiac clockwise				x	x
Counter-clockwise	x	x		x	
Figures outwards				x	x
Figures inwards	x	x	x		
Seasons and signs correspond	x	x			
Seasons and signs do not correspond				x	x x

x = entirely preserved; -x = partly preserved

at Sepphoris where the names appear below the sign or beside it, with the addition of the name of the month. At Huseifa no names appeared.

The Jewish designs evince differences in the depiction and in execution of the figures in each part, which underlines the development of a distinctive design (pls. III.1-11; figs. III-1-10; Table III-1). The representations of the various figures and parts as well as their parallels in Roman art clarify their origin and inspiration, and the uniqueness and significance of the Jewish design. Each synagogue employed its own artists in mosaics, who utilized the same general form of the

zodiac and filled in the details according to their particular style.

B. Iconographic Sources and Comparisons

Comparable zodiac designs, consisting of two concentric circles within a square, exist mainly on ceilings and mosaic floors of villas in Roman art; each has a unique design in terms of form, content, and harmony (Table III-2). However, the form is not always two concentric circles within a square. There are circular forms in an astronomical text

of Ptolemy in the manuscript of the Vatican Library, gr. 1291 (pl. III-12b), which probably originated around 250 C.E. (Webster 1938: pl. 9; Levi 1941: 290) and on the 6th-century mosaic floor of Hall A at the Monastery of the Lady Mary at Beth-She'an (pl. VIII.4; Fitzgerald 1939: 7, pls. 6-8). Often different figures are to be found in the various parts of the design. The contents of the central circle differ frequently, as in the 1st-century CE ceiling decoration of the southern adytum of the Temple of Bel at Palmyra (fig. III-11; Seyrig 1933: 258-66, fig. 5; Lehman 1945: 3, fig. 3), a 4th-century mosaic from Carthage (Webster 1938: 20, pl. 5), and the monastery floor in Hall A at Beth She'an (pl. VIII.4). The personification of the seasons, zodiac signs, and Labours of the Months appear already on a 3rd-2nd century BCE relief from Hagios Eleutherios in Athens, rendered without circles (Webster 1938: 5-13, pl. 1). Sometimes the seasons are not included in the design, as at Palmyra (fig. III-11) and on the 3rd-century mosaic floor at Münster (pl. III-12a; Parlasca 1959: 86=87, pls. 84: 2, 86-87). Several examples have the representations of the months rather than of the zodiacal signs. This is found on the 2nd-century mosaic floors from Antioch (fig. III-14; Levi 1941: 251, 281, fig. 3; Webster 1938: 26, 119, pl. 2: 2), Carthage, and the monastery at Beth She'an. Moreover, the figures for the months are accompanied by their names whereas the zodiacal signs are not. In some cases the balance differs, with one section dominating the others. This is seen at Palmyra, where the circular dome containing the seven planets dominates the composition (fig. III-11), and at Münster, where the sun god in the central circle is the focal point of the design (pl. III-12a). So while similarities between these illustrations and the Jewish designs do exist, the major difference is that only the Jewish zodiacs follow one particular scheme. As noted by Lehman (1945: 5), the development of this scheme originated on the ceiling and was later projected onto the mosaic floor.

In the zodiac designs of Roman art we can trace three stages of development illustrated by the Palmyra ceiling, the Münster mosaic floor, and the Antioch mosaic floor. The Jewish design seems to be a continuation of this general development.

The first phase in the development of the design is the circular zodiac representation on the ceiling relief of the cella in the 1st-century BCE temple of Hathor at Dendera and in the Palmyra ceiling decorations. The Dendra temple depicts the



Figure III-11. Stone ceiling with zodiac at Palmyra.

elements of the round heaven supported by four diagonal corner figures of women, and the signs of the zodiac and of the Dodekaoros, namely the stars of the Hours; it is a rich and detailed rendition presenting a basic type (Lehman 1945: 5). From these precedents the round shape of the design developed, to represent the cycle of the zodiac or of the months.

Two stone ceiling decorations from 1st-century CE Palmyra are the earliest examples of the radial zodiac composition. One is the ceiling of the southern adytum of the Temple of Bel (fig. III-11), which depicts the circular dome containing the seven planets that dominates the composition. The outer circle contains the zodiac signs in a continuous, running pattern, and the corners of the square are filled with sirens or eagles (Seyrig 1933: 258-66, Fig. 5; Lehman 1945: 3, Fig. 3; Gundel 1992: No.44).

The second Palmyra example is a quarter fragment of a ceiling relief of similar design (fig. III-12): the inner circle might have rendered a Dionysus motif; four of the zodiac signs—Aries, Taurus, Gemini and Cancer, each accompanied by a star—are depicted in a narrow outer circle; in the corner of the square a wind's head is seen (Gundel 1992: no. 45).

A reflection of this design appears in the 2nd-3rd-century Bir-Chana (Tunis) mosaic floor (Fig. III-13); the planets are rendered in the centre of the composition, whereas the outer frame contains the zodiac signs framed in separate units



Figure III-12. Part of a stone ceiling with zodiac at Palmyra.

(Gaukler 1910, no. 447; Lehman 1945: 5, n. 29; Hachlili 1977: fig. 9; Dunbabin 1978: 161, pl. 162; Gundel 1992: no. 210). However, rather than forming a continuous pattern, the zodiac signs on the Bir-Chana mosaic are framed in separate units.

The next phase, represented by the 3rd-century Münster-Sarnsheim mosaic floor, has the same basic pattern (pl. III-12a). However, the frontal sun god has replaced the seven planets, and in the outer circle the zodiac signs are divided into individual units (Parlasca 1959: 86-87, pl. 42, 84: 2; Gundel 1992: No.84). The sun god in the central circle at Münster-Sarnsheim is the focal point of the design. In both the examples of Palmyra and Münster the central circle is the focal point, the zodiac signs are rendered as a narrow outer circle, and the objects situated diagonally in the corners of the square are similar in composition.

The final phase, showing a more balanced representation of the same pattern, is found in the 2nd-century mosaic floor from the triclinium in the 'House of the Calendar' at Antioch (fig. III-14). The central circle has become smaller, the outer circle larger (Webster 1938: 26, 119, pl. 2: 2; Levi 1941: 251, 281, fig. 3; 1947: 36-38; Stern 1953: 224-227, 256-258, 296, pl. XLII, 2; Campbell 1988: 60-62, fig. 24-25; pls. 183-185).² The Antioch mosaic pavement depicts the representations of the months rather than the zodiac signs. The

outer circle is divided into radial units containing the figures of the months, while the corners contain representations of the seasons. The inner circle has not survived.

The development of the design in these examples of Roman art can be traced from ceiling to pavement, from Palmyra to Antioch; the growing number of calendar representations on mosaic floors proves an increasing attraction in the cyclic movement of time (Lehman 1945: 8-9).

The basic form remains the same: two concentric circles within a square. What changes is the composition of the various parts and the balance among them. A central circle containing the planets in a geometric design undergoes a transition to a centre with the sun god. A continuous, running zodiac in the outer circle is transformed gradually into one divided into radial units with a zodiac sign in each. The purely aesthetic design of sirens or fishes in the corners of the square is replaced by the functional, but still aesthetic, design of the seasons. Eventually the total design develops from those of Palmyra and Münster, where one section, the central circle, is dominant, to the more harmoniously balanced design of Antioch.

The Jewish zodiac mosaic design, with the earliest Hammath Tiberias panel, thus seems related to the Antioch school and has its origins in Roman art. Each part of the design (central circle, outer circle, corners of the square) has comparable representations in the art of the preceding Roman period.

Several examples of the calendar's balanced circular design have survived from the late Roman and Byzantine periods. On the 4th-5th century mosaic pavement from Carthage the central circle contains a seated figure, probably representing Mother Earth. The outer circle renders in a continuous frieze the Labours of the Months, with their names inscribed above their heads. The outside spandrels contain four seated seasons inscribed with their names (Webster 1938: 20, pl. 5; Åkerström-Hougen 1974: 124, no. 5, fig. 80; Hachlili 1979: fig. 11; only a drawing of this mosaic is known).

The most striking resemblances to the Jewish zodiac are found on two contemporary Roman-Byzantine mosaic pavements in Greece:

⁴ Hanfmann (1951: 248) maintains that 'no later than the 2nd century CE, a type of composition in which the sun god is standing in his chariot, surrounded by the signs of the zodiac and the months with the *tropai* placed in the corners...the Seasons are not yet Seasons, but astronomical

tropai, the turning points of the sun during the year... Since these 'Turning Points' were represented with the attributes of Seasons, they are constantly confused with the seasons in later renderings'.

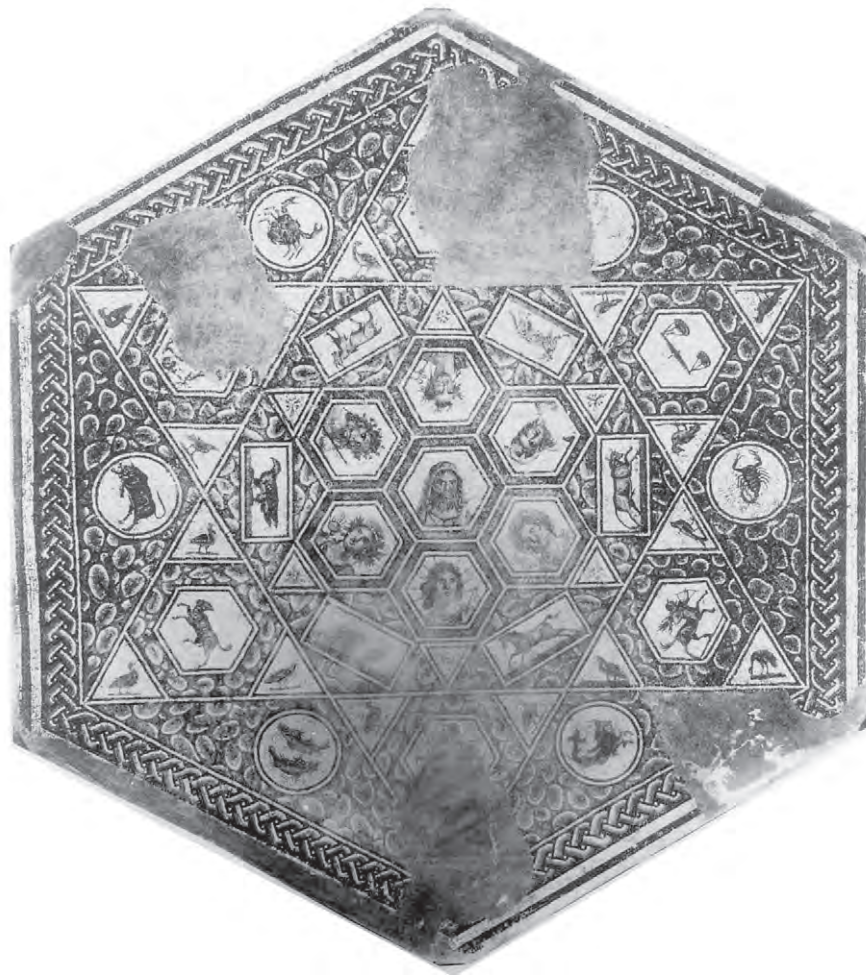


Figure III-13. Bir-Chana mosaic.

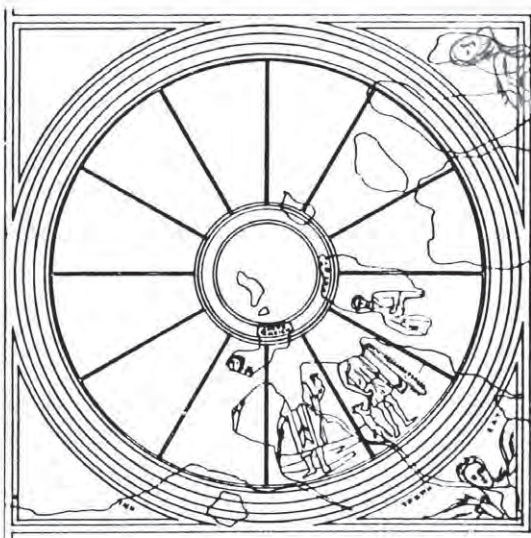


Figure III-14. 'Calendar House' mosaic at Antioch.

A Roman villa at Odos Triakosion in Sparta (Catling 1983-84: 27; Touchais 1984: 763, Fig. 48; Gundel 1992: No.85) consists of a 4th-century dining room mosaic in the familiar zodiac design of a square with two circles (fig. III-15); the inner circle contains busts of the youthful Selene and Helios, with no attributes; the outer circle contains the twelve signs of the zodiac; the four winds are rendered within the corners of the square. No inscriptions accompany the details of the design.

The only extant similar composition on synagogue mosaics is found on a 5th-century pavement in the main hall of the Tallaras Baths on the island of Astypalaea (Jacoby 2001). In the centre of a geometric carpet is a zodiac design of two circles within a square (pl. III.12b). The central circle contains a bust of Helios crowned with rays. He holds a globe in his left hand, and his right hand is raised in a blessing gesture; the twelve signs of the zodiac are in the outer circle. The corners of the square contain the four seasons with their typical attributes. Here too, no inscriptions accompany the details of the design, and Helios's chariot is missing.

The circular form of the design is also evident in the 6th-century mosaic floor of Hall A at the Monastery of the Lady Mary at Beth-She'an (pl. VIII-4); but this mosaic has only two circles: the inner depicts busts of Helios and Selene in their maturity and with their attributes, the outer renders the Labors of the Months with their inscriptions (Fitzgerald 1939: 7, pls. 6-8).

Comparison of the design in Roman art with the sun god-zodiac signs-seasons model of the Jewish synagogue mosaic pavements shows similarities as well as differences. The major distinction is that only the Jewish zodiacs follow one particular scheme. Sometimes the balance of the zodiac composition in the Roman examples varies, with one section dominating the others; the figures of the months in various designs of Roman art are accompanied by their names, whereas the zodiac signs are not.

C. *Meaning and Significance*

The significance and meaning of the Jewish zodiac panel is still under ongoing debate. Scholars have attempted to explain it in various ways: some interpret the zodiac panels as having astrological meanings; others explain these mosaics as



Figure III-15. Mosaic at Sparta.

symbolic, and some approach the zodiac panel content as representing the Jewish calendar.

Sukenik (1934: 64-67) expressed the astrological interpretation by maintaining that astrology was widespread in Jewish life, and the zodiac depiction on the mosaic pavements indicates the Jews' belief in the zodiac signs. Renov (1954: 189-201) and Goldman (1966: 59-60) expressed similar thoughts (see also Sonne 1953: 9-11; Lifshitz 1974: 102-3; Stern 1996: 400-403). Charlesworth (1977: 195) claims that by the 4th century there was archaeological evidence of Jewish interest in zodiac images, but this must not be equated with astrological beliefs. Wilkinson (1977-78: 22-24) in his interpretation of the Beth 'Alpha mosaic pavement argued that it seemed unlikely the zodiac design was placed there for astrological purposes, but had a connection with platonic cosmology.

The symbolic approach is articulated by a number of scholars: Goodenough (1953, I: 3-6; 1958, VIII: 168, 171, 214-215) held that despite pagan influences it is wrong to conclude from the zodiac mosaics that the Jewish community had an interest in astrology. He maintains that the zodiac containing a portrayal of the sun god Helios symbolized for the pagans the supremacy of the law of nature, of the cosmic order under the sovereignty of Sol Invictus. He further claims that for the Jews, 'Helios and the chariot symbolized the divine charioteer of Hellenistic Judaism, God himself'. Avigad (1976: 283) suggested that 'the figure in the chariot was the sun, itself a component of the cycle of cosmic forces depicted in the zodiac'. Foerster (1985: 383, 388) maintained that

Table III-2. Comparable chart.

<i>Site</i>	<i>Palmyra I Syria</i>	<i>Palmyra II Syria</i>	<i>Antioch Syria</i>	<i>Münster Germany</i>	<i>Sparta Greece</i>	<i>Carthage Tunis</i>	<i>Astypalaea Greece</i>	<i>Beth She'an Monastery Israel</i>
	<i>Stone ceiling</i>	<i>Stone ceiling</i>	<i>Mosaic floor</i>	<i>Mosaic floor</i>	<i>Mosaic floor</i>	<i>Mosaic floor</i>	<i>Mosaic floor</i>	<i>Mosaic floor</i>
Date	1st cent. CE	1st cent. CE	2nd cent.	3rd cent.	4th cent.	4th-5th cent.	5th cent.	6th cent.
Radial design	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Inner circle	7 planets	Dionysus?	?	Helios in chariot	Helios, Selene	Mother Earth	Helios	Helios, Selene
Outer circle	Zodiac signs	Zodiac signs	Labours of the months	Zodiac signs	Zodiac signs	Labours of the Months	Zodiac signs	Labours of the Months
Corners of the square	Sirens? Eagles?	Wind	Four seasons	Fishes, dolphins flanking vase	Four winds	Four seasons	Four seasons	—

the zodiac was an ‘astronomical realistic depiction representing God’s creation: the seasons, signs, moon, stars and sun leading the ‘heavens army’. He claims that it represents the Divine and heavenly order of the universe, the regularity in the courses of sun and moon. Further, the significance of the zodiac as a personification of the universe or cosmos is described by Jewish sources; the zodiac is an illustration, a key to the *piyyutim* (liturgical poems) of Eretz Israel; it is a substitute for the prayers, or functions as some kind of alternative prayer book (also Yahalom 1986: 313-322; Foerster 1987: 231-232; Kühnel 2000: 36). Ness (1995: 131) asserts, ‘the zodiac reminded the worshiper that God of Israel ruled all things...’. Berliner (1995: 179) proposes that the scientific map of the northern sky was used by the Jews in the decorative pattern of the zodiac circle. Weiss and Netzer (1996: 35) argue, ‘the zodiac symbolized the blessing implicit in the divine order of the universe. This order is expressed in the seasons, zodiac signs, the months and the celestial bodies, which are all responsible for the cyclical patterns of nature, for growth and for harvest’. Weiss (2005: 231-235) maintains the zodiac panel is illustrating the centrality of God in the creation. Roussin (1997: 93; 2001: 55) goes so far as to suggest that ‘...Helios on synagogue pavements represents a minor deity to whom some members of the congregation might have addressed prayers—not to the image itself, but to the deity it represents’. Schwartz (2000: 175-6) suggests that the zodiac cycle ‘at Sepphoris may have been

meant to facilitate as a horoscopic aid’. Engelrad (2000: 42-48) contends that the synagogue mosaics filled a didactic function; the zodiac on these synagogues’ mosaic pavements served as a visual reminder to the Jewish worshippers of the eternal covenant made by God with the Davidic dynasty and the priests. It is directly connected, in her opinion, with the other ritual objects depicted in other panels in these synagogues and expresses the longing for the revival of Israel and the restoration of the Temple. Talgam (2000: 101, 104) agrees with the interpretation of the zodiac as a calendar but also with the suggestion that the zodiac symbolizes the connection with the ceremony of declaring the new moon. Magness (2005: 49-50) proposes “that Helios and the zodiac cycle symbolized sacred time and sacred space.” Scholars found in the zodiac design at Hammath Tiberias links with the publication of the rules for determining the Hebrew calendar by Hillel II in the 4th century CE (Dothan 1967: 134; 1983: 47-49; Sternberg 1972: 72-87; Levine 2003: 110-114).

The most plausible interpretation for the combination of sun god–zodiac signs–seasons design is that the Jewish zodiac mosaic functioned as a calendar (Hachlili 1977: 72-76; 2002: 234-235); Avi-Yonah (1964: 56-57) suggested it in connection with the list of the priestly courses.

The portrayal of the zodiac-calendar had three obligatory sections: (1) the sun god, symbolizing the day—the night being denoted by the background of the moon and stars; (2) the twelve signs of the zodiac, representing the months; (3)

the four seasons, representing the year. According to the Jewish calendar the twelve months correspond exactly to the stations of the zodiac. The earliest listing of all the Jewish calendar months in succession (whose names are Babylonian in origin) appears in *Megillath Ta'anith* (probably 1st-2nd century CE); the Roman Julian calendar does not correspond exactly to the zodiac (Johnson 1968: 19; Schürer et al. 1973, I: 587; Herr 1976: 837-839). Jewish tradition has many references to the zodiac signs as monthly representations. Explicit evidence of this correlation and additional support for this interpretation are provided by the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic, which displays the names of the months in addition to the names of the zodiac signs. Further endorsement is the late 6th-century 'En Gedi synagogue mosaic inscription (pl. III.4c), which contains the names of the zodiac signs, followed by their corresponding months (Mazar 1970; Barag et al 1981). The tradition is preserved in later literature, such as in Ha-Kalir's poems, where the names of months are parallel to the zodiac signs (Avi-Yonah 1964: 55; Mirsky 1971). The 'En Gedi inscription also proves that even in the late 6th century the Jewish year started with *Nisan* (and its zodiac sign *Taleh*), the first month of the spring. The zodiac depiction at Beth 'Alpha indicates as much by adding the letter *vav* ('and') to both *Deli* (Aquarius) and *Dagim* (Pisces), thereby designating them the last signs of the zodiac; this in fact attests that the next zodiac sign, *Taleh* (Aries) for the month of *Nisan*, is the beginning of the year. The 'En Gedi written inscription must have replaced the illustrated zodiac mosaic during this later period; the images of the Na'aran floor might have been damaged at this same time.

In the Roman world zodiac signs are of cosmic and astronomical significance, whereas in Christian art, as in Roman, the calendar is sometimes represented by the Labours of the Months. Jewish art used the same form of the radial design and outer spandrels, rendered the same three components of the zodiac circle, and transformed it into a Jewish calendar by marking the signs and the seasons with their Hebrew names. At Sepphoris the Hebrew names of the months were added, and at Beth 'Alpha the signs were given some unique interpretations. Jewish art preferred an abstract

and symbolic zodiac, rather than the naturalistic representation of human activity depicted on the Roman or Christian examples, to safeguard the religious nature of the calendar.

The Jewish community adapted the Roman calendar, a pagan subject, which contained either the zodiac signs or the Labours of the Months, and modified it according to their needs, to convey the Jewish image of an annual calendar.³

The radial composition evidently conveys a visual, figured calendar by placing a circle of zodiac signs, representing the months, around the central figure of the sun god accompanied by the moon and stars, embodying day and night, and allocated the seasons in the four corners of the panel; the whole scheme conveys and illustrates the year.

In conclusion, in these synagogue pavements the Jewish zodiac-calendar, the form, composition, and balance of the three-part scheme are identical, suggesting the existence of a prototype for the general design. The Jewish zodiac-calendar is unique, however, in its balanced and harmonious conflation of the three parts. The basic design of the Jewish calendar is probably drawn from the Antioch school. The likeness to Roman mosaic calendars rendered with the Labours of the Months is perceived in the circular form and in the addition of inscribed names of months and seasons (see Antioch, Carthage, and the Beth She'an monastery mosaics), whereas names are lacking in circular zodiac representations at Astypalaea, Münster, and Sparta. The design has its roots in the art of the preceding period with the two major schemes, which are part of the Jewish calendar: the astronomical zodiac and the agricultural calendar. The Jewish model unified these two into the distinctive design of the seasons, zodiac signs, and sun god, signifying a liturgical calendar. When the synagogue replaced the Temple, the annual ritual acts, performed previously by the priests, came to be represented symbolically in synagogue art. The calendar became the frame of the annual rites, now enacted by the community. Thus, it was guaranteed a central location in synagogue mosaic floors.

The zodiac panel design, which occurs on these synagogue mosaic pavements widely separated in space and time, was apparently chosen from a

³ The 2nd-3rd century mosaic floor at Hellin in Spain (see note 3) is an example of a calendar mosaic which is

conceptually close to the idea of the Jewish mosaic calendar, adapted by the Jews for their special purposes.

pattern book (Hachlili 1988: 391, 394; 2002: 236). The schemes as well as the contents of these mosaics are identical, and as they are only found in Jewish synagogal art the existence of such sketch books is attested. Differences among them in style and execution may be put down to the variability of the individual artists' skill and style.

The fact that the zodiac mosaic was used several times makes it obvious that the Jewish community was not interested merely in a strictly decorative design for its floors. There must have been something unique about this particular design that caused the community to wish to adopt it. Probably it regarded the zodiac as a suitable vehicle for expressing conceptual needs. The community's intent was to portray a decorative design, but also to express a deeper import. Through this

balanced representation of the three elements, sun god, zodiac and seasons, a twofold purpose, of significance and design, could be achieved. Consequently, annual religious rituals could be graphically portrayed in the synagogue's interior decoration itself. From this it can be seen that the fundamentally pagan zodiac cycle came to serve the Jewish community as a popular, symbolic figured calendar, and was employed as a significant framework for the annual synagogue rituals.

The Jewish community assigned great importance to a design that expressed significant concepts, and had more than a merely decorative function. The integrated representation of these three symbolic elements successfully united design and significance in Jewish art, achieving decoration as well as symbolic vitality.

CHAPTER FOUR

BIBLICAL NARRATIVE THEMES AND IMAGES: REPRESENTATION, ORIGIN, AND MEANING

A. *Biblical Scenes*

Biblical themes were included in the Jewish figurative repertoire and represented on synagogue mosaics pavements though they were selected from relatively few biblical stories: the Binding of Isaac (*Aqedah*), Noah's Ark, Daniel in the Lion's Den, the Twelve Tribes and King David. At Sepphoris three additional narratives were rendered: The Consecration of Aaron to the Service of the Tabernacle and the Daily Offerings; The Shewbread Table and the Basket of First Fruits; and perhaps the Men's (Angels') Visit to Abraham and Sarah. Another addition is the scene of the End of Days on the mosaic pavement of the Beth Midrash at Meroth. Noteworthy is the recurrence of biblical scenes in more than one synagogue mosaic pavement in the Land of Israel and on mosaics and wall paintings in the Diaspora (Hachlili 1988: 285-300): the Binding of Isaac on the Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris mosaics and in the Dura Europos wall paintings; Noah's Ark on the mosaics at the Gerasa synagogue and Misis-Mupsuestia in Cilicia; Daniel in the Lions' Den at Na'aran and Susiya; David/Orpheus on the Gaza synagogue mosaic pavement and in the Dura Europos wall paintings, and David and Goliath's weapons on the Meroth synagogue mosaic.

The Binding of Isaac (The Aqedah)

The Binding of Isaac (the *Aqedah*) is portrayed on synagogue mosaic pavement panels at Sepphoris (5th century CE) and Beth 'Alpha (6th century) and on the wall painting of the arcuated niche at the Dura Europos synagogue (mid-3rd century) representing one of the most important stories of Judaism.

The story of the Binding of Isaac is described in Gen. 22: 1-13, 19:

God put Abraham to the test saying

“Take your son, your one and only son, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him as a sacrifice on one of the heights which I shall show you”. Early in the

morning Abraham saddled his donkey, and took with him two of his young men and his son Isaac; and having split fire-wood for the sacrifice, he set out for the place of which God had spoken. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the shrine in the distance. He said to his men: “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go on ahead. We shall worship there, and then come back to you”. Abraham took the wood of the sacrifice, and put it on Isaac's shoulder, while he himself took the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together' Isaac spoke to his father saying: “Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for a sacrifice?” Abraham answered: “God will provide himself a sheep for a sacrifice...”.

Arriving at the place Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. He reached out for the knife to slay his son. But the angel of God called to him from heaven, “Abraham... do not raise your hand against the boy; do not touch him. Now I know that you are a God-fearing man. You have not withheld from me your son, your only son”. Abraham looked round, and there in the thicket he saw a ram caught by his horns. He went seized the ram, and offered it as or a sacrifice instead of his son...Abraham then went back to his men, and together they returned to Beersheba... (Gen. 22: 1-13, 19)

The Beth 'Alpha mosaic panel is completely preserved and comprises a narrative composition divided into three episodes unfolding from right to left (following the reading of Hebrew), apparently illustrating the latter part of the biblical account (Hachlili 1988: 288-292) (pl. IV.1a; fig. IV-1a). (1) On the right Abraham lifts Isaac off the burning altar (Gen. 22, 10-11). (2) In the centre the Hand of God, representing the angel of God (Gen. 22, 10-11), and the substitute ram tied by its horn to a tree (Gen. 22, 13), constitute the dramatic climax of the story. (3) On the left the two youths with the ass (Gen. 22, 19). The depiction was apparently constructed from right to left, as proved by the fact that the ass is incomplete (Yeivin 1946: 21-22); however, Sukenik (1932: 40) describes the

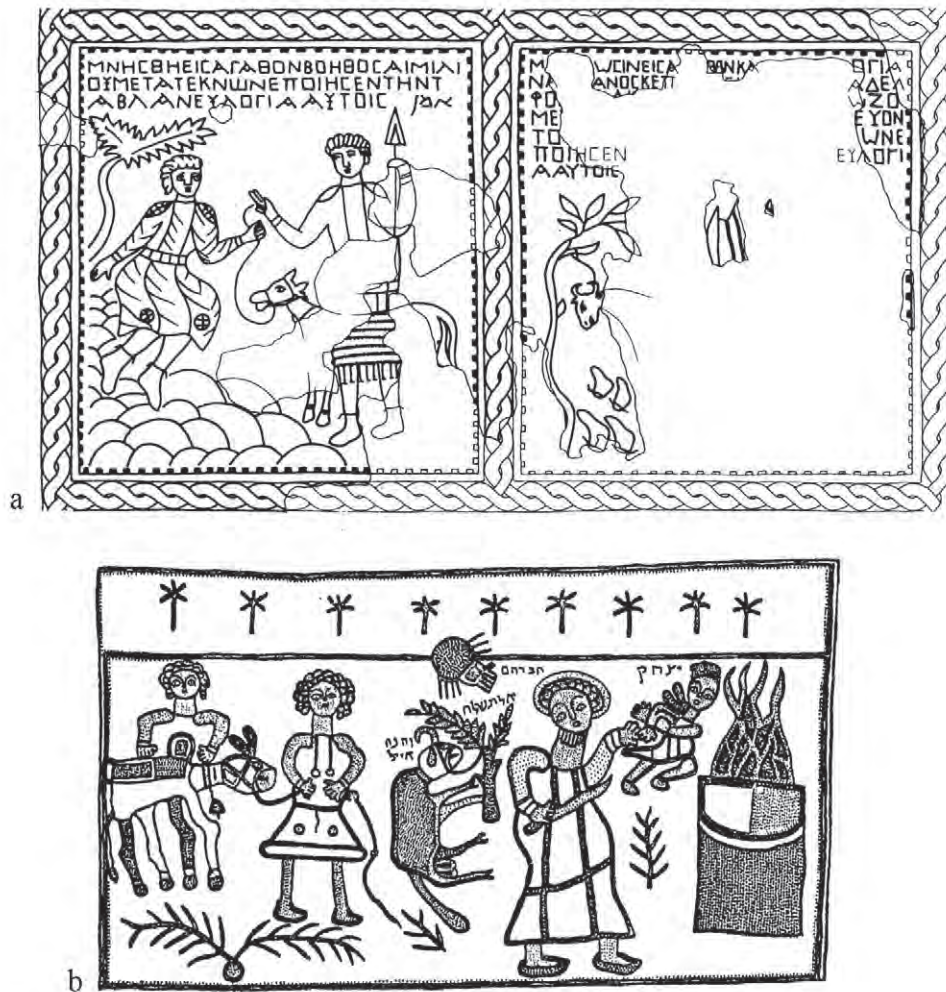


Figure IV-1. Binding of Isaac on mosaic panels: a. Sepphoris; b. Beth 'Alpha.

scene from left to right, even though it does not follow the exact narration of the biblical story.

A bearded Abraham is depicted on the right side of the panel, holding Isaac with one hand while in the other he carries a long knife. Isaac is rendered as a child, with bound hands. The altar is at the far right with flames leaping up. Abraham is clearly the chief figure, exceeding all the others in height and size; by this device his prominence in the story is shown. Isaac is also depicted in an unusual attitude: he is not bound to the altar but is suspended in the air and seems to be held by Abraham.

The most dramatic aspect of the story, the Hand of God, which appears from above, emerging out of a cloud emitting rays, occupies the centre. Under the hand a one-horned ram is placed beside a two-branched tree, suspended in the air in an unusual posture. The ram's single horn close to the tree is also exceptional, and

seems to illustrate the biblical sentence 'a ram caught in a thicket by his horns' (Gen. 22: 13). Sukenik (1932: 40) maintains that the reason for the position of the ram is simply lack of space, whereas Yeivin (1946: 22) suggests that the ram is rendered after naturalistic observation, as well as being a continuation of a prototype in Mesopotamian art (for further discussion of the ram's position see Bergman 1982 and Beitner 1999).

On the left a saddled donkey (cut off by the frame) and two young men are portrayed. One of the youths stands behind the donkey, only his upper body showing, while the other stands beside the donkey, holding the reins in his right hand and gripping a whip in his left.

Inscriptions have been worked into the scene: the names אברהם 'Abraham' and יצחק 'Isaac' appear above the figures. In the centre, under the Hand of God, parts of the Hebrew biblical verse are inscribed: אל תשלה 'Do not raise your

hand...’, while *והנה אייל* ‘He saw a ram’ accompanies the figure of the ram. A row of stylized palm trees is shown above the scene (Goodenough [1953, I: 246-247] contends that they symbolize the sky).

The depiction of the scene is stylized and naive. All the figures are rendered in a frontal posture, whereas the animals are in profile. Only the narrative connects the scene as a whole. The drama of the central episode is highlighted by the Hand of God, as well as by the inscriptions, and by the exceptional posture of the ram. The details accompanying the scene, such as the whip, the knife, and the donkey’s bell, are anachronisms from the contemporary environment of the artist. The empty space between the images is filled in with plants, due to the *horror vacui* element characteristic of this art. The Beth ’Alpha mosaic is an example of local, popular art, which Sukenik (1932: 42) claims may contain iconographical influences from Alexandria.

Another Binding of Isaac scene, discovered on the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic pavement and dating to the 5th century, is depicted on two connected panels on band 6 (Weiss and Netzer 1996: 30-31; Weiss 2005: 141-153); what has survived is similar in content to the Beth ’Alpha rendition and should also be read from right to left (pl. IV-1b; fig. IV-1b).

The left part of the almost completely destroyed right panel shows the ram’s head caught in a tree by one of his horns. Below it two overturned pairs of shoes have survived, one pair smaller than the other. In the centre of the panel a small trace possibly of a knifeblade is preserved; the excavators reconstruct Abraham and Isaac in the centre with Abraham holding the knife (Weiss 2005: fig. 89). The unusual rendering of the shoes does not appear in the biblical account, but in the story of Moses and the Burning Bush at Mount Horeb God calls out, ‘...put off your shoes from your feet; for the place on which you are standing is holy ground’ (Ex. 3,5; the same order is given in the story of Joshua at Jericho: Josh. 5,15). The same notion of presenting oneself barefoot at a sacred place is probably the explanation for the removed shoes in this depiction (Weiss and Netzer 1996: 31; Yahalom 2000: 84-5; Weiss 2005: 151-2). Similar renditions of removed shoes appear on the Dura Europos wall painting (Kraeling 1979: 228, 234-5; Hachlili 1998: 111-113, fig. III-11, pl. III-6). The figure of Moses and the

Burning Bush is on wing panel I; the figure on wing panel II is in dispute but it probably also represents Moses. The shoes in both these paintings are placed beside the figure’s feet.

On the left panel at Sepphoris the lads are rendered on some curved rock-like line, perhaps representing the mountain; the youth on the left sits under a schematically rendered tree; the one on the right holds a spear in his left hand and gestures with two fingers of his right raised hand. Both are portrayed en-face, dressed in short ornamented tunics and wearing black shoes. They hold the ass’s reins; the ass is shown in profile turning left and carries a decorated packsaddle on his back.

The iconographical depictions of the Binding of Isaac at Beth ’Alpha and Sepphoris show various similarities, which might indicate that the two pavements had a similar source, though the stylistic designs and the artists’ performances are completely different (pls. IV-1a,b; fig. IV-1a,b). The arrangement and composition of the panels is almost identical; the scene is divided into the three parts of the biblical story. On the right the binding/sacrifice, portraying Abraham, Isaac and the altar, appear only at Beth ’Alpha but undoubtedly were also rendered originally on the destroyed right side of the Sepphoris right panel.

In both pavements the centre is occupied by the ram’s head. At Beth ’Alpha it is tied to a tree by one of his horns, and not caught in a thicket as recorded in Gen.22: 13, along with the Hand of God above. The lads with the ass are depicted on the left side of the panel occupying about half of the scene at Beth ’Alpha whereas at Sepphoris they occupy the entire left panel. The two figures of the lads left behind are rendered distinctively in a prominent space in the composition, which might indicate their imperative position in the biblical story, although they are mentioned only as *נעריו*, his [Abraham’s] youths. In both cases one lad is behind the ass; they have similar attire; the one on the right at Beth ’Alpha has a pair of medallions decorating the lower part of his tunic, similar to those on the tunic of the youth on the left at Sepphoris. The ass in both depictions bears a saddle while turning in one to the left and in the other to the right.

Some scholars propose that the two young men are Ishmael, Abraham’s son, and Eliezer, the loyal servant, who are engaged in a competition or confrontation on the question of the heir to Abraham

if Isaac is sacrificed (Yahalom 2000).¹ Accordingly, Ishmael holds the spear in his left hand and raises his right hand in a gesture of delivering a speech whereas Eliezer swings the rope tied to the ass. E. Kessler (2000: 80) presents an unlikely suggestion that the figures are Abraham instructing his servant. However, the Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris depictions were accompanied by the figures' names and other explanatory inscriptions, so if these boys were identified as suggested, their names would certainly have been added (see also the Binding of Isaac legends collected by Ginzberg 1947, I: 274-286).

The youths depicted at Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris have a notable position in the design, while they appear only in few depictions in Christian art. In the catacomb of Via Latina, cubiculum C, only one lad and the ass are portrayed (pl. IV.2c). A painting in the 5th-century Basilica of S. Paolo fuori le Mura depicts Abraham with Isaac carrying the wood on the right and the two youths with the ass on the left, leaving a structure. One of the youths waves his hand in the rhetorical gesture of argument. A similar gesture appears on mosaics and illuminated manuscripts. Yahalom (2000: 87, fig. 48) maintains that the Binding of Isaac in the Christian catacombs in Rome and the synagogue mosaic at Sepphoris were based on a similar model. On the 10th–12th-century so-called miniature of *Christian topography* of Constantine of Antioch (formerly attributed to Cosmas Indicopleustes; Vatican. Biblioteca Apostolica, Cod. 699, fol.59r), possibly copied from a 6th–7th-century Syrian model, the figures in this scene are labelled and identified by their Greek inscriptions. H. L. Kessler (2000: 66-7, fig. 38) maintains that the Sepphoris mosaic shared a model with the manuscripts.²

The painting of the Binding of Isaac in the Dura Europos synagogue wall painting is the earliest art depiction of this theme and has no parallels in its composition in later Jewish or Christian art (pl. IV.2a; fig. IV-2). It was painted on the right of the arcuated panel above the niche on the west wall of the synagogue, dated to the first stage



Figure IV-2. Binding of Isaac, Dura Europos synagogue wall painting.

of the later building, probably 244-5 (Kraeling 1979: 54-65; Hachlili 1998: 100, 239-246).³

The tall figure of Abraham, on the right, is seen from the rear clad in a white himation, a chiton, and brown boots; in his right hand he holds a white knife. The small figure of Isaac lies on the top of a large white altar above Abraham to the left. The Hand of God appears above the altar and a ram and tree are visible at the bottom of the scene. The artist has added a further detail to the scene in the upper right corner: a conical tent within which stands a small figure. Most scholarly concern and attention has been devoted to the way the figures are depicted from the rear, and to the identity of the figure in the tent. This figure has been identified as various individuals such as Abraham, Isaac freed from his bonds, one of Abraham's servants, Ishmael, or Sarah (Hachlili 1998: 239). For the tent there are many

¹ Yahalom (2000: 85-87) cites Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, 31, a midrashic pseudepigraphic work, and later texts in Midrash Hagadol and Midrash VaYosha; Weiss (2005: 144 and n.447) quotes Leviticus Rabbah 20, 2; see also H. Kessler 2000: 66.

² The two youths are not listed among the iconographic particulars which feature in the Binding compositions in the catalogue prepared by Woerden 1961: 243.

³ Two lamps from a private collection depict the Binding of Isaac. One is on the discus of an imperial Roman discus lamp (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1996), but is no real proof that this lamp is Jewish. On the nozzle of a Samaritan oil lamp the Binding of Isaac is represented not as a narrative scene but by various objects connected to the story (Sussman 1998).

suggestions, the most plausible apparently that of Goodenough (1964, IX: 72-74, Fig. 71), who proposes the figure is Sara and compares the Dura Europos scene with the Binding of Isaac in the el Bagawat painting where Sara's name is inscribed above the figure's head (fig. IV-5). Goodenough further points out Sara's connections, according to traditional sources, with the festival of the New Year.

The Dura Europos depiction is unique in several respects. Its composition is narrow and vertical; Abraham, the draped Isaac lying on the altar, and the figure in the tent are viewed from the rear, their faces unseen; Isaac is depicted in a special way on the altar; and the tent and its figure are added. The Hand of God and the ram are the only elements shown in profile. Goodenough (1964, IX: 71; and St. Clair 1986: 112 for other interpretations) suggests that the figures turn to the Hand of God. This does not seem plausible because other scenes at Dura Europos (such as panels WA3, NC1, wing panel I) show figures that do face the viewer, their backs to the Hand of God. The Dura scene is depicted in a narrative manner yet it is symbolic in character, showing the highlight of the story, the moment of rescue and salvation.

Two elements diverge from the biblical story (*Genesis* 22: 9): one is the Hand of God, which on the Beth 'Alpha mosaic and in the painted scene at Dura Europos is portrayed instead of the angel of God (see Hachlili 1999 for the subject of the Hand of God); the other, the ram standing beside or tied to a tree, and not 'caught in the thicket by its horns', appears in all three depictions. Kraeling (1979: 57) and Gutmann (1984a: 1321; 1984b: 117-118) maintain that these variations grew out of rabbinical exegesis stressing God's intervention in human affairs.

The renderings of Binding of Isaac on the Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris synagogue mosaic pavements differ in some ways from that in the wall paintings at Dura Europos (pls. IV.1,2; figs. IV-1,2). In particular, the composition is vertical at Dura, horizontal at Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris. A further difference between Beth 'Alpha and Dura is in the portrayal of Abraham;

but there are similarities in the Hand symbolizing God, the architectural form of the altar, and the wood on the altar arrayed as a triangle form (Hachlili 1988: 291).

The Binding of Isaac (the *Aqedah*), shown prominently in the synagogue mosaic pavements of Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris and on the wall paintings of the Dura Europos synagogue, is an event with deep religious implications and holds a central place in the traditions of Judaism and Christianity;⁴ it later came to symbolize the covenant between God and the Jewish people, denoting God's mercy and kindness to Israel.

The Binding of Isaac became a popular theme in early Christian art on catacombs paintings, sarcophagi and gold glasses dating to the late 3rd-4th century. Portrayals of the scene are generally similar, in a style part realistic, part symbolic; it shows a dramatic rendering of Abraham, the largest figure in the composition, holding a knife in his right hand, Isaac frequently kneeling; the ram is on the left, the altar is often depicted, and the Hand of God is shown in a corner of the design (see discussions and catalogue in A.M. Smith 1922 and in Speyart van Woerden 1961, who listed 195 examples in the Roman-Byzantine period).

Two paintings of the Binding of Isaac were discovered at the Via Latina catacomb dating to the 4th century (pl. IV.2b,c), one in cubiculum C, the other in cubiculum L (Ferrua 1960; 1991: 87, figs. 68, 113, see conclusions and dating, pp. 153-165). The painting in a panel to the right of the niche in cubiculum C shows in the upper part, from right to left, Abraham with a sword in his hand and Isaac kneeling before him. To his left is the altar with wood burning on top, and the ram stands farther to the left. A Hand of God might have been once rendered above, on the left. Below a figure dressed in a tunic stands next to a donkey. On the other painting, partly destroyed, in cubiculum L, Abraham holding a sword in his right hand is next to a burning altar with the ram partly seen beside it. The Hand of God is portrayed in the left corner (Hachlili 1998: 242).⁵

Although scholars see Christian analogies for the Binding of Isaac in the Dura Europos wall

⁴ On the New Year festival (*Rosh Hashanah*) the *Aqedah* is recited annually, as well as in the daily morning prayers. In Christianity the story prefigured the crucifixion; Gen. 22 is traditionally recited on Easter (Gutmann 1984: 116-7).

⁵ Speyart van Woerden (1961: 222-224; 243-245) maintains that the Binding of Isaac in the 4th-century wall paintings of the catacombs in Rome did not have a fixed composition, while the 93 sarcophagi do have a set composition and an identical iconography. In it Abraham wears a tunic and



Figure IV-3. Binding of Isaac on catacomb paintings, sarcophagus, and lamp.

painting and the mosaic pavements, several significant variations exist. In early Christian art Isaac is depicted in one of two poses (see proposal by E. M. Smith 1922: 163-64): on the altar (an Asiatic-Hellenistic type), or kneeling near Abraham (usually the position seen on the catacombs of Rome wall paintings (a western-Hellenistic type). Isaac lying atop the faggots on the altar at Dura Europos is seldom depicted in Christian examples (Gutmann 1984b: 118; Speyart van Woerden 1961: 222, 224, argues that it occurs only after 340 CE: see catalog, nos. 99, 100, 103). The altars, with their architectural renditions,⁶ and the wood on the altar set as a triangle in early Christian art, bear some similarity to the scene in the Dura Europos synagogue painting (Kraeling 1976: pl. 51; Goodenough 1958, IX: 73).

In the Dura Europos painting and on the Beth 'Alpha mosaic pavement the Hand of God is framed by a cloud (?). In Christian art the Hand of God commonly reaches out of a cloud or the sky, and is similar to that in the Dura Europos

scene (see Ehrenstein 1923: figs. IX.5-8, 11, 18); it typically appears as an important symbol of God's intervention. In many of the Christian examples the Hand of God appears with Abraham turning his head towards it: on wall paintings from catacombs in Rome, on a lamp, and on sarcophagi (pl. IV.2c; figs. IV-3,4); a Hand of God hangs out in the upper left of the Christian wall painting in a 4th-century tomb chapel of the Allegorical Figures at El Bagawat in Egypt (fig. IV-5), on glasses from Bologna (Hachlili 1998: fig. V-6) and Trier dated to the 4th century (Smith 1922: no. 88; Reusch 1965: no. 56) and an ivory pyxis (Smith 1922: no. 114, Fig. 7, Reusch 1965: no. 106a); on the glasses and the pyxis the Hand of God is a complete forearm and hand (Hachlili 1999: 66-68, figs. 14-16).

In comparable early Christian scenes the ram is seldom tied to a thicket, but usually stands aside (see Ehrenstein 1923: figs. IX.2-4, 8, 11, 13-15, 18; also Gutmann 1984: 117-118).

holds a sword; he stands behind a kneeling Isaac. A ram, the Hand of God, and an altar are also shown.

⁶ The Dura altar form is similar to the altar painted in cubiculum L of the catacomb at Via Latina (Ferrua 1991: Fig. 113).



Figure IV-4. Binding of Isaac on catacomb paintings, sarcophagus, and glass.

Church mosaic pavements showing sheep and rams in front of or tied to trees are suggested by several scholars as representing an abbreviated form of the Binding of Isaac. The examples include the following. A ram tied with a rope to a tree within a round medallion is rendered on the lower mosaic of the church at Massuh (end of 5th century; Piccirillo 1993: 254 fig. 447). Two rams tied to trees decorate two ends of the western side of the font of the apse on the upper mosaic of the Baptistry Chapel in the Cathedral at Madaba (mid-6th century) (Piccirillo 1993: 118, figs. 116-117). A ram pictured leaning against a small tree appears in the semicircle behind the altar in the presbytery of the Church of St. George



Figure IV-5. Binding of Isaac on a wall painting from El Bagawat, Egypt.

at Mukhayyat (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 67, 107, 236-237, pls. 23,1, 39,1; Piccirillo 1998: 322, fig. 122).

Maguire (1987: 71) interprets it as 'a prefiguration of the divine sacrifice'. Bagatti (1984: 296-7, figs. 31-32; Piccirillo 1989: 339; followed by Talgam 2000: 94, 102-3) infers that these images of tied animals form an abbreviated and symbolic version of the Binding of Isaac. Though rams and sheep, especially flanking pairs, are a common rendition (see Chap. IX) the interpretation for this symbolic image is an appealing proposition.

The examples of the Binding of Isaac at Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris synagogue mosaic pavement panels are unique.⁷ They probably had a similar or identical source although each of them was done by completely different artists. At Beth 'Alpha, that Abraham is taking Isaac down from the altar is indicated by the fire already burning on it,⁸ and by the substitute ram and Hand of God. The lads with a saddled ass but no wood in the Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris mosaics indeed intimate the end of the tale, designating Abraham (apparently without Isaac) returning to his lads after the action has ended. At Dura Europos, Isaac bound and placed on the altar follows the biblical story more closely, though the tent and figure do not appear in the biblical source. The ram's horn tied to the tree and the Hand of God symbolizing the angel are another illustrated interpretation of the biblical description. This episode is the highlight of the story, determining its purpose and conclusion by expressing the moment of rescue (Hachlili 1988: 291; 1998: 242-243).

This narrative depiction of a popular biblical scene becomes the symbol and expression of the desire for and hope of salvation. The illustrated scenes understandably focus on the most important component of the story, the intended sacrifice and its fortunate outcome, portrayed at the right and in the centre. Interestingly the episode of the two waiting youths and the ass is quite prominent on the mosaic pavements of Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris; in fact, it signifies the beginning and the end of the *Aqedah* account. The two youths are mentioned at the start (Gen. 22,3) and at the con-

clusion of the story (Gen. 22, 19). The appearance of the scene on the mosaic pavements of both Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris on the left side of the panel brings the entire narrative full circle. It represents the opening and the closing of the tale.

The inscriptions accompanying the depictions at Beth 'Alpha, though verifying the relation with the biblical source, contain only the names of the two main figures and two short quotes each of only two words (as in other panels with biblical scenes at Sepphoris), which evidently merely explain the illustrations. These mosaic panels focus on portraying a narrative tale or legend and the inscriptions were added for clarification and perhaps remembrance, *but are not in any way an illustrated text* (see below).

The depictions in Jewish art on the mosaic pavements are narrative and render the full story, while the Binding in early Christian art, depicted on catacomb walls and sarcophagi, is in a style part realistic and part symbolic; the most typical scenes show a dramatic-symbolic rendering of Abraham with the knife, Isaac, the Hand of God, and the altar. This is due apparently to different sources and partly to the small space available; a mosaic panel has more space, whereas the space on sarcophagi, lamps, etc., is limited.

Jewish and Christian depictions of the Binding of Isaac appear to be based on two different conventions. Furthermore, whereas in Judaism the Binding of Isaac is a symbol of life and of belief in God's help as well as confirmation of God's covenant with Israel, in early Christian art it is a pre-figuration of the life and crucifixion of Jesus and is related symbolically to death and salvation. Because of this contrasting attitude the Jews felt the appropriate place to portray the scene was the synagogue, while the early Christians preferred to show it in their funerary art, in catacomb paintings, on sarcophagi, pyxis, and gold glasses, possibly on mosaic pavements in a symbolic abbreviated form, and later on two church wall mosaics in Italy. Nor would the lack of sanctity towards the topic shown by the Jews of Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris, where the mosaic pavement was intended to be trodden on, have been acceptable to the Christian believers.

⁷ But see Gutmann (1984: 120-122). Comparing the mosaic with three terracotta tiles and a 9th-century miniature, he contends that the Beth 'Alpha Binding scene follows 'an established early Christian type'.

⁸ But see Sukenik (1932: 41), who maintains that Abraham carries Isaac on his way to placing him on the altar

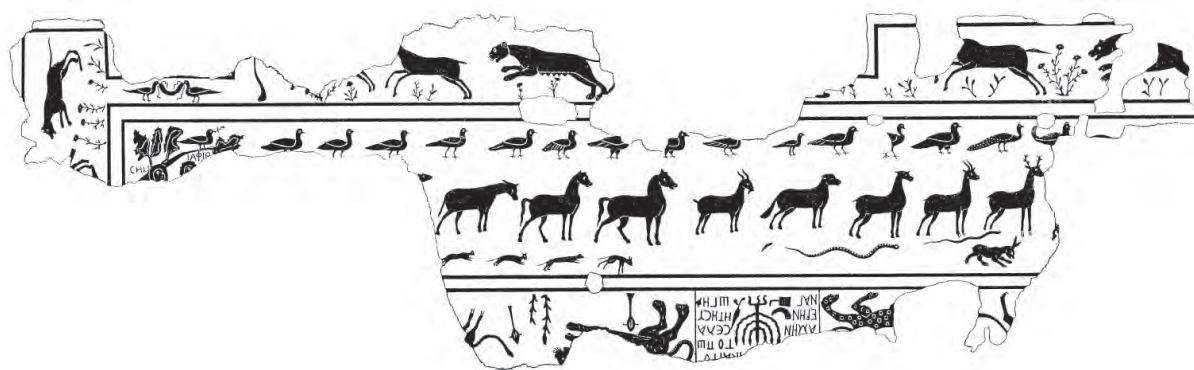


Figure IV-6. Noah's Ark, pavement of the Gerasa synagogue vestibule.

Noah's Ark

The narrative story of Noah's Ark appears on two mosaic pavements: on the floor of the Gerasa synagogue (Jordan) and on the pavement of Misis-Mopsuestia (Cilicia, Turkey).

The story of Noah and the flood is told in Genesis chapters 6-8 (see also the Noah's Ark legends collected by Ginzberg 1947, I: 165-167). The part of the story portrayed in the mosaic pavements represents the end of the tale (Gen. 8: 10-20):

...He waited seven days more and again sent out the dove from the ark. She came back to him towards evening with a freshly plucked olive leaf in her beak. Noah knew then that the waters had subsided from the earth's surface. He waited yet other seven days, and when he sent out the dove she did not come back to him. So it came about that on the first month, the first day of the month of the six hundred and first year, the waters had dried on the earth; and when Noah removed the hatch and looked out, he saw that the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was dry. And God spoke to Noah, saying: 'Come out of the ark together with your wife, your sons, and their wives. Bring out every living creature that is with you, live things of every kind, birds, beasts and creeping things and let them spread over the earth, and be fruitful, and increase on it'. So Noah came out with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives; and all the animals, creeping things, and birds; everything that moves on the ground came out of the ark, one kind after another. Noah built an altar to the Lord; and taking beasts and birds of every kind that were ritually clean he offered them as whole-offerings on it. (Gen. 8: 10-20)

Noah's Ark on the Mosaic Pavement at Gerasa

The mosaic panel in the east vestibule of the early 5th-century Gerasa synagogue is a rendition of the latter part of Noah's Ark narrative. The panel is oblong with a broad border (figs. IV-6,7). This synagogue comprises an atrium on the east, a vestibule, and a large hall. The synagogue and its mosaics were found under a church apse built over the synagogue structure in 530-531 CE (Sukenic [1932: 55-56] suggests a date between the mid-4th century and 530 CE; Kraeling 1938: 323; Piccirillo 1993: 290, figs. 546-551, listed the identification of the animals).

The synagogue orientation was different from the above church. Its entrance was from the east and those entering the east courtyard could observe the Noah's Ark scene. The building was identified as a synagogue by the Greek and Aramaic inscriptions as well as by the depiction of the menorah and the four ritual objects (Kraeling 1938: 473; Hachlili 1988: 292-294).

The mosaic panel in the east vestibule, only partly preserved, is shown from left to right and starts in the south corner of the framed central panel.

The surviving part of the mosaic shows on the left a perched dove holding an olive branch, conveying the news of the receding flood (figs. IV-6,7). Under the branch two partly preserved human heads with the inscribed names 'Shem' and 'Japhet' are portrayed; originally Noah's family was probably depicted leaving the ark or sacrificing after they came out (Genesis 8: 11, 14-19). The rest of the panel consists of three rows of realistically rendered animals, striding from left



Figure IV-7. Noah's Ark, pavement of the Gerasa synagogue vestibule.

to right: the top row shows the birds, the middle row the mammals, and the bottom row the reptiles (Sukenik 1932: 55, note 4).

The Gerasa scene commemorates the moment when the animals leave Noah's Ark, as Noah and his family celebrate the event. The panel is bordered by a frieze rendering beasts chasing their victims, with flowers and plants filling the space; the frieze scene begins at the inscription with the

beasts facing opposite directions. In the centre of the east border frieze is an inscription placed upside-down in relation to the entrance of the vestibule. The partly destroyed Greek inscription contains the greeting 'Holy place. Amen. Sela. Peace to the Synagogue'. It encircles a menorah together with the four ritual objects: lulav and ethrog on one side, shofar and incense shovel on the other (Hachlili 2001: 58-61).

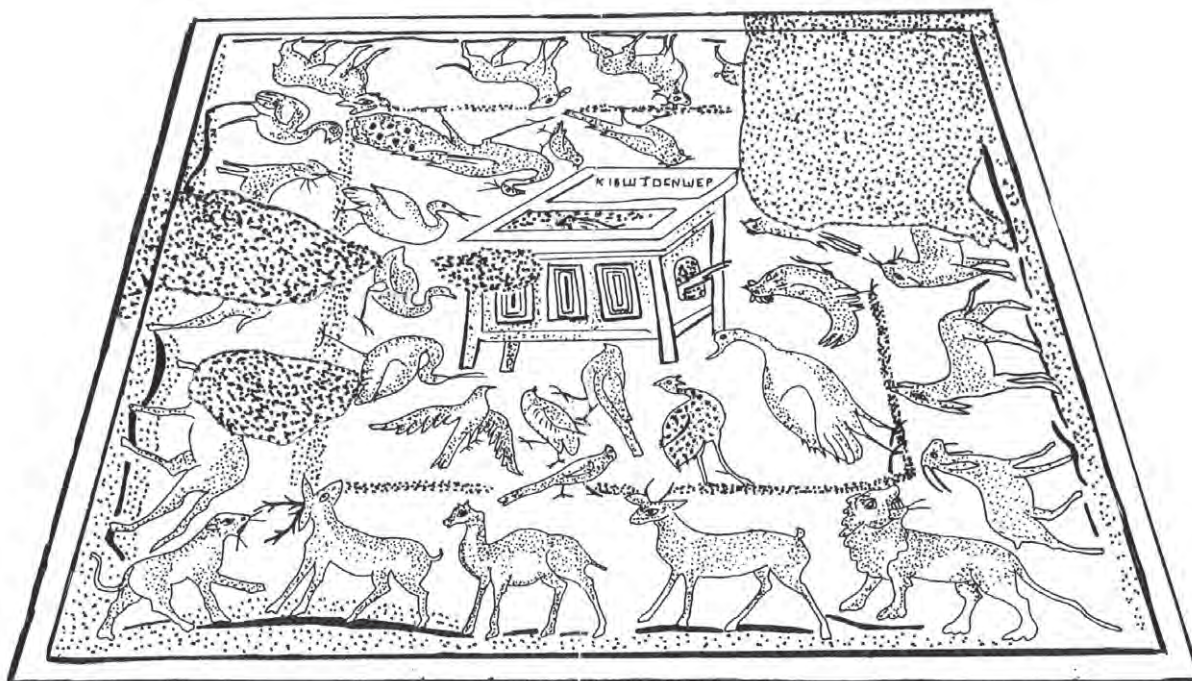


Figure IV-8. Noah's Ark on the nave mosaic at Misis-Mopsuhestia.

The difference between the scene of the animals leaving Noah's Ark and the chase scene around the border is interpreted in various ways. The two scenes picture the situation before and after the flood according to the narrative in the Midrash (Sukenik 1932: 56). The main scene renders the pure animals while the border depicts tainted animals (Kraeling 1938: 320-321, however that is not exactly accurate). The animals leaving the ark are tame while those in the border are wild beasts, which were not taken into the ark (Goodenough I: 259-260; he also [1968, XII: 133] asserts that the beasts in the border symbolize immortality and the afterlife). Yet the border scene may quite simply be decorative; a similar pursuit scene is found in the Beth She'an small synagogue, where the animals are shown in an inhabited scrolls design. Compare also the chase scene around the border of the mosaic pavement of the Martyr church at Beth She'an (see Chap. VII).

Noah's Ark on the Mosaic Pavement at Misis-Mopsuhestia

The central scene of Noah's Ark surrounded by various animals is depicted on a mosaic pavement found in a building in Mopsuhestia, the Cilician city on the road from Tarsus to Antioch, south of the Taurus Mountains (Asia Minor). Today Misis is a Turkish town. The building and its

mosaic pavement most probably date to the late 5th century CE.

The remains of the building consist mainly of parts of the mosaic pavements and a few remnants of walls (Budde 1969: 31-37).

The mosaic floor is divided into a wide nave, a south aisle, and two north aisles; the mosaic on one aisle shows episodes from the biblical story of Samson (Budde 1969; Kitzinger 1973; Hachlili 1998: 209-216); Budde (1960 and 1969) maintains that it was a *martyrium* church, but the structure is probably a synagogue, as suggested by Avi-Yonah (1981: 186-190): it resembles synagogues in the Land of Israel such as Hammath-Tiberias, which also has a nave flanked by two aisles on one side and a single aisle on the other (Kitzinger 1973: 136; Hachlili 1998: 51-52; 209-216; 249-256).

At Misis-Mopsuhestia two renditions of Noah and the ark are portrayed on the western panel of the nave's mosaic pavement. The earlier panel is in the lower half of the nave. A relaid mosaic lies in the western, later, part of the nave, probably close to the entrance (Budde 1969: 54; pl. 50). It shows a much simpler depiction of Noah's story, crudely rendered.

Noah's Ark on the Earlier Mosaic Pavement at Misis

The scene of Noah's Ark on the nave mosaic shows the ark surrounded by animals (fig. IV-8; Budde 1969: 38-43, 109, Fig. 26-49; Hachlili

1998: 249-254). The decorated ark is in the centre of the square panel forming the focal point of the scene. It is a three-dimensional chest standing on four legs; it is open and the lid is folded back. A dove can be seen inside the ark and the tail end of another dove (?) protrudes from the side opening (Budde 1969: figs. 26, 30). The Greek inscription KIBWTOC NWEΠ on the inner open lid of the ark means 'The ark of Noah the r[edeemer]' or 'The r[edeemed] ark of Noah' (Budde 1969: 41-42; Avi-Yonah 1981b: 186; but see Buschhausen [1972: 67-68] who asserts that the Greek Π means 100, that is, 100 years between the building of the ark and the flood). The word KIBWTOC means box or chest and is the word used in the Septuagint for Noah's Ark as well as for the Ark of the Covenant. In Hebrew the word for the ark of Noah is תיבה.

The ark is decorated with three coloured rectangles similar to standard decorations of Torah arks appearing on the mosaic pavements of Hammath-Tiberias, Susiya, Beth 'Alpha and others (figs. II-9-12) (Hachlili 1976: 40-50; 1988: 272-278, figs. IX 21; 22, pls. 102-105; 2000: 154-5, figs. 11: 4,5, 12: 1-4; but see Buschhausen's suggestion [1972: 65] that the ark is a type of columbarium).

The animals are arrayed in two wide rows around them so they can be viewed from all sides. Two rows of animals surround the ark, an inner row consisting of birds and an outer row of mammals. The birds are identified as crane, cock, hen, peacock, dove, nightingale, and stork; some are depicted in flight, and some stand on a simple base line (Budde 1969: figs. 27, 28, 34, 36, 38, 39, 42). The mammals stand on a thicker line, which may indicate landscape. The animals also have an added line in darker colours between or under their feet. The mammals appear to be arranged, for example, the savage beasts such as the bear, lion, and panther or leopard are placed at the corners, one of which is damaged (Budde 1969: figs. 26, 27, 29, 32); the domesticated animals such as ox, deer, donkey, gazelle, and camel are placed in between the corners (Budde 1969: figs. 30, 35, 40-42; Avi-Yonah 1981: 186). In this row one bird, a crane, is also depicted among the mammals. Surprisingly, the animals are not depicted in pairs: only a single example of each animal species appears. Furthermore, Noah and his family are also missing from the scene, although they do appear in the later mosaic.

The animals' movement is stereotypically awkward and stiff, body bulk is excessive and their

eyes are large and emphasized; they are portrayed isolated on a white background. Differences in bird size attest to the probability that the depictions were from observations in nature, as well as copied from some model books. The scene is comparable to the Antioch tradition of the Martyrion of Seleucia (Kitzinger 1965: 345, 348-9; Buschhausen 1972: 61). Dunbabin (1978: 230-31) suggests that the rows of animals at the Misis mosaic accord with a favourite theme in Christian churches, namely bands of animals moving peacefully. This is interpreted as the Animal Paradise, a peaceful assembly of animals prophesied by Isaiah (see below).

The style of the pavement emphasizes the ark, which is three-dimensional but lacks perspective or shadow, though there is some influence of a Hellenistic illusionary description. Kitzinger (1976a: 65) claims that the pavement with Noah's Ark surrounded by animals is a figure carpet, although it 'retains a certain vestige emblemata'.

Noah's Ark on the Later Mosaic Pavement at Misis

The other Noah's Ark scene on the repaired later part of the mosaic is viewed from the opposite direction to the older mosaic (Budde 1969: 54-55, Fig. 50, 55, 113-114).

This mosaic has two parts (fig. IV-9): one shows a large figure holding a vessel in the left hand. An animal (panther?), a bird, and an upside-down bird cage are between this figure and a much smaller figure on the left. A red box-like object appears under the first figure. The other part of the mosaic shows three animals, one open-mouthed without ears. Budde (1969: 54) contends that they are a lion and a panther, and that the third animal looking back on the right has an elephant's trunk. A bird is placed above this animal, and remains of a building are beside it. Budde suggests that this scene shows Noah and his two sons Shem and Japhet offering thanks after their salvation. He compares the primitive, rustic style of the Misis mosaic to the Beth 'Alpha mosaic style. Neither is of high artistic standard and both were executed by local artists. The later pavement at Misis is especially crude compared with the high quality of the earlier mosaics.

The date of the early mosaic pavement is disputed. Budde (1960: 116, 123) first suggested the end of the 4th or early 5th century, the period of Theodore, Mopsuestia's famous bishop (392-428), but in his later book (Budde 1969: 34) he

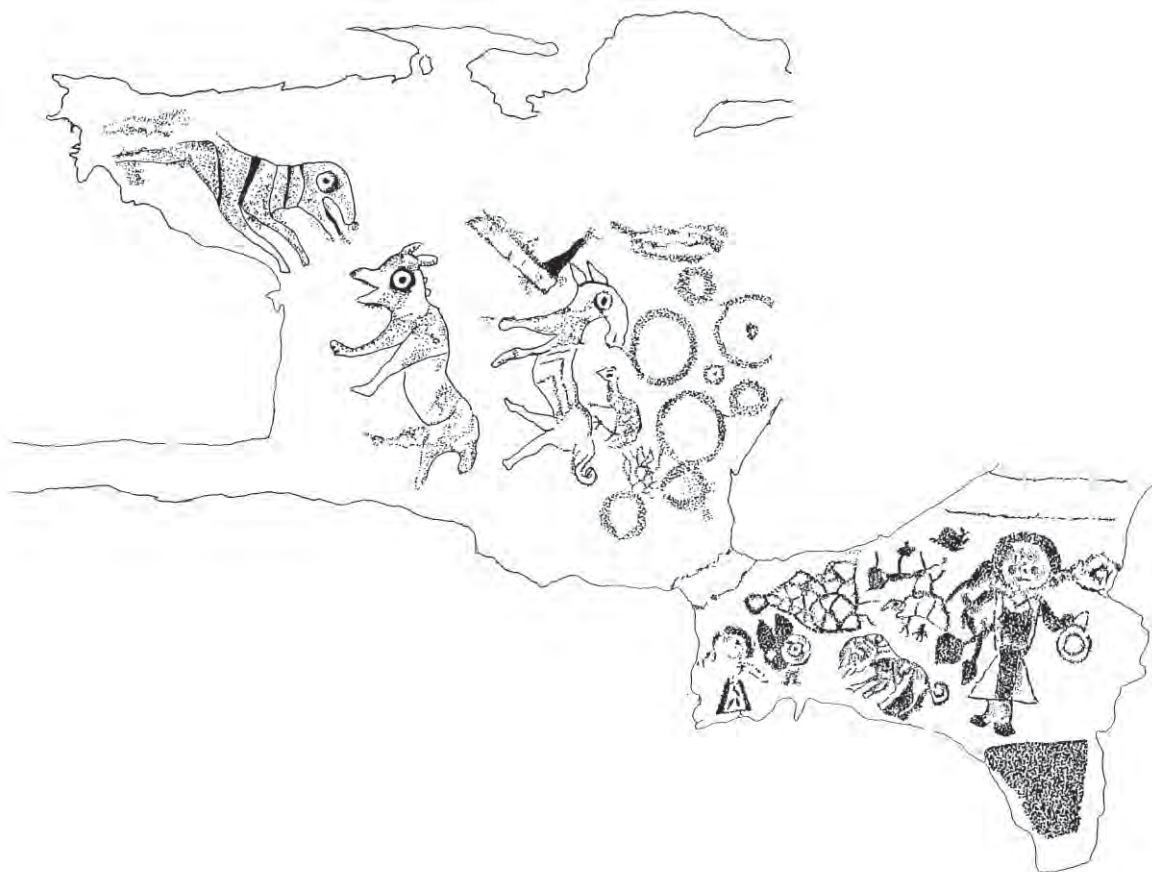


Figure IV-9. Noah's Ark on the later pavement at Misis-Mopsuestia.

dates the mosaics to the third quarter of the 4th century, mainly on grounds of stylistic comparison with the Antioch mosaics (also Kitzinger 1973: 138, note 20). Avi-Yonah (1981: 189) likens the mosaics stylistically to the mosaics of the Church of Nativity at Bethlehem. The Misis pavement style combines several influences, and seems to have been created in the intermediate period of the continuation of the Graeco-Roman mosaic traditions coincidentally with the beginning of the new direction of the Justinian mosaics (Kitzinger 1976a: 64). Buschhausen (1972: 59, 61-63) suggests a later date, in 6th-century Justinian times, also on the basis of stylistic comparisons. Most scholars, however, prefer a date in the second half of the 5th century (Lavin 1963: 273, note 424; Kitzinger 1976a: 66; 1973: 138; Grabar 1966: 10, 15; Dunbabin 1978: 223).

In the mosaic pavements of both Gerasa and Misis the Noah's Ark scene is rendered at the moment of the animals' emergence from the ark (because the dove is already portrayed in the scene), thereby probably suggesting the symbolic meaning of the event, which is that God has

promised not to destroy the world again (Genesis 8: 18; 9: 9-11). However, the two interpretations of the Noah story on the mosaic pavements differ in their emphasis. At Misis, in the earlier mosaic the ark is placed at the centre of the scene, whereas at Gerasa it is entirely missing. At Gerasa the animals appear in pairs and Noah and his family are present. At Misis the animals are shown singly and Noah's family is not even depicted. Still, at Gerasa and at Misis alike the main narrative topic is the animals.

The depictions of Noah's Ark in early Christian illustrations, on catacombs wall paintings and sarcophagi, differ iconographically from the mosaics just described. An abbreviated scene usually shows Noah in a box-like ark sending off the dove, which appears in flight, and no depiction of the animals is found. The ark is usually a square box, sometimes with four small feet (fig. IV-10). Usually Noah is rendered in one of two types, as follows.

The first type shows him in an orans pose emerging from a box-like ark, the dove with an olive branch above him or Noah extending his

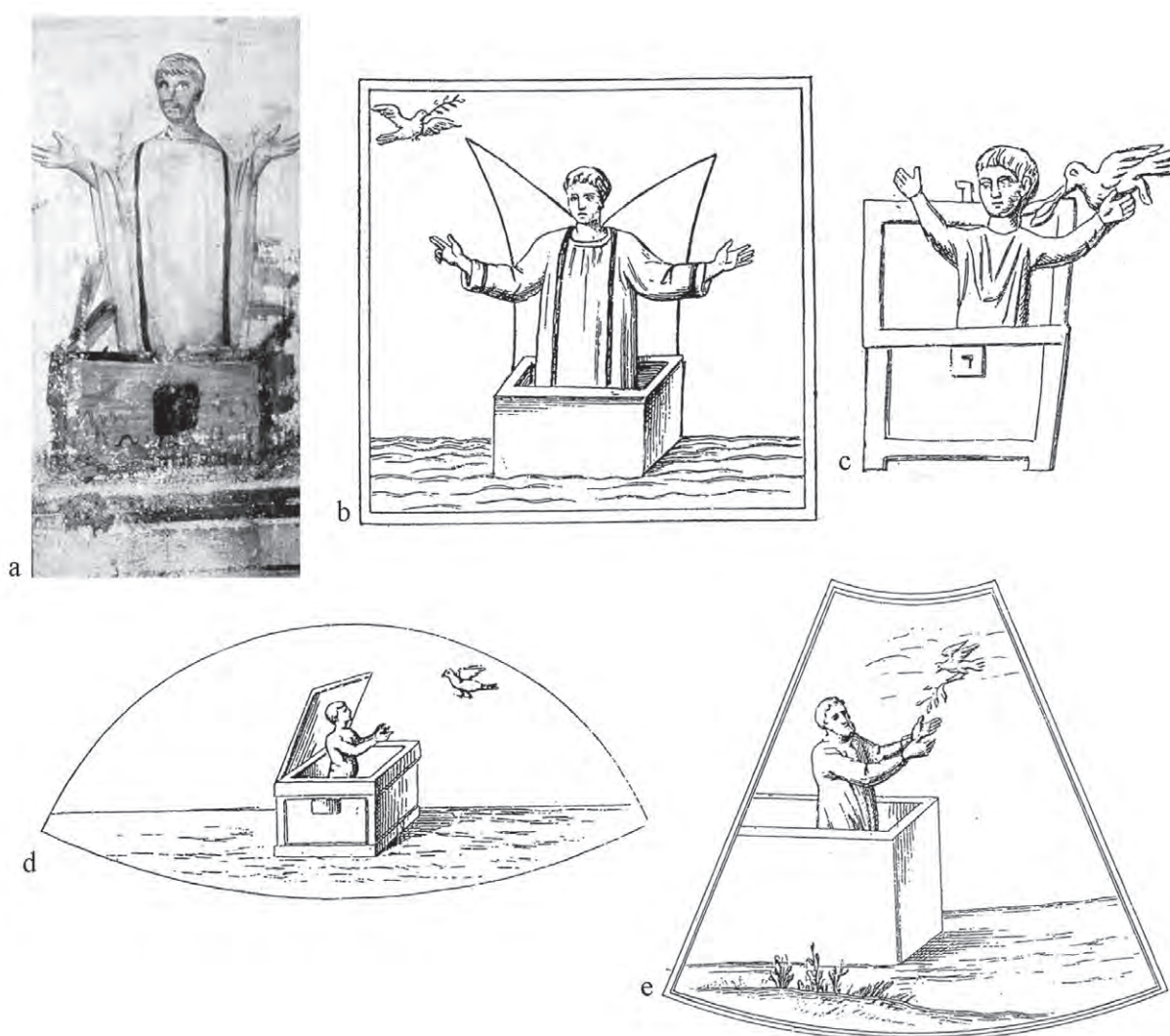


Figure IV-10. Noah's Ark on catacomb wall paintings and sarcophagi.

hands towards it. This type occurs on 4th-century wall paintings and sarcophagi from the catacombs of Rome (Hachlili 1998: 253-4; fig. V-10 a, d); on a gold glass found in a sarcophagus dated to the 4th century (Cologne Museum no. N991, Reusch 1965: 130-31, no. 124). Other examples appear on the wall painting of the Roman catacomb in the Via Latina, cubiculum O (Tronzo 1986: fig. 96; Ferrua 1991: fig. 142), in the Priscilla, Domitilla, Petrus, and Marcellinus catacombs (Ehrenstein 1923; Kapitel IV: 1-10; Bock and Goebel 1961: pls. 1,22,41,43). The same portrayal is found on a glass bowl from Köln (Morey 1959: 68, no. 421, pl. 34; Schüler 1966: 51-52); and on a small glass medallion (Morey 1959: 30, No. 139, pl. XXI). One of the few biblical depictions on Christian mosaic pavements appears on a

6th-century mosaic floor from the south transept of the East Church at Apollonia in Cyrenaica: it is rendered inside one of the sixteen squares of the mosaic; some of the other surviving squares are filled with genre scenes (Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980: 61, 88; fig. 3, pl. 37, 1). The scene depicts Noah in the orans pose emerging from a chest-like ark and dispatching the dove. The inscription NEW identifies the scene.

In the second type Noah stands in the box-like ark, turning aside, his hands outstretched to the dove. This appears on a wall paintings, a sarcophagus, and a gold glass from the catacombs of Rome (Bock and Goebel 1961: pl. 40; Hachlili 1998: fig. IV-11b, c, e).

Different depictions in early Christian art are found in another painting in the Roman

catacomb of Via Latina, cubiculum B (Ferrua 1960: 118, fig. 47; Kötzsche-Breitenbruch 1976: 51-54, pl. 4a), where Noah and his wife are shown sitting next to a tree while water pours onto the ark. The Noah sarcophagus from Trier (Förster 1965: 18, Katalog no.2) shows Noah in a coffin-like ark surrounded by his family and the animals; Noah extends his hand to the dove.

Another important example of the Noah legend is found on bronze coins from the Phrygian town of Apamea (Asia Minor, Turkey), struck under Septimus Severus (193-211), Macrinus (217-219), and Philip the Arabian (244-249). The coins portray the images of Noah and his wife in the ark on the reverse (fig. IV.11) (Hachlili 1998: 255-256, fig. V-11). The ark is in the form of a chest; a raven perches on it and a dove flies above, carrying an olive branch. The ark bears an inscription in Greek. Two figures interpreted as Noah and his wife move leftwards next to the ark, their right hands raised in an orans gesture. They stand on dry land. The scene represents both the flood and their salvation.

Illuminated manuscripts show different representations of the biblical story: eleven illuminated scenes of the Noah's story were depicted originally on eight pages in the Cotton Genesis (British Museum, Cod. Cotton O B, IV., fols. 10-12); it is probably the oldest illuminated manuscript, dated to the 5th-6th century, and has 330 miniatures in the Genesis text (Weitzmann 1971a: 45-48, scenes b,e,h,j, Figs. 23-26). The miniatures illustrate several parts of the Noah's narrative: God commands Noah; Noah brings his family into the ark; Noah sends forth a raven and the first dove; Noah sends the third dove. The Cotton Genesis illuminations are considered the inspiration for the wall mosaics of San Marco in Venice. Some miniatures were reconstructed on the basis of this comparison too.

The Vienna Genesis (Vienna Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Theo. Gr. 31) is a 6th-century illuminated manuscript (Weitzmann 1971b: 207-208) which preserved 24 purple leaves with 48 miniatures out of the originally estimated 96 leaves which must have contained 192 miniatures (the archetype of the manuscript probably had about 400-500 scenes). Each miniature rendered several scenes, with two or three on the bottom half of each page. Two miniatures in the Vienna Genesis show part of the Noah's narrative: one illustrates the ark during the flood, the other Noah



Figure IV-11. Noah on the Apamea coins.

and his family leading the animals in pairs out of the ark.

Scholars disagree about the sources for the Noah's Ark story (Stichel 1979). Grabar (1951: 13) argues that the Noah images in early Christian catacombs and on the Apamea coins are based on Jewish wall paintings that decorated a building in Apamea, and that this is perhaps the oldest example of a Jewish image based on a biblical subject. He provides no proof for such a building; he further states that the influence on the Christian-Roman catacombs was Jewish. Weitzmann (1971b: 317, 321-3; see also Friedman 1989: 14-5) maintains that the pictorial elements in the Vienna Genesis are based on Jewish legend, further proposing that the source might have been Josephus' illustrated *Antiquities* (of which no proof has been found to date). Kötzsche-Breitenbruch (1976: 54) maintains that the Apamean coins are similar to the Noah's Ark images at Via Latina and are linked to Jewish illustrated manuscripts. Murray (1981: 103-104, Fig. 38) argues that the source for the ark in the Early Christian images may be the pagan story of a figure in a chest cast on the water, similar to the Greek myths of Auge, Telephos, and Danae with her baby son Perseus. Murray argues that the connection between these coins and early Christian art seems remote; the iconography is probably not related, the main difference being that on the Apamea coins the Noah story is a narrative, whereas in the early Christian scenes the image of Noah tends to be symbolic.

Murray further suggests that 'it may perhaps be better to speak of "Jewish inspiration" in the matter of the iconography'.

The Early Christian depiction of Noah standing in the box-like ark is symbolic. The interpretation of the story in Christianity is usually different. It has funerary connotations and it symbolizes death and resurrection; the ark is *vox Arche*, 'the

Christian church'. Allen (1963: 155) maintains that 'Noah is usually the joyful emblem of the risen Christ' and the ark looks 'like a sarcophagus or the funerary box in which the body of Christ was laid'. This is also the interpretation of Budde (1969: 55) for the Misis depiction. The central position of the ark in Misis symbolizes, in his opinion, the Christian Church, bringing salvation to the world as Noah's Ark saved the animals (see also Grabar 1966: 15). Others interpret the flood story as a prefiguration of the Baptism of Christ. Christ is represented as the new Noah and the ark is the church (Gutmann 1977: 63).

The emphasis in Gerasa and Misis is on the animals, and the story is depicted in a narrative-illustrative form, with the animals marching along the panel; by contrast, the scene is different from the way it appears in Early Christian art on catacombs and sarcophagi. The art of the catacombs usually carries a symbolic rendering of the ark (as a box) with Noah in it, sending off the dove, and no depiction of the animals is found.

King David at the Gaza Synagogue

A synagogue decorated with mosaics was discovered on the Gaza-Maiumas seashore with a Greek inscription dating its pavements to 508-509 (Avi-Yonah 1966: 221-223; Ovadiah 1969; Barash 1980). The floor of the synagogue hall was originally paved with mosaics on the nave and side aisles, the southernmost of which is decorated with an inhabited scroll design.

A fragmentary representation of King David is on a section of the western end of the central nave; he is identified by the inscribed name **דָּוִד** *David* in Hebrew (pl. IV-3, fig. IV-12). The figure of David as a musician in frontal posture is rendered in the known iconographic manner of Orpheus. He appears crowned with a diadem, a nimbus around his head and wearing royal costume: a Byzantine emperor's robes and chlamys. David sits on an elaborate decorated cubic box-like seat or throne, whose geometric decoration has similarities with the ornamentations of the ark on the mosaic pavements of the Hammath Tiberias and Susiya synagogues. With his right hand David strums the cithara with a plectrum, while his left hand holds the instrument from behind; the cithara is to his left on a cushion positioned on the throne. To the king's left the animals listening to the music are rendered. Only a lioness, the head and neck of a giraffe, and an elephant's trunk or

a serpent have survived (Hachlili 1988: 297-8, pls. 66-67; Jesnick 1997: no. 73b). David's sitting posture and the way he plays the musical instrument is similar to many of the Orpheus mosaics (Jesnick 1997: 183-189, however, she does not consider the Gaza figure Orpheus).

David was known as the royal psalmist and a magical musician with some extraordinary quality attributed to his musical instrument:

...whenever an evil spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his lyre (**הַכִּנּוֹר**) and play it, so that relief would come to Saul. He would recover and the evil spirit would leave him alone (1 Samuel 16: 23).

The animals originally surrounded the centrally positioned musician figure on all sides, as is seen on many comparable Orpheus mosaics. As noted, in the scene at Gaza only a few survived: a lioness bows her head (but see the mistaken interpretation of the animal as a lion or lion-cub by scholars: Avi-Yonah 1966: 222; Barash 1980: 18). The bending stance of the lioness apparently captivated by the musician is a dramatic representation that seldom appears in Orpheus depictions. This lioness is quite similar to the one with the suckling cub portrayed on a medallion in the inhabited scrolls pavement on the southernmost aisle. The giraffe's head and neck with a band around it, next to the lioness, is similar to the giraffe rendered on a medallion in the inhabited scrolls pavement of the southernmost aisle (pl. XII.7a). A giraffe is highly unusual in connection with King David, and to date has only once been found in an Orpheus scene (2nd-century Orpheus mosaic at Santa Marinella I in Italy: Jesnick 1997: 78, Cat. no.3); it was considered a tame and peaceful animal in late antiquity and is perhaps an additional symbol of redemption associated with Orpheus (Barash 1980: 19, and note 68). The other animal below the lioness is a serpent, or an elephant of which only the trunk has survived.

The figure of David in the Gaza scene is similar to some characteristics of Orpheus iconography in Roman mosaic pavements. Many portrayals are seen on villa mosaics dating to the first quarter of the 4th century; Jesnick (1997: 8-19, 68-90, 124-147, catalogue; figs. 23a-g) lists more than 91 examples. Orpheus is usually portrayed in the centre in a typical posture, seated on a rock or a box-like seat, sometimes in a landscape surrounded by animals; he wears a Phrygian cap, is dressed in long Thracian or Greek robes or a short Phrygian tunic or a chiton. He plays a



Figure IV-12. David-Orpheus, Gaza synagogue pavement (1968, before the destruction).

typical instrument, lyre or cithara. Note that although the figure of Orpheus might turn right or left, the musical instrument is constantly depicted on the left with Orpheus holding the instrument with his left hand and strumming it with his right.

Several unusual details in the representation of the David mosaic pavement at Gaza deserve comment:

- David's head is adorned distinctively with a halo or nimbus. The only picture

comparable to the nimbed David at Gaza is a blue nimbus surrounding the head of Orpheus playing a lyre, found in a 4th-5th-century living room in Ptolemais in Cyrenaica (Jesnck 1997: 43, 142, no. 74, fig. 146).

- David's headgear consists of a diadem/crown instead of the Phrygian cap characteristic of Orpheus; Barash (1980: 20-24) notes that no royal attributes were assigned

to Orpheus and he was not imagined as a king; in some later illuminations a haloed David appears.

- The decorated cubic throne is different from the usual rock or natural object that Orpheus sits on; the Edessa square box-like rock seat is slightly comparable (Jesnack 1997: 141, No.71, fig. 115). The scene is in an open landscape, different from the usual Orpheus environment.
- The animals associated with David are unlike those of Orpheus: the giraffe is a unique representation not found usually on other Orpheus-type scenes; the lioness is rendered in a unusual stance as if wholly engrossed in the music.

The combination of the crown and the throne, the two imperial emblems, impart to the figure of David in Gaza a regal character, which is contradictory to the nature of Orpheus generally depicted, particularly his playing before the beasts.

A comparable scene to the David of Gaza is the image of Adam in Paradise surrounded by animals found on the mosaic pavement of the North church (The 'Michaelion') of Haouarte (dated to 486/7 or 501/2; Donceel Voûte 1988: 104, 112-114, 480, 487, fig. 71; pl. h.-t.5). Only the upper part of the nave mosaic has survived. It shows the scene of Adam giving names to the animals in Paradise (Gen 2: 19-20). The figure of Adam, inscribed ΑΔΑΜ, is seated on a throne, his right hand in a blessing gesture. He is flanked by a pair of trees with coiled snakes facing him and two birds. To his left is a phoenix with radiated head (in Christian art this became the symbol for eternity) and a plant and an eagle are close to the throne. To his right are a mongoose, a large griffon, and a lion, more birds and another animal. The phoenix and the griffon are unusual figures in such scenes.

The scene recalls similar Orpheus depictions, especially the snake curled around trees, but a griffon and the phoenix appear elsewhere only once: on the mosaic of Piazza Armerina (Jesnack 1997: 84, 90). The similarity of the figure of Adam to the image of David of Gaza is notable in their dress, the throne, and the choice in animals—the lion and the snake. The later proposed date for the Haouarte mosaic is also quite close to the date inscribed on the Gaza mosaic.

Barash, in his comprehensive article (1980) proposes that the David of Gaza is a combination

of two different styles and two different iconographic themes: the royal David, and Orpheus charming the beasts. Complete harmony of style has not been achieved in this allegorical combination, probably because it had no earlier model on which to draw. Its uniqueness suggests it was the artist's own invention. The crown and throne, unknown in renditions of Orpheus, are emphasized as ceremonial motifs expressing royal images. All these details present the iconography of David on the Gaza mosaic as a unique work of art.

The artist evidently intended to render the figure on the Gaza synagogue mosaic as King David, as the inscription of his name proves, though at the same time it evokes the image of Orpheus, both being portrayed as musicians playing and charming the animals. The two images had much in common: they both affected semi-divine status carrying a promise of redemption and eternal life, and David also induces Messianic hopes. They were divine singers/players who could charm animals and tame fierce powers (Barash 1980: 3, 15-17; Jesnack 1997: 43). King David's image was clearly partly based on a familiar type of Orpheus portrayal.

The Gaza synagogue depiction represents King David, evoking the image of Orpheus, charming wild beasts. The pagan world saw Orpheus as a symbol of heavenly peace, whereas Early Christian art depicted Orpheus as symbolizing Jesus, the good shepherd.

David-Orpheus, Dura Europos Wall Painting

An earlier representation of King David as Orpheus appears in the wall paintings of the Dura Europos synagogue (Kraeling 1979: 224-5; Hachlili 1998: 110, 247-249, figs. III-9, V-7, pl. III- 4). On the upper part of the lower central panel (reredos) a figure is seated on a throne in the upper left corner. He wears a royal costume of an ornamented long-sleeved tunic, and trousers, white boots, a Phrygian cap, and a chlamys over his left shoulder. In his left hand he holds a lyre, which he strums with his right (fig. IV-13); vestiges of the throne can be seen beside his right shoulder; a large yellow eagle perches on the rail of the throne (?). The figure seems to be playing to a lion (preserved from the first stage), a possible eagle, a monkey (?), and, a bird and is similar to depictions of Orpheus.

Kraeling (1979: 224-5, and most scholars) identifies the figure as King David dressed as a

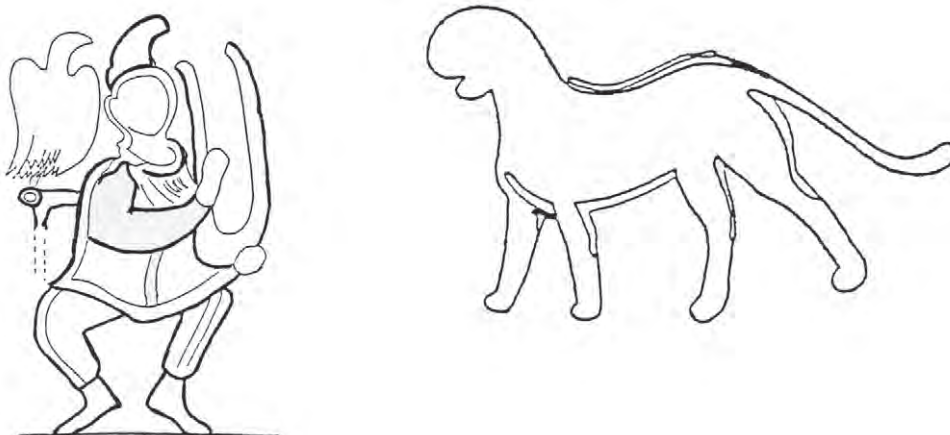


Figure IV-13. David-Orpheus, Dura Europos wall painting.

musician to emphasize his piety. He is clearly a later addition to the panel as he has been painted on top of the red wash and the foliage from the first stage (but see Sukenik, 1947: 62, fig. 22, who maintains that the seated musician belongs to the original first stage of the decoration of the later building). Most scholars agree that this depiction proves that by the mid-3rd century the Orpheus figure had been adopted to portray David (Kraeling 1979: 223-225; Goodenough 1964, IX: 89-90; Finney 1977-78: 14; Hanfmann 1980: 87). Stern (1958: 3-4) suggests that the figure and its company, the eagle and the lion, represent Orpheus announcing the coming of the Messiah. Flesher (1995: 353, using computer analysis) argues that the musician figure in the Dura Europos reredos is not David as Orpheus but a composite figure. This is because only two animals, a lion and a dove, are depicted next to the figure. Flesher (1995: 351, 354, 366, Fig. 21) identifies a shepherd's crook behind David's right shoulder, and not an eagle as Kraeling suggests.

A debate exists among scholars concerning the origins of the Christian image of Orpheus, and whether it lies in a Jewish tradition where Orpheus is identified with King David as the Messiah. Sister Murray (1977: 25-27; 1981: 120-121) argues that the Dura Europos lyre-player identification with Orpheus is doubtful; an Orpheus figure did not exist in Jewish literature or in Jewish art so it could not have been the source of the Christian catacomb figure. The formal sources for the iconography were pagan renderings of Orpheus charming the beasts. Murray concludes (1981: 63), 'far from being merely a pagan survival in Christian art, the Orpheus representation originated

as Christian images of rebirth and afterlife'. Murray also suggests that the artist of the Dura Europos synagogue might have used current clichés for musicians and Orpheus to portray David as psalmist (?) in that role. Stern (1958) claims that Christian art uses the same iconography but substitutes for it the Orpheus-Christ-Savior figure. Finney (1977-8: 14-15) following Stern (1974) asserts that the Orpheus image entered Christian art through intermediate Jewish portrayals and not through pagan images; it was a figure accepted by Judaism, therefore taken for granted in Christian art. Finney further maintains (1994: 188-9), 'Orpheus [on the Callistus catacomb paintings] though symbol-specific, is not derived from the Hebrew Bible and hence is not a vehicle of Judeo-Christian meaning', but was a popular figure in Roman Imperial art. Early Christians were drawn to Orpheus, as attested by early literature inspired by apologists for the Jewish cause in Ptolemaic Alexandria. Furthermore, Finney thinks that the Christians may have seen a Christian meaning in the musician image, but that it is impossible to prove or disprove whether they equated Christ with Orpheus. Simon (1986: 23, 26) contends that Orpheus is intended to be a symbol—'perhaps the divine wisdom communicating itself to the creatures'. Kessler (Weitzmann and Kessler 1990: 169) maintains that the Dura musician may be a rendition of the composer of Psalms, David. Also, there may not be any relationship between this depiction and Christian Orphic conventions. Goldstein (1990: 81-87) claims that Orpheus does not represent the historical David but is the Messiah prophesied in Isaiah 11: 1-9.

The theme of King David as Orpheus clearly belongs to the existing iconographic affinities of a mythological pagan Orpheus figure with attributes of a musician and animal charmer, which was combined with the biblical image of David (1 Samuel 16: 23) as royal musician, poet, psalmist, and charmer of humans and animals with music (Hachlili 1988: 298). Gaza was an ancient Hellenistic town with a Hellenistic-Byzantine tradition; this may have influenced the Jewish community to choose for their synagogue pavement a biblical figure represented in its original pagan mythological image. The David-Orpheus motif was probably appropriated by Jewish iconography from the pagan world while retaining its original meaning of the charming of beasts by music, and combining it with David's royal image. David in this composition, as the biblical psalmist king, is represented similarly as Orpheus playing the cithara before wild beasts.

Two mosaic pavements portraying Orpheus were discovered in Israel: the Late Roman mosaic at Sepphoris and the Byzantine mosaic of Orpheus in Jerusalem.

The Orpheus Mosaic Pavement at Sepphoris

The Orpheus mosaic pavement was found in the triclinium of a private house, adjacent to the cardo in the lower city of Sepphoris, dated to the second half of the 3rd century CE (Talgam and Weiss 2004: 8-10). The excavators suggest (Talgam and Weiss 2004: 9, with no verification) that the Sepphoris dwelling may have belonged to a Hellenized Jew rather than a pagan resident.

The upper panel of the T-shaped mosaic in the triclinium depicts Orpheus surrounded by birds and animals; Orpheus is seated on a rock under a tree, wearing a Phrygian cap, an ornamented short Oriental tunic and trousers, the Persian *anaxirides*, a red chlamys, and low boots (apparently belonging to the Phrygian Orpheus type: Jesnick 1997: 72). He holds an especially large seven-stringed cithara to his left (pl. IV-4).

About twenty animals are portrayed listening to and charmed by Orpheus and his music; the birds are rendered in the upper part of the panel, the animals in the lower part. Among the depicted birds are an eagle, a peacock, and a goose; the animals include a lion, a wild boar, a tiger, a rabbit, a bull and a snake coiled around a tree which is frequently part of the Orpheus scene; the snake-in-tree motif appears on other Orpheus mosaics at Chabba, Carnuntum, Ptolemais, Seleucia,

Tobruk, and Trento (Jesnick 1997: 81, fig. 21). A later wall built on it destroyed the lowermost part of the scene.

The composition is similar in character to some 3rd-4th-century Orpheus mosaics. It consists of a unified rectangular panel, which depicts the figure of Orpheus in the centre, with the birds and the animals circling him in a conventional division: the birds are on the upper section and the animals on the lower. This design appears on other Orpheus mosaics, such as the Orpheus mosaic pavements at Adana, Chahba, Cos I, Lepcis Magna I, North Syria (now at the Kestner Museum, Hannover), Paphos, and Saragossa (Jesnick 1997: figs. 112, 113, 122, 131, 133, 141).

The animals, portrayed at Sepphoris without regard to scale and hanging in midair to form a circle around Orpheus, are rendered attentively listening to the musician. Their faces and bodies are turned up towards him, in a way quite similar to other 'mannerist' features on Orpheus mosaics (Jesnick 1994; 1997: 62-64).

The Jerusalem Orpheus

The Orpheus mosaic pavement in Jerusalem (now at the Istanbul Archeological Museum, no. 1642) was found in 1901 in a courtyard of a Jewish house north-west of Damascus Gate (Vincent 1901, 1902; Avi-Yonah 1932: 172-3, no. 133, pls. 50-51; Bagatti 1952; Ovadiah and Mucznik 1981; Jesnick 1997: 16, no. 73, fig. 117 and bibliography there). The building consisted of a hall and two rooms, with a small apse decorated with a mosaic containing a cross at the centre; it probably served as a funerary chapel. The Orpheus mosaic decorates a large part of the hall's upper register (fig. IV-14); it is dated to the 6th century.

The oversized frontal Orpheus in the centre of the panel is a young seated figure (without a seat), presented frontally looking out with large eyes (pl. IV-5a). In his left hand Orpheus holds a multi-stringed cithara set on his left knee, which he strums with his right hand; he wears an embroidered chiton and a chlamys fastened with a fibula, and a Phrygian cap, and has sandals on his feet (Jesnick 1997: 68-71, figs. on pp. 183-189; the Jerusalem Orpheus belongs to the Thracian Orpheus type).

Orpheus is surrounded by several animals: a viper circles his head, confronting a mongoose, to the right, with a leash tied around its neck; on Orpheus's left a lamb and a bear look backwards,



Figure IV-14. The Orpheus mosaic pavement from Jerusalem.

towards him; under them is an eagle with a bulla on its neck. Beside and beneath the cithara are a bird on a tree, an owl, and a mouse (Rosen 1984). Below the Orpheus scene is a portrayal of a centaur and Pan, who are Dionysos's companions; the centaur is rendered on the left with a look of astonishment. His right hand touches his face, his left, with a bird or an animal pelt on the arm, holds (or drops ?) a cornucopia. Pan, on the right, holds out his right hand and holds a syrinx under his left arm. between the centaur and Pan is a rabbit. Most of the creatures are local animals. Small plants fill the whole space.

The Orpheus panel is surrounded by an inner frame of stylized flowers and by an wide outer frame with an inhabited acanthus scrolls containing animals and fruits and four heads, two bearded and two female (?) in the corners (the winds or seasons); in the centre of the lower acanthus border a jewelled woman holds a cornucopia.

The middle mosaic register below the Orpheus mosaic (pl. IV.5b) consists of three panels. Two are blank; the central one shows two nimbed female figures with identifying Greek names, Theodosia and Georgia, flanking a column or candlestick; Theodosia holds a handkerchief, Georgia a bird (pl. XI.3b). The lower register forms two squares and two circles of medallions showing hunting episodes. Two naked hunters occupy the corner medallions and the hunted lion and leopard the central medallions.

In its characteristics the large figure of the Jerusalem Orpheus accords with most Orpheus representations. The animals are those regularly represented surrounding Orpheus, although the arrangement differs from most mosaic depictions. Exceptional is the eagle with a bulla in an Orpheus scene though it appears also in an inhabited scrolls medallion (pl. VI-14d). The fight of the serpent and the mongoose sometimes appears in an Orpheus scene (see also Sakiet and Thina Orpheus mosaics: Jesnick 1997: 65, 81, fig. 154); this scene is a frequent Nilotic motif (Balty 1976) as well as appearing in a medallion of the inhabited vine scroll at the Church of Be'er Shema (Gazit and Lender 1993: pl. XXIb) and on mosaics at Qabr Hiram and Zaharani (pl. VII.6).

The figures of the centaur and Pan on the Jerusalem mosaic, constituting the main element in the design, are rare; they are seldom depicted among the animals in an Orpheus scene. However, they do appear on a 5th-6th-century ivory pyxis from the San Columbano monastery at Bobbio and the Abbey of St. Julien Brioude (fig. XII-16) (Volbach 1952: no. 91, pl. 28; 1961: 28, no. 84, pl. 84; Jesnick 1997: 84-5, figs. 11, 14). The centaur and Pan might have suited the notion of wild animals and creatures fascinated by Orpheus's music, thereby becoming tamed and under control, which is the centre of the Orpheus representation.

From the 4th century Orpheus taming the animals almost disappeared in western art, being transformed into a Christian Good Shepherd tending his flock (Barash 1980: 12, 14-15). The Jerusalem Orpheus is considered a Christian image⁹ and is the latest known representation of the Orpheus scene in Byzantine art in the East.

David with Goliath's Weapons at the Meroth Synagogue

In the Galilean synagogue of Meroth remains of a mosaic floor were found at the northern edge of the eastern aisle (Ilan and Damati 1984-85; 1985; 1987: 53-58; Talgam 1987: 149-152; Ilan 1989: 24-26). The fragment of the mosaic floor is dated by the excavators to the 5th century CE (Ilan and Damati 1985: 51). The mosaic depicts the figure of a young man, probably crowned, wearing a short white tunic with a red cloak over his left shoulder, fastened by a fibula (pl. IV-6; fig. IV-15). On the garb of the figure's right arm and hip are symbolic emblems in the form of disc-round designs, which appear frequently on garments of soldiers and high-ranking individuals on Byzantine mosaics (Ilan and Damati 1985: 52 and fig 3). A similar emblem appears on the right arm of Orpheus from Saragossa (Jesnick 1997: fig. 23f). The figure's eyes seem to have been destroyed (purposely?). Weapons surround the figure: an oval shield on which he leans, a helmet and a long sword in its sheath with an attached sling. On the corner of the mosaic along the frame (on the left side) beside the weapons is an inscription:

⁹ Ovadia and Mucznik (1981: 164-166) propose that the Orpheus mosaic in the first stage (late 4th or early 5th century) belonged to a local pagan family, while in the

second stage (second half of the 5th century) the mosaic was embraced by the Christians.



Figure IV-15. David with Goliath's weapons, pavement at Meroth Synagogue.

יודן בר שמעון מני 'Yudan Son of Shimeon Mani', which may refer to a donor (Naveh 1989: 305) or may be the artist's signature or the name of the figure itself (Ilan and Damati 1985: 54-55).

Most likely David is represented, surrounded by the weapons taken from Goliath after his victory (as suggested by the late Prof. Yadin and followed by the excavators Ilan and Damati 1985: 55 and note 12; Talgam 1987: 149-151). David removing Goliath's armour is recorded in Jewish legends (Ginzberg 1947, IV: 88). The posture of the figure at Meroth is similar to that of King David depicted in the Gaza-Maiumas mosaic, including the set of the right hand and a small part of the left hand which has survived (pl. IV.3). This sitting posture of the figure suggests that he was playing a lyre or cithara, which originally the figure might have clasped (pl. IV.6); but see Talgam (1987: 151), who argues that the space next to the figure is too small to accommodate a lyre and suggests the possibility of a palm branch held by the figure to symbolize victory in a fashion similar to other Hellenistic-Roman depictions. Several renditions of David show him with similar attire and with some of the weapons: on a silver

bowl from Cypros (Kitzinger 1977: figs. 195, 197) David and Goliath are depicted with a shield similar to the shield at Meroth.

The figure at Meroth probably represents David in a description scheme combining the customary portrayal of the Orpheus posture, sitting and holding a cithara, with the addition of the seized weapons surrounding David to signify his victory over his enemy. David's defeat of Goliath could possibly represent hope of redemption and victory over the enemies of Israel (Naveh 1989: 305).

The most likely interpretation for the Meroth figure is that it represents David, primarily since depictions on synagogue mosaic pavements show biblical or mythological personalities, whereas local individuals have not yet been found portrayed on a synagogue mosaic.

Daniel in the Lions' Den

Daniel in the Lions' Den (Daniel 6, 15-24) is a fairly popular theme in Jewish and especially early Christian art. Daniel, like Orpheus, exercised magical power by which he charmed the lions (Mathews 1993: 77-78). The scene appears on the mosaic pavements of the Na'aran and Susiya synagogues. The illustration is apparently based on the biblical narrative:

Then the king gave the order for Daniel to be brought, and thrown into the lion-pit. But he said to Daniel: 'Your God whom you serve at all times, may save you'. A stone was brought, and put over the mouth of the pit, and the king sealed it with his signet, and with the signets of his nobles so that no attempt could be made to rescue Daniel. The king went to his palace, and spent the night fasting; no woman was brought to him and sleep eluded him. He was greatly agitated and at the first light of dawn, he rose and went to the lion-pit. When he came near he called anxiously, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you serve continually, been able to save you from the lions?' Daniel answered 'Long live the King! My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths, and they have not injured me; he judged me innocent and moreover I had done your majesty no injury'. The king was overjoyed and gave orders that Daniel should be taken out of the pit. When this was done no trace of injury was found on him, because he had put his faith in his God. (Dan. 6: 16-24)

The 6th-century Na'aran synagogue hall mosaic pavement is decorated with the Daniel scene depicted within the Torah shrine panel on its lower



Figure IV-16. Daniel in the lions' den, mosaic pavement at Na'aran synagogue.

part (Hachlili 1988: 294-295, fig. VIII. 34 and fig. XI.11).

The damaged scene on the mosaic pavement is Daniel in the Lions' Den (fig. IV-16). The human figures were destroyed by iconoclasts sometime during the 6th century. Daniel himself is poorly preserved with only his arms remaining in an orans posture; he is flanked by a damaged pair of lions, of which only the rump of each survived, rendered in schematic and unidentical style (see their tails' different pose). Above Daniel's left arm is the identifying Hebrew inscription דניאל שלום [ל] דניאל 'Daniel shalom', while between Daniel and next to the lion's legs are some donors' inscriptions (Naveh 1978: nos.61-64).

A similar theme may have been portrayed on the mosaic pavement of the Susiya synagogue, in the westernmost panel (Gutman et al. 1981: 126). However, it is almost completely destroyed, and only a fragment of an animal tail and upper part and the end of the word דניאל [דניאל] [Daniel] is preserved (pl. X.2c), so it is difficult to make a positive identification.

Another depiction in a Jewish context appears on a stone orthostat found at 'En Samsam, probably originating in the 'En Nashut synagogue in the Golan (Ma'oz 1981: 112; Hachlili 1988: 321-322, fig. IX. 24b, pl. 88; 1995: 185-187, 203, no. 37). The stone may have been the base of the side-wall of an aedicule (fig. IV-17a). Its front extremity has the three-dimensional shape of a lion's torso; it has a head, a foreleg and a stylized mane. On one side of the stone a carved scene depicts a figure flanked by a lion on one side and a lioness suckling her cub on the other. Two rather square eagles flank the whole scene.

The central figure shown en-face holds up his hands. The right hand holds the lion's head; the lion and lioness, with small heads and stylized mane, stride in profile. The eagle heads turn to the centre, wings spread; the right eagle eats

grapes. The scene might be Daniel in the Lions' Den (Ilan 1969: 185; Ma'oz 1981: 112; 1995: 265-269), though the addition of the lioness and her cub gives the biblical scene a local naïve interpretation.

Two additional portrayals of this scene appear in a Byzantine Christian context in Israel:

A wall painting in a tomb near Lohamei Hagheltaot, dated to late 4th or early 5th century (Foerster 1986), shows Daniel, in orans posture, in Parthian attire, and wearing a Phrygian cap, between two animals, lions (?) flanked by a pair of candelabra (fig. IV-17b). The scene is poorly executed, quite like the depiction of the Na'aran synagogue.

A scene possibly illustrating Daniel in the lions' den was carved and incised on the western wall in the northern cave at Tel Lavnin, Judean Shephelah, dating to the 5th-6th century (Zissu 1999). The scene consists of a lioness (or a lion?) with head en-face turning towards a Greek inscription on the left reading 'Daniel/Ioannes/the priest'; above is a deeply carved cross (fig. IV-17c). To the left of the inscription Zissu (1999: 567) describes some remains of another lion (?). He maintains that this scene is a depiction of Daniel in the lion's den, with the figure of Daniel replaced by the cross, and the inscription indicating the significance of the theme.

Daniel in the Lions' Den is a popular theme in Early Christian art (fig. IV-18), appearing on wall paintings of catacombs and on sarcophagi in Rome (Ehrenstein 1923: chap. XXXVI: figs. 1-3; Bock and Goebel 1961: fig. 49; Grabar 1968: paintings—ill. 1,2, 26, 29; Tronzo 1986: fig. 95; Ferrua 1991: fig. 139). In these scenes Daniel is usually depicted in orans pose and flanked by a pair of lions; frequently he is naked.¹⁰

¹⁰ Foerster (1986: 418-9) claims that the scene of Daniel in the lions' den in Christian funerary art in the 4th century

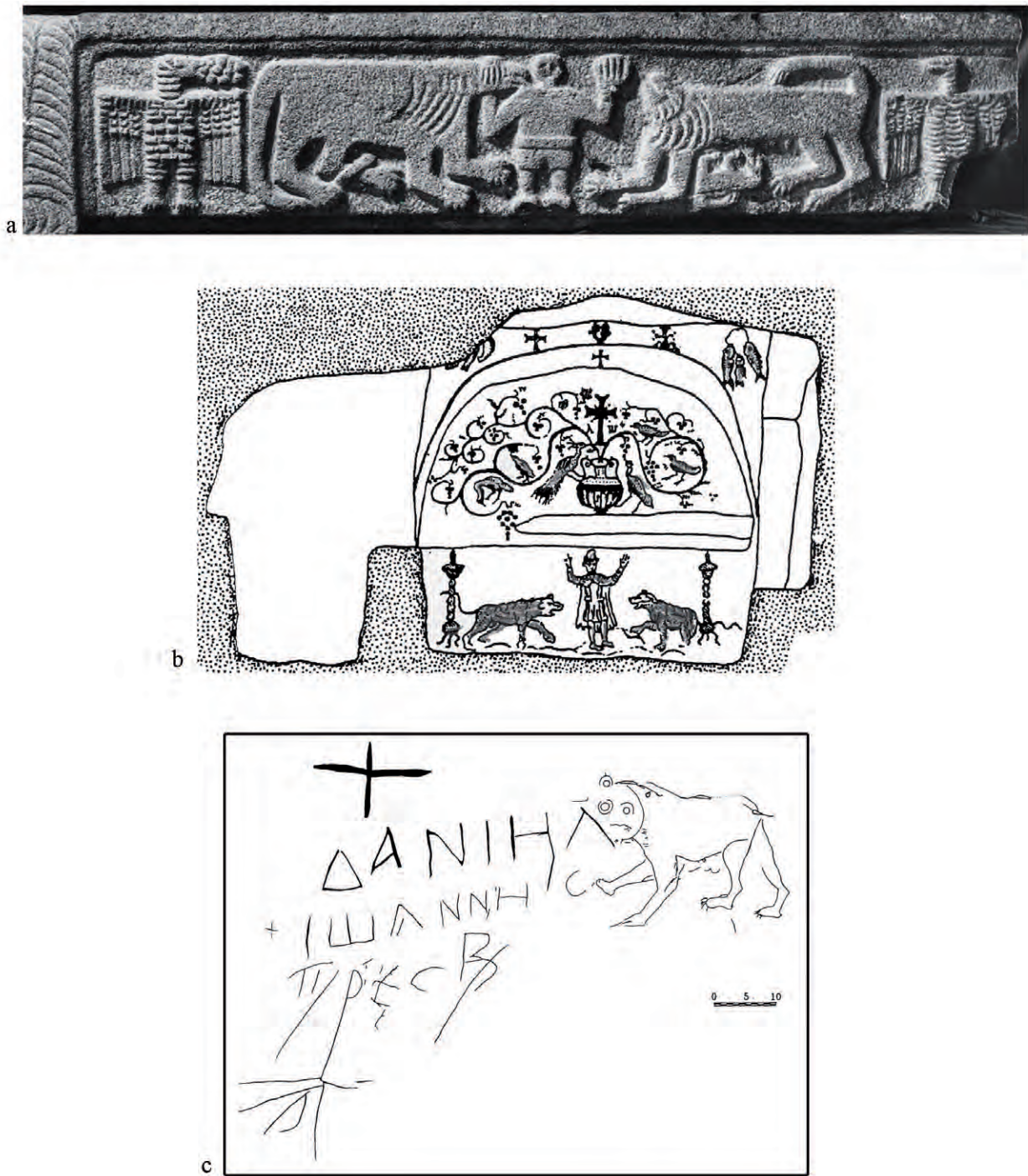


Figure IV-17. Daniel in the Lions' Den: a. on a stone relief from 'En Nashut; b. in a tomb near Lohamei Haghetaot; c. carving in a cave at Lavnin, Judaeen Shephelah

in the West renders Daniel naked in orans posture, flanked by two lions kneeling or lying down; whereas the 5th-6th-century examples in the East (also in the West)

show Daniel attired in a Parthian dress and a Phrygian cap, with the flanking lions standing or walking.

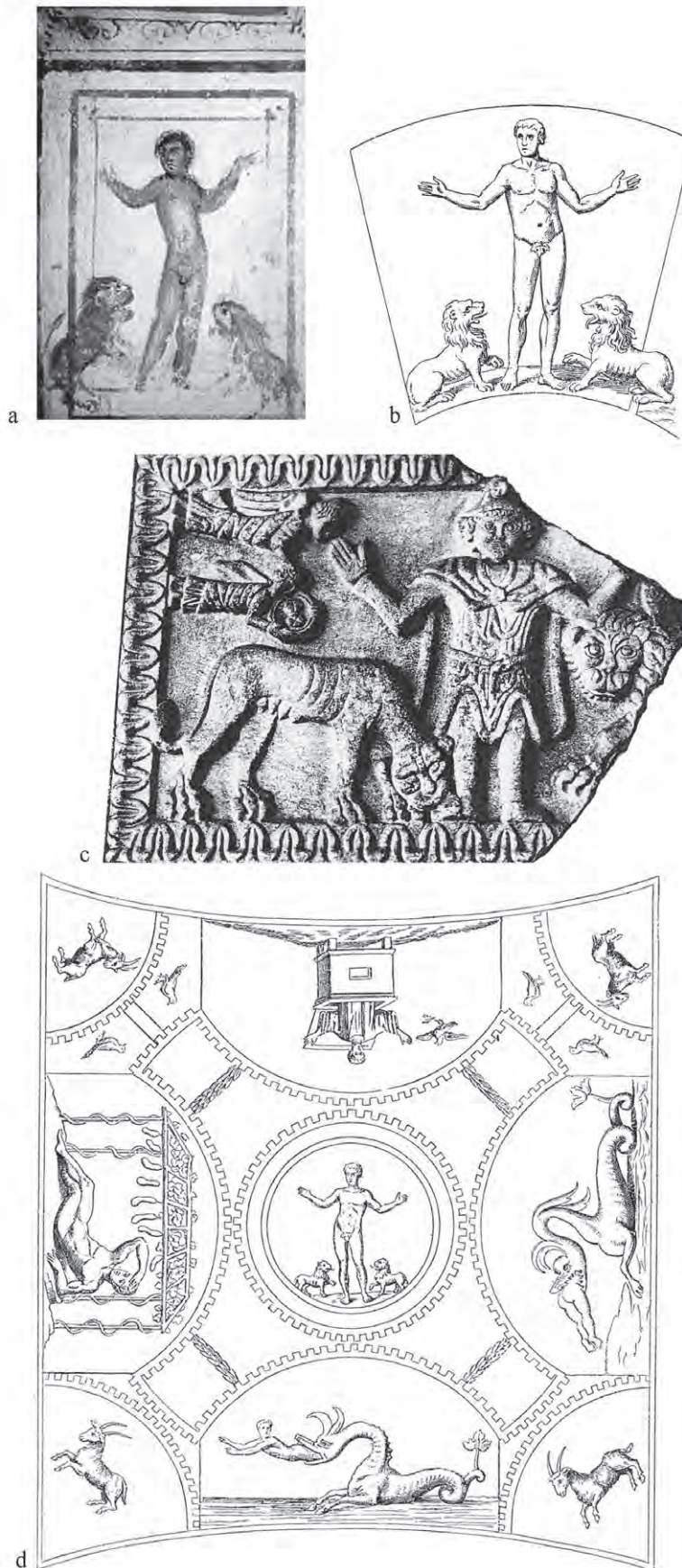


Figure IV-18. Daniel in the Lions' Den in wall paintings and sarcophagi.

Several copper strips, presumably from a liturgical box probably from a church and found at Umm al-Kundum, Jordan are decorated with medallions in relief. among them is the scene of Daniel flanked by a pair of lions (Piccirillo 1993: 316, fig. 657). At Sfax (and Bordj-el-Ioudi) in North Africa Daniel in the Lions' Den is depicted in an 5th-6th century Early Christian tomb-mosaic; Dunbabin (1978: 191-2, pl. 191) argues that this representation is a standardized motif modelled on designs decorating mass-produced earthenware, pottery, and lamps. A relief from Thasos, dated to the 6th century, shows Daniel in the Lions' Den wearing Persian-Phrygian attire. His hands are in orans posture and he is flanked by a lioness on his right and a lion on his left (Grabar 1963: 48, pl. 17; Mathews 1993: 77-78, fig. 55).

Scholars relate the theme of Daniel in the Lions' Den to a death cult and assume that the scene symbolizes a person who is saved because of his beliefs. Goodenough (1953, II: 129) maintains that the Daniel scene at Na'aran symbolizes victory over death, as illustrated by the word *shalom*. Grabar (1968: 8) contends that figures such as Daniel, Noah, and others in Christian funerary art are 'allegories of the soul of the pious believer and of Christ as the shepherd' (see Berliner-Landau 1994 for a different interpretation).

The theme of Daniel in the Lions' Den, in contrast to the other Biblical scenes found on synagogue pavements, is depicted symbolically and not in the narrative style used elsewhere. The representation of a figure flanked by lions might have been enough to suggest the theme to observers, because the story concerns only Daniel himself and the lions.

The Twelve Tribes

The nave pavement of the Yaphi'a synagogue, which is mostly destroyed, was probably divided into panels, of which only the westernmost has survived. It shows a square panel containing a large circle, within which another, smaller circle is inscribed. In the space between the two circles twelve small interlacing circles appear. Unfortunately only two of these circles have survived (Sukenik 1951: 6-24, fig. 5, pls. VIII, IXa). The central circle contains a bull facing right, and the other circle, which is badly damaged, depicts the head of a horned animal with two feet facing left (fig. III-2). Above its head only three Hebrew

letters have endured: םר׳ [פא]. Presumably this is the name Ephraim, one of the twelve tribes, whose symbol is a wild ox. The other bull probably represents another tribe-Manasseh.

Sukenik (1951: 18) maintains that the circles contain the symbols of the twelve tribes. This, he asserts, is illustrated by a passage in Midrash Rabba (BaMidbar 82) which says, regarding the two surviving circles, '...On the flag of Ephraim was embroidered a bull (or ox)... On the flag of the tribe of Manasseh was embroidered a wild ox'. However, a discrepancy exists here, as the sign of Ephraim in the mosaic is the wild ox, and the sign of Manasseh is the bull (Sukenik 1951: 20-23; but see Goodenough 1953, I: 217-218; 1964, VIII: 168, who suggests that this mosaic portrays a zodiac). The Yaphi'a circle design however is a different scheme from the Jewish zodiac (see also Naveh 1978: 70). This design is unique and has not been found in any other symbolic or iconographic portrayal in ancient Jewish art. Moreover, its theme probably does not describe a biblical story but originates in Rabbinical literature.

The Consecration of the Tabernacle, Its Vessels, Aaron, and the Daily Offerings

The depictions on bands 3 and 4 of the nave mosaic at Sepphoris are connected. They show three of the Tabernacle vessels: the water basin, the altar (on band 3), and the Shewbread Table (on band 4, centre panel); remnants of Aaron the priest, the sacrificial animals—a bull and two lambs (rams), an oil jar, a flour basket, two trumpets (on band 3), and a fruit basket (on band 4, right panel). Some of the images are accompanied by explanatory inscriptions in Hebrew (pl. IV.7; fig. IV-19a).

Weiss and Netzer (1996: 20-22; Weiss 2005: 77-94) interpreted these two bands as 'The Consecration of Aaron to the Service of the Tabernacle and the Daily Offering' depicted on band 3 and the left panel of band 4. They are an illustration of Ex. 29. The two right panels of band 4 contain the Shewbread Table and the baskets of First Fruits (Weiss and Netzer 1996: 24; Weiss 2005: 94-104). The Consecration of the Tabernacle and its vessels, the daily offerings, and the dedication of Aaron are described in Ex. 29: 39-40.

Band 3 at Sepphoris shows from right to left: a partially destroyed water basin placed on a base

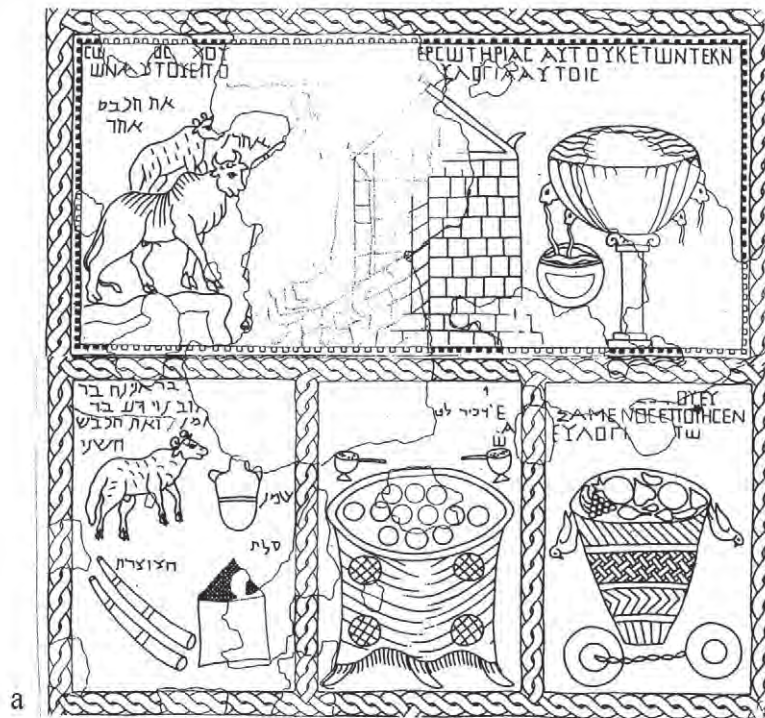


Figure IV-19. The Consecration of Aaron to the Service of the Tabernacle and the Daily Sacrifice: a. Sephoris synagogue mosaic, bands 3 and 4; b. Dura Europos wall painting, panel WB2.

formed as an Ionic column. The basin is full of water represented by wavy lines and has two animal heads projecting on the left side. A stream of water flows into a bowl from their mouths (originally the right side of the basin possibly had the same projecting animal heads and bowl). Left of the basin, its side destroyed, is a large altar (for reconstructions see Weiss 2005: fig. 32) with horns on the gable corners. Left of the altar is the figure of the High Priest Aaron, of which only his name

אהרן Aaron in Hebrew and a few fragments of his garment have survived. A single bell survives at the hem, which is described in the bible as ornamenting Aaron's tunic (Ex. 28: 34).

In the panel at the left side of band 3 a bull walks to the right on, and behind him is a lamb (pl. IV-7; fig. IV-19a). Above them the inscription **את הכבש אחד** 'the one lamb' appears. The left panel of band 4 continues the foregoing scene: it portrays another lamb with the inscription,

ואת הכבש השני 'and the other lamb'; a black two-handled jar has the Hebrew inscription שמן 'oil'; below it is a square container with the Hebrew inscription סלת 'fine flour', shown as a triangular heap of chequered pattern. At the lower left two trumpets are identified by the Hebrew inscription הצוצרות 'trumpets'.

These depictions on the left panels of bands 3 and 4 illustrate the daily sacrifice based on the biblical description of the Consecration of the Tabernacle in Ex. 29: 39-40 and Numb. 28: 4-5:

Offer one ram at dawn and the second between dusk and dark. With the first lamb offer a tenth of an epha of flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of pure oil of pounded olives, and a drink-offering of a quarter of a hin of wine. (Ex.29: 39-40)

Only the names and labels necessary to explain the depiction were taken from this biblical text; all the daily offerings—the bull, two lambs, flour and oil—are mentioned; only the wine is missing. The two trumpets are not mentioned in this biblical description. However, Weiss and Netzer (1996: 22; Weiss 2000: 25, 93) record an interpretation to Num. 10: 10 in the Midrash (Sifrei Zuta, Beha'alotekha 10: 10) which links the blowing of the two trumpets to the daily sacrifice and possibly reflects the practices at the Second Temple period.

A similar depiction, interpreted as the Consecration of the Tabernacle and Its Priest, is portrayed on panel WB2 of the Dura Europos Synagogue wall painting (Kraeling 1979: 123-131; Hachlili 1998: 117-18, fig. III-12, pl. III-11).

The interior of a sanctuary at Dura appears in the upper part of the panel. It is a modest structure with gabled roof and columns (fig. IV-19b). The Ark of the Covenant stands inside the sanctuary and in front of a veil; in front of the sanctuary a seven-branched menorah, is flanked by two thymiateria or candlesticks. Green and pink curtains hang on the upper panel to the right and left. Aaron the High Priest in ceremonial dress stands next to the sanctuary. He is designated by a Greek inscription *Αρον* Aaron. A sacrificial animal lies on top of an altar to the left. Three figures stand at each end of the composition, wearing Iranian dress and holding short curved trumpets in their right hands. A figure at the lower left of the scene grasps the horns of a humped red heifer in his left hand and holds a long-handled ax in his right. At the lower right, two sacrificial animals, a ram and a bullock, are shown. The lower part of the

panel portrays a wall of dressed stones, with three closed doors surmounted with conch-decorated arches. The central door is larger than the two side ones, and has a green-pink curtain hanging in front of it.

This scene is generally interpreted as the Consecration of the Tabernacle and Its Priest (Exodus 29; Numbers 7). Goodenough (1964, X: 19-26) contends that it presents the 'Open Mystic' Temple of the priests; Renov (1970: 67-72) assumes that the scene is a view of Herod's Temple from the Nicanor Gate (but see Avi-Yonah *ibid.*: 73-74). The Dura scene has some additional details (Weiss and Netzer 1996: 23) such as the blowing of the trumpets (Num. 10: 1-3) and perhaps the burning of the red heifer (Num. 19). Similar scenes of Aaron and offerings appear on the Byzantine Basilewsky pyxis, now in the Hermitage Museum, and on the Christian manuscripts of the Octateuchs and the Ashburnham Pentateuch (Weiss 2005: 83-5, figs. 27-29).

The central panel of Band 4 contains the Shewbread Table (Weiss and Netzer 1996: 24-25; Weiss 2005: 95-101), a round, three-legged table (which is unlike the biblical description of a four-legged table in Ex. 25: 23-30; 37: 10-16) covered by a cloth (described in Num. 4: 7) decorated with four criss-cross circles in its corners and fringes on its ends (pl. IV.7; fig. IV-20a). Twelve round loaves (some destroyed) are placed on the table arranged in three rows: three loaves in the top and bottom rows and six in the middle, which differs from the biblical record: 'and bake twelve cakes... place them upon the pure table...in two rows, six to a row' (Lev. 24: 6). At either end of the table are two vessels with long handles; they correspond to the description of censers holding frankincense (Weiss and Netzer 1996: 24) that was used in the Tabernacle and the Temple as cited in the Tosefta (Menahot 11: 15).

This tripod table has several comparisons (Hachlili 2001: 233-239, fig. V-13, pl. II-38): a table rendered on the 4th-century Samaritan synagogue mosaic at el-Hirbeh shown together with a menorah and a sanctuary (pl. II.3a) (Magen 1993b: 71; Hachlili 2001: 238, 264-266, Figs. V-13e,g, VII-1). The table is a round X-crossed tripod type with eight loaves and vessels set in two rows on it. This form also possibly has its origin in earlier bronze tables from Cyprus (Hachlili 2001: Fig. V-13d) and is similar to Roman tripod tables. A simple two-legged table with two piles on it is rendered on a Samaritan clay lamp (Sussman

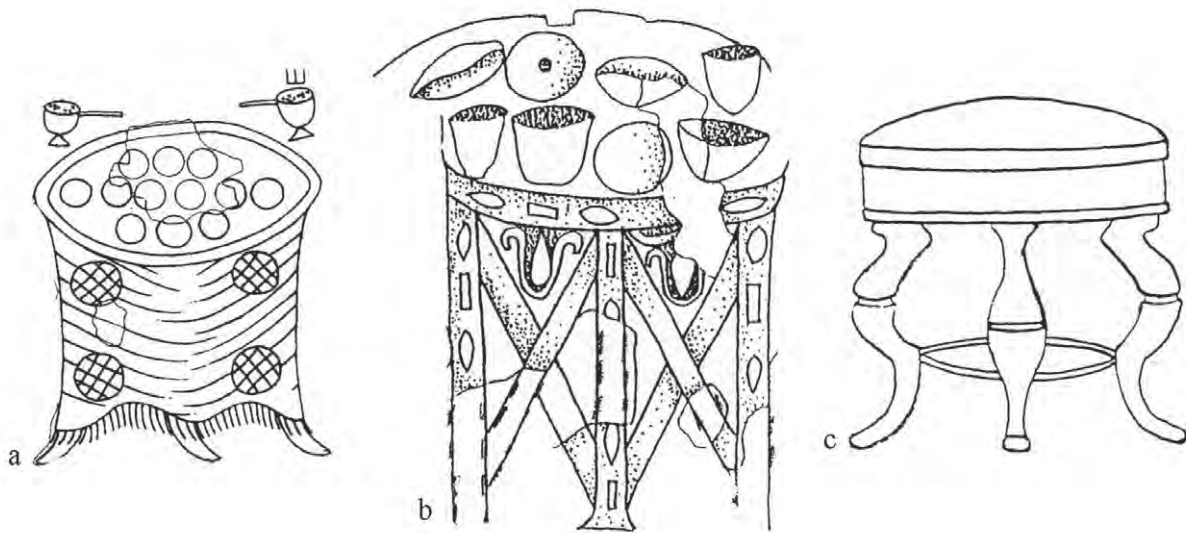


Figure IV-20. Shewbread Tables: a. Sepphoris mosaic pavement; b. el-Hirbeh mosaic pavement; c. Dura Europos wall painting panel WB1.

1986-7: 139, fig. 19). Another Shewbread Table and menorah are crudely rendered on a lintel from the Qasrin synagogue (Hachlili 1995: 184, 195 no. 5, fig. 5; Hachlili 2001: 42-3, Figs. II-2, II-18b); it may be equated to the table incised on the Second Temple period plastered wall in Jerusalem.

Another variation of the tripod type is a gold, round table with moulded legs, painted in front of the menorah and the Tabernacle in panel WB1 of the mid-3rd century Dura Europos synagogue wall paintings. It recalls three-legged stone tables discovered in Second Temple Jerusalem, and a painted table on a Hellenistic tomb at Marisa (Avigad 1983: 168-170, figs. 188, 189); also a tripod table painted in the Callistus catacomb (Finney 1994: 214, fig. 6.47). The tripod table depicted on the Jerusalem coins of King Herod, different from the rectangular form of the Shewbread Table, might have represented one of the Temple tables connected with the sacrifice (Meshorer 1997: 63-64, pls. 44-45: coins 48-54).

The Sepphoris Shewbread Table is similar to the one from Dura Europos in its round top and three-legged character (similar also to some early 10th-8th century BCE images: see Yarden 1991: figs. 95-97) and its form possibly derives from early bronze tripod tables from Cyprus.

The Sepphoris table is unique in the covering cloth and in that it appears alone in a panel, in contrast to the Shewbread Tables of the Second Temple period, as well as those on the

Dura Europos wall painting, the Qasrin relief, and the Samaritan el-Hirbeh mosaic pavement, which are rendered together with the menorah (Hachlili 2001: 239, Figs. II-18b; VII-1). In these cases the table and the menorah represent the two most important Tabernacle and Temple holy vessels. However, the depiction at Sepphoris of the loaves of bread, the addition of the two censers, and the close proximity of the Shewbread Table to the biblical scene of the Consecration of the Tabernacle indicate that it shows a Tabernacle and Temple vessel. This is comparable to the Shewbread Table painted on panel WB1 at Dura Europos, which appears in the same biblical scene of the Consecration of Aaron.

The table, grouped with the menorah, is intended to represent the sanctity of the Temple. But the Shewbread Table, unlike the menorah, appears only in a few examples. It did not develop into a symbol, nor did the table have any function in the synagogue.

Talgam (2000: 104) suggests that a round shape was chosen for the Shewbread Table in the central panel of band 4 at the Sepphoris synagogue 'to distinguish it from the altar that stood on the bema of the Christian church and that is also depicted on wall-mosaics from the Byzantine period (such as the mosaic of Abel and Melchizedek at san Vitale, Ravenna)... For the same reason wine was omitted from the components of the daily offering at Sepphoris', probably because of 'the significance attributed to it as one of the components of the Eucharist in the Christian Mass'.

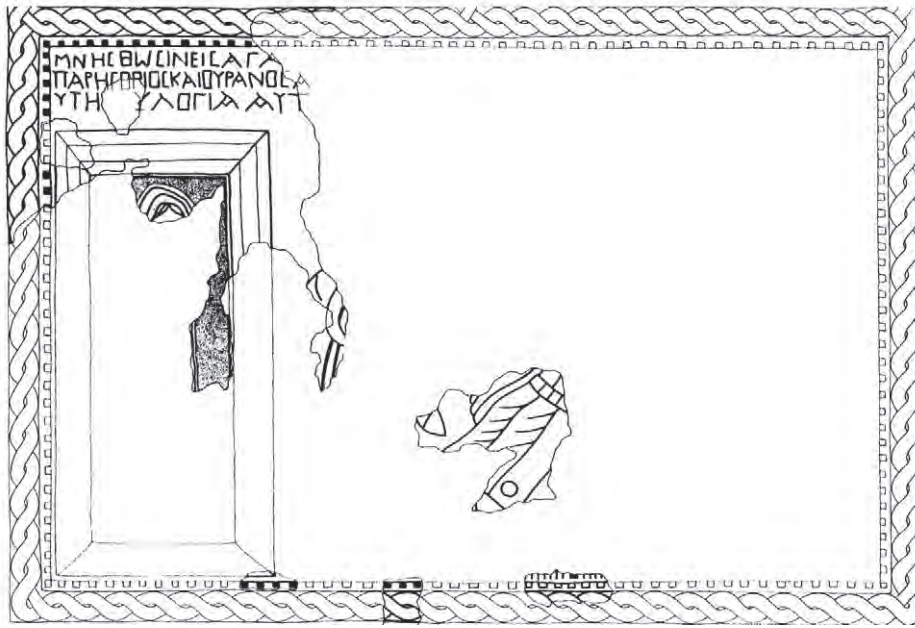


Figure IV-21. The men's (angels') visit to Abraham and Sarah, Sepphoris nave mosaic, band 7.

Weiss (2005: 99) refutes this suggestion, maintaining that the depiction was meant 'to symbolize the table rather than precisely describe its actual appearance in the Tabernacle or Temple'.

The right-hand panel of band 4 of the Sepphoris mosaic shows a basket of First Fruits (Weiss and Netzer 1996: 24-25; Weiss 2005: 101-104). The basket is made of four bands of plaited wicker and contains a cluster of grapes, a date, a pomegranate, perhaps a loaf of bread, and some other unidentifiable fruits. The basket is ornamented at each end by two hanging birds. A pair of cymbals linked by a chain is rendered below the basket. This probably illustrates the presenting of the First Fruits as described in Deut. 26; the same basket of fruits and especially the hanging birds are noted in the later tradition of the Mishna and Talmud (Weiss and Netzer 1996: 24; Weiss 2000: 24, 26).

The Sepphoris mosaic depiction on Bands 3 and 4 and the Dura Europos wall painting on Panel WB2 have similar elements in their scenes, mainly the inscribed figure of Aaron and the animals for the sacrifice. However, the Sepphoris depiction seems like a combination of various images, which jointly represent the main duties and ceremonies performed in the Tabernacle and the Temple, whereas the Dura painting is more of a narrative rendition of the same. Sed Rajna (2000: 50) contends that both derive from the same model. Weiss and Netzer (1996: 23; Weiss

2005: 82-83) maintain that the Sepphoris scene is a narrative one, based on Ex. 29, with three main foci: the purification ceremony of Aaron and his sons, the offering of the bull, and the daily sacrifice of two lambs; the two bands are purposely linked and thus complement one another. Weiss further claims that Aaron stands opposite the entrance to the Tabernacle, which he identifies as represented in the architectural façade of Band 2 above.

The two Sepphoris mosaic bands, 3 and 4, are depicted beneath band 2 showing the Torah shrine with flanking menoroth. All three are linked through the common perception of commemorating the Tabernacle, and more especially the Temple cult and rites.

The Men's Visit to Abraham and Sara

Band 7, the last of the Sepphoris synagogue nave bands, is the one closest to the main entrance and is almost completely destroyed (Weiss and Netzer 1996: 32-3; Weiss 2005: 153-161, figs. 94-95). The only remains seen on the left consist of a frame with traces of a figure with a draped head and robe. To the right, the edge of one figure's garment and the lower part of another figure's garment are seen; under this figure some of a fringed hem has survived (fig. IV-21).

The excavators interpret the scene by comparison to several Christian examples, among them

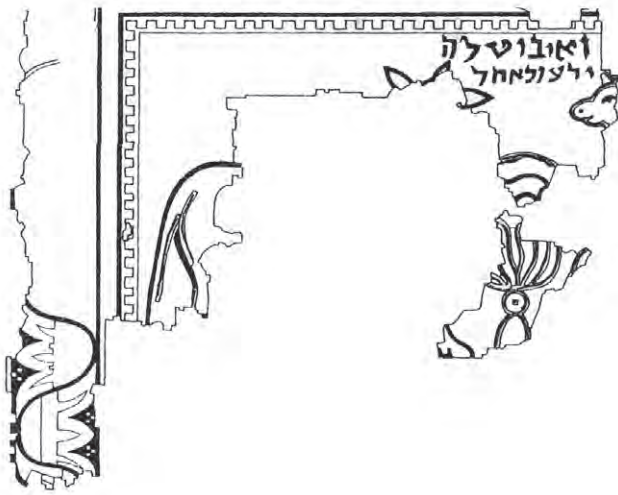


Figure IV-22. The vision of the End of Days, Meroth.

the 6th-century wall mosaic from the presbyterium of the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna (Weiss 2005: 157-8, fig. 98); the scene is rendered on the major part of the mosaic. It shows the men (angels) visiting Abraham and Sarah to tell them of the coming of Isaac's birth (Gen. 18: 1-15). The Binding of Isaac is portrayed on the left part of the mosaic.

Accordingly, the interpretation of the Sepphoris scene shows the figure of Sarah standing at the tent entrance on the left. The remains of the garment next to the tent possibly belong to Abraham, whereas the other garment and the rest of the destroyed panel might have presented the three visitors reclining around a low table (Weiss 2005: 158-160, fig. 100). This scene, common in Christian art, is regarded as a prefiguration of the Incarnation or of the Annunciation.

The grouping of the two scenes at Sepphoris of band 6, portraying the Binding of Isaac, and the visit of the angels to Abraham and Sarah (the hospitality of Abraham) in band 7, together create an inclusive iconographic unit, similar to the scenes on the wall mosaic of the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna. The figure standing at the tent entrance might also be compared to the Binding of Isaac scene at Dura Europos (pl. IV.2a; fig. IV-2) where some scholars suggest the figure is Sarah; and to the figure of Sarah, identified by her accompanying name, rendered in the upper right part of the Christian wall painting in the 4th-century tomb chapel of the Allegorical Figures at El Bagawat in Egypt (fig. IV-5).

The excavators suggest that the two Sepphoris bands, viewed from the entrance towards the

Torah shrine, are arranged according to sequence of the events described in the Bible: first the visitors telling Abraham and Sarah about Isaac's pending birth (band 7) and then the second scene of the Binding of Isaac in band 6 (Weiss and Netzer 1996: 34; Weiss 2005: 228-231).

However, the two scenes might perhaps be one continuous story, the Binding of Isaac in band 6 taken up on band 7 by the figure of Sarah standing at the tent entrance to welcome the returning Abraham, Isaac, and the youths (Gen. 22: 19). A similar scene of the return of Abraham to the waiting servants is part of the three scenes following the Sacrifice of Isaac in the 6th-century Vienna Genesis (Weitzmann 1957: 87, fig. 8). This is feasible, especially considering that the Sepphoris nave mosaic is arranged from the inscription flanked by lions in band 1 to the entrance; thus the Binding of Isaac in band 6 comes first, so band 7 should portray a later scene rather than an earlier story.

Illustrations of the End of Days

A group of mosaics show episodes illustrating biblical verses relating to peace on earth. This is an unusual rendition, expressing a conceptual perception of a messianic vision of peace rather than a Bible story.

Pairs of animals that are acknowledged enemies are peacefully portrayed on several mosaics; they are depicted facing each other, accompanied by the inscribed verse of Isaiah 11: 6 or Isaiah 65: 25; the scene apparently emphasizes peace.

The plaster floor at the hall of the Beth Midrash at Meroth was covered by a mosaic pavement in the early 7th century, of which about half remains (Ilan and Damati 1984-85; 1985; 1987: 77-80; Talgam 1987: 149-152; Ilan 1989: 33-34). The pavement consisted of three panels to the south (and possibly another three to the north). The main panel in the centre shows a scene facing west with the remains of a lamb in the right and a wolf in the left, flanking an amphora. The accompanying biblical Hebrew verse is *וְהָיָה זֵאִיב וְטִלְהָ יָרְעוּ כְּאַחַד* 'The wolf and the lamb will graze together' (Isaiah 65: 25) pl. IV-8a; fig. IV-22); this and the similar verse in Isaiah 11: 6, 'the wolf will live with the lamb', are part of the vision of the messianic peace. It is interesting that the inscribed verse is the lesser known of the two, and is unique to the Meroth mosaic both in language and design.

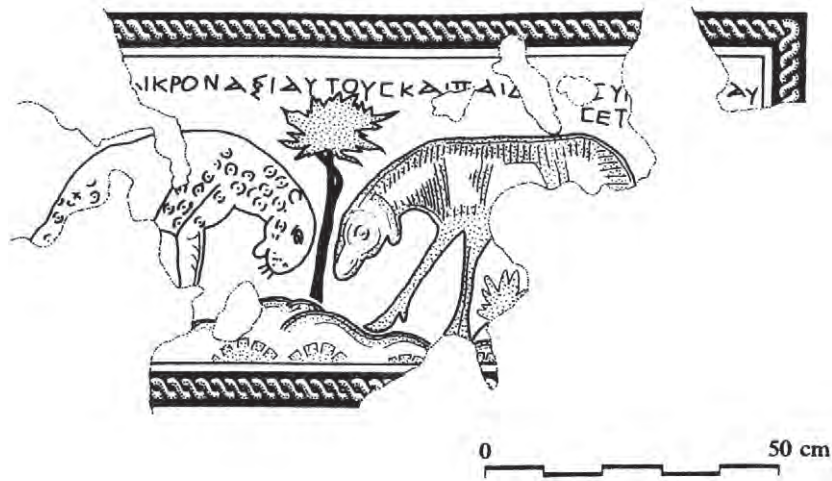


Figure IV-23. The vision of the End of Days on a mosaic at Anemurium.

Here Isaiah's vision of the End of Days is portrayed as perfect peace all over nature; the rise of messianic peace is implied by the illustration of animals, even natural enemies, which will be at peace with one another. Perhaps it is meant to express some kind of prayer for peace (Naveh 1989: 305).

A similar depiction of flanking animals accompanied by the second part of the verse from Isaiah, and possibly also symbolizing the End of Days, is found on the mosaic pavement of the room north of the church of the Acropolis at Ma'in (Jordan), dated to 719-20 (De Vaux 1938: 227, fig. 2; Piccirillo 1993: 201, figs. 301-302,312). The original scene rendered a zebu and a lion flanking a tree, of which only two paws, a tail, a bush, a hump, a hoof, and the points of two horns have survived (pl. IV.8b). Above at the border of the panel is the biblical verse in Greek *καί λέων ὡς βοῦς φάγ/ονται ἄχυρα* 'And the lion will eat [straw] like the ox' (Isaiah 11: 7; 65: 25). The original figures were damaged and covered later by a bush, an amphora, and vine scrolls. Piccirillo contends that the scene signifies 'the messianic reign of peace as foretold by Isaiah and thought to have been realized by Christ'.

Four more Christian mosaic pavements with similar illustrations of the Peaceful Kingdom, depicting pairs of ordinarily hostile animals, and identified by excerpts from Isaiah 11: 6-8, were discovered in the churches at Karlik and Korykos and the Necropolis Church at Anemurium in Cilicia in Turkey, and at the Mariana Church in Corsica (Russell 1987: 70-74; cat. no. 14; Donceel

Voûte 1988: 487-488; Campbell 1995: 125-128, figs. 1-8).

The pavement of the church at Karlik (Gough 1972; 1978: 411-419, fig. 63, pls. 130a,b) is the most complete version of the theme. It shows animals that are known enemies now peacefully portrayed in four pairs, almost in the order of the biblical verse: in the first row are wolf and lamb, leopard and kid; in the second row lion and ox, cow and bear, with an additional pair of stag and elephant not mentioned in the verse. The scene is accompanied by the full inscription of Isaiah 11: 6-8, although the text is arranged freely with the appropriate clause above each of the pairs.

The mosaic fragment in the Necropolis Church at Anemurium, dated to the mid-5th century (Russell 1987: 70-74, No. 14, pls. XIII, 19, fig. 17), shows a leopard and a kid flanking a tree (fig. IV-23), accompanying them is the surviving portion of the Greek Septuagint legend with a changed order of the clauses *καί παιδίον μικρόν ἀξι αὐτούς καί πάρδ[α]λι[ς] συγ[αναπ] αὐσετ[αι ἐρίφω]* 'and a little child will lead them and leopard will lie down with kid' (Isaiah 11: 6). Russell maintains that a second pair was originally depicted in the missing area to the north.

In the Cathedral Church of Korykos (Herzfeld and Guyer 1930: 106-7, figs. 104-5; Budde 1972: figs. 273-274) only a fragment of the mosaic before the apse has survived, depicting a lioness, a leopard, and a ram, with the Greek Septuagint inscription (discerned by Russell 1987: 73, note 202) *απαύσεται ἐρίφω/μικρόν ἀξι αὐτούς* 'the leopard shall lie down with the kid

and a little child shall lead them' (Isaiah 11: 6).

The two fragmentary mosaics at Anemurium and Korykos are quite similar in their depictions and cite the same verse from Isaiah.

The only example of this theme in the west appears in the mosaic fragment of the Mariana church in Corsica, probably dating to the late 5th century (Moracchini-Mazel 1967; Russell 1987: 72, and n. 200) portraying an ox and a manger of straw accompanied by the early Latin inscription [*et leo quasi bos p]aleas manduc[abunt]*’, [And the lion will eat]straw like the [ox’ (Isaiah 11: 7; 65: 25), similar to the mosaic remains and inscription at Ma’in.

In all the above examples the accompanying Isaiah text is not accurately cited but is freely arranged so as to fit the depictions. The text has a distinct explanatory purpose, so the appropriate clause is placed above each particular pair.

To this group of mosaics rendering the Peaceful Kingdom Russell (1987: 73 and n. 204) adds the Cilician churches of Ayas and Dag Pazari which portray pairs of animals. They lack the biblical inscriptions, and the animals are differently arranged, but they might still belong to the same theme. Perhaps the lion and bull facing each other on the Martyr church at Beth She’an (pl. IX.2a) might be part of the same theme.

Campbell (1995: 129-133) argues that the explanation for the use of the iconography of the Peaceful Kingdom on these mosaics (as suggested for the Karlik and Mariana mosaics: Gough 1978: 419) is too general hence not entirely adequate, though the emphasis on peace would be suitable for a time of controversy in an attempt to reconcile the ecclesiastical/political events in the east. Instead Campbell maintains that a simple elucidation for these illustrations could be a reference to the rite of baptism; this was highly important to 4th-5th-century theologians and it was also appropriate to decorate church pavements by this symbolic means. Campbell (1995: 134) dates all these mosaics to the 5th-6th century over a period of some 50-70 years. She concludes, ‘we see a literal depiction of three biblical verses designed from readily available visual sources... and reveal... something about the liturgy which was being practiced in these functioning churches’.

Dunbabin (1978: 230-31) suggests that the rows of animals rendered in the scene of Noah’s Ark on the Misis mosaic also follow a favourite

theme in Christian churches of bands of animals moving peacefully. They too are interpreted as the Animal Paradise, the peaceful assembly of animals described by Isaiah.

Scenes with a symbolic conception rather than a narrative theme, and accompanied by other biblical verses, are found on Jordanian mosaic pavements at Mount Nebo. The western panel of the nave of the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius at Mukhayyat on Mount Nebo (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 62; Piccirillo 1993: 164-5, fig. 213) shows two bulls flanking an altar (pl. IX.3). Like all other such scenes, it has an accompanying biblical verse in Greek: ‘Then they shall lay calves upon thy altar’ (Psalms 51: 21).

The sanctuary mosaic of the Theotokos Chapel, dated to the early 7th century (Piccirillo 1993: 151, fig. 200), has a comparable scene on a rectangular panel in front of the altar decorated with a heraldic composition of two bulls flanking a temple/sanctuary image, themselves flanked by two gazelles and two flower clusters. Iconoclasts damaged the animals except for the gazelle at the northern end (pl. II.3b). Above the scene appears an inscription from Psalms 51: 21, in Greek: ‘Then they shall lay calves upon thy altar’. As noted, this concluding verse of the psalm, which contains a prayer for the future of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and renewal of the sacrificial rites, accompanies the depictions of these mosaics. The flanking animals are symbolic of this hope. Apart from this verse, the symbolic scenes with flanking animals use only verses from Isaiah 11: 6-8; 65: 25, which describe future visions of messianic peace.

Talgam (2000: 107-109) indicates similarities between the portrayals of the eschatological biblical verses relating to the End of Days in the above Christian examples and certain synagogue mosaics designs, such as the depiction of rams at Susiya and the offering of sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple at Sephoris.

By the mid-6th and early 7th century, narrative figural scenes were doubtless no longer feasible for Jews or Christians (at Meroth and Ma’in) and were replaced by a more conceptual rendition. This is implied by the mosaics presenting a common pattern of flanking or confronting animals, but with accompanying biblical verses providing them with symbolic meaning.

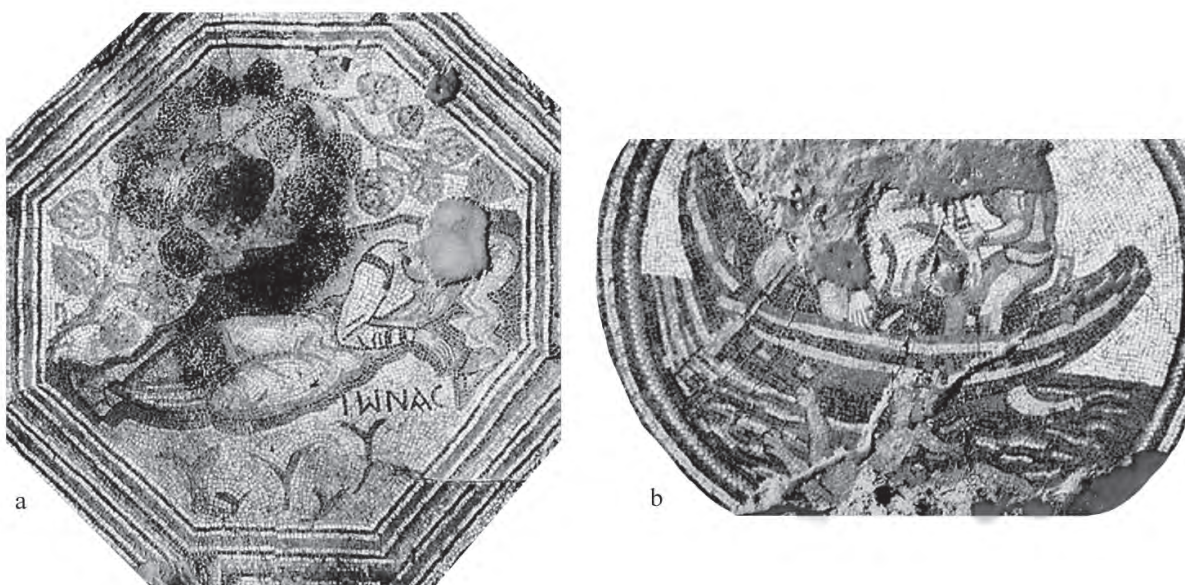


Figure IV-24. Jonah depicted at the church of Mahat el-Urdi mosaic, Beth Guvrin.

Jonah

Biblical depictions, although common in Jewish art on synagogue mosaic pavements, are rare in early Christian art on church floors, probably owing to a legal sanction decreed by Theodosius in 427 prohibiting the depiction of crosses or figurative themes on that place (*Cod. Just.* 1, 8, 1). The only exceptions known to date in the area are the episodes of Adam in Paradise ruling the animals on the mosaic of the late 5th-century Haouarte church in Syria (see above) and of the Jonah cycle on a mosaic pavement of the Byzantine church Mahat el-Urdi at Beth Guvrin (5th-6th century: Baramki 1972; Ovadiah R. 1974; Foerster 1978). The Mahat el-Urdi church consists of a nave decorated with opus sectile, and mosaic pavements in the north and south aisles with a geometric design; these were damaged by iconoclasts. The north aisle has a design of octagons in the centre, squares and hexagons around it filled with peacocks, fish, animals, birds, figures, and geometric patterns. One octagon (the third in the row) (fig. IV-24a) shows a dressed figure reclining on his left arm under a gourd. The Greek inscription IWNAC identifies him as Jonah. The scene illustrates the biblical description in Jonah 4: 6:

The Lord God ordained that a climbing gourd should grow up above Jonah's head to throw its shade over him and relieve his discomfort and he was very glad of it.

Two other medallions containing maritime scenes might represent other parts of the Jonah story though there is no proof and no inscription; they could be part of the general repertoire of maritime themes. The partly destroyed second octagon from the top in the north aisle shows a boat at sea with two rowing figures.

A round medallion in the south aisle (fig. IV-24b) presents a boat with two figures who seem to be pushing another figure—possibly Jonah—out of the boat towards a sea monster, as described in Jonah 1: 15,17: ‘Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging of the sea subsided... The Lord ordained that a great fish should swallow Jonah...’

A similar Jonah scene is found on a mosaic at the Cathedral of Bishop Theodore in Aquileia (313-319) (Grabar 1967: fig. 19), showing three figures in a boat. The one on the right is naked and holds an oar, the one on the left is clothed and is rendered in orans pose; Jonah is being thrust from the boat by the central naked figure towards the mouth of a large sea monster. Similar scenes appear on catacomb paintings (Grabar 1967: figs. 20, 31, 78, 100).

These two Mahat el-Urdi medallions give no indication that they are part of the Jonah story, but from the octagon with the identifying inscription it may be inferred that they too show episodes related to the Jonah cycle. It is interesting to find the representations of the Jonah story on a church pavement albeit carefully consigned to

side aisles and set within a generally busy geometric design.

B. *The Origin and Source of the Biblical Themes*

Scholars are deliberate as to the origin and sources of the biblical scenes appearing in Jewish art on synagogue mosaic pavements and in the Dura Europos synagogue wall paintings, as well as Old Testament scenes presented in Christian art, on catacomb paintings, and in church wall mosaics (Hachlili 1988: 299-300; 1998: 182-197).

Although presented in a narrative manner, the decoration is symbolic and abstract. A biblical episode may be shown condensed and abbreviated, as in the case of the Binding of Isaac and Noah's Ark. This attests to a symbolic decorative tradition which appears in the Dura Europos synagogue wall paintings and the synagogue mosaic pavements of Late Antiquity. Kraeling (1979: 361-363) claims that this symbolic tradition appears throughout many periods and in many places, and that in origin it goes back to the beginning of the Maccabean period (2nd century BCE) at the latest.

The selected scenes do not follow a biblical sequence, but are chosen to illustrate various Bible books. As noted, the scenes usually follow the biblical narrative, yet scholars suggest that some include and incorporate non-biblical embellishments from Aggada, Targum, and Midrash in the iconographic details; some such examples occur in the wall paintings of Dura Europos synagogue and in several biblical episodes on the Sepphoris synagogue mosaics (Kraeling 1979: 57, 140-141, 352-353; Gutmann 1983a: 92-100; Yahalom 2000; Weiss 2000). As Kraeling mentions (1979: 140-141), the Midrash materials were already known and used in the mid-3rd century CE, and represent the 'living popular heritage of which the written word was the essential core, but which could and did undergo the elaboration of all folk narrative in the best sense of the word'.

The artists designing the biblical scenes performed within an existing tradition, and the question has been raised as to the source they consulted. Illuminated manuscripts and cartoons, copybooks, or pattern books are the most common answer. Some scholars propose certain monumental works as another source (Hachlili 1998: 185-190).

Scholars maintain that the biblical episodes originated in illuminated biblical manuscripts first created by Alexandrian Jews in imitation of the rolls of classical antiquity of Greek, Homeric or other illustrated cycles; they may have been written in Greek translation for gentiles (Roth 1953: 29, 32, 40, 44; Sukenik 1947: 165-166; Kraeling 1979: 361-363; Weitzmann 1957: 60; 89-90; 1971: 227-231; 309-315; Goodenough 1964, X: 12; Gutmann 1971: 227-234; 1971b; Avi-Yonah 1973: 128; Weitzmann and Kessler 1990: 5-9). The hypothesis is that Hellenized Jews of Alexandria tried to make Judaism attractive to gentiles by transforming the biblical stories into epic poems, illustrating them in a cycle like Greek mythological scenes.

Weitzmann (1990: 143-147) considers that although no illustrated manuscripts are preserved, prototypes probably existed before the middle of the 3rd century. He suggests, 'the model could only have been individual books or groups of books that existed with extensive miniatures cycles, too large to be accommodated in a complete Septuagint. Yet individual books may have existed'. An illustrated Septuagint used as the main and primary source could well have been available to Jews and Christians alike. He concludes that in the mid-3rd century narrative art was fully developed and the Dura Europos wall paintings prove the existence of Old Testament representations rooted in illustrated manuscripts. Moreover, Weitzmann asserts that the illustrated manuscripts used by the Dura wall painters came from the library of Antioch, the nearest metropolitan city; from such a library 'manuscripts could either be consulted or sketched and collected in a kind of model book. Another possibility would be to lend out the original manuscript for a certain time'.

The thesis that illuminated manuscripts were the source for biblical scenes seems highly doubtful for several reasons: (1) The Hebrew Bible is considered sacred, especially the writing itself, hence it has never been illustrated. It is highly unlikely that the Bible would have been illuminated by or for Jews at this time. (2) Sages' rules about illustration would have forbidden illuminated manuscripts of the Bible (also Kraeling 1979: 396). (3) No proof exists as no ancient illuminated manuscripts actually existed before the 5th century (Christian) or the 9th century (Jewish) (Gutmann 1983a: 100-104; 1984a: 1333). (4) The Dead Sea scrolls, ranging in time from the

2nd century BCE to the 2nd century CE, do not contain even a single illustration. (5) If illustrated manuscripts had actually existed, and had been a source for biblical themes, uniformity of iconography style and design would be seen in later Jewish art. This, however, is not the case as each biblical scene portrayed is fundamentally different. (6) The iconography of each of the episodes reflects a local style, not the Hellenistic style it would have reflected had the source been Alexandrine or Antiochian illustrated manuscripts. (7) The decoration in registers and panels is in contrast to the style of illustrated manuscripts. All the examples scholars give of the relationship between known manuscripts and pictorial narrations are of much later periods. (8) It would have been a very complicated project to use an actual manuscript as a source for wall paintings. Weitzmann himself (1990: 9) doubts that 'a whole set of richly illustrated manuscripts was available in the small provincial town' and suggests that such a collection of illustrated codices was available at a metropolitan centre (Antioch), where intermediary drawings could have been made. This circumstance would have made the process even more complicated and would have required a large library. (9) The painted scenes on illuminated manuscripts were first and foremost illustrations of the written text with the purpose of illuminating and embellishing the biblical wording, whereas the Dura paintings and mosaic pavements are illustrations of a tale; the text, if it exists, is explanatory, giving the names of the figures and a short biblical citation, not always accurately. This is an essential difference.

Other scholars dispute the assumption of illuminated manuscripts as a source for the scenes of biblical episodes, and propose that they were influenced by monumental compositions with roots in late 2nd and early 3rd centuries in Rome (Tronzo 1986: 30-31). Monumental pictorial works, such as wall paintings on pagan temples and domestic decorated buildings or mosaics, are also claimed to be the origin for the biblical narratives. Kraeling (1979: 240-250; 392) suggests that other synagogues in Mesopotamia or Syria may have provided the model for the paintings at Dura.¹¹

¹¹ Wharton (1995: 49) maintains that the Dura Europos synagogue elders settled on the themes and instructed a local workshop to produce the designs.

Similar influences and comparisons are found in scenes on mosaic pavements in Near Eastern, Hellenistic, and Roman art and in the Dura paintings. The monumental pictorial annals of the ancient Near East, especially in north Syria and Assyria, portray scenes of kings and heroes in stories of historical events on wall reliefs and wall paintings; these could be the forerunners of the biblical scenes on the mosaic pavements and in the Dura synagogue wall paintings. The scenes in these places are set in horizontal panels, comparable to the renditions on Near Eastern reliefs. Similar episodes and conventions are common in pagan art with pictorial iconographic formulae, such as figures differing in scale and size to signify their relative importance. The ancient artistic technique of frontality is prevalent in the mosaic episodes and the Dura paintings. Conventional postures are occasionally comparable to those in pagan art. Objects are painted anachronistically, in the style of the iconography of contemporary cult vessels and items. Roman historical reliefs from the 2nd and early 3rd century could have inspired the narrative scenes in the Dura wall paintings (Hill 1941: 1-3, 8, 11).

Pattern books, copybooks, and cartoons have also been suggested as the source for the biblical themes (Mesnil 1939: 149; Moon 1992: 599, 610, 612). The pictorial formulae, repetitive iconography, and stylistic details that the artists used all indicate that pattern books are the most probable source. The artists possibly had sets of iconographic conventions which they used in the scenes they portrayed, as well as extensive cycles of biblical episodes which they could copy, abbreviate, or even improvise according to their needs. Themes and schemes, styles, and composition were probably inherited from prototypes.

Kraeling (1979: 368-370, 379-380, 383) argues that the art of the Dura artists could be called in some respects 'copy-book art'. In fact, he proposes that three sources were responsible for the biblical scenes: other monumental buildings provided a source from which to copy; some kind of divine book existed as a source for both Jews and Christians; and the artists used some kind of 'copy-book'.

Avi-Yonah (1973: 127-129) maintains that the style featuring frontality, isocephaly, and hierarchic perspective, which characterizes the mosaic biblical scenes and the Dura paintings, is a 3rd-century style representative of Alexandria, and that the basic elements of the Dura paintings are

Hellenistic, not oriental, in character, with evident Parthian influence. He believes that Goodenough, albeit for the wrong reason, was right in suggesting that the place of origin of Jewish figurative art (out of Alexandria, Antioch, and Babylon) was Alexandria: this was also the centre of Jewish Philonic mysticism that may have inspired the paintings. The Hellenized Jews of Alexandria wished to make Judaism respectable and attractive in the eyes of the gentiles by giving the religion a Greek form.

Rousin (1985: 194) contends that the process of conflation and selection of the images from a common source or sources accounts for the difference in the depictions of the biblical story, rather than any distinction between Christian and Jewish iconography. Nevertheless, the Binding of Isaac and the Noah story are rendered similarly in almost all Christian examples, which differ significantly from the Binding of Isaac at Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris and from the Noah scene on the Gerasa and Misis pavements.

The mosaic scenes and the Dura synagogue painted panels show some long established artistic tradition, itself probably combining diverse traditions, a mixture of east and west with new elements added (Gutmann 1984a: 1332). Although some of the mosaic scenes and the Dura paintings are reminiscent of Graeco-Roman art, the iconography attests to local influence, where, apart from the addition of specific Jewish symbols, many of the formulae, schemes, postures, costumes, and objects are similar to local art found also in other structures and other art modes.

The Binding of Isaac is depicted on the mosaic pavements of Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris synagogues by a similar formula, although the Beth 'Alpha mosaic is an example of local, popular art (which Sukenik [1932: 42] maintains may contain iconographic influences from Alexandria). Some of the figures like Daniel and Orpheus are usually dressed in Persian pants, a tunic, and a Phrygian cap. This, Mathews (1993: 84) maintains, is a costume that by the 4th century 'had come to designate not just foreigners but specifically oriental magicians'. Daniel at Na'aran is similar to the same scene appearing in Christian iconography. David in Gaza portrayed as Orpheus exhibits Hellenistic and Byzantine influences in its depiction and iconography.

The biblical subjects of the synagogue pavement mosaics and the Dura Europos synagogue paintings do not seem to have one general theme, or to have been chosen at random; nor do they seem to illustrate the bible as a whole. Specific

books and events are illustrated. Composition and style, as well as the conventional iconographic repertoire, designate that the sources for the episodes to which the artists could refer were readily available. Most likely, the artists, community leaders, and donors consulted pattern books. These would contain Jewish motifs, themes, and biblical stories that would naturally be included as subject matter for the decoration of synagogues.

C. *Interpretation and Significance*

The biblical narrative scenes on synagogue mosaics such as the Binding of Isaac and Noah's Ark show the ending of the tale. They are generally based on the biblical story, with the addition of other literary sources. The essential part of the story refers to the intervention by God, the rescue, and the hope of salvation. The depictions of Daniel in the Lions' Den, David-Orpheus, the Sepphoris Consecration of Aaron to the Service of the Tabernacle and the Daily Offering, the Shewbread Table, and the Basket of First Fruits are symbolic images of the biblical tales; or, as in the End of Days, an image is created to illustrate a biblical citation. In the case of Jewish or Christian illustrations of the End of the Days (Peaceful Kingdom) the accompanying text from Isaiah is not accurately cited but is arranged so that the appropriate clause is above each particular pair of animals.

Space for mosaics, wall paintings, and in other media was limited, so the scenes illustrate the tale in a concentrated or symbolic way. The text merely provides an explanation for the picture, giving the names of the persons and objects, and sometimes part of the appropriate biblical verse is quoted. By contrast, illuminated manuscripts have the deliberate intention of illustrating a text. Their purpose is to illuminate, track, and explain the written biblical text.

The biblical scenes were depicted in simple narratives, although some of the scenes as a whole may have had symbolic meanings. Common to them all was an illustration of the theme of salvation (Shapiro 1960: 11, Avigad 1969: 68) and they were associated with prayers offered in times of drought (Avi-Yonah 1975: 53). Some of these subjects were part of the prayers, such as 'Remember' and 'He that answereth...' (Sukenik 1932: 56 and note 4; but see Goodenough I: 253, who suggests a symbolic meaning connected with Eastern mystery religions). The choice of themes arose from the religio-cultural climate of the age, and

was meant to be a reminder of and reference to traditional historical events (Avigad 1968: 68; but see Goodenough's proposal [1953, I: 253 ff.] on the use of these themes for symbolic or didactic purposes). Some scholars suggest that the biblical scenes accompanied sermon and worship; others perceive an association between art and liturgy, a possible link between the artistic depictions of the biblical stories, which were meant to illustrate Midrashim, *piyyutim*, and prayers recited in the synagogue (Shinan 1996; Fine 1997: 124-125; 1999; 2004). Weiss (2005: 246-249) claims that these notions are not valid, maintaining that the biblical renditions 'present visual expression to central ideas that are also emphasized in prayer, midrash, and *piyyut*'.

The depictions as well as the aims of the biblical story/legend in mosaic pavements, wall mosaics, wall paintings, and sarcophagi are quite distinct from the illuminations accompanying biblical manuscripts. The renditions on the mosaic pavements tell a narrative or symbolic story, sometimes with explanatory inscriptions of names or short citations, and have a restricted space; the intention is to decorate a structure. Each tale appears separately and independently, and serves as a memento and commemoration of a known legend. The manuscripts, by contrast, contain the full biblical text, accompanied by several detailed illuminations for each story. The illuminations simply supplement the text, with the aim of adding to the reading, or perhaps educating. But they are not independent pictures standing on their own.

The interpretation and significance of the biblical scenes are controversial. Scholars debate them and come up with different opinions. Weiss and Netzer (1996: 34-39; Weiss 2005: 225-256, 240) contend that the Sepphoris mosaic has a single, whole programmatic theme with significant foci: the 'Aqedah and the angels' visit to Abraham and Sarah signify the Promise. The façade, the Tabernacle and Temple representations symbolize the Redemption, whereas the zodiac expresses the centrality of God in Creation. Fine (1999: 227-237) rejects this overall interpretation and proposes similar sources: 'Scripture and liturgy were the unifying glue of the composition'. Levine (2000: 575-578) rejects this assumption owing to 'the limitations of the literary and archaeological evidence at hand'.

A certain evolution in attitude is discernible in the biblical scenes, which may help determine the development of the biblical scene depictions from highly detailed narrative stories to concise

symbolic depictions (Hachlili 1988: 300). For instance, Noah's Ark at Gerasa is executed in a narrative mode, highlighted by the many details. This style suggests an earlier date for Gerasa than at Beth 'Alpha, where there is already a tendency towards the symbolic in the narrative of the Binding of Isaac. At Meroth, David is depicted as a prominent figure, a Byzantine warrior. David of Gaza is shown as a biblical monarch—but in the Hellenistic attitude used for the mythological figure of Orpheus; so is the Christian figure of Jesus the Shepherd. Daniel, at Na'aran, rendered in the orans posture, is a concise depiction and probably symbolic, similar to Early Christian art depictions.

The biblical scenes found so far do not seem to have a common denominator as regards style or origin. The style, form, and artistic depiction on each of these floors is different, and each scene may be traced back to a distinct influence or source. Yet some similarity does exist in the arrangement of interconnecting panels and subject matter found at Beth 'Alpha, Na'aran and Sepphoris, suggesting mutual intercourse or social affinities.

The repertoire and the iconography used in the narrative scenes in the mosaics and the Dura painting attest to a rich repertoire of scenes, compositions, and patterns based on similar contemporary conventions. These iconographic conventions show local affinities and demonstrate a close source for the illustrative, visual style.

The iconographic repertoire available to the artists consisted of compositional forms, conventions for entire scenes, and formulae for elements and pattern details. Taken together, this repertoire indicates two main sources for the narrative paintings: first, a copybook or pattern book consisting of religious and secular scenes, with examples of schemes, compositions and models; second, a large and extensive repertoire of biblical scenes from which to choose and which could be used according to the space allotted and to the programme to be decided. The function of this repetition of conventions and the use of stereotypes, designs, and patterns was to elucidate the meaning of the scenes. Moreover, the existence of an illustrated repertoire would enable the artists to execute a great number of scenes relatively quickly.

The scenes were chosen for their connotative force and their ability to illuminate Jewish traditional stories based on well-known biblical themes, enhanced and elaborated with legendary details. Artistic depictions of folk tales apparently existed

already by the 3rd century, as indicated by the Dura Europos synagogue paintings. By this time, therefore, these stories must have become traditional, popular folk legends, which were then rendered in art. The narrative scenes were probably based on artistic forerunners, albeit sketches only, but allowing much artistic freedom. Furthermore, the fact that the biblical scenes were narrated within a contemporary iconographic repertoire indicates that this repertoire had traditional, inherited, graphic origins and was not based on the written word. These scenes are not illustrations for a written text (Hachlili 1998: 195-197; see also Wharton 1994: 4-21; 1995: 42,45, who discusses the priority given to the literary text by most scholars) but are themselves illustrations of highly developed, stylized folk stories.

The choice of the themes was eclectic, which is proved also by the paintings of the west wall of the Dura Europos synagogue (Hachlili 1998: 123-127; 132-33). The artists of these iconographic sources, following their own initiative, were free to select and shape the models they used as they were familiar with other current depictions. The scene was intended to symbolize rather than accurately describe its written source according to the established tradition.

The general biblical themes portrayed on the mosaic pavements, as well as in the Dura Europos wall paintings, with their many interpretations do not create a comprehensive general theme or programmatic outline. The scenes and episodes portray prominent figures in Jewish tradition and history (Aaron, Abraham, David, Daniel, Isaac, Noah) as well as important biblical episodes with additions of legends and themes which could be construed as symbolizing traditional, historical events, divine intervention, the covenant between God and his chosen people, and his protection of some and his punishment of others.

The assumption that the scenes on the paintings and mosaics do not illustrate a text is proved by the inscriptions found next to certain biblical episodes. Most of the Hebrew inscriptions accompanying the scenes are intended as identification. They consist of the names of figures and objects, occasionally scenes, and a short citation which clearly explains and interprets the illustrations beside it. These inscriptions without doubt are secondary to the illustrations, explaining and clarifying them. The Hebrew inscriptions on the Binding of Isaac at Beth 'Alpha, the identification

of the various vessels in the Consecration of the Service of the Tabernacle and Daily Offering at Sepphoris, the names in Hebrew of Aaron, Abraham, David, Daniel, Isaac, and Noah's sons—all explain the scenes. The inscriptions are not exact biblical quotations. The text glosses the images, but the images do not illustrate the biblical text.

Had the source of any painting been the biblical text, there would surely have been consensus about its identification. The fact that there is frequently disagreement among scholars about which biblical text is quoted for any specific scene proves that the immediate source was not the biblical text itself but a readily available visual repertoire. Had more attention been paid to the pictorial identification of the images, rather than to a preoccupation with text identification (see also Wharton 1994: 9, 14), this fact would have been self-evident.

In conclusion, the Jewish communities wanted to decorate their major religious and social structures with didactic, narrative illustrations expressing their legacy, their religious and national tradition, and their shared experiences evoking memories of past glory. This desire elucidates the visual dominance and explains the images' function. The communities used folk tales based on biblical stories with legendary additions, which found artistic expression in painted narrative scenes; the wall paintings of the 3rd-century CE Dura synagogue are the earliest evidence of this. Subsequently, this folk art was to evolve and develop in the Byzantine period in the synagogue mosaic pavements. The narrative scenes were considered historical events yet they were also treated as parables and had some symbolic implications. Biblical scenes were considered appropriate subject matter for the synagogue pavements, although they were trodden on even when the pavements contained the Hand of God and the Temple ritual objects. This was intentional, to emphasize the notion that if these depictions were stepped on, they could not then be considered sacred, and no danger of worshipping graven images could arise.

These depictions seem to indicate that a visual source, not the biblical text, was the guide to the paintings. The biblical folk themes depicted on synagogue mosaic pavements and in the Dura Europos synagogue paintings attest to the importance the Jewish community attached to their visual as well as their written inherited tradition.

CHAPTER FIVE

ICONOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS OF NILOTIC SCENES ON BYZANTINE MOSAICS PAVEMENTS

Nilotic scenes are a recurrent theme on mosaic pavements, wall paintings, wall and floor mosaics, reliefs and miscellaneous objects (Schneider 1937: 66-78; Whitehouse 1979 provides a comprehensive catalogue on the subject; Balty 1984; Roussin 1985: 299-316; Meyboom 1995: 8-19, 41-42, 83; Versluys 2002 with up-to-date bibliography).

Here the term 'Nilotic' applies to Nilotic landscapes which contain a limited number of elements, including the personification of the Nile, architecture of buildings or a city, a boat, beasts, birds, vegetation, and people. The tradition of Nilotic scenes dates to the Hellenistic period, and the earliest examples of ancient Nilotica are the 2nd- and 1st-century BCE mosaics at Palestrina and Casa del Fauno; the 2nd-century BCE Nile mosaic of Palestrina portrays in detail Aethiopia and Egypt during the inundation of the Nile. The Byzantine artists continued to use and adopt Classical and Hellenistic imagery, among them Nilotic episodes, sometimes with a much broader variety of elements from the Nilotic repertoire.

In this chapter the elements in Nilotic scenes are assembled, and the different designs and theories ascribed to the main issues, such as the form, time, function, and significance of the theme (Hachlili 1998), are assessed.

A. *The Pavements*

The Nilotic scenes portrayed on the mosaic field or on the border appear on several pavements found in Israel: in a Jewish house, in churches, and in pagan structures. All are dated to the 5th-6th centuries except for the later mosaic part in the House of Dionysos at Sepphoris, dated to the late 3rd or early 4th century CE (Hachlili 1998: 106-107).¹

¹ Versluys (2002: 245) concludes that the mosaic pavements with Nilotic scenes in the Near Eastern Roman provinces show a different chronological distribution (diagram 6). Only one example dates to the 4th century; all the

Beth-She'an, the House of Leontis. A Jewish house-synagogue complex dated to the mid-5th or early 6th century at Beth-She'an depicts in hall 3 a mosaic field of three panels (pls. V.1, XII.1; fig. V-1). The upper panel shows two scenes from the *Odyssey*, representing the Homeric tales of Odysseus and the sirens and Odysseus and the Scylla. The central panel is occupied by a Greek inscription within a circle, surrounded by birds, with a five-armed menorah. The lower panel contains a Nilotic scene rendering the personification of the river Nile, a towered building inscribed 'Alexandria' in Greek, a Nilometer, a scene of animal combat, typical Nilotic plants and birds, and a sailing boat with a figure and vessels (Zori 1966: 131-132; Whitehouse 1979: 139-140, M45; Adler 2003: 40-80).

Tabgha, the Church of the Multiplying of the Loaves and Fishes. The mosaic pavements of the north and south transepts (fig. V-2a,b) consist of two similar compositions depicting elements of Nilotic scenes: typical Nilotic flora and fauna, a city building with gate and towers, a tower, a Nilometer, and a pavilion rendered on a white background. The pavement is dated to the second half of the 5th century CE (Schneider 1937: 58-63, plan 3, tables A, B; Kitzinger 1976: 54; Whitehouse 1979: 140-141, M46).

Haditha chapel. Only the border of the mosaic has survived, showing a Nilotic scene (pl. V.2b) consisting of a man fighting an animal, a city representation inscribed ΕΓΥΠΤΟC 'Egypt' in the corner of the pavement; a sailing boat containing two figures and vessels, as well as typical Nilotic plants, fish and birds; the mosaic is dated to the second half of the 6th century (Avi-Yonah 1972; Whitehouse 1979: 138-139, M44).

Sepphoris, the Nile Festival Building. This public secular structure contains a mosaic pavement in Room 6 depicting a Nile landscape and celebration

other date to the 5th and 6th centuries, when the genre was relatively popular, while only a few examples from other regions originate in this period.



Figure V-1. Beth Leontis mosaic, Beth-She'an.

scene on its upper section, and a hunting scene on the lowest part (Weiss and Talgam 2002: 61-73, 83-85).

The mosaic field is partially divided by water and structures into three parts (pl. V.3): two registers display the Nile festival celebration and the third renders hunting scenes. The upper part shows the personification of Egypt, as a partly naked woman leaning with her right arm on a fruit basket and holding a cornucopia in her left (pl. VIII.1a). On the left the Nile river, Nilus, reclines on a hippopotamus with the water streaming from his mouth; several putti, one marking the level of the floodwater on a Nilometer, is rendered in the centre, surrounded by Nilotic flora and fauna; fishes, birds, and a crocodile are scattered around in the river water. The flowing Nile water divides this upper register from the central part in which the celebration of the flood is represented; a youth and two horsemen, one male and *Semasia* the lead rider, bring the news to the city of Alexandria. The horsemen advance from a column surmounted by a statue towards a gate flanked by two towers and Pharos, the lighthouse, with a flame, representing 'Alexandria' as indicated by the Greek inscription. The arrival of *Semasia* indicates that the flood has reached the mark. The procession celebrates the festival of the coming of the inundation of the Nile, which will vouchsafe a successful crop (Mayboom 1995: 71-75, 147-149; see also Dvorjetski & Segal 1995: 100-103, for Talmudic literature on the Nile festival).

The third register contains another stream of Nile water flowing diagonally through the area to the right of the column and the lowest section, which portrays hunting scenes of animals and their prey. Although the iconography is divided between the Nile celebration and hunting scenes the mosaic maintains the effect of a harmonious and integrated composition.

From the archaeological evidence the Nile Festival Building was constructed in the early 5th century CE (Netzer and Weiss 1992a, 1992b; 1995: 166-171; Weiss and Talgam 2002: 60), however, 'the stylistic analysis of the mosaics is ambiguous in this regard' (Weiss and Talgam 2002: 85). On stylistic grounds Merrony (2003: 55) suggests the 6th century, as does Bowersock (2004: 766) on the grounds of his reading of inscription 1 (Di Segni 2002, 2005b), found at the West entrance to the building; according to this, he argues, the house belonged to the daughter of the governor Procopius (517/8, governor of Palaestina Secunda)



Figure V-2. Tabgha Church. a. The north transept; b. the south transept.

and her husband Absolius Patricius (see Chap. XII).

Some isolated and abridged Nilotic elements appear on three pagan pavements dated to earlier periods:

Sepphoris, the House of Dionysos. A section in the southern side of the border mosaic replaced at some stage the earlier Dionysian procession. It shows a pair of naked youths hunting a crocodile, and a heron, water plants, figures, and birds (pl. V.2a). It is dated to the late 3rd or early 4th centuries (Netzer and Weiss 1994: 37; Talgam and Weiss 2004: 87-88, 112, Figs.73-74).

Emmaus. A structure (perhaps a villa or a Christian religious building) dated to the 5th century (pl. V.2d) shows a mosaic with a geometric design which portrays Nilotic water plants and birds rendered inside an octagon; scenes of beasts hunting

other animals also appear inside two other surviving octagons (Vincent and Abel 1932; Avi-Yonah 1981: 355, no.346).

Beth Guvrin, el-Maqerqesh. On the lower centre of the southern border of the nave's mosaic pavement (period II, late 5th century), an isolated scene shows some elements of Nilotica flora and fauna (pl. V.2c; fig. VIII-4). A horseman holding a sistrum (a musical instrument) in his hand rides among the plants (Vincent 1922; Abel 1924; Schneider 1937: ill.13, 14; Avi Yonah 1981: 293, no.23, pl. 49; 1992: 197; Whitehouse 1979: 137-138, M43).

A few Nilotic scenes are preserved on contemporary church mosaics in Jordan, Syria, Phoenicia, and Cyrene.

Several mosaic pavements in Jordan show Nilotic scenes: on the intercolumnar space in the



Figure V-3. Sarrin border mosaic.

church of Sts. Lot and Procopius at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat on Mount Nebo, the mosaic depicts a Nilotic scene divided among four of the panels; one shows a church representation flanked by a boatman and a fisherman, another portrays a river with fishes and ducks (Piccirillo 1993: 37, fig. 209). A fragmentary mosaic in the main hall of the chapel at Zay al-Gharby contains fish, a sailing boat with two damaged figures, and a crocodile, fishes, and birds on the Nile water; a small church is in the border (Piccirillo 1993: 37,324-325, figs. 660, 674, 676). On the central panel of the nave mosaic of the Byzantine church (or perhaps a house: see Maguire 1999: 183, note 34) at Umm al-Manabi only a sketch of the mosaic is preserved. Once it contained a walled city with the inscription 'Egyptos'; of the personification of the Nile all that has survived are the Greek inscription 'Nilos', a Nilometer with marks from ten to eighteen, and stretches of water with a fish and a sailing boat (Glueck 1951: 229-230; Whitehouse 1979: 141-142, M47; Piccirillo 1993: 37, 341, Fig. 752; Hamarneh 1999: 186).

Isolated Nilotic elements appear on some other mosaics of Jordan. In the church of St. John at Gerasa, two Nilotic scenes show of a river with fish swimming in it; ducks, storks, and herons move about and lotus flowers accompany the walled city (Piccirillo 1993: 34, fig 535). On the pavement of the church of the priest Wa'il, in the intercolumnar space on the north side a Nilotic scene appears consisting of two boats, fishes and plants (Piccirillo 1993: 243, Fig.398). The flowing Nile stream with seven fishes and walled cities are portrayed on the Madaba map (Avi-Yonah 1954: 21-23,25; Piccirillo 1993: 30-34). On the mosaic pavement of the 8th-century St. Stephen church at Umm al-Rasas, the border frame renders Nilotic landscape with cities, boats, fishes and plants (Piccirillo 1993: 35-37, figs. 345, 358). Some of these pavements suffered deliberate iconoclastic damage; most were crudely repaired (Schick 1995: 189-195,217).

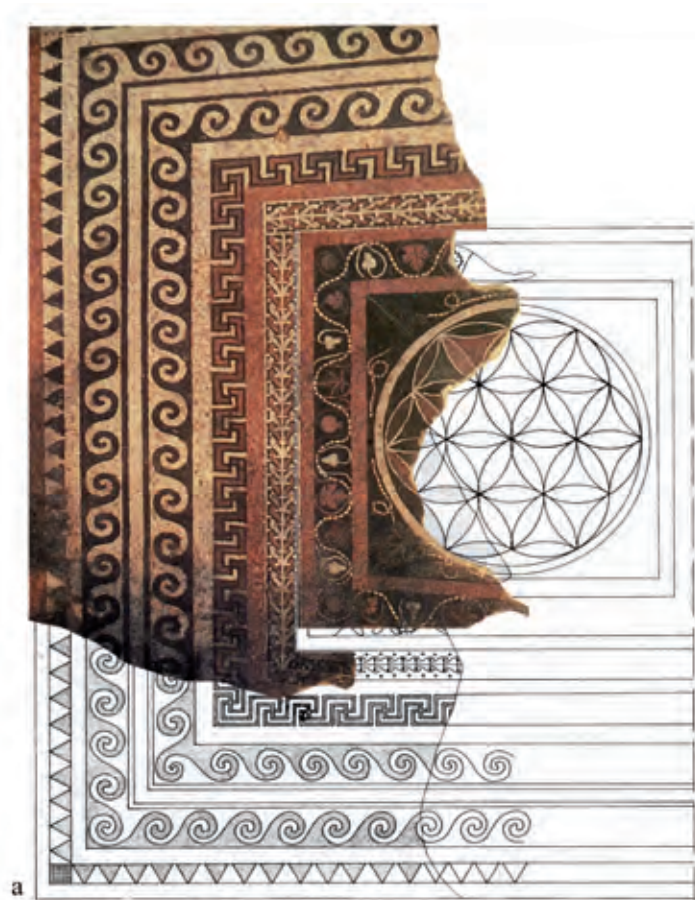
On an outer border of the 6th-century mosaic pavement at Sarrin in Syria (Balty 1990: 60-68,

pls. XXXI-XXXIII, XXXV,3: general plan) a Nilotic scene appears in the border mosaic containing most of the elements (fig. V-3): a half-naked Nilus reclines on a wagon drawn by a pair of hippopotami with a naked putto riding one of them; another putto rides a crocodile; on a Nilometer a putto engraves the numbers IH and IZ; close by is a depiction of a walled city, perhaps Alexandria.

An interesting scene with most of the Nilotic elements appears on a central panel mosaic at Jiyé (Phoenicia, Lebanon) dated to the second half of the 5th or early 6th century (Ortali-Tarazi and Waliszewski 2000). The panel is divided into two levels by two base lines: the upper level shows the half-naked bearded figure of Nilus. Nilotic plants, an eagle, and another bird flank him. The lower level renders in the centre a boat with two seated rowing figures; under it is a crocodile nibbling at a Nilotic plant; to the left is a fish and another Nilotic plant. The border of the mosaic is depicted with Nilotic plants, fishes, birds, a snake, and a crocodile.

Nilotic motifs consisting of plants, birds, and fishes also appear on some mosaic pavements in Syria: on a floor of the House of Ge and the Seasons in Antioch, and on church floors at Apamea, Oumnir, Qoumnahan, and Tell Hauwash (Balty 1984: 830, table on p. 831, figs. CXXX,5; CXXXII,1-2; CXXXIII,1,4,5), and Sorân (Donceel-Voûte 1988: figs. 295,297,298).

Nilotic scenes appear on two currently discovered pavements in Syria (Zaqquq 1995: 237-140, pls. 1, 19; Hamarneh 1999: 188; Campanati 1999: 173, fig. on p. 175): the cathedral of Hama (412 CE) has a Nilotic scene in its south passage depicting water with fishes, plants, a boat with amphorae, and birds quite similar to the Tabgha birds. The presbytery pavement of the Church of the Holy Martyrs at Tayibat al-Imam (Hamah district, dated to 442 CE,) shows another unusual Nilotic scene: a river with fishes and Nilotic birds, apparently created by the four rivers of Paradise and identified by an inscription; it flows down from the mountain of Paradise on whose top is an



a



b

I.1 Masada mosaic pavements: a. anteroom (Oecus 456) at the Western Palace; b. bathhouse corridor of the Western Palace (room 449).



I.2 a. Mosaic in the Hasmonean bathhouse, Jericho palace, Lower Herodium palace pavements; b. Mosaic panel in the bathhouse main tepidarium; c. mosaic in small tepidarium; d. fragment of the laconicum pavement; e. Caesarea palace mosaic.



I.3 Jerusalem, Upper City, pavements in houses.



a

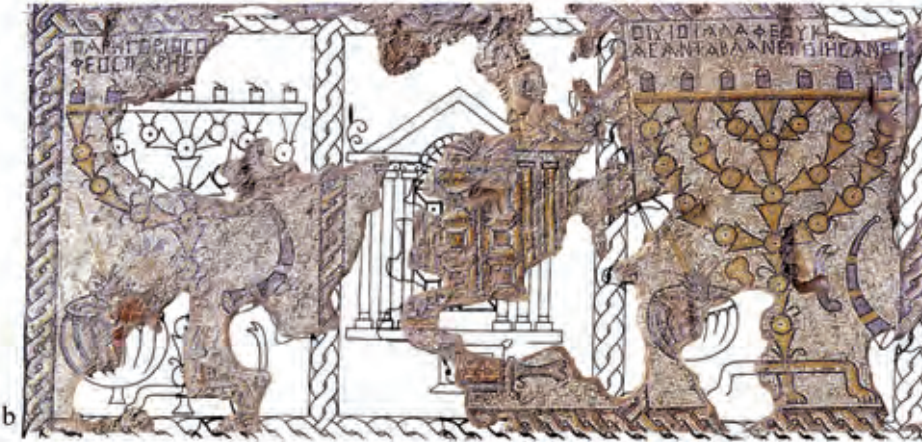


b



c

I.4 Jerusalem, Upper City, pavements in houses.



II.1 Torah shrine panels on synagogue pavements: a. Hammath Tiberias; b. Sepphoris; c. Susiya.



II.2 Ark of Scrolls on synagogue pavements: a. Beth Alpha; b. Beth She'an A; c. Jericho.



II.3 Comparable shrines on Jordan mosaics: a. Upper chapel of Priest John, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo; b. Theotokos chapel, Basilica of Moses, Mt. Nebo.



II.4 Dura Synagogue wall paintings panels WB3, WB2.



III.1 Hammath Tiberias synagogue zodiac panel.



III.2 Sepphoris synagogue zodiac panel.



III.3 Beth 'Alpha synagogue zodiac panel.



a



b



c

III.4 a. Na'aran synagogue zodiac panel; b. Susiya synagogue fragment of surviving zodiac; c. 'En Gedi zodiac inscription.



a



b



c



d

III.5 Sun God on synagogue pavements: a. Hammath Tiberias; b. Sepphoris; c. Beth 'Alpha; d. Na'aran.



a



b

III.6 Comparisons of Sun God on mosaics: a. Tomb of the Julii beneath the Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican, Rome; b. The sun God in his chariot on a 3rd century Swiss mosaic.



III.7 Zodiac signs on synagogue pavements: a. *Aries*—Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha; b. *Taurus*—Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha; c. *Gemini*—Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha.



III.8 Zodiac signs on synagogue pavements: a. *Cancer*—Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha; b. *Leo*—Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha; c. *Virgo*—Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha.



III.9 Zodiac signs on synagogue pavements: a. Libra Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha; b. Scorpio Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha; c. Sagittarius Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha.



III.10 Zodiac signs on synagogue pavements: a. *Capricorn*—Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha; b. *Aquarius*—Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha; c. *Pisces*—Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha.



III.11 The four seasons on synagogue pavements: a. Spring (*Nisan*): Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha; b. Summer (*Tamus*): Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha; c. Autumn (*Tishrei*): Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Huseifa, Beth 'Alpha; d. Winter (*Tevet*): Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha.



a



b



c

III.12 Comparable Zodiac: a. Münster-Sarnsheim mosaic pavement; b. Astypalea mosaic pavement; c. Calendar ms. 1291.



a



b

IV.1 Binding of Isaac on synagogue pavements: a. Sepphoris; b. Beth 'Alpha.



a



b



c

IV.2 Binding of Isaac: a. Dura Europos Torah shrine niche painting; b-c. Rome, Via Latina catacomb paintings: b. Room L; c. Cubiculum C.



IV.3 David-Orpheus on the Gaza synagogue mosaic pavement.



IV.4 The Orpheus mosaic pavement, Sepphoris.



a



b

IV.5 The Orpheus mosaic, Jerusalem.



IV.6 David with Goliath weapons on the Meroth Synagogue pavement (with my reconstruction).



IV.7 Sepphoris synagogue, The Consecration of the Tabernacle and Aaron, Band 3 and The Daily Sacrifice, Band 4.



IV.8 The vision of End of Days: a. Beth Midrash, Meroth; b. Ma'in church.



V.1 Nilotic scene at Beth Leontis, Beth-She'an, the upper panel.



a



b



c

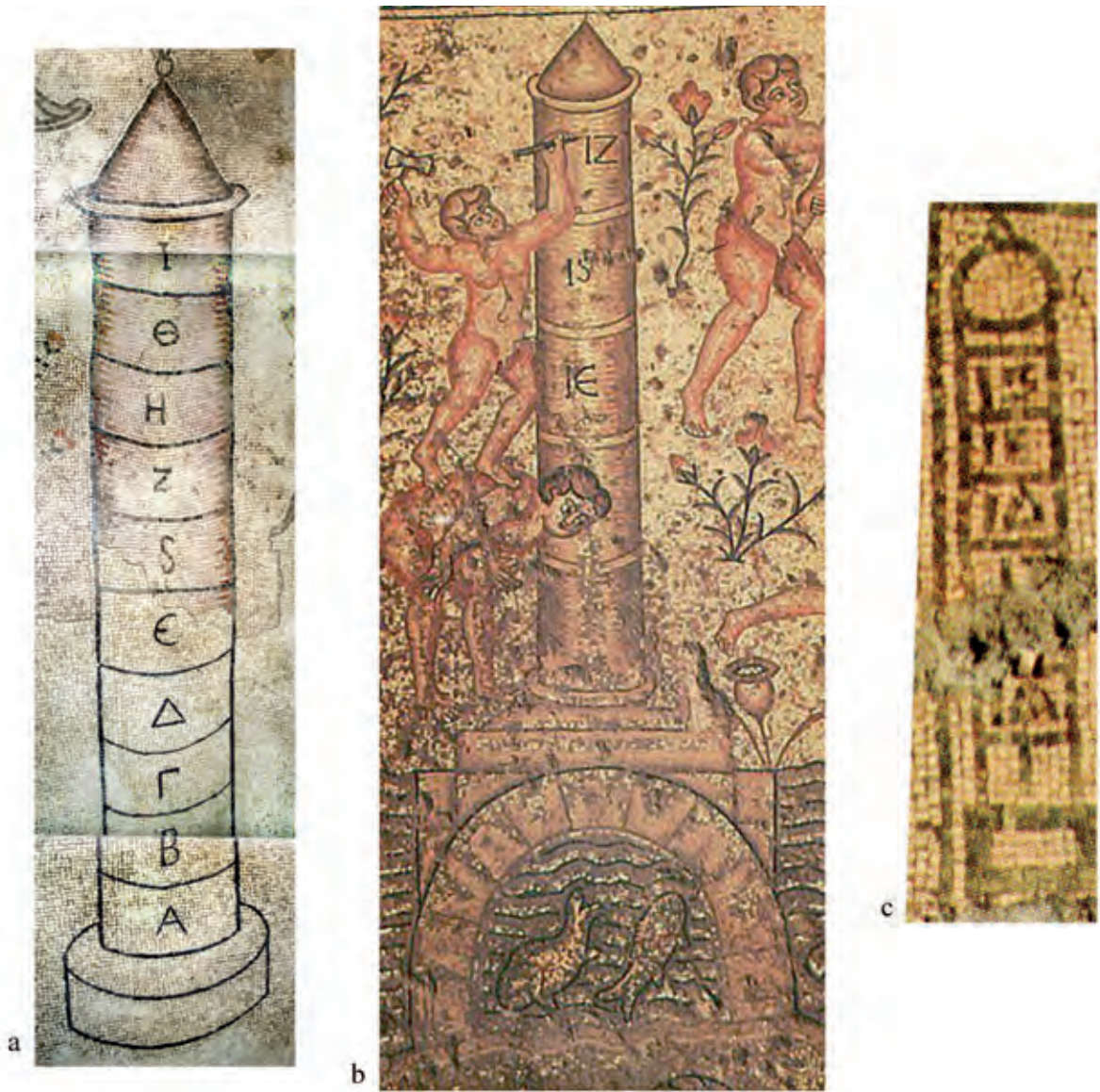


d

V.2 Nilotic scenes: a. Sepphoris, the House of Dionysos, the later Nilotic panel; b. Haditha, border mosaic; c. Beth Guvrin, el-Maqerqesh border mosaic fragment; d. Emmaus.



V.3 Nilotic scene at Sepphoris Nile Festival Building (Room 6 pavement).



V.4 Nilometer: a. Tabgha; b. Sepphoris; c. Beth Leontis, Beth She'an.

eagle. Another Nilotic scene appears on a southern intercolumn panel of the same Church at Tayibat al-Imam, Hamah (Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999: 448, plan I, fig. 17).

Nilotic landscape scenes and isolated motifs of Nilotica, including such images as animal combat, water plants, crocodiles, ducks, and the Pharos, the Alexandria lighthouse, are depicted on three Byzantine mosaic pavements of Cyrenaic churches: on the panel of the north-east chapel at Qasr-el-Lebia, on the north aisle and south-east chapel of the Cyrene cathedral, and on the mosaic pavement of the nave of the East Church at Qasr-el-Lebia (Alföldi-Rosenbaum & Ward-Perkins 1980: 45-49, 59-60). Although differently executed they are apparently based on a common model.

B. *The Repertory Elements*

The iconographic elements of the Nilotic scene compositions consist of (see Table V.1; see also Versluys 2002: 261-299):

- The Nile personification
- Nilometer
- Towered building or a walled city with an arched gate, with or without the name inscribed in Greek ‘*Alexandria*’ or ‘*Egypt*’
- The crocodile and animal combat: a buffalo (cow) attacked by a crocodile
- Sailing boat with men and sometimes wine-jars
- Water plants, nilombos plants like lotus and papyrus
- Fishes
- Birds such as cranes, herons, ibis, flamingos, ducks

The Personification of the River Nile

The Nile river personification is a rare occurrence; he is portrayed as a male figure, reclining on an animal. On the bottom mosaic panel of the House of Leontis at Beth She’an, the Nile dominating the scene is rendered as a bearded, large, half-naked figure, seated on an animal identified as a crocodile (Zori 1966: 131) or a hippopotamus (Roussin 1981: 7); his outstretched right arm holds a duck; his left arm rests on a globular jug, from which the Nile water flows down along the lower part of the panel (pl. V.1).

At Sepphoris, in room 6 of the Nile Festival Building (Weiss and Talgam 2002: 61, 66-67) the partly destroyed Nile river personification is seen on the upper right corner of the mosaic as a male figure reclining on the back of a large hippopotamus, resting on an amphora from which water streams; the Nile flows down, out of the amphora and the animal’s mouth, along the lower part of the centre of the pavement (pl. V.3). The Nile figure is rendered as an old man with a bare upper body, his right arm outstretched. Three putti carrying gifts accompany Nilus. Two other putti appear; one is mounted on the other’s back, and engraves the number IZ on the Nilometer.

A symmetrical counterpoint in the composition at Sepphoris shows on the upper left corner: this is a reclining female figure who personifies Egypt, the female consort of Nilus, also represented as Euthenia, holding a cornucopia in her left hand and leaning with her right elbow on a basket of fruit (pl. VIII.1a). She personifies the abundance brought about by the inundation of the Nile (for the allegorical picture of a goddess and the horn of plenty as a symbol of *truphe* see Meyboom 1995: 78 and 334, note 198).

The personification of the Nile at Sepphoris resembles other renditions of the Nile in the art of Late Antiquity (Dunbabin 1978: 109-110, pl. III; Ostrowski 1991: 56, fig. 1), such as the 2nd- or 3rd-century mosaic pavement from the Villa del Nilo near Lepcis Magna (Hermann 1959: 61-62; Whitehouse 1979: 128, M34; Roussin 1981: 9-10; Versluys 2002: no. 91). The tepidarium mosaic shows a Nile celebration procession, featuring the personified Nile reclining on a hippopotamus and holding a cornucopia in his right hand, accompanied by nine putti, two nymphs, and priests; an inscribed Nilometer is rendered at the left end. In this scene the Nile god is the focus of the representation.

A different depiction of the Nile appears in the late 5th or early 6th century on two mosaics discovered at Syria and Phoenicia: on the central panel of the mosaic at Jiyé (Phoenicia) a half naked bearded figure of the Nile is rendered reclining on a cart drawn by a pair of hippopotami lead by a putto, he is wearing a horned hat, holding a sistrum in his right hand and a plant in his left (Ortali-Tarazi and Waliszewski 2000: 168, figs. 1, 3).

A slightly similar portrayal appears on the 6th century outer border of the mosaic pavement at Sarrîn (Balty 1990: 60-68, pls. XXXI-XXXIII,

XXXV, 3; plan general). A naked bearded Nilus holding most likely a sistrum in his left hand, is reclining on a *biga* pulled by two hippopotami with a naked putto riding on one of them, a garland is attached and carried on by two putti (fig. V-3)².

The river labelled ΓΗWN Gehon rendered on a mosaic pavement in the East Church at Qasr-el Lebia (Olbia) in Libya (539-540) is personified as Gehon, the river of Paradise, usually identified with Nilus (Maguire 1987: 44-55, figs. 52-57). He is depicted as a bearded almost completely naked figure, reclining on a vessel from which water pours out (fig. V-4), quite like the portrayal of Nilus on the Sarrin and Jiyé pavements. It is apparently a depiction of the Nile, as Hermann (1959: 63, Fig.5) argues, as indicated by the sistrum, which he holds in his right hand and the cornucopia at his left arm. (see Chap. VIII, p. 183).

This type of Nile personification with accompanying putti goes back to the Hellenistic period, and might have derived from painting or from sculpture. The number which the putti indicated is the desirable flood-level of the river, but it is not possible to determine when the putti were added to the depiction of the reclining Nile (Whitehouse 1979: 194-196; Jentel 1992: 720-726).

The half-draped figures of the Nile in the mosaics at Beth She'an and Sepphoris are similar in their general posture, and both (likewise the figure of 'Egypt' at Sepphoris) are larger than the other figures. Both are seated on hippopotami from whose mouths the Nile water streams, as well as from an amphora. However, the Nile at Beth She'an is a different type from the one at Sepphoris and other early examples of river personifications; he is sitting rather than reclining, and a duck replaces the cornucopia in his right hand.

Conversely, the Nilus in the Sarrin border mosaic, as well as at Jiyé, is depicted in a different style: he reclines on a *biga* towed by two hippopotami; at Olbia he rests on a vessel, holding a sistrum in his hand. The horseman in the Nilotic scene at Beth Guvrin holds a similar sistrum in his hand. In all representations Nilus is bearded.



Figure V-4. The Gehon-Nilus on a mosaic pavement of the East Church at Qasr-el Lebia (Olbia), Libya.

The Nile river is depicted as a stream shown as stripes of wavy lines filled with fishes and plants; at Haditha the Nile appears as a wide horizontal stripe on the lower part of the border (pl. V.2b). The Nile at Beth She'an pours out of the jug and the hippopotamus' mouth. It flows down in two wavy lines along the side of the mosaic and turns into four lines across the bottom (pl. V.1). At Sepphoris (pl. V.3) the Nile stream originating in the hippopotamus' mouth is richly represented in one central stream consisting of twelve wavy lines, which divide the pavement, and another thinner stream flowing down on the right side of the mosaic.

The Nilometer

The Nilometer is a structure that measures the level of the Nile in flood, and has different depictions in the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Hermann 1959: 62; Wild 1981: 25-26; Meyboom 1995: 244-245, notes 77,78; Friedman 2001). On mosaic pavements the instrument is usually

² Two early mosaics rendering the Nile god were found, one in the House in Patras, Greece (dated to 200-300 CE; Versluys 2002: No. 119). In the mosaic square the personification of the Nile god is seated on a crocodile. Around him are five boats with pygmies and large lotus flowers. A mosaic at Villa Puente Genil, Spain (dated to 300-400 CE; Versluys 2002: No. 106) the mosaic square depicts the

personification of the Nile god with long hair and beard, around him are two ibises, a hippopotamus and a crocodile. Two depictions of the Nile personification appear on Roman reliefs: a relief, adorns a base perhaps an altar, Rome (250 CE). The other relief, Rome (100-200 CE) portrays the Nile god with a cornucopia in his hand, leaning on a hippopotamus (Versluys 2002: Nos. 9 and 12).

shown standing on the river bank as a measuring column within a well. In the mosaics under discussion the Nilometer is depicted similarly, as a cylindrical tower-like structure with a conical top, whose horizontal divisions are marked with numbers and Greek letters measuring the water height in cubits (pl. V.4).

The stylized Nilometer as a column on a base or rising from a well is shown in the left corner of the panel of the House of Leontis at Beth She'an; another is partially preserved on the south transept of the Tabgha mosaic. A more detailed rendition appears in the centre of the scene at the Sepphoris Nile Festival Building, where it is rendered as a round tower mounted on a rectangular base with a vaulted opening surrounded by many busy putti (Weiss and Talgam 2002: 61, 67-68). The numbers in cubits on the various Nilometers are different: at Beth She'an they are IA to IZ from eleven to sixteen; at Tabgha the letters are from S to I, from six to ten; at Sepphoris they are IE, IS, and IZ, from fifteen to seventeen, where a putto mounted on another putto's back engraves the number IZ; a similar scene appears on a 6th-century silver bowl from Perm (fig. XII.15b) (now at the Hermitage Museum, dated by imperial stamps to 491-518) and on a Coptic textile (Netzer & Weiss 1992a: 38; 1992b: 77-78; Weiss and Talgam 2002: 67). The 6th-century mosaic border pavement at Sarrin similarly shows a putto engraving the numbers IH and IZ on the Nilometer (Balty 1990: pl. XXXIII, 1). As noted above, the mosaic of Umm al-Manabi shows the Nilometer in the centre with the marks from ten to eighteen (Glueck 1951; Piccirillo 1993: 341). The high numbers of sixteen and seventeen are probably a symbolic number meant to express the optimal and successful yearly rising of the Nile. Possibly another small Nilometer is rendered on the north transept mosaic at Tabgha as a structure of bricks on a stepped base without marks (fig. V-2a). Similar unmarked Nilometers are known from other mosaics (Whitehouse 1979: 53, M34).³

In the mosaic at Beth She'an the location of the Nilometer is indicated by its rendition next to a city inscribed with the name of Alexandria (Meyboom 1995: 293, note 61). Still, this might imply just an element of Nilotic scenes rather

than a specific location. In earlier appearances the Nilometer represented the popular celebration of the inundation, but by the time it is portrayed on the Byzantine mosaics it in all likelihood simply symbolized the Nile (Whitehouse 1979: 54).

City Representations

The city representations on the mosaics are different (pl. V.5). At the House of Leontis in Beth She'an, a pillared building with a tiled roof and a tower inscribed in Greek with the name *Alexandria* is a schematic and stylized representation. A simple-walled towered structure is depicted on the north transept of the Tabgha floor. On the mosaic of Sepphoris the city of Alexandria is portrayed, consisting of two round towers flanking a gate, and above it the inscription *Alexandria* in Greek, with the Pharos attached to the right of the tower with a flame at the top.

Two horsemen, one the leading *Semasia*, the other a male, coming from a column surmounted by a statue (possibly of Diocletian) on top of a Corinthian capital, head for the gate to announce the Nile celebration. These portrayals are schematic representations of a building rather than a city. A similar simplified type of city rendition, consisting of two towers pierced by a gate, appears on the Madaba Map (Avi-Yonah 1954: 22, fig. 7). Only on the Haditha pavement, at the corner of the border, is a walled city portrayed, with domed towers and an arched gate; within the wall three buildings are shown; the Greek inscription *'Egypt'* is written below. *'Egypt'* means Memphis in the Hellenistic tradition.⁴ Avi-Yonah (1972: 121) suggests that the other three destroyed corners of the Haditha mosaic border might have depicted Alexandria, the Pharos, and Menuthis.

On mosaics of Jordan, in the church of St. John at Gerasa a walled city is portrayed together with two Nilotic scenes; a small church is rendered on the Nilotic scene at Zay al-Gharby (Piccirillo 1993: 34, 324, figs. 535, 677). Walled cities as well as the Nile flowing with seven fishes are portrayed on the Madaba map (Avi-Yonah 1954: 21-23, 25; Piccirillo 1993: 30-34). A depiction of a walled city, perhaps Alexandria, appears in the Nilotic scene on the mosaic pavement border at Sarrin (Balty 1990: pl. XXXIII, 1).

³ In the Roman period the use of portable measurement poles for the overflow of the Nile is known (Wild 1981: 32).

⁴ But see Hermann (1962: 82) and Roussin (1985: 308-9), who suggest that the cities inscribed *'Egyptos'* can be interpreted as the fortress of Babylon, now old Cairo.

Portrayals of the walled cities of Alexandria and Memphis appear on mosaics of the churches of St. John the Baptist and St. Peter and Paul in Gerasa (Kraeling 1938: 241-244; Biebel 1938: 341-351, pls. 67b, 69a, 75a; Avi-Yonah 1972: 119, pls. 21-23; Alföldi-Rosenbaum & Ward-Perkins 1980: 49; Duval 1986; Piccirillo 1986: 213, see also 220; Piccirillo 1993: 34, figs. 535, 556). The formula of the walled city in these mosaics is much richer in detail. The development is described by Biebel (1938: 342-349), who maintains that they are based on a landscape tradition and were introduced to the pavement to add to the beauty of the mosaic floors. The church of St. John at Khirbat al-Samra likewise has Alexandria and Memphis, preserved on the mosaic floor with some lotus flowers (Piccirillo 1993: 34, fig. 592). Cities are also represented on Jordanian mosaic floors of the 7th -8th centuries in Ma'in, and on the border mosaic of the nave in the church of St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas, where the cities are accompanied by boats, fishes, and plants (Piccirillo 1993: 35-37, figs. 345, 358). The motif of the walled city shows its evolution in the mosaics of Jordan where it appears on floors from the 6th to the 8th century Piccirillo further suggests that the city representations followed a formula borrowed from the Classical tradition. However, cities characterized by their landmarks might have been in pattern books from which these motifs were copied.

The Crocodile and Animal Combat

The crocodile and the hippopotamus are the two most characteristic animals of Egypt and they appear frequently in the Nilotic scenes (pl. V.6a,b). The hippopotamus is the animal evidently connected with the personification of the river (Meyboom 1995: 255-6, note 114). In Egypt the crocodile could be perceived as the sacred animal at the temples in the cult of a crocodile god, but its religious aspects is not reflected in the Nilotic scenes.

Animal combat consists of a crocodile trying to devour a buffalo.⁵ At Beth She'an a buffalo seized by a crocodile (a tiger? a lion?) is shown. Another suggestion is a lion trying to devour a bull (Hamarnah 1999: 186). At Haditha a naked

man waving a stick is shown beside an animal (destroyed—probably a crocodile) trying to seize a steer, which the herdsman is trying to save (pl. V.6c,d).

Comparable scenes of combat are portrayed on 6th-century Cyrenaic church mosaics: the one in the southeast chapel of the Cathedral of Qasr el-Lebia shows on the right a boat with two men fishing and bird-catching; characteristic plants fill the space (Alföldi-Rosenbaum & Ward-Perkins 1980: 46, pls. 56-57, 85,1). The scene on the left of the panel is a crocodile attacking a cow, with a cowman grasping the cow's tail in an attempt to save the animal. A similar scene (with two cowmen) is depicted on the 2nd-century Roman North African El-Alia mosaic (Foucher 1965: figs. 4, 9). The north aisle of the Cyrene cathedral depicts the combat of the cow and crocodile (Alföldi-Rosenbaum & Ward-Perkins 1980: 45, pl. 84,2). The south-east chapel of the cathedral depicts the combat of the cow and crocodile, with a cowman present (Alföldi-Rosenbaum & Ward-Perkins 1980: 45, pls. 64, 85,2). However, the crocodile in these Cyrenaican mosaics is portrayed differently from the Sepphoris examples; it has long legs, a small head with snapping jaws, and its upper hide is depicted like a tortoise-shell (Whitehouse 1979: 28).

The scene of a crocodile trying to devour a cow or a donkey is suggested to derive from a motif by the painter Nealkes, described by Pliny (*N.H.* 36,142) (Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins 1980: 46; Meyboom 1995: 100, notes 18,19 on pp. 371-72). Nonetheless, the scene is clearly a reflection of the real hazard to life along the Nile in Egypt. Such a representation also identifies it as a Nilotic scene (Whitehouse 1979: 32; Meyboom 1995: 371, n. 19).

Other episodes portray a crocodile in various activities. In the House of Dionysos at Sepphoris, a youth (hunter?) holding a stone seems to be in the process of throwing it at the crocodile, rendered with its mouth open (pl. V.6b); another youth holds a shield, and a spear which he aims at a heron (Netzer and Weiss 1994: 37; Talgam and Weiss 2004: 87-88). A crocodile attacking a fish appears in the left part of the flowing Nile on the Sepphoris Nile Festival mosaic (pl. V.6a). The somewhat similar crocodile in both mosaics is portrayed, unrealistically and schematically, with a long tail, a dog-like head with long ears, a large eye, and small legs.

⁵ The earliest representation of the combat scene is in a painting from Herculaneum (Alföldi-Rosenbaum & Ward-Perkins 1980: 46, Pl. 86,2).

The depiction of a putto riding a crocodile, and another crocodile with a fish in its mouth, appears in the Nilotic scene on the border mosaic at Sarrîn (Balty 1990: pl. XXXII, 2, general plan).

A crocodile is depicted in the waves of the river in the Nilotic scene at the nave mosaic of Zay al-Gharby (Piccirillo 1993: 324, fig 677). A crocodile is portrayed on the bottom of the Nilotic mosaic panel, and another is on the mosaic border of the late 5th- or early 6th-century mosaic at Jiyé (Ortali-Tarazi and Waliszewski 2000: fig. 3). A crocodile with a duck standing on its back appears on the nave mosaic pavement of the East Church at Qasr-el-Lebia, and is considered part of Nilotic repertoire (Alföldi-Rosenbaum & Ward-Perkins 1980: 124-126, Fig.10, panel D5; Maguire 1987: 45).

For the Romans the crocodile seems to have been symbolic of Egypt, and it is often portrayed so as to highlight the animal's savage nature.⁶ For the Christians of the Justinian age the crocodile possibly came symbolize the powers of evil (Alföldi-Rosenbaum 1975: 152; Alföldi-Rosenbaum & Ward-Perkins 1980: 51).

Sailing Boats

A sailing boat is portrayed at Beth She'an and Haditha (pl. V.7). On the Beth She'an mosaic the boat, with a small sail, is laden with three wine vessels, and a man standing close to the mast holds the sail's rope. The boat at Haditha is loaded with wine-jars, and two naked figures (putti, pygmies?) are seated in it, one holding the oars. Similar to the Haditha boat is the sailing boat with two figures, one a fisherman holding a fishhook with a caught fish (pl. VII.20a), portrayed in a round medallion on the mosaic of the north aisle at Beth Loya (Patrich and Tsafirir 1993: 269, pl. XIXb).

The boat and figures fishing are frequently portrayed as part of a Nilotic scene (Alföldi-Rosenbaum & Ward-Perkins 1980: 46). Often the boat's prow has a bird or animal head on it (see Friedman 1999 for ships on mosaics). Two sailboats, one with two figures, destroyed, are depicted in the Nile's waves on the nave mosaic of Zay al-Gharby (Piccirillo 1993: 324, figs. 660, 676). Ships with fishing putti, naked, with caps on their

heads, appear in the Nilotic scenes on the border of the 8th-century church mosaic of St. Stephen at Umm Al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 345, 358). A similar boat with a sail and three wine jars is rendered on the mosaic pavement of the Byzantine church in Sorân in Syria (Donceel-Voûte 1988: figs. 295, 297,298). A boat with two rowing figures is portrayed on the mosaic panel at Jiyé (Ortali-Tarazi and Waliszewski 2000: fig. 3).

The boat carrying wine in the mosaic portrayals may reflect two traditions, one of Egypt as a wine producing area and the other of the Nile as a kind of highway, the river being Egypt's main transport route (Whitehouse 1979: 50-52). Ver-sluis (2002: 280) surmises that the boat was perhaps filled with offerings to the River Nile, made at the peak of the flood.

Water Plants, Fishes, and Birds

Nilotic water plants such as lotus, papyrus, and oleander fill the space in a similar manner in all the pavements and represent and distinguish the Nilotic landscape (pl. V.8). The lotus is featured with an erect stem, circular bell-like leaves, and cup-like flowers, and is the most distinctive plant in these scenes; it appears not as the Egyptian lotus but as the sacred lotus of Buddhism, introduced into Egypt from India probably during the Persian period (Whitehouse 1979: 9-22). The lotuses depicted at Tabgha (fig. V-2) have shapes different from the actual plants, and may be confused with papyrus plants. They probably derive, though not directly, from illustrated botanical manuscripts (Schneider 1937: 59-60; Whitehouse 1979: 20-21). The oleander appears in Sepphoris and Tabgha similarly (figs. V-2, pl. V.3). At Sepphoris the lotus is in the main stream, seemingly to symbolize the Nile, while the oleander is scattered all over the mosaic and might represent the river valley and banks.

Fishes

A number of fishes are depicted swimming in the Nile streams on the Haditha and Sepphoris pavements (pls. V.2,3,8). In the House of Leontis at Beth She'an (pl. V-1) one fish swims in the Nile stream in the lower left corner. Fishes are

⁶ For Whitehouse 1979: 26-30, the animal's appearances suggests a ptern book or zoological illustrations rather than observation from nature; on the ritual killing of crocodile

and hippopotamus see Meyboom (1995: 325-6, notes 169, 170).

portrayed on most of the comparable mosaic pavements (Table V.1). Three fishes swim towards a Nilotic plant, and a youth pursues a pelican, on a fragment of a mosaic upper panel at El-Hammam, Beth She'an, probably from the Roman period (Zori 1957; Schapiro and Avi-Yonah 1960: 15; Adler 2003: 72, pls. 79, 80). A fish is seen in the Nile waves in the scene on the nave mosaic of Zay al-Gharby (Piccirillo 1993: 324, fig. 677). One fish is depicted in the Nilotic scene on a panel of the mosaic at Jiyé, and a pair of fishes are on its border (Ortali-Tarazi and Waliszewski 2000: figs. 3, 4). The presence of fishes in the Nilotic landscape emphasizes the river's current and its abundant water.

Birds

The most concentrated repertoire of types of birds on a Nilotic scene—cormorants, doves, ducks, geese, herons, and swan—is portrayed quite realistically on the two floors of Tabgha (pl. V.8f; Fig.V-2). A crane appears at Beth She'an and Haditha (pls. V.1, 2). A flamingo killing a snake appears at Tabgha, and at Sepphoris the bird in a similar scene is probably a stork (fig. V-2, pl. V.3). In earlier examples, such as the Nile mosaics of Palestrina and the Casa del Fauno at Pompeii, the theme is represented as a fight between a mongoose and a cobra (pl. VII.6) (Balty 1976; Meyboom 1995: 27, 243, note 74, figs. 15, 28; see also the appearance of this scene in mosaics with inhabited scrolls and with the Orpheus design). A pair of ducks are portrayed at Haditha; a duck resting in a lotus cup appears at Sepphoris, Tabgha north transept, Emmaus, and Beth Guvrin. Recurrent and popular motifs, which are standard features of Nilotic scenes, include a pair of swimming ducks and the motif of a duck resting in a lotus cup (pl. V.8b,c,e), which became a design for decorative use (Whitehouse 1979: 19, 44-45). Many of the plants and animals are realistically depicted and reveal knowledge of the species 'more than their place of origin' (Hamarneh 1999: 187). Although many birds are portrayed on these pavements they are differently rendered; no single pattern seems to be their source.

Various hunting or animal assault episodes are sometimes part of the Nilotic scenes, for example, on the lower part of the Nile Festival mosaic pavement at Sepphoris and on the border frieze mosaic at el-Mequerqesh, Beth Guvrin. Some of the Nilotic scenes also show activity by putti or pygmies.

The full scheme of the Nilotic scene with all the iconographic elements (Table V.1) appears only at Beth She'an. The city with towers, plants, fishes, and birds appear on all the pavements. The Nile personification is portrayed on the Beth She'an and Sepphoris pavements. The Nilometer is depicted on the Beth She'an, Tabgha, and Sepphoris floors. The sailboat and animal combat is rendered on the Beth She'an and Haditha mosaics. At Sepphoris the buffalo-crocodile combat scene and the sailing boat are missing. At Haditha, the Nilometer and the Nile personification are omitted. At Tabgha, the Nile personification, the buffalo-crocodile combat scene and the sailing boat are absent, and the pavements are almost completely filled with Nilotic plants and birds while human figures are absent. The most common elements of Nilotica presented in these mosaics are the water plants and birds, which appear on all the floors, but at Beth She'an there are very few of them. The representation of the city, named 'Alexandria' or 'Egypt', and the Nilometer seem to be the most important elements even though they appear only on some of these mosaic pavements. Tabgha is the only pavement that might have been chosen because of its close proximity to water, the Sea of Galilee, whereas all the other mosaic floors do not seem to have a specific reason for the depiction of Nilotic landscapes. The Sepphoris mosaic is the only one that portrays the typical elements of the Nilotic theme, but in addition it illustrates the festival celebration and announcement of the Nile inundation.

C. Interpretation

The question arises whether the Nilotic scenes have a specific meaning in their pagan, Jewish and Christian contexts. The tradition of Nilotic images goes back to the Hellenistic period. The meaning and function of the Nilotic scenes is in controversy—are they Egyptian or non-Egyptian. Most scholars maintain a secular view, the Nilotic scenes represent a phenomenon of using motifs of exotic character for decorative purposes, mostly with imaginative rather than realistic content, suggesting affluence and well-being, with no allegorical-biblical significance. Kitzinger (1965: 10; 1976: 52,54, 59) states that the Nilotic motifs were geographic and topographic themes introduced in the 5th century, and need not have any symbolic meaning; it is impossible to say what was

Table V.1. Nilotic Elements on Byzantine Mosaic Pavements*.

<i>Sites with Nilotic mosaic pavements</i>	<i>Century CE</i>	<i>Nilus personification</i>	<i>Nilometer</i>	<i>Building</i>	<i>Crocodile, animal combat</i>	<i>Sailing boat</i>	<i>Plants</i>	<i>Fishes</i>	<i>Birds</i>
<i>Israel (Palestina)</i>									
Beth Leontis, Beth Shean	5th	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
El Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin	4th-5th						+		+
Emmaus	5th						+		+
Haditha	6th			+	+	+	+	+	+
Sepphoris, The House of Dionysos	4th				+		+		+
Sepphoris, Nile Festival building	5th-6th	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
Tabgha	5th		+	+			+	+	+
<i>Jordan (Arabia)</i>									
Khirbat al-Samra	634			+			+		
Madaba map	6th			+				+	
Peter & Paul, Gerasa,	540			+					
St John the Baptist, Gerasa,	531			+			+	+	+
St. Stephen, Umm al-Rasas,	756			+		+	+	+	
Sts. Lot and Procopius, Khirbat al-Mukhayyat,	6th					+		+	+
Umm al-Manabi	6th	+	+	+		+		+	
Zay al-Gharby	6th				+	+	+	+	
<i>Syria</i>									
Apamea				+		+		+	
Ge and Seasons, Antioch Hama	412					+	+	+	+
Oumnir el-Qubli	6th					+	+	+	+
Qoumhan	6th						+	+	+
Sarrin (Osrhoène)	6th	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
Soran	6th					+	+	+	
Tayibat al-Imam,	442								+
Tell Hauwash	516						+	+	+
Jiyé (Phoenicia-Lebanon)	5th-6th	+			+	+	+	+	+
<i>N. Africa, Cyrenaica</i>									
Leptis Magna, Villa del Nilo	2nd-3rd	+	+				+		
Cyrene Cathedral, SE chapel	6th				+				
Cyrene, Cathedral, N. aisle	6th				+	+	+	+	+
Qasr-el-Lebia, NE Chapel	6th				+	+	+	+	+
Qasr-el-Lebia, E. Church	6th			+	+	+	+	+	+

* See also the table in Balty 1984: 831

the reason for the choice of a particular subject. Avi-Yonah (1972: 121-122) suggests that for the Greeks and Romans the Nilotic scene represented Egypt and its landscape. Egypt apparently filled the role of ‘an exotic country endowed with an ancient culture, different from the rest of the civilized world’. He further maintains that the importance of the Nilotic scene in church pavements was different: ‘Life in the Nile valley, representing the maximum of earthly delights, belonged within the framework of the “earth-bound world”’.

The Nile, mentioned by ancient writers such as Anastasios, is considered a river that brings fertility and has allegorical meaning (Maguire 1987: 43-4). The Nile was believed to be one of the four rivers flowing from Paradise: the ‘Tigris’, the ‘Euphrates’, the ‘Phison’ and the ‘Gehon’ or Nile (see Chap. VIII, pp). The Nilotic scenes might have been considered to convey a general idea of Paradise on earth, of prosperity and fruitfulness, and was part of Christian sacred geography (Hermann 1959: 64-67; Alföldi-Rosenbaum

and Ward-Perkins 1980: 51; Piccirillo 1993: 37; Maguire 1999: 181). Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins (1980: 48-49) suggest that the mosaic pavements found in Israel and those from Gerasa depicting Nilotic scenes are perceived as geographical renditions of the Nile valley and Egyptian towns, while the Nilotic panels in the Cyrenaic churches are by contrast genre scenes. Alföldi-Rosenbaum (1975: 150-151; 1980: 49) posits that Nilotic motifs were included in mosaicists' pattern books. The other view argues (Whitehouse 1979: 77-81; Meyboom 1995: 84; Hamarneh 1999: 188-9) that the Nilotic landscapes are of a religious derivation as elements imported with the Egyptian cults, especially the cult of Isis.

Roussin (1981: 6-9) suggests an eschatological interpretation for the crocodile-cow combat scene at the House of Leontis, Beth She'an. The scene is identified as 'the combat between Leviathan and Behemoth, which signals the beginning of the Messianic Era and will take place at the end of the world according to Jewish tradition' (see also Drewer 1981). Yet this combat appears in other examples too, so it should rather be considered one of the iconographic elements of the Nilotic scene. Roussin (1985: 312-315) maintains that some of the Nilotic landscapes with specific Egyptian topographic subjects are possibly related to the Nile liturgy.

Balty (1984: 833-834) rightly states that the Nilotic scenes in the 5th-6th centuries were inherited from the Hellenistic period; however, they lost their meaning of worship of the Nile and glorification of the Egyptian landscape, and became unspecified motifs which could be loaded with various meanings. In some cases the scenes were considered to carry Christian symbolism.⁷

Maguire (1987: 50-55, 82) maintains that many of these motifs (especially those on the nave mosaic pavement of the East Church at Qasr-el-Lebia) might be interpreted 'as signs standing for the earth and the waters, and as symbols representing allegories on the creation'. He further argues that the Nilotic scenes at Qasr-el-Lebia refer 'both to the gathering of waters to create dry land and to the arrival of Christ in Egypt'.

Meyboom (1995: 7-90; n. 19 p. 341; n. 47 p. 380) contends that the Nile mosaic of 2nd-century BCE Palestrina is in a sense symbolic

as it combines and depicts the Nile flood and all its aspects. The various motifs of the Nilotic landscape scenes were considered symbols of the fertilizing power of the Nile's inundation, and in the Christian period 'were seen as illustrations of the Creation'.

Hamarneh (1999: 185) divides the Nilotic scenes into three major groups, forming 'prototypes', though they tend to interconnect constantly: the first group, showing the River Nile as a deity, is closely associated with the Classical background; in the second prototype elements and architecture of cities control the composition, and the third group reflects landscape elements originating from nature. He maintains (1999: 188-189) that Nilotic patterns, especially those with all the elements discussed above, derive from Egyptian origins; Nilotic, maritime and other images depicting water are popular in the region with its dry climate, and are probably meant to symbolize the inhabitants' welfare. Furthermore, 'the pagan subjects seem to be completely deprived from their cultural meaning and become purely decorative compositions in the Christian pavements'.

Versluys (2002: 290-291) examined the Nilotic elements of the 5th-6th centuries in the Near East and suggested three similar categories: (1) the Nilotic scene which quite extensively shows a number of Nilotic elements; (2) topographic mosaics which depict the Nile and Egypt as topographic elements; (3) a large number of mosaics depicting a Nilotic motif as part of a representation of the flora and fauna world. In his catalogue Versluys studies the first category; the other two are examined in the appendix. Versluys (2002: 294-295) writes, 'Nilotic scenes are flood scenes not random depictions of Egypt. The Nilotic iconographic scenes seem to present fertility and abundance scenes, sometimes connected with a Dionysiac character, for example, the restored mosaic panel with a Nilotic scene in the House of Dionysos at Sepphoris'. The Nile Festival mosaic at Sepphoris is considered by Versluys (2002: 290) as depicted in the classic tradition with stereotype motifs'.

Weiss and Talgam (2000: 72, 83) agree with Maguire and Balty that Nilotic scenes in the Byzantine period may articulate diverse meanings. Moreover, the secular context of the Sepphoris

⁷ Balty (1984: 833) also notes that the Nilotic scenes depicted on Syrian church pavements do not portray

humans, in contrast to the scenes found in Israel and North Africa.

Nile Festival mosaic, with the addition of the inscriptions and themes of the other mosaics in the building, the Nilotic scene 'was chosen because of the fertility, abundance, and prosperity, the exotic appeal of the theme, and the decorative value of the composition'. The depictions at Sepphoris, though originating in Classical art, were integrated as a decoration into secular Early Byzantine art with no religious significance.

The Nilotic motif was perhaps chosen by patrons in connection with the Nile festival, which might still have been celebrated in the Byzantine period (Hamarnah 1999: 189), or with various water festivities, which promise fertility and a plentiful harvest. Weiss and Talgam (2002: 71, n. 64) describe at Sepphoris the drainage system that existed in the Nile Festival room and 'hints at the possibility that water was poured on the celebrants or on the floors of both halls during festivities'. Some hold that Leontis's choice of the Nilotic subject for the mosaic pavement of his Beth She'an house was inspired by his connection to Egypt and the maritime trade (Zori 1973: 238; Isgar and Poulsen 1997: 28); or the mosaic might reflect an association with water, as indicated by the many water installations at the site (Adler 2003: 78, 125-128). The choice of the Nilotic mosaic theme at Tabgha could be connected to the site's proximity to the Sea of Galilee. But some scholars, for example, Maguire (1987: 50-51, 81-84), ascribe allegorical and symbolic meanings to such pavements.

To sum up, the Nilotic scenes depicted on the mosaic pavements demonstrate they incorporate all or some of the elements: the personification of the Nile appears only in secular buildings seldom in churches or synagogues probably as a measure of caution (Maguire 1999: 182-3). The Nilometer, a towered building or a walled city with or without its Greek inscribed name, a crocodile, or animal combat of a buffalo (or cow) attacked by a crocodile, a sailing boat with men and wine-jars, nilombos water plants, birds and fishes are all integral part of the Nilotica illustrations. The Nilotic theme on the Sepphoris mosaic is representing

the entire scene adding to all the elements the portrayal of the Nilus consort Egypt surrounded by Nilotic flora and fauna, the celebration of the flood is represented by horsemen, one male and *Semasia* the lead rider, announcing the news to the city of Alexandria that the flood has reached the mark. The other Nilotic scenes are represented in a stylized, condensed version of the theme.

The Nilotic episodes rendered on these Byzantine mosaics are not meant to illustrate simply the landscape of Egypt, but reflect the Nile landscape as presented and expressed by the artists of the Hellenistic-Roman periods; the scheme is again chosen and represented by the Byzantine artists in their own style. Nilotica is a general manifestation of mosaic pavement art in Israel in the Byzantine period. It appears in various parts of the country, in different kinds of buildings—pagan, Jewish, and Christian, sometimes occupying a complete floor or only part of a pavement.

The Nilotic mosaics have elements in common, reflecting a limited traditional repertoire used repeatedly. It portrays life on the Nile and its surroundings, as well as aspects connected to the inundation of the Nile, which illustrates the water's fertilizing force as well as connection with water. It is difficult therefore to attribute any specific religious meaning or function to the Byzantine mosaics.

It seems likely that the themes and motifs in these Nilotic mosaic pavements, which were popular and used mainly for decoration, were taken from pattern books from which the artists or the clients could choose either the full Nilotic scheme or isolated motifs without relating any symbolic meaning to them and perhaps interpreting them as genre scenes.

Although the pavements described include all or some of the Nilotic elements they are each executed in a completely dissimilar manner and with various differences in the details. Thus, they could most likely be the result of common models books, which were utilized by various artists who executed each of these pavements and served a mixed clientele.

CHAPTER SIX

THE 'INHABITED SCROLLS' MOSAIC PAVEMENTS— A SIXTH-CENTURY TREND

The 'inhabited scroll' became one of the most widespread motifs during the 6th century CE, and appeared throughout the Levant; it was especially popular on mosaic floor carpets of synagogues and churches, but also decorated floors of villas, baths, and funerary chambers. The motif is also referred to as 'peopled scroll' and 'rinceau'. It originated in Hellenistic and Roman art, and developed in the mosaic art of North Africa (Avi-Yonah 1936: 19-20; Toynbee and Ward Perkins 1950; Maguire 1987: 60), apparently from the Hellenistic garland with vine leaves and grapes (Levi 1947, I: 490-517; Dauphin 1987: 183-212; Merrony 1998: 446-448).

The inhabited scroll¹ is designed as a symmetrical and geometrically patterned and rigid carpet composition covering the entire floor evenly (Kitzinger 1965b: 24). Vine branches and trellises issue from an amphora or an acanthus leaf, or from four amphorae or acanthus leaves, one in each corner. They form regular, almost geometrically circular, medallions. These are occupied by animals, birds and objects that contribute to the harmonious and integrated impression and sense of uniformity created by these carpets. The scrolls are inhabited by images framed within their curls consisting of animals, birds, various objects, and occasionally human figures in genre scenes, such as hunting, and rural activities (see the extensive research of the inhabited scroll theme by Dauphin 1976, 1978a, b, 1980, 1987, 1994: 10-13).

The inhabited vine scroll design was commonly used on religious and secular structures in the Levant, especially during the 6th century, on church and synagogue pavements; it is almost absent from villas (Merrony 1998: 443-4).

The popularity of the motif is explained by Biebel (1938: 302) 'by its variable form capable of indefinite extension in a vertical or horizontal direction according to the space to be filled, and at the same time the definite rhythm and

compactness which it achieves by the repetition of the circular medallions' (see also Kitzinger 1976a: 70-71; 1977: 89; on the development of the inhabited scroll motif in border and field mosaics see Dauphin 1987: 183-185; Lists 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 13).

Biebel (1938: 302-3) divided this motif into two types: the medallions issuing from one central point, an amphora or an acanthus leaf, or spreading out from four amphorae or acanthus leaves, one in each corner (also Toynbee and Ward-Perkins 1950). Lavin (1963: 218-222) further defined these two groups, showing the vertical nature of Biebel's first group and the diagonal nature of his second (see also Dauphin 1976b, 1987: 188-189; Merrony 1998). Levi (1947: 504-516) describes the progression and 'the complete degeneration of the vegetable motif into a purely ornamental element'. Dauphin (1987: 184-185) contends that in Arabia and Palaestina a 6th-century innovation consisted of a border of inhabited acanthus scrolls enclosing an inhabited vine field on the same mosaic pavement (see Table VI-1,2). The overall motif of the inhabited scrolls on mosaic pavements was treated as a unit, with the accent on the point of departure of the scrolls—again, by a vase or acanthus leaf flanked by birds or animals or by vases or acanthus leaves stemming from four points. Dauphin (1987: 191) summed up thus: 'the pavement has become a "carpet" dominated by a repetitive, geometricized *pattern*, thus a "carpet design"'. Merrony (1998: 465) argues that 'in Roman villae, the vine was associated with vintaging and Dionysiac scenes, whilst on Early Byzantine Christian pavements, the vine was essentially used as a compositional device'.

A. *The Compositions*

The principal design of the inhabited vine scrolls mosaic floors fields is an all-over pattern of a conservative and stereotype space composition, which divides the floor into formalized, geometricized circular medallions of vine-trellis and can be assembled into five distinctive groups according to

¹ In this study 'inhabited scroll' is preferred to 'peopled scroll', coined by Toynbee and Ward-Perkins 1950; see also Dauphin 1978a: 400 and n.4.

the compositions, schemes and content (Hachlili 1987).

The five compositions are divided into groups I-III, in which the vine scrolls issue from one point, from a vase rendered at the base of the design. In group IV the vine scrolls issue from one point, as in groups I-III, or lack a point of issue. In group V the vine scrolls issue from four vases or acanthus leaves, each positioned in a corner of the composition (see Dauphin 1976a: 114-115 for her classified types of scroll work; 1976b for the method of laying the inhabited scrolls mosaics; 1987: 188-189, Lists 12,13).

Group I (pl. VI.1; figs. VI-1-4; Table VI-1) consists of mosaics executed in long narrow naves (Hachlili 1987: 46, composition II). To this group belong the following mosaic floors:

The southernmost aisle of the Gaza-Maiumas synagogue dated to 507/8 by inscription, consists of an inhabited vine scroll carpet with three columns and at least eleven rows of medallions in the surviving composition (pl. VI.1; fig. VI-1). The design is composed of alternating rows of animals and birds, sometimes with animal chase scenes, also in the central column (Avi-Yonah 1966; 1975a: 377-378; Ovadiah 1969).

Most of the medallions of the Gaza-Maiumas synagogue contain beasts and birds; because of the destroyed base the listing of rows begins at the top of the composition. The arrangement is of three animals in the medallions of each row, connected horizontally, especially the animal chase scenes in rows 2, 4, and 8. In the other rows a bird or a beast in the centre is flanked symmetrically by two animals facing each other in an antithetic composition. In row 9, in contrast to other inhabited scroll designs, the peacocks flank an inscription (commemorating the donors Menachem and Yeshua, sons of Jesse) instead of a vase; likewise row 5, in which a bird cage flanked by a pair of partridges is depicted in the central medallion. The central axial column shows no objects except the bird-cage and an inscription; the destroyed central medallions in rows 10 and 11 show remains of birds' feet.

Naturalistic and impressionistic renditions characterize the Gaza pavement, and are also apparent in the spirited animals, which burst through the bounds of the medallions. They include a lioness and her cub (row 8), a pair of giraffes flanking a zebra (row 6), a tigress, and a



Figure VI-1. Group I: Gaza-Maiumas synagogue pavement.

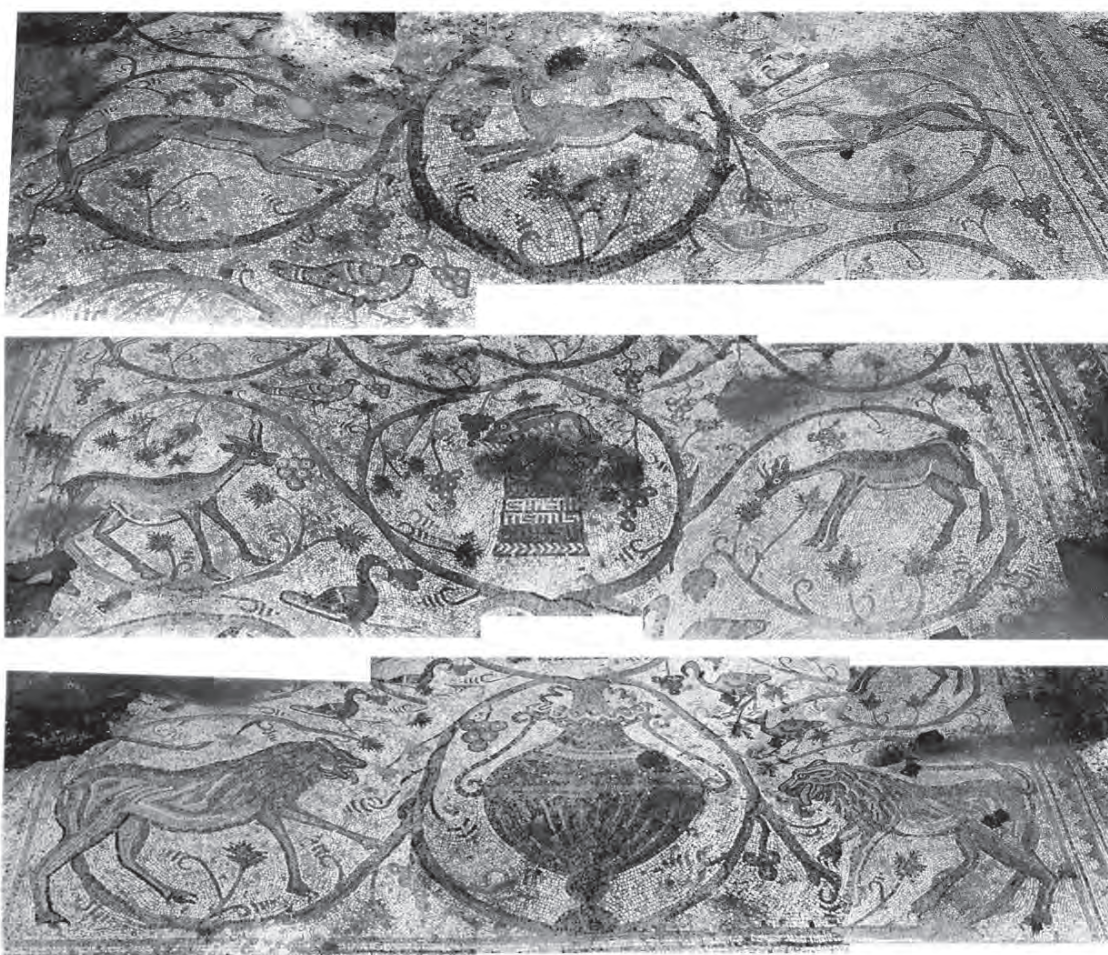


Figure VI-2. Group I: Hazor-Ashdod church pavement.

donkey. Lively animal chase scenes appear in the medallions of the Gaza mosaic: the lowest row has a pair of bears chasing a deer; a tigress leaps toward a donkey jerking his legs (row 8), a pair of foxes chase a deer/stag in the centre (row 4); and a pair of leopards attack a stag/ibex in the central medallion (row 2) (compare the animal chase in row 6 of the Shellal church mosaic in the west-south Negev, described below). The proportions between animals and birds are almost realistic, the birds being smaller than the animals. The arrangement at Gaza is horizontal, each row having a group of three animals, connected by a chase scene or by a symmetrical composition of animals facing towards the central medallion.

The church at Hazor-ʿAshdod, Judaea (fig. VI-2) is dated by inscription to 512 (Avi-Yonah 1957; Ovadiah and Ovadiah 1987: 67-68, no.93); the mosaic consists of an inhabited vine scroll design of three columns and seven rows of medallions, only fourteen medallions have survived. The vine trellis issues from an amphora in

the centre of the base, flanked by a pair of lionesses. The central medallion in the second row has a basket full of grapes with a rabbit seated on top, flanked by a pair of goats. A pair of dogs chase a hind in the third row. A leopard and a donkey are in the side medallions of rows 4 and 5. A pair of cranes are seen in the side medallions of row 7. Several birds appear outside the medallions between the first and second row.

At Khirbet ʿAsida church (fig. VI-3) the inhabited vine scroll design of the nave mosaic, dated to the 5th century, consists of three columns, eleven rows of medallions, in which only seventeen medallions have survived (Avi-Yonah 1981b: 391). The original design had alternating rows of animals and birds, with a bird-cage in the central medallion of row 9. The mosaic was completely transformed by iconoclasm and later repairs.

Several damaged mosaics show some affinities with this group of inhabited vine scrolls:

Deir el-Asfur mosaic chapel has three columns with only seven surviving medallions, which show



Figure VI-3. Group I: 'Asida church nave mosaic pavement.

alternating rows of animals and birds in all the columns and no objects (Waliszewski 1994).

The nave of the Eastern Church at Herodium is decorated with inhabited vine scrolls of which only three rows of three columns have survived (Netzer et al. 1993: 225-224, pl. XVII). The first row has an acanthus leaf flanked perhaps by peacocks, destroyed and restored as a leaf. In the second row, on the left a lion survived flanking an eagle in the centre; in the third row bird's legs survived in the central medallion.

At the Horvat Sokho mosaic only three rows of three columns survived. The amphora at the bottom was flanked by a pair of horses or mules, a bird is flanked by baskets in the row 2 and possibly two camels in the side medallions of the third row (Gudovitch 1996).

The group's common characteristics are:

- The mosaics composition of 'Asida, Gaza, Hazor-Ashdod, Herodium and Horvat Sokho contain three columns.
- At 'Asida and Hazor-Ashdod, in the bottom row at the base of the motif an amphora is depicted in the central medallion, flanked by lions; at Horvat Sokho the flanking animals might be horses or mules. At Gaza the bottom row is missing.
- The axial column is not inhabited with objects.

- No human figures inhabit the mosaics.
- The animals and birds in the rows often have connected themes such as confronting animals and a chase at Gaza and Hazor-Ashdod.
- The bird-in-cage is portrayed in the central column at 'Asida and Gaza. The rows of medallions at Gaza and 'Asida are inhabited by alternating birds and beasts. At Hazor-Ashdod, the surviving medallions show only animals, with just a pair of cranes in the top row; other birds are presented outside the medallions around the two central medallions (of rows 1 and 2). The animals at Gaza and Hazor-Ashdod are outside the medallion borders.

The distinctive features characteristic of this group of inhabited vine scroll designs appear mainly at the Gaza synagogue, which survived almost completely, while few parts of the other mosaics are in evidence; however, it is apparent that the mosaic composition is not as rigid as group II (see below). The animals are depicted in connection with each other in each row, usually in some action like pursuit; the axial central column is without objects, except for the bird-in-cage. The animal and bird images in the scrolls are lively and

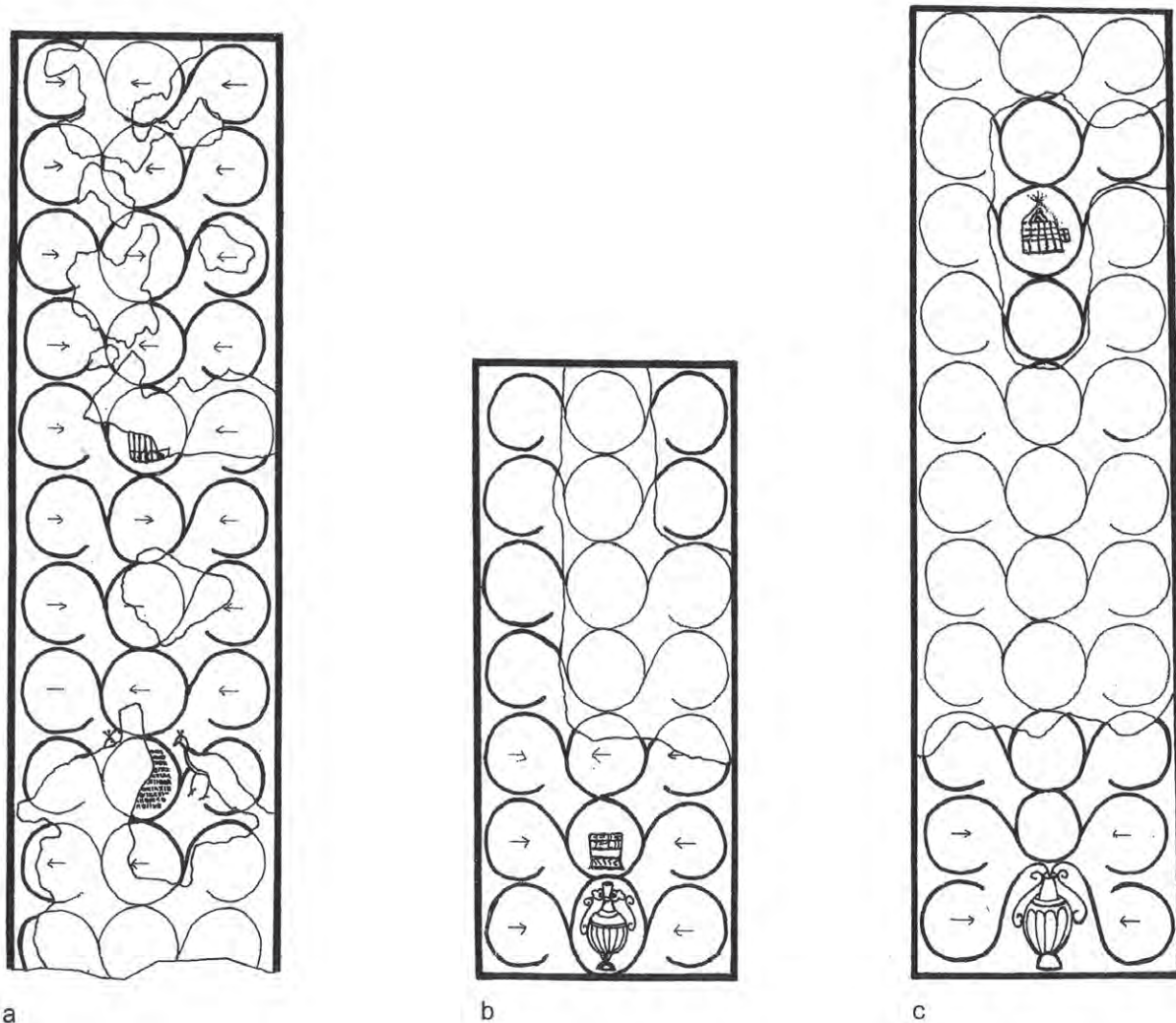


Figure VI-4 Group I pavements: a. Gaza synagogue; b. Hazor-Ashdod church; c. 'Asida church.

naturalistic in execution, and unlike group II the animals at Gaza and Hazor-Ashdod frequently extend outside the medallions. Furthermore, this is the earliest group of inhabited vine scroll mosaics in Palestine made during the early 6th century, dated by inscriptions: the Gaza synagogue to 508/9, and the Hazor-Ashdod church to 512.

The Gaza-Maiumas synagogue pavement shows coherence in the natural portrayal of the animals. For instance, the lioness feeds her cub in one medallion (pl. VII.14a) while in the next two in the same row a ferocious tigress pounces on a terrified fleeing donkey (pl. VII.5a). This contrasts with the placid, subdued, and passive depiction of most of the beasts on the pavements of the later group II.

The Gaza mosaic has a unique feature, namely a Greek inscription flanked by peacocks in a medallion in the central column; a similar pattern

is found on the hall mosaic of the lower chapel of Priest John at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo, where an inscription is flanked by two horned stags in the last row of the inhabited vine scroll pavement (Piccirillo 1993: 176, fig. 240). The first row at Gaza is entirely destroyed, but might also have shown lions flanking a vase, like the other two designs of this group.

The general design at Gaza and Hazor-Ashdod seems to place more emphasis on the horizontal rows of the composition.

However, some features characteristic of the organization and order of the composition, which develop further in later group II, are already apparent. These include the stylization and geometric manner of the scrolls, vine trellis, and grapes; the alternating rows of animals and birds and the leaning to symmetrical heraldic composition. Still, the rigid symmetry characteristic of

group II is absent as some of the animals facing each other are not the same, many are set outside the medallions, and several are in the process of chasing or attacking. The central axis column depicted with objects—a salient characteristic feature of the group II pavements—is absent from this group.

The distinctive composition and content of the Gaza synagogue and the 'Asida, and Hazor-'Ashdod church mosaics, as well as their date, are noticeably different from the mosaics of group II; the pavements do not show common stylistic features: each seems designed by a different craftsman (see Chap. XII, pp...). Consequently this group of mosaics should not be considered as part of the pavements which were mistakenly regarded as the work of the 'Gaza School'; however, this type of inhabited vine scrolls composition was apparently the forerunner of the later mosaics of group II, as it already has some of the same features.

Group II (pls. VI.2-4; figs. VI.2-9; Table VI.1) consists of mosaics executed in long narrow rooms (Hachlili 1987: 46, composition I). This group contains the following mosaic floors:

The nave of Ma'on-Nirim synagogue in the west-south Negev (pl. VI.2; fig. VI-5;) is decorated with an inhabited vine scroll mosaic, dated to c. 538 (Avi-Yonah 1960); it consists of five columns and eleven rows, of which the left side is largely destroyed. The vine-trellis issue from an amphora in the centre of the first row, flanked by a pair of peacocks. The axial column has objects such as baskets, bowls, and a bird cage (apart from the bird of prey in the second row).

The symmetry in the Ma'on pavement is almost perfect: the axial column is flanked symmetrically by alternating birds and animals in each row, usually identical on either side of the central column, which results in side columns consisting of the same alternating birds and animals. The Ma'on animals are portrayed in a more naturalistic way, while the animals on the Shellal mosaic (below) are more stylized; Avi Yonah (1960: 33) maintains that 'the Ma'on artist followed his Hellenistic prototypes more closely'. All the animals at Ma'on (except perhaps for the ibex) are in movement, for instance, the hound in chase, the hares in flight. The Ma'on alternating composition of animals and birds in each of the horizontal rows made it impossible to depict scenes of animal chase like those shown at Gaza and Shellal. The last



Figure VI-5. Group II: the Ma'on synagogue pavement.

three rows have a unique design of a menorah in the central two medallions, flanked by a pair of lions in the last row (pl. XI.1a) and two palm trees in the row below. The Ma'on synagogue design arrangement (like the other mosaics of group II) emphasizes the central axial column,

which contains objects flanked by symmetrical antithetic animals.

The Shellal church in the west-south Negev is decorated with an inhabited vine scroll mosaic, dated by inscription to 561/2 (Avi-Yonah 1933: no.306; Trendall 1957). It is composed of five columns and probably nine rows, of which only seven survived; the upper part of the mosaic and parts of two columns on the left side are destroyed (fig. VI-6). The vine-trellis issues from an amphora in the centre of the first row, flanked by a pair of peacocks. An axial column is replete with objects such as baskets, bowls, and a bird-cage, and is flanked symmetrically by columns and rows of alternating birds and animals. Some of the flanking animals in the alternating rows are not identical (a lion and a tigress in row 4) and the animals in scenes of pursuit in the second and the sixth rows are presented in different poses.

The Jerusalem 'Armenian' church nave is decorated with an inhabited vine scrolls mosaic, dated to the 6th century (Avi-Yonah 1933: 36, no.132; Evans 1982). The mosaic composition consists of five columns and nine rows (fig. VI-7; pl. VI.3).

The vine-trellis issues from an amphora emerging from an acanthus leaf in the centre of the first row, flanked by a pair of peacocks and birds. An axial column with objects such as baskets, a bowl, a bird-cage and birds is flanked symmetrically by columns and rows containing only an assortment of alternating birds facing the column (except for the birds in row 4). Almost all flanking birds are identical.

The inhabited vine scroll mosaic on the nave of Horvat Beth Loya church in Judaea is severely damaged by iconoclastic defacement and by grave-digging in the Muslim period (Patrich and Tsafirir 1993: 268). It consists of five columns and twelve rows (pl. VI.4, fig. VI-9b). The vine-trellis issues from an amphora in the centre of the first row, flanked by a pair of peacocks. An axial column contains objects such as a double basket, a goblet, a flask, and a bird-cage. It is flanked symmetrically by almost completely defaced columns and rows of alternating birds and animals. The entire pavement is enclosed in an acanthus scroll border inhabited by animals and birds, showing hunting and pastoral scenes similar to some other pavements of vine scrolls design (see Table VI below).

The two church mosaics at Be'er-Shem'a and Petra are assigned to this group primarily because

they display its distinctive features: a central vertical axial column with objects; the figures in the medallions in each row set facing each symmetrically, on either side of the axial column. But in addition, these two mosaics include a rare depiction of human figures in various rural activities.

The mosaic on the nave of St. Stephen at Be'er-Shem'a (Khirbet el-Far) is wholly preserved and is dated to the mid-6th century (Gazit and Lender 1993: 275-6). It has five columns and eleven rows (pl. VI.5, fig. VI-9a).

The inhabited vine scrolls arise from a vase at the centre of the bottom row flanked by a pair of lions, each depicted in two medallions with heads and legs outside them; whereas the peacocks appear in the top row, each rendered in two medallions flanking a fruit bowl. Only the second, third and seventh rows have alternating animals and birds similar to the Ma'on mosaic. Although the design looks symmetrical it is not as rigid and heraldic as the other group II designs.

Though the mosaic belongs to group II, the composition is different in some aspects: the medallions of the axial central column are only partly filled with objects: a basket of fruit (row 3), a hanging 'Gaza' jar made into a dovecote with a pair of doves (row 5) (pl. XII.3f), a basket with bunches of grapes (row 6), a bird-in-cage (row 7), and a fruit bowl (row 11). Other medallions contain the unique human figures: a woman breast-feeding a baby (row 2) (pl. VII.17a), a flute player (row 4) (pl. XII.4b), a shepherd leaning on his staff (row 8) (pl. VII.16a), and a man, with the Greek inscription BIKTWP (VICTOR), carrying a tray (row 10) (pl. XII.17a). Several animals in the second and fourth rows are presented in different poses; scenes of pursuit in the fifth and eighth rows and some of the flanking animals in the same row are different (leopardess and lioness in row 2, elephant and giraffe in row 9, horse and mare in row 10).

The two medallions on the side columns of several rows contain linked scenes maintaining some sort of symmetry: two animal pursuit scenes, a dog chasing a vixen and a bitch after a doe rabbit (pl. VII.8c,d), flank the central medallion in row 5; a panther pursuing a deer on the left, and a wolf pursuing an ibex on the right, appear in row 8 (pl. VII.5b,c). The animal chase scenes are comparable to those at the Gaza synagogue but are less aggressive. A figure leading a donkey on the left and one leading a camel on the right flank a double basket in row 6 (pls. VII.2b, VII.18b);



Figure VI-6. Group II: the Shellal church pavement.



Figure VI-7. Group II: Jerusalem, the 'Armenian' church pavement.

a figure on an elephant and another leading a giraffe are seen in row 9 (pl. VII.15a). A figure carrying a tray in the central axial column in row 10 (pl. VII.17a), thought by the excavators to be the church storekeeper, is flanked by a horse and a mare, and a mongoose and snake combat, in a medallion on the far left (pl. VII.6a) (the theme appears also in Nilotic scenes, see Chap. V, p. 106). At Be'er Shem'a, the human figures in the axial row and those in the side columns, such as the shepherd, the flute player and the men leading a donkey and a camel, as well as the men leading exotic animals, are similar to the usual depictions in compositions of inhabited scrolls in groups IV and V (see tables VI-1, 2). But the woman breast-feeding a baby is unique. The Be'er-Shem'a mosaic is thus a distinct composition, unique in style and subject matter, albeit

with affinities to all other groups of inhabited vine scroll mosaics in the area.

Several notable stylistic details are common to both Be'er-Shem'a and the Ma'on mosaics (see Chap. XII, pp. 266-268): the vine leaves and the bunches of grapes are similarly depicted; the stylistic rendition of round muscles and some parallel lines and the posture of the animals are similar at both Be'er-Shem'a and Ma'on.

The long north aisle of the Petra church has a pavement of 28 rows in three columns, dated to c. 550 (Fiema et al. 1995: 295, figs. 3-4; Waliszekowski 2001: 219-244, 262-265).

The mosaic is arranged like the others in the group in a symmetrical composition, with the central axial column containing objects such as baskets and bowls full of grapes or fruit, amphorae, a bird-in-cage, and a bird of prey (pls. VI.6-8, 14f, 15g, fig. VI-9c). The vine-trellis issues from an amphora in the centre of the bottom row, flanked by a pair of peacocks. The rows alternate with beasts and birds; the flanking side columns show the same animals in each row, although many of them are in different postures (see rows 7-10, 12, 16). Exceptional are three rows containing human figures: three medallions in row 4 have a shepherd leaning on his crook, a dog, and an elderly man holding an amphora. The three medallions in row 14 portray a connected scene of two drivers on the side rows leading a camel in the central column (pl. VII.18c); in row 26, a pyxis is flanked by two figures, one holding a jar and the other a plate (pl. VII.17e).

All the objects in the central column and almost all the birds (except the roosters in row 21, the crown cranes in row 23, and the pheasant in row 25) are set within the medallion, whereas the animals and humans are portrayed with some of their parts extending beyond the rim.

The figures usually are proportional and coherent. The same animals and birds are depicted differently in the upper and lower rows: in the lower half of the mosaic (rows 1-16) the animals hold dissimilar postures: one of the flanking animals crouches or sits, sometimes with open mouth, its counterpart stands with inclined head (see rows 2, 7, 8, 10, 12, 16; compare the identical pose of the dog in row 4 to that of the hare in row 8). Some of the birds are also dissimilar (rows 3, 9). In the upper half of the mosaic (rows 17-28) the birds and most of the animals are in identical posture (rows 1, 5, 6, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20-25, 27, 28). Most of the animals appear calm, crouching or

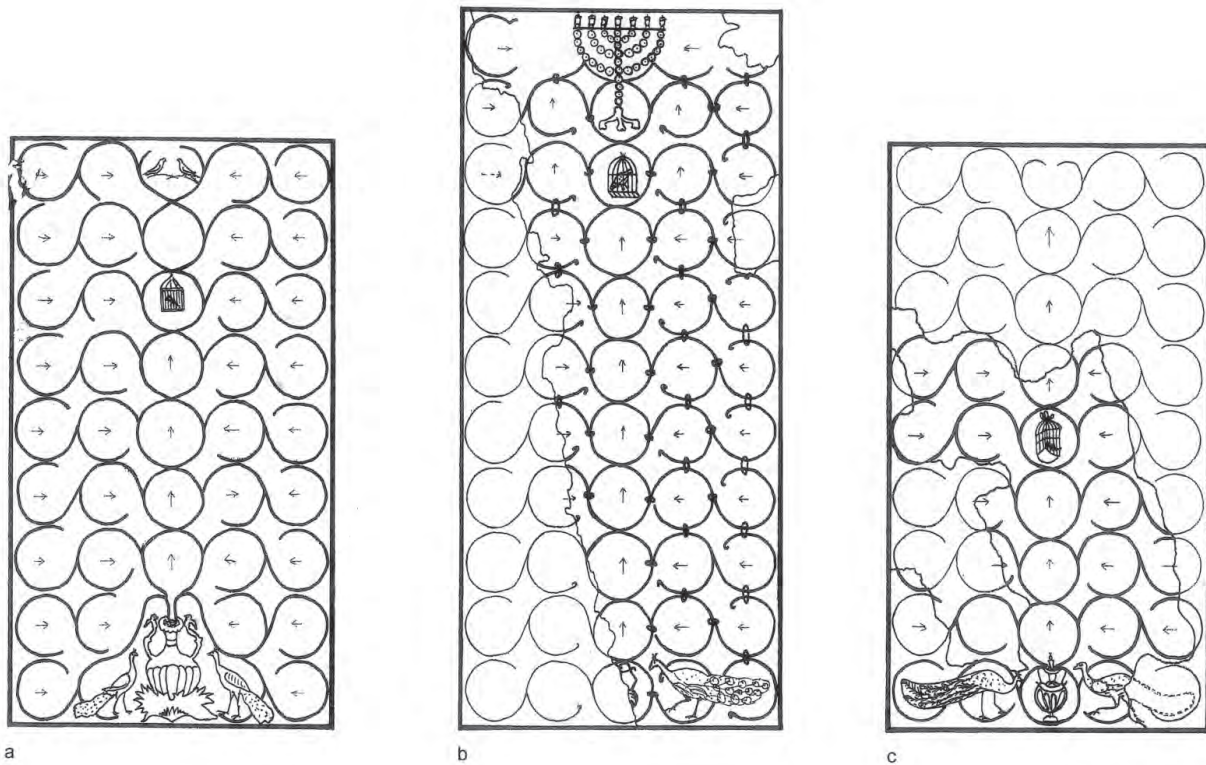


Figure VI-8. Group II: a. Jerusalem 'Armenian' Church; b. Ma'on synagogue; c. Shellal church pavements.

standing with an inclined (bent or lowered) head, or seated in a position of compliance and tame-ness. This posture of docility is also characteristic of the wild animals depicted on the Be'er-Shem'a mosaic.

This scheme of the same animals in dissimilar poses in the lower half was apparently deliberate. Waliszekowski (2001: 242) contends that these variations in some of the medallions of the left and right columns is proof of the work of more than one artist.

Several of the Petra animals hold a similar posture to animals in other mosaics of this group: the tiger and the ram at Shellal; the leopard (A16) is similar to the posture of the leopard at Ma'on; the leopard at the Petra church (C16) is identical in posture to the tigress in row 4 at Shellal (Trendall 1957: pl. IIIb) and to the lioness and leopardess with inclined heads, the bulls, and the bear at Be'er Shem'a (pl. VI.20). The horse resting on bent legs at Petra (A7) is similar to the posture of the buffalo in row 4 at Ma'on (Avi-Yonah 1960: pl. IV, 3). The pair of birds at Petra (in row 9) are similar to the pair in row 2 at Ma'on (Avi-Yonah 1960: pl. III, 2). The eagle at Petra (B15) is similar to the eagles at Ma'on and Jerusalem, also seen in the central column (pl. VI.14). The

medallions at Petra are only slightly filled with leaves and grapes, as at Shellal; the leaves and grapes are schematic and conventional and display fewer details.

Most of the characteristic features of group II occur at Petra: the central axial column is filled with objects such as baskets, vases, a bird-cage, a bird of prey, and a double basket. The rows alternate with identical animals and birds in the side columns.

A group of almost destroyed mosaics perhaps belongs to this composition as well:

The 'En Hanniya basilica pavement with five columns and twelve rows of medallions, mostly destroyed by iconoclasm. Only fourteen medallions survived, showing remains of birds, animals, and baskets (Baramki 1934: 115, pl. XXXVI).

The mosaic in the narthex of the church at the monastery of St. Martyrius at Khirbet el-Murasas (Ma'ale 'Adummim), dated to the last quarter of the 5th century, shows only five columns with two rows that have survived (Magen and Talgam 1990: 110-113, 122-3, 150, figs. 25, 26, 30-32; Magen 1993: 179, pl. Xa). The medallions are formed by vine-branches rising out of an amphora in the centre of the bottom row, flanked by goats in the inner medallions and probably birds in

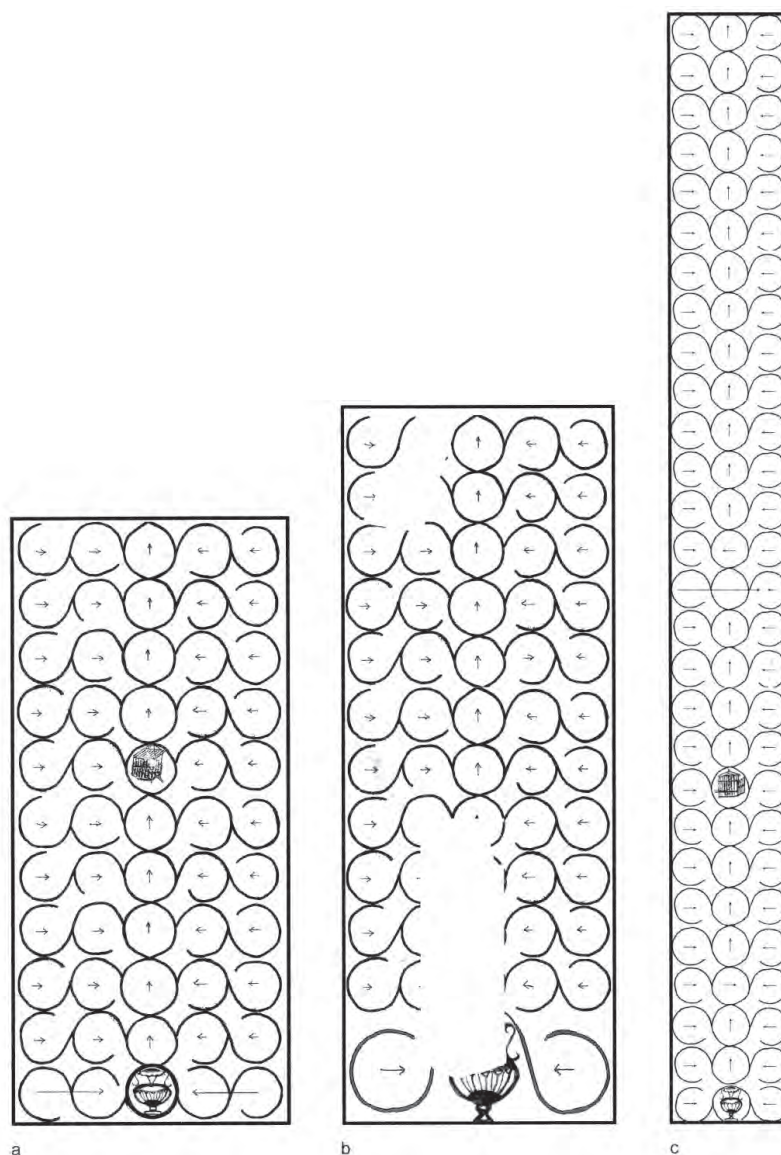


Figure VI-9. Group II: a. Be'er-Shem'a church pavement; b. Beth Loya church pavement; c. Petra church pavement.

the outer ones; the second surviving row shows a rabbit eating grapes in the outer medallions and a bird in the inner medallions flanking a completely destroyed central medallion. The arrangement is similar to that of the Ma'on synagogue mosaic, in which the flanking columns have alternating birds and animals in the same row. An almost completely lost field mosaic of inhabited vine scrolls framed by an inhabited acanthus scroll border was found on an upper room mosaic in Mt. Berenice church at Tiberias dated to the late 6th century (Area B, next to the Byzantine city wall on Mt. Berenice; Amir 2004: 146, fig. 8.21, plan 8.2).

Several mosaics discovered in Jordan are akin to those of group II: the nave mosaic pavement of the Chapel of Theotokos in the monastery of 'Ayn al-Kanish (pl. X.3), dated to the second half of the 6th century (Piccirillo 1998: 359-363; Ognibene 1998: 376-382), though greatly disfigured by iconoclasts, evinces a similar scheme to group II. The mosaic consisted originally of five columns and seven rows. The axial column has objects such as a basket, a cantharos, a vase full of fruit, and flowers; several birds and parts of animals survived in some of the rows; in the central scroll of the fourth row the unusual rendition of a phoenix was oddly spared, with some repairs.

The axial column was probably flanked symmetrically by alternating birds and animals in each row, which were replaced by grapes, plants, trees, and simple tesserae. The two bottom rows are missing and were originally in the area of the church door that was covered over by a mosaic of geometric patterns and a central inscription during the 8th-century restoration. In keeping with the group II mosaics, the amphora from which the vine trellis emerged, with flanking animals or birds, might originally have been on the covered bottom row.

The 6th-century mosaic of the chapel of Qam (Piccirillo 1993: 340, fig. 750) is decorated with inhabited scrolls issuing out of a central amphora flanked by birds, the right side of the mosaic is completely destroyed. They form three? (four?) columns of seven rows inhabited by animals, birds, and baskets.

At the 7th-century three-apsed church at Zoara (Piccirillo 1993: 336, figs. 723,725-6), in the bottom row of the sanctuary mosaic only the right peacock survived, possibly flanking an amphora. In the central medallion a cross flanked by two lambs is inscribed with *telos kalon* (good end).

Characteristic features of group II (Table VI-1):

- The floors were divided into five columns of medallions (except at Petra, with only three columns). The central vertical axial column generally contains inanimate objects such as baskets and bowls full of grapes or fruit, a bird-in-cage, and a bird of prey. Four (or two) vertical columns of medallions, two on each side of the central static axial column, contain antithetic groups of beasts and birds; ordinarily these are pairs of identical animals or birds in the same row, flanking and facing the axial column, forming a symmetrical composition. The birds and animals alternate either in each row (a row of birds above a row of animals (Shellal, Petra), or a bird and animal alternating in the same row, with the animal in the upper row rendered above a bird in the lower row (Ma'on, Horvat Be'er-Shem'a, Horvat Beth Loya). The composition is vertically oriented by the objects of the central axial column and horizontally oriented by the identical inhabited rows.
- The symmetric arrangement and the vine scrolls pattern are reduced almost to a geometric design, which imparts a rhythmic and harmonic composition.
- The medallions are formed by vine-branches issuing out of one central point, an amphora in the central medallion of the bottom row, flanked by peacocks (except at Be'er-shem'a, where the amphora is flanked by lions, and at Ma'ale 'Adummim, where it is flanked probably by a pair of gazelles). Two intersecting branches form the medallions in the axial column; the medallions of the side columns grow horizontally out of the central medallions.
- The bunches of grapes are set in horizontal rows.
- The Ma'on, Shellal, and Be'er-shem'a medallions are connected vertically and horizontally by rings.
- The central axial column contains various objects, with the recurring depiction of a bird-in-cage, a bird of prey, a double basket, bowls, and vases (Be'er Shem'a, Beth Loya, Ma'on, Petra, Shellal).
- *Horror vacui*: The medallions are loosely filled with leaves and grapes, to minimize the empty space if the figure did not fill it completely.
- Activity is rare in more than one medallion (except for several scenes at Be'er Shem'a, Shellal, Petra).
- Lack of proportion: the animals and birds are depicted in uniform size inside the medallion; the aim was not to copy nature: birds and beasts were made the same size so that they could be squeezed into one medallion (see, for instance, the equal sizes of birds and elephants at Ma'on and Petra (Avi-Yonah 1936: 17; 1960: 31; Dauphin 1976a: 129).
- The animals are usually portrayed as docile and quiet. Even the beasts appear tame, demonstrating peaceful co-existence of savage and timid beasts, smaller animals, and birds. The animals at Ma'on are depicted in movement, for instance, the hound in chase, the hares in flight; but the animals at Shellal—the leopard, the ram and the goats—lower their heads, as do most of the animals at the Petra church. At Be'er Shem'a several of the animals, a goat, the leopardess and lioness, the bull, and the bear, are also depicted with inclined heads (pl. VI.20).
- Human figures are depicted in several activities only at Be'er Shem'a and Petra.

Table VI-1a. Composition and Repertory of Inhabited vine scrolls mosaic, groups I, II, III .

Mosaic	Date centuries CE	Structure type	Composition		Vine issuing at bottom					
			No. of columns	No. of rows	Inhabited acanthus border	Figures out of medallion	Images filling space between scrolls	Vase + Peacock	Vase + ram/ goat	Vase + lion/ leopard
<i>Group I</i>										
<i>Palaestina</i>										
'Asida	5th.	church	3	10						+
Deir el-Asfur	6th	chapel?	3	5+						
Gaza-Maiumas	508-9	synagogue	3	11		+				
Hazor-Ashdod	512	church	3	7		+	+			+
Herodium	5th-6th	church	3	13?				+?		
Kh. Sokho	6th	chapel?	3+	3+					+	
<i>Group II</i>										
Be'er Shem'a	Late 6th	church	5	11		+	+	+		+
Beth Loya, Horvat	6th	church	5	12	+	+		+		
Jerusalem, Armenian mosaic	6th	church	5	9				+		
Ma'ale'Adummim	Late 5th	church	5	2+					+	
Ma'on- Nirim	c.538	synagogue	5	11		+		+		
Petra, N aisle	c.550	church	3	28		+		+		
Shellal	561/2	church	5	7-9				+		
<i>Arabia</i>										
Chapel of Theotokos, 'Ayn al-Kanish	Late 6th	chapel	5	5						
Zoara	7th	church	5	3						
<i>Group III</i>										
<i>Palaestina</i>										
Beth She'an small Synagogue	6th	synagogue	3	3		+ vine	+		+	
El-Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin	6th.	chapel	3	3		+			+	
Ma'ale Adummim Kh. el-Murassas	End 5th	monastery kitchen	3	3						
<i>Syria</i>										
Ain el-bad	6th	church	4	3				+		
Houad	568	church	3	2				+birds		
Frikya	6th	church	3	3					+	
Khan khalde	503 or 506	church	2	2				+		

(continued on next page)

Table VI-1b. Composition and Repertory of Inhabited vine scrolls mosaic, groups I, II, III. (Cont.)

Mosaic	Date centuries CE	Structure type	Central axial column repertory						Bird	Animal	Human figures	Symbols	
			Bird-in cage	Bird of prey	Bowl goblet	Basket	Double basket	Vase, chalice				Menorah	Cross
<i>Group I</i>													
<i>Palaestina</i>													
ʿAsida	5th.	church							+	+			
Deir el-Asfur	6th	chapel?											
Gaza-Maiumas	508-9	synagogue	+						+	+			
Hazor-Ashdod	512	church				+			+	+			
Herodium	5th-6th	church		+					+	+			
Kh. Sokho	6th	chapel?					+		+				
<i>Group II</i>													
Be'er Shem'a	Late 6th	church	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+		
Beth Loya, Horvat	6th	church	+		+	+	+	+	+	+			
Jerusalem, Armenian mosaic	6th	church	+	+		+		+	+				
Ma'ale'Adummim	Late 5th	church							+	+			
Ma'on- Nirim	c.538	synagogue	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	
Petra, N aisle	c.550	church	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		
Shellal	561/2	church	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+			
<i>Arabia</i>													
Chapel of Theotokos, ʿAyn al-Kanish	Late 6th	chapel			+	+	+		+	+			
Zoara	7th	church						+	+	+		+	
<i>Group III</i>													
<i>Palaestina</i>													
Beth She'an small Synagogue	6th	synagogue							+	+		+	
El-Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin	6th.	chapel		+					+	+			
Ma'ale Adummim, Monastery, kitchen	End 5th	monastery kitchen							+				
<i>Syria</i>													
Ain el-bad	6th	church							+			+	
Houad	568	church					+		+				
Frikya	6th	church					+		+	+			
Khan khalde	503 or 506	church	+						+				

Group III consists of the mosaics executed in small, rectangular rooms (figs. VI-10-12; Hachlili 1987: 46, 49, 53):

Attached to the House of Leontis, the small synagogue mosaic pavement of Beth She'an (B) is a variation of the inhabited scroll composition (Bahat 1981). It has a wide, ornate border and a central panel consisting of nine medallions, three columns, and three rows (figs. VI-10,12). The vine-trellis issues from an amphora in the centre of the first row, flanked by a pair of rams or goats. A menorah occupies the central medallion, flanked by an ethrog and a suspended lamp or incense burner, the word שלום (*shalom*) is inscribed above (pl. XI.1). A peacock, en face, fills the upper central medallion. Two medallions are lost so it is impossible to determine whether the inhabited scrolls had identical animals (as suggested by Bahat 1981), or whether each medallion contained a different animal, like the Beth Guvrin church floor. The round medallions all end in a vine leaf, similar in other details to the Beth She'an workshop (see Chap. XII, pp. 254-264).

The border design is four corner amphorae with vines emerging from them, and intertwining animal chase scenes. Among the depicted animals are bear, fox, hare, dog, deer, hen, and elephant. A fox chases a hare, and a bear chases a deer. Birds fill the space around and outside the menorah medallion. In the centre of the upper part of this border is a dedicatory inscription in a tabula ansata.

The small chapel at el-Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin, belongs to the period of group III, dated to the 6th century (figs. VI-11,12) (Avi-Yonah 1993, I: 197; Hachlili 1987: 46, 49,51,53). The inhabited scroll mosaic consists of nine medallions, three columns and three rows. The vine-trellis rises from an amphora in the centre of the first row, flanked by a pair of rams. The other medallions contain an assortment of birds. The central medallion of the mosaic contains a bird of prey (pl. VI.12d), flanked by a partridge and a quail; in the third row a pheasant is flanked by a crane and a goose.

Somewhat comparable to the Beth Guvrin mosaic is the small lower chapel to the east of Priest John, Khirbat al-Mukhayyat, Mount Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 176, figs. 234, 237) with only five

medallions emerging from an amphora flanked by two sheep. The other three scrolls are inhabited by animals and a bird.

The mosaic floor of the kitchen at St. Martyrius monastery at Ma'ale 'Adummim (Khirbet el-Murassas) dated to the third quarter of the 6th century is decorated with an inhabited vine scroll design (Magen and Talgam 1990: 131, 146, 148, 150, fig. 51; Magen 1993: 184, pl. XIA). The vine-trellis issuing from an amphora in the centre of the first row is flanked by two medallions, each filled with a bunch of grapes; the second row shows a bird in the central medallion, again flanked by two medallions, each with a bunch of grapes; the third row has three medallions, all filled with a bunch of grapes.

Characteristic features of group III:

- The mosaic pavements are designed as a nine-scroll composition, three columns and three rows, with an amphora in the central medallion of the bottom row at the base of the motif, flanked by two rams or goats.
- This group of mosaics focuses attention on the centre of the composition by special representations placed within the central medallion, a seven-armed menorah at Beth She'an, the bird of prey at el-Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin. At Ma'ale 'Adummim (Khirbet el-Murassas) the central medallion contains a bird while all the other medallions contain bunches of grapes.
- The contents of the scrolls at el-Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin are not symmetrical. Two medallions of the Beth She'an mosaic are lost, but presumably each scroll contained a different animal as on the Beth Guvrin pavement.
- The animals fit within the encircling medallions except for the two goats at el-Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin.²

The assessment of the details of the pavements in groups I-III demonstrates a chronological and stylistic development of the specific composition of inhabited vine scrolls which is characteristic to pavements in Palaestina.

Several pavements with variation of the inhabited vine scrolls design comparable to groups II and III are found in Syria, all dated to the 6th

² In the Jerusalem area three examples of group II and III mosaics—the Jerusalem 'Armenian' mosaic,

el-Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin and the kitchen at Maale Edomim, the medallions are inhabited only with birds.

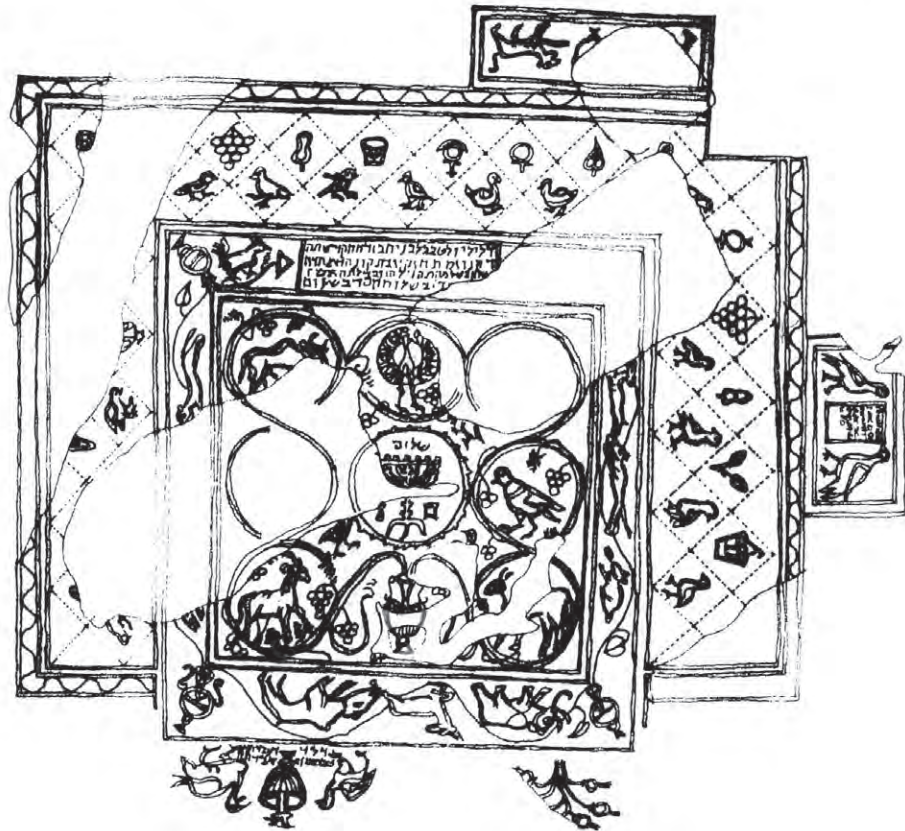


Figure VI-10. Group III: Beth She'an small synagogue.

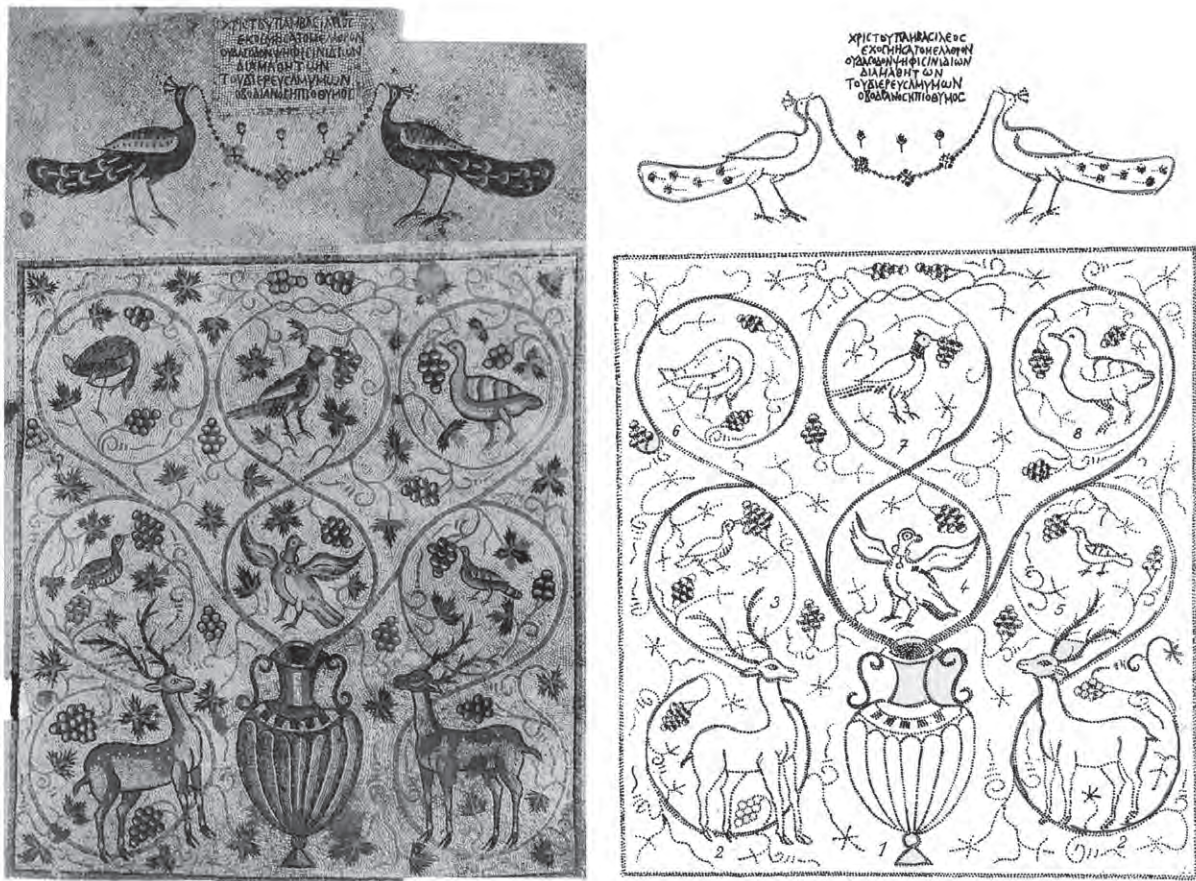


Figure VI-11. Group III: el-Maqerqesh chapel, Beth Guvrin.

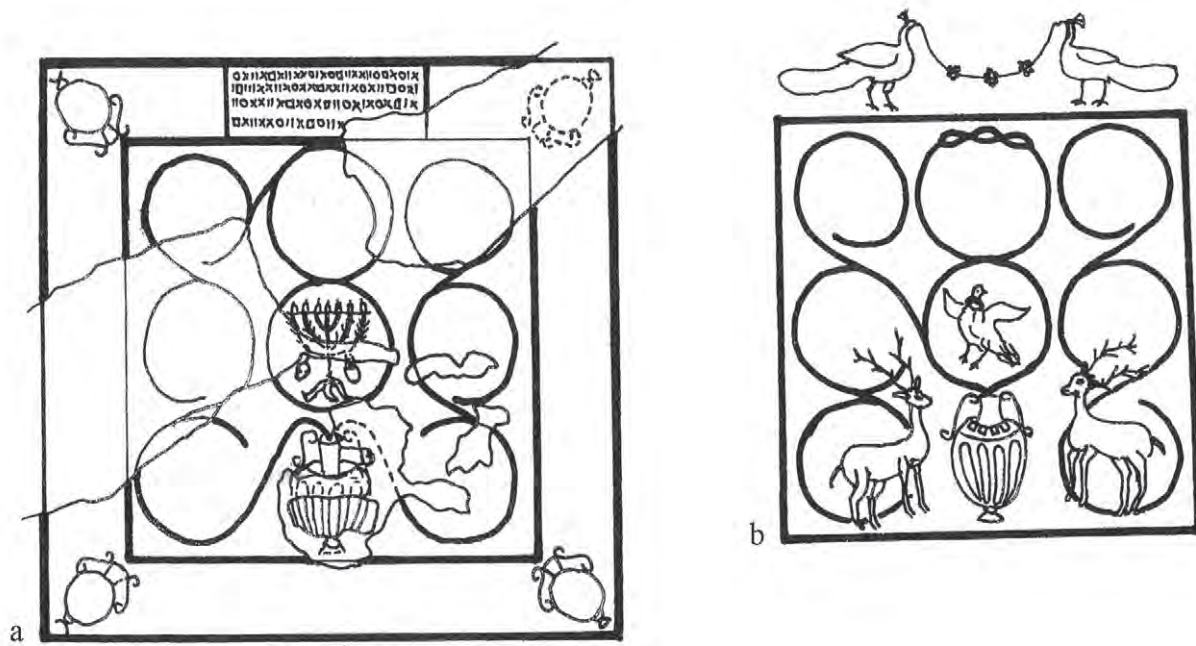


Figure VI-12. Group III: a. Beth She'an small synagogue B; b. el-Maqerqesh Church pavement, Beth Guvrin.

century. They too belong to small rectangular rooms and have a similar composition. In the bottom row is an amphora, from which issue vine-branches forming the medallions, flanked by peacocks, birds, or other animals. The pavement of funerary chapel at 'Ain el-Bad (Donceel-Voûte 1988: 16-18, fig. 1) shows seven medallions filled with birds, and a cross is rendered in the upper centre; the amphora is flanked by a pair of peacocks. The 6th-century panel in the side aisle of the Houad church (Donceel-Voûte 1988: 141-2, fig. 112, pl. h.-t. 8) shows a amphora sending forth branches which form four medallions, all filled with birds. The mosaic pavement at Frikya (Balty 1995: pl. XXVI, 1) is different. The amphora issuing seven medallions is flanked by a ram and a rabbit eating from a basket; the other medallions contain a rooster, a donkey, a deer, a leopard and a dog; an inscription appears in the centre. Another interesting comparable mosaic is found in the Inferior Church at Khan Khalde (Phoenicia) (Donceel-Voûte 1988: 386-7, fig. 373). The amphora from which four medallions emerge is flanked by a peacock on the right and a partridge on the left, with a bird-in-cage inside the same medallion; a rooster, a duck, and some other birds are depicted inside and outside the medallions.

The last two groups of mosaic pavements, IV and V, decorated with inhabited vine scrolls differ in design, style, and content from groups I-III; the vine medallions are inhabited by scenes of figures active in such things as vintage and hunting, as well as animals and birds. Also, they lack the rigid symmetrical and balanced layout of groups I-III.

Group IV comprises inhabited vine scroll mosaics discovered in Israel and Jordan, and is uniform in the general composition and content of the medallions. The vine scrolls rise out of an amphora or an acanthus leaf placed at the base, flanked by a pair of peacocks, lions, or leopards. The composition is arranged horizontally, while groups I-III are composed vertically. In the vintage and hunting scenes the figures and objects are distributed haphazardly, with no relative proportion; all are depicted in the same size. None of these mosaics has a central axial column containing objects, nor are the side columns symmetrical in content (Table VI-2). Most scenes appear in one or two medallions with no connection; the movement of the scenes or animals is also in all directions.

The mosaic pavements of this group appear in the Beth She'an area: ornamenting room L at the Beth She'an Monastery of Lady Mary, the tomb chamber pavement at El Hammam, Beth She'an, and perhaps the Sede Nahum chapel carpet.

The composition at the Beth She'an Monastery, Room L, dated to 567 (Fitzgerald 1939: 9), is divided into twelve medallions in four columns and three rows formed by a vine-trellis issuing out of an amphora in the central medallion of the first row (fig. VI-13). The medallions are integrally connected vertically and with an added line horizontally. They contain grape-harvesting activities in the two lower rows, hunting episodes and a figure leading an animal for display beast in the top row, each filling only one medallion. The figures are similar in appearance. In between the medallions are birds and animals, all the same size.

In the tomb chamber at El Hammam, Beth She'an (Avi-Yonah 1936: 13-16; pl. XIV), the inhabited vine scrolls pavement is arranged in seven columns and eight rows: fifty-six medallions, of which nine are lost (fig. VI-14). The vine-trellis issuing out of an acanthus leaf in the centre of the bottom row is flanked by two peacocks; two vintagers carrying baskets and a fruit basket survived on the right; the other medallions contain vintage and hunting scenes (see Chap. VII, Tables VI-2; VII-1), birds, animals and baskets. As usual for this group, the composition shows no symmetrical arrangement. The human figures, animals, and objects, as well as the vintage and hunting scenes, are distributed with no order or direction; all figures are disproportionately the same size, and most animals show conventional attitudes. Humans and animals interact, and the action scenes usually fill no more than two medallions.

The 6th century Sede Nahum chapel nave is decorated with inhabited vine scrolls pavement, arranged in three columns (originally perhaps four or five) and about ten rows, of which only fourteen medallions survived (pl. VI.9; fig. VI-15). The medallions contained a figure of a harvester animals, and birds: a fox, ducks, two doves, a cock, a hind, a donkey and an episode of snake and mongoose confrontation (pl. VII.6b) (Zori 1962: 183; Ovadia and Ovadia 1987: 125-126).

Several mosaic pavements discovered in Jordan show a similar design of the inhabited vine scroll, incorporating various scenes of vintage activities, village life, and hunting, which include human



Figure VI-13. Beth She'an, Monastery of Lady Mary, Room L.



Figure VI-14. el Hammam, Beth She'an tomb chamber.



Figure VI-15. Sede Nahum mosaic fragment.

figures (Table VII-2); the vine arises from a vase, an acanthus leaf, or a tree, flanked by a pair of peacocks; none of these mosaics has a central axial column containing objects, nor are the side columns symmetrical in content.

The nave mosaic at the church of the Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo, dated to first half of the 6th century, is decorated with inhabited vine scrolls, issuing out of a central amphora flanked by a pair of leopards (Piccirillo 1993: 187, figs. 263, 269). They form three columns of eight rows inhabited by animals and scenes of vintage, hunting, and pastoral life (pl. VI-10; Tab. VI-2), similar in some scenes to the Suwayfiyah mosaic. A border of acanthus scrolls filled with birds, a cage, baskets, and fruit surrounds the carpet.

The hall mosaic of the lower chapel of the Priest John at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat, Mount Nebo, dated to the second half of the 5th or early 6th century, consists of two inhabited scroll mosaics (Bagatti 1949: 38, 49-55, fig. 4; Piccirillo 1993: 176, figs. 234, 240, 241; 1998: 312). The carpet of the lower chapel has inhabited vine scrolls in three columns and four rows (Tab. VI-2). The vine trellis rises from an amphora in the centre at the bottom of the carpet, flanked by two rampant lionesses. Vintage scenes fill some of the medallions, including a figure leading a donkey laden with grapes (pl. VII.2d); other scrolls depict animals. A pair of horned stags flank the Greek inscription seen at the centre of the highest scroll. Another small chapel to the east has only five scrolls in two rows (Piccirillo 1993: 176, fig. 237; 1998: 311, fig. 94). The vine scrolls issue from

a vase in the bottom row, flanked by a pair of rams, and the other three scrolls are inhabited by a fleeing hare, a bird, and a beast.

The lower mosaic of the Kaianus church, 'Uyun Musa, Mount Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 189, figs. 271, 274, 275; 1998: 314-316), has a small mosaic panel in the western part of the nave consisting of four medallions with vintage scenes and animal combat, similar to what is seen on the mosaic of the lower chapel of the Priest John (Tab. VI-2). Both mosaics were possibly the work of the same team of mosaicists in the second half of the 5th or early 6th century (Piccirillo 1989: 335; 1998: 318).

The 6th-century mosaic of the chapel of Suwayfiyah on the outskirts of ancient Philadelphia (Piccirillo 1993: 264, figs. 469-471) has the inhabited scroll design with three columns and six rows of vine scrolls, issuing from the central amphora, flanked by lions (Tab. VI-2). A bird of prey is in the uppermost central medallion; the other medallions are filled with animals and birds, as well as scenes containing human figures such as a youth leading a donkey, a shepherd leaning on his staff, and a bearded figure leading a camel (pls. VII.2h, VII.16h, VII.18d).

The inhabited vine scrolls mosaic on the floor of the church of Elias, Maria, and Soreg at Gerasa (Piccirillo 1993: 296, fig. 572) is divided into a symmetrical composition of two equal sections by a tall palm tree, flanked by a pair of peacocks (fig. VI-15). Their posture is similar to the flanking peacocks on the 'Armenian' church pavement in Jerusalem.

The church of St. George, Khirbat al-Mukhayyat in the village of Nebo (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 67, 74; fig. 8, pl. 28,3; Piccirillo 1993: 178, fig. 246; 1998: 321-322) shows a similar inhabited scrolls composition on the small panel of the north aisle mosaic next to the north entrance. Of the six scrolls, the central one portrays a palm tree growing out of a vase, flanked by two peacocks; the other scrolls show a young man in an orans posture (John, son of Amonius, a benefactor of the church) and a vintager cutting grapes. A lion and a bull face each other outside the scrolls.

The nave mosaic in the 8th-century church of St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 238-9, figs. 345, 380, 383) is decorated with an inhabited vine scrolls design with four columns and eleven rows; the figures were partly destroyed by iconoclasts. The vine trellis issues out of an

Table VI-2a. Composition and Repertory of inhabited vine scrolls mosaic pavements of groups IV-V.

Mosaic	Date century CE	Type of structure	Composition					Vine issuing from		
			No. of column	No. of rows	Inhabited acanthus border	Figures out of medallion	Images filling space between scrolls	Vase at bottom +peacocks/ animals	Acanthus leaf at bottom +peacocks	Four vases in corners
<i>Group IV</i>										
<i>Palaestina</i>										
Beth She'an El Hammam	c. 530	tomb chamber	7	8	+	+	+		+	
Beth She'an, Monastery room L	567	monastery	4	4			+			
Sede Nahum	6th	chapel	3+	10						
<i>Arabia</i>										
Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo	First half 6th	church	3	7	+			+		
Gerasa- Elias, Maria, Soreg	6th	church	6	3		+	+		+ Palm	
Kaianus, Lower mosaic, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo	Late 5th early 6th	church	4	4	+	+		+		
Priest John, Lower mosaic		chapel	3	4		+		+		
Mukhayyat Mt. Nebo, I-nave II-presbytery	Late 5th – early 6th		3	2				+		
Qam	6th	chapel	4?	7				+		
St. George, Mukhayyat Mt. Nebo, north aisle	535/36	church	3	3				+	+ Palm	
Suwayfiah, Philadelphia, St. Stephen Umm Rasas	6th 756	chapel church	3 4	6 11	+	+		+		+
<i>Group V</i>										
<i>Palaestina</i>										
Caesarea	6th	mansion	5+	4+						+
<i>Arabia</i>										
Al-Khadir, Madaba	6th	church	6	6	+	+				+
Anastasius, Bostra	6th	chapel	4	7					+	
Cathedral Chapel, Gerasa		chapel				+			+	
Khirbat al-Kursi Philadelphia	6th	chapel	5	6	+	+			+	

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Table VI-2a. (Cont.)

Mosaic	Date century CE	Type of structure	Composition						Vine issuing from				
			No. of column	No. of rows	Inhabited acanthus border	Figures out of medallion	Images filling space between scrolls	Vase at bottom +peacocks/ animals	Acanthus leaf at bottom +peacocks	Four vases in corners	Four acanthus leaves in corners		
St George, S aisle, Gerasa		church	4+	4+								+	
Sts. Lot & Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo	557	church	4	6									+
<i>Unclear</i>													
St. Paul, Umm al-Rasas <i>Inhabited Acanthus scrolls</i>	Second half 6th	church	4?	4+									
Burnt Palace, Madaba	6th	mansion	4	6	acanthus field								
Bishop Sergius, Umm al-Rasas	587/88	church	4	10	acanthus field								
Church of the Lions, Umm al-Rasas	574 or 589	church	3	5+	acanthus field								
Church of the Rivers, Umm al-Rasas	579 or 594	church	4?	10?	acanthus field								
Priest John, Mukhayyat Mt. Nebo, Upper mosaic	565	chapel	3	5+	acanthus field								
St. George, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo, nave	535/36	church	3	4	acanthus field								
<i>Phoenicia</i>													
Jenah	6th.	church	3	3									+
Qabr Hiram	575	church	5	7									+
Zaharani I	524	church	3	6									+
Zaharani II	535		3	4					center				
<i>Syria</i>													
Haouarte South	484/6	church	4	5?					+				
Haouarte North, apse	486/7 or 501/3	church											
Haouarte North, side	6th	church	4	7					+				
Qum Hartaine, apse	5th-6th	church	5	4					+				

Table VI-2b. Composition and Repertory of inhabited vine scrolls mosaic pavements of groups IV-V.

Mosaic	Date century CE	Type of structure	Repertory									
			Vintage scenes	Hare eating grapes	Chase and hunting scenes	Pastoral scenes	Basket	Peacocks flanking	Bird- in-cage	Bird of prey	Animals	Birds
<i>Group IV</i>												
<i>Palaestina,</i>												
Beth Shean	c. 530	tomb	+	+	+			+	+		+	+
El Hammam		chamber										
Beth She'an, Monastery room L	567	monastery	+	+	+						+	+
Sede Nahum	6th	chapel	+								+	+
<i>Arabia</i>												
Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo	First half 6th	church	+		+	+					+	
Gerasa- Elias, Maria, Soreg	6th	church	+	+	+				+	+	+	+
Kaianus, Lower mosaic, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo	Late 5th early 6th	church	+		+	+					+	
Priest John, Lower mosaic Mukhayyat Mt. Nebo, I-nave II-presbytery	Late 5th - early 6th	chapel	+								+	+
Qam	6th	chapel						+			+	+
St. George, Mukhayyat Mt. Nebo, north aisle	535/36	church	+									+
Suwayfiah, Philadelphia, St. Stephen Umm Rasas	6th 756	chapel church	+			+					+	+
			+		+	+		+	+		+	
<i>Group V</i>												
<i>Palaestina</i>												
Caserea	6th	mansion	+	+				+			+	+
<i>Arabia</i>												
Al-Khadir, Madaba,	6th	church	+		+	+					+	
Anastasius, Bostra	6th	chapel									+	
Cathedral Chapel, Gerasa		chapel										
Khirbat al-Kursi Philadelphia	6th	chapel			+						+	+
St George, S aisle, Gerasa		church									+	+

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Table VI-2b. (Cont.)

Mosaic	Date century CE	Type of structure	Repertory										
			Vintage scenes	Hare eating grapes	Chase and hunting scenes	Pastoral scenes	Basket	Peacocks flanking	Bird- in-cage	Bird of prey	Animals	Birds	
Sts. Lot & Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo	557	church	+		+	+						+	+
<i>Unclear</i>													
St. Paul, Umm al-Rasas	Second half 6th	church	+			+							
<i>Inhabited Acanthus scrolls</i>													
Burnt Palace, Madaba,	6th	mansion			+	+						+	
Bishop Sergius, Umm al-Rasas	587/88	church	+		+	+						+	+
Church of the Lions, Umm al-Rasas,	574 or 589	church				+						+	
Church of the Rivers, Umm al-Rasas	579 or 594	church			+	+						+	
Priest John, Mukhayyat Mt. Nebo, Upper mosaic	565	chapel			+	+						+	
St. George, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo, nave	535/36	church	+		+	+						+	
<i>Phoenicia</i>													
Jenah	6th.	church						+					+
Qabr Hiram	575	church	+	+	+							+	+
Zaharani I	524	church						+				+	+
Zaharani II	535												
<i>Syria</i>													
Haouarte South	484/6	church										+	+
Haouarte North, apse	486/7 or 501/3	church											+
Haouarte North, side	6th	church						+	+	+		+	+
Qum Hartaine, apse	5th-6th	church							+	+		+	+



Figure VI-16. Gerasa, church of Elias, Maria, and Soreg.

acanthus leaf placed at the bottom of the mosaic, flanked by youths holding peacocks in both hands. The scrolls are filled with scenes of vintage activities, hunting episodes, pastoral scenes, animals, birds, and objects. All suffered damage in the iconoclast crisis.

Group V characterizes several mosaic pavements with a diagonal inhabited scroll design; the vine scrolls arise out of four amphorae or four acanthus leaves set in the four corners of the floor (Biebel 1938: 302, type 1; Dauphin 1976a: 121) (Table VI-2).

This design is found in a room mosaic in Caesarea (Lehmann 1999: 147-8, figs. 3,9-10, colour pl. 11; room floor 11020 in front of vault 12). Two of the corner vases survived and the existing medallions, containing various animals, birds, a vintager, and a flute player, show, as usual for this group, no special order or symmetry (fig. VI-17). The Caesarea floor is thought to be that of a room in a luxurious seaside villa, dated perhaps to the 5th-6th century.

Comparable mosaic floors with inhabited scrolls issuing from four corner vases are found in Jordan: the remains of the Cathedral Chapel mosaic at Gerasa show a vine scroll design with the vine-trellis emerging from four amphorae, one in each corner (Biebel 1938: 312, pls. LIXa, b, mid-6th century). Of the central square panel in the St John the Baptist church, Gerasa (529-539) (Biebel 1938: 324-333) only parts of three of the four vases have survived. Two other pavements with similar designs, the Chapel of Anastasius and the Chapel of Khirbat al-Kursi, are almost completely destroyed (Piccirillo 1993: 265,308;

figs. 476,478, 610, 612). At the bottom of the Khirbat al-Kursi mosaic two gazelles face each other in the central scrolls. In another scroll a soldier confronts a wounded lioness.

A similar design with inhabited vine scrolls issuing from four corner vases appears on 6th-century church pavements in coastal Phoenicia (Lebanon) at Qabr Hiram (fig. VI-18) (Stern 1965: fig. 3; Donceel-Voute 1988: 411-414, fig. 403, pl. h.-t. 17) and Zaharani I (Donceel-Voute 1988: pls. L, LI). The nave of St. Christoph's church, Qabr Hiram, has an elaborate beautiful mosaic panel with inhabited vine scrolls arising from four corner vases; the scrolls show farming, animal chase, and hunting scenes.

The other compositions of group V consist of pavements rendered with an acanthus leaf in each of the four corners, from which vine scrolls emerge. These mosaics are found on two mosaic pavements in Jordan. One of them, in the church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo, dated to 557 (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 55-61; Piccirillo 1993: 164-5; figs. 201-207), consists of four columns and six rows. The medallions contain vintage, hunting and pastoral scenes, animals, and birds (pl. VI.11; Table VI-2).

The other Jordanian pavement is in the church at al-Khadir, Madaba. The central panel design of the mosaic shows inhabited vine scrolls issuing out of four acanthus leaves in the four corners, consisting of six columns and six rows (Piccirillo 1993: 129-130; figs. 142, 146-7). The medallions contain vintage, hunting, and pastoral scenes, animals, and birds. Many of the inhabited images were destroyed by iconoclasts.

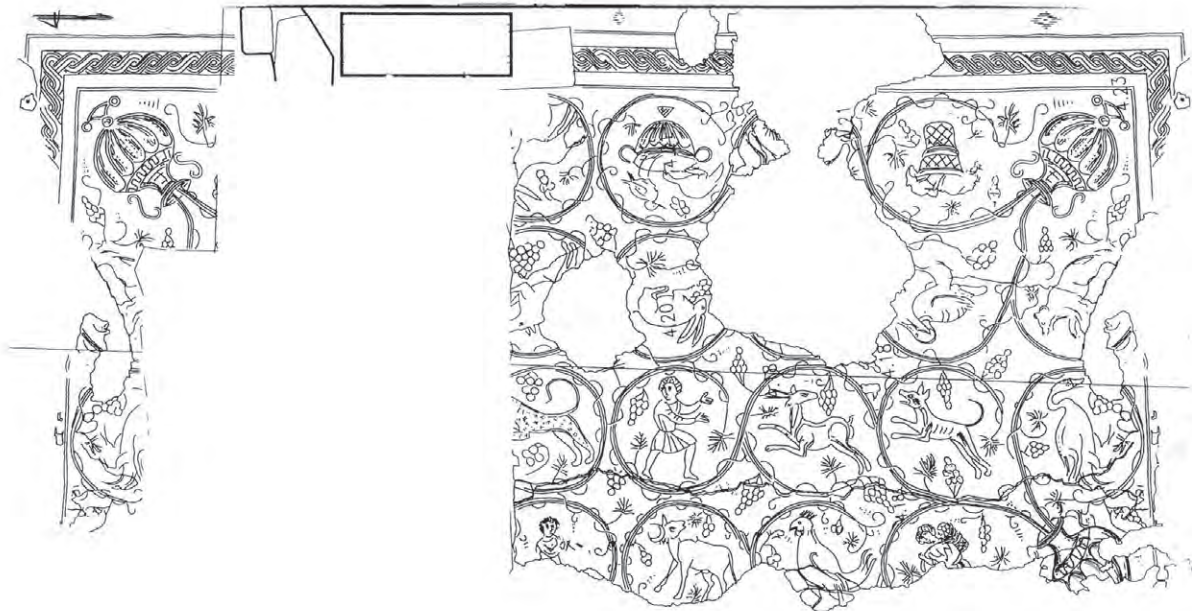


Figure VI-17. Caesarea, mosaic pavement.

In the south aisle of St. George church at Gerasa, the partly destroyed pavement is rendered with inhabited vine trellises issuing from acanthus leaves in the four corners (Biebel 1938: 330, pl. LXXII,d).

The characteristic features of group IV-V are the following:

- The pavement has four points of departure: in each corner a vine scroll arises from an amphora or an acanthus leaf.
- The scenes include grape harvesting, hunting, the countryside, animals, and birds.

Scenes usually fill no more than two medallions.

- Some of the mosaic field compositions, for example at al-Khadir and Khirbat al-Kursi, are enclosed in an acanthus scroll border inhabited by hunting and pastoral scenes, animals and birds.

Several mosaic pavements decorated with the inhabited scroll design are found in Jordan, Syria, and Phoenicia, but with slightly different compositions.

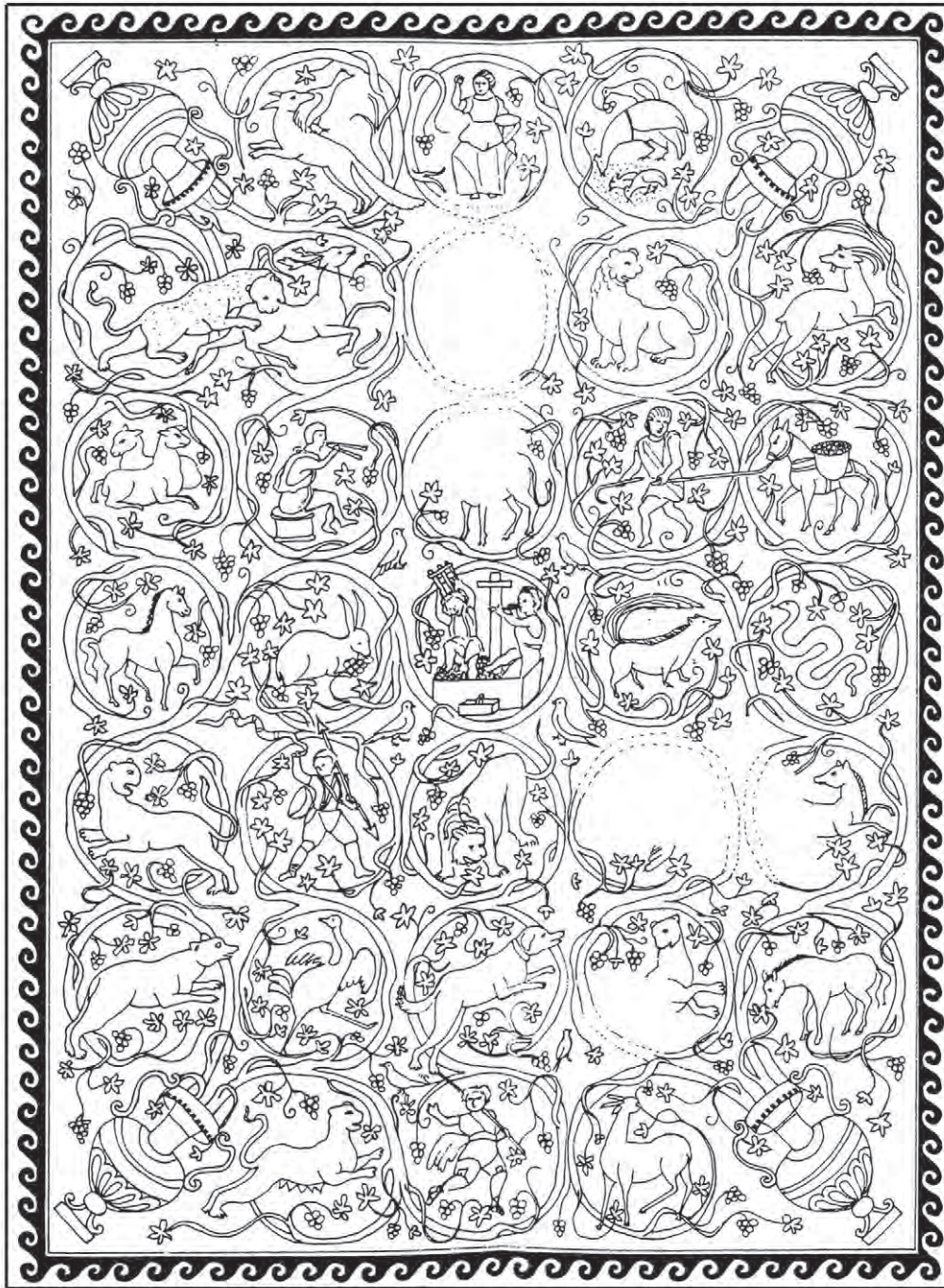


Figure VI-18. Qabr Hiram, nave mosaic pavement.

The inhabited scrolls in the churches in Syria are less rigid symmetrical and stylized in composition; the medallions are arranged in a more relaxed manner (Table VI-2). The design decorates the apses of three 5th- and 6th-century Syrian churches: Haouarte South Church (Donceel-Voûte 1988: 94-6, fig. 63, pl. h.-t.3), a side carpet at Haouarte North Church 'Michaelion' (Donceel-Voûte 1988: 111-2, fig. 77, pl. h.-t.5), and at the church of Qum Hartaine (Donceel-

Voûte 1988: 198, fig. 180, pl. h.-t.11). In these the branches emerging from the amphora at the centre bottom form medallions surrounding a central inscription. All contain birds and animals. At Haouarte North and Qum Hartaine a bird-in-cage appears, with the bird outside the cage.

The church at Zaharani I and a villa at Jenah in Lebanon (Chehab 1959: pls. 29,30; Donceel-Voûte 1988: 431, fig. 431, pls. h.-t.18, L, LI) show mosaic pavements with branches arising out of

four amphorae in the centre of the mosaic.

A group of Jordan mosaics decorated with fields of inhabited acanthus scrolls should be considered part of the inhabited scrolls trend in the 6th century. The repertoire of these mosaics is quite similar to the rural, vintage, and hunting scenes contained in groups IV and V above (Table IV.2). Two inhabited acanthus scroll mosaics appear at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo, in the Upper Chapel of the Priest John (565 CE) and in the church of St. George (535/36 CE) (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 49-55; 67-71, 100; figs. 4, 8; Maguire 1987: 69-72; Piccirillo 1993: 174, 178, figs. 227, 230, 245; 1998: 324-327). The scrolls are rendered with Earth and her offerers, and scenes of farming and hunting.

Three others are found on Umm al-Rasas mosaics. The Church of Bishop Sergius, (587/88), the Church of the Lions (574 or 589), and the Church of the Rivers (579 or 594) were are disfigured by iconoclasts (Piccirillo 1993: 234,241, figs. 365, 392, 394, 395). On the nave field mosaics at the Church of Bishop Sergius and the Church of the Rivers, inhabited acanthus scrolls are enclosed by an inhabited vine scroll border.

Another inhabited acanthus scroll mosaic appears on the nave field of the Burnt Palace at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 78, figs. 49-50). The two coloured acanthus leaves create symmetrical and schematic medallions. A heart-shaped band connects the leaves. The acanthus medallions contain various farming, hunting, and pastoral scenes.

The mosaics at the church of St. George and the Upper Chapel of the Priest John at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat and the Church of Bishop Sergius at Umm al-Rasas have a distinct motif in one of the acanthus medallions: the personification of the Earth flanked by a pair of offerers in three medallions in the same row. The disfigured personification of the sea (inscribed abyss) is rendered within an acanthus medallion at the Church of Bishop Sergius and at the Church of the Rivers, Umm al-Rasas.

B. *The Repertory*

The repertory of the inhabited scroll design is varied. Repetition of motifs and figures is common to the pavements of the inhabited scrolls; they are not identical but vary in features and style (see list and statistical data, Dauphin 1978a:

400-404,419-423). Groups I-III embody objects, birds, and animals; Be'er Shem'a and Petra also incorporate human figures. By contrast, groups IV-V contain figured scenes, particularly rural activities and domestic scenes, the vintage cycle, hunting, and animal chase,³ usually depicted in a similar manner and attitude (Tables VI-1, 2; Chap. VII, Table VII-1, 2).

The repertory set out next characterizes especially the central axial column of the inhabited scroll mosaics of Groups I-III.

The Amphora Flanked by Peacocks or Animals

In groups I-IV the motif of the amphora flanked by animals was usually placed in the central medallion at the centre of the base of the design (Table VI-1); the amphora was the issuing point for the vine trellis, which made up the rest of the inhabited vine scroll composition. The vase in these mosaic pavements resembles a stylized version of a metal wine volute amphora, with two handles, its base a round ball on a triangle or rectangle pedestal, its body decorated in a stylized lobed design; sometimes the shoulders are studded with a pattern of precious stones (pl. VI-12). The lobed ornament was probably used to emphasize the metallic character of the amphora (Levi 1947: 512; Avi-Yonah 1960: 25, note 2). The wine amphora was chosen as the appropriate vessel from which the vine trellises arose.

Peacocks flank the amphora on pavements of group II (figs. VI-5-7; pls. VI-2, 4, 6; Table VI-1; on the symbolism of the peacock see Goodenough 1958, VIII: 52-58). At Ma'on a peacock with two feathers on its head walks towards the vase, with head and sometimes tail outside the medallion, the body in one medallion and the spread tail in the other (Avi-Yonah 1960: 26, pl. III,2); at Shellal there are similar peacocks, with a small partridge placed above the tail (Trendall 1957: 18, pl. III,2); each peacock of the pair at the 'Armenian' church at Jerusalem stands in one medallion while two other birds are in the flanking end-medallions. Each of the the pair of peacocks at Beth Loya, though damaged, appears in one large medallion. At Petra too, each peacock of

³ No maritime or harvesting scenes appear in the inhabited scrolls repertory.

the pair flanking the amphora (A1, C1) stands in one medallion (Waliszewski 2001: 222-223,310). At Be'er Shem'a the peacocks are depicted in the top row, flanking a fruit bowl, while the amphora at the base is flanked by lions.

In Group I, at the Gaza synagogue peacocks flank a Greek inscription (pl. VI-1). This is a recurrent motif in many mosaics, and may appear in different parts of the pavement. Various animals flank the amphora: lions at 'Asida, a pair of lionesses at Hazor-'Ashdod. In Group II, at Be'er Shem'a lions flank the amphora; in Group III, at Beth Guvrin a pair of rams flank the vase and at the Beth She'an synagogue a pair of sheep.

At El-Hammam (Beth She'an) peacocks flank an acanthus leaf (fig. VI-14). Two youths hold the peacocks on the pavement of the church of St. Stephen (Umm al-Rasas), which is an unusual depiction (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 345, fig. 358). At the Chapel of Elias, Maria and Soreg at Gerasa (fig. VI-15) the peacocks flank a tree.

At other Arabian mosaics, leopards flank the amphora at the church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa on Mt. Nebo (pl. VI.10); lions flank the amphora at the chapel of Suwayfiyah; lionesses flank the amphora in the lower chapel of the Priest John at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo.

From the examples discussed above, an amphora flanked by animals was evidently a recurrent and popular motif in inhabited scroll pavements, and it also occurs in other types of mosaics. It was seemingly a key motif in the pattern book used for the execution of this type of mosaics.

The Bird-in-Cage

One of the most common recurring motifs on the pavements of groups I, II, and III is the bird-in-cage depicted in the central axial column (pl. VI.13; figs. VI-1, 3-9). The cage has various styles, usually with a bird inside and the door closed; the cage at 'Asida has an open door, as does the one at the Petra church, but the bird is still inside. The cage is represented in a rectangular shape with a rounded or triangular upper part.

A number of cages depicted on Jordanian mosaics (Table VI-1) render one bird in the cage the other outside in a vine rinceau medallion; so it is on the Elias, Maria, and Soreg church mosaic at Gerasa (pl. VI-13h) (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 237-

238, pls. 40,3; 45; Piccirillo 1993: fig. 514) and at the North Church mosaic at Esbus (Piccirillo 1993: fig. 422). However, the bird-in-cage motif is missing from pavements of groups III (Beth She'an synagogue and Beth Guvrin church).

Yet the bird-in-cage appears on other mosaics beside those on the inhabited vine scroll compositions. Examples are the Na'aran synagogue mosaic (Vincent 1961: pl. 146) and the inhabited acanthus border mosaic of the church at Nahariya (pl. VII.19a) (Dauphin 1978a: pl. 7; Dauphin and Edelstein 1984: pl. XXVII). On several Arabian mosaics the cage (without birds) appears within medallions of the inhabited acanthus or vine scroll border mosaics: in the Baptistry Chapel at Madaba, the Church of Bishop Sergius, and the Church of Priest Wa'il at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 102, 369, 399); an open cage within an acanthus scroll is found on the border mosaic of the church of Deacon Thomas on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1990: 234-5, foto 36; 1998: 340, fig. 158).

In Syria, the cage is present on an inhabited vine scrolls pavement at the church of Qum Hartaine and on a side carpet at Haouarte North Church, 'Michaelion' (Donceel-Voûte 1988: figs. 77, 180). It is found on the pavement of Misis in Cilicia (Budde 1969: figs. 51, 56,58) and in the Sabratha mosaic in Tripolitania, North Africa (Ward Perkins and Goodchild 1953: pl. 26).

Some scholars argue that the bird-in-cage signifies the human soul imprisoned in a body and yearning for release; others see it as representing the soul of the blessed (or the donors) to be read as a funerary motif (Grabar 1966; Donceel-Voûte 1983; Maguire 1987: 65; Hunt 1994: 121). Yet, this motif also reflected some hunting custom, such as a bird in a cage as a decoy (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 271; Avi-Yonah 1960: 29, n.16). This interpretation is strengthened by the content of two medallions in the inhabited acanthus border on the Nahariya church pavement, where bird-hunting is depicted (pl. VII.19a); the left medallion shows a hunter with an empty cage behind him, and a club aimed at a bird is in the adjoining medallion (Dauphin 1978: pl. 7; Dauphin and Edelstein 1984; volute 35-36, pl. XXVII). To reinforce the notion that the bird-in-cage is used as a decoy, note that the cage at 'Asida, Gaza, Jerusalem, Ma'on-Nirim and Shellal is placed in the axial central column and is flanked by birds on the same row.

On Jordanian mosaics, in the acanthus border of the Baptistery Chapel at Madaba a cage within a medallion is flanked by two birds (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 102). The two examples show a bird in the cage with another bird outside. An empty cage with an open door decorates the centre of the nave of the church of St. John the Baptist at Khirbat al-Samra (Piccirillo 1993: 304, figs. 595, 599).

In sum, the bird-in-cage, almost always in the company of other birds and several episodes of bird-catching, seems to indicate that it was part of a bird repertoire or catalogue in pattern/model books that the mosaicist used in his work.

The Bird of Prey

The bird of prey, possibly a hawk or an eagle, is another motif which recurs in the central axial column of the inhabited scroll pavements of groups II and III (pl. VI. 14; figs. VI-5,7,11). The bird of prey appears with spread wings, its head turned left, on the 'Armenian' church mosaic in Jerusalem (Evans 1982: 219, fig. 3), and at Petra (in medallion B15: Waliszekowski 2001: 233). At the Ma'on synagogue (Avi-Yonah 1960: 26, pl. III,3), and at the el-Maqerqesh chapel at Beth Guvrin the bird of prey is rendered with a ring and a bulla round its neck, at el-Maqerqesh it is in the central medallion of the mosaic composition (fig. VI-11).

Similar birds occur on other inhabited scroll mosaics: at Suwayfiyah in Arabia (Piccirillo 1993: 264, fig. 469), Jenah in Phoenicia (Chehab 1959: pl. 98,1), the Khan Khalde pavement (Donceel-Votûe 1988: pl. 15) and the Sabratha church mosaic in North Africa (Ward Perkins and Goodchild 1953: pl. 26). Evans (1982: 219) proposes that the eagle should be regarded as a symbol of Christ freeing the bird in the cage, which she sees, following Grabar, as symbolizing the soul of man (see also Donceel-Votûe 1983). Maguire (1987: 65) contends that the eagle could be an intimation of the resurrection and of immortality, or a symbol of the cross, the eagle being a bird with imperial associations. However, these birds do not seem to be emphasized in the design, so they might have been deprived of their religious symbolism and might rather belong to a bird repertoire or a catalogue (Hachlili 1988: 332-334).

A Double Basket

A double (joined) basket, its lower part curved, was made out of two baskets and a wooden frame or carrying rods, probably to fit the back of a donkey; This object is rendered frontally on several of the mosaics of group II in a medallion of the central axial column (pl. VI-15): at Ma'on a double basket filled with grapes appears in row 4 (Avi Yonah 1960: 28, pl. IV,2); a similar double basket with carrying rods filled with fruit on which a pair of birds are perched is in the central column of the Shellal mosaic in row 2 (Trendall 1957: 19, fig. 4a); the double basket at Beth Loya, full of dates and almonds (Patrich and Tsafirir 1993: pl. XVIIIId), is similar to the double basket full of grapes seen at Be'er Shem'a in the central medallion in row 6 (Gazit and Lender 1993: 275). On the Petra church north aisle mosaic the double basket is empty (B8, Waliszekowski 2001: 228). The function of the double basket depicted frontally is clarified by similar baskets rendered in a side position and placed on a donkey's back, illustrated in some of the scenes of transporting vine (pl. VII.2).

Baskets

Plaited and wicker baskets filled with fruit are a common motif in the central axial column in groups I and II (pl. VI.16): a plaited basket containing red pomegranates, with a handle crossing from one side to the other is depicted in the central medallion at Ma'on (Avi Yonah 1960: 28, pl. V,2). Wicker baskets (*canistra* or *cistae*) of fruit are rendered at Shellal (Trendall 1957: 20, fig. 4c), on the pavement of the Be'er Shem'a church (Gazit and Lender 1993: 275), and on the mosaic at Beth Loya (Patrich and Tsafirir 1993: 268); two baskets appear on the Jerusalem 'Armenian' church mosaic (Evans 1982: fig. 3). Five different baskets, one with a handle, are seen on the Petra church north aisle mosaic (B2, B6, B10, B19, B24; Waliszekowski 2001: 224,227, 229-230, 236). On mosaics of group IV and V baskets are rendered within various medallions: three baskets filled with fruit are depicted at el-Hammam, Beth She'an (fig. VI-14). A basket full of grapes appears in a medallion on the Caesarea mosaic (fig. VI-18). In a vintage scene, a basket full of grapes placed next to a vintager cutting a bunch of grapes appears in a medallion (pl. VII-1a) on the mosaic of the Beth She'an monastery, Room L.

On some Arabian inhabited scroll mosaics a wicker basket full of grapes and carried by figures is portrayed, within medallions at the church of the Sts. Lot and Procopius (pl. VI.11) (Piccirillo 1993: fig. 204), on the inhabited acanthus scroll mosaic of the Upper Chapel of the Priest John at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: fig. 119), and in the 8th-century St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: fig. 386). Baskets are seen on other types of mosaics too (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 111), such as the pavement at the Baptistery Chapel in the Cathedral Church in Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 119, 204-5, 224, 229). Baskets filled with fruit also appear on mosaics in Syria-Phoenicia at Houarte and Zaharani.

Vessels

Various vessels are common motifs represented frequently in the central axial column in groups I and II (pl. VI.17): shown in the central axial column at Ma'on are a semi-globular bowl with a circular foot, filled with fruit, and a cantharus with a knob and splaying foot filled with red wine (?). There is an amphora with two small handles, and a water vessel containing a hen that has laid an egg (pl. VI.19) (Avi Yonah 1960: 26-29). Fruit bowls are seen at Jerusalem and on the pavement of the Be'er Shem'a church, at Beth Loya a vase and two semi-globular bowls one with two birds drinking from it appear on the axial column. Amphorae appear in the central column in the mosaics of Shellal and Jerusalem (figs. VI-6,7). A cantharos ornamented with a lobed design and a splaying foot with two birds drinking from it is seen on the Caesarea mosaic (fig. VI-16). At Petra, a number of vases, bowls and a plate appear on the axial column of the northern aisle (B5, B11, B13, B16, B17, B18, B20, B23, B28) (pls. VI.6-8).

Vine Leaves and Bunches of Grapes

The portrayal of vine leaves and grapes developed into a schematic and stylized form more as a decorative device than a natural design. The round medallions end in a small volute in Gaza, Ma'on, and Shellal, in a vine leaf at Beth She'an synagogue and Beth She'an Monastery Room L, and sometimes in a bunch of grapes at Hazor-Ashdod, the Jerusalem 'Armenian' church mosaic, and Petra, or in a mixture of

all of them. A difference in the the vine leaves and grapes is apparent in many of the mosaics (pl. VI.18).

The style and shape of vine leaves on the inhabited scroll mosaics vary and can be divided into three types (pl. VI.18a-h): (1) leaves in one colour, closely assembled into a schematic three parts central leaf with with three or four fronds, placed freely and in random locations (pl. VI.18a,b); this type is seen at 'Asida, Gaza, Hazor-Ashdod, Kh. Sokho, Beth Loya, Shellal, el Hammam, Beth She'an, Petra and Suwayfiyah in Jordan. (2) The vine leaves are depicted more naturalistically, with one half in a light colour and the other half dark (pl. VI.18c,d); this type appears at Be'er Shem'a and Ma'on, Caesarea (?), and on Jordanian pavements at the Chapel of Elias, Maria and Soreg in Gerasa, and St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas. (3) Vine leaves in one colour with a three- or five-part leaf, decorated with one or two light coloured crosslets (pl. VI.18e-h); this type appear at the Beth She'an synagogue, the Beth She'an monastery Room L, and the Jerusalem 'Armenian' church mosaic, and on Jordanian mosaics at Al Khadir, Madaba, the church of Deacon Thomas, Kaianus Lower Church, Sts. Lot and Procopius, and the Lower Chapel of the Priest John.

The bunches of grapes have a schematic shape, often hanging from two strings sometimes on a small ring, rendered in and out of the medallion in all directions (Levi 1971, I: 515; Avi Yonah 1960: 33-4). The bunches of grapes are arranged in a round ring-like representation in several colours set in three or four rows. Two styles of grape depiction are observed (pl. VI.18i-q): (1) the grapes are oval or round with a central dot (pl. VI.18i-l); these are seen on the pavements at Gaza, Hazor-Ashdod, Beth She'an monastery Room L, the Lower Chapel of the Priest John on Mt. Nebo, Kaianus lower church and at St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas. (2) the bunches appear in a dark outline and two parts, in horizontal rows with two or three colours, one half light and the other half dark (pl. VI.18m-q). At Ma'on the grapes are oval and the clusters regularly hang only in one direction; the same shape is rendered at the 'Armenian' church in Jerusalem; at Beer Shem'a, Beth Loya, Ma'on, at Deir el-Asfur and Kh. Sokho; at the Jordan inhabited scrolls mosaics of Sts. Lot and Procopius, Deacon Thomas, Suwayfiyah and the Chapel of Elias, Maria and Soreg at Gerasa. The pavement at Shellal seems

to have grapes of both styles (pl. VI.18j, m).

The vine medallions and the figures at the Hazor-Ashdod, Ma'on, and Shellal mosaics are characteristically shown in a stylized and flat fashion. The artists at Ma'on exhibit a keen sense of humour, for example, the hen laying an egg (pl. VI.19a), the depiction of the hunting dog, the elephants, and the leopard cub playing outside the leopard medallion. By contrast, the images in the mosaics of Gaza, Be'er Shem'a, el-Hammam, and Sts. Lot and Procopius are portrayed in the 'Justinian Renaissance' style (Kitzinger 1976). A revival style with secular iconography, it is characterized by striking changes in the style of the figures with the illusion of supple movement, the animals moving outside their frames, a three-dimensional description, and an interest in anatomical details. The rendition of the animals is sometimes impressionistic and sometimes realistic, with quite natural and lively poses. A group of wild and domestic animals depicted on the Be'er-Shem'a, Shellal and Petra mosaics appear calmly standing with an inclined (lowered or bent) head, in a position of compliance and tameness (pl. VI.20). This posture of docility is also characteristic of the animals depicted on the David-Orpheus mosaic at the Gaza synagogue and the Jabaliyah diakonikon pavement (pl. XII.3b,c).

The spaces between the scrolls on the mosaics are filled with bunches of grapes and vine leaves in accordance with the characteristic *horror vacui*. But space between the scrolls filled by animals, especially birds, is a phenomenon distinctive of some of the mosaics of Israel (see Tables VI-1-2). The inhabited scrolls mosaic of Hazor-Ashdod shows birds filling the spaces between the three surviving rows; at Be'er Shem'a two birds are set between the central medallions of rows 2 and 3, and another couple of birds appear between the central medallions of rows 6 and 7. At the Beth She'an synagogue birds are depicted in the spaces around the medallion of the menorah. The spaces between all the scrolls of Room L of the Monastery of Lady Mary at Beth She'an are filled with animals and birds. At el-Hammam two birds appear between the central medallions of rows 4 and 5. A sole example in Arabia appears on the mosaic of Elias, Maria, and Soreg at Gerasa; a pair of birds are shown in the space flanking the tree medallion and another bird is rendered between the four upper medallions on the left. The figures with parts outside the medallion are

not a chronological indication (as suggested by Talgam 1998: 80), nor are the images placed outside between the medallions.

C. *Origin, Development, and Interpretation*

The origin of the vine-trellis on mosaic pavements is a reflection on the floor of an overhead pergola. This type of mosaic was developed in Roman North Africa in the 2nd-3rd centuries, depicting Cupids in vintage scenes (Avi-Yonah 1936: 19). The composition is rendered with the trellises represented naturalistically all over the floor, sometimes forming circular scrolls, and growing from its four corners (see Oudna, the villa of the Laberii; Lavin 1963: 221, fig. 55; Kondoleon 1995: 235-242, 252, figs. 150, 153). The mosaic pavements of group V seem to follow this early tradition. Levi (1947, I: 509) maintains that the origin of the earlier arrangement of the motif with four corner amphorae was in imitation of a real arbor: 'The vine-trellis is conceived, obviously, as formed with shoots climbing up along the four pilasters in the corners'. In the early 4th century a transitional type appears on the wall mosaic of Santa Constanza in Rome. The diagonal vine design had a tradition in North African mosaics in examples found before the 4th century at Cherchel-Caesarea and 'Maison Byzantine' at Sousse and elsewhere (Dauphin 1987: 189, figs. 11, 15). The fully developed Byzantine type appears in the first half of the 5th century, consisting of the central amphora flanked by birds, usually peacocks, from which issue vine trellises that develop into symmetrical scrolls. An interesting comparable pavement is found at the Justinian church at Sabratha (Ward Perkins and Goodchild 1953: pl. XXVI) comprising a design of vine branches issuing from a stylized acanthus leaf inhabited by a great number of birds. The four central oval medallions connected by rings are inhabited by a bird-in-cage and a large peacock with a spread tail in the upper medallion. Avi-Yonah (1936: 19-20) suggests that the similar type of mosaic laid in the 6th century in Africa, Italy, Palaestina, and Syria evolved under the 'Justinian Renaissance', probably radiating from a single centre, the imperial court at Constantinople (see also Hunt 1994: 115-119; Balty 1995: 118-121). Trilling (1985: 33-37) argues that the inhabited scrolls mosaics 'confirm the principles of the medallion style—

symmetry, confinement, repetition and pictorialism'. Dunbabin (1999: 297-298) contends that the rinceau originated as a border motif related to similar designs in vase-painting and architectural ornament.

A religious significance and symbolism of the vine is argued by several scholars. Saller and Bagatti (1949: 94-98) claim a religious symbolism of the vine in early Byzantine mosaics in churches and synagogues, quoting Psalms 80: 9-16 (wrongly cited as Psalms 79 by them, and also by Merrony 1998: 471) and Isaiah 5: 1-7 referring to the vine and interpreted that Jews and Christians are the vineyard of God. This was the justification for the compositions of the inhabited vine scrolls in synagogues and churches for Jews and Christians alike. To prove their interpretation they also cite a modified Latin inscription of the Isaiah text above a vine rinceau on a 5th-century mosaic pavement in a sepulchral monument at Ancona, suggesting that it was adapted for the use of the Christians, the chosen people of the New Testament. Maguire (1987: 9-10) contends, 'the vine represents God's people, or Israel in Psalm 80: 8 and Hosea 10: 1, but which is first an image of Christ, and then of his people... Likewise, the vineyard represents the people of Israel in Isaiah 5: 1-7, but in Christ's parable it becomes the Kingdom of God (Matthew 21, 33-43)'. He further tries to prove the point by referring to three Early Christian mosaic pavements with inscriptions which 'emphasise a particular aspect of vine symbolism'. Bagatti and Maguire claim that the artists chose the design to signify that the vine symbolized God's people. Merrony (1998: 471) supports this interpretation: 'the vine may be regarded as a fundamentally religious symbol' on Palestinian and Arabian synagogue and church pavements in the 6th century.

It seems more conceivable that the vine gradually lost its symbolic meaning as the 6th-century inhabited scroll design on mosaic pavements turned into a geometric composition with formalized renditions, functioning as a decorative device rather than expressing religious imagery. The inhabited scroll pavement seems so bereft of its symbolic meaning that to signify their synagogue edifice the Jews at Ma'on added to their inhabited vine scroll mosaics the significant symbol of the menorah with the flanking lions. Those at the Beth She'an synagogue did likewise, and topped the menorah with the Hebrew inscription שלום

(shalom) (pl. XI.1a,b). The special significance of the menorah, the lions, or the Hebrew inscription within the mosaic is indicated by the scale and by its central position in the general composition, so it evidently has a symbolic meaning. Avi-Yonah (1960b: 32) maintains that the vine branch pattern served merely as a pleasing design, and that the contents of the upper panel at Ma'on were the real symbols meant to lead one up spiritually towards the Torah shrine in the apse.

Avi-Yonah (1975a) recorded a group of eight mosaic pavements in the Land of Israel, which were similar in composition, and he designated them the creation of the 'Gaza School'. The group consists of the mosaic floors in churches: 'Asida, el-Maquerqesh at Beth Guvrin, 'Ein Hanniya, Shellal, and the 'Armenian' church in Jerusalem, and in synagogues: Beth She'an small synagogue, Gaza, and Ma'on. Avi-Yonah maintained that the 'Gaza School' mosaics had characteristic features: the composition has a symmetrical geometric rigid layout; the vine is schematic and stylized; the figures are arranged to suit a geometric composition pattern. The medallion figures in each row face each other; they are placed antithetically and symmetrically on either side of a central vertical axis with the objects placed vertically one above the other. The bird-in-cage is a recurring motif. The design's main features include 'stylization of natural forms, *horror vacui*, subordination of proportions to the size of the medallions, rhythmic symmetrical grouping and descriptive isolation' (Avi-Yonah 1960b: 31). From these similarities he reached the conclusions that during the 6th century a 'Gaza School' flourished and was responsible for the execution of these mosaics.

This view is no longer accepted; stylistic differences can be observed between the compositions; the divergence in chronology, execution, and artistic style of the mosaics indicate that these pavements were not created at the same workshop. Moreover, it is incorrect to base a school or workshop on the design of the border and field composition, or on the contents of the mosaic. It is erroneous to assert that one school created a single uniform design. Rather, the elements and composition of the mosaics were a matter of personal selection from a similar source or pattern books, by the donors or sometimes by the artists (Dauphin 1976a: 130; 1978a: 408-410; Dunbabin 1978: 23; Hachlili 1987: 55-57; Talgam 1998: 80; Waliszewski 2001: 242-243). Dauphin (1987: 189)

rightly observes that the different compositions—the position of the single vase in the centre (groups I-IV) or the four corner vases depicted as the point of departure for the scrolls (group V)—do not constitute a chronological criterion, but the geographical distribution is significant in defining workshops. These designs can hardly indicate a school with far-reaching changes in style. Different artists must have executed these pavements following some common designs.

The following characteristics of the inhabited vine scroll pattern are shared by churches and synagogues pavements of groups I-III (Avi-Yonah 1960b: 31; 1975a: 192; Hachlili 1987):

- A pattern of an overall and aesthetically pleasing composition.
- A formalized geometric motif of vine branches dividing the floor into circular medallions.
- A rhythmic, symmetrical setting arranged horizontally in antithetic groups on either side of a central axial column.
- Stylization of fauna and flora.
- Proportions according to the size of the medallions, hence no difference in the size of animals or birds.
- *Horror vacui*.

To these common characteristics should be added another, which occurs exclusively on synagogue pavements, namely the Jewish symbols placed in a central position on the Ma'on and Beth She'an synagogue pavements. Most of the motifs used in these mosaics are not limited to the inhabited scroll pavements, but also occur on other types of overall geometrically patterned pavements, for example, the synagogue at Na'aran (Vincent 1961: pl. 7), the church of SS. Cosmas and Damianus at Gerasa (Piccirillo 1993: fig. 535); Horvat Berachot (Tsafrir and Hirschfeld 1979: fig. 17), and Hall A at the Beth She'an monastery (fig. XII-6).

The appearance of the motifs in these contexts implies that the designs and motifs are simply decorative. Furthermore, the addition of the symbolic panel to the synagogue by the Jews supports this assumption as differentiating the synagogue buildings from the neighboring churches, also decorated with inhabited scrolls, was evidently necessary.

All the details of the pavement, both the general composition of the floor, the individual patterns and motifs, and especially the Jewish symbolic

objects, were probably taken from model or pattern books according to individual or communal taste. This can be deduced from the uniformity of, and similarity in composition, schemes, and motifs. However, as the individual styles are obviously dissimilar, there must have been many artists and workshops producing mosaics in different parts of the country. Also, communities or artists may have preferred certain combinations of motifs without specific significance attached to them, for instance, the motif of the bird-cage.

*

The inhabited scrolls appear frequently on mosaic pavements in Palaestina, Arabia, Syria, and Phoenicia mostly during the 6th century (Balty 1995: 118-121). Comparable mosaic pavements mostly date to the same period, although the composition continued in use until the 8th century on some Jordanian pavements. The appearance of the inhabited scroll pavements in the 6th century can be attributed to the development of this style from geometric-organic floors and the spread of these fashions in Palaestina and Arabia (Kitzinger 1977: 89). The artist's object, in Avi Yonah's words (1936: 17), was 'to give a surface agreeably coloured and patterned... as [this] would help him to subordinate his subjects to the optical unity of the pavement'. The earliest of these compositions is the one portrayed on the Gaza-Maiumas synagogue, which has an absolute date of 507/8.

The common characteristics of all these mosaics is an overall design of vines issuing out of an amphora or sometimes an acanthus leaf in the centre, flanked by birds or animals, or from amphorae or acanthus leaves in corners to form medallions inhabited with objects, animals, and human figures. Different basic compositional schemes exist: division into two parts, vertical and horizontal (group I); a central axial row with antithetical design (group II); a central focus (group III). Yet regardless of the composition, the floors consist of a square or rectangle which was subdivided into squares; the medallions and motifs were executed within these, producing an even, overall stylized carpet. Kitzinger (1976a: 71) sums up: 'these sixth-century rinceaux patterns are, in fact, essentially geometric constructions in organic disguise'.

Distinct differences occur between the inhabited scroll mosaics of groups I-III and the mosaics

designated groups IV and V. The difference in the composition is possibly connected to or a result of the geographic distribution (see Tables VI.1, 2; Dauphin 1976a: 121-122). Groups I-III are found mainly in Palaestina, with only one in Arabia, whereas compositions IV and V are located chiefly in Jordan, in the Gerasa and Madaba regions, and in coastal Phoenicia, with three in Israel, two in the Beth She'an region and one in Caesarea. The inhabited scroll designs are sparsely used in Syria and frequently on small surfaces (Donceel-Voûte 1995: 99).

Groups IV and V are usually laid out randomly in the general geometric composition with no logic in the arrangement of the themes; this contrasts with the symmetrical design of groups I-III. The composition in groups IV and V is developed horizontally, as distinct from the vertical composition of groups I-III. The vine trellis issues out of an amphora or sometimes an acanthus leaf in the centre of the bottom row, flanked by birds or animals (group IV), or from amphorae or acanthus leaves in the corners of the composition (group V); they form medallions inhabited with objects, animals, and human figures. Hunting, vintage and pastoral scenes appear only on mosaics of groups IV and V; scenes usually fill no more than two medallions. There is a lack of proportion; the spaces are equally filled, human figures, birds, and beasts are of equal size so that they may be squeezed into one medallion. It seems quite clear that the artists' aim was not to copy nature. On the inhabited scroll pavements some motifs are of frequent use, such as the bird-in-cage, a bird of prey, and baskets, as well as less common animals, a lioness with her cub, an elephant, and a giraffe. These motifs are not exclusive to the inhabited scroll mosaics; some occur in other types of mosaic floors, earlier or contemporary.

Although the inhabited scroll composition appears in Jewish and Christian art, it might have carried entirely different meanings, corresponding to the significance and form of the architectural building, the community needs, and the faith and the time it was designed for. The appearance of the inhabited scrolls in both synagogue and church contexts might imply that its designs and motifs are simply decorative; it also indicates that mosaicists worked for Christian and Jewish patrons alike. The significance of each motif is difficult to determine, although it may be postulated that certain combinations of motifs which recur in synagogues or churches may have been

preferred by the Jewish or Christian communities. The same perhaps applies regarding the animals, especially the rare ones such as the elephant, the bear, and the buffalo, which occur on the Ma'on, Gaza, and Beth She'an synagogue floors.

Certain motifs might have had special meaning or significance for certain groups of people (Dauphin 1978b). For example, Jews could have commissioned work with a request for motifs such as the menorah, or other patterns, which held special significance, as in the composition of the Ma'on and Beth She'an synagogues floors. It is important to emphasize that Jewish inhabited scroll mosaics are distinctive for two reasons: first, because of the addition of Jewish symbols to the composition in the synagogues of Ma'on and Beth She'an; second, because no human figures are depicted in the medallions, although genre and vintage scenes are seen in many of the church mosaics.

The details of the pavement, in the general composition of the floor, the individual patterns, and motifs, were probably taken from pattern or model books according to individual or communal taste (see Chap. XII). This can be inferred from the uniformity of, and similarity in composition and motif. However, as the individual styles are obviously dissimilar, various artists and workshops must have produced the mosaics in different parts of the country. Also, certain combinations of the recurring motifs might have been preferred by the Jewish or the Christian community without specific significance attached to them. The motifs and the repeated elements and scenes in mosaics usually rendered similarly evidently cannot be associated with particular compositions or schools. They seem to indicate individual choice from a common source or pattern books by the craftsmen and donors; the difference in style in each mosaic is due to the individual style and ability of the mosaicist.

The differences in the content of the scrolls are also remarkable. Human figures and everyday life scenes are absent from groups I-III except at Be'er Shem'a and Petra. The geographic regions seem to indicate different preferences by the population. Whereas in the Land of Israel the most popular and common inhabited scroll pavement design for synagogues and churches are from groups I-III, with their symmetrical layout, containing objects and animals, the Beth She'an region and the Christian pavements in Jordan are asymmetrical, including, in addition to animals and objects, human figures rendered in scenes of

grape harvesting, pastoral, and hunting episodes.

Design, style, and motifs were mutually independent. This may be attributed to the individual tastes of each commissioner or artist who chose the compositions and motifs. It is difficult to discern

schools or workshops based on the composition and contents of the inhabited scrolls; and even within each group, it is difficult to assign them to one artist, school, or workshop owing to differences in style and execution.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ICONOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF RURAL LIFE

Rural activities and pastoral scenes, episodes of daily life, vintage, harvesting, animal chase, and hunting appear as part of the repertoire of inhabited vine and acanthus scrolls found in religious and secular contexts, and on other designs on mosaic pavements of the early Byzantine period in the provinces of Palaestina and Arabia (Tables VI-2, VII-1-2).

These popular vintage and hunting events, which include human activities, are absent from synagogue pavements. Only a few scenes of animal combat and chase appear in the synagogue context, in medallions of the vine rinceau at the Gaza synagogue aisle mosaic and in the border mosaic of Beth She'an synagogue (figs. VI-1,10). The only figural themes on synagogue pavements are rendered in biblical scenes and the zodiac designs.

Rural scenes on mosaic compositions involving human figures are usually recurrent episodes depicted in a similar manner and posture often in scenes of vintage, animal chase and combat, hunting, and events of everyday life.

Vintage-arable scenes incorporate various activities of vine harvesting: figures gathering and carrying grapes, a donkey loaded with baskets transporting the harvest, treading the grapes, pressing in the vine press, and a flute player accompanying the harvesting.

Chase and hunting scenes show animals in pursuit, chase, hunting, and combat; scenes of big game hunting include hunters on foot or mounted, armed with spear and shield, combating or confronting beasts; archers hunting beasts; the taming of animals, animals presented for public display, fowling, and bird catching. Pastoral and everyday scenes show shepherds and their flock, men and women in diverse settings, and fishing.

A. Vintage, Arable Scenes

Vintage scenes on the mosaic pavements appear in compositions of vine and acanthus inhabited scrolls describing a complete cycle of the grape

harvest (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 92; Roussin 1985: 236-247; Piccirillo 1989: 326-327; 1993: 40-41; Merrony 1998: 448-449, 467-468, 470-474).

The vintage scenes are usually random with no sequence, appearing haphazardly in various medallions of the design, while other medallions in the same mosaic might include hunting or everyday life episodes; yet in some mosaics the scenes are composed in linked medallions.

These vintage scenes seem particularly suited to inhabit a vine scrolls carpet though they are portrayed on some inhabited acanthus scroll mosaics too; all the typical themes appear on Christian sacred mosaics (in church and chapel); none of these scenes appear on synagogue pavements except for a hare eating grapes seen on the mosaic border at the Beth She'an small synagogue.

The characteristic features of the arable scenes are the following (Table VII-1, pls. VII.1-6):

- The vintager gathering the grapes
- A porter carrying the basket of grapes
- A donkey laden with baskets transporting the grapes from the vineyard to the press
- Treading the grapes, pressing in the wine press
- The flute player
- A hare or fox eating grapes

The Vintager

The vintager portrayed in the inhabited vine medallion is frequently shown in the same pose: turning to his left, barefoot, wearing a short sleeveless tunic decorated with two *orbiculi* (discs); in his right hand he holds a knife with a curved blade with which he cuts the cluster off the vine (pl. VII.1). In some cases the cluster is dropped into a full basket next to the vintager.

The vintager (pl. VII.1) appears twice in medallions of the inhabited vine scrolls mosaic in Room L (pl. VII.1a) (Fitzgerald 1939, pl. XVII, figs. 1, 2), and is partly destroyed in the mosaic chapel of Sede Nahum (pl. VII.1b) (Zori 1962: 185, pl. XXV, 3-5). Vintagers appear in inhabited vine medallions in several 6th-century mosaics

in Jordan: at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo, the lower chapel of the Priest John (pl. VII.1c), the church of Sts. Lot and Procopius (pl. VII.1e), the north aisle panel of the church of St. George (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 75, pl. 28,3), the church of the Deacon Thomas (pl. VII.1f), and the lower church of Kaianus at 'Uyun Musa on Mt. Nebo (pl. VII.1d). A similar damaged figure is rendered at al-Khadir at Madaba, and in the 8th-century St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 131, figs. 153,202-206, 263, 274, 345). At the mosaic of the Church of Elias, Mariah and Soreg in Gerasa the vintager is rendered on the bottom row in an inhabited vine scroll (fig. VI-16). He wears a Phrygian cap, a short tunic, and a fluttering chlamys. He holds a knife in his right hand and gathers a bunch of grapes on the left (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 271, pl. 45). The third panel of the church of St. Paul at Umm al-Rasas displays a disfigured inhabited vine scroll carpet of which only four medallions have partly survived (Piccirillo 1997: 386-7, plan I, foto 25; 2002: 545). In one of the medallions the hands of a figure cutting off a bunch of grapes survived.

The Grape Porter

The grape porter in the inhabited vine scroll appears as a youth carrying a basket on his left shoulder; he wears a short sleeveless tunic decorated with two *orbiculi*, and is either barefoot or has sandals on his feet. A grape porter occurs at Room L in Lady Mary Monastery at Beth She'an (fig. VII-1a) (Fitzgerald 1939, pl. XVII, fig. 1). A porter with a full basket of grapes and a knife, his right leg stretched out on the frame of the medallion, appears at el-Hammam at Beth She'an (fig. VII-1b) in two medallions in the bottom row, one almost completely destroyed (Avi-Yonah 1936: 14, pl. XVII, 4). A porter carrying a basket of grapes is portrayed in a partly destroyed medallion of an inhabited vine scroll mosaic at Caesarea (fig. VII-1c) (mosaic pavement 11029, Area CV11; Lehman 1999: 147, fig. 9-10, pl. 11).

In Arabian mosaics a porter wearing a short tunic and a chlamys appears in a medallion at the Chapel of Elias, Mary, and Soreg at Gerasa (fig. VII-1e); he carries the basket with both arms (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 270, pl. 45; Piccirillo 1993: 296, fig. 572). At Sts. Lot and Procopius church at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo the porter is depicted as an old white-bearded man carrying on

his back a basket full of grapes (fig. VII-1d) (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 59, pl. 16, 2; Piccirillo 1993: figs. 202, 205). A figure carries on his shoulder a bunch of grapes balanced by a staff, and another man carries grapes in medallions of an inhabited vine scroll mosaic on the second panel of the al-Khadir church at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 131, fig. 147). The grape porter usually is turning right, while the porter at Caesarea and at the Chapel of Elias, Mary, and Soreg at Gerasa is walking to the left.

A Youth Leading a Donkey Transporting Grapes

This scene usually fills two medallions: in one a youth is stands or walks, leading a donkey rendered in the other medallion (pl. VII.2). The youth wears a short tunic, its lower part decorated with two *orbiculi*. He is usually barefoot, but at Be'er Shem'a he wears sandals and in the lower chapel of the Priest John he wears shoes. The figure grasps in one hand a rope with which he leads the donkey, on which a harness usually loaded with baskets of grapes is shown. In the other hand he holds a stick or a whip. Sometimes the youth is looking back at the donkey.

The donkey usually carries a pointed basket; the unusual kind of sack seen on the donkey's back at Be'er Shem'a is exceptional. Only on the mosaic at el-Hammam does the youth carry a full basket on his back, and he drives the donkey with a two-tailed whip held in his right hand (Avi-Yonah 1936: 15, pl. XVI, 2). The basket with a pointed base carried by the donkey is the double basket, which appears in frontal position on some inhabited vine scroll mosaics (see the baskets depicted at Ma'on, Shellal, and Petra (figs. VI-5, 6; pl. VI.6-8).

A youth leading a donkey appears in one medallion in the bottom row of Room L in Lady Mary Monastery at Beth She'an (pl. VII.3a). The remains of a donkey looking back are seen in another medallion in the same row (fig. VI-13) (Fitzgerald 1939: 9, pls. XVI, XVII, fig. 1,3). A figure leading a donkey in two separate medallions appears at Be'er Shem'a (Gazit and Lender 1993: pl. XXIa). At el-Hammam in Beth She'an the youth whips the donkey (pl. VII.3b) (Avi-Yonah 1936: pl. XVI, 2). An almost completely naked youth holding a whip leads a donkey in two medallions of the inhabited acanthus scroll mosaic border at Nahariya (Dauphin and Edelstein 1984: volutes 21, 22, pl. XXIIIa,b).

Table VII.1. Vintage scenes on vine or acanthus inhabited scrolls mosaic pavements

<i>Mosaic</i>	<i>Date century CE</i>	<i>Structure type</i>	<i>Inhabited vine scroll</i>	<i>vintager</i>	<i>Porter</i>	<i>Youth leading donkey</i>	<i>Treading, vine press</i>	<i>Flute player</i>	<i>Hare eating grapes</i>
<i>Palaestina Prima & Secunda (Israel)</i>									
Be'er Shem'a	6th	church	+			+		+	
Beth Loya	c. 6th	church	+						
Beth She'an synagogue border	6th.	synagogue	+						+
Caesarea	6th	mansion	+		+				+
El Hammam, Beth She'an	c. 530	tomb	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Jerusalem, Armenian mosaic	6th	church	+						
Ma'ale Adommim, Monastery, kitchen	End 5th	monastery	+						+
Monastery, Beth She'an, room L	567	monastery	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Nahariah, border	6th	church	acanthus			+		+	+
Sede Nahum	6th.	chapel	+	+					+
<i>Palaestina Tertia</i>									
Petra, N aisle	c. 550	church	+						+
<i>Arabia (Jordan)</i>									
Al-Khadir, Madaba	6th	church	+	+	+			+	+
Bishop Sergius, Umm Rasas, border	587/8	church	+			+	+		
Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo	6th	church	+	+		+			
Elias, Maria, Soreg, Gerasa	6th	church	+		+				+
Kaianus, 'Uyun Musa Mt. Nebo, Lower mosaic	6th	church	+	+	+				
Priest John, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo, Lower Upper	Late 5th	chapel	+	+		+			
St. George, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo	565		acanthus						
	535/36	church	+	+					
			acanthus	+		+	+	+	
Sts. Lot & Procopius Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo	557	church	+	+	+	+	+	+	
St. Stephen, Umm al-Rasas	8th	church	+	+		+	+	+	
Suwayfayah, Philadelphia	6th	chapel	+			+			
<i>Phoenicia Lebanon</i>									
Qabr Hiram	575 CE	church	+			+	+	+	+

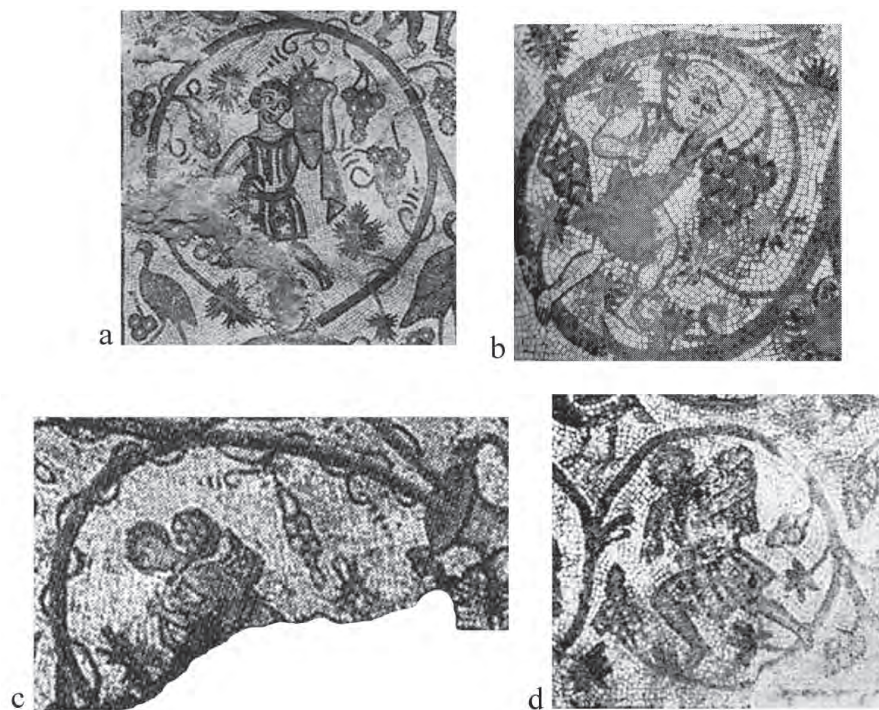


Figure VII-1. The porter of grapes: a. Beth She'an, Monastery Room L; b. el Hammam; c. Caesarea; d. Chapel of Elias, Mary, and Soreg, Gerasa.

The same scenes occur on several inhabited scroll mosaics in the Jordanian churches on Mt. Nebo (pl. VII.3d-g): Sts. Lot and Procopius, the lower chapel of the Priest John, the church of the Deacon Thomas, the upper church of Kaianus (Saller & Bagatti 1949: 59-60, pl. 17,2; Piccirillo 1993: figs. 153,240, 242); the chapel of Suwayfiyah at Philadelphia, and the 8th-century St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 253, 264, 275, 345). A vintager driving a donkey shown in two medallions and walking towards a wine press in the next medallion, is rendered in the inhabited vine scroll mosaic border of the 6th-century Bishop Sergius church at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 234, fig. 365, 369). A figure pulling an animal, probably a donkey, is portrayed in a medallion of an inhabited vine scroll mosaic at the church of al-Khadir at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 131, fig. 147). A similar episode of grapes transported on a donkey led by a youth with a stick in his right hand appears in an acanthus medallion on the mosaic of the Church of St. George on Mt. Nebo (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 70, pl. 24, 2). At the Church of John and Elias at Khattabiyah in Umm el Rasas a surviving fragment of an inhabited vine scroll mosaic shows a

donkey laden with a basket of grapes (Piccirillo 1993: 244, fig. 404). One of the medallions of the third panel of the church of St. Paul at Umm al-Rasas displays a damaged figure leading a donkey carrying grapes (Piccirillo 1997: 386-7, plan I, foto 25; 2002: 545).

Only at the Beth She'an Monastery and at the Lower Church of Kaianus are the youth and the donkey depicted in the same medallion. The youth and the donkey at Be'er Shem'a and el-Hammam have parts of their bodies (head and legs) rendered outside the medallions while in all other depictions they are confined inside the medallion frame.

Figures leading a donkey also appear on Syrian-Phoenician mosaics: on the inhabited vine scroll mosaic at Qabr Hiram (575), a figure carries a loaded donkey rendered in two separate scrolls (fig. VI-18) (Donceel Voûte 1988: 411-412, fig. 403; pl. h.-t. 17). On the north aisle mosaic of the North church (The 'Michaelion') of Haouarte (Donceel Voûte 1988: 109, 487, pl. h.-t.5), a figure with the name Georgis (in a posture similar to the camel driver at Kissufim) leads a cart drawn by a horse and a donkey.

Figures Treading Grapes and the Press

The grape-treading motif in a medallion on inhabited scroll mosaics commonly consisted of two or three figures, nude except for a loincloth (*cinctus*), with outstretched arms standing in the vat, or two similar youths treading grapes in a tub around a wine press rendered in the centre of the medallion (pl. VII-3).

Three figures are rendered treading grapes at el-Hammam (pl. VII-3a) (Avi-Yonah 1936: 14-15, pl. XVI, 2). In Room L of the Lady Mary monastery at Beth She'an (pl. VII-3b) the partly destroyed medallion originally showed three figures treading grapes (Fitzgerald 1939: 9, pl. XVI).

Figures treading grapes around a wine press are rendered on Arabia mosaics: Two youth in loincloths, treading grapes and holding hands around a wine press (pl. VII-3c), are shown at the church of Sts. Lot and Procopius at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 60, pl. 18, 1; Piccirillo 1993: fig. 202, 206). A somewhat similar scene appears inside an acanthus medallion (pl. VII-3d) on the pavement of the church of St. George at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo, where a pair of treading figures in loincloths grasp each other by one hand. The treader on the right holding a shovel. They appear around a wine press (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 60, pl. 24, 1). A similar scene where two figures (playing music) sit treading inside a box-like object, with a press in the centre (pl. VII-4e), is shown on the 6th-century mosaic of Qabr Hiram in Phoenicia (Donceel-Voute 1988: 411-12, Fig. 403, pl. n-t.17). A partly destroyed treading scene is depicted at the 8th-century St. Stephen church at Umm al-Rasas with three figures, of which only two survived; the juice flows into a *dolium* depicted outside the medallion (Piccirillo 1993: fig. 382). A wine press (similar to the one depicted at the church of Sts. Lot and Procopius) without any figures is rendered in a medallion in the inhabited wine scroll border at the 6th-century Bishop Sergius church at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 234, fig. 334).

A Flute Player

A flute player fills a medallion in several of the inhabited scrolls mosaics. He is portrayed usually in the same posture, sitting on a basket, in some cases turned upside-down. He wears a short tunic, is usually barefoot or with sandals, and holds the

single flute in both hands (pl. VII.4). The flute player usually turns right. Exceptions are the player at Be'er Shem'a and the standing player at St. Lot and Procopius, who turn left. The flutist is often rendered next to the grape treaders; he seems to be playing in time to their movements.

The flute player appears at el-Hammam (Avi-Yonah 1936: 14-15, pl. XVI, 2), Be'er Shem'a (Gazit and Lender 1993: pl. 20A), and in a partly destroyed medallion at Caesarea (Lehman 1999: 147, figs. 9, 10, pl. 11). A dog listens to the flute player rendered in a medallion in room L at the Beth She'an monastery (Fitzgerald 1939: 9, pl. XVII, 2). A naked flute player sitting on an overturned basket is depicted in a medallion of the acanthus rinceau border band of the Byzantine church of Nahariya (Dauphine and Edelstein 1984: volute 8, pl. XVa; 1993: 51).

In Jordanian mosaics a flute player in a short tunic stands seemingly absorbed in his playing at the church of Sts. Lot and Procopius at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo (pl. VI.11) (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 202, 206); the flutist rendered in the acanthus medallion at the church of St. George is differently dressed and is seated on a stool-like object (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 70, figs. 7, 8, pls. 23, 2; 24, 1, 2; Piccirillo 1993: fig. 245). A flute player sitting on a basket appears at Al-Khadir (Lux 1967: pl. 33D; Piccirillo 1993: 131, fig. 147) and in an octagon in the Cathedral Chapel of the Martyr Theodore at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 96, 109). A flute player sitting on a stool is rendered in the acanthus border at the church of St. Kyriakos at al-Quwaysmah (Piccirillo 1993: fig. 492). The depiction of a seated flute player has partly survived in the 8th-century St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: fig. 382). A double-flute player sitting on a basket is rendered in a medallion on the 6th-century inhabited vine scroll mosaic of Qabr Hiram in Phoenicia (fig. VI-18) (Donceel-Voute 1988: 411-412, fig. 403, pl. n-t.17).

Two mosaics found at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo—the inhabited vine scrolls at the church of Sts. Lot and Procopius (pl. VI-11), and an inhabited acanthus scroll mosaic at the church of St. George—show similar scenes in medallions of the same row: a vintager transporting grapes with a donkey walking towards two treaders in a wine press, and a flutist who seems to guide their movements with his playing (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 70, figs. 7, 8, pls. 23, 2; 24, 1, 2; Piccirillo 1993: figs. 202, 244-5; 1998: 325-6). The two are

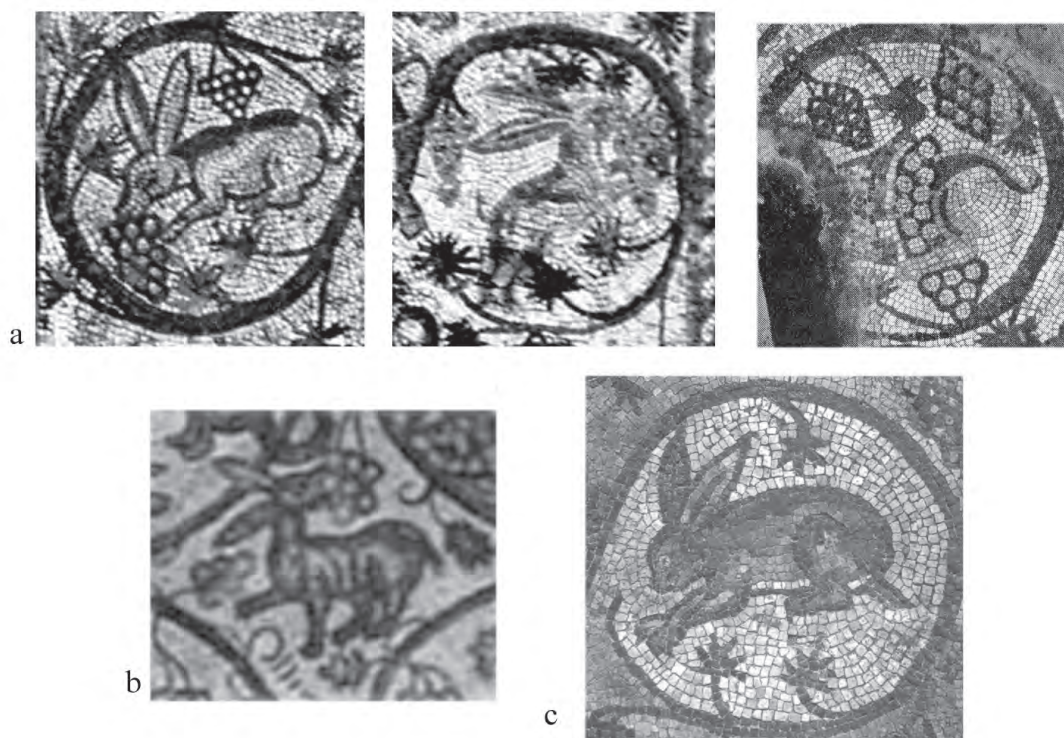


Figure VII-2. Hare eating grapes: a. three episodes, el-Hammam, Beth She'an; b. Room L, Monastery Beth She'an; c. Petra Church.

quite similar, but at Sts. Lot and Procopius the scene develops from left to right through four medallions while on the St. George mosaic it develops from right to left through three medallions.

A Hare Eating Grapes

A hare eating grapes is quite a common occurrence on several Byzantine inhabited vine scroll mosaic pavements (fig. VII. 2a-c). An early example of this image appears in late Roman mosaics in Israel: on a panel of the mosaic in the Public building north of the *decumanus* at Sephoris, dated to the Severan period, and in one of the squares of the central panel of the northern carpet at Lod (Rousin 1996: 123, fig. 55; Talgam and Weiss 2004: 1-2, 12, figs. 2, 13).

A hare eating grapes appears between the medallions in the bottom and the second row of the inhabited scroll mosaic in Room L at Beth She'an (fig. VII. 2b) (Fitzgerald 1939: 9, pl. XVI, XVII, 3); also in two medallions in row 2 and in a medallion in row 6 of the vine rinceau mosaic at el-Hammam at Beth She'an (fig. VII. 2a) (Avi-Yonah 1936: 14, 16, pl. XIV). A hare placed on top of a basket and eating grapes is seen in

a medallion on the inhabited scroll mosaic at Hazor-Ashdod (fig. VI-2). A hare eating grapes is depicted on the mosaic border in the Beth She'an small synagogue (Bahat 1981: 83). A similar episode appears in a medallion of the inhabited acanthus mosaic border at Nahariya (Dauphin and Edelstein 1984: volute 60, pl. XXXVa), in row 2 of the inhabited scroll mosaic of the church narthex at Ma'ale Adummim (pl. VI.9b) (Khirbet el-Murassas: Magen and Talgam 1990: 113, fig. 32). A seated hare reaching up for a bunch of grapes is rendered in row A8 on mosaic I at Petra (fig. VII. 2c) (Waliszewski 2001: 228, fig. 9) and in a vine scroll medallion at the church of Elias, Maria, and Soreg at Gerasa (Piccirillo 1993: 296, fig. 513). The same episode of a hare eating grapes appears on the presbyterium of a newly discovered church at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 2006: 380-382, foto 23). A hare eating grapes is seen in a medallion on the 6th-century inhabited vine scroll mosaic of Qabr Hiram in Phoenicia (fig. VI-18) (Donceel-Voute 1988: 411-412, fig. 403, pl. n-t.17).

A fox eating grapes from a basket is depicted in a medallion in the vine rinceau pavement of the church of the Deacon Thomas (pl. VI.10) (Piccirillo 1993: 187, fig. 255).

The forerunners for these vintage scenes are probably in villa mosaics of North Africa in the Roman period. Those scenes might have had some symbolism as many of the North African mosaics are connected with the Dionysian repertoire of scenes of wine and drunkenness (Merrony 1998: 449, 470-1). Vintage scenes on 3rd-century floor mosaics are known from Cherchel at El Djem (Dunbabin 1978: 115-6, pls. 105, 107-8) as well as on the vault of the church of Sta. Costanza in Rome (Oakeshott 1967: pl. 38).

These vintage motifs are almost exclusively depicted in vine scroll medallions of inhabited scroll field and border mosaics (see Table VI-1). Similar scenes appear in inhabited acanthus scroll medallions on Arabian mosaic pavement fields: in the upper chapel of the Priest John and in the church of St. George at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo as well as on the inhabited acanthus scroll mosaic border of the church of Bishop Sergius at Umm al-Rasas.

Scholars argue for a religious symbolism of the vine in early Byzantine mosaics in churches and synagogues based on some biblical verses: Isaiah 5: 1-7, Psalms 80: 8-16, and Hosea 10: 1 (see Chap. VI, p. 144; Piccirillo 1993: 174, 178, figs. 224, 229-230, 244). However, a different explanation for the abundant choice of vintage scenes on 6th-century mosaic pavements in Palaestina and Arabia is possibly due to wine production and commerce, one of the main activities of the period (Merrony 1998: 472-3). A large number of wine installations and presses were discovered in Israel of the Early Byzantine period, and similar ones were found in the vicinity of Mt. Nebo (Saller 1941: fig. 2). The Byzantine wine press features vats for the storage of the grapes before treading and an installation containing a treading floor paved with white tesserae, paved basins connected by a narrow pipe, and a screw-press. The fixed screw-press was constructed from an upright pole with carved screw ridges and fixed into a heavy stone block; pressing was 'by rotation of the wooden nut screwed onto the upper end of the beam' (Hirshfeld 1983: 211-5, figs. 5, 7; Frankel 1997; see also Brun and Eitam 1993). The same screw-presses are depicted on several mosaic pavements discussed above. These wine installations attest to robust wine production and trade in the Byzantine period, which is reflected on the mosaic pavements probably without indicating any symbolic meaning.

B. *Chase, Combat, and Hunting Scenes*

Hunting scenes depicted on the mosaic pavements could typically be divided into three basic themes: (1) animal chase and combat; wild beast combat and assault on animal prey; (2) human and animal battle and hunt; (3) transportation of big-game animals for public display. Almost all scenes are organized in confronting pairs of animals or hunter and beast (see also Merrony 1998: 452-456, 462, 465-466, 474-475).

Combat and hunting scenes appear in three mosaic categories: in medallions of inhabited vine or acanthus scroll mosaic fields; in medallions of inhabited vine or acanthus scroll mosaic borders; on general mosaic fields on the panels of the mosaic pavement on the aisle at Kissufim, the Nile Festival Building, Room 6 mosaic at Sephoris, and the Old Diakonikon on Mt. Nebo which depict animal combat and hunting scenes in different compositions.

Animal Chase and Combat

The animal chase theme usually consists of pairs of animals in which one is chasing another. This type of motif appears both in religious as well as in secular structures. The animal chase contains several recurring themes: beasts chasing animals, hare hunt by a hound, snake and mongoose combat, wild beasts assault their prey (Table VII-2).

Animal chase and not combat is common in medallions of the inhabited scrolls, perhaps because usually each animal was depicted in a separate medallion. Several animal chase scenes appear in the medallions of the inhabited scroll mosaics (pls. VII.5-6,8): the Gaza synagogue pavement shows the only depictions of a pair of animals attacking their prey: two foxes attack a deer in row 7; a pair of leopards attack a gazelle in row 9; a tigress leaps towards a donkey in row 3 (pl. VII.5a). A bear chases two female ibexes on the el-Hammam rinceau mosaic (fig. VI-14) in three separate medallions in row 5 (Avi-Yonah 1936: 14, pl. XIV). A panther pursuing a deer on the left, and a wolf pursuing an ibex on the right, flank a shepherd in the axial column medallion in row 8 on the Be'er Shem'a church mosaic (pl. VII.5b). A lion chasing a gazelle and an ibex (pl. VII.5c), a lioness and her cub in a posture of attack, and a bear chasing a horse (pl. VII.10a) are depicted on the Diakonikon mosaic field in

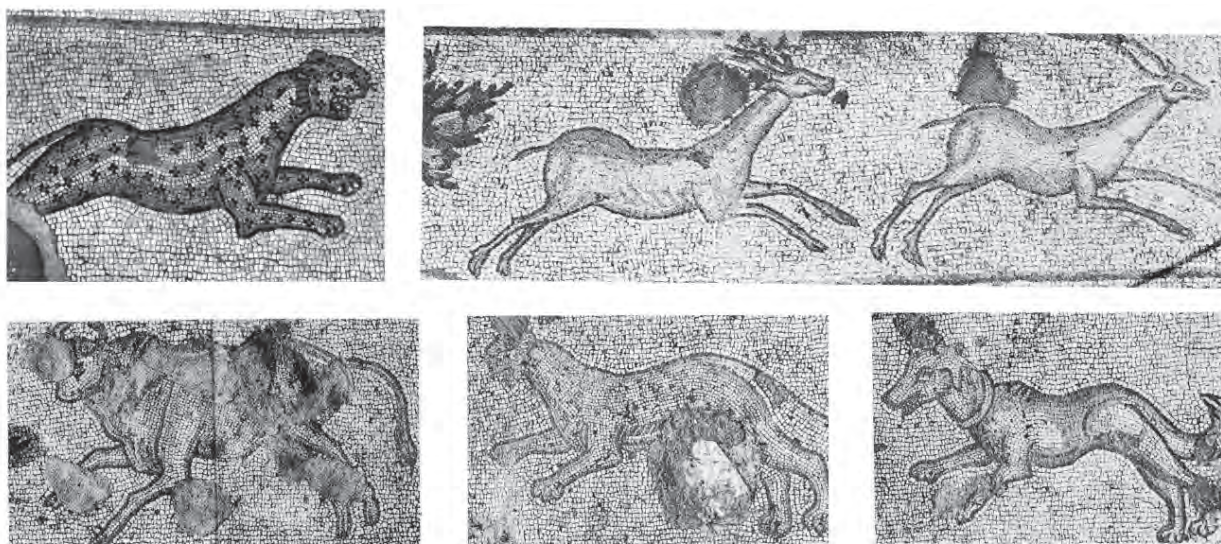


Figure VII-3. Animal chase: Caesarea mosaic border.

the Byzantine Church at Jabaliyah near Gaza (Humbert 1999: 216; 2000: 123). A similar scene to the Jabaliyah lion chasing a gazelle and an ibex is seen on the south aisle of the mid-5th century Church of the Holy Martyrs at Tayibat al Imam in Hamah (Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999: pl. VIII).

Scenes of beasts chasing animals are found on animal friezes rendered on mosaic borders: a bear chasing and catching the rear legs of a fleeing deer, and a tiger jumping on an animal (destroyed), are depicted on the narrow border of the Beth She'an small synagogue mosaic (fig. VI-10); the animals are portrayed in vine trellis issuing out of four amphorae placed in the four corners of the border. The border of a Caesarea Byzantine pavement (church or villa?: Avi-Yonah 1958: 61; Reich 1985: 211, fig. 2, pl. LII 4,7) which frames a composition of 120 medallions containing various birds (fig. XII-14), shows wild animals chasing tame animals with fruit trees between them: a leopard chases two gazelles; a bear pursues a horse (fig. VII-3); other animals confront each other, flanking trees.

Animal scenes of a lion confronting a bull (pl. IX.2a), a leopard chasing a (destroyed) animal, and a deer being pursued appear on the intercolumnar mosaic panels at the Martyr Church at Beth She'an (Mazor and Bar Nathan 1996: 28-30, color photo p. 4). Comparable animal chase scenes are rendered on the southern intercolumnar panels and on the border frieze of the

Church of the Holy Martyrs at Tayibat al-Imam in Hamah (Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999: 448, plan I, figs. 17-19). A comparable scene of chasing animals is depicted on the destroyed border of the narthex mosaic of the small church of Khirbet Ghureiyib in western Galilee (Aviam 2003: 48, fig. 13).

An animal frieze in which a few scenes of beasts chasing smaller animals survived on the outer border of the vestibule mosaic of the Gerasa synagogue (fig. IV-6): a bear pursues a wild ass, a lioness pursues a wild ass, a cheetah chases a 'cloven-hoofed animal', a lion chases a bubale and a leopard pursues a 'cloven-hoofed animal' (Biebel 1938: 319-320; Piccirillo 1993: 290, fig. 547). Similar scenes of animal pursuit show a lioness chasing an ibex, and a leopard chasing a gazelle, each rendered in medallions of the acanthus rinceau border of the 6th-century mosaic of Hippolytus Hall at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 66, fig. 28).

In Syria and Phoenicia several similar animal chase episodes are rendered: in medallions on inhabited vine scroll mosaic in the nave of the Qabr Hiram church in Phoenicia (fig. VI-18) and on the intercolumnar panels there (Donceel-Voûte 1988: 411-415, Figs. 403, 405-408, 410-413; pl. n-t.17); several animal chase vignettes are rendered in the south aisle frieze of the North church mosaic at Haouarte (the 'Michaelion'; Donceel-Voûte 1988: 106, figs. 73, 80, pls. h-t.5).

Snake and Mongoose Confrontation

The scene of snake and mongoose confrontation is noted by Timotheus of Gaza and in other literature, and appears on Roman mosaics; the theme was illustrated, for instance, on an early mosaic at the House of the Faune at Pompeii. It appears on several 6th-century pavements (pl. VII.6) some on inhabited vine scroll (Dauphin 1978: 407). The snake and mongoose occurs on the church mosaic of Be'er Shem'a in the side medallion in row 10 (pl. VI.5); the snake's lower part is coiled around the vine scroll, and it confronts the mongoose which is portrayed with its long tail curved over its body (Gazit and Lender 1993: 276, pl. XXIIb). At Sede Nahum the snake and mongoose is portrayed in the side medallion of row 8 (fig. VI-15).

This scene appears in Syria and Phoenicia: the earliest is the mosaic of the south aisle of the North church at Haouarte (pl. VII.6f) (the 'Michaelion', dated to 486/7 or 501/2; Donceel-Voûte 1988: 106, figs. 73, 80, pls. h-t.5; now in the National Museum in Damascus). In the central row of the inhabited vine scroll pavement of the late 6th-century Qabr Hiram church in Phoenicia, the mongoose in one medallion confronts the snake in the next (pl. VII.6d); the same scene occurs in two medallions of the mosaic in the first antechamber of the 6th-century church of Zaharani (pl. VII.6e) (Balty 1976: pls. XLI-XLII,1; Donceel-Voûte 1988: 411-12, figs. 403, 430-432, pls. h-t.17, 18; pl. L). A similar confrontation is portrayed at the Byzantine Imperial Palace in Constantinople (Trilling 1989: 70, no. 36).

Several Orpheus scenes on mosaic pavements depict the snake and mongoose theme: in the Jerusalem Orpheus mosaic a viper appears on the right confronting a mongoose with a leash around its neck (pls. IV.5; VII.6c; fig. IV-14). On 4th-century Orpheus scenes at Sakiet and Thina in Tunisia a mongoose and a cobra appear in combat in the upper part of the panel (Jesnick 1997: nos. 17, 20; fig. 154). The 'snake confronting a mongoose motif' might be associated with the 'montreurs de serpents' who 'put on a staged battle with an air of protective magic' (Jesnick 1997: 81), or it might indicate the mongoose as a semi-domesticated animal used to exterminate vermin (Rosen 1984: 182).

Note that in the confrontation on the pavements of Be'er Shem'a and Qabr Hiram the

mongoose appears with its tail up in an attack manner.

Among Nilotic scenes a comparable theme is noticeable: a heron combating a snake is rendered on the mosaic of the north transept of Tabgha church and on the Nile Festival Building mosaic at Sepphoris; a scene of a heron attacking a badger also appears on the mosaic at Tabgha (pl. V.8e). Animal combat of a crocodile attacking a bull is frequent in Byzantine Nilotic scenes (pl. V.6; see Chap. V, p. 104).

Hare Pursuit and Chase

Hare pursuit, represented by a hound/dog chasing a hare, was popular in Roman mosaics. The theme of the hare chase has affinities with similar representations in 3rd-century North African mosaics such as that in the Maison de la Chasse a Courre at El Djem and in the Maison des Laberii at Oudna, which probably influenced the Byzantine images (Dunbabin 1978: 49, 61, pls. 22, 44; Merrony 1998: 452). A somewhat comparable scene of a hare and a fox eating from a bunch of grapes occurs in the 4th-century large hall mosaic pavement of Lod, in one of the squares of the central panel of the northern carpet (Avissar 1996: back cover).

The hare pursuit theme occurs on 6th-century mosaics in Israel (pl. VII-8a-e). A hound with collar chasing a hare that looks back at its pursuer is rendered in row 6, each animal in a medallion, of the vine scroll mosaic at Shellal church (Trendall 1957: pl. 4). A hound with collar and leash pursuing a hare and an antelope is rendered on the northern aisle of St. Elias Church at Kissufim (Cohen 1980: 16, 20). A dog chasing a vixen and a bitch chasing a doe rabbit, each in a vine medallion, are seen in row 5 of the church pavement mosaic at Be'er Shem'a (Gazit and Lender 1993: 276). A dog pursuing a hare appears in the mosaic panels between the columns of the Martyr Church at Beth She'an (Mazor and Bar Nathan 1998: 28-30). Another episode of dog pursuing a hare appears in the inhabited acanthus border mosaic at the Khirbet el-Wazia church (pl. VII.8d) (Aviam 1995: 52-53).

A dog leaping after a hare—each in a medallion—appear on the inhabited vine scroll mosaic at Caesarea (fig. XII-14) (mosaic pavement 11029, Area CV11; Lehman 1999: 147, fig. 9-10, pl. 11). A hound with collar grabs hold of the legs of a

fleeing hare in the vine scroll border frieze of the Beth She'an small synagogue mosaic (fig. VI-10) (Bahat 1981: 85). A collared dog emerging from the medallion catches the hare portrayed in the joined medallion on the inhabited vine scroll of the mosaic border in the narthex at Beth Loya church (Patrich and Tsafirir 1992: 184).

The same motif appears on mosaics in Jordan. A running dog with a collar and a broken rope hunts an escaping rabbit, each animal in a medallion, perhaps with the hunter in the adjacent medallion as part of the scene, in the vine rinceau at the Church of the Sts. Lot and Procopius at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 61, fig. 7, pls. 14,2; Piccirillo 1993: 164-5, figs. 202, 207,213). A similar episode of dog pursuing fleeing hare is rendered in two medallions of the acanthus rinceau border of the mosaic of the upper apse at Massuh church in Ebus (Piccirillo 1986: 230, no.19; 1993: 252, figs. 437, 444). A dog chasing two rabbits, each animal in a medallion, is seen on the acanthus rinceau of the Burnt Palace at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 78, figs. 50, 52). Similar vignettes of a dog pursuing a fleeing hare are rendered in intercolumn panels on the mosaic of the 6th-century nave of Qabr Hiram (fig. VI-18) in Phoenicia (Donceel-Voute 1988: 411-415, figs. 403, 405, 412; pl. n-t.17).

A different method of hare hunt appears at el-Hammam, in a medallion in row 6; a hare (only tail and paws have survived) is being hunted with a basket and rope Beth She'an (fig. VII-2a) (Avi-Yonah 1936: 15, pl. XVII, 6).

Two dogs chase a deer, in three medallions, in row 3 of the inhabited vine scroll mosaic at the church at Hazor-Ashdod (fig. VI-2). A hound pursuing a gazelle, almost entirely lost, each in a medallion, is seen on the left in row 6 of the vine scroll mosaic at the Shellal church (fig. VI-6). A hound with collar chasing a gazelle, flanking a fruit tree (fig. XII-14), is depicted at the Caesarea border pavement.

Similar scenes appear on Jordan mosaics: A hound with collar and leash capturing a gazelle by the leg, each in a medallion, is depicted in the church of the Deacon Thomas (Piccirillo 1993: 187, fig. 254). A hound with collar chases an animal in medallions of the vine scroll panel of the nave field, and another scene of a dog attacking an animal is depicted in a medallion at Kaianus lower church (Piccirillo 1993: 189, fig. 271, 275). Interestingly, on the mosaic of the lower chapel of the Priest John a hound with collar and a torn

leash is depicted in a medallion in the row 2 of the vine scroll mosaic in the main nave, while the fleeing hare is rendered in a medallion in the sanctuary vine scroll mosaic (Piccirillo 1993: 176, figs. 237, 240).

An interesting variation of the same theme is a seated dog with a collar looking back at a fleeing rabbit depicted on the eastern panel of the Diakonikon chapel at Jabaliyah (pl. VII-10b). (Humbert 1999: 216, pl. XI top; Humbert et al. 2000: 124).

A hound or dog with a collar probably represented a guard dog whose task was to protect his owners' property, especially his herd (Toynbee 1973: 102-108).

A cock-fight appears at el-Hammam, in a medallion in row 7 (fig. VI-14). This was a popular sport in antiquity (Avi-Yonah 1936: 16, pl. XIV). Roosters appear flanking a flat bowl in medallions in row 21 of the vine rinceau mosaic of the north aisle in Petra church (pl. VI.7) (Waliszewski 2001: 236-7, fig. 17) and flanking each other in geometric squares on the north aisle of the Jabaliyah church (pl. X.4) (Humbert 2000: 121).

Wild Beasts in Combat, Predation, and Assault

Scenes of beasts chasing animals are found not only on mosaic fields and in inhabited scrolls designs but also on animal friezes rendered on mosaic borders. A related theme is represented by beasts and their animal prey in combat and hunt, or sometimes already in victory over one of the animals. They usually are pairs, often with a beast at the moment of overpowering its victim.

These impressive scenes of wild beasts fiercely attacking and overwhelming their victims appear on the lower section of the mosaic pavement of the Nile festival building at Sepphoris (pl. V.3), and on two registers at the St. Elias Church at Kissufim (pl. VII.7). These images of ferocious animals battling in assorted compositions recall comparable scenes on 3rd- and 4th-century mosaic pavements in Palaestina. On the 3rd-century triclinum mosaic from Shechem (Nablus) combat and hunting scenes are portrayed in medallions of the acanthus inhabited scroll border on a black ground (Dauphin 1979: 14-18). Similar combat scenes appear in the medallions of the acanthus inhabited scroll frame of the House of Dionysos at Sepphoris (Talgam and Weiss 2004: 88-94, 109-110; figs. 75, 77-80; colour pls. XII-XIII). The 4th-century hall mosaic pavement of Lod shows scenes

Table VII.2. Animal chase and combat scenes.

<i>Mosaic</i>	<i>Date century CE</i>	<i>Structur type</i>	<i>Inhabited vine scroll</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Animal chase</i>	<i>Snake mongoose</i>	<i>Dog chase hare/gazelle</i>	<i>Cock fight</i>	<i>Wild beast assault prey</i>
<i>Palaestina Prima & Secunda (Israel)</i>									
Be'er Shem'a	6th	church	+		+	+	+		
Beth Loya	6th	church	+				+		
Beth She'an small synagogogue, border	6th	synagogogue	+		+		+		
Caesarea	6th	mansion	+				+		
El Hammam	c. 530	tomb	+		+			+	
Gaza-Maiumas (Gaza strip)	508-9	synagogogue			+				
Hazor-Ashdod	c.512	church	+		+		+		
Jabaliyah (Gaza strip)	6th	church		+	+		+		
Kissufim	6th	church		+			+		+
Martyr Beth She'an, Intercolumnar panel	6th	church					+		
Nile Festival, Sepphoris,	5th	mansion		+	+				+
Sede Nahum	6th.	chapel	+		+	+			
Shellal	561-2	church	+		+		+		
<i>Gaza Strip</i>									
Gaza-Maiumas	508-9	synagogogue			+				
Jabaliyah	6th	church		+	+		+		
<i>Arabia (Jordan)</i>									
Al-Khadir, Madaba	6th	church	+	+					+
Burnt Palace, Madaba	6th	mansion	acanthus				+		
Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo	6th	church	+				+		
Gerasa synagogogue, vestibule mosaic border	530/531	synagogogue		+	+				
Hippolytus Hall, Madaba border	6th	mansion	acanthus		+				
Kaianus, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo, Lower mosaic	5th	church	+		+		+		
Massuh, Esbus, , upper apse mosaic, border	6th	church	acanthus				+		
Sts. Lot & Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo	557	church	+				+		
<i>Phoenicia</i>									
Qabr Hiram	575	church	+			+			
Zaharani, I	524	church	+			+			



Figure VII-4. Kissufim church north aisle.

of animal pairs in a vicious encounter between wild beasts and their prey; they appear in several hexagons of the north panel and in two squares of the central panel of the north carpet (Avissar 1996: figs. 2, back cover). Similar scenes appear on the late 4th-century Bacchic mosaic at El Djem in North Africa (Lavin 1963: 238-9, fig. 92).

The mosaic at the Sepphoris Nile Festival Building (pl. V.3) displays six episodes of animal combat, usually in pairs. The animals fight ferociously and pursue in the section to the right of the column and the lowermost section below the Nile festival scene (Netzer and Weiss 1992: 39, 41-2; Weiss and Talgam 2002: 69, fig. 5). These scenes recall similar ones on the Lod mosaic. Four of the depictions illustrate expressive events (pl. VII. 9a, c): a tigress devours a deer to the right of the column and a lion devours an ox/bull in the centre of the bottom section (Netzer and Weiss 1992: colour photo on p. 42). A bear overwhelms a wild boar, with another boar standing by, at the bottom right of the Nile river stream (Netzer and Weiss 1995: colour fig. 7). A tigress overcoming a deer is shown on the bottom left section (Weiss and Netzer 1991: photo on p.121). Two other scenes are milder depictions of a lion cub pursuing a gazelle and a leopard cub chasing two mice (one of them is escaping out of the frame); they are at the left side of bottom section (Netzer and Weiss 1992: 42, colour photo on p. 37). The combat scenes in the lower part of the Sepphoris Nile mosaic are organically interrelated though the episodes have no actual narrative progression, contrary to the Nilotic theme on the upper part.

At St. Elias church at Kissufim (Cohen 1979, 1980) the ten assorted episodes of animal combat and hunting events, as well as peaceful scenes, are arranged at the north aisle in parallel registers, one register above another. Unity is established by the fact that the separate panels are almost all the same size, and none of the panel scenes dominates the entire composition (pl. VII.7; fig. VII-4). Still, the themes in the various panels do not form a continuous narrative. Each of the series of horizontal panels renders grouping of pairs of figures, plants and trees in the background and some sort of lines on the ground between the registers. The subject matter and arrangement of the registers are comparable to the centre aisle of the mid-4th century villa pavement at Cherchel (Lavin 1963: 237-8, fig. 89) though there each register contains only a single figure.

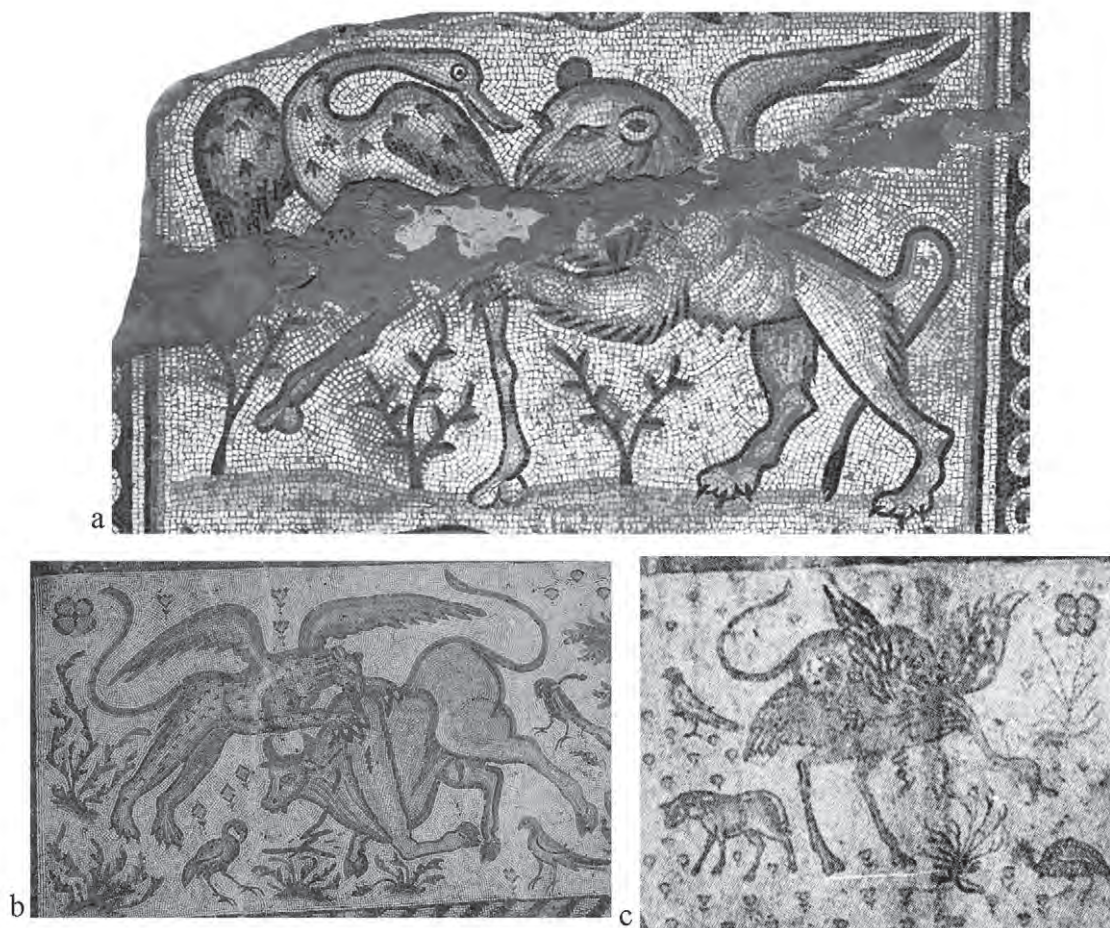


Figure VII-5. a. A lioness with wings seizing a swan, Kissufim church north aisle panel; b. Winged lioness attacking a swan; c. winged tiger devouring a bull, Haouarte North Church.

The panels in the northern aisle of the church at Kissufim show several animal combat scenes: in one, a lion devours a bull (pl. VII.9b), similar in content to Sepphoris but portrayed differently; in another a hound chases a deer and hare (pl. VII.8b). A lioness with wings (interpreted as a griffon by Cohen) seizes a swan in another register (fig. VII-5a). A similar scene earlier in date of a winged lioness attacking a swan and winged tiger devouring a bull appears at either end of the south aisle mosaic of the Haouarte North Church (fig. VII-5b,c) (Donceel-Voûte 1988: pl. h-t.5, fig. 73).

Other two panels at Kissufim show a realistically depicted giraffe facing an elephant in one panel and prancing zebras in the panel above (fig. VII-6).

Two scenes of wild beasts capturing their prey appear in two surviving octagons at the Emmaus pavement (Vincent and Abel 1932; Avi-Yonah

1981: 355, no.346). A wild beast savagely attacking a goat appears in the fourth register in the first panel mosaic of the Church of al-Khadir (Lux 1967: 170; Piccirillo 1993: 130, fig. 142).

Although the combat scenes on the Byzantine mosaics of Sepphoris and Kissufim evoke the comparable late Roman villa mosaics at Shechem, Sepphoris, and especially Lod, the Byzantine scenes are striking: the artists fashioned the combat scenes with thought, drawing attention to the vicious attack. The beasts and smaller animals are realistically rendered with emphasis on their features.

In Syria and Phoenicia several animal combat episodes similar in the ferocity of the attack are seen in the south and north aisle friezes of the North church at Haouarte in Syria (the 'Michaelion'). Several vignettes of animals in vicious combat appear in two medallions (fig. VI-18) on the 6th-century inhabited vine scroll mosaic in the nave



Figure VII-6. Two panels on the north aisle of Kissufim church: A giraffe and an elephant facing each other; above: prancing zebras.

at Qabr Hiram in Phoenicia (Donceel-Voûte 1988: 106, 411-415, figs. 73, 80, 403; pls. H.-t.5, h.-t.17).

Big Game Hunting

Hunting scenes are popular motifs on mosaic pavements in general and frequently appear in the inhabited scrolls. Big game hunting was an important theme in ancient mosaics and consisted of two main types (Merrony: 1998: 452): human and animal combat reflecting the hunting activities of the mosaic's patron, and the capture and transportation of beasts and animals for public display. The hunt scene may vary: a hunter on foot striking a beast with spear or lance; a mounted hunter striking an animal with lance or spear; an

archer on foot or mounted hunting animals (pls. VII.10-13; Table VII-3).

Levi (1971, I: 237-244) and Merrony (1998: 452-456) believe that the hunting motifs might have derived from representations of mythological examples that in time acquired a symbolic value. Merrony (1998: 453-455) states, 'the 6th century Levantine pavements derived their subject matter from the same sources as the Roman predecessors', inspired by earlier models. Several examples, such as the Calydonian Hunt mosaic in the Constantine villa at Antioch, show the hunter on the left facing the animal on the right and a similar motif in which the stricken lion bites the arrow. Dunbabin (1978: 35-6) asserts that the hunting scenes in Roman villas reflect the hunting activities of the mosaic's patron. Comparable

scenes are found in the mid-5th- to early 6th-century mosaic pavement fields at wealthy villas at Antioch and Apamea. The Megalopsychia Hunt mosaic from the Yakto Complex at Daphne and the so called 'Worcester Hunt' from Antioch show hunters attacking and fighting beasts, as well as animal combat (figs. VII-7,8). A series of scenes of mounted hunters and hunters on foot with spears and bows attacking beasts also appear on the 'Triclinos building' from a house at Apamea (Levi 1971, I: 325-345, 363, figs. 136, 151; pls. LXXV-LXXX; Lavin 1963: 187-189, figs. 2,6,7; Roussin 1985: 254-260; Dunbabin 1999: 180-184, figs. 194, 196).

The hunting scenes occur on inhabited vine or acanthus scrolls in which the human hunter is in one medallion and the pursued animal in another. An exception is in the Beth She'an Monastery Room L, where the scene appears in one framed medallion. Hunting scenes also appear in free composition carpets or in friezes on mosaic borders. Almost all of them show a pair of combatants, the hunter on the left facing the animal on the right.

The hunting scenes are presented in this order: combat between a hunter on foot with spear or lance attacks a lion, bear or bull; a hunter-soldier on foot armed with spear and shield; a mounted hunter, an archer, and a mounted archer.

Combat Between a Hunter with Spear or Lance and a Beast

In these scenes a hunter on the left attacks a beast on the right. The hunter's pose in all these episodes is almost the same (pl. VII.11): usually he wears a short tunic, sometimes with its lower part decorated with two *orbiculi*. His face is at times frontal but usually he looks at the beast he is attacking. He is armed with a lance, which he holds in both hands; he is in motion, turning towards the beast with his left leg bent, and is usually barefoot. The beast is portrayed ready to leap.

A hunter stabbing a leaping tiger or leopard is shown in what remains at el-Hammam in two medallions in row 6; and another hunter armed with a spear attacks a leaping wild boar in two medallions in row 4 (Avi-Yonah 1936: 14-15 pl. XVII, 2, 5). An interesting scene in row 3 at el-Hammam shows a figure holding a club in his right hand and perhaps a shield in his left, though Avi-Yonah believes his left arm is covered by a red cloth. He maintains that the animal (in

the next medallion) is a huge mastiff, although it looks like a lion, chasing two sheep. In the Beth She'an Monastery Room L two hunters confronting beasts are apparently portrayed in two very damaged medallions (2 and 3) in the top row (fig. VI-13). The hunter in the second medallion, wearing a fluttering cape, attacks a beast, which has not survived; another hunter may originally have been in the third medallion. On the mosaic border in the nave at el-Maqerqesh at Beth Guvrin two hunters wearing tunic and chlamys streaming out behind them are armed with spears. One attacks a bear, the other a beast that has not survived. They are portrayed on a wavy ground (Vincent 1922: fig. 3, pl. IX,6; Avi-Yonah 1981: 293, no. 23, pl. 49). A hunter wearing a tunic and a chlamys flying behind his back, armed a spear and attacking a lion is found in two inhabited acanthus scrolls of an upper room border mosaic in Tiberias (Area B, next to the Byzantine city wall on Mt. Berenice, dated to the late 6th century; Ben Arie 1995: 37, fig. 44, pl. III; Amir 2004: 141-148, figs. 8, 15-16; colour pl. I: 4).

Naked hunters (putti) in motion spear lions and leopards in the medallion of the acanthus rinceau border band in the Byzantine church of Nahariya (Dauphine and Edelstein 1984: pls. 28, 31, volutes 37-38, 42-43; 1993: 51-2). The classical style here is paralleled according to the excavators in two Phoenician mosaic pavements: in the Church of St. Christopher at Qabr Hiram (575) and in the Jenah villa in the Tyre area.

Mosaics in Jordan show several similar hunting scenes (pl. VII-11d-g): a hunter dressed in a short tunic decorated with two *orbiculi* and armed with a lance battles a rearing lion in the top row on the lower mosaic of the Old Diakonikon Baptistery at the Memorial of Moses on Mt. Nebo (530) (Piccirillo 1993: 146, figs. 166-169, 182). A hunter (inscribed by the name Stephanos) strikes a lion with a spear; hunter and lion are each in a separate medallion of a vine rinceau at the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 187, figs. 252, 263, 269). A hunter spearing a lion is seen in two medallions of an acanthus rinceau border at the Chapel of the Martyr Theodore in the Cathedral at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 78, 117, figs. 37, 49, 50,101). A hunter and a bear fighting, each in a medallion, are seen on a vine inhabited scroll mosaic at the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 58, fig. 7, pl. 16,1; Piccirillo 1993: 164-5,

figs. 202, 213). A hunter attacks a bear in two medallions of an inhabited acanthus scroll field at the Burnt Palace Hall at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 78, fig. 37). A hunter spearing a lion is seen in two medallions of an acanthus rinceau border at the church of the St. Kyriakos, al-Quwaysmah (Piccirillo 1993: 268, fig. 494). A hunter armed with a whip fights a wild beast in the fourth register on the first panel of the Church of al-Khadir at Madaba (Lux 1967: 170, pls. 30D, 31A, 32A; Piccirillo 1993: 129-130, fig. 142).

Hunter-Soldier on Foot Armed with Spear and Shield

In this scene the hunter-soldier is on the left, holding a sword, spear, or lance in his right hand and a hemispherical shield in his left hand fighting a beast on the right (pl. VII.12). A hunter-soldier wearing a decorated tunic, breeches, and low boots is armed with a huge shield in his left hand and a long sword in his right; the scabbard hangs on his right side. He is about to launch an attack on a brown bear. The scene appears in a panel of the northern aisle of St. Elias church at Kissufim (Cohen 1993: 280, pl. XXIIb). A hunter dressed in tunic and chlamys, armed with spear and shield, pursues a lioness with two cubs in the left medallion in the top row at Room L of the Beth She'an monastery (Fitzgerald 1939: 9, pl. XVI). A barefoot hunter dressed in a tunic and armed with spear and shield attacks a panther in the acanthus rinceau border of the 6th-century Hippolytus Hall at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 66, fig. 11). A hunter with a round shield and sword confronts a bear in the panel above the vine rinceau at the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1989: 220; 1993: 187, figs. 252, 263, 269). A hunter wearing a Phrygian outfit and boots, armed with spear and shield, battles a leaping lioness in the top row of the central panel on the lower mosaic of the Old Diakonikon-Bapistry at Siyaga, Memorial of Moses, on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 146, figs. 166-169, 182). A hunter wearing a short tunic and a puffed up mantle, a Phrygian cap, breeches, and shoes, and armed with a sword and shield, attacks a bear in two medallions of row 1 of the acanthus rinceau of the Church of the Priest John at Mukayyat on Mt. Nebo (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 50-51, pl. 9,2). A hunter-soldier with shield and spear confronts a wounded lioness, each in a separate medallion of a vine rinceau at the Chapel

of Khirbat al-Kursi (Piccirillo 1993: 265, figs. 476, 479). At the church of al-Khadir in Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 131, figs. 145, 147), in two medallions of the inhabited vine scrolls mosaic a hunter with sword and shield is seen striking at a beast; and in a medallion of the acanthus rinceau border a hunter in Phrygian attire has a round shield in his left hand, and his right hand is outstretched.

Mounted Hunter with Spear or Lance

In the episodes the mounted hunter on a horse on the left attacks a beast on the right (pl. VII.13). The border frieze of the nave mosaic at el-Meqreqesh at Beth Guvrin shows a mounted hunter wearing a short tunic and with a chlamys streaming behind his shoulder; armed with a spear, he attacks a panther. Another horseman also wearing a tunic and chlamys holds a sistrum in his right hand; he appears to be riding through Nilotic scenery (fig. VIII.3) (Vincent 1922: fig. 2, pl. X, 4; Avi-Yonah 1981: 293, no. 23, pl. 49). Similar mounted hunters with upraised arm appear on the hunting pavement of the mid-3rd-century Bordj-Djedid at El-Djem near Carthage (Lavin 1963: 233, 240, figs. 80, 100). A mounted hunter with moustache and beard wearing a long-sleeved embroidered tunic and boots strikes a leopard with his spear in a panel in the northern aisle of the St. Elias Church at Kissufim (Cohen 1993: 280, pl. XXIIa). A comparable scene occurs in the lower register of the mid-4th-century hunting pavement at Orleansville (Lavin 1963: 237, fig. 88). In a similar fashion a mounted hunter spearing a lion is rendered in two medallions of the acanthus rinceau border of the Chapel of the Martyr Theodore in the Cathedral at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 117, fig. 97).

Two mounted hunters wearing short tunics, trousers, and boots, armed with spears and accompanied by their hounds, are seen in row 2 on the lower mosaic at the Old Diakonikon Bapistry at Siyaga, Memorial of Moses, on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 146, figs. 166, 169, 182). The hunters hold an identical posture: the outstretched right hand grasps the spear striking the animal; one hunter wounds a brown bear with its head turned back and the other hunter spears a wild boar. A parallel can be found in the mid-4th-century hunting pavement of the upper register at Djemila (Lavin 1963: 233, 240, fig. 87). A mounted hunter spearing a wild beast has partly survived in two medallions in the acanthus rinceau border of

Table VII.3. Big Game Hunting scenes on mosaic pavements.

<i>Mosaic</i>	<i>Date century CE</i>	<i>Structure type</i>	<i>Inhabited vine scroll</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Hunter vs. beast</i>	<i>Mounted hunter vs. animal</i>	<i>Archer vs. beast</i>	<i>Mounted archer vs. beast</i>	<i>Display animals</i>
<i>Palaestina Prima & Secunda (Israel)</i>									
Be'er Shem'a	6th	church	+						+
El Hammam, Beth She'an	6th	tomb	+		+				
El- Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin, border	5th			+	+	+			
Kissufim	575	church		+	+	+			
Monastery, Beth She'an, room L	567	monastery	+		+				+
Nahariya, border	6th	church	acanthus						
<i>Arabia (Jordan)</i>									
Al- Khadir, Madaba,	6th	church	+	+	+	+	+		+
Burnt Palace, Madaba	6th	mansion	acanthus		+				
Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo	6th	church	+		+		+		+
Hippolytus Hall, Madaba, border	6th	mansion	acanthus		+			+	
Khirbat al-Kursi, Philadelphia	6th	chapel	+		+				
Old Diakonikon Baptistry, Memorial of Moses, Mt. Nebo, Lower	530	church		+	+	+			+
Cathedral Martyr Theodore, Madaba	562	chapel	acanthus		+	+			
Priest John, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo	565	chapel	acanthus		+				
St. George, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo	535/6	church	acanthus					+	
Sts. Lot and Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo	557	church	+		+		+		
Suwayfiyah, Philadelphia	6th	chapel	+						

al-Khadir church at Madaba (Lux 1967: 170, pls. 30D,31A, 32A; Piccirillo 1993: 129-130, figs. 142, 148). A hunter with a Phrygian cap seated on an elephant and holding a trident chases a fleeing tiger, disfigured by iconoclasts, in the second register at the first panel in the same church.

Archer Shooting an Arrow at a Beast

Hunting archers are illustrated on Jordanian pavements with inhabited scroll mosaics. The archer, usually wearing a tunic, standing, or in one case mounted, holds the bow in his left hand in the left medallion while the hunted beast is seen in the right medallion. An archer raises his right hand above his head having shot an arrow from the bow in his left at a lion: each is in a separate medallion of the vine rinceau at the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo (pl. VI.11). The lion is portrayed frontally, his paw trying to remove the arrow that has pierced his mouth (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 61, fig. 7, pls. 14,2; Piccirillo 1993: 164-5, figs. 201, 202, 213). In a similar scene, at the Church of the Deacon Thomas at 'Uyun Musa on Mt. Nebo (pl. VI.10), a hunter has a bow in his left hand and his quiver hangs on his left thigh. His right arm is still raised above his shoulder after he has shot a lion, seen with frontal face and the arrow sticking out of him. Archer and lion are in separate medallions of a vine rinceau mosaic (Piccirillo 1993: 187, fig. 263; 1998, fig. 183). An archer shooting an arrow and striking a seated lioness appears in the acanthus rinceau border mosaic of the Hippolytus Hall at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 66, figs. 3, 12). A (disfigured) archer shooting an arrow and a beast struck by it appear in two medallions of the inhabited vine scrolls mosaic nave panel at al-Khadir church at Madaba (Lux 1967: pl. 34C,D; Piccirillo 1993: 131, fig. 147).

In an octagon on the pavement of Hall A at the Beth She'an monastery (fig. XII-6) (Fitzgerald 1939: 9, pl. VI) a mounted archer shoots an arrow at a beast. The animal, wounded by two arrows, appears upside-down in the next octagon. At St. George's church at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo a mounted archer wearing a long tunic, boots, and a chlamys flying behind him, is seen seated on a horse with an ornamented harness. He shoots an arrow, wounding a lioness with her cub. Each is in a separate medallion of an acanthus rinceau; the lioness, with her cub approaching, is wounded by an arrow in her mouth, which she is trying to

remove (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 71, fig. 8, pls. 24,3; 25, 1; Piccirillo 1993: 178, figs. 244-5). A few fragments survive of a hunting scene with hunters on horseback and on foot, and equipped with lance and bows, attacking their prey, on the central nave panel mosaic of the Theotokos Chapel, a lateral chapel inside the Basilica of Moses on Mt. Nebo (early 7th century) (Piccirillo 1986: 80-81; 1993: 151; 1998: 304).

Felines and Their Cubs

Hunting scenes involving felines and their cubs pursued by archer, or hunter on foot or mounted (pl. VII.14), appear on several mosaic pavements, probably representing the actual hunting and capture of cubs (Roussin 1985: 260-263): A mounted hunter pointing his spear at a lioness with two cubs is rendered in the upper left medallion of the inhabited vine scroll at Beth She'an monastery Room L. At Nahariya, a hunter aiming his spear at a leaping tigress with a small cub behind her appears in two medallions of inhabited acanthus scrolls (Dauphine and Edelstein 1984: pl. XXIa, b; 1993: 52). A mounted archer who has shot an arrow at a lioness which holds the arrow, and whose cub is trying to suckle, appears in two medallions of inhabited acanthus scroll pavement at St. George's church at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 71, pl. 24, 3; 6, 7; Piccirillo 1998: 326, figs. 145-146). Similar scenes of hunting cubs appear on earlier pavements at the Piazza Armerina Great Hunt mosaic. A hunter attacks a tigress with two cubs running next to her on the Megalopsychia Hunt pavement from Antioch (fig. VII.7). On the Antioch Worcester Hunt mosaic, a mounted hunter holds a cub while the tigress and her two cubs race after him (fig. VII.8) (Levi 1947, II: figs. 136, 151; Lavin 1963: 187, 189-190; figs. 2,6).

A number of scenes portray a lioness or leopardess with cubs suckling or running alongside her, but not in hunting scenes. This probably indicates that they were rather chosen as decorative motifs (pl. VII.14). A lioness suckles her cub in a medallion on the Gaza inhabited vine scroll. The leaping lioness followed by her cub portrayed on the pavement of the Diakonikon at Jabaliyah might have been in an attitude of attack on an animal on the left, later destroyed. A standing lioness with her cub is rendered in a panel in the north aisle mosaic at Kissufim. On the inhabited vine scrolls pavement at Ma'on a leopardess is



Figure VII-7. The Megalopsychia Hunt, Yakto Complex, Antioch.

rendered in a medallion whereas her cub is near her but outside the medallion. A leopardess with her cub suckling appears in an inhabited acanthus scroll of a church upper room border mosaic in Tiberias (Area B, next to the Byzantine city wall on Mt. Berenice, dated to the late 6th century: Ben Arieh 1995: 37, fig. 44, pl. III; Amir 2004: 141-148, fig. 8.18; colour pls. I: 2).

Several comparable animal combats and game hunting scenes appear on Syrian villa mosaics: the Megalopsychia Hunt in the Yakto Complex (450-469), the Worcester Hunt (late 5th or early 6th century) at Antioch, and the Triclinos Hunt

mosaic at Apamea (mid-5th or early 6th century; now at the Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire in Brussels). These have completely different compositions (Levi 1947: 323-345, 363-365; II, pls. 75-80, 86b, 90, 136, 151, 170-173, 176b-167; Lavin 1963: 189-191; 270-271, figs. 2, 6, 139; Dunbabin 1999: 180-184, figs. 194, 196).

The Megalopsychia Hunt field is divided by four trees, placed diagonally in the corners, into separate scenes of hunting; these and a central medallion portraying the bust of *Megalopsychia*—generously handing out gold pieces—yield the overall design. Six hunters bearing mythological

names, wearing contemporary costumes, and representing amphitheatre *venatores* are set around the four sides of a square (fig. VII.7).

The scenes of hunters on foot spearing beasts are arranged in confronting pairs with limited landscape. Beasts assaulting animals are around the central medallion. Dunbabin (1999: 181) concludes, 'the overall effect, however, is one of decorative schematization, with little reference to the natural form'.

The Worcester Hunt is similar in design, with hunters mounted and on foot arranged among four trees, and in the centre a standing figure is surrounded by various animals (fig. VII-8). Some of the hunting episodes are similar to those on the Megalopsychia Hunt mosaic and comparable to many of the scenes on the Palestinian and Arabian mosaics described above.

The Apamea Hunt has a different composition. The scenes are arranged in five registers portraying hunters on foot and horseback battling beasts, as well as beasts attacking animals. The figures are classical with inflated poses to convey movement; the composition shows both natural form and decorative representation. The mosaic is unique, though to some degree comparable to some of the scenes on the mosaic of the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors at Constantinople.

Presentation of Animals for Public Display

Scenes of transportation of beasts for public display were a prominent element in the repertoire of mosaics in the Roman period. Some 6th-century Levantine examples were possibly inspired by earlier Roman models such as the 4th-century Sicilian villa of Piazza Armerina. There the Great Hunt scene is an example of the capture of animals for display in the imperial circus by the *venatores*. It apparently reflected the patron's activities and showed off his wealth (Merrony 1998: 455).

The scene renders a figure leading various animals for display (Table VII-3). The emphasis in these colourful scenes is on ethnic figures (perhaps African or Indian) leading exotic animals (pl. VII.15).

On the inhabited vine scrolls pavement at the Be'er Shem'a church a scene of a man leading an elephant with a black rider wearing a striped trousers and necklace is in the two left-hand medallions in the row 9; a black man wearing similar striped trousers and necklace, leading a giraffe, is

the scene in two right-hand medallions in the row (Gazit and Lender 1993: 276, pl. XXIe). A black man stripped to the waist, wearing a striped skirt-trousers and a feathered head-dress, and leading a giraffe is the scene in a medallion on the inhabited scroll mosaic at Room L of the Monastery at Beth She'an (Fitzgerald 1939: 9, pl. XVI).

In mosaics discovered in Jordan several scenes of animals appear. The bottom row of the mosaic pavement of the Old Diakonikon Baptistery on Mt. Nebo shows two figures: a black figure wearing only a striped skirt leads an ostrich; the other figure in Eastern dress leads a zebra and a giraffe (pl. VII.15c) (Piccirillo 1993: 146, figs. 166, 170, 171, 182: the giraffe was wrongly identified as a camel).

A figure leading a similar giraffe appears in the second register of the first panel at al-Khadir church at Madaba; a hunter with a trident in his right hand pulling a lion by a cord is seen in the fourth register (Lux 1967: 170, Taf.32B; 1993: 129-130, fig. 142). A man with a moustache holds a tamed bear on a rope in two medallions of the inhabited vine scrolls border of the Church of the Rivers at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 234, 241, fig. 389).

The artist in these examples possibly meant to render a giraffe, although it looks like a camel with a hump and spots on its body and horns on its head like the giraffes at the Beth She'an monastery Hall A and Room L (pl. XII.4e,f). A giraffe corresponds well with the other exotic animals led by the figures; by contrast, the camels in following examples carry merchandise.

Some of the same exotic animals appear on inhabited vine scrolls pavements in Gaza and the south-west Negev without leading figures (pl. XII.4). At the Gaza synagogue a pair of giraffes and a zebra are seen in the medallions of row 6; the giraffes are in a natural pose with their bodies covered in lattice of thin light lines, separating dark patches and blotches; similar naturally depicted giraffes appear in an inhabited acanthus scroll border on the Be'er Sheva pavement (Cohen 1968: 130; Dauphin 1978: 408, pl. 14) and at Kissufim. At the Ma'on synagogue a pair of elephants are rendered in the side medallions of row 8. An elephant is seen in the border of the Beth She'an small synagogue. An elephant, a giraffe, and a zebra are portrayed in a mosaic panel at Kissufim. The giraffe is similar in the style of its patches and blotches to those on the Gaza and Be'er Sheva pavements. These three animals



Figure VII-8. The Worcester Hunt, Antioch.

likewise surround the basin of the Jabaliyah baptistry (fig. VIII.1) (Humbert 1999: 217-18). In the Monastery of Lady Mary at Beth She'an, Room A, a giraffe, a zebra and an ostrich appear, each in an octagon (fig. XII.6). The giraffe is similar to the one depicted in Room L of the monastery at Beth She'an (Fitzgerald 1939: 6). A pair of similar giraffes are rendered at the Petra church (pl. VI.8; XII.4g) (Waliszewski 2001: 239). Dauphin (1978a: 407) maintains that the depictions of these exotic animals at Beth She'an are based on observations of nature: the animals might have passed through Beth She'an in a parade of exotic animals similar to that through Gaza noted by Timotheus of Gaza. There in 496 CE a man from India brought two giraffes and an elephant to the Emperor Anastasius. She further contends that the presence of these exotic animals 'can be explained by the geographical position of Gaza as a junction of caravan routes, and a centre of commerce and the animals could have been traded or imported'. A similar proposition

by Waliszewski (2001: 239) is that in the Gaza region animals were depicted realistically probably owing to observation from nature. But the exotic animals, especially the less realistic giraffes (sometimes taken for camels), with a hump on the back, spots on the body (those usually characteristic of leopards), and horns on the head, which appear at the Beth She'an monastery, on Mt. Nebo, and on the Petra mosaics, are based on models or pattern books; or they are the result of the interpretation of the Greek word for giraffe, which combines 'camel' and 'leopard'. An apparently realistic depiction of a giraffe, as well as a camel, is seen at Kissufim and Be'er Shem'a (pls. VII.18a,b; XII.7b,d). This attest to distinct knowledge of the difference between the two animals; both are probably drawn from observation. The difference in the portrayal evidently has nothing to do with the date: the giraffes are depicted on pavements dated to the early, mid-, and late 6th century.

C. Pastoral and Rural Scenes

The rural scenes depicted on inhabited scroll pavements and on other mosaics include themes such as a shepherd leaning on his staff watching his flock, sometimes with a dog; men and women in scenes such as harvesting; a figure leading a camel; taming animals; fowling and bird catching, fishing, and boating (Table VII-4).

A Shepherd Leaning on His Staff

A shepherd leaning on his staff appears in similar posture in several of the mosaics (pl. VII.16): the shepherd wears a short tunic decorated with two *orbiculi* and a mantle on his left shoulder, his upper torso is naked, his legs are crossed, his right hand is raised above his head, and his left hand rests on the staff; usually he wears sandals (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 93; Piccirillo 1993: 40). In one case the figure is a bearded older man, and in another he is seated. The shepherd is with his dog, and sometimes he is watching his flock of sheep or goats.

The scene appears in vine rinceau medallions on the mosaic floors: a shepherd wearing a short tunic decorated with two *orbiculi* is portrayed in the pose just described, his right hand raised above his head, in the central medallion of row 8 of the vine rinceau at St. Stephen's church at Be'er Shem'a (Gazit and Lender 1993: 276). A similar shepherd is seen in a vine rinceau medallion of Room L at the Monastery at Beth She'an (Fitzgerald 1939: 9, pl. XVI, XVII, 3). A shepherd in the same posture watching his flock appears on border mosaic at el-Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin (Avi Yonah 1981: pl. 49). A shepherd (head and upper body destroyed) wearing a sleeveless tunic rendered in similar pose, a seated dog with a collar and a bell in two medallions in row A4 of the vine rinceau mosaic of the north aisle of the Petra Church (Waliszewski 2001: 224-225).

The shepherd appears on Jordan mosaics: In an inhabited vine medallion on the mosaic at the church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius on Mt. Nebo he is an old bearded figure, with a dog seated in the adjacent medallion. The shepherd on the vine rinceau mosaic at the church of the Deacon Thomas appears in the central medallion, flanked on the left by a dog and on the right by a goat, each in a separate medallion, with sheep and a goat in the medallions in the row below. A shepherd, wearing a short tunic decorated

with two *orbiculi*, and a goat are depicted each in two medallions of the vine rinceau mosaic at the Chapel of Suwayfiah (Piccirillo 1993: 131, 187, 264, figs. 147, 202, 253, 263, 275, 474) (the Suwayfiah goat is similar to a goat portrayed in the Lower Church of Kaianus). The shepherd appears slightly differently from the usual way: his right hand rests on his left and he is without a mantle, or it was in the destroyed part. A shepherd dressed only in loincloth and barefoot and leaning cross-legged on his stick, and the dog crouching at his feet, are portrayed in a medallion of the acanthus rinceau at the Burnt Palace at Madaba; a ewe suckling her lamb is depicted in the medallion to its left (Piccirillo 1993: 78, figs. 36, 50). The third register of the first panel at the Church of al-Khadir shows a shepherd, partly destroyed by iconoclasts, wearing a mantle, leaning on his staff, and watching his flock of sheep and goats (Lux 1967: 170; Piccirillo 1993: 129, fig. 142). A shepherd sitting on a stone watching his flock—a goat and three sheep, with trees as the background is the scene in the second register of the lower mosaic at the Old Diakonikon-Baptistry at the Memorial of Moses on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 146, fig. 135). A shepherd leaning on his staff followed by his flock is rendered in the acanthus rinceau border at the church of the St. Kyriakos, al-Quwaysmah (Piccirillo 1993: 268). In the 8th-century St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas the remains of a shepherd leaning on a stick have survived (Piccirillo 1993: 238, figs. 345, 383).

Saller and Bagatti (1949: 93) maintain that the shepherd representation reveals that 'the Christians loved to record in works of art the efforts which they made to safeguard and improve also their temporal welfare'. Piccirillo (1989: 325-326) contends that the shepherd in the mosaics of the Madaba School is shown in pastoral scenes with his dog, sheep and goats; sometimes he is the flute player, sometimes the hunter who protects his flock against predatory beasts.

Several scenes, showing sheep peacefully nibbling foliage around a tree and without a shepherd, appear on the first panel in the Kissufim pavement; in a similar episode on the lower part of the Jabaliyah Diakonikon pavement a rabbit is added (fig. VII-9).

Women and Men in Everyday and Rural Activities

Scenes of everyday activities representing rural life appear on mosaic pavements, several of them in



Figure VII-9. Peaceful scene of sheep around a tree and nibbling foliage: a. Kissufim, first panel; b. Jabaliyah Diakonikon pavement.

medallions of inhabited scroll design (pl. VII.17). Women are rare in renditions of rural activities, but several episodes with them do appear in some of these medallions. An extraordinary scene of a woman kneeling and breast-feeding her child appears in the central medallion of the row 2 on the inhabited vine scroll mosaic in St. Stephen's church at Be'er Shem'a (Gazit and Lender 1993: 275, pl. XXe); she wears a decorated dress and hat, a necklace, earrings, and bracelets. Similarly, a woman on a chair nursing her child appears on the mosaic pavement of the Byzantine Great Palace in Constantinople (Trilling 1989: 70, figs. 3, 32). A woman carrying a basket of fruit appears in the acanthus rinceau border of the

narthex mosaic at the Beth Loya church (Patrich and Tsafirir 1993: 266, 268). A woman carries a fruit basket on her left shoulder and holds a knife in her right hand in a medallion of the acanthus rinceau nave mosaic in the Upper Chapel of the Priest John at Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 174, figs. 229-230). At Beth 'Alpha a figure holding a goose is rendered on the west border; a hen strutting along with her four chicks behind her is portrayed in a lozenge medallion of the top border band.

A barefoot man with the Greek inscription 'Victor', wearing a tunic and carrying a plate in both hands, is shown frontally in the central medallion in row 10 of inhabited vine scroll

mosaic at St. Stephen's church at Be'er Shem'a (Gazit and Lender 1993: 276, pl. XXc). A similar scene of a man (head destroyed) dressed in a decorated long-sleeved tunic, pants, and shoes, holding a plate in both hands, is shown in three-quarters view in a medallion (C26) of the vine rinceau at the north aisle of Petra church. A slightly stooping African shown in three-quarters view, wearing a short-sleeved decorated tunic, looks at a jug he holds up with both hands in a medallion (A26) of vine rinceau in the north aisle of Petra church. An elderly bearded man wearing a short white sleeveless tunic with a hood and sandals, holding a Gaza amphora in both hands and bending over the vessel, appears in a medallion (C4) of vine rinceau in the north aisle of Petra church (Waliszewski 2001: 225-6; 240-41). The Gaza amphora is depicted on several mosaic pavements (pl. XII.6f-h).

A youth with a stick over his shoulder and a figure waving his right arm appear in the vine rinceau border of the narthex mosaic in the Beth Loya church (Patrich and Tsafirir 1993: 266, 268).

A man wearing a short tunic decorated with an *orbiculus*, kneeling on his right knee, milking a goat with both hands into a vase, is the vignette on a partly destroyed panel at Kissufim (fig. VII.10). The same scene is found on the floor mosaic of the Byzantine Imperial Palace at Constantinople (Trilling 1989: pl. D).

The mosaic floor of the Diakonikon at Jabaliyah has several scenes: on the field mosaic two figures sit facing each other (pl. VII.10a,b). A figure is seated on a rock on the right of the mosaic panel; a man wearing a short tunic decorated with *orbiculi* and sandals holds the horns of a goat in both hands on the left side of the panel.

A bald and bearded elderly harvester, barefoot and clad in a loincloth, holds wheat stalks in his right hand and a sickle in his left in the scene in a medallion of the inhabited acanthus scrolls mosaic at the St. George's church at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat, on Mt. Nebo (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 71, pl. 25, 3). A man naked except for shorts and with bare feet holds a basket in his left hand and harvests pomegranates from a tree in the top row of the vine rinceau mosaic of the church of the Deacon Thomas (Piccirillo 1993: 187, fig. 256). An unusual scene of a man carrying a bed on his shoulder appears in a medallion in the inhabited acanthus scroll mosaic in the nave

of the Church of Bishop Sergius at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 235, fig. 367).

A boy wearing a loincloth and a triangular kerchief, extracting a thorn from the sole of his left foot, appears in a medallion of the inhabited acanthus scroll border at the church of Nahariya (Dauphine and Edelstein 1984: pl. 38, *Volute* 66; 1993: 52).

Youths holding peacocks form the scene on two mosaic pavements: two boys each holding a peacock in both hands are seen in medallions flanking the acanthus leaf in the bottom row of the inhabited vine scroll mosaic at St. Stephen's church at Umm al-Rasas. The eastern panel mosaic in Zay al-Gharby's north chapel shows a youth named Georgios holding a peacock in his arms in a vine scroll medallion (Piccirillo 1993: 41, 106, 324; figs. 358, 661, 680).

Barefoot boys wearing short tunics are seen in three central medallions on each side of the acanthus rinceau border mosaic in the nave of the church of the Apostles at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 106, figs. 79, 80, 82, 83): one boy, a whip in his right hand and reins in his left, stands in a wagon drawn by a pair of pheasants or parrots, which Piccirillo suggests 'imitates a chariot race in a hippodrome'; another boy has a flower in his right hand and a toy windmill in his left. The third boy holds a large green and blue parrot in his left hand and has a stick over his right shoulder. Roussin (1985: 214-216) proposes that the scene is 'one of fowling where birds are caught with lime rods'.

Similar depictions appear on the mosaic pavement of the Piazza Armerina villa and on a mosaic floor at Carthage. Dunbabin (1978: 91-92) suggests that the iconography of the bird circus tradition originated in North Africa, the theme probably being initiated at Carthage. Roussin (1985: 209-213) maintains that these scenes reflect the use of models inherited from Hellenistic art and popularized in North African workshops.

Portrayals of women are rare on the mosaics showing farming or rural activities (pl. VII.17). However, portraits of female benefactors on Christian mosaic pavements are almost as common as males (pl. XI.3).

Figures Leading Camels

Figures leading camels appear on some mosaic pavements, indicating that the use of a camel as



Figure VII-10. A man milking a goat, Kissufim church north aisle panel.

a carrier of some cargo was familiar in the period (pl. VII.18). A man inscribed with the name Orbicon is seen holding a cluster of dates in his right hand and a stick in his left in a side panel at St. Elias Church at Kissufim (575 CE; Cohen 1980: 19, 23, 61). He leads a camel laden with Gaza amphorae and baskets. A man drives a camel in two vine medallions in the same row at Be'er Shem'a, parallel to the episode of a donkey led by a figure whose head is lost. The figures in these two episodes wear the same short tunic and are similar in their posture.

Two figures leading a camel appear in three medallions in row 14 of the inhabited vine scroll mosaic in the northern aisle of Petra Church. The camel drivers are shown in profile. They are barefoot, wear short sleeveless tunics, and hold the rope in their crossed hands; the camel in the central scroll with bridle and harness is either standing or sitting; the camel is loaded with a cut palm tree trunk; the other figure in the right scroll (14C) holds the camel's bridle (Waliszewski 2001: 231-235).

A bearded figure with a stick in his right hand leading a camel is the scene in two medallions of the inhabited vine scrolls at the church of Suwayfiah in Philadelphia; Piccirillo (1993: 264, figs. 456, 470) maintains the camel is transporting stones for building. A figure with a Phrygian cap holding a camel by a rope appears in the second register of the first panel of al-Khadir church at Madaba (Lux 1967: 170; Piccirillo 1993: 129-130, fig. 142). A camel driver (possibly representing a Ghassanid Christian-Arab soldier) dressed in loincloth, a mantle on his shoulder, and armed with a whip in his right hand, a bow slung on his

shoulder, and a large sword at his side, leads a camel on the mosaic of the western panel of the nave at Kaianus upper church (Piccirillo 1993: 191, fig. 277).

Camel drivers also appear on Syrian mosaics. On the outer border in the nave of St. George's church at Deir el-'Adas a camel driver leads a caravan of four loaded camels (Donceel-Voûte 1988: 48-49, 109, 487, figs. 20-23).

Roussin (1985: 228-231) pointed out the contrast in dress: the figures leading camels are portrayed in contemporary dress while those leading the exotic animals wear elaborate eastern dress. She maintains the difference might be due to the fact that the exotic animals and their proprietors originated in foreign countries, probably Africa, while the camels drivers were local.

Taming Animals

A few mosaics show the taming of animals with a lasso or sling on mosaics of Jordan. Two men taming a bull, with a lasso, appear in separate medallions in the bottom row of the acanthus rinceau at St. George's church on Mt. Nebo (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 71, fig. 8, pls. 23, 3; 25, 4).

A figure with a sling hunting a wild boar appears in a medallion of the acanthus rinceau on the mosaic of the upper chapel of Priest John. A figure holding a lasso is shown in a medallion of the vine rinceau at the chapel of Elias, Maria, and Soreg at Gerasa (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 52, fig. 4, pl. 11, 1; Piccirillo 1993: 174, 296, figs. 223, 230, 567, 572). A figure with a lasso is rendered in an octagon of the main hall mosaic of the chapel of the Martyr Theodore in

Table VII- 4. Rural and Pastoral scenes on inhabited scrolls and other mosaic pavements.

<i>Mosaic</i>	<i>Date century CE</i>		<i>Inhabited vine scroll</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Shepherd leaning on stick</i>	<i>Women & men in rural scenes</i>	<i>Camel driver</i>	<i>Taming animals</i>	<i>Fowling and bird catching</i>	<i>Fishing and boating</i>
<i>Palastina Prima & Secunda (Israel)</i>										
Be'er Shem'a	6th	church	+			+	+			
Beth Loya, border	6th	church	acanthus	+		+				+
El Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin	5th			+	+					
Kissufim	575	church		+			+			
Nahariya, border	6th	church	acanthus			+			+	
<i>Palastina Tertia</i>										
Petra, N and S aisle	c. 550	church	+		+	+	+		+	+
<i>Arabia, Jordan</i>										
Al-Khadir, Madaba	6th	church	+	+	+		+		+	
Bishop Sergius, Umm al-Rasas field and border	587/88	church	acanthus +			+			+	
Burnt Palace, Madaba	6th	mansion	acanthus		+					
Church of the Apostles, Madaba, border	578	church	acanthus			+			+	
Deacon Thomas 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo,	6th	church	+		+	+				
Elias, Maria and Soreg, Gerasa	6th	chapel	+					+		
Kaianus, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo, upper church	6th	church		+			+			
Martyr Theodore, Madaba, border	562	chapel	acanthus					+		
Massuh, Esbus, upper church	5th	church		+						+
Old Diakonikon-Baptistry, Memorial of Moses, Mt. Nebo, lower mosaic	530	chapel		+	+					
Priest John, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo, Upper mosaic	565	chapel	acanthus			+		+		
Priest Wa'il, Umm al-Rasas	586	church		+						+
St. George, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo	535/6	church	acanthus					+		
Sts. Lot & Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo	557	church	+	+	+					+
St. Stephen, Umm al-Rasas	8th	church	+	+	+					+
Suwayfayah, Philadelphia	6th	chapel	+		+		+			

the cathedral at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 117, fig. 109). A figure with a slingshot in his hand has survived in a medallion in the third panel of St. Paul's church at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1997: 386-7, plan I, foto 25; 2002: 545). A similar depiction of a hunter holding a lasso occurs in the hunting mosaic of Khanguet-el-Hadjaj (Lavin 1963: 240, fig. 99).

Fowling and Bird-Catching

Episodes of bird-fowling are found (pl. VII-19). A child tries to catch a bird by poking it with a stick, with a cage ready behind the child, in volutes 35-36 of the acanthus rinceau border of the Byzantine church of Nahariya (Dauphine and Edelstein 1984: pl. XXVII; 1993: 51, pl. IIb).

A man approaches a tree in a fowling scene in the rectangular medallion B9 of the south aisle of Petra church (Waliszewski 2001: 252-53, 319). He wears a white long-sleeved tunic and brown shoes, carries a cage on his back with a bird inside, and holds a long rod in his right hand and two sticks in his left. A small vessel hangs under the right elbow. Two fowling scenes appear on the first register of the first panel on the church hall mosaic of al-Khadir at Madaba. A hunter with a bird on his shoulder (perhaps a falcon) tries to frighten with a stick two birds perched in a tree. Behind him is a bird cage. Another figure with two sticks under his arm is ready to put a caught bird into a cage (Lux 1967: pl. 31B; Piccirillo 1993: 129, fig. 142). Another fowling scene shows a cage and a hunter with a stick who frightens two birds perched on a tree on the vine rinceau mosaic border in the nave of the church of Bishop Sergius at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 234, fig. 369).

Scenes of fowling and bird-catching were quite common in Roman and Byzantine iconography (Levi 1947, I: 129).

These fowling scenes reinforce the interpretation that the bird-in-cage motif recurring in the central axial column on many inhabited scrolls mosaics (see Chap. VI, pp.) might reflect some hunting custom which used a bird in a cage as a decoy (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 271; Avi-Yonah 1960: 29, n.16).

Fishing and Boating

A few scenes of fishing and boating appear on Palaestianian mosaics (pl. VII.20). The Byzantine church at Beth Loya has two scenes of fishermen

at work, defaced by iconoclasts (Patrich and Tsafirir 1993: 269, pls. XIXa,b): a boat with two sails carries two fishermen. The one on the left holds a hook from which hangs a fish, the right figure grasps a pair of oars while fish swim in the waves under the boat; this scene is in a large round medallion at the entrance to the northern aisle. The other scene, in another round medallion, shows two standing fishermen. The one on the right carries a wicker basket and the one on the left holds a fishnet on his shoulder; some fishes hang from his right hand. A fisherman standing in the Nile holding two fish in his left hand is portrayed on the Nile Festival building at Sepphoris. Two fishermen scenes are shown in the southern aisle of Petra church (Waliszewski 2001: 247-48; 318,320): in a rectangular medallion (B3-4) a fisherman, naked except for a girdle and hat, is seated on a block with two fish lying between his legs. His raised right hand holds a fish and his left a fishing rod with a fish at the end. In the other scene, also in a rectangular medallion (B12-13), stands a fisherman dressed in a white tunic holding a fish in his left hand.

On Arabian mosaics, two fishermen in a boat (damaged) are portrayed on the Madaba map mosaic (Piccirillo 1993: 62). A fisherman is rendered on one of the intercolumnar panels of the mosaic at the church of Sts. Lot and Procopius. A fisherman naked but for his hat sits in a boat in an intercolumnar panel of the church of Priest Wa'il at Umm al-Rasas. Fishing scenes of naked putti wearing hats appear on the mosaic frame of the 8th-century St. Stephen Church at Umm al-Rasas; one of the octagons in the nave mosaic of Massuh upper church (Esbus) shows a fisherman in a boat (destroyed) (Piccirillo 1993: 36-37, 41, 165, 243, 238, 252; figs. 209, 358, 385, 398, 439).

D. Interpretation and Conclusions

Many of the genre motifs and rustic episodes are unique and may represent individual artist's own initiative and imaginative contribution to the mosaic floors repertory. These refreshing innovations contrast sharply with the recurrent conventional motifs, such as the vintager, the flute player, hunters, and animal combat and assault.

The vintage scenes are almost entirely in medallions of inhabited vine scroll field and border mosaics, though they are also portrayed

in two inhabited acanthus scroll fields and in one border (Table VII-1). Conversely, all the typical themes appear on Christian mosaics. None is portrayed on synagogue pavements, except for the hare eating grapes motif on the Beth She'an small synagogue border. Animal chase and combat episodes appear on mosaic pavement fields and borders of churches, synagogues, and mansions; many of the scenes are in medallions of inhabited scroll pavements, for example, the Gaza-Maiumas synagogue, the Be'er Shema and Shellal churches, El Hammam Christian tomb chamber, and a mosaic panel in al-Khadir church. But they are also found on other types of carpet design such as panels in the north aisle of Kissufim church and on the lower part of the Nile Festival building mosaic at Sepphoris (Table VII-2). Big game Hunting scenes appear only on church and mansion mosaic pavements, in medallions of inhabited scroll carpets, and on several other pavements such as the el-Maqerqesh border at Beth Govrin, some of the Kissufim church panels, the mosaic panels of al-Khadir at Madaba, and on the lower mosaic of the Old Diakonikon Baptistery at the Memorial of Moses on Mt. Nebo (Table VII-3). Rural and pastoral scenes are portrayed in medallions of the inhabited vine and acanthus scrolls, on the south aisle pavement of the Petra church, and primarily on church carpets.

The scenes on synagogue pavements comprise animal chase and combat themes. Notably, synagogue pavements contain no human figures, which are part of farming, hunting and pastoral themes; only biblical scenes and the zodiac design on synagogue mosaics have human figures.

Farming is the most appropriate theme for inhabited vine scroll mosaic designs and almost all elements of this theme appear. Yet chase and hunting vignettes were used in other designs also. The mixing of themes of vintage, animal chase, hunting, and rural life on the inhabited scrolls shows no evident order, though some episodes of the same subject lie in close proximity.

Scholars contend that the origin of the Byzantine farming, hunting and pastoral scenes is in the repertory of Classical and Hellenistic art; the Christian mosaic ornamentation apparently borrowed elements and was influenced by the pagan genre and hunting repertory of North African villa mosaics (Lavin 1963: 229-242). Scholars concur that these scenes imitate presentations of wild beast hunts in the Roman arena, and possibly also

other sources such as the Triumph of Dionysus.

Scholars debating the intention and function of the rural themes of farming, hunting, and pasturing on Early Byzantine mosaic pavements. Avi-Yonah (1933: 64) asserts that the hunter on his galloping mount in the pose of the Roman Emperor represents the nobility of the Roman and Byzantine empires. Levi (1947, I: 237-244) holds that the hunting scenes originated in mythological themes, which eventually lost this association and acquired a symbolic value. Saller and Bagatti (1949: 88, 94-95) suggest that the central idea of these compositions was that 'God was the Creator and Preserver of all things'. They maintain that the rural themes in the inhabited scrolls, although with decorative purpose, were chosen for the church 'in order to remind the people that their activities had a close relation to the service of God from whom they received everything and upon whom they were completely dependent'. Furthermore, the images on the mosaic pavements of Mt. Nebo represent the activities of a prosperous agricultural community. Roussin (1985: 220-228, 255, 263-265) believes that Roman sarcophagi themes and North African mosaics influenced the iconography of the genre and hunting representations, and that the scenes of hunting and leading exotic animals reflect the use of Roman models. She further argues (1985: 260-263) that the significance of these themes for church decoration, their roots in classical iconography notwithstanding, lies in their being chosen by different patrons as well as their mere decoration. Maguire (1987: 67-72) presents the two inhabited acanthus mosaics at the Priest John chapel and the St. George's church at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat (Mt. Nebo) as examples of the hunting and pastoral themes and maintains that this iconography, inspired by the writings of Philo, St. John Chrysostom, and other Christian writers, 'brings together into one composition portrayals of Earth, of the food she provides, of man's mastery over domestic animals, and of his defenses against wild beasts... Thus... like the Christian commentators, the makers of the mosaics were defining humanity's place in the natural world created by God'. Piccirillo (1989: 339) similarly contends that scenes of farming, hunting, and shepherding describe the concept of the creation of which human beings are a part; he argues (1993a: 29) that the rich repertoire of hunting scenes refer back to the classical scenes representing the capture and transport of wild beasts for the amphitheatre. Merrony (1998:

443, 455-6, 466) holds that this type of scenes portrays rural life on villa estates and represents the patron's prestige and wealth. These recurring themes, which decorate some religious and secular Levantine mosaics, show in some cases hunting and pastoral scenes in the same composition. Here is an apparent dichotomy and an interrelation between 'idyllic' and 'violent' scenes. These subjects decorate religious buildings because they are fully attuned to Christianity. Some of the best examples of this dichotomy and of the interrelation and juxtaposition of pastoral and savage hunting scenes are found on some other carpets such as the Nile Festival Building mosaic at Sepphoris. The border frieze mosaic at el-Maqerqesh at Beth Guvrin shows similar scenes of Nilotica combining pastoral and hunting episodes. On many inhabited scroll mosaics arable and hunting scenes appear on the same pavement (Tables 1-4). Similar interpretations are presented by Trilling (1989: 58-60) in respect of the iconography of peaceful rural life and animal violence shown together on the Byzantine Great Palace mosaic pavement in Constantinople. Dunbabin (1999: 235) maintains that the sources for the pavement themes are 'those of bucolic idyll and of wild nature...together creating the predominant atmosphere of the mosaic, part peaceful, part violent'.

Merrony (1998: 474-75) presents two possible interpretations of the hunting renditions in the religious context. First, hunting was a social pursuit of the upper classes—landowners, the bishop and clergy—in the Roman and Early Byzantine periods; on church floors these scenes glorified the activities of the ecclesiastical patrons. Second, 'such iconographic themes could, moreover, have been viewed symbolically... The battle between the prince and his enemies—wild animals—could be viewed symbolically as the struggle and victory over passions... or as an allegory of human life itself'. Merrony continues (1998: 480-482) by noting that the vintage scene and the inhabited scroll iconography were a religious theme as well as carrying a descriptive meaning. Further, the hunting scenes on Early Byzantine religious pavements continued the inference from the Roman period articulating the patron's prestige and integrity. The pastoral scenes presented a biblical significance. The combined vintage, hunting, and pastoral themes represented an idyllic/violent relationship renowned in the Roman period. Merrony suggests three possible meanings for

these episodes. 1. They 'emphasized the protection against external forces, the controlling of passions, and the triumph of good over evil. 2. These themes represented the dominion of Mankind over animals. 3. The various categories of iconography may be interpreted as a variation on Isaiah 2: 6-8'. He claims that the inhabited scroll pavements, though undergoing stylistic changes, still presented a continuation of iconographic form and ideological message but bore a change in significance from the pagan to the Christian sphere with manifold aspects of meaning in their iconography.

Dunbabin (1999: 197-199) contends that the popular 6th-century genre themes describing rural activities might have 'a unifying underlying significance. The church floor becomes an image of the earth with its varied inhabitants, its produce, and the work needed to maintain it, though it probably retained different levels at which such floors might have been read'.

Further, 'the liveliness and realistic detail of some of the genre scenes illustrate... the revival of traditions and motifs going back to the Hellenistic period; a revival often connected with the "classical renaissance" under Justinian. The classicism, it should be noted, is one of subject-matter rather than of style'.

Another interpretation of the themes of vintage, hunting, taming of wild beasts, and using domestic animals is that they might reflect and represent contemporary existing rural life and vine-producing activities in the area (Maguire 1987: 71; Merrony 1998: 472-473). Still another valid interpretation is that the farmers had to perform their vintage or agricultural activities but also to protect the vineyard and animals from beasts by hunting them. Conceivably, the rendering of rural and genre scenes, especially savage hunt episodes and the capture and display of animals, enabled the mosaicists to exhibit their talent in portraying humans, animals, and beasts in various activities, manners, and positions.

The farming, hunting and pastoral scenes, vignettes of daily life depicted on mosaic pavements and especially in medallions of the Early Byzantine inhabited scroll mosaics, are only partly symbolic; they rather portray the activities and occupations of the local communities. While some conventions imitate the real actions of the figures they possibly were selected from model books. The popular themes could have been chosen because those episodes were part of the repertoire of the

inhabited scroll mosaic design; more probably an inspiring trend or fashion might have influenced the artists or patrons to choose the entire design with its details of familiar themes, elements, and features. The scenes in general possibly show rural and genre activities during the seasons of the year, as well as at the time of agricultural festivals, which sometimes involved visits by figures leading

exotic animals. The decorative programme of the carpets, especially the inhabited scrolls, though drawing upon Classical-Hellenistic tradition, was created from assorted details and elements that were assembled to imply a coherent picture, an image of the natural secular world; individual tastes and situations generated the great variety of motifs and designs.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PERSONIFICATION OF NATURAL FORCES

Personification is a common theme on secular and Christian mosaic pavements inherited from Hellenistic art. Many personifications show classical influence. The recurrent themes found on the pavements are personification of natural elements such as Earth, Sea, and rivers. Time and the year are embodied in the personification of the zodiac, months and seasons, the sun and the moon. Some less frequent and unique personifications are the ocean, wisdom, and representations of a country or a city.

A. Earth

The personification of Earth, or Ge, is found on several mosaics of secular and church pavements in Israel and Jordan with similar images and attributes.

Usually the figure of Ge appears as a woman's bust with a wreath of grain, flowers, and fruit. She holds fruit in her sash to represent agricultural abundance and fertility. She is sometimes accompanied by two offerers or is part of a group containing the four seasons. The bust of Ge appears in a circular medallion on the El-Maqerqesh mosaic at Beth Guvrin. Yet although inscribed Ge, the El-Maqerqesh figure in fact symbolizes Autumn as part of the personification of the four seasons on the medallions in the centre of this mosaic (Vincent 1922: 259-281; Avi-Yonah 1932: 146, No. 23; 1993, I: 197). Earth/Autumn is rendered as a half-length female figure with a crown, dressed in a tunic and holding fruit in her sash (pl. VIII.2b). In the composition of her arms, hands, and sash this figure of Ge is quite similar to the one at the Worcester Hunt in Antioch as Levi (1947, I: 577, note 89) suggested.¹

A personification of Earth appears in column B5 on mosaic II of the southern aisle at Petra

church (Waliszewski 2001: 248-249, 318). It is a damaged bust of a woman, with only the top of her head, an arm, and a putto on her right shoulder survived (pl. XII.1a). The Greek inscription ΓΗ appears at the sides of the figure.²

A distinct motif—the personification of the Ge flanked by two young offerers—is rendered on inhabited acanthus scroll mosaics of St. George's church, on the upper mosaic of Priest John at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat (Mt. Nebo), and in the church of Bishop Sergius at Umm al-Rasas (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 51-52; 69-70, 100-101, pls. 10: 2,4;22, 3; Maguire 1987: 69-72; Piccirillo 1993: 38, 174, 178, figs. 223-224, 226-227, 230, 251, 368; 1998: 324-5, 352; figs. 138, 211-213). On the upper mosaic of Priest John, Earth, with the Greek inscription ΓΗ, is portrayed as a female bust wearing a tunic. She has two strings of beads around her neck, and a wreath of ears of corn, fruit, and grapes and a turreted crown on her head, like a representation of Tyche; similar crowns are on the heads of the four seasons at the Hippolytus Hall at Madaba. In her hands she holds the end of her sash filled with fruit. In these two Khirbat al-Mukhayyat examples the same rendition of Earth appears in the central acanthus medallion and is flanked by a pair of young offerers (*karpoforoi*) with baskets of fruit shown in the side medallions. The manner of representation and garments on these pavements is similar. The depiction of Earth holding a sash filled with fruit is similar to Ge from the 'House of Ge and the Seasons' in Antioch-Daphne (Donceel-Voûte 1995: 97, fig. 9).

The pavement of the church of Bishop Sergius shows Earth, disfigured by iconoclasts, as a reclining woman wearing a tunic, earrings, and a bracelet on her left arm; she holds the corners of her cloak filled with fruit. Beside her are offerers (disfigured) and she has the Greek *Ge* inscribed

¹ An early representation of Ge with a turret crown was discovered on a mosaic pavement in a Roman house in Jerusalem (Monastery of St. Petrus in Gallicantus on Mt. Zion; Piccirillo and Aliata 1992; Avner 1995).

² Roussin (1985: 271) identifies as Earth the female bust with jewels and headdress, and holding a cornucopia, depicted in the central medallion of the inhabited acanthus scroll border of the Jerusalem Orpheus.

at the sides of her head (Piccirillo 1993: 38, 234, fig. 368, see also the remains of a similar scene at the sanctuary of the church of Bishop Isaiah at Gerasa).

A disfigured personifying bust of Ge appears in a square medallion in the centre of the nave of St. Paul's church at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1997: 385-7, fig. 5, fotos 27, 29; 2002: 544; Piccirillo and Alliata 1999: 200, pl. IV). The Four Rivers of Paradise are seen in four medallions surrounding the damaged Earth figure; the remains show Earth wearing a cloak and tunic, and a halo has replaced the head. All the figures suffered iconoclastic disfiguring and crude repairs.

Saller and Bagatti (1949: 100-101) state that the personification of Earth is related to the classical type of 'Abundance'. The offerers are a new element, a concept derived from the writing of the Fathers that represents the celebration of offering the fruits of the earth as gifts to God (also Maguire 1987: 71; Merrony 1998: 468). Piccirillo (1993: 38) maintains this portrayal of Earth repeats a classical type identified with Generosity. Merrony (1998: 450-451, 468) contends that Earth is associated with the four seasons. However, only the personification of Earth in the south aisle at Petra appears with the four seasons on the same mosaic, each in a different medallion; at El-Maqerqesh Autumn is accompanied by the inscription ΓΗ. At Priest John chapel the motif of the personification of Earth and her offerers appears on the two inhabited scroll mosaics in the church in association with farming, hunting, and pastoral activities. In St. Paul's church the connection is with the Four Rivers of Paradise.

B. *The Sea (Thalassa) and Ocean*

The personification of the Sea is depicted on three church mosaics in Jordan. It decorates the central round medallion of the nave mosaic of the Church of the Apostles at Madaba (Lux 1968; Piccirillo 1993: 38, 106; figs. 78, 80). Sea is rendered as the bust of a woman, with her breast partly bare, a wide-eyed face and loose hair rising from the sea waves; her left shoulder is draped and her raised right hand is ornamented with bracelets. Fishes, jellyfish, two sharks, and a sea monster surround her. An inscription commemorating the donors and the mosaicist frames the medallion. Piccirillo maintains that the personification followed the

depiction of the goddess Thetis emerging from the waves.

Two other personifications of the Sea, damaged by iconoclasts, are in medallions of inhabited acanthus scrolls on two mosaics from Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 38, 234, 241, figs. 365, 395), one in Bishop Sergius church representing the Abyss, and possibly another at the Church of the Rivers; this manner of personification might have been borrowed from the classical representation of Oceanus portrayed in Antioch mosaics.

The Ocean appears in the south aisle of Petra church (B6-7), inscribed Oceanus. He is represented as a bearded (elderly) man, looking to his right; two horn-like lobster claws emerge from his head; his left leg leans against a small dolphin, and his feet are bare (pl. VIII.1b; XII.1b). He wears a draped cloth; his raised right hand rests on an oar with a long shaft while the left hand holds a small model of a sailing boat (Waliszewski 2001:250, 319). Ocean is a unique motif in the repertory of the area yet it is modelled on classical iconography and earlier depictions in North Africa and Antioch.

C. *The Four Rivers of Paradise*

The four rivers flowing from Paradise are recorded in Gen. 2, 10-14: the Gehon, the river generally associated with the Nile (traditionally following Jeremiah 2: 18, although this is an interpretation: the Hebrew name is *Shahor*) is a mythic river winding around the land of Kush. The Phison, a river flowing around the Land of Havilah, the source of gold and precious stones, is associated with the southern kingdom of Arabia or sometimes identified with the Ganges. The Tigris and the Euphrates flow in the Land of Assur.

The decoration of several church buildings contains the personification of the Rivers of Paradise. Yet the Nile, rarely as a personification, appears much more frequently alone than as one of the Four Rivers of Paradise. It flows through its typical flora and fauna, or through its cities (Maguire 1999: 181-182; for the Nilotic theme see Chap. V). Personifications of the Four Rivers of Paradise are seen on several mosaic pavements in the eastern Mediterranean usually accompanied by their names inscribed in Greek: Γηων, Gehon; Φησων, Phison; Τίγρης, Tigris; Εύφράτης Euphrates.

The pavement of the baptistry in the northern building of the Jabaliyah church shows the Four

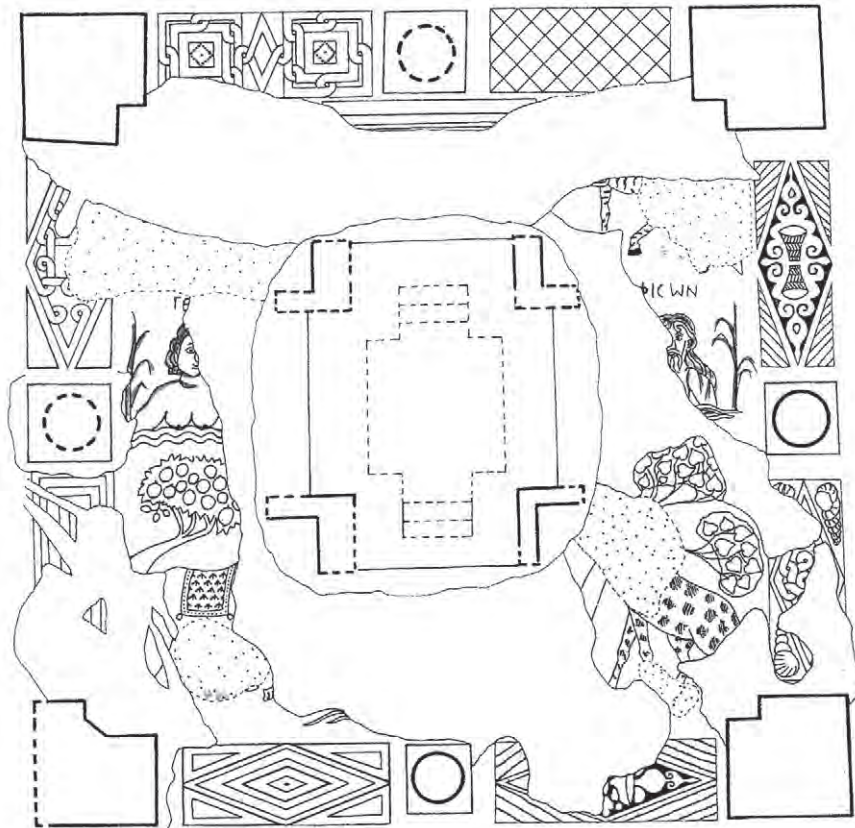


Figure VIII-1. The Four Rivers of Paradise: Baptistry of Jabaliyah church.

Rivers of Paradise, but only two of these personifications have survived (Humbert 1999: 216-218; Humbert et al. 2000: 125). The Greek inscription attributes them to two mosaicists, Victor and Cosmas, from Ashkelon.

The baptistry hall was paved with beautiful geometric carpets, which have survived almost in tact. The personifications of the Four Rivers of Paradise were part of a special mosaic, later almost completely destroyed, surrounding the cross-shaped basin (fig. VIII-1); it consisted of four exotic animals at the basin's corners: an elephant at the upper right, a giraffe at the lower right, and perhaps a leopard and zebra at the left corners. Between these animals were fruit trees and the personifications of the Four Rivers of Paradise: of these, only two survived the destruction (fig. VIII-2c). On the left is a portrayal of a naked woman's bust with rivulets springing from her breast. Only two letters of the Greek inscription survived, identifying her as Gehon, usually identified with the Nile (ordinarily this river is portrayed as a male). On the right is a naked elderly man with a green wreath in his hair and between his arms an urn with water pouring out. The Greek

inscription above identifies him as Phison. Both are rendered above a wavy pattern of water. The two completely destroyed others were probably portrayed on the upper and lower parts of the same mosaic.

The Four Rivers of Paradise, found to date on five mosaics in the Madaba region of Jordan, are personified as a half naked reclining figures with a reed in one hand and a cornucopia in the other, from which water flows (Piccirillo 1993: 39).

The rectangular carpet of the main hall pavement of the chapel of the Martyr Theodore in the cathedral complex at Madaba has a geometric pattern (Piccirillo 1993: 40, 117, figs. 112-115). The four corner octagons show partly destroyed busts of the four Rivers of Paradise, identified by Greek inscriptions (fig. VIII-2a): the two octagons on the west show Euphrates as a bust of a naked man, with a mantle on his left shoulder, holding a reed; of the Tigris only a hand holding the reed survived; little survived of the Phison and Gehon portrayed on the two octagons on the east.

In St. Paul's church the geometric composition of the nave's central panel is divided into four symmetrical parts by geometric bands (Piccirillo

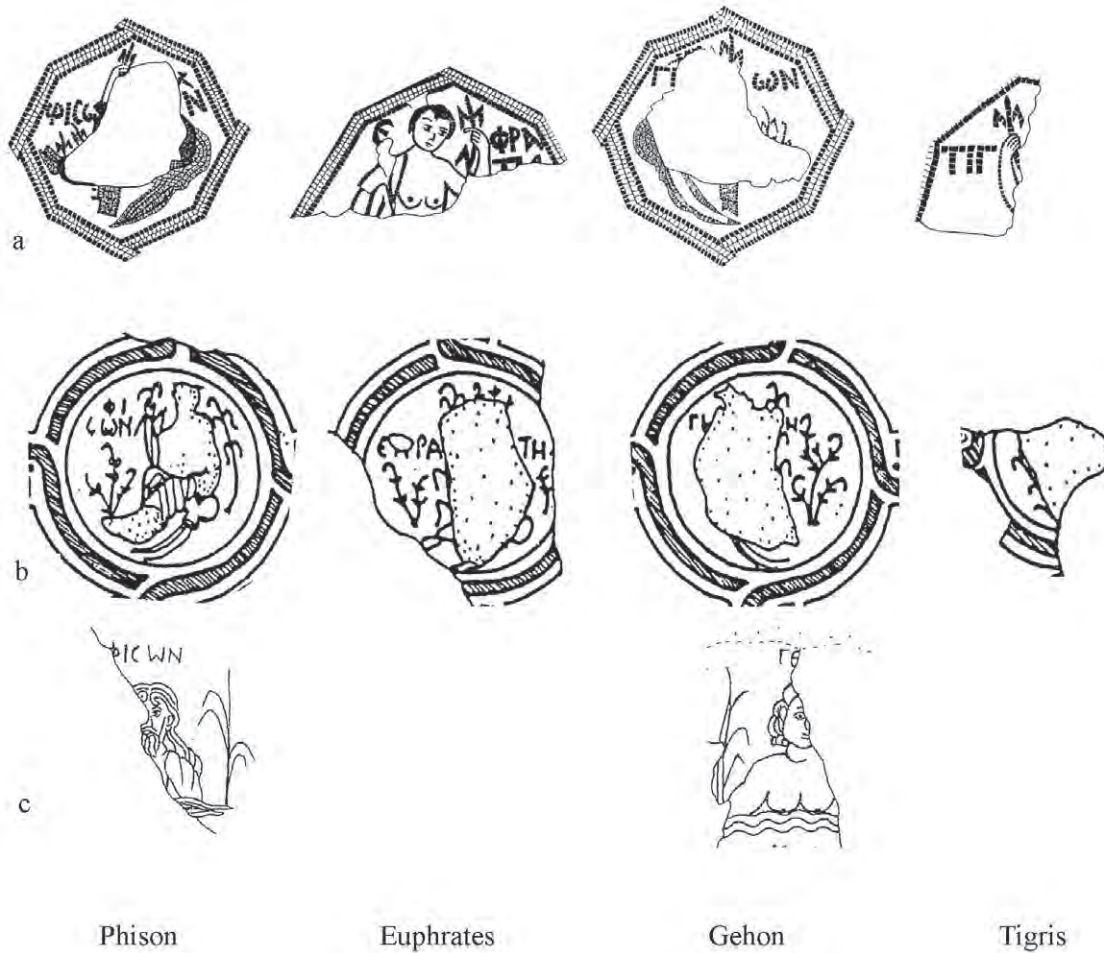


Figure VIII-2. The Four Rivers of Paradise: a. Martyr Theodore chapel in the cathedral at Madaba; b. St. Paul church at Umm al-Rasas; c. Baptistry, Jabaliyah church.

1997: fig. 5, fotos 27, 28a-d; 2002: 544-545, 548; Piccirillo and Alliata 1999: pl. IV, right). In the centre of the design the personification of Earth is rendered in a small square; personifications of the four Rivers of Paradise are depicted in the four round medallions (figs. VIII-2b). Gehon and Phison are in the upper panels, each surrounded by four fishes (disfigured). In the bottom medallions are the almost completely destroyed Tigris, surrounded by four vases, and the Euphrates, surrounded by four baskets; all suffered in the iconoclast crisis, which left only their inscriptions; repairs were crudely done.

The outer frame of the nave of the Church of the Rivers is decorated with an inhabited vine scroll. The trellises arise from jars held by four personifications of rivers in the four corners of the border; only one has survived (Piccirillo 1993: 241, Fig. 390; 1995: 395; Piccirillo and Alliata 1999: pl. IV).

In the church of the Sunna family at Madaba two mosaic fragments show remains of river personifications (Piccirillo 1993b: 277-313, pls. 8-9; Piccirillo and Alliata 1999: pl. IV, bottom).

Four small vases with flowing water, each accompanied by the name of one of the Four Rivers of Paradise (pl. X.3), are seen in the corners surrounding the inscription of the Theotokos chapel in the monastery at 'Ayn al-Kanisah on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1994: 521-538, fig. p. 528; pls. 19-26; 1998: 363, figs. 232-236; Piccirillo and Alliata 1999: pl. IV bottom). The vases and their inscriptions were added during the redecoration of the mosaic in the 8th century.

Comparable but different depictions of the Four Rivers of Paradise appear on mosaics at other sites. An unusual Nilotic scene is portrayed on the presbytery pavement of the church of Tayibat al-Imam in the Hama district of Syria. The bema mosaic renders a river with fishes and Nilotic

birds, apparently created by the Four Rivers of Paradise identified by inscriptions. The river flows down from the mountain of Paradise which is topped by an eagle (Zaqzuq 1995: 237-140, pls. 1, 19; Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999: 445; Hamarneh 1999: 188; Campanati [1999: 173, fig. on p. 175; in note 22] interprets the river as the Jordan).

The 5th-century Basilica of Thyrsos at Tegea in the Peloponnese shows in the nave a framed rectangular design divided into sixteen squares. The four Rivers of Paradise are depicted at either end of the pavement; the pair at the east end near the apse are Gehon and Phison, and the pair near the entrance are Tigris and Euphrates. The other twelve squares render the busts of the months carrying various attributes. The rectangular design is surrounded by a border of octagons containing marine creatures (Maguire 1987: 24-28; figs. 15-21; 1999: 180). Maguire suggests that the Tegea pavements 'represent the terrestrial world... the earth surrounded by the ocean' with no symbolic interpretation for the months or the rivers. Maguire further believes (1999: 180) that at both the Martyr Theodore chapel and the Tegea pavement 'the earth is watered at its four corners by the rivers of Paradise...' They 'acquired an allegorical significance, beyond a mere illustration of divinely created geography'.

The eastern half of the nave in the East Church at Qasr-el Lebia (Olbia) in Libya (539-540) is adorned with a mosaic pavement divided into fifty square panels (Maguire 1987: 44-55; figs. 52-57). Personifications of two of the rivers of Paradise, inscribed Gehon and Phison, appear on the second row in two separate panels, flanked by two other panels filled with Nile flora and fauna. For the river labelled ΓΗΩΝ Gehon an almost completely naked figure with a beard reclines on a vessel out of which water pours. Hermann (1959: 63, fig. 5) argues rightly that this is a depiction of the Nile (fig. V.4), indicated by the cornucopia beside his left arm (similar to the depiction of Nilus at the villa at Lepsis Magna) and by the sistrum he holds in his right hand, which characterizes some Nilus depictions (see Chap. V).

The Rivers of Paradise seen on the pavements of the Martyr Theodore chapel and of the Sunna family church (both at Madaba) and of St. Paul's church (pl. VIII.2) are usually represented as male figures, except for two; they render a semi-clad figure crowned with foliage, holding a cane stick or a reed in the hand resting on a pitcher from which water flows. They are surrounded by

plants; at one of the rivers in the Sunna church a fish accompanies the (destroyed) figure. All the personifications were damaged by iconoclasts.

The composition of the rivers and their location in the overall design differ in each pavement. But each river personification appears in a round or square medallion in the mosaics, except for Jabaliyah and the unique representation in the Theotokos Chapel.

D. *Country and City*

A unique personification of Egypt is rendered on the mosaic at the Nile Festival building at Sapphoris (Weiss and Talgam 2002: 61,66, fig. 6). It shows a reclining female figure on the upper left part of the mosaic as consort of a similarly resting male figure, the personification of Nilus—the Nile river—on the upper right part. The female figure wearing a robe, her upper body naked, leans on a basket with her right arm while her right hand holds a cornucopia filled with fruit; ears of grain adorn her head. She is identified by the Greek inscription Αἴγυπ[πιτο]ς Aigyptos to the left of her head (pl. VIII.1a). Weiss and Talgam (2002: 66) interpret the figure of Aigyptos and her attributes as the personification of the land of Egypt and as Euthenia, the consort of Nilus, as well as denoting the abundance produced by the inundation of the Nile. Another depiction of Egypt on the Haditha pavement border is a walled city (pl. V.2b, 5d) interpreted as Alexandria.

The mosaic of the Hippolytus Hall (Piccirillo 1993: 24-25, 66, figs. 3, 10), shows along the eastern hall outside the border the personifications of three cities identified by their Greek inscriptions. They are Madaba, Gregoria, and Rome, all rendered as Tyche. They are seated on thrones in identical poses; all three wear decorated tunics and mantles joined at the breast by a clasp. Rome wears a red helmet on her head, while Madaba and Gregoria wear turreted crowns similar to the seasons on the same mosaic. Madaba and Gregoria are adorned with earrings and bracelets. All three hold in their right hands long staffs ending in a small cross. Madaba carries in her left hand a cornucopia with two sheaves of corn. Rome holds a similar cornucopia filled with pears and pomegranates, while Gregoria holds a basket of flowers in her outstretched left hand. Piccirillo and Buschhausen identified the three as cities represented by a Tyche.

However, Gregoria is not the name of a city. Scholars have variously identified her as a Roman female donor or the wife of the son of the 7th-century emperor Heraclius (Buschhausen 1986: 153-154). Avner-Levy (1996: 370-373) believes that Gregoria was a local donor, and that the attributes carried by the three personifications are the same as those of the personifications of Spring, Summer, and Autumn. Accordingly, they represent not only Tychai but also 'the three seasons of fertility'. She asserts that the three personifications represent the city, Madaba, the local donor, Gregoria, and the capital of the Byzantine Empire, Rome, as symbolizing 'the notion of the good order (Eunomia)'.

Though the personifications of Egypt at Sepphoris and the three cities at Madaba are different in style, design, execution, and meaning they are all apparently based on portrayals found on Roman coins of cities (Piccirillo 1993: 38; Weiss and Talgam 2002: 66). The personifications of Egypt on the Nile Festival mosaic at Sepphoris and of the three cities at Madaba are unique, whereas the usual representations of land and cities are not personifications but renditions of walled cities with gates, towers, and buildings, often identified by their inscribed names (Piccirillo 1993: 34-37; Duval 2003).

E. Personifications of Time, Year, and Calendar

The year and calendar are personified on mosaic pavements by three elements: the four seasons, the months, or the zodiac signs representing the twelve months, and the sun and the moon representing day and night. On synagogue mosaics all three are assembled to create a calendar. On pagan and church mosaic pavements the three elements appear individually in various versions. The most common is a composition of the personifications of the four seasons; there are a few designs of the Labours of the Months, and to date one with the sun and the moon.

Personifications of the Four Seasons

The personifications of the four seasons are the legacy of common classical figural art. They are a popular motif on mansions, villas,³ and church mosaic pavements, and form part of the zodiac on synagogue floors of the Roman-Byzantine period. They consist of female busts, with their attributes

recalling similar depictions of Hellenistic-Roman images. They are accompanied by their names in Hebrew inscriptions on synagogue mosaics and Greek inscriptions in other representations.

On synagogue mosaics at Beth 'Alpha, Hammath Tiberias, Huseifa, Na'aran, and Sepphoris the four seasons lie diagonally in the four spandrels of the zodiac scheme's outer square; each season is represented by a bust of a woman wearing jewellery, equipped with identifying attributes, and objects representing the activities of the season; except at Huseifa, all are accompanied by the Hebrew name of the month that represents the relevant season (pl. III.11). The Beth 'Alpha seasons are the only winged figures, depicted frontally, with richly coloured jewellery and decorations. Only at Sepphoris is each season also accompanied by its name in Greek. The attributes of the Sepphoris seasons are depicted flanking the image, not holding them as on comparable pavements. The four seasons' representations in each design are similar in appearance, manner, and style; the facial features, the eyes, and some of their jewellery and dress are alike; only the different attributes distinguish them.

Comparable renditions of the four seasons in the corners of a similar zodiac design as women's busts with their typical attributes appear on the 5th-century mosaic pavement in the main hall of the Tallaras Baths on the Greek island of Astypalaea (Jacoby 2001: 226-7, figs. 2,5) (pl. III.12b) and on the Antioch mosaic (fig. III-14).

Personifications of the seasons identified by their Greek inscription on pagan and church mosaics, unlike the portrayal of seasons as part of the zodiac composition in the synagogue, are depicted in medallions in various arrangements and compositions: in medallions assembled in the centre of the mosaic field (El-Maqerqesh and Petra church), in square panels at the corners of the mosaic field (Caesarea), in panels in the border of the nave mosaic field (St. George's church at Mulkayyat), in acanthus or vine scrolls in the four corners of the border of the nave mosaic field (Hall of the Seasons and Hippolytus Hall at Madaba; Bishop Sergius church at Umm al-Rasas), and

³ At the Roman villa of 'En Yael (Jerusalem, late 3rd century) four male busts of the personifications of the seasons appear in rectangular panels on a corridor mosaic; the busts are perhaps inspired by a western model (Roussin 1995: 31, 33 fig. 4).

in an intercolumnar space (Church of Priest Wa'il at Umm al-Rasas). The renditions of the seasons on these mosaics may be interpreted as symbols of happiness and prosperity (Hanfmann 1951, I: 261).

Personifications of the four seasons appear on several mosaics found in Israel and Jordan.

On the El-Maqerqesh mosaic (Vincent 1922; Avi-Yonah 1932: 146-147, no. 23), the four seasons are rendered in panels in the centre of the design. The mosaic was found in a room consisting of a main carpet surrounded by a border, with all the figures turning to face south (where the entrance apparently was). The rectangular carpet is divided into ten octagonal panels by various geometrical designs. The central vertical strip of four circular medallions contains the personification of the four seasons (fig. VIII-3). In the two rows of five octagonal panels each, pairs of animals face each other surrounded by plants: stag and hunting dog, lioness and ram, boar and bear, lion and a destroyed animal, leopard and antelope. Each pair is a wild beast and its animal prey. The mosaic border illustrates a hunt. The corners picture buildings, of which only two have survived. On the south border on the right is a Nilotic scene with a galloping hunter, on the left are a bear (rather than an elephant) and birds. The west strip shows a hare, a wolf, a sheep, a bird, a shepherd and his two sheep (pl. VII.16c), and a hunter standing, with his horse tied to a tree nearby. The west-north corner and part of the border strip are destroyed. On the remaining north strip a mounted hunter attacks a leopard (pl. VII.13b). On the remaining east strip a hunter on foot with his coat billowing out attacks a bear (pl. VII.11b).

The general composition of the El-Maqerqesh mosaic is comparable to the south aisle pavement design in Petra church, which is much more elaborate; both are arranged with a similar central vertical strip of medallions filled with the seasons (pls. XII.1,2). At Petra there are also other personifications, flanked on both sides by two more strips of medallions filled with animals.

The El-Maqerqesh mosaic shows four circular medallions on a vertical axis in the centre at the intersecting of the strips. They contain the seasons rendered as women's busts with attributes and inscriptions (pl. VIII.2b): Winter is depicted outside the field in a circular medallion in the centre of the south part of the border. She is draped, her head is covered, and she holds an amphora with

water pouring out; beside here are two ducklings. A shrub is on the right; there is no inscription. Spring, inscribed 'Εαρ, is a female bust holding a cup with a bird perching on it. Autumn is missing: it could have been intended for the upper circle, now containing a geometric design. Avi-Yonah (1932: 146-147, No. 23, note 2) suggested that Autumn is actually the female bust inscribed Γη (*Ge*, Earth); she is crowned with vine branches and cornstalks, and holds fruit in her sash. Her right hand is depicted with an upright finger, which has a parallel in the Summer (*Tammuz*) portrayal at Hammath Tiberias (pl. III.11). Summer, inscribed Θέρ[ος], is a female bust, the head destroyed, holding a sickle in her right hand and a sheaf of corn in her left. The arrangement of Winter, Spring, Autumn, and Summer does not accord with the order of the seasons in the year. All the figures are stylized and have similar frontally staring faces with firm features; the three seasons wear similar headdress with a veil and a similar dress (except Winter).

The seasons at Caesarea (Holum et al. 1988: figs. 122, 124; Spiro 1992: 250, 254, figs. 12-14) are classical images depicted in the corners of a mosaic field in a room of a building (in Field C, originally 'a large central panel flanked at the east and west by pairs of corner panels separated by meander swastikas': Spiro 1992: 250). The room with the seasons mosaic was part of a mansion which perhaps served as a reception or dining hall; it is dated by pottery to c. 450 CE, though by style and technique the seasons are similar to 4th-century representations (Spiro 1992: 257). The seasons' personifications, of which only winter and spring are preserved, consist of winged female busts (pl. VIII.2a; fig. VIII-4).

Spring, in the lower right corner panel, is crowned with a wreath of flowers, and wears a sleeveless blue and green garment with yellow fibulae attached at both shoulders, and has white earrings. Beside her is a basket filled with red and pink flowers. Fragments of the identifying Greek inscription survived. Winter, in the upper left panel, is shown with brown hair, wearing earrings, accompanied by a stalk and crown of reeds, and her *palla*. The two other seasons, Summer in the upper right corner, Autumn in the lower left, are destroyed. The unusual arrangement of the personifications at Caesarea, with Winter and Summer in the top row and Autumn and Spring in the bottom, are not in their usual chronological order. Spiro maintains that the mosaicist created



Figure VIII-3. El-Maqerqesh mosaic pavement (level II, building A).

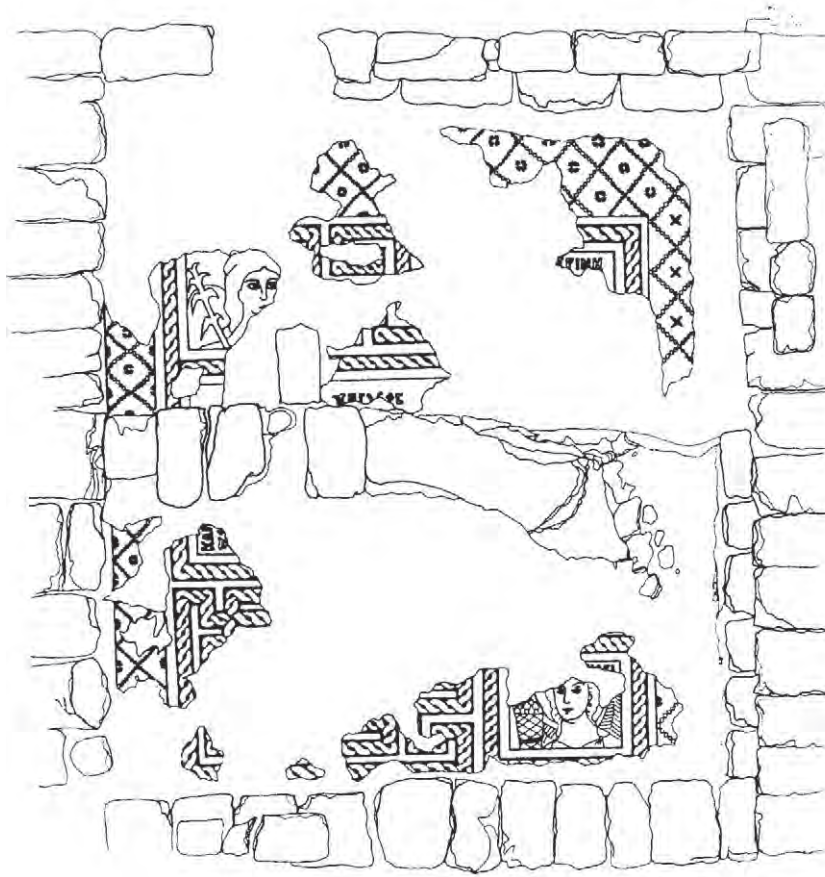


Figure VIII-4. Caesarea seasons mosaic.

the seasons with deliberate differences between them.

At Petra church the personifications of the four seasons are seen in the central and western parts of the southern aisle, Mosaic II (pls. XII.1,2) (Waliszewski 2001: 244-259, 318-321). They are rendered in the central column (B), each in a square panel and identified by a Greek inscription (pl. VIII.2c). They are observed from the entrance in this order: Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn, with Winter rendered the first season of the year, as at El-Maqerqesh.

Winter (B2) is completely destroyed. only the Greek inscription *χιμερνή* survived. Spring (B8), a bust of a young woman, is shown in full frontal face. She wears a brown sleeved garment, holds a flower in her right hand and bowl or basket in her left, and has the Greek inscription *εαρινή* (Waliszewski 2001: 251-252, 319). The figure wears bracelets, earrings, and a necklace; her head is crowned with a wreath of flowers fixed by a brown ring, the hair is curled on the forehead and falls to the sides. There are no close comparisons to

the Petra figure. Summer, identified by the Greek inscription *θερινή* (B14), is a woman's bust shown frontally, dressed in a white, sleeveless garment exposing the right breast and shoulder. She wears a hat and earrings, and holds a sickle in her right hand and a bunch of twigs and a sheaf of corn in her left (Waliszewski 2001: 255-56, 320). Autumn, identified by the Greek inscription *φθινοπωρινή* (B17), is a female bust shown frontally, wearing a white, sleeveless tunic with a cloak draped on the left shoulder and breast. Two bracelets adorn the arm and wrist. The hem of the cloak is held in both hands and it is filled with fruit grapes and pomegranates (recalling representations of Earth). The hair is curled and a wreath lies on it (Waliszewski 2001: 257, 321).

In the Hippolytus Hall at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 39, 66, fig. 3, 13-14, 26-27) the four corners of the wide border of acanthus scrolls that frames the mosaic field have personifications of the four seasons. All are represented as a half bust like Tyche. Each wears on her head a yellow *corona muralis*, a turreted crown; the faces and hair are

identical but they wear different garments. Three of the personifications hold a cornucopia in their left arm. That of Spring is filled with a bunch of grapes, Autumn's is full of flowers tumbling out, and Winter holds a cornucopia from which water flows. Summer holds a sheaf of corn.

Four seasons are depicted on the mosaic of St. George's church (Saller and Baggati 1949: 72, 101-2, pl. 27; Piccirillo 1998: 323, figs. 125-126; 130, 132). Four busts of women lie in the square panels alternating with a meander pattern on the border of the nave field. The personifications of Winter and Summer are on the east side of the border, Autumn and Spring on the west side. All are in frontal pose.

The portrayed women wear richly decorated tunics and cloaks concealing the arms. They are adorned with jewellery and accompanied by their attributes. Winter has curly hair, and florets decorate the two upper corners. Summer, wearing earrings, has a turreted crown on her head, like Tyche, and ears of corn (these are comparable to the personifications at the Hippolytus Hall). Olive-tree twigs placed in the two upper corners characterize Autumn. Spring wears a tunic and a pall; in her left hand she holds a cornucopia full of fruit.

Bishop Sergius church originally had personifications of the four seasons at the corners of a vine scroll border, but only one, in the southeast corner, survived the iconoclast crisis; it shows the bust of a young woman wearing a mantle and holding a cornucopia in her left hand (Piccirillo 1993: 39, 234, fig. 332).

The mosaic at the Hall of the Seasons at Madaba portrays three female busts depicted in acanthus scrolls in the corners of the mosaic border. They have elongated faces and long hair; one is adorned with a ribbon, the other two have crowns on their heads (Piccirillo 1993: 39, 76, fig. 35, 41-42).

Of the four seasons that originally decorated the mosaic in St. Peter and Paul Church at Gerasa, only the name of Summer survived (Biebel 1938: 335, 485).

One of the intercolumnar spaces of the southern row in Priest Wa'il church at Umm al-Rasas is rendered with four busts of women (disfigured) identified as seasons. Each holds a cornucopia from which water flows; they are depicted between images of buildings, towers, and houses (Piccirillo 1993: 39, 243, fig. 397).

A comparable depiction of the seasons appears on the 3rd-century mosaic floor at Zliten in North Africa (Hanfmann 1951: II, 112, no. 135 and p. 148). The seasons are winged female busts, each with a wreath on her head matching the season (fig. VIII-5).

The four seasons each, in a compartment, appear on the mosaic at Deir es Sleib church in Syria; horses in various postures are rendered in the other four compartments (fig. VIII-6) (Hanfmann 1951: II, 121, No. 192; Donceel-Voûte 1988: fig. 35).

The four seasons, the four winds and the twelve months are among the figures decorating the aisles of the St. Christoph's church mosaic at Qabr Hiram in Phoenicia (fig. VIII-7) (Hanfmann 1951: II, 117-120, no. 193; Donceel-Voûte 1988: 412-415, figs. 402, 404; 1995: fig. 12). The seasons are rendered as winged female busts presented in couples, Spring and Winter in the north aisle and Summer and Autumn in the south aisle. All are enclosed in round medallions, among many other pairs of figures, animals, birds, and fishes in medallions.

The representations of the seasons with their specific attributes described are comparable to those found on the Roman-Byzantine pagan mosaic floors of the 2nd-5th centuries. Most are winged busts, usually crowned with a wreath (Hanfmann 1951: I, 192-96). Though their symbols are similar, they are not identical with those of the Jewish zodiacs and the Christian examples.

Spring's common attribute on mosaic designs is the plate or basket of fruit or the shepherd's crook. Spring holding a plate of fruit is depicted on several mosaics: on the 4th-century Daphne mosaic floor (Hanfmann 1951: II, 64, No. 23), on the south aisle (mosaic II) of the Petra church (pl. VIII.2 c; Waliszewski 2001: 251-252, 319), on the floor of Qabr Hiram church (fig. VIII-7a) (Hanfmann 1951: II, 117-120, n. 193), and on the synagogue pavements of Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris. Spring on the El-Maqerqesh mosaic a bird is rendered on the plate (pl. VIII.2b); a similar bird appears on the Beth 'Alpha synagogue mosaic. Several Spring personifications hold a cornucopias full of fruit in their hands: at Hippolytos Hall, at St. George's church, and at Priest Wa'il's church. Spring is comparable in jewellery, wreath, and dress at Hammath Tiberias, Caesarea (the winged Spring), and in the Petra church south aisle (pl. VIII.2). The shepherd's



Figure VIII-5. The four seasons on the mosaic of Zliten, North Africa.

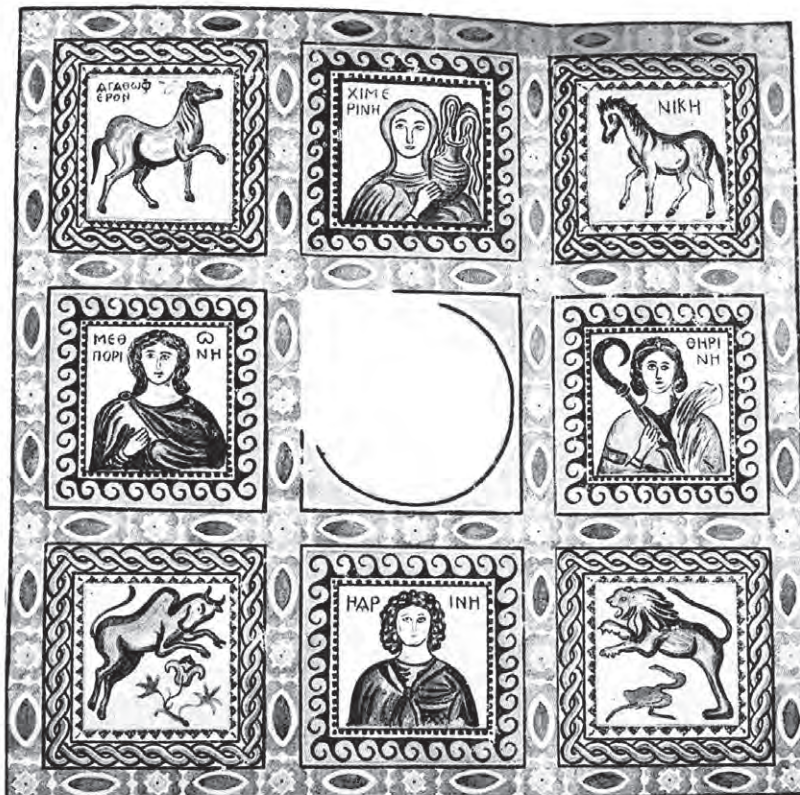


Figure VIII-6. The four seasons on the mosaic of Deir es-Sleib church, Syria.



Figure VIII-7. The four seasons on the mosaic of the St. Christoph's church at Qabr Hiram.

crook Spring's attribute at the Beth-'Alpha and Na'aran synagogues, on the 3rd-century Ostia mosaic floor (Hanfmann 1951: II, 114, No. 151), and the 3rd-century mosaic floor at Zliten in North Africa (fig. VIII-5) (Hanfmann 1951: II, 112, No. 135 and p. 148).

The attributes of *Summer* are a sickle and sheaves of corn attiring the head or beside the figure; a sickle as an attribute appears on the mosaics at El-Maqerqesh; in the Petra church south aisle (pl. VIII.2); at Daphne (Antioch) (Hanfmann 1951: II, 100); on the mosaic floor of Deir es-Sleib church (fig. VIII-6) (Hanfmann 1951: II, 121, no. 192; Donceel-Voûte 1988: fig. 35); and on the Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris synagogue pavements (pl. III.11). At Zliten similar sheaves of corn adorn the head of Summer and at the Hippolytus Hall she holds one sheaf of corn. Summer at Sepphoris and Petra wears a hat; at Petra she appears with a bare breast (pl. VIII.2c), as she does on some North African mosaics (Waliszewski 2001: 255) and like the nude breast of the personification of the Sea in the Apostles church at Madaba. By contrast, the Summer attribute at Beth-'Alpha is fruit. Summer personifications holding a cornucopia full of fruit are rendered at the St George's church and at the Priest Wa'il's church.

Autumn has as attributes pomegranates and clusters of grapes. They are seen at El-Maqerqesh, albeit inscribed Ge (Earth), and on mosaic II at Petra church (pl. VIII.2b, c) (Waliszewski 2001: 257, 321). In these mosaics, however, the figure carries the fruit in her shawl (Hanfmann 1951: II, 101). At the mosaics of Hyppolitus Hall (Piccirillo 1993: fig. 27), St. George's church (Bagatti 1949: pl. 27: 4), and the Priest Wa'il's church Autumn is rendered holding a cornucopia full of fruit or pouring water. Several of these depictions evoke the personifications of Earth. These attributes appear also on the synagogue mosaics.

The personification of *Winter* continues a Graeco-Roman tradition of a draped female bust, a veil covering her head, often holding a jug, as on the El-Maqerqesh mosaic. Winter is also accompanied by two ducklings (pl. VIII.2b) on the mosaic in Qabr Hiram church (fig. VIII-7) (Hanfmann 1951: II, 120, No. 193), on the mosaic at Deir es-Sleib (fig. VIII-6) (Hanfmann 1951: II, 121, No. 121), and on the synagogue floors of Hammath Tiberias and Sepphoris (pl. III.11). The mosaics at Zliten (fig. VIII-5) and Ostia have a similar draped figure (winged at Zliten) but without

the jug (Hanfmann 1951: II, 112, 114, Nos. 135, 151). The Caesarea winter is different, wearing a crown of reeds and earrings and holding a reed (pl. VIII.2a) (Spiro 1992: 254, 257, figs. 12,14). The reed and the ducklings are common emblems of Winter on Roman North African mosaics; the ducklings are usually depicted as hunting spoils (Parrish 1984: 27, 32-34; 1994: 79-80). The reed is a more common attribute of the personification of rivers (see above).

The personifications of the seasons draw directly on models and patterns from the classical Graeco-Roman repertoire. In every mosaic they are alike in manner, style, and details of face and eyes, but they differ in dress, jewellery, and attributes, to mark each different season. Only those on synagogue pavements are an integral part of the entire zodiac design. The seasons on the pagan and church pavements are either isolated or a group within larger design.

A familiar design on North African mosaics (Parish 1984: 204-206, pl. 69) and on an Antioch mosaic (Levi 1971, II: pl. 81) is the seasons combined with the personification of Earth. The examples in the mosaics described above differ somewhat: at El-Maqerqesh, Earth is identified with autumn and appears with three of the seasons (pl. VIII.2b); at Petra church, Earth, the seasons and other personifications and figures appear in the central axis (pls. XII.1,2); at St Paul's church Earth is combined with the Four Rivers of Paradise.

The seasons rendered on church and synagogue mosaics in all probability represented the year's cycle, the renewal of nature and the agriculture cycle presented with their typical attributes and the iconography of agricultural activities (Hanfmann 1951, I: 227-280; Maguire 1987: 27; Merrony 1998: 469), the same interpretation presented for the seasons on the zodiac design in synagogues.⁴

Personification of the Months

Personifications of the twelve months appear on mosaic pavements and represent the farming and rural activities of each. The designs vary: some are in a panel/s with the months as a group (the floors of El-Hammam and Gerasa), or in a

⁴ But see Roussin's assertion (1985: 114) that the use of the seasons on these mosaics was 'primarily decorative'.

calendar grouped with the Sun and Moon (Monastery of Lady Mary at Beth She'an). Similar designs of the Labours of the Months appear on mosaics in the Greek East and at Carthage.

Examples are found at Hall A of Lady Mary Monastery and in the narthex of the funerary chapel at El-Hammam. Both render the Labours of the Months but the two are of different design (Fitzgerald 1939: 6, pls. VI-VIII; Avi-Yonah 1936: 22-26, pl. xv).

The months in the El-Hammam narthex are depicted on a panel in two rows of six, each row divided into two separated groups (pl. VIII-3). The months consist of active, full-length standing figures, each with its Latin name and number of days inscribed in Greek; between the figures are plants with coloured leaves (Avi-Yonah 1936: 22-26, pl. XV; Webster 1938: 24-25, no. 15; Åkerström-Hougen 1974: 122, no. 3). The left part of the mosaic with the first six months is badly damaged. Only nine months: January, February, April, May, July, August, September, November and December are preserved, some only in fragments, while the inscriptions partly survived. July is depicted as a youth dressed in a tunic holding a big leaf full of fruit. August is a youth clad in a decorated short tunic; he holds a fan in his right hand and an amphora in his left. September is a youth clad in a decorated tunic, his right arm encircling a two-handled jar on his left shoulder while the left hand holds a cock head downwards. November is a figure dressed in a decorated tunic and holding a yellow basket. December is represented as a female (Åkerström-Hougen 1974: 122, no. 3 maintains the figure is undoubtedly a man) clad in a robe and a mantle drawn over her head, wearing green slippers; she holds a mattock in her left hand; this hooded figure was probably influenced by the representation of Winter.

In the Monastery of Lady Mary the personification of the months appears in the centre of the carpet in Hall A (pl. VIII-4, fig. VIII-8). The design of the central composition is two concentric circles, the outer divided into twelve units. Within each unit is a single figure in frontal pose and in full activity; at its feet appear the Latin name of the relevant month and the number of its days in Greek letters. The inner circle contains the personifications of Sun and Moon, as female busts bearing torches (Fitzgerald 1939: 6, pls. VI-VIII; Webster 1938: 23-24, no. 18; Åkerström-Hougen 1974: 123-4, no. 4).

The months are personified as full-length male figures with short curly hair; only February has a beard. January is almost completely lost but shows the head and a shod foot. February wears a short tunic and carries a hoe. March is personified as a warrior, clad in a tunic and perhaps a cuirass, a huge mantle, and a helmet; he leans on his shield. April is a shepherd garbed in a short tunic and barefoot. He carries a goat in his arms and a bucket for milk in his left hand. May is dressed in a long tunic and trousers; a dalmatic held up in front carries flowers. June is a partly damaged figure, wearing in a sleeveless tunic and holding a seed-box (?) in his left hand and a sickle (?) in his right. July wears a short tunic and cap. He carries a sheaf of corn over his left shoulder and a sickle in his right hand. August is damaged, only the head and the lower garment having survived. September is a vintager wearing a short tunic, and holding a bunch of grapes in his right hand and an object in his left. October is a fowler clad in a short sleeveless decorated tunic and barefoot. A basket-like object or a net is slung over his left shoulder, and he holds a stick in his right hand. November is a man dressed in a short decorated tunic and a mantle; a string of birds hangs down from his right hand and some object rests on his left shoulder. December is a sower clad in a short decorated tunic and holding a sack in his left hand, from which he scatters seed.

The two Christian examples from El Hammam and the Monastery of Lady Mary at Beth-She'an are different in their basic form but similar in the general depiction of the personified Labours of the Months. The emphasis in these personifications is on the figures' rural occupations. The attributes for each month are different in the mosaics, but the Latin names of the months and the number of days written in Greek letters are identical, and are found only in Byzantine mosaics in northern and southern Palestine and the Negev. The inscribed names of the months remain Macedonian until later (Avi-Yonah 1936: 22-25).

Avi-Yonah (1936: 24) maintains that both pavements are an independent variant of the transition from Roman to Byzantine style, and that the monastery mosaic anticipates the later Byzantine tradition more than does the El-Hammam pavement.

The Christian pavements at Beth-She'an represent civil and agricultural calendars, probably following earlier Roman calendar designs



Figure VIII-8. Months: Monastery of Lady Mary, Beth-She'an.

(Webster 1938: 23-26, catalogue nos. 15, 18; Åkerström-Hougen 1974: 85-86).

In Jordanian church mosaics the Labours of the Months appear on three mosaics at Gerasa, of which two are almost completely disfigured: in the Elias, Maria and Soreg church they appear in twelve square panels of an interlaced ellipsis in the first three eastern rows of the nave (Biebel 1938: 480; Saller and Bagatti 1949: 275-278, 284-285, fig. 17, pls. 46, 47, 50, 3-4-51, 4;

Åkerström-Hougen 1974: 127, no. 9; Piccirillo 1993: 39, 296 fig. 571). The full-length images of seven months and their Macedonian names written in Greek survived.

The first month on the left is September, inscribed *Garpiaiōs*. It is represented as a vintager, a youth carrying grapes, a bunch in his right hand and a basket on his shoulder; he wears a tunic and chlamys. October, inscribed *Hyperberetaiōs*, almost completely destroyed, perhaps represented

a fowler, a bird-catcher. Of November, inscribed *Dios*, the lower part of a figure survived, possibly representing sowing. January, inscribed *Audoneos*, is a seated figure holding in his raised right hand a small jar with a caduceus in his left. February, inscribed *Peritios*, though destroyed is a falconer. May, inscribed *Artemisios*, is a figure holding a flower or fruits. August, inscribed *Loos*, shows a figure holding a hoe or fan.

The two other Gerasa pavements were almost completely destroyed: personification of the months originally filled the rectangular panels alternating with perspective meander of the border of the central square at the church of St. John the Baptist church (Wells 1938: 480, inscription no. 307; Webster 1938: 29-30, no. 16); inscriptions of the summer months and sketches of two of the figures are the only surviving fragments. In the chapel of the cathedral at Gerasa, the months originally were rendered in the centre of the nave in two rectangular panels; each panel contained six squares in which the personifications of six months were depicted. The images, destroyed by iconoclasts, were either full figures or busts, accompanied by their Macedonian names inscribed in Greek, which survived (Biebel 1938: 313, 475, no.295; Webster 1938: 30, no. 17; Piccirillo 1993: 39, 284, figs. 528, 531). The Macedonian names inscribed on the Gerasa mosaics follow the calendar used in Antioch.

Personifications of the months are presented on the 'Mosaic of the Months' at Antioch (fig. III-14) (Webster 1938: 26-7; no. 2; Campbell 1988). The calendar design is similar to the zodiac scheme in the synagogues. Only January, March, April, May, and June survived in the outer circle of the design. March and May might be female figures. The Macedonian names of the months are inscribed in Greek letters.

Comparable personifications of the months are depicted on the north and south aisles of the mosaics in Qabr Hiram church, where the months are represented by busts, with almost no attributes and accompanied by Macedonian names in Greek letters, each rendered in a round medallion (Donceel-Voûte 1988: 412-415).

Personifications of the twelve months in squares appear in an interesting rectangular geometric design on a 5th-century mosaic pavement in the main hall of the Tallaras Baths, on the Greek island of Astypalaea (Jacoby 2001: 230, figs. 1, 5). The months, portrayed as crude busts, nine male and three female, are arranged in four rows,

three months to a row of the middle square. No inscription accompanies these depictions of the months.

Personifications of the months appear on secular floors of the Greek East at Argos (c.500 CE), Tegea (350 CE) and Thebes. The months are represented as male figures holding attributes, objects, or animals; at Argos all the months except December survived; they are full-length standing figures. At Thebes the four panels show running figures of the four months July, February, May, and April, while at Tegea the months are presented by busts of young males (Åkerström-Hougen 1974: 120-123, nos. 1,2; figs. 75-77). Åkerström-Hougen (1974: 153) contends that the calendar at Argos is 'the earliest fully preserved, already Byzantine in character'.

At Carthage three floors with personifications of the months were found. The Carthage calendar (c. 400) mosaic design of a square with two circles is similar to the zodiac scheme of the synagogues; the Four Seasons set in the spandrels of the square are seated full-length figures. The months are in the outer circle consisting of full-length male figures, except February and May represented as females; a seated figure, Mother Earth or Abundance, is portrayed in the inner circle (Webster 1938: no.11; Åkerström-Hougen 1974: 120-123, no. 5, Carthage I). Åkerström-Hougen (1974: 120-123, no. 6, Carthage II) maintains that four scenes on the Dominus Julius mosaic are personifications of the months February, April, May, and August. A fragmentary floor from Carthage (3rd-4th century: in the British Museum; Webster 1938: no.10; Åkerström-Hougen 1974: 120-123, no. 7, Carthage III) originally contained two rings of wedge-shaped panels in which the personifications of the months were depicted round a central medallion. Only the four months March, April, July, and November survived.

Similar in most of these mosaics are the representations of the Labours of the Months and attributes (Avi-Yonah 1936: 25-26; Åkerström-Hougen 1974: 83-4, Tables II-III; Roussin 1985: 93-109):

January is rendered as a consul with a *mappa* on the mosaics of El-Hammam, the Monastery of Lady Mary, Beth She'an and the Elias, Maria, and Soreg church at Gerasa. The same image appears on the Argos pavement and in the Vatican Ms.1291. *February* has different images: the Monastery of Lady Mary he carries a hoe, at the Elias, Maria, and Soreg church he is bird-catching,

while in mosaics of the Greek East he is often illustrated as a figure carrying ducks. *March* is a warrior (but appears as a shepherd on mosaics of Carthage); *April* is as a shepherd. *May* is usually associated with flowers, but at the Beth She'an Monastery of Lady Mary he holds melons. *June* partly damaged, only survived at the Monastery of Lady Mary, where the figure holds a seed-box (?) in his left hand and a sickle (?) in his right. The month of *July* is often a harvester carrying a sheaf of corn (at Argos and Antioch the harvesting is the Labour of June). A fan, a vessel, or a fruit signifies *August*; *September* is represented as a vintager (at Argos the scene continues in October), *October* and *November* are sometimes represented by hunting or fowling episodes. *December* is signified by ploughing or sowing, but on the El-Hammam pavement it appears as a woman with a hoe.

A comparison of these examples indicates they are not copied identically from a common source or model, or from each other, though some have similar attributes. The artists apparently utilized a combination of common patterns with local additions and adaptations.

The months on the Monastery of Lady Mary pavements are accompanied by their Latin names and number of days inscribed in Greek, as are the months depicted on mosaics of the Greek East and Carthage I, whereas the Gerasa pavements are inscribed with their Macedonian names written in Greek, as are the months on mosaics of Syria-Phoenicia at Antioch and at Qabr Hiram church (see also discussion of calendar in Chap. XI).

Personification of the Zodiac Signs

The signs of the zodiac on synagogue mosaics at Hammath Tiberias, Huseifa, Sepphoris, Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran personify the months of the Jewish calendar (pls. III. 7-10), a portrayal entirely different from the representations of the Labours of the Months on the 6th-century Christian pavements.

The zodiac signs appear in the outer circle of the zodiac, which is divided into twelve radial units, one for each sign. These are identical to the twelve months of the Jewish year. Each sign is followed by its name in; only at the Sepphoris pavement is the Greek name of the month added, in keeping with many pagan zodiacs (see Chap. IIB pp. figs). The naked or clothed human figures personified as the signs in all the synagogue zodiacs have the same features of face and body, and

similar garments and hair, except for Aquarius. The signs of Gemini, Virgin, Libra, Sagittarius, and Aquarius are figures in an active posture and with identifying attributes. Gemini appears as twins and Virgo is shown a clad woman; Libra shows a youth carrying scales. The usual representation of Sagittarius is as a centaur, but at Beth 'Alpha and Huseifa the archer is shown in human form, holding a bow and arrow. Aquarius is signified differently in each of the zodiac mosaics: at Hammath Tiberias a naked figure pours water from an amphora. At Sepphoris only flowing water at the lower edge has survived. At Huseifa the sign is represented by a large amphora with water pouring out of it. The Beth 'Alpha sign is unique, showing Aquarius as a figure drawing water from a well with a bucket.

Personification of the Sun and Moon

The *Sun* god riding a four-horse chariot is enclosed in the inner circle of the zodiac on the synagogue pavements (pl. III.5; fig. III-5); at Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran the image of the sun god is presented as a male bust in frontal position, a crown with nimbus and rays on his head, riding his chariot; the frontal chariot has two wheels in front and is pulled by four horses, two on either side. The representation at Hammath Tiberias shows the sun god looking at his uplifted right hand while his left hand holds a globe and a whip. At Sepphoris the Sun is shown with ten rays suspended in the centre, and its middle ray is attached to the chariot. The chariot in all these examples is represented as a frontal box with two large wheels and drawn by four horses, which at Beth 'Alpha have only heads and legs. An important characteristic of these presentations is a star (or stars) and a crescent moon in the background (see Chap. III, pp).

The personifications of Sun and Moon at the centre of the central circle of Hall A at the Monastery of Lady Mary at Beth She'an are different (Fitzgerald 1939: 7, pls. VII, VIII, figs. 1-2). Sun is crowned with seven golden rays and Moon with a crescent. Both hold flaming torches (pl. VIII. 4b). Sun, on the left, is the bust of a bearded male wearing a tunic and chlamys. Moon, on the right, is a bust of a female wearing a mantle revealing one bare breast. A larger circle rendering personifications of the twelve months surrounds this central circle. Although Sun and Moon are personified completely differently on the synagogues

and the Beth She'an monastery pavements they evidently represent the core of the calendar: day and night.

Comparable though different are the sun and moon portrayed on two Greek pagan mosaic pavements: the youthful busts of Selene and Helios with no attributes feature in the inner circle of the 4th-century dining room mosaic of the Roman villa at Odos Triakosion, Sparta (fig. III-15) (Catling 1983-84: 27; Touchais 1984: 763, fig. 48; Gundel 1992: no. 85). The bust of Helios, crowned with rays, a globe held in his left hand and his right raised in blessing, is rendered in the central circle of the mosaic pavement in the main hall of the Tallaras Baths on Astypalaea (pl. III.12b) (Jacoby 2001).

Both these Greek mosaic schemes, consisting of a square with two circles rendering Sun and Moon in the inner circle and the zodiac signs in the outer, are similar to the Jewish zodiacs.

The mosaic images prove that traditionally a connection is noticed of the sun god as charioteer, or the images of Sun and Moon, with the seasons, the signs of the zodiac or the Labours of the Months; they represent Time and personify the year, thereby illustrating a yearly calendar. These designs serve as a reminder of the cycle of the seasonal and agricultural year.

In almost all examples the seasons appear as female busts, sometimes winged. They are frequently part of the calendar illustration. However, some seasons appear in separate panel and medallion compositions, which might have carried a specific meaning or perhaps merely provided a decorative design. Merrony (1998: 480-482) argues that the various personifications of Ge, the Four Seasons and the Labours of the Months continue from the Roman period and bear allegorical implications.

In several examples the winds are also associated with the yearly cycle. On the mosaics of the qabr Hiram church aisles busts of the winds are rendered with the seasons and the months; on the zodiac mosaic at the Tallaras Baths on Astypalaea busts of the winds appear in the corners of the composition.

The six personifications at the central column (B) of the south aisle at the Petra church are the Four Seasons, Ocean, and Wisdom, all in square panels; according to Waliszewski they are part of the cosmic meaning of the whole mosaic.

A unique representation of *Wisdom* appears on Mosaic II in the south aisle of the Petra church

(pl. XII.2a) (Waliszewski 2001: 253-4, 320). The partly destroyed figure in column B11 is apparently a bust of a woman with a nimbus surrounding the destroyed head; she holds a book in her right hand. A Greek inscription identifies the figure as *Wisdom*.

*

Personifications of natural forces such as the Earth, Sea, and Ocean, rivers and of country and city, are rare on Byzantine mosaic pavements. The yearly cycle personifying the seasons, months, zodiac signs, and the sun and moon is more popular.

Some of the personifications serve as a focal element of the design, for example, Earth appears in the central square medallion on the pavement of St. Paul's church at Umm el Rasas, surrounded by Four Rivers of Paradise in round medallions. The Sea in the Apostles church at Madaba is the focal point of the pavement. The sun god as charioteer surrounded by half moon and stars on synagogue pavements, and Sun and Moon on secular and church mosaics, are the focal point of the calendar design.

The iconography of the natural elements on Byzantine mosaic designs is applied to the various personifications systematically and methodically. It shows a clear distinction between of male and female representations. Several personifications are only female, others only male. Females are usually fully dressed and adorned with jewellery whereas males appear with upper body naked.

Female images personify several natural elements: Earth is constantly a women's figure. Female busts typify the four seasons in the zodiac design on synagogue pavements, as well as those in calendars on secular and Christian mosaics. Sea too is personified by a female, and Virgo, is the only female sign in the zodiac design.

The months are usually represented by males, with some exceptions: December in the mosaics of El-Hammam and the Monastery of Lady Mary at Beth She'an is the only female personification. February and May are represented as females in the Carthage (I) calendar mosaic. The personifications March and May in the Antioch calendar are possibly female figures. Three female busts of the months are portrayed on mosaic at Tallaras Baths Astypalaea. The other nine months are rendered as males.

Moon, as the partner of Sun, is a bust of a female portrayed in the inner circle of the calendar mosaic in Hall A of the Monastery of Lady Mary.

Male figures stand for the River Nile, the Four Rivers of Paradise, and the sole rendition of Oceanus on the mosaic in the south aisle at Petra church. The months, usually males, are portrayed in various rural activities. The zodiac signs are all male except for Virgo. The sun god personification in the zodiac designs on synagogue pavements is male, as well as is bust of Sun in the inner circle in Hall A at the Beth She'an monastery and on the zodiac mosaic at Tallaras Baths Astypalaea.

The personifications of natural elements show some association with Hellenistic tradition, although generally they have 'long lost any sense of representing actual deities' (Dunbabin 1999: 199). However, some of the personifications might have assigned a symbolic significance to the images, such as the role of God as the creator of Heaven and Earth as proclaimed by an inscription surrounding the personification of Sea in the Apostles church at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 106), or the prosperity and thriving of the people represented by the cycle of nature and time.

DESIGNS OF SYMMETRICAL ANTITHETIC ANIMALS

Animals in a repeated antithetic symmetrical heraldic composition flanking various objects, especially inscriptions, are popular on mosaic floor panels. The design is usually a pair of animals (sometimes identical) facing each other on either side of an object or an inscription. Saller and Bagatti (1949: 102) contend that animals facing each other were used because of the available long and narrow space; however, 'There was certainly also some ideal concept which guided the artist in the choice of these subjects'.

In synagogues and churches the flanked objects include vases, trees, plants, and inscriptions. In synagogues the animal representation flank the Torah Shrine and a Menorah, and in churches they flank an altar, a temple, trees, and mountains.

A. *Same Animals Flanking Inscriptions and Objects*

The design on synagogue pavements frequently contains an inscription flanked by lions and birds, often in a panel of its own. The animals are a pair of lions on mosaic panels in the synagogues at Hammath Tiberias, Hammath Gader, and Sephoris (pl. IX.1; fig. IX-1). Conversely, different animals, a lion and a bull, flank an inscription at the entrance panel of the Beth 'Alpha synagogue.

At the Sephoris synagogue, the partly destroyed band 1, composed of three panels, shows a pair of lions, each in his own panel, grasping a bull's head in its front paw; they flank a Greek dedicatory inscription inside a round wreath in the central panel (Weiss 2005: 61-65, figs. 4-8). The lions and the bulls' heads are symmetrically composed but are not identical in many details. A similar pair of lions, each seizing a bull's head, are found on a relief from Tiberias (fig. IX-2).

Lions flanking various objects and subduing bulls exemplifies a motif that evolved from ancient Oriental art; it is also prevalent in Hellenistic tombs. The lion symbolically signifies death claiming its victim. A similar motif of lions flanking

a bull's head may have been a stylized version of this same motif (Avigad 1976: 140,142).

Lions flanking Jewish symbols such as the menorah or the Torah shrine may have had significance beyond their decorative function, in which the attributions of guardian and protector are attached to them—a feature already acknowledged in ancient Near Eastern art (Hachlili 1988: 327-328). Avi-Yonah (1960a: 23; 1960b: 30 note 19; see also Goodenough, 1958, VII: 29-37, 78-86) maintains that the lion is the symbol of Judah, the guardian and protector (based on Gen. 49: 9, Num. 23: 24, Deut.33: 20-22). This may explain the significance of lions flanking the Torah Ark in Beth 'Alpha and the menorah at Ma'on (pls. II.2a, XI.1a). Possibly the lions flanking inscriptions at Hammath Tiberias, Hammath Gader, and Beth 'Alpha (pl. IX.1) have the same significance as guardians and protectors. These finds seem to indicate that the lions were consistently selected in their capacity as representations of power or images of vigilance to adorn synagogues.

A pair of pheasants flanking a Greek inscription and a pair of guinea-fowl flanking a vase and an Aramaic inscription praising the artists (pl. IX.2a; fig. IX.3b) lie on panels outside the border of the inhabited vine scroll on the pavement of the Beth Shean small synagogue.

A pair of peacocks flank an inscription in a row of the inhabited scrolls mosaic at the synagogue of Gaza-Maiumas (fig. IX-3a; pl. VI.1). A pair of peacocks holding a wreath flank a Greek inscription on the mosaic of the small chapel at El-Maqerqesh at Beth Guvrin (fig. VI-11). On the border panel of the Huseifa synagogue a Hebrew inscription *שְׁלוֹם עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל* 'peace to Israel' is flanked by a pair of menorot (pl. IX.4a; fig. IX-4;).

On a mosaic pavement in Tiberias synagogue a Greek inscription inside a wreath has the Jewish symbols of a lulav and an ethrog on either side (fig. IX-5).

The antithetic composition seen on synagogue pavements also contains the Torah shrine flanked by lions and birds at the Beth 'Alpha synagogue

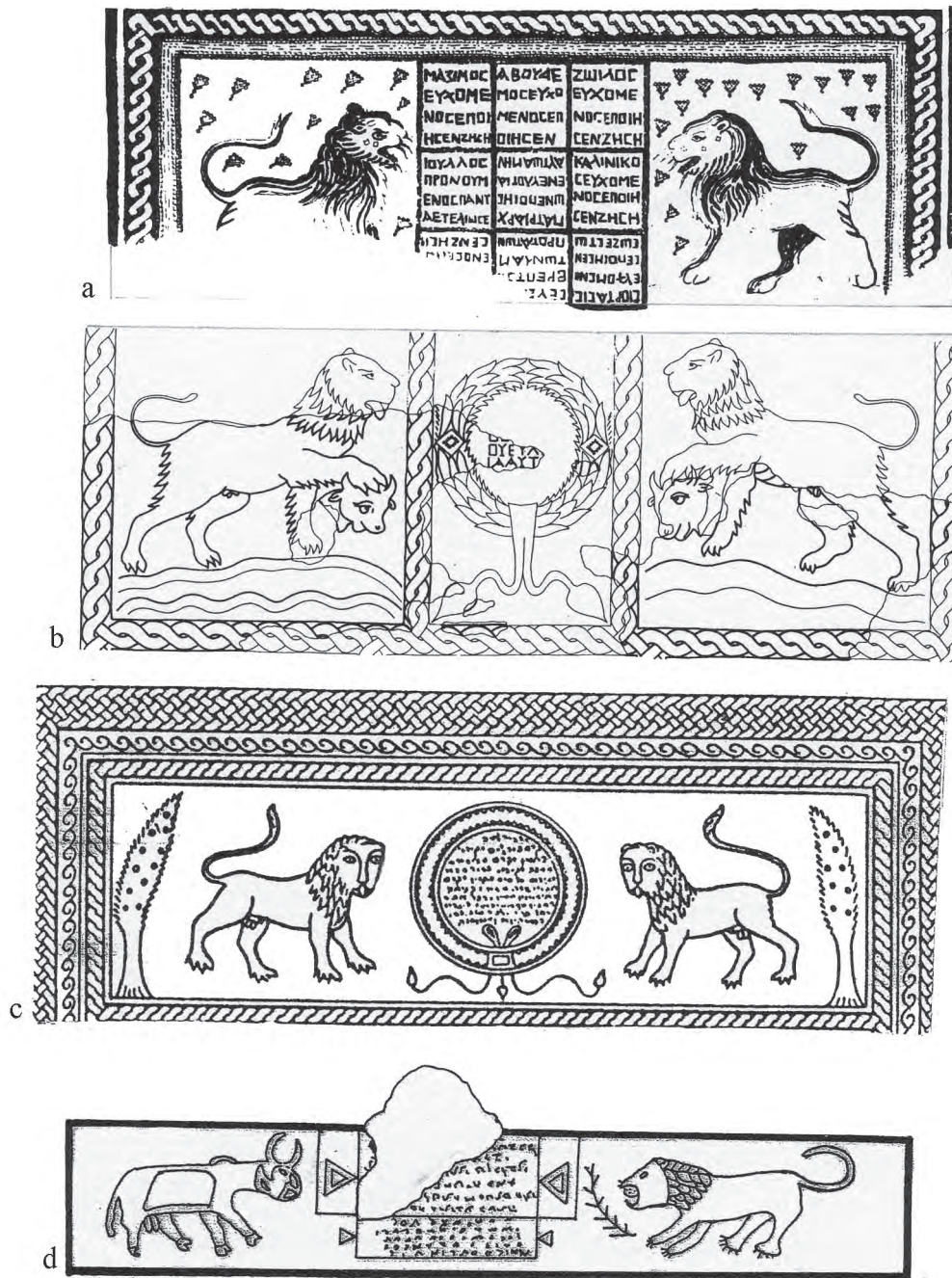


Figure IX-1. Lions flanking inscriptions: a. Hammath Tiberias; b. Sepphoris; c. Hammath Gader; d. Beth 'Alpha.

(pl. II.2a). Similar depictions are found on gold glasses from Jewish catacombs in Rome (Hachlili 1998: 302-303; figs. VI-20-24; pls. VI-20-21). A pair of sheep flank the Torah shrine panel on the Susiya synagogue mosaic pavement; one sheep, damaged by iconoclasts, is crudely repaired (pl. X.2). A pair of lions flank a menorah on the mosaic in the nave of the Ma'on synagogue (pl. XI.1).

Church pavements in Jordan show similar renditions of heraldic animals flanking inscriptions, but here the animals are horned. The panel in front of the apse and altar in the presbytery of Bishop Sergius church at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 174, figs. 331, 365) shows a medallion with an inscription in the centre flanked by a pair of rams and pomegranate trees. The lower mosaic in the presbytery of the North Church at

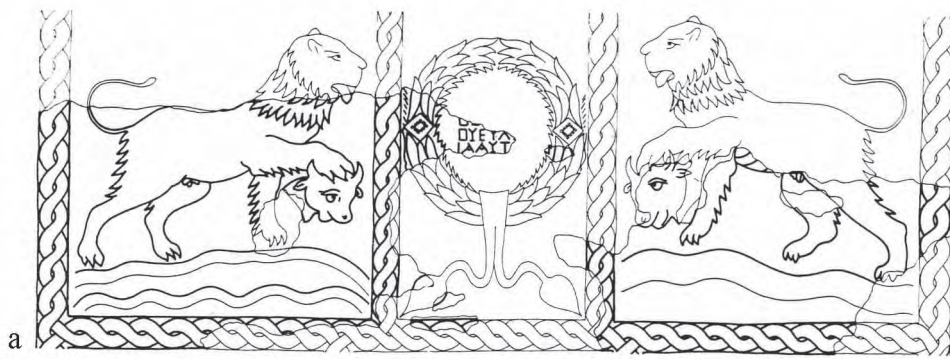


Figure IX-2. A pair of lions seizing bulls' heads: a. flanking an inscription: Sepphoris synagogue pavement, band 1; b. Tiberias, relief.

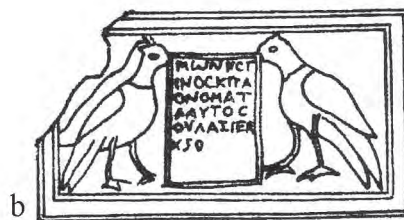
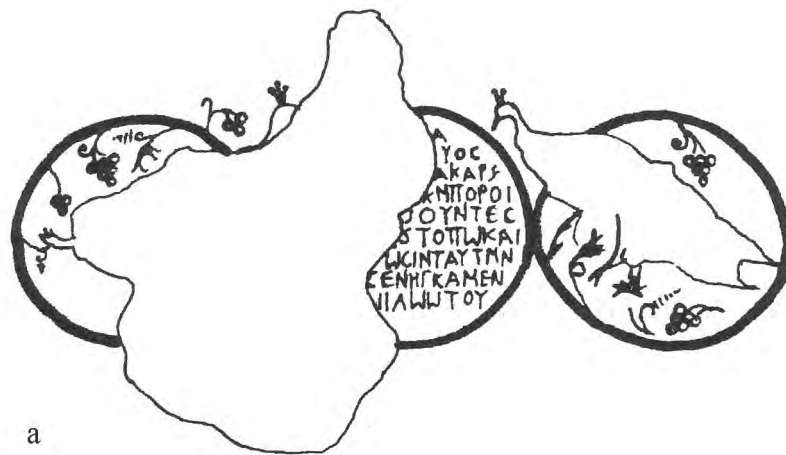


Figure IX-3. Birds flanking inscriptions: a. Gaza synagogue medallions; b. Beth She'an small synagogue mosaic panel.

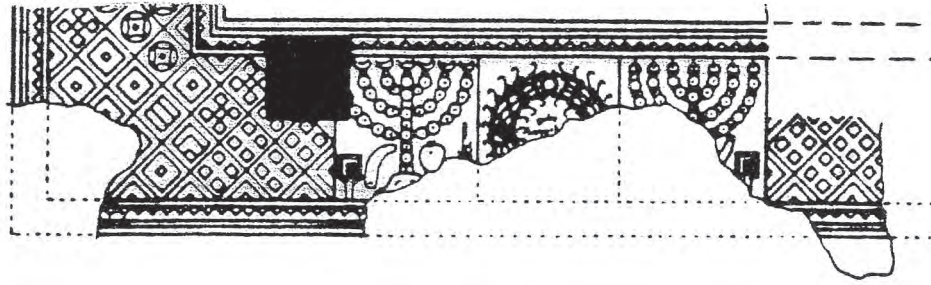


Figure IX-4. Huseifa synagogue ritual objects: a pair of menorot flanking an inscription.



Figure IX-5. Tiberias synagogue ritual objects flanking inscription.

Esbu (Hesban), a semicircular apse, is decorated with a pair of deer on either side of an inscription contained in a medallion (Piccirillo 1993: 250, figs. 426). A pair of horned stags flanking an inscription are rendered in row 1 of the inhabited scrolls on the lower mosaic in Priest John's chapel in Khirbat Mukhayyat (Piccirillo 1993: 176, fig. 240).

A symmetrical design of pairs of identical animals flanking vases, plants, or trees appears on synagogue and church pavements. A pair of stags flanking a plant are depicted on a repaired panel at the entrance of the Na'aran synagogue on the nave's mosaic pavement (pl. X.1a). A pair of lions

on either side of a vase feature on a side panel of the Beth She'an small synagogue pavement (fig. VI-10) (Hachlili 1988: 330, 336, figs. X, 17, 26, 42). An amphora flanked by a pair of fruit baskets decorates the entrance to the auxiliary chamber of the cave-church at Khirbet ed-Deir (Hirschfeld 1993: 251, pl. XVIIa).

The antithetically arrangement of a pair of birds or peacocks flanking a basket or amphora decorate panels of the mosaics (pl. IX.2a-d) at Kursi, at the entrance to the North wing, (Tzaferis 1983: 26, pl. XI: 4, he compares this design to the Tabgha illustration, pl. XI.4); at Mamshit the design decorates the nave of the 5th century West church

(Ovadia 1987: 105) and at the Nahariya church the design ornaments the bema area.

The Caesarea 'Birds mosaic' consists of a central panel with 120 medallions, each containing a single bird; the panel is surrounded by a frame depicting pairs of animals flanking a tree and some wild animals chasing tame animals (fig. XII-14). The mosaic is considered to belong to a Byzantine church or a villa dating to the late 6th or early 7th century (Reich 1985: 207-212; Spiro 1992: 250).

Two pairs of animals, one rams and the other peacocks, flank a vase on a mosaic panel in the 'Bacchic procession' room of a mansion at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 76, figs. 34, 40). A small panel inside the north door in the Martyr Theodore chapel in the cathedral at Madaba, shows a pair of roosters flanking a jar (Piccirillo 1993: 117, figs. 98, 111).

The elevated presbytery in the Sts. Lot and Procopius church in Mukhayyat is decorated with two sheep flanking a tree, as well as three intercolumnar panels with animals flanking a tree and plants (Piccirillo 1993: 164-5, figs. 214, 215, maintains they are part of Nilotic scenes). A pair of goats or deer flank a palm tree on the mosaic pavement of the southern sacristy of St. George's church, accompanied by an inscription meaning 'IN PEACE' in two languages: Greek and a Semitic script, Christo-Palestinian Aramaic or Arabic; above are two more schematic plants and doves flanking a plant. The inscription might indicate that the room has a funerary character (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 76, 105, pl. 30,1; Piccirillo 1993: 178, fig. 250; 1998: 327-8, fig. 136). A pair of sheep flanking a fruit tree and bunches of grapes appear on the mosaic pavement panel of the apse of the crypt of St. Elianus church at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 125, fig. 134).

The New Baptistery chapel in the Memorial of Moses on Mt. Nebo is decorated with fruit trees flanked by disfigured deer and birds (Piccirillo 1993: 150, fig. 197). The nave mosaic pavement at the Apostles church at Madaba is completely covered by pairs of birds surrounding a central medallion with personification of the sea. Flanking animals are rendered on the two end panels of the nave. The second chapel, to the north of the church, shows a mosaic decorated with pairs of stags, sheep, and gazelles flanking trees (Piccirillo 1993: 106, figs. 81, 92, 93, 95). Pairs of animal face each other among branches of a vine; they include a pair of rams, a pair of gazelles, and a

bull and a lion depicted on the mosaic pavement of the lower Baptistery chapel at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 119, figs. 121-123).

A pair of bulls and a pair of horned rams on different levels nibbling the leaves of a tree are depicted on the Mosaic of the Tree at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 132, figs. 160-161). Two pheasants flanking a tree are seen at the western end of the nave in Suwayfiyah chapel (Piccirillo 1993: 264, figs. 455, 469, 471).

Three episodes of flanking animals are depicted at the Church of the Lions at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 236, figs. 338-9, 365, 374-376). In the raised presbytery two panels show flanking animals. Two bulls with bells on their necks flank a medallion in a panel behind the altar. A panel in front of the altar shows two gazelles and two lions flanking fruit trees. One of the two small side apses features a pair of birds (defaced) flanking a vase and the other two eagles (defaced) flanking a vase. At the Church of the Rivers at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 240, fig. 391) the presbytery is decorated with two rams facing the altar; the panel in front of the altar shows (destroyed) figures and a sheep between three fruit trees. In a panel in front pairs of partridges and pheasants flank bunches of grapes. A similar depiction of figures (destroyed) and a goat between three fruit trees decorates a rectangular panel in the nave of St. Paul's church at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 2002: 544)

In the presbytery of the North Church at Esbus two levels of mosaics were discovered (Piccirillo 1993: 250, fig. 425). On the upper mosaic, preserved in front and at the sides of the altar, the west panel shows a vase from which two vines sprout, flanked by two gazelles, trees, and plants. A singular depiction occurs on the mosaic pavement of the upper mosaic in Priest John's chapel (Piccirillo 1993: 174, fig. 228). The upper, eastern part of the central panel shows a central structure consisting of four decorated columns surmounted by a tympanum decorated with a conch (pl. II.3a). The structure is flanked by a pair of peacocks, fruit trees, and two roosters placed on the corners of the tympanum. Two candlesticks (or *tymiate-ria*) are inside between the columns. A dedicatory inscription lies between the two inner columns.

The antithetic composition is usually rendered within a panel. In most of the heraldic designs the animals are identical, except for slight differences in features and poses (pls. IX.1-2,4). Notable in the antithetic designs on synagogue

mosaics is the pronounced unidentical symmetry depictions of flanking animals and menoroth (see below). Human figures flanking trees appear only in the heraldic compositions of mosaics at St. Paul's church and Church of the Rivers at Umm al-Rasas. A heraldic panel depicting inscriptions and menorah flanked by lions occurs only on synagogue pavements (pls. IX.1, XI.1a); as noted, the inscriptions on church mosaics are flanked by various horned animals.

B. *Animals Recognized as Enemies Now Peacefully Portrayed*

Heraldic and flanking animals, sometimes presenting the confrontation of beasts and their prey, are rendered on several mosaics.

Pairs of animals that are acknowledged enemies, accompanied by the inscribed biblical verse Isaiah 65: 25, are peacefully portrayed facing each other on two 7th- or 8th-century partly destroyed mosaic pavements (see Chap. IV). The main panel in the centre mosaic of the *Beth midrash* at Meroth shows the remnants of a lamb on the right and a wolf on the left flanking an amphora (pl. IV.8a; fig. IV-22). The first part of the Hebrew verse, זאיב וטלה ירעו כאחד 'The wolf and the lamb will graze together' (Isaiah 65: 25) is inscribed (Ilan and Damati 1984-85; 1985; 1987: 77-80; Talgam 1987: 149-152; Ilan 1989: 33-34). A similar vignette of flanking animals accompanied by the second part of the verse was originally depicted in the room north of the Acropolis church at Ma'in (De Vaux 1938: 227, fig. 2; Piccirillo 1993: 201, figs. 301, 302, 312). The original scene showed a zebu and a lion flanking a tree; this was damaged and later repaired (pl. IV.8b). Above at the border of the panel the biblical phrase 'And the lion will eat [straw] like the ox' (Isaiah 65: 25) is inscribed in Greek.

This depiction portrays Isaiah's vision of the End of Days, representing complete peace all over nature; the rise of messianic peace is implied by the illustration of animals by nature enemies at peace with one another. It expresses a conceptual perception of messianic vision of peace rather than a biblical narrative story. Piccirillo contends that the scene signifies 'the messianic reign of peace as foretold by Isaiah and thought to have been realized by Christ'. Perhaps it is meant to express some kind of prayer for peace (Naveh 1989: 305).

A heraldic composition of two bulls flanking a temple/sanctuary image and probably two gazelles and two flower clusters (pl. II.3b) occurs on the rectangular mosaic panel in front of the altar of Theotokos Chapel, a lateral chapel inside the Memorial of Moses on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 151, fig. 200; 1998: 300, 302). Above the scene is a biblical citation inscribed in Greek: 'Then they shall lay calves upon thy altar' (Psalms 51: 21). This scene might be a symbolic representation of the conception of sacrifice. A comparable scene of a pair of bulls flanking an altar with the same accompanying from Psalms in Greek is seen on the western panel of the nave of the Sts. Lot and Procopius church (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 62, 105, pl. 34,3; Piccirillo 1993: 164-5, fig. 213). The other pairs of heraldic animals are two hares flanking a rock and a pair of deer between four diagonally placed fruit trees (pl. IX.3; see discussion below). The flanking animals apparently portray a symbolic notion as verse 21 is the closing verse of Psalm 51, and it contains a prayer for the future of rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and renewal of worship there.

These scenes of flanking animals, Isaiah 11: 6-8; 65: 25 and Psalms 51: 21 the only verses inscribed, are ostensibly symbolic images which describe future visions of the messianic peace and renewal of worship in Jerusalem.

A variation of the motif appears as a group of animals confronting each other, but it is not accompanied by the biblical citations: the pavement border of a Byzantine building (church or villa?) at Caesarea shows several pairs of a wild animal and a tame animal, separated by fruit trees (Avi-Yonah 1958: 61; Reich 1985: 211, fig. 2, pl. LII 4,7). Among them are a bear and a boar, a horse and a deer, a lion and a bull, and an elephant (figs. VII-3; XII-14).

The mosaic at El-Maqerqesh consists of a main rectangular carpet surrounded by a border. The carpet is divided into a central vertical strip of four circular medallions containing the personification of the four seasons and ten octagonal panels surrounded by various geometrical designs (Vincent 1922; Avi-Yonah 1932: 146-147, No. 23). Each of the ten octagonal panels, set in two rows of five octagons each, shows a pair consisting of a wild beast and its animal prey facing each other in position on a ground line and surrounded by plants (fig. VIII-3): the five pairs are a stag and a hunting dog, a lioness and a ram, a boar and

a bear, a lion and a destroyed animal, possibly a bull, and a leopard and an antelope.

A lion and a bull in confrontation appear on several pavements: at the Beth 'Alpha synagogue pavement a lion and a bull flank the inscription (fig. IX-1d); a similar episode of a bull and a lion appears in an intercolumnar panel on the Martyr church mosaic at Beth She'an (Mazor and Bar Nathan 1998: 28-30). A similar confrontation of a lion and bull is rendered on the south aisle the Holy Martyrs church at Tayibat al-Imam in Hamah (Zaqzuq and Piccirillo 1999: pl. VIII).

A lion confronts a bull on several mosaics in Jordan. In the panel of the northern aisle of St. George's church these animals face each other outside the inhabited vine scrolls medallion; the lion is in a threatening pose (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 74-5, 105-6, pl. 29,3; Piccirillo 1993: 178, fig. 246). On the lower mosaic of the Baptistry chapel in the cathedral at Madaba three pairs of animals facing each other among vine branches: a lion and a bull, a pair of gazelles, and a pair of rams (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 121, 122). An interesting depiction of a pair of confronting sea monsters represented as lion and bull is found on the surrounding part of the Hippolytus Hall (Piccirillo 1993: 66, figs. 3,16).

In a diagonally designed pavement, namely the Mosaic of the Paradise at Madaba and the Deacon Thomas church at 'Uyun Musa, a lion and a bull face each other among other flanking animals (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 139, 266) (see below).

Some scholars maintain that these scenes might be presented to evoke the notion of peace, friendship, and the End of Days even without the appropriate citations. Levi (1947, I: 317-319) contends that the motifs of animals in heraldic posture are an allegory and represent the Golden Age or a hope to return to Paradise. Saller and Bagatti (1949: 105-106) maintain that though the lion and bull and other beasts and their animal prey in confrontation are scenes copied from pagan patterns meaning a struggle, the motif in the church illustrates the Isaiah text of the Peaceful Kingdom even if the inscription is absent.

Toynbee (1973: 287) suggests that the confronting beasts, animals, birds, and fishes in square panels in alternate rows on the mosaic in the nave of the SS. Cosmas and Damian church at Gerasa is a description of Paradise. Maguire (1987: 35) argues that the picture of some of the animals leaping runs counter to the account of Paradise

in which animals are at peace with each other. He prefers to interpret the composition as a rendition of the living things of Creation shown in their habitat in the air, on land, and at sea.

Yet these animal episodes could be based on observations of nature where beasts naturally attack and fight with other animals; or these heraldic or flanking animals were copied from a catalogue or pattern book, and were made on mosaics without any symbolic meaning.

C. Pairs of Animals Facing Each Other in a Diagonal Composition

The diagonal composition was one of the arrangements meant to organize the floor as a whole unit achieving several viewpoints; it was perhaps derived from Roman groin vaults; it might have belonged to a class of pavement types imitating ceiling compositions (Lavin 1963: 219-222, figs. 55-58). This form of composition probably originated in North Africa, in the latter part of the 2nd century, with the diagonal vine-scroll type at the villa of the Laberii at Oudna. It grew in popularity during the 3rd century, being found on some pavements from Kourba near Carthage, El-Djem, Hippo, Banasa, and Thuburbo Majus. Trees as a dividing device are common on North Africa mosaic pavements (Lavin 1963: 190, 222, note 191).

A noteworthy example of the diagonal composition appears on mosaics at Antioch: on the Megalopsychia mosaic in the Yakto complex (mid-5th century) (fig. VII.7). The field is divided by diagonal trees springing from the corners into separate scenes of hunters attacking wild beasts in the outside square; beasts assault animals in the inner square. In the Worcester Hunt a similar diagonal composition is depicted (Levi 1947, I: 324, 363-4; fig. 136, 151; Lavin 1963: 187, 190, figs. 2, 6).

This scheme becomes a characteristic feature of pavement decoration during the 6th century in the eastern Mediterranean. Among the trees, flanking animals, usually identical, are portrayed, sometimes in different postures. In some examples a different pair is rendered.

Several renditions of this distinctive design of pairs of animals facing each other between four diagonal fruit trees meeting in the centre is found in a secular building at Caesarea and in a number of mosaic floors in churches in Jordan.

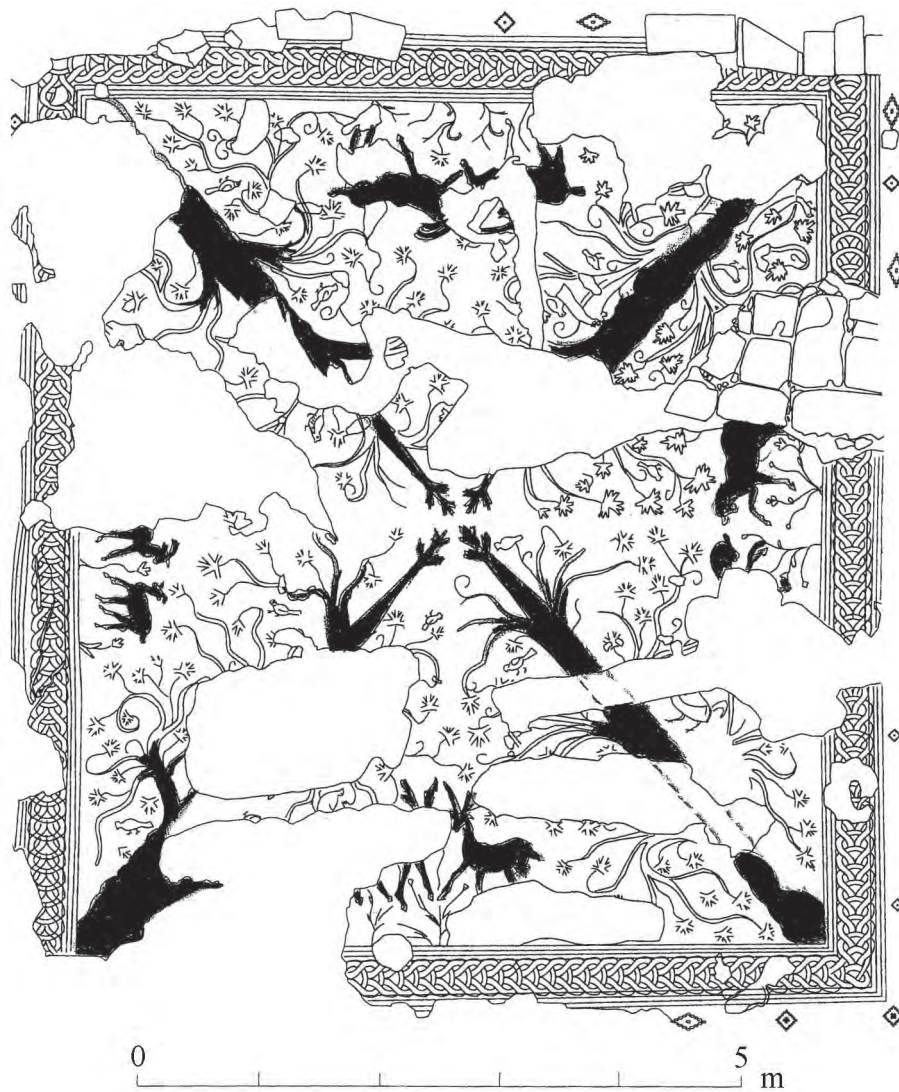


Figure IX-6. Caesarea mosaic pavement.

In Caesarea the scene is on a mosaic pavement almost completely preserved in the hall of the courtyard building (stratum IVb, Area NN; Patrich et al. 1999: 97-98, fig. 33). The main field consists of a square composition of four long vine-tree trunks inserted in each of the four corners of the square, set diagonally, meeting in the centre to form four triangles; within them, two horned animals face each other: pairs of ibexes, deer, goats, and stags (fig. IX-6). The rest of the carpet is completely filled with vine trellises, leaves, and a few small birds.

Comparable designs in Jordan are the following. The western panel of the nave of Sts. Lot and Procopius church at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 61-63, 105; fig. 7; pls. 20,1,2;

34,3; Piccirillo 1993: 164-5, fig. 213; 1998: 346) has a comparable diagonal composition (pl. IX.3). The western field of the nave (oriented in the opposite direction from the eastern field) consists of four diagonal stylized fruit trees that meet in the centre to form four triangles, in each of which a pair of animals face each other. The most important is pair of bulls, each the distinctively different, flanking a small octagonal altar with flames of fire; below the scene is an accompanying biblical verse in Greek: 'Then they shall lay calves upon thine altar' (Psalms 51: 21). The bulls perhaps represent animals for sacrifice on the altar (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 105). The other animals are a pair of hares flanking a rock, one crouching, a pair of wild goats (destroyed), and a pair of

long-horned deer drinking from a spring, which Saller and Bagatti (1949: 103, pl. 20,1) argue is 'the baptismal water'.

The mosaic in the second chapel of the Apostles church portrays two pairs of horned animals and a pair of hares flanking plants. They are between four fruit trees, each rising in one of the corners. One side has a dedicatory inscription (Piccirillo 1993: 106, figs. 89, 95). The Mosaic of Paradise at Madaba is a square with fruit trees placed diagonally and meeting in the centre with a medallion with a face. Down the sides between the trees, pairs of non-symmetrical rendered animals face each other: two hares, two rams, and two ducks or geese. On the north side a lion and a zebu flank a plant (Piccirillo 1993: 128, figs. 137, 139). This is interpreted as a scene of *filia* (friendship) among animals, perhaps 'a symbolic representation of the biblical Eden or Paradise'.

A variation of this composition appears on the presbytery mosaic panel at the Deacon Thomas church (Piccirillo 1993: 187, figs. 266, 269). Here the four fruit trees are vertical. A lion faces a bull/zebu in the lower part, each animal in front of a tree, and a ram is in the upper part.

Another variation occurs on the platform mosaic at the west end of the Martyr Theodore chapel in the cathedral at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 117, figs. 110, 111). A square panel contains four fruit trees dividing the space, and only two pairs of animals are between the two pairs of trees. Two lions (only the rear part of one is preserved) flank a tree in the eastern space and a pair of deer flank a tree in the western space. The pairs of beasts are interpreted by Dunbabin (1999: 198) as 'allusions to Paradise and to sacrifice'.

Interestingly, on all these pavements the same animals face each other, except for the lion and the bull on the Mosaic of Paradise and in Deacon Thomas church.

D. *Unidentical Symmetrical Composition*

Symmetry is a distinctive feature of the art of the ancient world. Antithetic or heraldic symmetrical composition—a central object flanked by a pair of animals or various items, which occurs in many figurative and decorative subjects, is one of the basic elements of Oriental art (Avi-Yonah 1948: 144; Hachlili 1989: 65, figs. 1-3). As a rule the symmetry is intensified by the flanking animals

or objects being identical. But sometimes this composition is unconventional: (1) motifs have unidentical symmetry; or (2) the design is non-symmetrical in the depiction of different flanking motifs (Hachlili 1988: 376-79; 1989: 65-67).

A non-symmetrical design feature is found in the entrance panel of the mosaic pavement of the Beth 'Alpha synagogue, where the inscription is flanked by a lion on one side and by a bull on the other (pl. IX.1, fig. IX-1). The animals were apparently selected for their symbolic value (Avi-Yonah 1981a: 51).

Most frequently antithetic designs are composed symmetrically, but in some cases aesthetic symmetry is realized even though some objects or animals, are clearly not identical, and are intentionally represented dissimilarly. Impressive examples of this tendency are found on mosaic pavements of synagogues, as detailed next.

Several panels depict a Torah shrine flanked by menoroth and ritual objects in a symmetrical composition which contains dissimilar flanking objects. For example, almost all the heraldic elements in the Beth 'Alpha Torah shrine panel are not identical (pl. II.2a): the menoroth flanking the Ark differ, especially in their bases and in the lamps on the bar; each of the four ritual objects is portrayed differently; the two lions appear similar but have different tails; and the birds are unlike. In Hammath Tiberias synagogue the upper panel has a symmetrical design (pl. II.1a), but even here the two shofaroth and incense shovels are dissimilar in their details. At Sepphoris, the Torah shrine panel details are almost identical but the bases of the menoroth differ in scale and size; the ethrogim are positioned dissimilarly (pl. II.1b). The menoroth in the Susiya pavement (pl. II.2b) are entirely unlike, particularly in their branches and bases. In the centre of the zodiac panel at Beth 'Alpha (pl. III.3) the horses, two on each side of the sun god, are rendered symmetrically but are portrayed differently, particularly in their head decoration. The entrance panel at Huseifa (pl. IX.4a; fig. IX-4) shows two wholly different menoroth: one has pottery lamps whereas glass lamps are seen on the other; the branches too are unlike.

Animals flank inscriptions, menoroth, and the Ark on several synagogue mosaic pavements. These animals are usually similar, although differences in details can be distinguished. The Hammath Tiberias pavement shows lions facing each other across the inscription (pl. IX.1a; fig. IX-1a).

They differ in facial details such as their ears. Also, an inscription at the Tiberias synagogue is flanked by unidentical lulavim and ethrogim (fig. IX-5). The Beth Shean small synagogue has an inscription flanked by birds (fig. IX-3b) which differ in size, the one on the left being the larger. The biblical scene at Na'aran of Daniel flanked by lions presents the lions symmetrically, but each has a different position of the tail (fig. IV-16): the left lion has an upward-turned tail, whereas the right lion has his tail between his hind legs. The entrance panel at Na'aran depicts two unidentical (repaired) stags facing each other (pl. X.1a). The 'En Gedi central emblem shows birds symmetrically placed, but with differences in size and stance (pl. IX.4b).

Inhabited scroll pavements of groups I-III (see Chap. VI) sometimes contain antithetic designs with unidentical animals or details. At Gaza-Maiumas some of the medallions are inhabited by similar heraldic animals (pl. VI.1, rows 5, 7, 9); even these, however, show differences: the leopards in row 9 have unidentical tails. In row 3, different animals flank a dog—a lioness and her cub on one side and a tigress on the other. On the upper part of the Ma'on synagogue pavement the lions flanking the menorah differ in mane and heads (pl. VI.2). The two elephants in row 8 are rendered differently from each other, particularly their trunks (fig. XII-13).

Heraldic symmetry with unidentical elements is also encountered on inhabited vine scroll pavements in churches: at Shellal (fig. VI-6, rows 4,7) the flanking animals are different; dissimilar birds are rendered on the 'Armenian mosaic' in Jerusalem (fig. VI-7, in rows 2,5,6,9). On the mosaic at el-Maqerqesh chapel the last row has different

flanking birds (fig. VI-11). Different flanking animals and scenes are found on the Be'er Shem'a mosaic pavement (pl. VI.5, rows 5,6 8, 9), or the same animals have unidentical postures or details (pl. VI.5, rows 1, 2, 4, 10). At Petra church many of the flanking animals in the lower half of the mosaic are portrayed in unidentical postures. Usually one crouches and the other stands (pl. VI.6,7, rows 2,7,8,10, 12,16) whereas the flanking animals and birds in the upper half of the mosaic are rendered in an identical stance (pl. VI.6,7, rows 17-25, 27, 28). A particularly common method of stressing the unidentical character of these designs is depicting the animals' tails differently.

On mosaic floors in Jordan flanking pairs of animals and birds are frequently illustrated in an identical pose. But on some pavements though the same flanking animals are have unidentical postures. Particularly notable are the vignettes with unidentical flanking lion and bull on the diagonal designs (pl. IX.3).

The antithetic symmetrical design was an integral part of synagogal art and to some extent also of church pavements. This tendency in the heraldic design must have been intentional as it would have been just as easy to portray perfectly identical designs. Nor should it be put down to unskillful artistry, as some designs do use symmetrical patterns. Jews in particular adopted the style of unidentical symmetry style intentionally. One may conjecture that it was associated with a desire to avoid competition with a perfection that only God could achieve. Yet it may have been due to the character of Jewish and Christian popular art, and to the artists' standards of composition and their cultural environment, which did not traditionally demand perfection.

ICONOCLASM ON MOSAIC PAVEMENTS OF SYNAGOGUES AND CHURCHES

The terms iconoclasm and the iconophobic or iconoclasm crisis refer to the systematic destruction of images of living creatures, human or animal, from the decorative repertoire (see the comprehensive study by Schick 1995: 180-219). Iconoclasm was expressed in deliberate damage to figurative motifs on a number of synagogue and church mosaics in Palaestina and Arabia. The damaged figures included isolated animals and birds in geometric compositions. In most churches the damage appears in scenes of combat and hunting, pastoral events, Nilotic scenes, classical personifications, and portraits of donors. The figures were completely eliminated or methodically damaged, and in some cases only destroyed in part. Occasionally some figures were left intact, and in others the outline is still evident:

- Several mosaic pavements were disfigured and not repaired, namely those in the Na'aran synagogue (pl. III.4a; X.1a; fig. X.1), Mahat el-Urdi church, Beth Guvrin (figs. IV.24; X.3), and the Kursi Basilica (pl. X.1c). The mosaic in the New Baptistry chapel in the Memorial of Moses basilica on Mt. Nebo and the mosaic panel of the Theotokos chapel there sustained damage that was never repaired. Yet the Old Diakonikon Baptistry mosaic in the same basilica suffered no iconoclastic damage.
- Faces and heads were usually disfigured, damaged and crudely repaired, generally with tesserae of the original size, or at times of different size, on the pavements of several churches: at 'Ein Hanniya, the southern aisle of Beth Loya church (pls. VI.4; X.1b); at Jabaliyah, the 5th-century Diakonikon mosaic (pl. VII.10) and the 8th-century church pavements (pl. X.4); the Madaba Map church; the Martyr Theodore chapel and the Al-Khadir church at Madaba; the raised sanctuaries at the New Baptistry chapel and Theotokos chapel; Massuh upper church; all of the Umm al-Rasas churches: Bishop Sergius, Church of

the Lions, Church of the Rivers, Church of the Palm Tree, Priest Wa'il, St. Paul and St. Stephen.

- These pavements were apparently damaged carelessly, with no real aim of disfiguring the whole image; frequently many figures were not touched, including some animals and humans. Repairs were poor, often just filling in the part gouged out with tesserae of mixed size and no consideration of the aesthetics of the restored design. Apparently the repair was done mainly so that the building's pavement could be used again.
- Pavements disfigured and properly repaired, but usually with different, neutral motifs, seldom with a variation of the original motif, are found in the synagogues at Susiya (pl. X.2) and the entrance panel at Na'aran (pl. X.1a); in the churches of 'Asida (fig. X.2); in Herodium eastern church; on the nave mosaic of Theotokos chapel at Wadi 'Ayn al-Kanish (pl. X.3); in the Acropolis church at Ma'in, especially a room north of the church.
- The pavements of this group were almost completely transformed by changes in many of the motifs and details, although the general design was preserved. In most cases some of the original patterns and scheme can still be discerned. Several of the disfigured pavements reflect careful and proper restoration, perhaps done at the actual time of the disfigurement with attention to replacing motifs and details.

The iconoclastic work was done with precision. The outline was sometimes still visible even though all the tesserae were removed, and replaced by different representations. The damaged area was either filled haphazardly with larger tesserae, or the same polychrome tesserae were re-used. This possibly indicates that in some cases the disfiguring and the repair were undertaken concurrently (Schick 1995: 194-195).

A. Iconoclasm in Synagogues

Several synagogue pavements suffered from iconoclasm probably in the mid- or late 6th century. At the Na'aran synagogue all the mosaic images of humans and animals suffered extensive damage (Vincent 1961; Benoit 1961; Schick 1995: 203-4; Fine 2000: 189 with some errors in the described damage). In the upper panel in the nave, the biblical scene of Daniel in the Lions' Den was almost completely destroyed; only Daniel's arms and rear parts of the lions survived (figs. II-4; IV-16). In the central zodiac panel the signs and the seasons were carefully and methodically removed (pls. III.4a; X.1a; fig. X.1). Only the outlines of most of the signs survived. Three were eradicated entirely, but all the identifying Hebrew inscriptions were left untouched. In the third panel, with a geometric design of circles and hexagonals containing animals and various items, all the animals were damaged while the fruits and objects were unharmed. This mosaic was not repaired.

However, the small panel rendering a pair of gazelles at the entrance of the Na'aran synagogue was carefully repaired with cubes of different sizes copying and replacing the damaged parts of the two animals (pl. X.1a).

The undamaged Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions and the panel of the Torah shrine and menoroth at Na'aran, as well as the extensive but precise iconoclastic disfigurement of the mosaic of the nave, seem to suggest that Jews executed the iconoclastic damage. The lack of repair to the nave mosaic implies that the damage was possibly done at a later phase, when further use of the mosaic in its damaged form was not possible, though the excavation yielded insufficient data to verify this suggestion.

The mosaic at the Susiya synagogue shows damage and repair all over it (Gutman et al. 1981, fig. on p.123; Yeivin 1989: 95, fig. 1, 16; Fine 2000: 190). The mosaic panel in front of the second bema shows the Torah shrine flanked by a pair of menoroth and a pair of deer (pls. II.2b, X.2a); only the deer on the right was destroyed, with just a small part of the animal's body crudely repaired with different cubes.

The nave mosaic was divided into three panels: the large eastern panel, with a geometric design of squares, lozenges, and octagons originally containing birds, was damaged and crudely repaired. In the central panel the zodiac images originally covered this part of the floor; of these, only a small

section of two zodiac signs and a wing of a season survived at the south end (pl. X.2b); the panel was covered over and replaced by a geometric design with a large rosette in its centre.

The western panel apparently showed Daniel in the Lions' Den originally. Of this, only remains of a human hand, lions' bodies and the inscription לָאֵל [דָּנִיֵּל] [*Dani]el* survived (pl. X.2c). The nave mosaic was framed with a meander pattern alternating with metopes filled with birds, fruit, and flora motifs; the birds were damaged and crudely repaired. Two chancel screens found in the Susiya synagogue also show obvious signs of iconoclasm. Both show a tree flanked by animals, whose heads are damaged (Yeivin 1989: 94, figs. 8, 9). The Susiya mosaic, in contrast to the Na'aran pavement, was repaired at the time of, or a little later than, its iconoclastic destruction. This enabled the community to continue to use the Susiya synagogue floor in later periods.

Several architectural fragments at the Meroth synagogue show iconoclastic damage, such as the three arch stones on which the human figures were disfigured (Ilan and Damati 1987: 47,76). The damage to several parts of the mosaics of this synagogue is regarded as deliberate by some scholars. One instance given is found on the mosaic floor of the figure of David with Goliath weapons (Ilan 1989: 24-26), has had his eyes taken out (pl. IV.6), perhaps intentionally (Fine 2000: 189). However, at a later stage (late 5th or early 6th century) the floor of hewn flagstones that had been laid over the mosaic was lifted to expose the mosaic. The eyes could have been damaged then, or at any time much later. Another mosaic pavement found in a side room (suggested as a *beth midrash*) of the Meroth synagogue (stage III, first half of the 7th century: Ilan 1989: 31-33, figs. 17, 18; Talgam 1987: 153) was mostly destroyed, but a lamb's head and a wolf flanking a large vase accompanied by the Hebrew inscription of Isaiah 65: 25 are still visible (pl. IV.8a). That the lamb's head survived might indicate that the iconoclasts did not do their work thoroughly. Similar damage was wrought on a stone lintel at this building's entrance: the heads and bodies of two eagles shown there flanking a wreath suffered iconoclastic injury, but the accompanying Hebrew inscription was undamaged.

Further destruction involves several defaced figurative reliefs, screens, and sculpture. This is observed at Galilean synagogues such as Bar'am, Capernaum, and Tiberias (Schick 1995: 202,

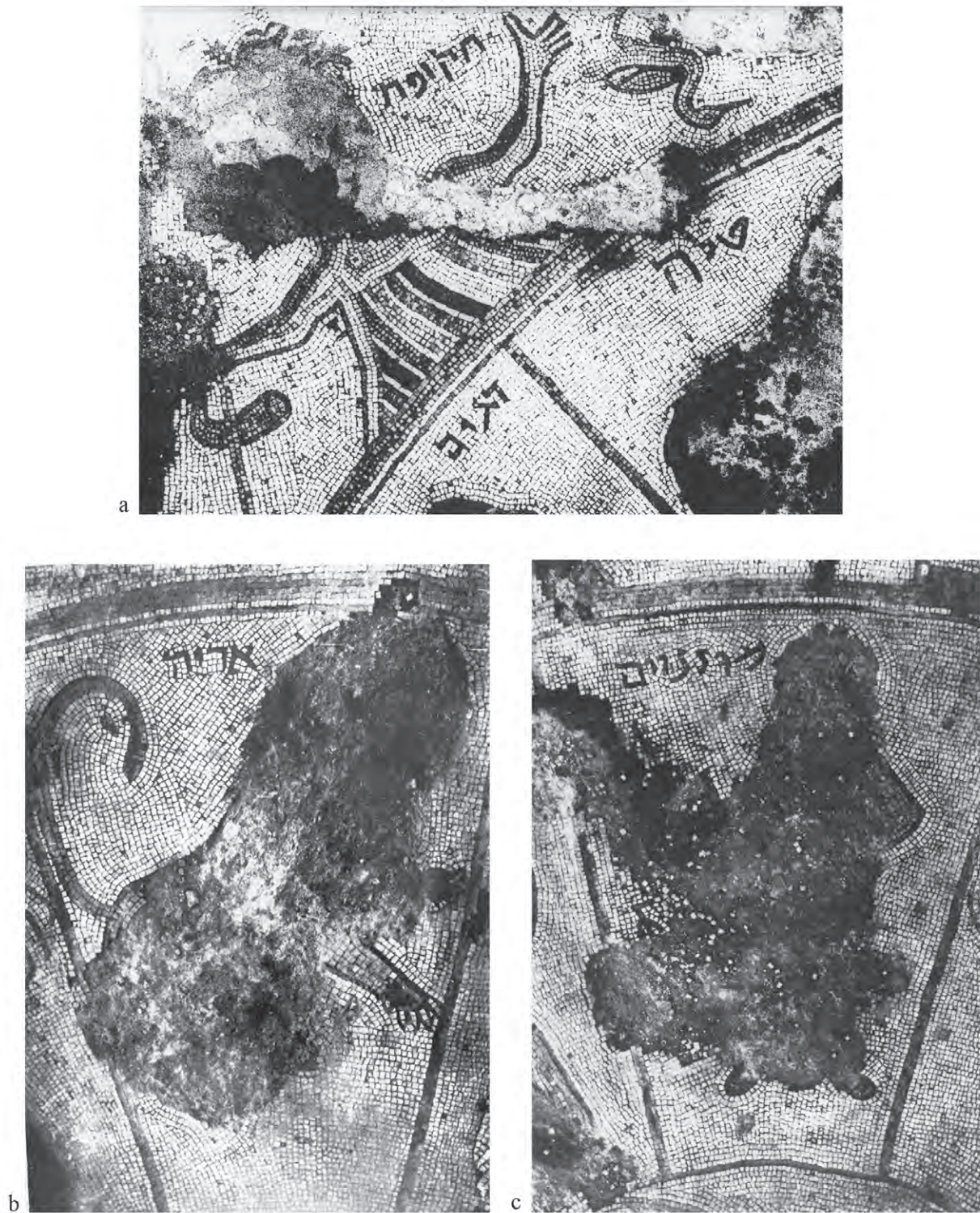


Figure X-1. Na'aran synagogue: disfigured zodiac signs.

Table 13). At Korazim a large number of defaced animals and human images on reliefs and sculpture are found (Yeivin 2000: 14*-18*, figs. 77, 81, 103-106, 125, 126, 130, 137; pls. 6,1-3; 14,5; 15,3-7; 25, 1-3; 26,1: May 2000: 51*-54*). In most of these examples the images were carefully removed. It is not clear when the damage was done since many of these architectural fragments were discovered on the floor inside and outside the synagogue building, while others were found in second use.

In fact, very few synagogue mosaics suffered iconoclastic damage; each is an isolated case. Na'aran, with its painstaking disfigurement and lack of repairs seems to suggest that the local Jewish community probably carried out the iconoclasm damage probably at a later phase, which did not allow further use of the mosaic. By contrast, the original animated mosaic at the Susiya synagogue was covered over and replaced by geometric designs into which small sections of the original pavement were integrated. The local Jewish community undoubtedly executed this change.

More iconoclastic damage is detected on figurative reliefs and sculpture from Galilean synagogues, and on chancel screens from various sites. This might indicate that Jews were less concerned about the animated mosaic pavements that were trodden on, and were more apprehensive about the architectural decorated elements, which were literally looked up to.

B. *Iconoclasm in Churches*

Iconoclastic damage was more extensive on church mosaic pavements confined to some specific areas in Palaestina and Arabia:

At the 'Asida church many of the images on the nave mosaic pavement were replaced by various plants and flowers, probably with the same tesserae. Especially notable are the lion and flamingos, of which some undamaged parts have survived (figs. VI-3, X-2) (Baramki and Avi-Yonah 1934: 19, pls. X, XI 1,2).

The mosaic carpets in the northern and southern aisles of Mahat el Urdi church had a geometric design of octagonal panels alternating with squares filled with human and animal figures and objects (figs. IV.24, X-3). Most of the figures suffered damage, which was not repaired (Bagatti 1972; Baramki 1972).

The central carpet of the church at Beth Loya (Patrich and Tsafirir 1993) is decorated with an inhabited vine scroll design bordered by an inhabited acanthus scroll (pl. VI.4). The aisles have a geometric design of alternating circles and squares inhabited by animal and human figures. These figures, and those in the large medallions on the southern aisle, were damaged by iconoclastic activity. However, the axial column contained objects such as a double basket, bowls full of water or fruit, and an amphora: these were not damaged (pls. VI.15d, 17e).

The mosaic field on the nave of the 'Ein Haniya church (Baramki 1934) was also decorated with an inhabited vine scroll design containing objects, animals and birds. These too were disfigured at the time of the iconoclastic movement.

At Herodium eastern church, the nave is decorated with an inhabited vine scroll, of which only three rows of three columns have survived (Netzer et al. 1993: 225). The first row has an acanthus leaf in the central medallion originally flanked by a peacock, then possibly destroyed by iconoclasts and repaired as a leaf.

The mosaic pavements in the aisles of the church at Kursi (Tzaferis 1972: 176-177) show a diagonally arranged design of large and small interlacing squares; the large squares contain leaves, fruits, flowers, animals, and birds (pl. X.1c). Almost all the animated images were disfigured during the iconoclastic crisis and seem not to have been repaired.

The Jabaliyah church has several mosaic pavements (Humbert 1999: 216-217; 2000: 122-125); many of the human and animal figures on the Diakonikon mosaic there, dated to the mid-5th century, suffered at the hands of the iconoclasts, though some other parts, even human faces, were not damaged (pl. VII.10). The disfigured ones were carelessly repaired with tesserae, without regard for the original figures. The northern building was a Baptistery and its mosaic suffered damage, perhaps not by iconoclasts (fig. VIII.1). The church central nave was laid at the beginning of the 8th century). The pavement of inhabited vine scrolls shows damaged representations of birds, wild game, and rustic scenes; the north aisle was paved with a geometric design including eight squares containing damaged pairs of animals facing each other (pl. X.4) (Humbert 1999: 216; 2000: 121, 126). The artist's creation is of excellent quality and beautifully drawn, which attests that the Gaza Christian community was still in

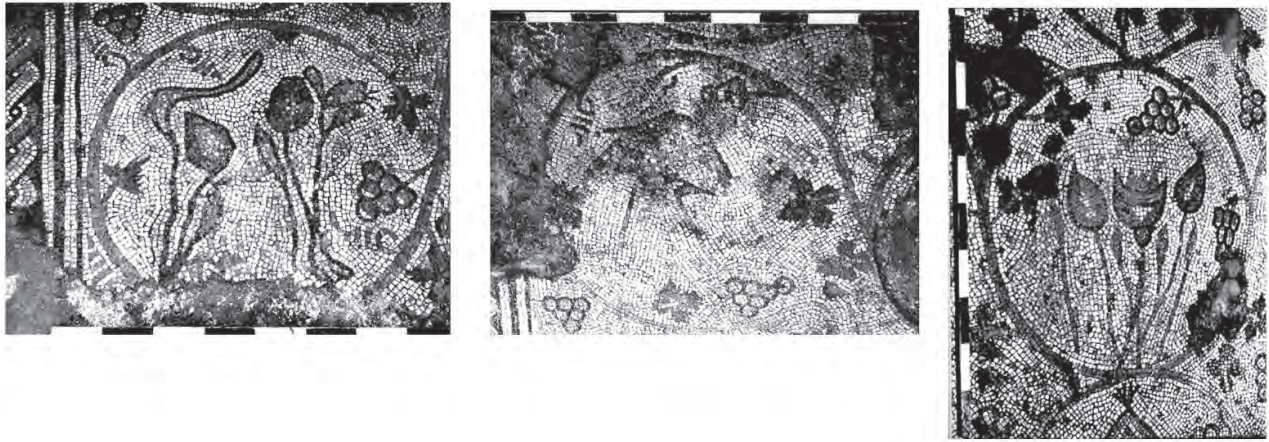


Figure X-2. 'Asida damaged mosaic fragment.



Figure X-3. Mahat el Urdi church, northern aisle.

existence in the 8th century and was able to produce an outstanding pavement. Humbert (1999: 216) argues that the late dating of the mosaic indicates that the iconoclasts did their damage later than previously thought, that is, after 750, and it was 'associated with Abbasid conservatives'.

Many churches in Jordan were disfigured and damaged by the iconoclastic crisis.

At Madaba only four pavements suffered from iconoclasm. On the mosaic of Madaba Map church, four human figures in two boats, two in each, were disfigured and crudely repaired with no attention to the original depictions; on the same mosaic, in the scene of a lion chasing a gazelle in the plains of Moab only the lion was damaged and randomly repaired. The gazelle and the fishes were not touched (Avi-Yonah 1954: 24-25; Piccirillo 1993: figs. 62). At Al-Khadir church (Piccirillo 1993: 129, figs. 142-156) almost all images in the three panels were disfigured: yet tesserae were removed only from parts of them, and the outline was left untouched. At Martyr Theodore chapel at the western end of the cathedral, some but not all of the animals and humans suffered disfigurement (Piccirillo 1993: 117, figs. 109-115).

In Wadi 'Ayn al-Kanish on Mt. Nebo the nave mosaic of Theotokos chapel suffered extensive disfigurement of the inhabited vine scrolls, intended to change its original animated appearance (Piccirillo 1998: 359-364; Ognibene 1998: 376-382; figs. 7-9), which showed a scheme similar to Group II of inhabited vine scrolls (Tab. VI-1). There had been five columns and seven rows (pl. X.3). The axial column contained objects such as a basket, a bowl, a vase full of fruit, and flowers: these were not damaged. In the central scroll of row 4 the rare rendition of a phoenix was strangely spared also, as were several other birds and animal parts in the other rows integrated into the design. The axial row was originally flanked symmetrically by alternating birds and animals in each row: these did suffer extensive intentional disfigurement. They were replaced by plants, trees, grapes, and plain tesserae. The nave alterations were made during the restructuring in 762, and consisted of covering over the two bottom rows with geometric patterns and a central inscription, and reducing the number of vine scrolls from seven to five, with motifs either disfigured or modified. The tesserae were apparently removed with care, and in some medallions it is still possible to trace the original outline of the animated images and details of the restoration. Note especially the phoenix.

The nave mosaic and the two lateral chapels of the Siyagha, Memorial of Moses, were the only disfigured pavements on Mt. Nebo, while the Old Diakonikon in the same church was not damaged. The nave mosaic consists of three panels of which the second, probably portraying a hunting scene, was almost completely destroyed; in the third panel with a geometric design of squares containing fruit and animals, most of the animals were ruined by iconoclasts (Piccirillo 1993: 148-151, figs. 197, 200; 1998: 300-304, figs. 74-76). The apsidal area of New Baptistery chapel, a lateral chapel of the Siyagha Memorial of Moses, shows a panel of disfigured animals flanking trees. The repair is poor, probably done with the same tesserae (Piccirillo 1993: 150). The mosaic panel of the sanctuary of the later Theotokos chapel depicts disfigured but recognizable animals flanking a temple and flowers (pl. II.4b). Note the perfect preservation of the gazelle on the left (Piccirillo 1993: 151, fig. 200; 1998: 300).

The Acropolis church at Ma'in (Piccirillo 1993: 201, figs. 301, 302, 312) shows iconoclastic damage on the eastern mosaic panel; it originally depicted a lion and zebu flanking a tree, and representing the verse Isaiah 65: 25 inscribed in Greek above the scene (pl. IV.8b). These images were disfigured and replaced by a vase and plants on the right and a bush on the left barely covering the original legs, paws and tail of the lion. The central tree foliage was also substituted.

Iconoclasm damage with crude repairs is found on the pavement of six churches at Gerasa and on five at Rihab (Schick 1995: Tables 10, 11).

Seven church pavements at Umm al-Rasas likewise sustained iconoclastic damage. The human and animal images were systematically destroyed at these churches: Bishop Sergius, the Church of the Lions, the Church of the Palm Tree, the Church of the Rivers, Priest Wa'il, St. Paul and St. Stephen. Damage at these churches was partial (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 338, 358, 365-400). The Church of the Lions experienced a strange kind of iconoclasm (Piccirillo 1995: 394, fig. 8): the human and animal figures in the main nave were all destroyed, but in the presbytery the iconoclasts disfigured the two bulls flanking the altar; in the panel they damaged the gazelle on the left and the bodies of the two lions, while the gazelle on the right and some birds were spared.

The church of St. Paul, dated to the second half of the 6th century, was used at least until the first half of the 8th century (Piccirillo 1997,

2002: 548-549). The nave mosaic pavement was damaged by the iconophobic crisis. The animated images were almost completely removed and were carefully replaced with the same tesserae or others of local stone.

In sum, all the Umm al-Rasas mosaics were damaged by iconoclasts, although some were disfigured by careful removal of the tesserae only from the head and the outline was left. In most of these cases the figures were repaired very crudely. For some reason figures of humans or animals on the same mosaic were left intact (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 304,389, 393; Schick 1995: 193-195).

C. *Conclusions*

The main issues regarding the iconoclastic crisis are where, who, why, and when these activities were performed. Various responses are presented:

Where

Iconoclasm was limited to specific areas, certain churches, and few synagogues in Palaestina and Arabia. It involved damage to the ornamentations on reliefs and mosaics. No evidence of iconoclastic damage is observed on any mosaics in Syria-Phoenicia or North Africa, except perhaps for a few cases in Egypt (Schick 1995: 205-207). Schick suggests that perhaps iconoclasm ‘in Palaestina is due to the Christians here being Chalcedonians rather than Monophysites, as in the adjacent areas’. The nature of the damage attests that this destruction in these places was deliberate.

Who

Iconoclastic damage and disfigurement affected and characterized mosaics of churches. Ognibene (1998: 384) argues, ‘the phenomenon ...generally defined as “iconoclasm”...perhaps should be more correctly considered as a manifestation of “iconophobic intolerance”’. Few synagogue pavements suffered from iconoclasm. In many of the church mosaics the state of the destruction is complex: some of the disfigured and damaged pavements were repaired crudely or carefully, and others were left unrestored. In many cases the iconoclasts were conceivably the clergies or the original local community of Christians or Jews. This is attested by the fact that the mosaic pavements were disfigured with care, to avoid unnecessary damage; repairs were careful or crude, using

the same or different tesserae. They signify the continue use and function of the structure. Mosaics in which some parts or images were spared, and the disfigurement carefully chosen, may imply that the iconoclasts were Christians or Jews, who revered some singular element of a sacred space. Damaged floors left unrepaired mean that the building was not in use at the time the disfigurement took place, or that the destruction could be put down to later occupants, perhaps Muslims, and it occurred around the late Umayyad period or later (Piccirillo 1993: 42; Schick 1995: 197, 209-210). Schick (1995: 205) presumes that ‘deliberate damage of images is very much a phenomenon of Christian churches’. That no secular mosaics or Muslim building were damaged, and ‘the lack of firm evidence for damage done by Jews, [point] to it being first and foremost a feature of Christianity’.

Why

Iconoclasm on mosaic pavements of synagogues and churches shows different tendencies, although the damage might have been generated in different periods and instigated by a change of attitude to figurative art by members of the clergy or by a local community. Yet the systematic damage to church pavements implies a much more determined movement. It is palpable that depictions of humans and animals disturbed the iconoclasts who disfigured the mosaic floors. But this type of iconoclasm was not initiated by Christians in the Byzantine Empire, who objected to, and destroyed only icons, while common images did not present any difficulty (Schick 1995: 213, 223; Dunbabin 1999: 204). Conversely, almost all the damaged floors were repaired—some carefully with geometric and plant designs. This indicates that many of the communities survived, and ascertained that they could continue the use of their churches. Furthermore, church mosaic pavements with animated images in Arabia and Palaestina continued to be created at least until the late 8th century.

The intense debate as to the motivation for iconoclasm has raised diverse assumptions (Schick 1995: 196, 209,210, 223, Tables 10 and 11; Dunbabin 1999: 204). (1) The destruction, and particularly its lack of repair, was the work of later Muslim rulers under the Abbasid caliphs; this was a planned action performed at a single time throughout the region. (2) The damage was the result of an extreme Muslim edict, namely

to eradicate all human and animal images, pronounced by Caliph Yasid II in 721. (3) The local Christian and Jewish communities in some areas objected to the animated motifs on the pavements and carried out the disfigurement.

When

Scholars debate the dating of the iconoclasm crisis, in the knowledge that the provinces of Arabia, Palaestina and Syria were under Islamic rule from about 636. Bagatti (1949: 256) and Schick (1995: 223) maintain that the iconoclastic movement must be dated after 719-720, possibly owing to the decree of Yazid II and based on the destruction of the mosaic at al-Quwaysmah (717) and of the eastern mosaic panel on the Acropolis church at Ma'in (719/20). Piccirillo (1993: 41-2) maintains that archaeological evidence indicates that the crisis must have arisen after the laying down of the last figurative mosaics at Ma'in, Al-Quwaysmah, and Umm al-Rasas, dated to the Umayyad period. Therefore, the undamaged animated pavements at Madaba and Mt. Nebo 'can be taken as historical evidence for dating the abandonment of the church before the era of iconoclasm'. He suggests, 'since this phenomenon occurs in all the churches of a town such as Kastron Mefaa (Umm al-Rasas) and since all the churches involved carried the name of the orthodox bishop of Madaba, the archaeological data cannot be explained as a sectarian phenomenon within the local Christian community'. Piccirillo further argues (1993a: 30): 'On the whole these signs of aversion to images in the mosaics of the churches of Jordan testify to a period of crisis which the Christian community in Jordan underwent during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, after a time of relative peace and tolerance by the Muslim authorities'.

The disfigurement and restoration or transformation probably occurred at the same time on most of the pavements, possibly later on the mosaics with crudely repaired damage or with different tesserae. Other instances where the damage was careless and not restored may have been the work of new residents after the churches were out of use, at the end of the Umayyad period or later (Schick 1995: 196).

Schick (1995: 207-209) concludes that the iconoclastic damage occurred some time after the Islamic conquest, probably the last decades of the Umayyad period. The damage was likely to have been the result of an coordinated action

throughout the region at a single time.

Ognibene (1998: 383) claims that the iconophobic crisis dates to a period immediately following the years ca. 718-720—'the last documented period in which a group of mosaics with animated subjects were laid and which have sustained a detailed disfiguring action'. A second phase of iconoclastic damage at the mosaic of the chapel at 'Ayn al-Kanish is dated to precisely 762; this is evinced by the substituted geometric design of the west part of the pavement and recorded in inscription B. She maintains that the disfigurement of the mosaic at 'Ayn al-Kanish occurred in a relatively short period, between the early 8th century and 762, when the iconophobic crisis seems to have ended¹.

*

The destruction of figures, methodical defacing, and undamaged Hebrew inscriptions on mosaic pavements and sculpture in the synagogues is usually explained as the work of Jewish iconoclasts, contemporary with a thematic change in mosaic design to floral and geometric patterns (as on the 'En Gedi and Jericho synagogue pavements) and to inscriptions (at 'En Gedi and Rehov). These replaced figurative art on the pavements, perhaps as a result of self-imposed restrictions by the Jewish communities, possibly even before the iconoclastic actions in Christianity and Islam (Avi-Yonah 1960: 34-35; Hachlili 1988: 398; Ilan 1989: 31; Schick 1995: 202-204; Fine 2000: 190). It seems to represent a change in the Jewish attitude to figurative art in the late 6th–early 7th century; Jews perhaps started to implement restrictions on synagogue pavement decoration; a general reluctance to represent human and animal forms resulted, and the aniconic convention prevailed. Some scholars (Avi-Yonah 1961: 42; Kitzinger 1954: 130, note 204; Barber 1997: 1022, note 11, 1034-1036) suggest that the strictness of the Jews at the late 6th or early 7th centuries might have been caused by the polemic with Christians over images.

¹ About dating the nave mosaic of St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas to 717/8 or to 785, Schick and Bowersock (1998: 697) maintain that the original date should be 718, and the inscription of 785 was probably rearranged.

Avi-Yonah (1961: 42) claimed that this 'aniconic orthodoxy resumed its way even before the similar trends prevailed in Islam and in the iconoclastic tendency at Byzantium... The old fear of the human image returned...it was now in protest against and in opposition to the use of images by the church'. Schick (1995: 182) disagreed, arguing that figures decorated later synagogue mosaics such as Beth 'Alpha and the mid-7th century *beth midrash* at Meroth. However, the Beth 'Alpha pavement is dated to early or mid-6th century, probably before the restrictions were imposed, and the Meroth mosaic decorates a side room of the synagogue, suggested by the excavators to be a *beth midrash*, whose ornamentation might have enjoyed greater leniency.

The few examples of iconoclasm found on synagogues pavements seem more likely to be the result of a decision by the specific local community to ban the display of images. At Susiya the mosaic was completely renewed with different geometric designs, while at Na'aran the images were destroyed and not repaired, which suggests that the synagogue was no longer in use.

The number of church mosaics in Israel and Jordan with iconoclastic damage is about 65 (about 11 pavements in Israel) while about 85 mosaics are undamaged (Schick 1995: tables 7, 10-11; Ognibene 1998: 384). In Jordan the damage to mosaics is concentrated in several towns where a great number of church mosaics were damaged, but it also befell church floors in many other villages: at Gerasa the mosaics of several churches (seven), at Madaba those of only a few (four) and at Umm al-Rasas all the pavements (seven; all repaired). The archaeological evidence proves that not all churches sustained iconoclastic damage. All church pavements at Umm al-Rasas were disfigured but only a few at Madaba and on Mt. Nebo, while others did not suffer at all. Though disfiguring animated renditions on church pavements might have been an organized campaign, it apparently affected only certain mosaics, apparently reflecting local occurrences.

The dates of the iconoclastic crises also are in dispute, though most scholars seem to agree that the damage was done at the end of the 7th century or early 8th century. However, some disfigurements are unusually dated: the Jabaliyah Diakonikon pavement (dated to 445) shows

disfigurement and crude repair to the human figures and animals while other images survived intact (pl. VII.11). On the church pavement at Jabaliyah, dated to the 8th century, the animals and birds of the north aisle pavement were disfigured (Humbert 2000: 121, 123).

The churches of Umm al-Rasas, all of which suffered at the hands of the iconoclasts, might indicate two waves of the crisis occurred. All the pavements were originally decorated with figured motifs and are dated to the late 6th century (Bishop Sergius church to 587/8, Priest Wa'il church to 586, and the Church of the Rivers to 579 or 594). This implies that iconoclastic damage and crude repair probably occurred some time in the late 6th or early 7th century, and possibly was organized by a principal authority. Nevertheless, in the 8th century St. Stephen's church was once again paved with an elaborate figurative mosaic, which was some time later damaged by iconoclasts and repaired.

The very small number of synagogue pavements affected by the iconoclastic crises indicates that it undoubtedly reflected local cases. The Jews regarded the synagogue floor as a place to walk and tread on; the decoration, albeit with meaning and importance, was not sacred and the local community tolerated even the hand of God to be depicted on the Beth 'Alpha pavement. They might even have purposely rendered the biblical scenes on the pavement to intensify the feeling that the ornamentation was not sacred and should not be worshiped.

The iconoclast destruction, primarily churches of Palaestina and Arabia, and in a few synagogues, was apparently caused by the status of these regions as the Holy Land, the land of the Bible, the cradle of Judaism and Christianity, hence more susceptible to zealously pious approaches.

The somewhat random destruction of church pavements, and their repair concurrent with the notably diverse periods of damage, presumably indicate that waves of iconophobic actions at different points in time affected the sites and were the result of the zeal of select local communities and their leaders, or possibly of the resident clergy. The absence of repair to damaged pavements might have been the result of the local community leaving, as can be deduced from the careful disfigurement of the pavements, or due to the inaction of later occupants.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BETWEEN SYNAGOGUE AND CHURCH

A significant subject in ancient art and architecture of Palaestina and Arabia is the parallel development and reciprocal influences of ancient synagogues and churches. Serving as religious places of worship, synagogues and churches have an important place in the history and archaeology of the region. Although the earliest religious edifices of Judaism and Christianity were probably first built in other countries, their development and mutual influences in the area are important to our knowledge of both religions (Avi-Yonah 1957; Hachlili 1997: 96-110). Development and change in Judaism, and the rise of Christianity, resulted in a new type of edifice, different in its architecture and religious ceremonies.

The Temple in Jerusalem had been the centre of Jewish national worship, which took the form of animal sacrifice ritual, conducted and attended by a small group of priests. After the destruction of the Temple (70 CE), the Jews established a new institution for the expression of their faith, a 'House of Assembly' *בית הכנסת* *beth ha-knesseth* (Hebrew) and *synagogue* (Greek), which was a place of worship for a large, participating community, a centre of public life (Hachlili 1996b). Reading and studying the Torah, as well as prayer in local synagogues, replaced the Temple sacrifice rituals as the means of serving God; but ongoing tradition and hope of rebuilding the Temple in the future are portrayed in the iconography and symbolic ornamentation of the synagogue. In the synagogue, the community participated actively in reading the Torah and reciting the prayers.

The church, following the synagogue, was conceived as a community assembly building used for prayer, and especially for the ceremony of the *eucharistia*, the symbolic feast of bread and wine.

The different functions of the ceremonies of each religion resulted in well-defined, separate considerations in the architecture and ornamentation of their respective sanctuaries. The new form of worship needed a different type of building: a large well-lit area was needed to facilitate reading and prayer; a prominent place was necessary for the most important part of the ritual.

Such buildings soon developed into prayer houses, synagogues for Jews and churches for Christians, and were then also decorated. These buildings were created and developed in the Holy Land, although so far the earliest synagogue and church remains have only been found outside that country.

The synagogue structure as a prayer hall began to appear in Eretz Israel at the end of the 2nd century CE; the erection of new synagogues and renovation of old ones continued until the 7th–8th centuries.

The earliest churches in the country were built in Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the 4th century by Constantine and his mother. However, most of the churches found to date were built later, at the end of the 5th and during the 6th to 8th centuries. The number of churches in the Land of Israel constructed during the Roman-Byzantine period is in the hundreds, whereas a smaller number of synagogues were built at that time. The increase in number and size of synagogues and churches was a result of the inflow, migration, and settlement of Jews and Christians throughout the period, as well as pilgrimage to the Holy Land, mostly by Christians and sometimes by Jews.

The two groups should be compared, as the development of synagogue and church pavement decoration shows interesting similarities and differences, apparently determined by the religious convictions of the Jewish and Christian communities. Still, it should be kept in mind that the decoration of churches and synagogues had to suit the building's architecture.

A. Similarity and Diversity in Mosaic Pavements of Synagogues and Churches

Comparison of church and synagogues mosaics raises a number of issues. Fundamental differences are seen in design and content—in the dating, in the attitude to the design and scheme of the mosaics, and in the significance of the content, which consists of the repertory and iconography

depicted on the pavements. The diversity between Jews and Christians is chiefly expressed in the different iconographic choices for their edifices.

Similarities are much less common. Essentially they are illustrated in some of the designs such as in the inhabited scroll scheme, on both synagogue and church pavements, in vogue during the 6th century though the contents of the scrolls differ greatly. Another shared aspect is the work of the mosaicists, who were invited to pave mosaics in both churches and synagogues.

Synagogues and churches were decorated with mosaic pavements, of which a large number have been discovered, the majority on church floors. Central floors were completely paved: various carpets paved the nave, the aisles, usually the intercolumnar area, and frequently the entrance and the courtyard. These pavements of synagogues and churches do have some similarities but are more frequently different in design and execution. Similarity in mosaic pavements of synagogues and churches is present in some floor compositions, in subject matter, and in many motifs.

Mosaic Floor Composition

Between the 4th and the 8th century synagogue and church adornment is concentrated entirely in the interior of the building; the floor of the edifice becomes an important location for elaborate decorations. Each floor is planned as one framed unit but is divided into fields of geometric or iconographic panels, medallions, organic or geometric patterns and other designs. The mosaic fields are further divided into smaller areas such as nave, aisles, intercolumnations and narthex, sometimes each consisting of single carpets. The most elaborate designs usually appear on the nave carpets, frequently separated by richly ornamented borders from the aisles.

Several distinctive systematic schemes of nave carpet design can be recognized in synagogues and churches.

One composition layout is distinctive to a number of nave synagogue pavements: Beth 'Alpha, Beth She'an A, Hammath-Tiberias, Hammath-Gader, Na'aran, and Susiya (Hachlili 1988: 347-354, Scheme A) portray a design divided into three rectangular panels each thematically distinct and appropriate to its position in the composition (figs. II-1-8). A frame encloses each panel. Other synagogue pavements are divided into more or fewer than three panels, such as the Sepphoris

nave mosaic, which is partitioned into seven bands, and the nave floor carpet at Huseifa with only into two panels.

The most common three-panel form consists of (1) a panel usually in front of the Torah shrine depicting Jewish symbols: the Torah shrine or Ark flanked by two menoroth and two or four ritual objects: lulav, ethrog, shofar and incense shovel (Hachlili 1976: 47-49; 2000: 154; 2001: 59); at Sepphoris this is the second panel (fig. II-2; Weiss 2005: 65-77).

(2) The zodiac design, frequently rendered in the central panel (at Sepphoris it is the fifth band) consists of a square frame containing two concentric circles. In each corner a bust symbolizing each season is portrayed. The outer circle divided into twelve units depicts the signs of the zodiac, each with the addition of its Hebrew name. The inner circle shows the sun god in a four-horse chariot (at Sepphoris only the Sun in a chariot is depicted).

(3) The third panel at Beth 'Alpha and at Sepphoris (the sixth band) contains the biblical scene of the Binding of Isaac; Na'aran and Susiya have a biblical scene of Daniel in the lions' Den and a geometric carpet as another panel; at Na'aran this scene is situated at the lower part of the Jewish symbols panel. At Hammath-Tiberias the third panel contains an inscription flanked by two lions; the Huseifa nave is divided only into two panels: one has the zodiac design and the other is rendered with a vine branches and bird carpet. The Hammath-Gader nave floor is divided also into three panels, one of which (close to the apse) has an inscription flanked by two lions. The other two panels consist of geometric carpets. A similar scheme of two panels may have existed in Yaphi'a (fig. III-2).

The Sepphoris synagogue nave mosaic is divided into seven panels, which are subdivided into smaller panels (Weiss 2005: 55-161). The first, close to the Torah Shrine area, is depicted with an inscription enclosed in a wreath flanked by two lions holding bulls' heads in their claws. The second panel contains the Jewish symbols design. The third and fourth show biblical scenes and Temple vessels; the fifth panel contains the zodiac; the sixth render the Binding of Isaac, and the seventh perhaps the angels' visit to Abraham and Sarah (fig. II-2). The division of large rooms into panels has comparisons in the 4th-century Antioch mosaics (Levi 1947, I: fig. 85).

These compositions with division into three or more panels are quite common on synagogue pavements but hardly appear on church floors. The frequency of this scheme on synagogue floors possibly derives from the desire of the Jewish community to incorporate symbolic and iconographical themes into their synagogue pavements. This way they could integrate and organize various themes in balanced relations.

A group of pavements presenting mythological scenes in secular buildings also are designed as separate panels, but these differ from the synagogue designs in content, composition, size, and balance. The Jewish House of Leontis at Beth She'an has a mosaic pavement divided into three panels containing mythological and Nilotic themes (fig. V-1). The Hippolytus Hall mansion mosaic at Madaba is divided into three rectangular panels surrounded by a wide inhabited acanthus scroll border (Piccirillo 1993: 66, figs. 3, 6, 9, 23, 25). The upper panel shows Aphrodite sitting on a throne next to Adonis with Graces and Cupids, all identified by inscriptions. The central panel, partly damaged, portrays the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra, again with captions identifying the characters. The lower west panel is a grid filled with plants, flowers, birds, and Nilotic motifs. The Sheikh Zuweid pavement is another example of a floor with mythological scenes divided into two panels.

Two church pavements in Jordan are also divided into three panels; however, these are part of a similar repertoire on other church mosaics and have no special significance in the design or in the subjects of the panels. The panel design on these pavements lacks the implications of the synagogue design. The nave mosaic of the later Theotokos chapel at the Memorial of Moses on Mt. Nebo, built in the beginning of the 7th century, consists of three panels, of which the upper one is composed of a geometric carpet; the second narrow panel originally portrayed a hunting scene and is almost completely destroyed, and the third has a geometric design of squares containing fruit and animals, in which most of the animated figures were ruined by iconoclasts (Piccirillo 1993: 151; 1998: 300-304, figs. 74-76).

The mosaic pavement of the church of St. Paul at Umm al-Rasas, is divided into three panels (Piccirillo 1997: 384, plan 1, photos 27; 2002: 548-549, figs. 7-9). The upper east panel is decorated with benefactors' portraits among three trees. The central panel is the largest geometric

carpet, depicting the personification of Earth in the central square medallion and the Four Rivers of Paradise in corner round medallions. The severely destroyed third panel has an inhabited vine scroll design, with branches sprouting from tufts in the corners and containing vintage and hunting scenes.

Many synagogues and churches decorated their floors with similar geometric carpets containing simple or even elaborate designs. A geometric design consisting of octagons with a small square or lozenge in its centre and a small meander square at each intersection appears on the Ma'oz-Hayim synagogue's eastern aisle (Tsaferis 1982: 224, figs. 31b, 32c) and the pavement of the church at Shavei-Zion (Avi-Yonah 1967: 50, pl. III). A pattern of squares made of flowers containing various objects or fruits and heart-shaped leaves is depicted on the pavement of the Jericho synagogue (Hachlili 1988: 360, fig. XI, 13), as well as on the east floor of the *beth-Midrash* at the Meroth synagogue (Ilan 1989: 34-35, fig. 19). A design of interlocking hexagons creating various geometric shapes such as circles, triangles, lozenges and octagons filled with geometric patterns, artefacts, and animals is portrayed on several pavements of churches and synagogues, such as those of church at Shavei Zion (Avi-Yonah 1967: 58, 59, pls. xxxib-xxxiii), the north aisle of Horvat Beth Loya (Patrich and Tsafrir 1993: 269, 270), the nave of the Horvat Berachot church (Tsafrir & Hirschfeld 1979: 307-309, pl. 17), and the third panel of the synagogue nave at Na'aran.

Similar compositions appear on 6th-century Christian mosaics in Jordan: the nave small carpet design of the crypt of St. Elianus at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 124, figs. 124, 129, 132), the Martyr Theodore chapel at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 117, figs. 97, 109), the nave mosaic of the upper church at Massuh (Piccirillo 1993: 252, figs. 435, 437), and the nave of the 8th-century Church of the Acropolis at Ma'in (Piccirillo 1993: 200, figs. 304, 307). The nave mosaic of the Sts. Cosmas and Damianus church at Gerasa (Biebel 1938: 331-2, pl. LXXIII) displays a geometric carpet with a variation of this design, composed of alternating diamonds and squares filled with animals, birds, and geometric patterns. At the Meroth *beth Midrash* the mosaic of the eastern section of the hall consists of a geometric greed made of flowers filled with fruit, heart-shaped leaf and *shofaroth* (Ilan 1989: 34-5, pl. 24: 19). A similar geometric greed filled with heart-shaped leaves and squares



Figure XI-1. A similar geometric design on the pavements of: a. Horvat Brachot church; b. Na'aran synagogue.

appears on the upper panel of the Jericho synagogue nave mosaic; this carpet includes emblems of two groups of Jewish symbols (Hachlili 1988: 355, fig. XI-13, pl. 63).

Another scheme of a geometric carpet design with an emblem as the central focus in the composition occurs on synagogue and church mosaic pavements. The emblem on the synagogue pavements at Jericho consists of Jewish symbols (pl. II.2c), and that at 'En-Gedi of a geometric design with birds (pl. IX.4b). On the floors of the north and south aisles of the Shavei Zion church the emblem consists of a cross and pomegranates within a circle (Avi-Yonah 1967: 49, 53, pls. XXVIII-XXIX, XIb). A beautiful example of the emblem design is the nave pavement of the Apostles church at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 106, figs. 76, 80, 81,95). It has a geometric grid

scheme consisting of pairs of birds and various plants with a central medallion containing the personification of the Sea.

Symbols

The significant symbols depicted on synagogue and church floors are the menorah and the cross, the identifying symbols of Judaism and Christianity.

Most of the synagogue pavements have depictions of some Jewish symbolic elements, frequently the menorah, in a prominent place.

Torah Shrine, Menoroth, and Ritual Objects Panel

The Torah shrine or the Ark of the Scrolls, flanked by a pair of menoroth and ritual objects, is a

frequent ornamentation of the synagogue mosaic panel, usually in front of the Torah shrine. On several synagogue mosaic floors the panel shows in symmetrical composition a pair of menoroth, one on either side of the Torah shrine, or the Ark of the Scrolls each flanked by all four ritual objects or only two or three. Such a panel with a pair of menoroth is rendered on the mosaic pavements of Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, and Susiya; at Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran the Ark of the Scrolls is depicted (figs. II-10, 11); the Torah shrine covered by a veil flanked by menoroth with no Ark of the Scrolls is depicted in a panel at Beth She'an, and a stylized Ark appears on the pavement of the Jericho synagogue (pl. II.2). At Susiya the panel was flanked originally by a pair of rams, but only one survived the disfiguring (pls. II.1, X.2a). The Na'aran panel shows two lamps hanging from a pair of menoroth instead of the usual ritual objects (figs II-11b); at Huseifa the pair of menoroth flank an inscription (pl. IX-4a).

This representation on synagogue mosaic pavements of the Torah shrine and ark symbolizes its importance as the container of the Torah, and probably shows its actual position in synagogue architecture, namely in an aedicula, a niche, or an apse (Hachlili 1976: 47-49; 2000: 154; 2001: 59; Weiss 2005: 65-77). The similarity in the composition of these panels, which is depicted uniformly and is found in various sites separated by distance and time, indicates the use of a common pattern (Hachlili 1988: 391-394).

Samaritan synagogue mosaics also depict a sanctuary façade and the Temple ritual vessels with some similar elements to the Jewish depictions (pl. II.3). At the Samaritan synagogue at Khirbet Samara (fig. II-15), the mosaic floor shows a façade of the ark with the door covered by a curtain tied to one of the columns (Magen 1993b: 63, figs. 4,5). The mosaic floor of the el-Hirbeh Samaritan synagogue (Magen 1992: 71-72) consists of a temple structure on the left, in the centre is the Shewbread table, on which lie various objects—bowls, goblets, and loaves of bread. On the right appears a seven-branched menorah flanked by two trumpets, a shofar, and remains of a lulav and an ethrog (fig. II-16). The sanctuary portrayed on the mosaics of the Samaritan synagogue floors (as well as the Dura Europos synagogue wall paintings (fig. II-17; Hachlili 1998: 360-363) can be interpreted as describing the Temple and its vessels. However, Magen

(1992: 72) suggests that this is a rendition of the Tabernacle vessels.

Symbolic motifs and religious elements are rarely depicted on church floors. Examples of a shrine interpreted as the stylized representation of the Jerusalem Temple are found on chapel mosaic floors in Jordan (pl. II.4). The upper chapel of Priest John at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1986: 85-86; 1993: 174, fig. 228; 1998: 351, fig. 210) shows in a panel a four-columned shrine, flanked by two candlesticks, inside the columns is an inscription. Two roosters perch on the gable corners and two peacocks flanking the shrine (pl. II.4a). Another example of a sanctuary appears on a panel in front of the apse on the mosaic of the Theotokos chapel, a lateral chapel inside the Basilica of Moses on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1986: 80-81; 1993: 151, fig. 200; 1998: 300, 302). The panel is rendered with a stylized shrine within are represented an altar, an offering table and a flame, flanked by two disfigured bulls and two gazelles; only one gazelle survived the iconoclastic damage (pl. II.4b). On the upper part appears a Greek citation of Psalms 51: 21: 'Then they shall lay calves upon Thy altar'. Accordingly, the scene is interpreted as the biblical sacrifice offered in the Temple in Jerusalem. The presbytery mosaic of the Theotokos chapel in 'Ayn al-Kanish (Piccirillo 1998: 359, fig. 228) shows a structure of two columns carrying an arcuated lintel and a curtain. Sheep (disfigured) in front of small trees flank the structure, which is somewhat similar to the structures on the panel of the Beth She'an A synagogue, and the Susiya Torah shrine panel (pls. II.1c, II.2b).

The depictions of the Torah shrine on synagogue mosaics show several affinities with the Christian examples. The sanctuary on the mosaic panel at the upper chapel of Priest John is comparable to the Torah shrine on the Susiya synagogue mosaic panel.¹ The motif of the structure, four columns supporting gable decorated with the conch, is quite similar in the mosaics of the upper chapel panel of Priest John and in the Susiya synagogue. The pair of candelabra in the upper chapel of Priest John can be compared to the pair of menoroth flanking the Torah shrine in the synagogue panel mosaic; the roosters perched on the

¹ Foerster (1990: 546-547) believes that both these depictions represent a temple façade.

gable corners of the upper chapel of Priest John mosaic recall the birds resting on the Ark of the Scrolls on the Beth 'Alpha synagogue mosaic. The Ark of the Scrolls at the Beth 'Alpha synagogue is flanked by lions, at Susiya the Torah shrine is flanked by sheep, and in the upper chapel of Priest John by peacocks. However, the façade at Susiya and the other synagogues shows a Torah shrine with an Ark of the Scrolls placed within, whereas the upper chapel of Priest John shows only a sanctuary façade.

The mosaic pavements of the synagogues in the Land of Israel yield a large number of menoroth, or sometimes a single menorah, flanked by ritual objects. Most of the menoroth are rendered with elaborately ornamented arms and bases (pl. II.1,2) (Hachlili 2001: 59, 61-62). The upper part of the pavement at Ma'on-Nirim synagogue is decorated with a menorah flanked by a pair of lions (pl. XI.1a). At the Jewish House of Leontis in Beth She'an a (damaged) five-armed menorah is incorporated into the inscription of the central panel (pl. XII.4b).

Other Jewish symbols representing the Temple cult utensils are frequently represented in the Jewish art of late antiquity accompanying the menorah, among them the four ritual objects: lulav, ethrog, shofar, and incense shovel (Hachlili 2001: 211-220). These four ritual objects are associated with the Feast of Tabernacles (*Succoth*).

Another item of cult furniture rendered on synagogue mosaic pavements is the shewbread table (fig. IV.20) (Hachlili 2001: 233-239, fig. V-13); originally, this gold table was one of the three most important Tabernacle and Temple vessels placed inside the sanctuary (Exodus 25: 23-30). A round, three-legged shewbread table (pl. IV.7) is depicted on the central panel of band 4 on the mosaic floor of the synagogue at Sepphoris (Weiss and Netzer 1996: 24-25; Weiss 2005: 95-101). Another variation of the shewbread table is rendered on the 4th-century Samaritan synagogue at El-Hirbeh (pl. II.3a), together with a menorah and a sanctuary (Magen 1993b: 71). It seems that these tables were based on contemporary furniture.

In contrast to the numerous Jewish symbols positioned prominently on synagogue pavements, a small number of Christian symbols—mainly the cross and seldom the monogram of Christ—occur on church mosaic pavements.

The Cross

The Christian symbol of the cross appears on several mosaic pavements (pl. XI.2; fig. XI-2) (Tzaferis 1971: 61-63, figs. 78-87; Tzaferis 1987: 50*-52*; Roussin 1985: 59-74): the pavements at the church of Evron were repaired several times during the 5th century. The earliest mosaic pavement there, dated to 415, depicts ten crosses, three of them monogrammatic; another cross enclosed by an inscription is rendered on a mosaic pavement dated to 442-3 (Tzaferis (1987: 50*-52*). In a chapel at Nazareth, two monogrammatic crosses were found, dated earlier than 427 (Bagatti 1967: I, 93-96, fig. 51). Four crosses surround the mosaic in the small chapel in the Shepherd's Field in Bethlehem (Tzaferis 1975). A cross surrounded by a band of interlocking circles at Beth Hashitta is rendered on the mosaic in the southern chapel (Aharoni 1954: figs. 1,2). Sussman (2004: 364-5) suggests that the mosaic should be dated to the 6th-7th century, and was probably the work of a craftsman from the Beth She'an region. At the Shavei-Zion church (early 5th century) crosses are depicted in the nave of the earlier pavement (pl. XI.2b) an area protected by a table or an altar (Avi-Yonah 1967: 48-49, 53-55, fig. 7, pls. VIIb, X, XI, XXVIIb, XXVIII, XLb). Five crosses are rendered in the north-eastern chapel and one cross on the north aisle pavement; two crosses are set in the southern and northern sides of the nave, surrounded by four bases, probably for an altar. A cross within a circle/wreath is set in the axis of the northern aisle. Below it is a symbolic design, perhaps a pair of fishes and two pomegranates (pl. XI.2a). A similar part of a cross with the letter A below was discovered recently in a late 4th- or early 5th-century church mosaic at Tiberias. Several crosses were discovered on the mosaic floor of the north aisle of the north-east church at Hippos-Sussita, perhaps dated earlier than the 6th century (Segal et al. 2004: 88-89, fig. 90). In the centre of the aisle are four squares, in the centre of each of which is an equal-armed cross. Two additional flare crosses (pl. XI.2f) are depicted in the north chamber of the church (Segal et al. 2005: 67, fig. 94).

A black cross outlined in red within a round medallion with flower buds is rendered at the church of Khirbet el-Beiyudat on the eastern edge of the apse (Hismi 1993: 160, pl. VIIb, dated to about 570). Two decorated crosses are found in the North Hall of the Hazor-Ashdod church

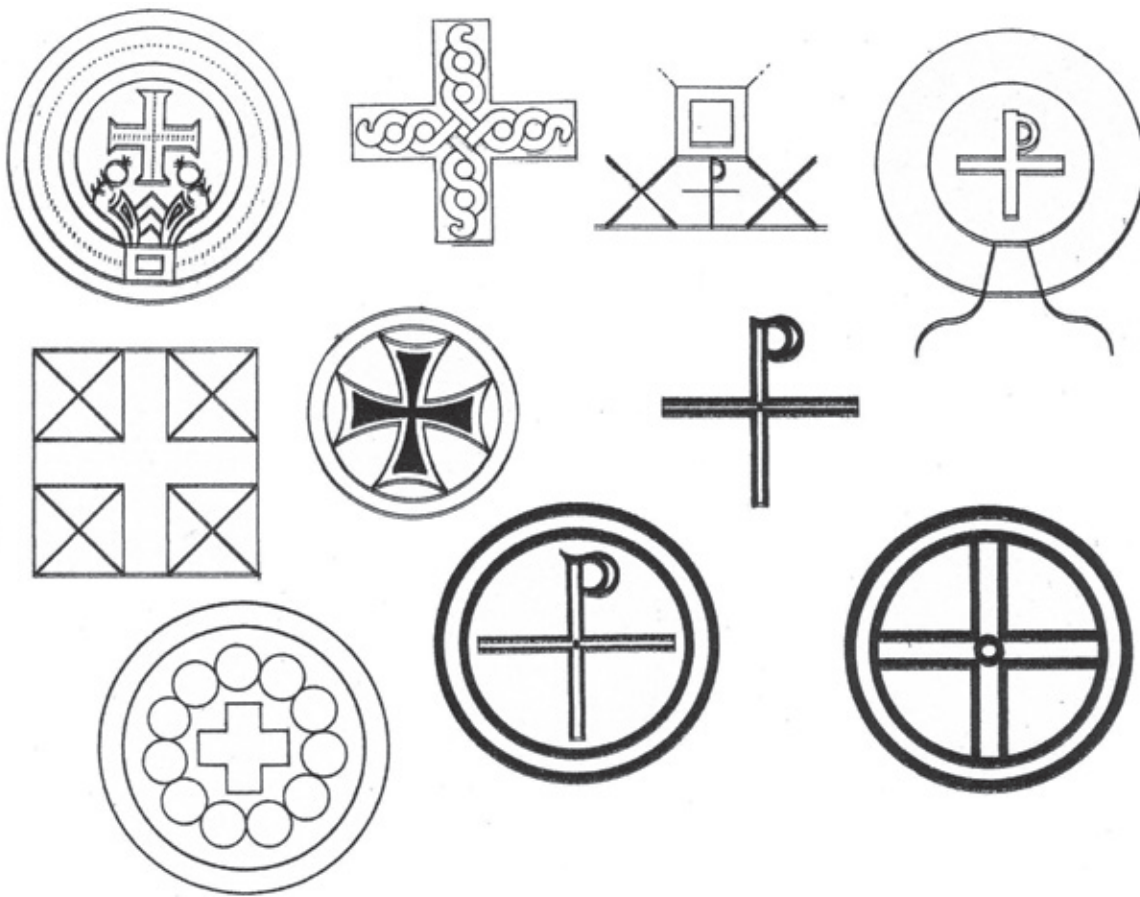


Figure XI-2. Cross representations on church pavements.

(Ovadia 1987: 68): A cross within a medallion, with the letters I X A W between the arms, and another cross flanked by two birds (pl. XI.2d, e). A cross (with the Greek letters AWIX) flanked by a pair of crudely rendered animals possibly lions is depicted at the western side of the nave pavement of the church at Ozem (pl. XI.2f). The letters I X A W are an abbreviation of the name Jesus Christ and the first and last letters of the alphabet. An isosceles cross surrounded by a circle is depicted in front of the altar in the eastern church at Kurnub, and another cross within a rectangular frame was rendered at the main entrance (Tzaferis 1971: 62, figs. 83,84). At the Magen churches, crosses are depicted on the mosaic pavements in church C (4th century) and building A (6th century) (Tzaferis 1993: 285); the large crosses flanked by birds were placed next to the threshold in the prayer hall dominating the entrance in a setting where people would be forced to walk on it. Two crosses with inscriptions are rendered on the vestibule mosaic pavement of a burial crypt at Khirbet ed-Deir (Hirshfeld 1990: 256-7). Several crosses are found on the pavements of partly preserved

mosaics on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, one in a basin and the other in the apse; another is in the apse of the church in the Jerusalem Musrara quarter, and at Umm er-Rus (Avi-Yonah 1933: 63, nos. 110, 114, 133, 237, 271, 326).

Some crosses appear on mosaic pavements discovered in Jordan.

A large isolated braided cross is depicted on the lower mosaic in a room on the south side of the vestibule of the Siyagha first church at the Memorial of Moses on Mt. Nebo, dated to the second half of the 4th century (Piccirillo 1993: 21,144, fig. 175; 1998: 268). Two crosses rendered flank two Christological monograms in the eastern part of the plain border of the lower floor, below the marble pavement, of the sanctuary of the central basilica of Pella (Piccirillo 1993: 330, fig. 706). A cross is rendered on the Glass Court at Gerasa, possibly dating to the 4th century (Biebel 1938: 309, pl. LVIIIb). A cross inscribed with *telos kalon* (good end) is flanked by two lambs in the centre medallion of the inhabited vine scroll pavement of the 7th-century church of St. Lot at Zoara (Gohr al-Safy) (Piccirillo 1993:

336, figs. 723,726). An interesting example is the replacement of a figure rendered in an octagon destroyed by iconoclasts and repaired with a very plain cross in the upper church of Massuh (Piccirillo 1993: 42, 252, fig. 443). Piccirillo assumes that the cross portrayed on this mosaic, was the work of a Christian mosaicist and the repairs were carried out because the church continued to be used after the iconoclastic event.

The cross—usually the Greek cross—appears braided, jewelled, monogrammatic, or isosceles (fig. XI-2), sometimes set in a circle or in a band of interlocking circles; its four arms occasionally enclose four crosslets, or it is shown with an inscription or the letters IC XC and AW.

The cross representation on church pavements appears to be popular from the mid-4th century on and was recognized as the emblem of Christianity; the cross represented the triumph over evil and salvation. On the early church mosaics the cross was depicted on locations including areas which were stepped upon by worshippers (Tzaferis 1987: 50*-51*). The rendition of the cross on floors proves that the symbol was utilized also later despite the decree of Theodosius II and Valentinianus, dated 427 and issued in Constantinople (Avi-Yonah 1967: 53; Tzaferis 1993: 285; Dunbabin 1999: 197). The edict forbade the use of the cross and other Christian religious symbols on pavements; they had to be removed if they already existed. Scholars consider the date 427 as the *terminus post quem* for some of the pavements with depicted crosses. Many of the crosses were rendered on pavements before the decree, and a few of the early pavements were covered or changed.

Avi-Yonah (1933: 63) contends that the crosses usually appear on pavements in small apses, in front of or behind the altar, and in basins, which are 'almost exclusively in places not likely to be stepped upon, or approached only barefooted, or on which only the priest during the functions could tread'.

Kitzinger (1970: 640) proposes that crosses placed noticeably near or on the entrance have an apotropaic intention, namely to protect the building from evil forces. Tzaferis (1971: 63; 1987: 50*-51*; 1990: 285) maintains that even if most of the cross illustrations were done before the prohibition was declared, it is difficult to prove that it was effective. The other part of the decree, eradicating existing crosses, was implemented, for instance, at Shavei Zion where an altar or table was built on the location of the cross; the crosses

in the central basilica of Pella were later covered by the marble pavement. Tzaferis further proposes two explanations for the existence of crosses on the other mosaics: they were created prior to 427 and remained untouched, or they were made after that date. His conclusion is that the prohibition was not generally accepted among Christians. It seems that crosses appeared before and after the public edict and are indicative of its observation in the Levant.

Other renditions such as lambs, peacocks, and birds drinking water from a vase—on both church and synagogue pavements—are considered by some scholars to be Christian symbols (Dunbabin 1999: 197); but these are too common to be designated Christian signs in particular.

Biblical Scenes

Biblical scenes occur in Jewish synagogue mosaics but seldom on church pavements. In synagogue art the earliest representatives, in the 3rd century, are the wall paintings of Dura-Europos, with a great variety of biblical scenes executed in detailed illustrations. They are also found on synagogue mosaic pavements from the 5th century on: the Binding of Isaac at Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris; Noah's Ark at Gerasa; Daniel in the Lion's Den at Na'aran and Susiya, King David (as Orpheus) at Gaza, and David with the weapons captured from Goliath at Meroth; Sepphoris has additional biblical episodes (see Chap. IV).

All these scenes were represented in a simple concise narrative. They had a common theme of yearning for salvation with reference to traditional historical events; they might have had some symbolic meaning associated with prayers, especially in times of drought. The synagogue mosaics are quite similar in their composition, while the artistic depiction and style of each scene differ.

The Binding of Isaac (the *Aqeda*) appears on the nave pavements at Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris (pl. IV.1). The depiction at Beth 'Alpha on the third panel summarizes the narrative in three parts: the donkey and the lads; the ram, the thicket, and the Hand of God; Abraham, Isaac, and the altar. On the Sepphoris synagogue nave mosaic (Weiss 2005: 141-153) the Binding of Isaac is depicted on band 6 in two panels; on the left panel, two servants with the ass survived. Of the right panel only a very small part is preserved: the head of the ram tethered to the tree, below it two upturned pairs of shoes, and in the centre only traces of a robe and the blade of the knife.

Some scholars propose that depictions on church pavements of a sheep or ram tied to a tree, or entangled in front of or beside it, refer to the Binding of Isaac (Bagatti 1984: 296-7, figs. 31-32; Piccirillo 1989: 339; Talgam 2000: 94, 102-3). The scene is rendered on the lower mosaic of the church at Massuh (end of 5th century), on the upper mosaic of the Baptistery chapel in the cathedral at Madaba (mid-6th century), and in the chapel of the Twal family, likewise at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 117, 138, 447). A similar scene of a ram leaning against a small tree is rendered in the presbytery of St. George's church at Mukhayyat (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 67, 107, 236-237, pls. 23,1; Piccirillo 1998: 322, note 48, fig. 122). Maguire (1987: 71) maintains, 'The location of these motifs immediately behind the altar is a strong argument for reading them as a reference to the sacrifice of Isaac as a prefiguration of the divine sacrifice'. This proposition is feasible, although in Christian art sheep and rams carry other connotations too.

In Jewish art the Binding of Isaac was probably meant as a belief in God's grace and as a symbol of life, while in Christian art, although the full scene does not appear on mosaic pavements, it represents a prefiguration of the life and sacrifice of Jesus. Furthermore, whereas the Jews depicted the full theme on synagogue pavements and the wall painting at Dura-Europas, the early Christians preferred to show it in their funerary art on Roman catacomb walls and sarcophagi (Hachlili 1988: 288-292; 1998: 239-246). The abbreviated scene of the ram tied to a tree on the Christian mosaic pavements is intended, if at all, merely as a symbolic notion.

Noah's Ark depicted on the Gerasa synagogue narthex pavement portrays the animals leaving Noah's ark, with Noah and his family celebrating the event (fig. IV.6, 7a). This suggests that the symbolic meaning of the scene is God's promise not to destroy the world again. By comparison, in Early Christian art the scene is usually a symbolic rendition, on catacombs and sarcophagi, of the ark as a box, within it Noah sending off the dove (fig. IV.10); the story here symbolizes death and resurrection and salvation for the believer (Hachlili 1988: 292-294; 1998: 249-256).

Daniel in the Lion's Den (figs. IV.16-17) appears on the Na'aran synagogue nave mosaic floor in the first panel, below the Ark and Jewish symbols, showing Daniel in an orans posture flanked by two lions; a similar scene was probably

depicted on the Susiya synagogue pavement, but was almost entirely destroyed (pl. X.2c). This theme was also popular in Early Christian art in catacombs and sarcophagi (figs. IV.18); it is related to a death cult, symbolizing a person saved because of his faith (Hachlili 1988: 294-295).

In Christian art, biblical scenes are seldom depicted on church mosaic pavements. One such scene is found on the Mahat el Urdi church mosaic floor at Beth Guvrin, depicting the biblical theme of Jonah; it is shown in two different octagons, one in the north aisle and the other in the south aisle (fig. IV-24). The first octagon shows Jonah in the jaws of the fish; the second portrays him lying under the gourd. In the two aisles the Jonah depictions fill the third octagon of each aisle carpet. Although the Jonah scenes have a partly central position, this is not as prominent as the space occupied by the biblical scenes on synagogue pavements. A Jonah scene is found also on the mosaic pavement of the North African church of Aquileia (Grabar 1967: pl. 19; Engerman, 1986: 85-87). Another unique biblical scene depicts Adam in Paradise surrounded by animals; this is on the mosaic pavement of the nave of the north church (The 'Michaelion') of Haouarte (Donceel Voûte 1988: 104, 112-114, 480, 487, fig. 71; pl. h.-t.5). The scene shows Adam giving names to the animals in Paradise (Gen 2: 19-20).

Two mosaic pavements, one in the Beth Midrash at Meroth, the other at the Acropolis church in Ma'in, portray Isaiah's vision of the End of Days (or the Peaceful Kingdom), representing perfect peace all over nature (pl. IV.8; figs. IV-22-23; Campbell 1995). The partly destroyed mosaic of the Beth Midrash (a side room of the synagogue) at Meroth (pl. IV.8a), shows in the centre of the main panel a lamb on the right and a wolf on the left flanking an amphora (Ilan and Damati 1984-85; 1985; 1987: 77-80; Talgam 1987: 149-152; Ilan 1989: 33-34); the scene is accompanied by the biblical Hebrew verse *וְזֵיב וְטִלְהָ יִרְעוּ כִּאֲהֶדּוּ* 'The wolf and the lamb will graze together' (Isaiah 65: 25). This is the lesser known verse, and is unique to the Meroth mosaic.

Originally a similar rendition in the room north of the Acropolis church at Ma'in (De Vaux 1938: 227, Fig. 2; Piccirillo 1993: 201, Fig. 312) showed a zebu and a lion flanking a tree (pl. IV.8b). Not much of it survived; the biblical verse in Greek is inscribed above: 'And the lion will eat [straw]

like the ox' (Isaiah 11: 7; 65: 25). A bush, an amphora, and vine scrolls later covered the original damaged figures.

These unusual scenes symbolize a conception of biblical verses rather than portraying a narrative scene. Animals, even natural enemies, seen at peace imply the advent of messianic peace or are perhaps meant to express some kind of prayer for peace.

A New Testament scene, the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, occurs on the pavement of the church at Tabgha, where the miracle supposedly took place (pl. XI.4). This pavement, found behind the altar, probably is a repair done in the 6th century (Kitzinger 1965: 11; Avi-Yonah 1975: 44-46).

The biblical themes in Jewish and Early Christian art are quite different in attitude, design and meaning (Hachlili 1988: 373-374).

The scenes in synagogues are part of the synagogal art and pavements programme; in Early Christian art (with the exceptions stated above) they are usually rendered on catacomb walls and sarcophagi in Rome, being considered subjects more suited to funerary art.

In the Jewish portrayal the association is with the belief in God's salvation for His chosen people; in Christian art the connection is with a person's own salvation, death and after-life (Grabar 1968: 25-26).

The biblical scenes in synagogues were a reminder of the tradition of biblical stories; in Christian art the symbolic meaning of these scenes was of primary interest.

The biblical scenes in the synagogue are in the form of a narrative-descriptive depiction, including details and inscriptions with names and explanatory verses; in Christian art the form of the scenes is concise and summarized, often allegorical and symbolic.

The source for these themes in both religions is probably not common figurative art but literature, namely the biblical text.

Early Christian catacomb art uses biblical scenes in an abbreviated and summarized manner. Grabar (1968: 25, 94-95) describes them as image-signs. From the beginning there was a tendency to symbolism, which would disguise the true meaning of the stories by means of allegory and proverb. Likewise, the Old Testament was also used as a pre-figuration of the New Testament.

Christian art frequently made use of Bible stories emphasizing the promise of individual salvation, such as Jonah, Moses, Daniel in the Lion's Den, Noah's Ark, and the Binding of Isaac.

Nilotic Scenes

The Nilotic episodes appear on a few pavements: on the lower panel of the Jewish Leontis House at Beth She'an, the church pavement of the north and south transepts at the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes at Tabgha, in the Haditha chapel, on a floor of a secular building (there is no indication if it was Jewish or Christian) in Sepphoris, as well as isolated scenes at El-Maqerqesh chapel at Beth Guvrin and at Emmaus (pls. V.1-8).

The iconography of the Nilotic scene compositions usually consists of personification of the Nile, a Nilometer, a walled building with or without an inscribed name, animal combat such as crocodile with buffalo, and various birds, fishes, and plants. Personification of the Nile appears only in the secular structures at Sepphoris and the House of Leontis at Beth She'an, not on church or synagogue pavements. The Nilometer in the lower panel of the House of Leontis is depicted as a round tower-like structure, akin to the rendition on the transept of the Tabgha church mosaic panel and on the upper part of the mosaic at Sepphoris: both are represented by a narrow tower marked off by measures. At the House of Leontis and at Sepphoris the towered building, with its name Alexandria inscribed, is more schematic and stylized than a similar depiction of the city of Alexandria in the churches of St. John the Baptist and St. Peter and Paul at Gerasa (Kraeling 1938: 241-244; 324-329; Piccirillo 1986: 213, 220). At both Haditha and the Leontis house, the Nilotic composition shows combat: a cow versus a crocodile at Leontis and a cow versus a man at Haditha; a sailing boat with wine jars is rendered at Haditha and the Leontis house.

The tradition of Nilotic scenes goes back to the Hellenistic period. Their meaning is controversial. Most scholars (Alföldi - Rosenbaum 1975: 150-151; 1980: 49; Whitehouse 1979: 77-81; Meyboom 1995: 84; Avi-Yonah 1972: 121-122; Roussin 1985: 312-315) maintain a secular view, namely the Nilotic scenes represent the use of motifs of exotic character for decorative purposes, mostly with imaginative rather than realistic content, suggesting affluence and well-being.



V.5 City representations: a. Beth Leontis, Beth She'an; b. Tabgha; c. Sepphoris; d. Haditha.



a



c



b



d

V.6 The Crocodile and Animal combat: a. Sepphoris, Nile Festival Building; b. Sepphoris, the House of Dionysos, the later Nilotic panel; c. Beth Leonitis, Beth She'an; d. Haditha.



a



b

V.7 The sail boat: a. Beth Leontis, Beth She'an; b. Haditha.



V.8 Plants, birds: a. Sepphoris, the House of Dionysos, the later Nilotic panel; b. Sepphoris Nile Festival Building; c. Haditha; d. Beth Leontis, Beth She'an; e. Tabgha.



VI.2 Ma'on synagogue pavement.



VI.3 Jerusalem 'Armenian' church pavement.



VI.4 Beth Loya church pavement.



VI.5 Be'er-Shem'a church pavement.



VI.6-8 Petra Church: North Aisle mosaic pavement.



VI.7



VI.8



VI.9 Sede Nahum.



VI.10 The church of the Deacon Thomas nave pavement, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo.



VI.11 The church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo.



VI.12 Amphorae depicted on inhabited scrolls pavements: a. Jerusalem, Armenian mosaic; b. Be'er Shem'a; c. Shellal; d. Beth Loya; e. Asida f. Hazor-Ashdod; g. Beth She'an, small synagogue; h. Beth She'an, Monastery Room L; i. Chapel el-Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin; j. Petra church.



a



b



c



d



e



f



g

VI.13 Bird Cage on inhabited vine scroll mosaic pavements: a. Ma'ón; b. Shellal; c. Be'er Shem'a; d. Petra; e. Gaza; f. Asida; g. Jerusalem, Armenian mosaic.



VI.14 Bird of prey on inhabited vine scroll mosaic pavements: a. Jerusalem; b. Petra; c. Maʿon; d. el-Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin; e. Yaphiʿa.



VI.15 Double basket on inhabited vine scroll mosaic pavements: a. Ma'on; b. Beth Loya; c. Shellal; d. Be'er Shem'a; e. Petra.



VI.16 Baskets on inhabited vine scroll mosaic pavements: a. Ma'on; b. el-Hammam; c. Shellal; d. Jerusalem, Armenian mosaic; e. Be'er Shem'a; f. Petra, four baskets.



VI.17 Vessels on inhabited vine scroll mosaic pavements: a. Ma'on, two vessels; b. Shellal; c. Jerusalem, Armenian mosaic; d. Be'er Shem'a; e. Beth Loya, three vessels; f. Petra church, seven vessels.



VI.18 Vine leaves and bunches of grapes on inhabited vine scroll mosaic pavements: Vine leaves: a. Shellal; b. Petra; c. Ma'on synagogue; d. Be'er Shem'a; e. Jerusalem, 'Armenian' church; f. Beth She'an synagogue; g. Beth She'an Monastery, Room L; h. Beth Loya. Bunches of grapes; i. Gaza synagogue; j. Shellal; k. Beth She'an Monastery, Room L; l. Beth She'an synagogue; m. Shellal; n. Ma'on synagogue; o. Be'er Shem'a; p. Beth Loya; q. Jerusalem, 'Armenian' church.



a



b

VI.19 a. Hen laying an egg, Ma'on; b. bird, Jerusalem 'Armenian' church.



VI.20 Subdued animals: a. Be'er Shem'a; b. Shellal; c. Petra.



a



b



c



d



e

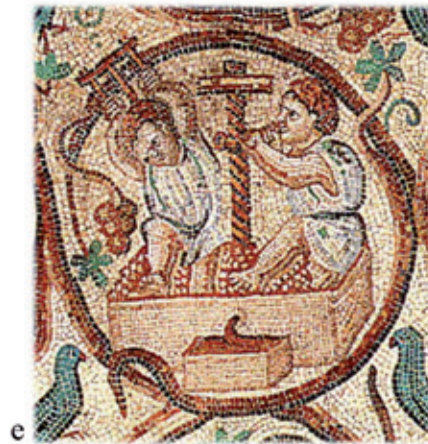
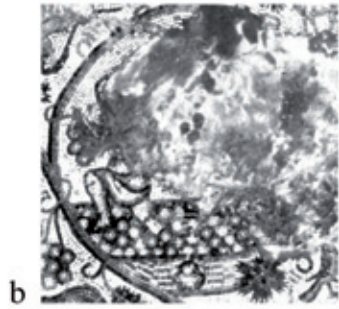


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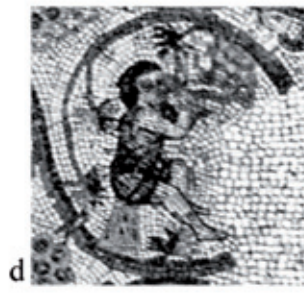
VII.1 Vintager: a. Beth Shean Monastery, Room L; b. Sede Nahum; c. Lower Priest John; d. lower Kaianus, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo; e. Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo; f. Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo.



VII.2 Transporting grapes: a. El Hammam, Beth She'an; b. Be'er Shem'a; c. Beth She'an Monastery, Room L; d. Lower Kaianus, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo; e. Lower Chapel of the Priest John, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo; f. Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo; g. Suwayfiyah; h. Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo.



VII.3 Treading grapes and the press: a. El Hammam, Beth She'an; b. Beth She'an Monastery, Room L; c. Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo; d. St. George, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo; e. Qabr Hiram.



VII.4 Flute player: a. Beth She'an Monastery, Room L; b. Be'er Shema; c. Caesarea; d. El Hammam, Beth She'an; e. Nahariya.



VII.5 Animal chase scenes: a. Three animal chase scenes, Gaza synagogue; b. two animal chase episodes, Be'er Shem'a; c. A lion chasing a gazelle and an ibex, Jabalyah diakonikon.



VII.6 Snake and mongoose confrontation: a. Be'er Shem'a; b. Sede Nahum; c. Orpheus mosaic, Jerusalem; d. Qabr Hiram; e. Zaharani I; f. Haouarte south aisle of North church (Michaelion).



VII.7 Kissufim, upper part panels of the northern aisle.



VII.8 Dog chasing hare/rabbit on church mosaics: a. Shellal; b. Kissufim; c. Be'er Shem'a, two episodes; d. Khirbet el-Wazia; e. Martyr church, Beth She'an.



a



b



c



VII.9 Animal assault scenes: a. Sepphoris, Nile Festival Building; b. Kissufim church; c. Sepphoris, Nile Festival Building, three episodes.

Inhabited Vine Scrolls Pavements

A popular design, especially in the 6th century, was the 'inhabited scroll' composition, which decorate a considerable number of synagogue and church pavements. The composition consists of vine branches forming medallions, usually issuing from a central amphora flanked by peacocks, horned animals, or lions at the base of the pavement. In some church and mansion pavements the vine branches issue from a central acanthus leaf or out of acanthus leaves at the four corners of the pavement (pl. VI.1-11; Table VI-1,2).

The medallions of inhabited scrolls of groups I-III, found on synagogue and church pavements alike, usually contain objects, birds, and beasts; in church pavements of groups IV-V scenes of vintage, hunting and everyday life fill some of the medallions. Although inhabited scroll compositions in synagogues and churches seem to be similar, there are some notable differences. On synagogue pavements Jewish symbols are added: at Ma'on a seven-branched menorah is flanked by two lions and ritual objects (pl. XI.1a). At Beth She'an small synagogue the central medallion contains a menorah flanked by an ethrog and a hanging lamp, and the inscription *Shalom* in Hebrew (pl. XI.1b; fig. VI-10).

Mythological Scenes

Mythological scenes demonstrating a revival of traditions and prototypes of the Classical and Hellenistic periods are found typically on pavements of mansions, but only rarely on those of synagogues and churches.

Orpheus, the singer of Greek myth, who charmed wild animals with his lyre playing, is represented in Jewish art. At the Gaza synagogue, David in an adoption of the mythological-pagan figure of Orpheus is attired and crowned as a Byzantine emperor, seated on a throne, and playing the lyre (pl. IV.3). Facing him are animals, of which only a lion, a serpent, and a giraffe have survived.

Orpheus was a fairly popular image in Christian art, usually identified with Christ, although the tendency is to represent him as the Good Shepherd rather than charming animals, as in pagan art. In a 6th-century chapel in Jerusalem the picture is a seated Orpheus in a Phrygian cap, holding a lyre, and surrounded by Pan, a centaur, a falcon (or eagle), a partridge, a rat, a bear, a

sheep, a serpent, and a salamander (crocodile) (pl. IV.5). Most scholars consider this Orpheus Christian.

In the Jewish House of Leontis complex at Beth-She'an, mythological scenes from Homeric poems of the *Odyssey* appear on the upper panel (Zori 1966: 128-9; Adler 2003: 55-68). In a scene of Odysseus and the sirens (pl. XII.4a) Odysseus is bound to the mast of his ship, while below and to the left a naked Nereid rides an ichthyocentaur. The lower scene on the same panel shows Odysseus fighting the monster Scylla, beside a siren playing a flute. It is the only scene from the Homeric poems on a mosaic pavement found in Israel, and interestingly appears on the floor of a Jewish house. The scene suggested to Avi-Yonah (1975: 54) that Byzantine Jews appreciated Homeric poems. Jentel (2000: 248) contends that the mosaic is a donation from Leontis, the rich merchant, and the mythological episode represents his own or his ship's sea voyage to Egypt or to Italy. Adler (2003: 125-128) argues that the Odysseus scenes are usually connected with water, appearing in bath-houses, pools, and water features. In this house they may be associated with water.

The themes on the pavement might have been the choice of the donor, Leontis, who may have originated in Alexandria, to show his voyage to Beth-She'an (Roth-Gerson (1987: 34, 38). The Beth She'an room decorated with the Odysseus and Nilotic themes served for secular, perhaps communal, purposes. Another possibility is that these scenes were the most attractive among the designs in a prevalent sketch book of mosaicists (Hachlili 1988: 301, 393).

Mythological episodes appear more frequently on pavements of secular buildings (Merony 1998: 444-445), such as Amazons and the Centaur at Sepphoris (Weiss and Talgam 2002: 73-83), Dionysiac *thiasos* and Phaedra and Hippolytus on hall mosaics at the Sheikh Zuweid villa (north Sinai, 4th-5th century?) (Clédat 1915; Ovadiah at el. 1991), Achilles, Heracles, and a Dionysiac procession in Jordan mosaics (Piccirillo 1993: 23-26, 76-77, figs. 40, 43, 48). Especially noteworthy are the two scenes of the stories of Phaedra and Hippolytus, and Aphrodite and Adonis, identified by inscriptions, depicted on the mosaic pavements of Hippolytus Hall at Madaba found beneath the Church of the Virgin (Piccirillo 1993: 76-80, figs. 32-48, 55; Dunbabin 1999: 199). Other mythological themes appear on

mosaics, such as the Dionysiac at Gerasa (Z'ubi et al. 1994).

Piccirillo (1993: 23-26) contends that mythological episodes found during Early Byzantine period can be explained by the Classical Renaissance under Justinian. But Merrony (1998: 460-465) maintains that 'there is good reason to suppose that a deeper symbolic meaning underlines these scenes'. Weiss and Talgam (2002: 73-83) maintain that the mythological episodes depicted in secular Early Byzantine art were apparently decorative and devoid of religious significance.

The Year, the Calendar, the Zodiac, the Labours of the Months, and the Seasons

Time, the year, and the calendar are represented differently in synagogues and churches. The zodiac design, consisting of three parts for personification of the seasons, the zodiac signs, and the sun god, is characteristic of synagogues, whereas church pavements are illustrated with the personifications of the twelve months and the four seasons in separate designs and different compositions.

A central feature of the synagogue pavement design was the zodiac panel, occurring in seven synagogues found to date. These are Beth 'Alpha, Hammath- Tiberias, Huseifa, Na'aran, Susiya (with only few remains of a the zodiac scheme), Sepphoris and 'En Gedi. Their dates range from the 4th to the 7th century (see Chap. III). Their design, form and composition are identical, except for the En Gedi inscription and Sepphoris, which show some unique features described below (pls. III.2-4; figs. III-3-4). The composition is uniform, consisting of a square frame containing two concentric circles. In the corners the four seasons are personified as female busts, accompanied by Hebrew inscriptions naming of the first month of each season. The outer circle, divided into twelve units, depicts the signs of the zodiac, each accompanied by its Hebrew name; these divisions conform identically to the twelve months of the Jewish year. At the 'En Gedi inscription the Hebrew names of the zodiac signs are followed by a precise list of the Hebrew names of the twelve Jewish months (Hachlili 1977, 2001). At Sepphoris the seasons are also accompanied by their Greek names. The Sepphoris mosaic has some other unique additions (Weiss 2005: 104-141). On all the mosaics the inner circle shows the figure of the sun god in a four-horse chariot,

but at Sepphoris only the sunrays are depicted in the chariot; a star or stars and crescent moon are rendered in the background. On each of the synagogue zodiacs the human figures personified as naked or draped signs have the same features of face and body, and similar garments and hair. The signs of Gemini, Virgin, Libra, Sagittarius, and Aquarius in all the zodiac renditions are figures in an active posture.

These identical schemes of the zodiac in the synagogues apparently functioned as an annual calendar consisting of the four seasons, the signs of the zodiac represented the months, and day and night were symbolized by the sun and the moon. This is further attested by the inscription on the 'En Gedi synagogue pavement. Clearly, the zodiac cycle served the Jewish communities as a symbolic calendar, the framework for the annual ritual in the synagogue.

The disparity between the synagogue and church presentation of the year and the calendar is quite remarkable. On church and mansion pavements different compositions illustrate the months and the seasons (pls. VIII. 2-4). Whereas the sun god appears within the inner circle of the zodiac in the synagogues, there is only a single personification of Sun and Moon on the inner circle at the Beth She'an monastery (pl. VIII.4b). On a few Christian mosaics the personifications of the twelve months accompanied by their names, as at the Beth She'an monastery and in an independent design in El-Hammam funerary chapel at Beth She'an (pls. VIII.3,4), represented the calendar, as described next. On synagogue mosaics the calendar was illustrated by all three parts of the zodiac, where the months were represented by the signs of the zodiac. The personifications of the four seasons were depicted on their own in separate designs on pagan and church mosaics, while the busts of the seasons in the synagogues were part of the integral zodiac scheme.

Personification of Months

Personifications of the months, which appear only on church mosaics, have different designs on two 6th-century Christian pavements at Beth She'an: in the narthex of the funerary chapel at El Hamman and at the centre of the mosaic in hall A of the Monastery of Lady Mary (pls. VIII. 3,4; fig. VIII-8) (Fitzgerald 1939: 6, pls. VI-VIII; Avi-Yonah 1936: 22-26, pl. XV). The two Christian examples differ in their basic form but are

similar in the general depiction of the personified Labours of the Months. These are typically illustrated as full-length figures in some agricultural activity, each representing the inscribed month.

The months in the funerary chamber are arranged on a panel in two rows: the first six months on the left and the last six months on the right (pl. VIII.3). Avi-Yonah (1936: 22-26) proposes that the space between the two groups was probably filled either by the figures of Sun and Moon or by an inscription. The months are represented as standing figures in frontal pose and an identifying activity, accompanied by their Latin names and the number of days inscribed in Greek. Only nine months survived.

In the Lady Mary monastery, the mosaic consists of two concentric circles (pl. VIII.4). The outer circle is divided into twelve radial units, and each shows a figure in full activity accompanied by the Latin name of the particular month and the number of days written in Greek letters. In the inner circle Sun and Moon are personified.

Three church mosaics in Gerasa in Jordan have remains of personifications of the Labours of the months, most of them destroyed. All have Macedonian names inscribed in Greek letters. In the Elias, Maria, and Soreg chapel the months are depicted in twelve square panels in the first three eastern rows of the nave (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 275-278, fig. 17, pls. 46, 47, 50: 3-4, 51: 4; Piccirillo 1993: 39, 296 fig. 571). The full-length images of seven months and their Macedonian names written in Greek are preserved. At St. John the Baptist church the personifications of the months, almost completely destroyed, originally filled the rectangular border panels (Biebel 1938: 324-3). On the mosaic in the Gerasa cathedral chapel the destroyed images of the months appear in two rectangles, each with six small squares containing the inscribed personifications of the months (Biebel 1938: 313, 475; Piccirillo 1993: 284, figs. 528, 531). Interestingly, the Latin names of the months in Greek letters appear on the Beth She'an pavements, while Macedonian names of the months in Greek letters are inscribed on the Gerasa pavements.

These examples are all quite different, which indicates that they are not copied from a common origin or from each other, though some have similar attributes (Bagatti 1949: 284-5). The personifications of the months draw directly from classical models and the Graeco-Roman repertoire.

The Seasons

The season personifications on each of the synagogue mosaics appear in the four corners of the square in the zodiac scheme. In each mosaic they are almost identical, with differences expressed only in garments, jewellery, and attributes. Their similarity lies in their having the same facial features, so the likeness is frequently more noticeable than the difference (pl. III.2-4).

Personifications of the seasons on pagan and Christian pavements are depicted in dissimilar compositions (figs. III.3-7). The pagan pavements of El Maqerqesh, Caesarea, the Hall of the Seasons at Madaba, and Hippolytus Hall at Madaba, as well as the mosaics of Petra church, St George's church at Mukkayyat, Bishop Sergius church at Umm al-Rasas, and Priest Wa'il church at Umm al-Rasas, are depicted in medallions. These are grouped in various patterns: in the centre of the mosaic field, in the corners of the mosaic field, in panels in the border, in acanthus or vine scrolls in the four corners of the nave field border, and once in an intercolumnar space. A significant difference is noted between the renditions of the seasons in the synagogues, where they are part of the zodiac, and those on the church pavements, where they appear independently. Hanfmann [1951, I: 261] interprets the depiction of the seasons as symbols of happiness and prosperity.

The Calendar

The difference between the Jewish and Christian calendar representations is quite striking in design and concept. The Jewish calendars comprise an identical scheme consisting of three sections: the four seasons represent the year, the months are represented by the zodiac signs, and the sun god with its background of a half moon and stars represents day and night. Together they represent an annual liturgical calendar. Their basically similar form suggests the existence of a prototype in a pattern book (Hachlili 1988: 394-395). The Christian depiction usually consists of designs of the Labours of the Months or of the seasons by themselves. The Jews seem to have preferred the combined symbolism of the seasons, the zodiac signs, and the sun god in one single composition, while the church pavements show that Christians chose the human labour of each month and the seasons in separate designs, though both followed the

traditions and general repertoire of the Graeco-Roman calendars.

Diversity of synagogue and church is perceived in the order of the months and their effect on the calendar, namely when the year begins or which is the first month of the year. The Jewish year began in the spring, the Christian year in autumn or the winter.

In the ancient (biblical) Israelite tradition months are indicated by ordinal numbers in which the 'First month' is the first spring month (Ex. 40.2, 17; Lev. 23.5; Num. 28.16), sometimes named 'the month of the spring' (Ex. 13.4; 23.15; 34.18; Deut. 16.1). The Babylonian month names are alleged to have been brought back by the returnees from the Babylonian exile and occur predominantly in the post-exilic books, which refer to *Nisan* (the first month of the spring) as the first month of the year (Zec. 1.7; Est. 3.7, 13; Neh. 2.1). The Jewish calendar continued to allude to *Nisan* as the month which begins the year. This is further proved by the 'En Gedi mosaic inscription noted above, which lists the Hebrew names of the months and the zodiac signs in the same order, beginning with *Nisan* and the corresponding zodiac sign *Taleh*/ram/Aries (pl. III.4c; fig. XI-4b).

On church mosaics the calendar order is different. The year begins either in January or in autumn. January as the first month appears on the El-Hammam mosaic pavement with a figure, almost completely destroyed, but the inscription survived (pl. VIII.7) (Avi-Yonah 1936: 22). The months' representations (destroyed) on the Gerasa mosaics in St. John church and the cathedral chapel indicate that the year apparently began with Audnaeus, which corresponds to January. Wells (1938: 468-469, 480, inscriptions nos. 274, 295, 307) maintains, 'The texts shows either that the Gerasene year did not begin with Hyperberetaeus, or that Hyperberetaeus was not equated with October. There seems no possibility at present of certainly resolving Gerasene month dates into Julian equivalents. Possibly the Macedonian year and the indiction had become coextensive'. The order of these months' depiction possibly follows the calendar used in Antioch. The first month on the mosaic of Elias, Mary, and Soreg church is Gorpiaios, which corresponds to

September. According to Saller (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 288-9), in the province of Arabia this month was from the 19th of August the 17th of September, which means the year according to this mosaic began in autumn.²

Personifications of Earth, Sea, Ocean, Nilus, the Four Rivers of Paradise, a country, or a city are depicted on secular mansions and church pavements but not on any of the synagogue pavements. On synagogue mosaics only the personifications of the zodiac elements, the four seasons, the zodiac signs, and the Sun-God appear.

Inscriptions

Short inscriptions usually accompany various personifications and biblical narratives. Hebrew inscriptions identify the biblical and the zodiac renditions on synagogue pavements, consisting of identifying names and short sentences explaining biblical scenes; on the synagogue mosaics the Hebrew names of the zodiac signs, and at Sephoris the addition of the names of the months in Hebrew, accompany the images; the seasons on the zodiac design are identified by the Hebrew name of the first month of each of the four seasons. On Christian mosaics of Beth She'an the depictions of months are accompanied by their Latin names and number of days inscribed in Greek letters, whereas the Gerasa mosaics have the months with their Macedonian names written in Greek. Greek names identify personifications, such as Earth, Sea, rivers and seasons on church pavements.

The dedicatory inscriptions found in synagogues and churches are mostly set in mosaic floors (though some can be found on lintels and doorposts, columns and capitals, and on chancel screens). These architectural and ornamental parts were donated by a private donor or by the community. Most church inscriptions are in Greek (a few are in Arabic, Armenian, Christo-Palestinian Aramaic, Latin, and Syriac). Inscriptions found in synagogues are in Aramaic, Hebrew (about 90, published by Naveh 1978; 1989: 302-310), and Greek (about 36, published by Roth-Gerson 1987). The common form of the inscription frame was the *tabula ansata*; other forms were circular and rectangular. The location of the inscriptions

² The seasons on the mosaic of El Maqerqesh chapel at Beth Guvrin are not arranged according to the order

of the year, so they cannot indicate the calendar order or the month which begins the year.



Figure XI-3. Synagogue inscriptions of donors: a. Gaza; b. Gerasa; c. Ma'on; d. Susiya.

was probably not regulated; they are set in various places in synagogues and churches.

Synagogue inscriptions are mostly dedications. In some of the inscriptions the donors or benefactors are mentioned (Naveh 1978: nos. 33-35, 74, 64; Weiss 2005: 202-208, 216-219). They usually begin with the Hebrew or Aramaic formula זכור לטובה or דכיר טוב *to be remembered for good* with the names of the donors following. The inscriptions include the donors' names, occasionally their title or profession, the kind of the donation, and sometimes the sum. A blessing to the donors is at times added, and rarely the date. In the Greek inscriptions the reason for the donation might be included (Roth-Gerson 1987: 150-151). The donors have titles such as priests, rabbis and *archisynagogos*. Other inscriptions mention donors with titles such as lord and lady, and persons who have some tasks in the community (Naveh 1978: 12). Some of the dedications were given not by local people but by donors from other towns or villages (Naveh 1978: no. 4, 21; Roth-Gerson 1987: 163-180).

Names of the donors on synagogues are mostly Hebrew. Greek and Latin names occur mainly in the Greek inscriptions. A few inscriptions mention

the artists who probably made the mosaic or constructed the building (Hachlili 1988: 383-385). Some of the inscriptions include a blessing on the donors by the community (fig. XI-3) (Roth-Gerson 1987: 158-160). Some of the Aramaic inscriptions mention donors who 'made', that is, 'paid for', the mosaics: Beth 'Alpha; a strangely written inscription on the Ma'on pavement, probably by a mosaicist who did not know or understand the language; Na'aran above the menorah; Hammath Gader; 'En Gedi (Naveh 1978: nos. 35, 43, 57, 58, 69); inscription 4 at Susiya (Gutman 1981: 127-28; Naveh 1978: no. 75).

A significant reference אַתְרָה קַדִּישָׁה "holy place" is used in several Aramaic inscriptions to describe the synagogue, see Beth She'an, Hammath Tiberias, Na'aran, as well as on a polycandelon at Kefar Hananiah (Naveh 1978: Nos. 16, 26, 46, 64); the same term appears also in Targums (Levine 1992: 221).

Biblical names and explanatory sentences are rendered in the biblical scenes on the Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris pavements. Hebrew expressions such as, שלום על ישראל, אמן סלה, *Shalom; Shalom al Israel* (taken from Psalms 125: 5; 128: 6); *Amen Sela* occur on some inscriptions

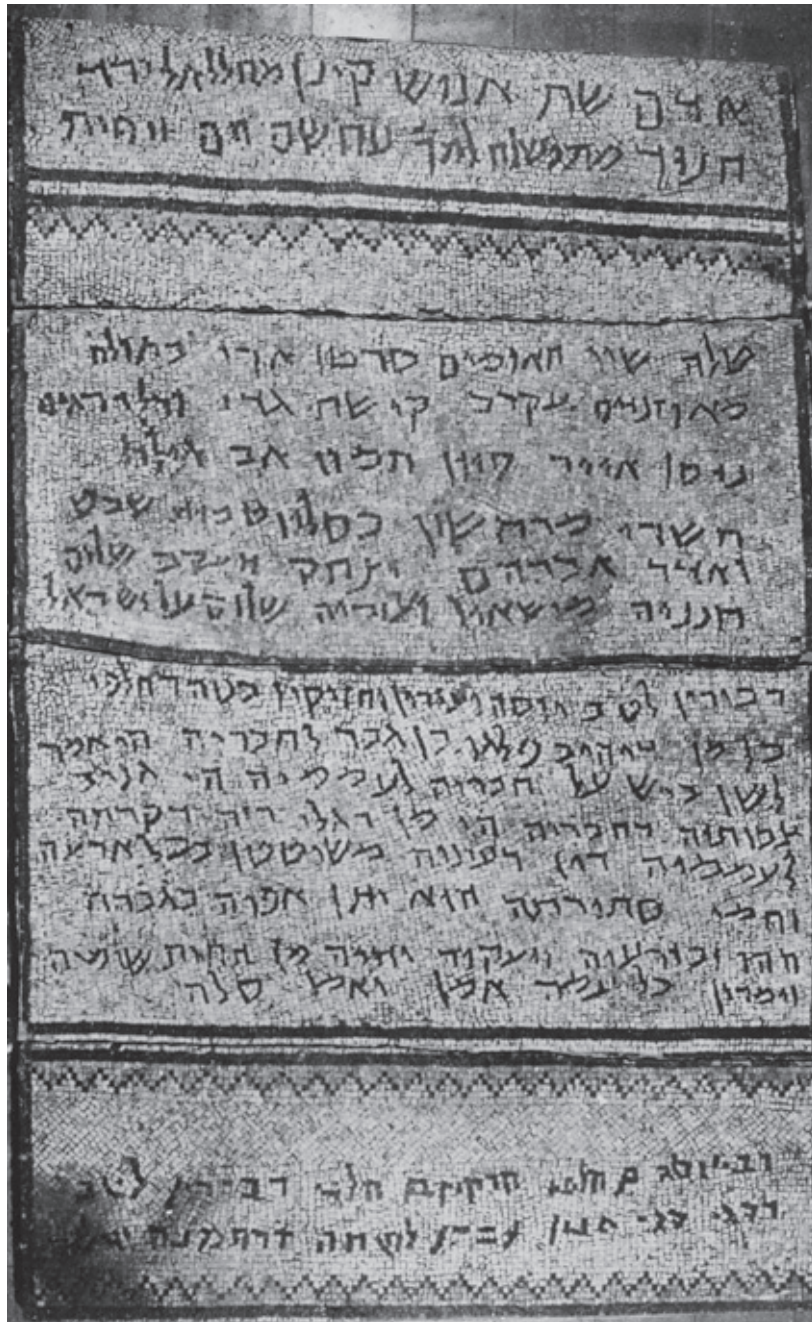


Figure XI-4. The 'En Gedi synagogue inscription.

(Naveh 1978: nos.26, 38, 46, 68, 70, 75; Roth-Gerson 1987: no. 17).

Two long and unusual literary inscriptions in Hebrew and Aramaic decorate the narthex of two synagogue pavements at 'En Gedi and Rehov.

The 'En Gedi inscription discovered on the pavement in the narthex of the synagogue consists of four panels and 18 lines (fig. XI-4) (Mazar 1970; Urbach 1970; Naveh 1978: no. 70; Levine 1981: 140-145). The first two panels of the inscription (lines 1-8) in Hebrew contain the names of

thirteen ancestors of the world in lines 1-2, copied from I Chron. I: 1-4; next is a list of the twelve zodiac signs in lines 3-4 and the twelve months of the year in lines 5-7a. Names of biblical figures of three ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the ending 'peace' are in line 7b, while the names Hananiah, Mishael, and 'Azariah, and the blessing 'peace unto Israel', appear on line 8. The second part of the inscription, a dedicatory caption in Aramaic, is entirely different in language and content. The beginning and the end of this

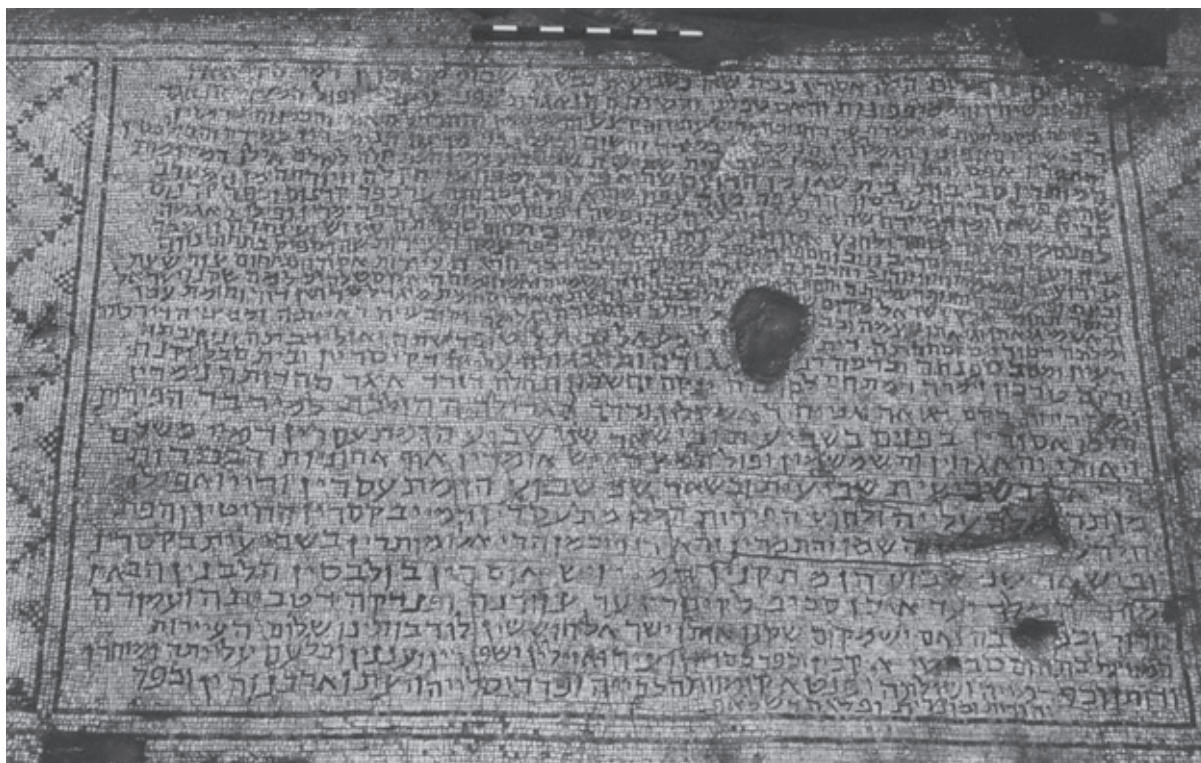


Figure XI-5. The Rehov synagogue inscription.

part are evidently connected: almost the same names of the donors and the same Aramaic formula *to be remembered for good* appear in lines 9 and 17-18. This last panel inscription is depicted in a different writing, perhaps executed by another hand.

The most unusual part of the second section is lines 10-16, which consist of four offences for which the town's community will be held accountable: causing disagreement, slandering friends to the Gentiles, stealing, and revealing the 'town's secret' to the Gentiles. This is followed by a three-line curse, an ominous warning to those who ignore the last-named proscription and do reveal the town's secret. The text of the secret draws greatly on biblical expressions (Dothan A. 1971). The nature of this curse is in great dispute among scholars and is not yet resolved. Some maintain it is an oath taken by the townspeople, perhaps an oath inspired by the Essenes (Urbach 1971). Mazar (1971) argues that the inscription's early 7th-century date attests that the town's secret was the outcome of the Persian-Byzantine political controversy of 614, which divided the community. Dothan, dating the inscription to the 6th century, claims that the 'secret' referred to hiding of the Torah scrolls. Lieberman (1971) suggests that the inscription is associated with the secrets

of the cultivation and preparation of balsam, the industry of 'En Gedi.

The *Halakha* inscription from Rehov decorates the central panel of the narthex (Vitto 1981; Sussmann 1974, 1976, 1981; Naveh 1978: no. 49). The Hebrew inscription (with many Aramaic area names and nicknames) is a well preserved 29-line inscription, unique in size and content; it is the longest inscription found in Israel (fig. XI-5). The entire text concerns issues of *Halakha*, citing passages at length.

The text records the tithes and Seventh-Year produce in many of the districts in the Holy Land; it contains a detailed list of fruits and vegetables permitted or forbidden during the Seventh Year in specific regions. About 90 cities and 'towns', and about 30 brands of fruit and vegetables, are listed. The inscription names the cities surrounding Jewish Galilee from south to east to north to west, and then again to the east: Beth She'an (lines 1-9), Sussita (Hippos-Sussita), Naveh, and Tyre (lines 9-13); Paneas (lines 18-22), Caesarea (lines 22-26), and Sebaste (Samaria) (lines 26-29). The boundaries of Eretz Israel, an important text in Talmudic literature related to the historical geography of the country, are listed in lines 13-18 in the middle of the inscription. The named regions were pagan therefore presented a problem in the

observance of the Jewish agricultural principles concerning tithes and Seventh-Year produce in the Holy Land. The list of regions and fruits appears in the Talmud too. The inscription is dated later than the 5th century according to the archaeological finds in the synagogue—perhaps as late as the 7th century. Sussmann (1981: 151) maintains that this unique inscription ‘achieved several purposes: ornamentation, instruction in the Law, and expression of regional “patriotism”’.

Notably, these two literary inscriptions were not rendered in the nave mosaic but in the side narthex. The presentation of the written word on the pavement and its preference over the figured designs might have been the decision of the local community and probably do not indicate a later date.

Church inscriptions were mostly dedications and commemorations, mentioning the builders, emperors, saints, clergy, monks, the church hierarchy, and many patrons and members of the congregation.

Like the dedicatory inscriptions in synagogues, the church inscriptions were offered for the salvation of the donors, and often include the formula ‘For the salvation of’ followed by the donor’s or founder’s name, with an added prayer or request (Avi-Yonah 1933: 68 and notes 10, 17, 18, 19; Roth-Gerson 1987: 150; Piccirillo 1993: 45). Inscriptions mention the vows that were probably the reason for the donation, a request for forgiveness of sins, in memory of a family deceased, all similar to the Greek inscriptions in synagogues (fig. XI-6). As noted, church inscriptions occasionally name emperors, but only on one synagogue pavement inscription (Beth ‘Alpha) is an emperor named: Justinian. Some church inscriptions mention the deity by a monogram appellation (Avi-Yonah 1933: 69).

Some church inscriptions use biblical citations, mainly from Psalms. Examples are an inscription from a cave-church at Khirbet ed-Deir in the Judaean desert rendering Psalms 105: 4-5 in Greek from the Septuagint (Hirschfeld 1993: 247) and an inscription from the northern church at Herodium (fig. XI-6b) partly taken from Psalms 117: 20 (Netzer et al. 1993: 222). Several inscriptions give excerpts from Isaiah 11: 6-8; 65: 25 and Psalms 51: 21, to identify depictions of pairs of confronting animals illustrating the vision of the End of the Days or the Peaceful Kingdom (pls. IV.8, figs. IV-22, 23).

Only few inscriptions of synagogues and churches pavements in Israel include dates. Some use the years of the emperor, such as the Beth ‘Alpha inscription. Several inscriptions give the date of the building’s completion or renovation, such as those in the Gaza synagogues (Naveh 1978: 5; Roth-Gerson 1987: no.21); the monastery of Lady Mary in Beth-She’an; and the churches of Hazor-Ashdod, Khirbet el-Beiyudat (Hismi 1990: 160), Kissufim (Cohen 1980: 18-19; 1990: 277), Shavei Zion (Avi-Yonah 1967: 59-60) and Shellal.

A number of church mosaics in Jordan include inscriptions of the bishops of Madaba and Gerasa, which enabled scholars to prepare a complete list of these prelates and facilitated dating of a number of pavements (Piccirillo 1993: 44-5, figs. 124); the inscriptions also provide records that buildings were constructed and decorated by means of church funds as well as contributions by donors, who included government officials. The inscriptions mention the saint, monk, or priest through whose zeal the holy place was built, and with the help of God and Jesus Christ (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 202-203). Several church inscriptions, notably at Umm al-Rasas and Rihab, give the dates of buildings completed in the 7th and 8th centuries. This demonstrates that although the struggle between the Arabian tribes and the Byzantine empire was ongoing, it did not immediately disrupt life in Arabian towns and villages.

In sum, the differences in the synagogue and church inscriptions exceed the similarities: the appearance of inscriptions on mosaic pavement of synagogues is earlier in date. They appear already in the 4th century (Hammath Tiberias) whereas those on church floors began only in the 5th century.

The language in the synagogues is mostly Aramaic and Greek, and Hebrew for explanatory inscriptions; in the churches it is almost exclusively Greek. The literary and explanatory inscriptions in Hebrew (biblical and in the zodiac) appear only on synagogue floors, while Greek inscriptions with biblical citations from Isaiah and Psalms appear occasionally on church floors, and once in Hebrew on the pavement of the Beth Midrash of Meroth. Prayers and requests are common among church inscriptions and quite rare on synagogues. Fairly often the church inscriptions use various expressions for God, for example, ‘Lord’, ‘Lord the son Christ’ (Herodium, north Church: Netzer et al. 1990: 221-2), ‘Holy spirit’ (Beth Hashitta:



Figure XI-6. Church inscriptions of donors: a. Kissufim; b. Herodium, northern church; c. Beth Loya.

Aharoni 1954) ‘Christ’s Grace’ (Hazor-Ashdod: Ovadiah 1987: 67) or the rare ‘Lord God of Hosts’ (Haditha: Avi-Yonah 1972: 120-121, pl. 23: B). None appear on synagogue inscriptions.

The usual location of the inscriptions recording donors, benefactors and donations on mosaic floors is within a *tabula ansata*, a wreath, or a rectangular panel. Many of the inscriptions are placed

above or below the portrayed themes; often these inscriptions show no direct connection between the donor and a particular mosaic panel. However, some inscriptions appear in odd locations, usually in close association with the mosaic ornamentation.

Several inscriptions are placed in odd positions on the Na‘aran synagogue mosaic upper

panel. The dedicatory inscriptions in Aramaic are above the ritual objects; they note the patrons' names and their part in the synagogue work (Naveh 1978: 96-102, nos. 61-66). Between the figures of lions in the biblical scene of Daniel in the Lions' Den, two dedicatory inscriptions in Aramaic are preserved. Beneath them is another lengthy Aramaic dedicatory inscription, blessing the donors without mentioning their names.

The Greek inscriptions on the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic are mostly positioned in the bands of the nave on top of the panel or within the panel. Each Aramaic inscription in the aisle and between the columns at Sepphoris is set in an individual panel (Weiss 2005: 216-219; Di Segni 2005: 209-211).

Also at Sepphoris an interesting location was found for a Greek dedicatory inscription, namely in the circular frame between the inner and outer circle of the zodiac in band 5 (Di Segni 2005: 211-212, no.6). A comparable location of a Greek dedicatory inscription, which also gives the name of the mosaicist, Salaman, is in the circular frame of the medallion of the personification of the Sea in the centre of the nave at the Apostles church at Madaba (Piccirillo 1993: 106, figs. 78, 80).

In the Beth She'an small synagogue a separate panel with an Aramaic dedicatory inscription blessing the mosaic artists is set opposite the depiction of birds flanking a vase (pl. XII.2a).

Yet another unusual location of a dedicatory inscription is that between two columns of a temple-like structure in the panel of the eastern part of the central carpet on the mosaic of Priest John upper chapel (pl. II.4a) (Piccirillo 1993: 174, fig. 228).

Many of the inscriptions were rendered on the upper part of the panel in order to leave undisturbed the scene that they topped; it also enabled the artist or donors to change the inscription, if necessary, without damaging the depiction. The aesthetics of the panel might have been a factor too: the scene is much more balanced and effective with the inscriptions at the top of the panel. Another reason could have been the donors' insistence on having their contribution recorded exactly above the scene they donated. The unusual locations of the inscriptions at Sepphoris and in the Madaba Apostles church, noted above, must have been due to their inclusion as an integral part of the mosaic panel. In two cases, the Na'aran synagogue and the Priest John upper

chapel, the inscriptions are awkwardly integrated into the mosaic.

The inscriptions name individuals, couples, family members, the community, and at times refer to anonymous donors. They functioned ordinarily as memorials to the benefactors, as records of donors' vows and their wish for divine reward, and as communal or individual prayers.

Portraits

Inscriptions for donors and benefactors are common on the synagogue and church pavements; the church mosaics went a step further by including portraits of benefactors, donors, and patrons on some pavements. No such portraits are found on any synagogue mosaic.

The portraits are among the classical motifs revitalized in the Byzantine period (Piccirillo 1993: 40; 1998: 322, 357; Dunbabin 1999: 197, 324-325). Sometimes the donors' portraits are rendered in pairs: two women, two men, or a husband and wife.

Portraits of women donors decorate two Christian pavements: at Kissufim, and at Jerusalem on the lower part of the Orpheus mosaic (pl. XI.3).

At Kissufim church (Cohen 1980: 21, 23; 1993: 277-280) two portraits of ladies bearing offerings are rendered on the northern intercolumnar panel in the nave (pl. XI.3a). The woman on the right holds a sack in her left hand and strews coins from her left. The inscribed name above identifies her as Lady Silthous. Her elderly companion on the left holds a fowl on a plate in her two hands. The inscription might possibly be her name Calliora or a blessing to the donor. Each woman wears a tunic and a mantle which covers her head and is adorned with jewellery, bracelets, earrings, and a diadem

Two portraits of women flanking a column or candlestick are rendered in the middle register of the Jerusalem Orpheus pavement (Avi-Yonah 1932: 173, no.133). The nimbed women wear a decorated dalmatica and a pallium, embroidered shoes and jewellery; the name is inscribed beside each figure (pl. XI.3b). Theodosia, on the left, holds a handkerchief and a lotus; Georgia on the right holds a bird in her two hands.

Three churches on Mt. Nebo present donors' portraits. A young man in the orans pose, named by inscription John [son] of Ammonius, is portrayed in a medallion of the inhabited vine scroll carpet of the north aisle in St. George's church at

Mukhayyat (Bagatti 1949: 99, pl. 29,1; Piccirillo 1993: 40, 178, figs. 246-247; 1998: 322, fig. 120). The upper chapel of Priest John at Mukhayyat (Piccirillo 1993: 174, figs. 216-217; 1998: 351, figs. 206, 207) shows two unidentified benefactors, each in a square panel: one in the middle of the west side of the border, the other in the middle of the north side. One depicts a priest, the other a lady with jewels; both have halos over their heads. Bagatti (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 99, pl. 10, 3) contends that the male bust depicts Priest John. Saller (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 176) believes that because several of the names recur in the other two churches, all three are linked.

In the western rectangular panel of the nave in the upper church of Kaianus (Piccirillo 1993: 190, fig. 277; 1998: 357, fig. 224) three portraits of benefactors are rendered with their names inscribed above. Fidus is portrayed as a young man wearing a tunic; he may be the deacon mentioned in an inscription in the panel in the southern intercolumnar. The portrait in the middle, of John, a young vintner, is almost completely destroyed. The third is an anonymous camel-driver wearing a loincloth and a mantle. Part of his face is lost; he carries a bow on his shoulder, a whip in his right hand and a sword in his left. Piccirillo maintains that this figure renders an Arab Christian soldier, one of the Ghassanids.

In front of the chancel step of the Sts. Cosmas and Damianus' church at Gerasa is a tabula ansata with an inscription between portraits of two benefactors, along with their names. Each stands between two trees (Biebel 1938: 331-332, pl. 73; Piccirillo 1993: 288-9, figs. 507-509). The benefactors are Theodore the *paramonarius* (sacristan) with an incense burner, and his wife Georgia in a pose of prayer. Theodore appears in the dedicatory inscription of Sts. Cosmas and Damianus as the founder of the church, as does St. John the Baptist. Georgia might have been the anonymous donor of the dedicatory inscription of St. George's church (Crowfoot 1931: 21-26; Wells 1938: 479, 481, 482, inscriptions nos. 306, 309, 314). Two other donors with offerings are rendered in the easternmost row of diamonds of the nave pavement render the portraits of John son of Astricius and Kalloeonistus (Biebel 1938: 331-332, pl. 73; Piccirillo 1993: 288-9, figs. 510-512). Kalloeonistus is dressed in a short tunic and high boots, and holds a basket of fruit in his right hand. John son of Astricius, wearing a short tunic and sandals, carries a basket on his left shoulder. Wells (1938:

481-482, nos. 312, 313) suggests that they might have been the mosaicists rather than the donors. However, there are no known portraits of mosaicists, only their inscriptions.

A similar scene of three portraits of benefactors, disfigured by iconoclasts, are rendered on the mosaic pavement of St Paul's church at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1997: 384; 2002: 548-549, plan 1, photos 25-27). The first rectangular panel of the nave mosaic shows benefactors, whose names survived, placed between trees; Segis, the benefactor on the left, holds a censer in his hand, while Rabbus and his son Paul stand on the right picking fruit from the tree.

Three portraits of donors are depicted in medallions in the inhabited vine scrolls on the mosaic of the presbytery in the church of Elias, Maria and Soreg at Gerasa (fig. VI-16) (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 272-3; Piccirillo 1993: 296, figs. 515, 569, 572). Elias wears a decorated tunic and holds a censer in his right hand, similar to the figure of Theodore in the church of Sts. Cosmas and Damianos. Maria wears a tunic, a pella covers her head, and she holds a cross; Soreg wears a long decorated tunic with a palla tied in the front above (similar to the garb of Georgia), and large earrings, and she holds a branch in her right hand. The church of Bishop Sergius at Umm al-Rasas shows several benefactors (about 11) enclosed in medallions on an inhabited acanthus scroll mosaic in the nave. All except one are named (Piccirillo 1993: 234-235, figs. 365, 369). St. Stephen's church at Umm al-Rasas shows two villages, Diblaton and Limbon, at the head of each aisle. They are associated with the portraits and inscribed names of the church's benefactors; the inscriptions are rendered around, beside and above the donors' portraits. They include the monk Kaium, priest of Phisga and superior of the monastery on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 238-239, figs. 381, 384). Note that church inscriptions and portraits name and illustrate male and female benefactors alike.

Several themes were rendered only on Christian mosaics: rural activities and everyday life, such as bucolic episodes, arable, vine producing, various hunting scenes, taming of wild beasts, and husbanding domestic animals (pls. VII.1-20, see Chap. VII). These might illustrate the contemporary rural activities in the villages where the churches were built (Maguire 1987: 71; Merrony 1998: 472-73). Another interpretation is that these

scenes signify the earth, its produce, and its inhabitants (Dunbabin 1999: 197-199).

Another subject matter popular throughout the 6th–8th centuries on church floors and absent from synagogue pavements is architectural representations such as walled cities, edifices, and buildings. These are found in the Jordanian churches (Duval 1986, 2003a, b; Ellern 1989). The most famous is the Madaba map, illustrating five main architectural types: several plans of walled cities, smaller cities with a number of buildings and colonnaded streets, large villages, small villages, and simple renditions of a gate or a church. Especially noteworthy is the rendition of the Holy City of Jerusalem. Many pilgrimage churches are depicted. The map is apparently a contemporary chart of 6th-century sites (Avi-Yonah 1954; Piccirillo 1993: 26-34, 94, figs. 61-77; Piccirillo and Alliata 1999). Other such architectural images appear on pavements in Sts. Lot and Procopius church on Mt. Nebo, churches at Gerasa, St. John church at Khirbat al-Samra, the the Acropolis church at Ma'on, Umm al-Manabi church, the churches of Bishop Sergius, of Priest Wa'il, of the Lions, and of St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas, and the church at Zay al-Gharby (Piccirillo 1993: 26-37). Worthy of note are the two depictions of the city plan of *Kastron Mefaa* (Umm al-Rasas), one in the north intercolumnar space in the 6th century Church of the Lions, the other, more schematic, in the east intercolumnar space in the 8th century St. Stephen's church (Piccirillo 1993: 37, figs. 337, 347). The rendition in both pavements describes a walled castrum, a church and another building inside the castrum, and a quarter outside the walls.

Two buildings are rendered on the corners of the border mosaic pavement in El Maqerqesh chapel at Beth Guvrin (fig. VIII-5). Similar structures appear on the corners of a border at Caesarea (unpublished).

A similar image of seven church structures decorates the pavement of the Holy Martyrs church at Tayibat al-Imam in Hamah in Syria (Zagzug and Piccirillo 1999: 446-447, plan 1, figs. 15-17). Cities representations, especially of Alexandria, are a part of Nilotic scenes (see Chap. V, pp).

The structures shown on the Madaba Map are interpreted as important sites for Christianity and many pilgrimage churches; Avi Yonah (1954: 9) maintains that these sites were chosen for three reasons: 'a. their intrinsic importance as cities; b. their significance as sites of events mentioned in the Old Testament, the Gospels or church history;

c. their suitability for filling the empty spaces of the map'. However, images of walled cities, edifices, and buildings, on many of the other mosaic pavements reproduce the actual plan or illustrate the actual contemporary structures themselves.

Mosaicists

Establishing the identity of artists and workshops is one of the most interesting subjects. Artists or builders may be identified by inscriptions in which they are mentioned, as well as through an analysis of the stylistic character of a given part of architecture or ornamentation and an examination of motifs and patterns (for a detailed discussion on artists and mosaicists see Chap. XII; Balmelle and Darmon 1986: 235-249; Donderer 1989). Only a few inscriptions survived on church and synagogue pavements that mention artists generally or by name.

Christian inscriptions mentioning craftsmen who worked on the pavements are found on several church and chapel mosaic pavements in Israel and Jordan. These inscriptions support the assumption that on most occasions Jewish artists were employed in building synagogues and laying mosaic pavements, and Christian artists laid mosaic floors in churches. Some inscriptions mention two or three artists who paved church mosaics; two synagogue inscriptions in Beth 'Alpha and Beth-She'an refer to two generations of mosaicists of the same family.

Stylistic characterization, the use of the same motifs and patterns, and similarity in style and execution might sometimes help identify artists. The same workshop teams or mosaicists might have produced the pavements of churches and synagogues in the Beth-She'an area and the Gaza-Negev region. This would suggest that occasionally Jewish and Christian artists and mosaicists worked for a mixed clientele: pagan, Jewish and Christian.

Sources of Repertory, Patterns, and Motifs

The use of similar compositions, iconographic program, themes, patterns and motifs in both Jewish and Christian ancient art suggests the existence of some common sources, perhaps in the form of pattern books or sketch books (Avi-Yonah 1981: 375; Kitlinger 1965: 7; Dauphin 1978; Hachlili 1988: 391-395). These pattern books were probably handed down through the artists' families, and were accordingly used over long periods of

time. They might have contained general compositions, such as carpet borders, files of motifs such as birds and animals, and compiled themes: biblical, everyday and rural life, mythological scenes, and Jewish iconography and symbols.

Trends and fashions could also have been a source of influence on schemes and designs, especially geometric and organic interlacing compositions filled with motifs. A design of interlocking hexagons creating various geometric shapes such as circles, triangles, lozenges, and octagons, filled with geometric patterns, artefacts, and animals, appears on several pavements of churches and synagogues. Examples are the mosaics in Shavei Zion church (Avi-Yonah 1967: 58,59, pls. XXXIB-XXXIII), the north aisle of Beth Loya church (Patrich and Tsafir 1993: 269, 270), Horvat Berachot church, and the third panel of the synagogue at Na'aran (fig. XI-1). The similarity of the inhabited scroll carpets appearing in synagogues and churches alike (pls. VI.1-12) is further evidence of trendy compositions or of the existence of pattern books (see Chap. VI). The Jews gave added significance to their synagogue floors by inserting Jewish symbols in prominent positions in the inhabited scroll carpet, as in the Beth-She'an, Gaza, and Ma'on synagogues. Artists used these assumed pattern books for the execution of designs chosen by themselves, or more probably by patrons, donors or the community (see Chap. XII). Presumably, pattern books existed on several topics. The similarity of Jewish iconography and the identical portrayal of themes such as the Torah shrine, the Ark, the seven-branched menorah, and the zodiac design imply that these were copied from such pattern books. Equally, the scenes of rural life, vintage, and hunting, which are depicted on Christian pavements, were possibly copied from Christian pattern books.

It seems reasonable to assume that artists and especially mosaicists used general copy books and occasionally specific Jewish or Christian pattern books for the ornamentation of synagogues and churches. The decision on what to use was probably made by the donors, the community representatives, the hierarchy of the religious edifices, or occasionally by the artists. A preference for symbols, iconography, and special motifs can be detected in the ornamentation of synagogues, while an inclination for rural life, vintage, and hunting scenes can be seen in church mosaic pavements.

B. *Summary and Conclusions*

Comparison of the development of synagogue and church pavement designs indicates that the growth and evolution of each went in opposite directions conceptually and consciously. Whenever one religion chose to represent figurative art, the other refrained, and vice versa (Roussin 1985: 264; Hachlili 1988: 370-374). Synagogue pavements contain conventionalized designs and schemes such as panels of symbolic and ritual motifs combined with varied subjects such as the zodiac, and heraldic scenes with inscriptions. Most of these pavements have some symbolic element depicted, usually the menorah, generally in a prominent place but occasionally in the border or in an inscription. The Jews' deliberate choice of symbolic elements was meant to emphasize the distinct and independent quality of Judaism. On church mosaics on the other hand, personifications of natural forces, scenes of village life, farming, hunting, animal chase, and architectural representations are numerous. Floors decorated with designs of medallions filled with beasts and birds and the inhabited scroll decoration are common to both synagogue and church pavements, but on some Jewish symbolic panel or motif is added.

The organization of the church field is different from that of the synagogue: floors are divided into geometric or organic carpets, and sometimes sub-divided into sections by vine branches or geometric patterns such as squares, circles, and hexagons, all filled with beasts, birds, objects, and plants. Several synagogue pavements are divided into panels with the same general themes, such as the sanctuary façade, the zodiac, and a biblical scene.

The pavements in the 4th-century Hammath Tiberias synagogue are the first to be designed to include prototypical figurative themes and subjects, proving that their iconography developed earlier than that of the churches. Such themes begin to appear on church pavements only in early 5th century; they differ from those of synagogues, taking the form of genre subjects which represented 'the world as it is', such as vintage and village life. Figurative art, iconography and symbolism, religious themes, and calendars represented as the zodiac are introduced into the designs on synagogue floors from the 4th century on; biblical scenes start being used from the 5th century. The Labours of the Months and the seasons, as well as pagan subjects, appear on church

pavements during the 6th century, when carpets with inhabited scrolls also become common. Synagogue pavements turn to an aniconic style in the mid-6th century. This style results from the trend away from the depiction of human figures; at the same time the zodiac figurative depiction is replaced by an inscribed panel. Mythological and pagan themes are absent on church and synagogue pavements, except for some specific subjects such as Orpheus. Biblical scenes are avoided on church pavements in view of the danger of their being trodden upon. Symbolic motifs and religious elements are rarely depicted on church floors for the same reason.

Iconoclasm affected many church pavements, and a few in synagogues. Some floors were greatly damaged and crudely repaired, others were intentionally disfigured and then replaced by geometric and floral carpets. From the mid-6th century onwards, synagogue pavements comprise mostly geometric and floral carpets, sometimes with an emblem decorating a part of the carpet. Church pavements continue to depict animated scenes until the 8th century, even though many suffered in the iconoclasm crisis.

In conclusion, synagogue pavement decoration seems to have shifted from carpets with figurative representations to aniconic geometric and floral patterned carpets which integrated symbolic elements. Early churches are decorated solely with geometric carpets, and no figurative art appears. Floral and faunal subjects begin to appear only in the mid-5th century at Tabgha and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (Avi-Yonah 1960: 34-35). In the latter part of the 6th century Jewish art tended to represent aniconic subjects. Church art in the 6th-8th centuries continued to ornament pavements with elaborate figurative art, as exemplified in churches in the vicinity of Beth-She'an and in many of the churches in the Madaba, Gerasa, and Umm al-Rasas regions.

In Christian art, representations of symbols on pavements was forbidden by imperial decree in 427 (Theodosian Code, I tit.VIII). The decree generated the development of a tendency to hidden Christian symbols. At the same time, church pavements begin to employ figurative ornamentation consisting mostly of personifications of the natural world, genre subjects such as vintage, village life, and hunting scenes, which are considered inoffensive (Vitto 1995: 283-300; Dunbabin 1999: 196; Talgam 2000: 93). Even though figurative designs are now employed, the negative

attitude to depictions of symbolic subjects persists. Portraits of donors and benefactors are rendered only on church mosaics. Although village life and the Labours of the Months may seem realistic depictions, they probably maintain the symbolic meaning of earthly paradise, a common notion in this period.

One of the causes of this separate and opposite development may have been the intention of the Jews to distinguish their art and architecture from those of Christianity; they did this through emphatic affirmation of Jewish spiritual values, which they symbolically expressed in the specific ornamentation of their synagogues.

It remains difficult to determine the actual reason for the patrons' and donors' choice of subjects. The designs might have been chosen from the assumed pattern books available. As the Christians hesitated to tread on sacred images, their iconographical and symbolic images probably decorated wall mosaics, which did not survive. Kitzinger (1965: 12-13) asserts that the Jews were ahead of the Christians in the development of specific subject matter for their synagogue mosaic pavements, such as the ritual objects and the zodiac. Symbolic motifs, such as the menorah representing Judaism and the cross representing Christianity, are more abundantly depicted on architectural fragments such as lintels, capitals and chancel screens in synagogues and churches than on pavements. Domestic, wild, and exotic animals, involved in chase, combat, or hunting, as well as birds and objects, are depicted on synagogue and church pavements alike, usually filling geometric or organic compositions.

From the similarity and diversity of synagogues and churches, close contacts were evidently maintained despite the differences. Divergence in architecture was due to the separate development of each faith's liturgy and worship, resulting in dissimilar emphasis on parts of the building. The proximity of the Jewish and Christian communities is illustrated by the resemblance of iconographic themes and motifs, which at times even carry the same significance. Contact and mutual influence between the art of Jews and Christians appear to have been considerable. This may have been because of a shared tradition and common themes, but also because of the common employment of artists who designed and worked for both synagogues and churches, and often used the same motifs in both.

MOSAICISTS, WORKSHOPS, AND THE REPERTORY

Artists, workshops and schools of mosaic pavements, meaning a group or a team of artists and workshops, can be identified by the following means: inscriptions mentioning artists or builders who signed their work; analysis of stylistic and technical idiosyncrasy which may characterize an artist or a workshop; and examination of particular motifs and patterns.

The technical and artistic skills involved in the laying of the mosaic pavements indicate that the work was probably executed by workshops consisting of groups of artisans and artists based in large cities and working within schools, or by travelling groups of artists, consisting generally of a craftsman in charge of several less skilled workers or a single master-artisan supported by his assistants, his son or apprentice (Dauphin 1976a: 130-131, 141-145; 1978; Balmelle and Darmon 1986: 238-240; Hachlili 1988: 383-391; Donderer 1989: 40-50; Dunbabin 1999: 269-278). The identity of artists and their workshops is important though they are generally anonymous.

The tasks in a workshop might have been divided among several experts: the master designer, a *pictor* who drew figures or complicated geometric designs, a craftsman in charge of the border decoration and of pavements of secondary rooms; assistants, apprentices, and general workers who prepared the site, cut the tesserae, and finished and cleaned up the work at the end. Certain parts could have been made in the workshop atelier and taken later to the site and placed within the pavement. Differences in the stylistic execution of the pavements were due solely to the artists' professional ability.

Balmelle and Darmon (1986: 238-240) describe the mosaic artists and workshops as artisans travelling from place to place, carrying only their tools. The basic materials of their trade would be found at the site, and they were probably considered members of the builders' team. Balmelle and Darmon (1986: 241-243) and Dunbabin (1999: 275) portray the status of the mosaicists on the basis of the edict of the Emperor Diocletian of 301 CE, which attempted to fix maximum prices for

commodities and artisans' wages. A distinction is observed between the mosaicist called *musaearius* (in Greek μουσαρίω κεντητή) and the one called *tessellarius*, (ψηφοθέτή), generally explained as a wall mosaicist and a floor mosaicist. Yet it could also mean the difference between the designer who draws the pictures, and the artisan who produces and adds the decorations and background; or it might distinguish skill, competence, and expertise, or perhaps describe the creator of superior decorative mosaics and the producer of plain mosaic pavements (Bruneau 1988: 33-34; Jesnick 1997: 58).¹

Only few examples have been found of preliminary drawing or incised lines for geometric or figured scenes under floor mosaics. Still, they may indicate that these preliminary sketches were considerably more common on mosaic pavements than previously supposed (Dunbabin 1999: 284-285).

These preliminary incised lines marked on the bedding of the mosaic (*sinopia*) are found on several pavements in Israel. An example is the mosaic pavement (Oecus 456) at the Herodian western palace at Masada (1st century BCE) which was partly destroyed in antiquity. The surviving bedding shows the process in which the mosaic was laid. Preparatory incised parallel lines appear on part of the pavement designating the border and the principal patterns of the mosaic, serving as guidelines for the mosaicists. But no paintings of the pattern or the design endured. Similar *sinopia* from the 1st century CE were found in other areas (Yadin 1966: 127; Foerster 1995: 151, fig. 254).

Preliminary incised lines marked on the *nucleus* of the mosaic of the House of Dionysos at Sephoris indicate the principal units and composition of the pavement (Talgam and Weiss 2004: 115-116).

In the Khirbet El-Murassas monastery at Ma'ale Adummim preparatory painting on the white

¹ On the technique of the mosaic pavements, materials, foundations, lay-out, and procedures see Dunbabin 1999: 279-290.

plaster before the laying of the tesserae appears on three pavements (Magen and Talgam 1990: 149-150). The best preserved is in the nartex. In the big chapel bema, the painting shows contours and lines marked in red and black. In the upper layer of the church floor incised guidelines of the main composition are displayed, and traces of various colours indicate the use of polychromic preparatory paintings.

Other examples are the eastern church mosaic at Herodium (Netzer et al. 1993: 225-226), which beneath the pavement displays red, yellow, and green paint marking the medallions and the figures; the Beth Midrash mosaic at Meroth shows remains of red paint outlining the design (Ilan 1989: 33). When the mosaic was being treated at the Israel Museum laboratory it was noticed that the pattern appeared in mirror-image markings on its underside, with the pattern larger than the mosaic; also, the inscribed word טלה 'lamb' was longer and located in a different place from that on the topside. The artists apparently had to reduce the size of the mosaic. Talgam (1987: 153) maintains that work on the mosaic must have been done with constant collaboration between the designer/painter (*pictor* or *ordinator*) who drew the *sinopia* and the *tessellare* or *pavimentare* who laid the stones.

The signatures inscribed on mosaic pavements are generally of one, two, or three artists: a single signature might indicate a master-craftsman or the head of the workshop, possibly supported by assistants or apprentices. Two and three signatures perhaps mark a division of labour between a director and assistants, or among artists performing different tasks, or all working together.

Though it is difficult to isolate the work of each individual artist when two or three are named in inscriptions, sometimes the style of a pavement might point to the work done by the different mosaicists (see the discussion of the El-Hammam, Sepphoris, and the Petra pavements, below).

At times it seems that mosaicists came from abroad to work, and later trained local artisans. This is indicated by the survival of the local mosaic traditions, in particular by the recurrence of some themes.

The mosaic workshops existed for clientele of all religions. Artists and workshops supplied their products indiscriminately to Jews, Christians, and pagans alike. These workshops produced uniform or conventional designs which would be acceptable to the various ethnic clients. Special decorative designs or religious symbols would be added

at the customer's request: Jewish symbols for Jews, Christian symbols for Christians, and mythological depictions for pagans.

A. *Mosaicists and Artists Identified by Inscriptions*

The identity of artists and mosaicists of synagogue and church pavements can be deduced partly from inscriptions on them which sometimes mention the artist by both name and deed, or a prayer dedicated to or commemorating the artists, and sometimes both. The signatures found on these floors date from the 5th to the 8th century.

Such inscriptions are few. Donderer (1989) lists 92 certain inscriptions of artists, but not all of them seem convincing. Dunbabin (1999: 270) maintains that about 70 to 80 signatures of mosaicists are preserved on pavements across all periods. No mosaicist's name appears on more than one mosaic, except in a single house, apart from the inscriptions on the Beth 'Alpha and Beth She'an synagogue pavements that name the same mosaicists, a father and a son. Some inscriptions evince confusion between the donors and the artists.

The inscription usually states the name of the mosaicist/s, often followed by a word meaning 'made by' or 'work of'.

Inscriptions on Synagogue Pavements in Aramaic and Greek were discovered on a few mosaic pavements, identifying the mosaicist (Hachlili 1988: 383-385).

- On the Beth 'Alpha synagogue mosaic a Greek inscription, near the western entrance in a tabula ansata, reads: Μνισθοῦσιν ὑ τεχνίτ[αι] εὐ κάμνοντες τῷ ἔργον του τω Μαρριανός καί Ἀνίνας υ [ἴ] ός, 'In honoured memory of the artists who made this work well, Marianos and his son Aninas' (fig. XII-1a). Judging from this inscription, the mosaicists Marianos and his son Hanina were local artisans who created (with special skill) a mosaic in an independent style (Sukenic 1932: 47; Avi-Yonah 1981: 292, Nr. 22; Roth-Gerson 1987: 29-30; Hachlili 1988: 383, fig. X.7c; Donderer 1989: no.A25, pl. 18, 1). Sukenic (1934: 77) claims that as the inscription is the only one in Greek it was the initiative of the mosaicists.



Figure XII-1. Greek inscription of mosaicists Marianos and his son Aninas: a. Beth 'Alpha; b. Beth She'an.

- The same artisans are mentioned in a Greek inscription discovered on a later mosaic pavement in side room 7 in the Beth She'an synagogue A (fig. XII-1b): *Χιροθεσία Μαρσιανου και το[ύ] υίο[ύ] Ἀνίνα* 'this work was made by Marianos and his son Anina' (Zori 1967: 159, pl. 31,1; Roth-Gerson 1987: 33; Hachlili 1988: 385; Donderer 1989: No. A24, pl. 17, 2).
- An Aramaic inscription within a panel was discovered on the mosaic of Beth She'an small synagogue B outside the main pavement frame (Bahat 1981: 85; Naveh 1978: 78-79, No. 47; Hachlili 1988: fig. X.26; pl. 106). The inscription is rendered upside-down, facing the general nave mosaic, placed under a scene of a vase flanked by a pair of guinea-fowl (fig. XII-2a); it commemorates the anonymous artist/s who created the mosaic: *דכיר לטב אומנה דעבד חדה אבידתה* 'Remembered be for good the artisans who made this work'. These inscriptions use specifically the Aramaic or the Greek term for artists (see below).
- Two related Aramaic inscriptions on fragments of mosaic pavements (dated to the 4th century) perhaps record and com-

memorate a Jewish family of artists who also 'made' mosaic floors: the first, from Kefar Kana, reads (fig. XII-2b): *דיכר לטב יוסה בר תנחום בר בוטה ובנוי דעבדון* 'Honored be the memory of Yoseh, son of Tanhum, son of Butah, and his sons, who made this pavement; may it be a blessing for them. Amen'.

The other is a fragmentary inscription from Sepphoris, which reads (fig. XII-2c): *דכיר [לטב] רבי יודן [בר תנ] חום [ב] ר [ד...]* 'Honored be the memory of Rabbi Yudan the son of Tanhum the son of...' (Avi-Yonah 1981b: nos. 167, 296; Naveh 1978: 51-53, nos. 29,30; Hachlili 1988: 384, fig. XV, 1d,e).

Both these inscriptions mention a family of three generations: Yoseh and Yudan, sons of Tanhum, son of Buta, who 'made' mosaic pavements. Avi-Yonah (1981b: 375, after Klein) proposes that these inscriptions attest to a family of artists with an inherited craft; but see Naveh, 1978: 51-52, who suggests that these are dedicatory inscriptions.

- An Aramaic inscription in one of the aisles of the Gerasa synagogue reads:



Figure XII-2. Aramaic inscriptions on synagogue pavements: a. Beth She'an small synagogue B; b. Kefar Kana; c. Sepphoris.

שלום על כל ישראל אמן אמן סלה פינחס בר ברוך יוסה בר שמואל וי[ו]ן בר חזקיה 'Peace upon all Israel Amen Amen Selah. Phinhas son of Baruch, Jose son of Samuel, and Judan son of Heskiah'; Sukenik (1934: 77) maintains that this inscription commemorated the Aramaic-speaking mosaicists and not the donors.

In several *inscriptions on church pavements*, usually in Greek, one or more mosaicists signed their names referring to their work.

- A Greek inscription (no. 7) on the north-west room of the 'Evron church with a 415 CE date, refers to [Κύριε Ἰησοῦ] Χρ(ιστ)έ μνήσκου τ[ού] δούλου σου Ἰουλ[ι]ανού καί Παύλου τοῦ ψηφοθέτου 'Lord Jesus Christ, remember your servant Ioulianos and Paulus the mosaicist' under the inscription is a cross (Tzaferis 1987: 44*, 49*).
- One of the panels on the mosaic in the northern aisle of the Kissufim church (pl. VII.13a) shows a horseman spearing a leopard with a lance, above which a Greek inscription is preserved: ἔργον Ἀλεξάνδρου 'The work [or deed] of Alexander' (Cohen

1980: 20; Donderer 1989: 53, no. A1, pl. 1). According to the excavator (Cohen 1980: 20), it could refer to the artist but he prefers to relate it to Alexander the Great. However, the word ἔργον 'work of' or 'made by' is quite common in reference to mosaicists' work, and it appears on several other inscriptions (Donderer 1989: 16, 34; A1, 25, 27). Accordingly, the Kissufim inscription evidently relates to the mosaic work created by the craftsman Alexander.

- In El-Maqerqesh chapel at Beth Guvrin the mosaic field is decorated with inhabited vine scrolls; above the design two peacocks hold a garland in their beaks, with a Greek inscription rendered above (fig. XII-3): Χριστου παμβασιληος ἐκόσμησα τό μέλαθρον Οὔδας ὀδόν ψηφισιν ἰδίων δια μαθητων τοῦδ ἱερεῦς ἀμύμων Ὀβοδιανός ἠπιόθυμος, 'I have decorated the house of Christ, the Universal Monarch, with mosaics, the floor and the entrance, through my disciples (or: in memory of His disciples) (I) His blameless priest, Obodianos the Gentle'. It is suggested that the inscription honors the mosaicists (Avi-Yonah



Figure XII-3. Inscription on the pavement of the chapel at El Maqerqesh in Beth Guvrin.

1933: 146, No. 23, 8; 1934: 73 =1981b: 294, 375, Nr.23, 8). Donderer (1989: 72, A30, pl. 21,1) regards this inscription as the work of apprentices of Obodianos, master of a mosaic workshop that made the pavement.

Several other inscriptions mention the mosaicists who created mosaic pavements. At 'Ein Fattir church an inscription in a tabula ansata mentions the master craftsmen Claudianus and Immanuel (Chambon and Strus 1994: 84). At Battir the inscription names Antonis Galoga (Avi-Yonah 1932: 142, no. 13=1981: 289, 375, no. 13, but see Donderer 1989: 123, C1, who does not see it as a mosaicist's inscription). The brothers Pelagius and Thomas, who made the pavement at Emmaus (Avi-Yonah 1933: 53, 73, no. 346=1981: 355, 375 no. 346). In the monastery of Bir-el-Qutt, a mosaicist called Josiah is mentioned in the inscription on the mosaic (Ovadia 1987: no. 54).

- The Greek mosaic inscription in the Nile Festival building at Sepphoris contains (lines 4-8 of the epigram), according to Di Segni (2002: 93, 95-6), a eulogy of the Nile mosaic's Alexandrine artists, Procopius and his son-in-law Patricius. She even contemplates that Procopius was the head of the team or workshop while Patricius was his apprentice. Bowersock (2004) suggests various corrections to the reading of the inscription and a different interpretation; he argues that this epigram is about the identification of the Nile Festival building as the mansion of Absbolius, or Patricius the son-in-law of Procopius, governor of Palaestina Secunda in the early 6th century.

Di Segni (2005) rejects Bowersock's reading.

However, Di Segni's interpretation of the eulogy glorifying the artists seems hardly tenable. Nothing in the inscription's phrasing implies any artistic work or any indication that the named persons were in any way connected to the making of the mosaic.

- The mosaics of the baptistral hall at the Byzantine church at Jabaliyah near Gaza were fashioned by two mosaicists, Victor and Cosmas, from Ashkelon according to the Greek inscription (Humbert et al. 2000: 125).

Several inscriptions mention craftsmen who paved church mosaics in Jordan (Piccirillo 1993: 47; 2005-6: note 12). They refer to one, two, or three mosaicists. The prominence of the inscriptions and the mosaicists' names indicate that the artists were advertising their work. Sometimes a prayer for their salvation is included, attesting to a 'desire to leave a lasting record of piety where it could be read by both God and men' (Dunbabin 1999: 273).

- An inscription surrounding the circular medallion with the personification of the Sea in the centre of the nave of the Apostles church at Madaba reads: 'O Lord God who has made the heavens and the earth, give life to Anastasius, to Thomas and Theodora, and [this is the work] of Salaman the mosaicist' Σαλαμανίου ψηφο(θέτου) (Piccirillo 1993: 106, fig. 78; Donderer 1989: 76, A35). It commemorates the work of a craftsman, with an added prayer.
- An inscription in Priest John's church at Mukkayyat on Mt. Nebo names the monk

Julian after several male and female donors. Saller and Bagatti (1949: 169, 177, inscription no. 8) considered this to indicate Julian as the maker of the mosaic.

- A small part of an inscription in a rectangular panel in front of the apse at the church of St. Kyriakos at al-Quwaysmah (6th century) mentions the work by [... Σ]ιλανού ψη(φοθέτου) ‘Silanus the mosaicist’ (Donderer 1989: 77-78, A36; Piccirillo 1993: 268, fig. 493).
- A small inscription in a panel in the southwest corner of the inhabited vine scroll field in Anastasius chapel at Khirbat al-Samra states: Ἀναστασίου Δομεντιανοῦ ὑψηφοθέτου ‘[Work] of Anastasius [son] of Dominianus, the mosaicist’ (Donderer 1989: 54, A3; Piccirillo 1993: 308, Fig.609, 612).

Several inscriptions note the work of three artists or more:

- A two-line inscription located near the entrance to the chapel in the Diakonikon-Baptistry of the Memorial of Moses at Siyagha on Mt. Nebo commemorates three mosaicists. A prayer is added: ...Κ(ύρι)ε, μνήσθητι Σοέλου κ(αί) Καίουμου κ(αί) Ἡλίου ψηφοῦητων κ(αί) παντός τοῦ οἴκου αὐτῶν ‘Lord Jesus Christ, remember the clerics and the monks and [all the] others who [rest] here [in peace]. God remember the mosaicists Soelos, Kaioumas and Elias and all their household’ (Piccirillo 1988: 155-157; 1993: 146, fig. 183; Donderer 1989: 78, A37; Dunbabin 1999: 273).
- An inscription in a circular medallion near the chancel screen in St. George’s church at Mukkayyat records three mosaicists: Ἔργον ψηφοῦητων Ναουμα κ(αί) Κυριακός κ(αί) Θωμάς... ‘Work of the mosaicists Nauma and Kyriakos and Thomas, for the repose of Sabinus, the brother of Martyrius’ (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 168, no. 5, pl. 32; Donderer 1989: 70, A27; Piccirillo 1993: 178, fig. 248). Saller and Bagatti maintain that these named mosaicists were the makers as well as the designers of the mosaic pavement.
- Two inscriptions in St. Stephen’s church at Umm al-Rasas commemorate the mosaicists, with an added prayer:
 - a. An inscription found around the altar in the presbyterium sanctuary refers

to Μνήσθητι κέ τοῦ δούλου σου Στυρακίου τοῦ ψηφοθέτου Ἐξβοντίνου [υ]ίου τοῦ Ζαδαῶς Εὐρεμίου ἑτέρου αὐτοῦ ‘the two mosaicists (and others) Staurkaios of Esbous, son of Zada, and Euremius his colleague’ (Piccirillo 1989: 285-6; 1993: 238, fig. 346; Donderer 1989: 79, A38; Dunbabin 1999: 273).

- b. An inscription in the mosaic of the nave dated to 785 mentions anonymous mosaicists: ‘Lord, remember thy servants the mosaicists whose names thou knowest’ (Piccirillo 1989: 289; 1993: 238, fig. 384). This is comparable to the Aramaic inscription in Beth She’an small synagogue that mentions the work of anonymous artists (fig. XII-2a, see above). Dunbabin (1999: 273) suggests that in this formula, as in those on donors’ inscriptions, sometimes ‘the names could be suppressed in aspiration for a heavenly reward’.

Few mosaicists were signing their names on mosaic pavements, the earliest inscription identifying a mosaicist appears on the mosaic pavement of the ‘Evron church in 415, and the practice continued until the 8th century. Most of the inscriptions found on synagogue pavements mention craftsmen with Jewish names, which implies that Jewish artists were employed in building synagogues and laying mosaic pavements, while Christian artists usually laid mosaic floors in churches. Yet a number of synagogue and church mosaics might have been paved by the same artists, team of mosaicists, or workshop (see below). The craft was apparently an inherited skill, traditionally a family occupation, as attested to by the inscriptions. Two generations of a family, Marianos and his son, together made the mosaic pavement of Beth ‘Alpha (inscription no. 1) which is unique in style and execution; and also the pavement in one room of Beth Shean synagogue A (room 7, inscription no. 2); possibly the same three-generation family is recorded at Kefar Kana and Sepphoris mosaic inscriptions.

Dunbabin (1999: 275) maintains that the mosaicists’ names noted in church inscriptions are similar to names of bishops, priests, and benefactors cited on other inscriptions in the region; they are a mixture of traditional Aramaic, Greek, and especially Christian names, which suggests a

characteristically mixed origin of the society and that they too were apparently local craftsmen.

The small numbers of craftsmen's inscriptions intimates that only a few artists signed their work. Even more significant is the absence of craftsmen who signed more than one pavement, except for Beth 'Alpha and Beth She'an, as noted earlier. This fact might serve as evidence of a single work by the artists, or that signing pavements was not a customary practice.

Terms Used in the Inscriptions for Mosaicist or Artist

It is notable that different words or terms for the mosaicist or artist are used in synagogues and church inscriptions:

The terms used in synagogue inscriptions are אומנא *omna* and אמן *oman*, in Aramaic and Hebrew respectively, and τεχνίτ[αι] in Greek. In Talmudic literature the Aramaic term אומנא *omna* means artisan or skilled builder (M. Berachot II, 4; JT. Hag. II, 1, 77b, line 15).

The Greek term used at Beth 'Alpha is τεχνίτ[αι] ('occupied in skilled labour' = artists) (Suknik 1932: 47). Hestrin (1960: 66) proposes that these artisans or artists might have been responsible for the mosaic, but also for the building, for two reasons: first, the same term appears in Syria carved on lintels and tomb walls, and is used there for both artisan and builder; second, the only ornaments are inside, on the mosaic floors, which were thus the only places for inscriptions. In sum, the Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek terms can be explained as meaning artisan, craftsman, or builder. This is also attested by Butler (1929: 254): 'there was no great difference in the function of designer and builder. One must assume that in most cases the architect was also the builder or contractor and may have been himself an artisan as well'.

The Greek derivatives of the term *psifothetai*: ψεφωθέ, ψεφωτήτων, ψιφωθέτο, ψηφωθήτων, and ψηφοθέτης, appear on several mosaic inscriptions and mean 'mosaicist', comparable to the Latin *tessellarius* and *tessellare*, *musseotes* or *mussiator* (Donderer 1989: 20-21, nos. A3, A27, A35, A37, A38; Piccirillo 1993: 47). Tzaferis (1987: 49*) claims that the term ψηφοθέτου refers to the one who 'laid the tesserae after the foundation and tracing were finished by other professionals'.

The Greek ἔργον 'work of' or 'made by' appears on several inscriptions in reference to the work of the mosaicist (Donderer 1989: 16, 34,

168; nos. A1, A25, A27). For the use of this word see particularly the Beth 'Alpha inscription, which describes clearly the work done by two mosaicists/artists. Another term, Χιροθεσία 'handwork', is inscribed for the same two artists in side room 7 in Beth She'an synagogue A.

B. Identifying Mosaicists and Artists

Mosaicists and workshops might be identified by analysis of stylistic and technical idiosyncrasy of the mosaic, as well as by examination of the motifs and patterns. Identity could be determined by theme preference, resemblance of ornamentation details, similarity of techniques used, and stylistic and typical features. Dauphin (1987: 189) claims that the geographical distribution is significant in defining workshops, for instance, the various designs of the inhabited scrolls, although none of the designs constitutes a chronological criterion.

Similarity in themes, scenes, and designs might also be related to fashion, trend, or an inherited preference. These similarities notwithstanding, mosaicists and craftsmen may be identified through their consistent use of the same stylistic features and characteristics, and by the technical details. Some craftsmen have distinctive technical habits, which distinguish their work.

Examples of identical themes executed by different artists are the designs of the zodiac scheme and Torah shrine panels on mosaic pavements of the synagogues at Hammath Tiberias, Beth 'Alpha and Sepphoris, which are dated to different periods.

A number of pavements are considered and described as especially interesting by their style, design details, and content:

The Artists of the Hammath Tiberias Synagogue Pavements

The synagogue mosaic of the Hammath Tiberias synagogue (stratum IIa) dates to the last decades of the 3rd or the first quarter of 4th century. It was destroyed in the 5th century either by official order or by an earthquake (Dothan 1981: 68; 1983: 52, 67). Dunbabin (1999: 189, note 6) proposes a later date for the mosaics of this stratum, between the late 4th and early 5th century. This is based on the geometric mosaics with the rainbow-style, looped patterns, and the *semis* of rosebuds ornaments which are more characteristic of the

last quarter of the 4th century. Talgam (2000: 100) also dates the Hammath Tiberias synagogue to the second half of the 4th century.

The mosaic central nave is rendered with three panels of the Torah shrine flanked by a pair of menoroth, and the four ritual objects, the zodiac design, and an inscription flanked by a pair of lions. The craftsmen producing the mosaic are distinctive in both the composition of the Torah shrine panel and especially in the treatment of the zodiac figures, which is comparable in style and details to the Constantine mosaics at Antioch (Dothan 1983: 48, 68,70).

The mosaicist/s created an agreeable composition executed with skill and ability (fig. II-1). The signs of the zodiac are represented by life-like figures, particularly the two uncircumcised nude images (Libra and Aquarius), which display a pagan Hellenistic character and free artistic illustration (pl. III.1). This and the mirror-like rendering of the Hebrew inscription דלי *Deli* for the Aquarius sign suggest that the craftsman did not know Hebrew but most probably followed a sketch prepared by the designer or a pattern from a model book. The assumption that he may not have been a Jew but a Gentile seems well founded. The stylistic features and details indicate a strong influence of 4th-century Hellenistic-Roman art; the figures and their movements are natural and the faces are full featured and expressive. A three-dimensional appearance is created through the artist's use of shadowing. Perhaps the mosaicist was an artist or an apprentice from Antioch or some other large centre. The classical-pagan design and the use of mostly Greek donors' inscriptions (except one in Aramaic) indicate the Hellenized outlook and the affluence of the synagogue community that commissioned the decoration, although it was still within limits of the liberal approach of the religious leaders in Tiberias.

The Mosaicists of the Beth 'Alpha Synagogue

The Beth 'Alpha synagogue nave mosaic is rendered with the same themes as in the Hammath Tiberias synagogue. The mosaic contains the same three panels of the Ark flanked by a pair of menoroth, the four ritual objects and a pair of lions and birds, the zodiac design, and the Binding of Isaac (instead of the inscription flanked by lions at Hammath Tiberias) (fig. II-3, pls. IIa, III.3,IV.1b). The border of the mosaic is unique. At the entrance the two inscriptions

are flanked by a lion and bull seen upside-down (fig. XII.1a). The east border is a frieze of intertwined vine branches enclosing birds, animals, and objects; in the centre a figure bust holds a bird (pl. VII.17b). The south and west borders are depicted with a line of lozenges, one containing a hen promenading her chicken, and next to it a fish, plants, fruit, and geometric designs (Sukenik 1932: 42, figs. 20-24). However, the Beth 'Alpha mosaic was created in an independent style with a simple design by two local craftsmen, Marianos and his son Hanina, who are commemorated in a Greek inscription which mentions that the work was done with special skill; the other Aramaic inscription at the entrance mentions the emperor Justin (probably Justin I, 518-527) which dates the mosaic (fig. IX-1d). The craftsmen who inscribed it were either with poor at, or ignorant of, the Hebrew script (Sukenik 1932: 44, 47).

The Beth 'Alpha craftsmen executed a naïve design in which the human figures and animals are austere drawings. The style is standardized disproportionate, and lacking in anatomical concern. The figures are *en face* and two-dimensional; The artist used only the essential lines to portray the figures; the human face is expressed by one continuous line outlining the eyebrows and nose, a square for the mouth, and simple circles for the eyes. The limbs have a doll-like appearance; the legs are directed to the side, not oriented frontally with the upper trunk of the body. There is no indication of age or sex, women differ from men by wearing jewellery, and color is used only to emphasize the different parts of the body.

Some rustic humour is revealed in the image of a hen promenading her chicken in the nave mosaic border. Some of the zodiac signs depictions at Beth 'Alpha are unusual, such as Virgo shown seated on a throne to indicate royal rank, and Aquarius illustrated as a figure drawing water from a well with a bucket, which is the translation of the Hebrew name דלי *deli* for the sign (pls. III.8c, 10b). Dunbabin (1999: 192) maintains, 'It seems clear that the Beth 'Alpha mosaicists were in possession of a model which was beyond their power to copy; this implies that there was strong pressure to have a design of this sort on the floor, and that considerable prestige resulted from it'. The Beth 'Alpha mosaicists apparently followed the same scheme as on the Hammath Tiberias pavement, but they lacked the ability to create a similarly skilled design.

The Sepphoris Mosaicists

The Sepphoris synagogue nave mosaic pavement is another example of the same model executed once more by different mosaicists. The three panels of the Torah shrine, the zodiac, and the Binding of Isaac, enriched by several more bands, are the decoration scheme of the this pavement (fig. II-2). The depiction of these panels differs in some respects from those on the other synagogue mosaics but the basic features are much the same. The artists who fashioned the Sepphoris pavement are inferior in their work than the highly skilled Hammath Tiberias craftsmen but they are more innovative and competent than the Beth ʿAlpha mosaicists.

Weiss (2005: 173) claims that two craftsmen worked simultaneously in laying the Sepphoris mosaics. He bases this opinion on the differences in details of images and colouring, and the unidentical depictions of pairs such as the lions and menoroth, and other Jewish symbols (pls. II.1b; IX.1b); the letters in the Aramaic inscriptions of the aisle and main hall are different from those between the columns. From these elements Weiss learns that a mosaicist and his apprentice laid the pavements of the Sepphoris synagogue. Yet it seems doubtful that the reason would be two different craftsmen working on either side of the flanking images; much more plausible is the deliberate utilization of unidentical symmetry, a known feature in Jewish art (Hachlili 1989a). More than one artist could have worked on the synagogue pavement but it is difficult to identify individual effects.

Weiss (2005: 166- 167, 170-173; figs. 110, 112) compares the Sepphoris synagogue mosaics with the pavements of the Sepphoris Nile Festival building, and proposes that although the artists are unknown the synagogue mosaicists planned the floor and the iconographic sources on the basis of the mosaics of that building. He assumes that both followed the same stylistic by virtue of the resemblance of some details, even though the synagogue mosaics are inferior in execution. The valid examples showing some similarity are the youth in the *Aqedah* on the left panel and the hunter, the fishes, and the horses on both pavements.²

However, the excavators' dating of the mosaics of the Sepphoris Nile Festival building to the early 5th century should be reconsidered. It possibly dates to the early 6th century as attested by the different reading of Inscription 1 by Bowersock (2004, but see Di Segni 2005b), and perhaps on stylistic grounds too. The comparison and the dating discussions should be reviewed. Different explanations could perhaps be proposed for the few parallels between the mosaics of the two structures, namely artistic tradition inherited by the craftsmen or the use of copybooks.

The Nile Festival building at Sepphoris is a public structure which contains several mosaics containing mythological scenes such as the Nilotic scene (pl. V.3), the Amazons and the Centaur. Room 6 depicts a Nile landscape and celebration scene on its upper section, and a hunting scene on the lowest part (Weiss and Talgam 2002: 61-73, 83-85). The mosaic field is partially divided by structures and water into three parts (see Chap. III): two registers display the Nile festival celebration and the third renders hunting scenes. The scene includes the personification of Egypt (pl. VIII.1a), the Nile river, Nilus, and several putti, marking the level of the floodwater on a Nilometer, surrounded by Nilotic flora and fauna; fishes, birds. The central part shows the celebration of the flood with the horsemen advance to the city of Alexandria, represented by a gate flanked by two towers and pharos. The third register contains hunting scenes of animals and their prey. Although the iconography is divided between the Nile celebration and hunting scenes the mosaic maintains the effect of a harmonious and integrated composition.

Weiss and Talgam (2002: 80) contend that these themes do not indicate a specific iconographic program, nor do they express or reflect any pagan rituals; indeed, 'their use was decorative and bore no religious significance' (Weiss and Talgam 2002: 83). The illustrations are classical in subject matter, and somewhat in style too, having originated in classical and Hellenistic imagery and becoming integrated into a secular Early Byzantine structure. Weiss and Talgam argue, 'the artists try to revive the sensual quality of the Classical nude, contrary to the prevalent trend in Early Byzantine art to dematerialize this figural style', and they possibly made use of Theodosian

² Weiss (2005: 170) proposes that the figural style of the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic could be related to stylistic

trends in Byzantine mosaics such as Khirbet el-Murrassas, the Leontis House at Beth She'an, and Tabgha.

models. Yet these mythological scenes, although originating in pagan mythology, enjoyed popularity in Byzantine secular art with both Jews and Christians, as proved by other mosaics in the area (such as the House of Leontis at Beth She'an and those at Erez, Sheikh Zuweid, and Madaba).

The Nile Festival building is a public structure, and could be a pagan or even a Christian or Jewish building, but it affords no clear evidence as to what kind of community it served. Archaeological evidence indicates a date in the early 5th century, although 'the stylistic analysis of the mosaics is ambiguous in this regard' (Weiss & Talgam 2002: 85).

The excavators believe that the artists who made the Nile Festival building's mosaics came from Alexandria (Weiss & Talgam 2002: 85, note 170). This assumption is based on eight lines of Greek Inscription I, which was found on the outside of the west entrance. Di Segni (2002: 91-97) maintains that it contains a reference to the Nilotic mosaic and praises the two artists, Procopius (who may have been the head of the team) and his son-in-law Patricius (the apprentice) who came from Alexandria (lines 5-6). Bowersock (2004) suggests a different reading of the same inscription, for which he proposes considerable corrections. He refutes the notion that the inscription is related to the Nile mosaic, situated four rooms away. Bowersock interpretation, which seems more persuasive, is that the Nile Festival building was the house of the daughter of the governor Procopius and her husband Absolius Patricius (Bowersock 2004: 766). He further argues that the governor may be identified as Fl. Theodorus Georgius Procopius (517/8), who ruled Palaestina Secunda, the province to which Sepphoris belonged (but see the replay of Di Segni 2005b). These proposed changes to the inscription provide an approximate early 6th-century date for the building's mosaic pavements. They also leave unresolved the question of the artists who created the mosaics, with no real indication that they came from Alexandria.

The Tabgha Church Mosaic

The *Tabgha* church pavements are the work of a great 5th-century master (Avi-Yonah 1960: 34). The transept's two panels show Nilotic flora and fauna (fig. V-2), perhaps employing the traditional repertory of the earth's fertility and wealth in a special design (Dunbabin 1999: 194).

At Tabgha the Nilotic motifs are distributed freely over the floor, without a clear plan, although they convey the impression of some continuity and relation between the various groups depicted in the design.

The artist did not depict the flora and birds realistically but schematically (pls. V.8e-f). He might have had a representation of a city, of which he used only a reduced version (Schneider 1937: 61, 69-70). The Tabgha mosaicist was a skilled craftsman, able to create an original work with distinctive and unique motifs depicted as spread out isolated scenes, where some episodes portray actual events. Schneider suggests that the mosaicist was a native of one of the great Graeco-Roman seaboard cities. Pixner (1985: 200, 202) maintains the Tabgha mosaicist was of Egyptian origin, on the assumption that the Patriarch Martyrios, who donated the mosaic pavement, brought in an Egyptian mosaicist to make the floor.

The Kïssufim Church Mosaic

In St. Elias church at Kïssufim (Cohen 1979, 1980) the mosaic in the northern aisle of the nave and several intercolumnar panels are the only surviving parts. The aisle composition consists of ten assorted episodes arranged in parallel registers, one above the other, surrounded by a frame of composite guilloche flanked by two rows of wave design (pl. VII.7; fig. VII-4). Animal combat and hunting events are shown, as well as peaceful scenes; the themes in the various panels do not form a continuous narrative. Each of the series of horizontal panels renders groupings of pairs of figures with some sort of ground lines between the registers. The style of the pavement is uniform and unique. The unity of the panels is established by all of them being almost the same size, with no scene dominating the entire composition. Two of the intercolumnar panels depict figurative scenes: two female donors bearing gifts in one panel (pl. XI.3a) and a camel driver in the other (pl. VII.18a). All panels have a white background with no landscape except plants and trees randomly dispersed. The white tesserae of the background follow the outline of the figures

The ten narrative panels, described from the entrance (west), are (pl. VII.7; fig. VII-4): sheep flanking a tree and peacefully nibbling foliage; combat of man and bear; a lion attacking a bull; a hound pursuing an antelope and hare; a hunter

on horseback spearing a leopard with his lance; a lioness with her cub; a lioness with wings seizing a swan; a figure milking a goat; a giraffe and an elephant; zebras pouncing. Some of these vignettes are unique, while others are comparable to similar episodes found on other mosaics. The Kissufim camel driver is quite similar to the same scene at Be'er Shem'a (pl. VII.18a,b). The sheep flanking the tree and nibbling foliage are similar to the episode on the lower part of the Jabaliyah Diakonikon pavement (fig. VII-9). The giraffe and zebras are comparable to the Gaza synagogue and Be'er Shem'a mosaics (pl. XII.7a-d, fig. VII.6).

The Kissufim pavement was executed by mosaicist/s possessing great ability, skill and fluidity, with scenes rendered in animated and naturalistic style using traditional models, unusual themes, a three-dimensional depiction—all seemingly of the mainstream Byzantine art environment of the late 6th century.

They were skilled in figural composition. The well executed details of humans and animals are emphasized and expressive. The men are rendered with the same stylized hair. Male and female faces are identical, with large eyes (pls. VII.12a, VII.13a, VII.18a; XI.3a). The figures adopt the same traditional pose, like the hunters and the horseman. They are rendered vividly and all seem to be in motion. The two hunters, on foot and on horseback, wear ornamented tunics, in contrast to the simple and customary tunic of the camel driver. The animals seem to be drawn from nature with some stylistic features; many are in movement, flight, or attack (pls. VII.8b, 9b; figs. VII-5a,6, 9).

The Mosaicists of the Petra Church

The Petra church is decorated with several mosaic pavements: the two major ones are Mosaic I in the north aisle and Mosaic II in the south aisle; in addition are Mosaic III in the east part of the south aisle, Mosaic IV in the north apse, and Mosaic V in the south apse (Waliszewski 2001: fig 1).

Mosaic I in the north aisle consists of the inhabited vine scroll design with 84 medallions arranged in three columns (Waliszewski 2001: 221-244; see Chap. VI, pp). Waliszewski (2001: 243) maintains that Mosaic I (pls. VI.6-8) was created by 'The master of Petra Mosaic' which consisted of a team of mosaicists influenced by 'models from the region of Gaza', and by the iconographic repertoire of the area of Madaba

in Jordan. Further, the exchange of artistic ideas resulted from the geographical location of Petra on the route between these two regions. Waliszewski (2001: 262-263) suggests that a mosaic atelier existed in Petra. However, the origin and artistic sources of the Petra mosaics are not clear.

Mosaic II in the southern aisle consisting of a geometric design of circular medallions and rectangular panels in three columns (pls. XII.1-2). The central column contains personifications of natural forces and seasons and figures in various activities, flanked by columns containing animals and fish (Waliszewski (2001: 244-259).

Mosaic II is quite unique and was the work of 'The Master of the Four Seasons' according to Waliszewski (2001: 244, 258) who maintains that figures in column B, personifications based on classical models, are masterly executed while the rest of the mosaic—the background, the geometric network, and the representations of the animals and fishes—is mediocre; he contends that it 'can be explained by the varying levels of accomplishment represented by the mosaicists involved'. Some of the depictions might suggest that in some parts of the mosaic different craftsmen worked on the two columns.

Although Mosaic I in the north aisle seems to be a homogeneous composition, I would suggest that a different concept directed the design of its lower and upper parts (pls. VI.6-8), though it could have been crafted by the same artists.

In the lower part of the mosaic, rows 1-16 depict the identical heraldic animals in columns A and C in different postures; usually one of the flanking animals is seated or crouching and the one opposite is standing; in the central column B, rows 1-16 present the most characteristic objects (of the inhabited vine scrolls of group II), such as the bird cage, the bird of prey, the double basket, and the wicker basket.

By contrast, the mosaic's upper part—rows 17-28—shows that the animals in columns A and C in the same pose, and some unusual objects appear in the medallions of central column B.

Mosaics I and II show some similarities (pls. XII.3). The treatment of the animals' eyes and bodies is the same; some of the flanking animals in different postures in Mosaic I are rendered also on Mosaic II: A5C5, AC9; the bulls are similar (A18 in Mosaic I and A13 in Mosaic II) and so are eagles (B15 in Mosaic I and B15-16 in Mosaic II). The lions are similar in design but depicted with different postures (A2 in Mosaic I and A5 in

Mosaic II). Similarity is also noted between the donkeys (AC22 in Mosaic I and AC9 in Mosaic II). The vase in Mosaic II B19 has similar details to two vessels on Mosaic I: the amphora in A1 and the bowl in A5.

Mosaic III with three flanking pairs of standing animals also has some affinities with Mosaic I. The ostriches in the central medallions are similar to the ostrich in A3 of Mosaic I. The deer with long branched antlers in the bottom medallions of Mosaic III is quite similar to the deer with short horns in A17 of Mosaic II.

From these similarities it seems that the mosaics at Petra were fashioned by the same workshop, yet perhaps by different craftsmen.

Waliszekowski (2001: 242) maintains that the variations are proof of the work of more than one artist. He further (2001: 258-9) assumes that the team of local mosaicists utilized iconography and traditional patterns that occur also in other pavements; the mosaicists of Mosaic II might have had some links especially with Judaea. He concludes that several teams of mosaicists were employed to create the pavements. This would explain the iconographic differences between the mosaics with no chronological difference between parts. However, he dates Mosaics II and III slightly older than Mosaic I as a result of decorating in phases, and dates all the Petra church mosaics to around 550.

The mosaic pavements at Petra, especially Mosaic I, had similarities with mosaics in the Gaza region such as Be'er Shem'a and Ma'on in the style and pose of the animals (see Chap. VI, pp). The heraldic animals with different postures that characterize the Petra Mosaic I occur on the mosaic at Be'er Shem'a. The same tendency in which one of the flanking animals crouches while the other stands might indicate common themes and stylistic choice by the artists. The submissive nature of the animals rendered at Petra, Be'er Shem'a and Shellal (pl. VI.20) is entirely different from the animals at the earlier mosaics at Gaza and Jabaliyah, which are rendered in an attacking and chasing pose.

C. Workshops and Mosaicists

The following discussion is meant to substantiate that similar stylistic and technical idiosyncrasies, and execution of the same theme or motifs, may identify a workshop, an artist, or a team of

craftsmen. Sometimes the work is composed by a single master-craftsman with his son or an apprentice. A comparison of the mosaic pavements of various structures in the Beth She'an (Scythopolis) area and the Gaza region proves that specific artists or workshop was employed simultaneously by the various communities.

Mosaicist/s from Beth She'an

In two buildings excavated in Beth She'an (Scythopolis), evidence from two mosaic pavements in one of them and three in the other attest that they were executed by the same artist/s or workshop (Hachlili 1988: 390).

The building with the two pavements is a mansion complex, the House of Leontis (I): (1) the mosaic of the long room, and (2) the mosaic of the small synagogue. The building with the other three pavements is the Christian Monastery of the Lady Mary (II): (3) the mosaic of Hall A, (4) the mosaic of the Chapel Room G, and (5) the mosaic of Room L.

I. The House of Leontis, discovered in the western part of Beth She'an (probably the Jewish quarter of the town) (fig. XII-4), was excavated by two archaeologists on different dates. The earlier excavation (1964) discovered three rooms of a mansion built of basalt walls around a central court; only the floor of room 3 is paved with a mosaic in its centre (8.50x 3.20); according to a Greek inscription Kyrios Leontis donated the money for it. Because of the menorah integrated into this mosaic the building was considered Jewish (Zori 1966: 124, 132 fig. 3; Adler 2003: 18-23). The later excavation (1970-73) unearthed a small room in the south part of the building, probably a small synagogue or a prayer room (Bahat 1981). Adler (2003: 90-103) suggests that the structure was possibly a Jewish public complex containing a synagogue, a lodging/inn, and water installations. Yet the building could originally have been a private dwelling and was later presented to the community, but with some sections still kept private. The complex is known as Beth Leontis or the House of Leontis and small synagogue B.

The two mosaic pavements in this complex are as follows (fig. XII-4).

1. Long room 3 in the north-west part of the building is decorated with a mosaic pavement divided into three panels (fig. V-1). The upper panel shows two scenes from the Odyssey:

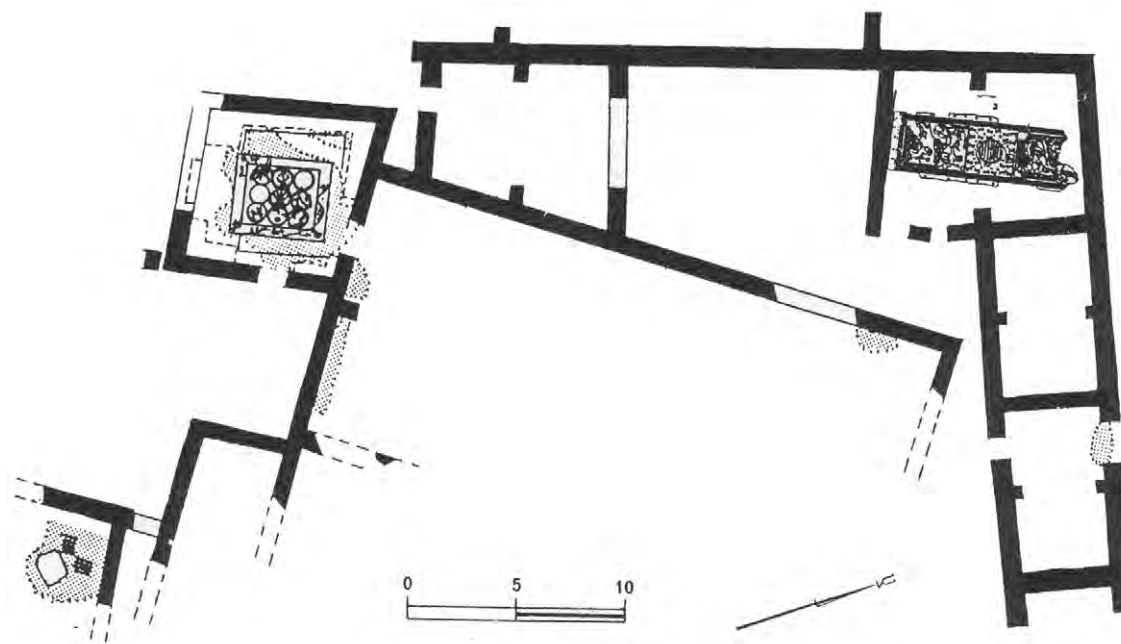


Figure XII-4. Plan of the Beth Leontis complex.

Odysseus fighting the monster Scylla, and Odysseus and the sirens (pl. XII.4a). A Greek inscription within a circle, surrounded by birds, occupies the central panel. On the right side of the inscription is depicted a (mutilated) five-branched menorah (pl. XII. 4b). The lower panel is rendered with a Nilotic landscape (pl. V.1), including a personification of the Nile, a nilometer, a representation of the city of 'Alexandria', a crocodile attacking a cow, and a sailor in a boat (see Chap. V. p. 97).

2. A small room in the south part of the building is suggested to be a synagogue or a prayer room (Bahat 1981) (fig. XII-4). The room is decorated with a mosaic pavement displaying the inhabited vine scroll design consisting of nine medallions, surrounded by a narrow inner and a broad outer ornate frame (fig. VI-10). The medallions panel has an amphora at the centre of its base, flanked by two horned animals. Animals and birds inhabit the medallions, except for the central one, which contains a menorah flanked by an ethrog and a lamp or incense box suspended from it, with the word *shalom* written above it (see Chap. VI, p. 125). A narrow inner frame surrounds the central panel, containing four amphorae at the corners with vine branches issuing from them that traverse animal chase scenes. The broad outer frame surrounding the whole panel is decorated with rhomboid medallions filled with objects and birds.

II. The Christian Monastery of Lady Mary at Tell Mastaba, outside Beth She'an, was discovered close to the city wall and is dated from its inscriptions to 567 (Fitzgerald 1939: 1, pl. 2). It consists of a large structure with a main entrance in the south leading into Hall A, which opens onto several rooms (fig. XII-5). Most of the rooms were paved with mosaics (Fitzgerald 1939: 1, 5-9,16).

The mosaic pavements of the Monastery rooms to be compared to the Jewish mansion are as follows (fig. XII-5).

3. Hall A has a floor laid in a scheme of octagons, squares, and rhombs, filled with animals, birds, fishes, fruit, and objects (fig. XII-6). The octagons are larger and contain a hunting horseman, beasts, peacocks, etc. The central part of the floor is filled with a large medallion with two concentric circles. The inner circle contains two upper parts of figures bearing torches, representing the sun and the moon. The outer circle is divided into twelve radial units with figures signifying the twelve months. Each contains a clad figure carrying various objects, having at its feet the Latin name of the month and the number of days in Greek (pl. VIII.4).

4. The mosaic in the Chapel room G shows a field of 80 linked medallions arranged in thirteen rows (fig. XII-7), each containing the figure of a bird. The birds are arranged in groups of eight in each row except, in four in the three upper rows. Most of the birds are walking from

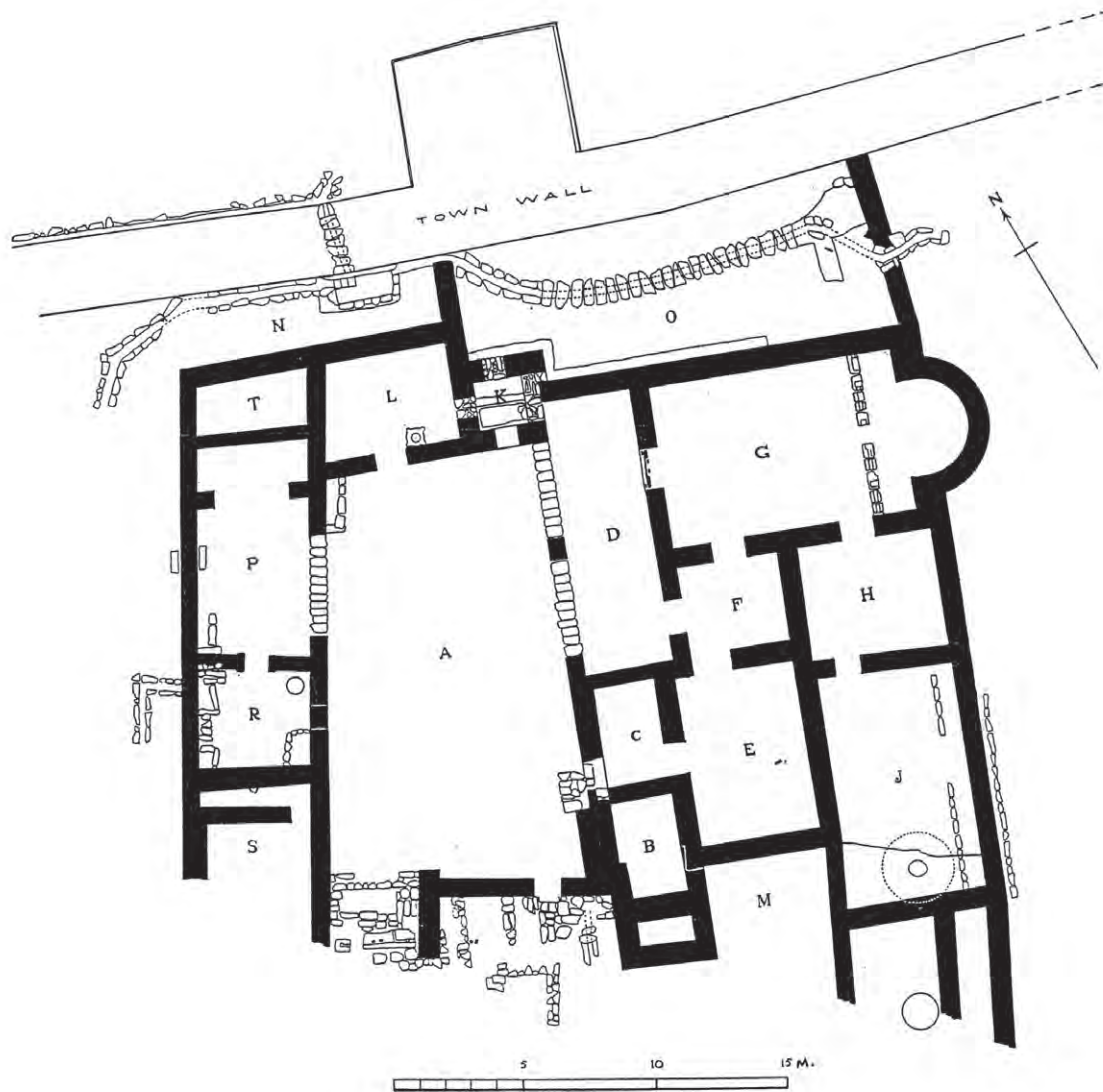


Figure XII-5. Plan of the Monastery of Lady Mary, Beth She'an.

right to left, with many exceptions, especially the northern column. Some of the birds are depicted in confronting pairs, as in the seventh row. In some of the rows the same species are rendered close together, and some birds in rows 4-5 are even depicted upside-down. Two additional large medallions near the west door contain confronting peacocks.

5. The floor of room L is decorated with the inhabited scroll design consisting of vine-branches issuing from an amphora forming twelve medallions arranged in three rows of four (fig. VI-10). Each medallion contains a figure in hunting, vintage, or everyday life scenes. Leaves, grapes, and tendrils decorate the medallions. Among the medallions are animals and birds.

I should like to propose that these five mosaic pavements were executed by the same artist/s (or workshop); this proposition is based on stylistic similarities, evinced by a comparison of the following constituents of composition of the mosaics of the small synagogue in the House of Leontis and room L of the monastery.

The inhabited scroll designs on the two pavements show some similarities in general outline and composition:

- i. The amphorae on the two are identical (pl. VI,g,h).
- ii. The vine branches, grape clusters and leaves of the designs are similar (pl. XII.5a,b).
- iii. The areas between the medallions of the



Figure XII-6. Hall A mosaic, Monastery of Lady Mary, Beth She'an.



Figure XII-7. Chapel G mosaic, Monastery of Lady Mary, Beth She'an.

mosaics of room L, the synagogue pavement, and the middle panel in the House of Leontis are all filled with birds and beasts (figs VI-10, VI-13, pl. XII.4b).

- iv. Details of decoration are also similar: the bird in the left-hand corner of room L and the birds in the wide ornate border of the synagogue pavement are similar; the execution of the animals is similar: there is a resemblance between the ram and buffalo in the synagogue, the giraffe and buffalo in room L, and the cow in the House of Leontis (figs. XII-11a-c).

Rendition of eyes in all the beasts, in room L, synagogue, and House of Leontis mosaics is similar. The guinea-fowl flanking a vase and inscription in the synagogue may be compared with a similarly constructed bird in the House of Leontis: the same free, curved line may be seen in the birds' bodies and legs (fig. XII-12c,d).

- v. Human figures bear a resemblance to each other in both the House of Leontis and room L: Odysseus is similar, particularly in his hair, to the hunter in the upper left medallion in room L. In his posture he

resembles the man with the flute in room L (figs. XII, 8-9).

An important stylistic indication is the representations of the vine leaves and grapes. The medallions of the inhabited scrolls mosaics in the Monastery and the synagogue are filled with leaves and grapes, although these are schematic. Details of the inhabited scroll design such as the vine branch medallions, grape clusters, and vine leaves are similar in the synagogue and room L in their shape and colour; vine leaves are represented in two colours, half the leaf light brown and the other half black, creating a distinctive form (pl. XII.5a,b). See especially the leaf design with the vertical central rib cut across by two horizontal lines; compare the leaf above the ram in the lower left medallion of the synagogue and the leaves inside the medallions of room L; this type of leaf has no equal in any of the other inhabited scroll examples. The vine leaves are placed in all directions. Interestingly, in both mosaics the round medallions all end in a vine leaf.

The bunches of grapes are similar in shape and the variety of the number of grapes in a bunch; some are irregular and lit from above. The grapes are similar in size and shape, usually round; a slight difference is an outline in brown or red in the synagogue, while in Room L the grapes have a dark outline and the flesh is pink or red and some have a white dot or a cross in the centre (pl. XII.5a,b). The round grapes with the crosses in the centre in Room L resemble also the grapes in the eastern part inhabited scroll mosaic in the El Hammam funerary chamber (fig. VI-14, and see below).

The spaces among the medallions in both the synagogue and room L are filled with birds and beasts; this is unique to these two inhabited mosaic pavements (only at Hazor-Ashdod do four birds fill the space between the two first rows (figs. VI-2, VI-10, VI-13)).

Human figures (figs. XII-8,9) in the House of Leontis, the Monastery Hall A and Room L bear a resemblance to each other. The renditions of the faces, especially the eyes and hair, are similar: the face and eyes of the Nile representation in a fixed gaze in the House of Leontis is similar to the faces of the Sun and Moon in Monastery hall A (fig. XII-8a-c). The hair and beard of the Nile representation in the House of Leontis is similar to the hairstyle of the figures of the months in

Monastery hall A. His chest, arm, and posture are similar to the black figure leading a giraffe in room L (fig. XII-8a-d).

The chained Odysseus in the House of Leontis is similar to the figures of the months in the Monastery Hall A and to the figures in the medallions of room L (fig. XII-8e-g).

The posture of the arms of figures is similar in the rowing figure in the upper panel mosaic of the House of Leontis and the flute player and grape-picker in the two medallions of room L (fig. XII-9a,b).

The face, hair, and head angle of the Siren playing the flute in the House of Leontis mosaic is similar to the month of October and the figure representing the moon in the centre circle of the Monastery Hall A mosaic (fig. XII-9c,d).

Animals (figs. XII-10,11) The general execution of the animals is alike in all these mosaics, with a broad outline of the body, stripes for details, and the eyes rendered similarly in all the beasts.

The deer in Monastery hall A and the deer depicted between the bear and elephant in the synagogue (fig. XII-10a) are similar. The posture and style of the hare hunted by a fox in the synagogue mosaic frame is similar to the hare eating grapes in room L (fig. XII-10b). The bear on the synagogue pavement is similar in execution but different in posture to a bear wounded by an arrow in Monastery hall A octagon (fig. XII-10c).

The dog in the synagogue frame and the dog inside the octagon in Monastery hall A are similarly depicted (fig. XII-10d).

A resemblance is evident in posture and style between the bull of the synagogue medallion, the buffalo in the House of Leontis, and the goat and leopard in Monastery room L (fig. XII-11a-c); akin in style are the ram of the synagogue and the donkey in room L (fig. XII-11d,e). Similarity is noted in the posture of the ram in the synagogue scroll, the lion in the outer panel of the synagogue, and the leopard between the medallions in Monastery Room L (fig. XII-11f,g).

Birds (fig. XII-12) are quite similar in execution and posture in all mosaics:

The birds with a ribbon around their necks that fill the central panel in the House of Leontis are comparable to the birds in the central line of medallions of the Monastery Chapel G, although the ribbons of the birds in the House of Leontis



Figure XII-8. Human figures on Beth She'an mosaics.



Figure XII-9. Human figures on Beth She'an mosaics.

are depicted in various patterns (fig. XII-12a,b). Some likeness is seen in the bird in the lower panel in the House of Leontis and the birds flanking the vase in the synagogue border panel (fig. XII-12c,d). The Imahof monastery mosaic has similar birds to the Leontis House birds (Ovadiah and Ovadiah 1987: 32, pl. XXVI).

Fowls and birds are similar in execution and style in the synagogue (flanking the inscriptions, and in the broad outer frame), the House of Leontis lower panel, the squares and rhombs of Monastery hall A, outside the medallions of room L, and in the round medallions of Chapel G (figs. XII-12c-g).

The rooster in the synagogue (next to the inscription) is similar to the roosters in chapel room G (fig. XII-12h,i).

Miscellaneous

The amphorae of the synagogue and room L are identical (fig. VI-18).

The baskets filling the squares and medallions in Monastery Hall A mosaic and those in the broad outer frame of the synagogue mosaic in room L have many similarities (figs. VI-10,13).

A similar round band with chiaroscuro (dentiles design) encircles the menorah on the synagogue

mosaic, the inscription in the central panel of the House of Leontis, and the busts of the moon and the sun in the Monastery Hall A mosaic (pls. VIII.4a, XI.1b, XII.4b).

Style

The mosaic figures and objects are designed on a white background, the figures are outlined by a dark line, heads are in almost complete frontal view, the body is depicted in a three-quarter view to the right, and large eyes look to one side; almost all figures are represented with curly hair. The two hands of every figure are rendered close together, holding an object. The tesserae of the faces are smaller than those of the bodies. The garments of the figures in the Monastery Hall A and Room L are similar.

The animals are rendered in profile with their heads forward or turning back, and anatomical details are schematic (figs. XII-10,11). The dark outline colour creates flat figures, and few details are apparent. Sometimes a more naturalistic approach was created by the mosaicist, with movement and naturalistic features in several animals, especially in the synagogue border mosaic.

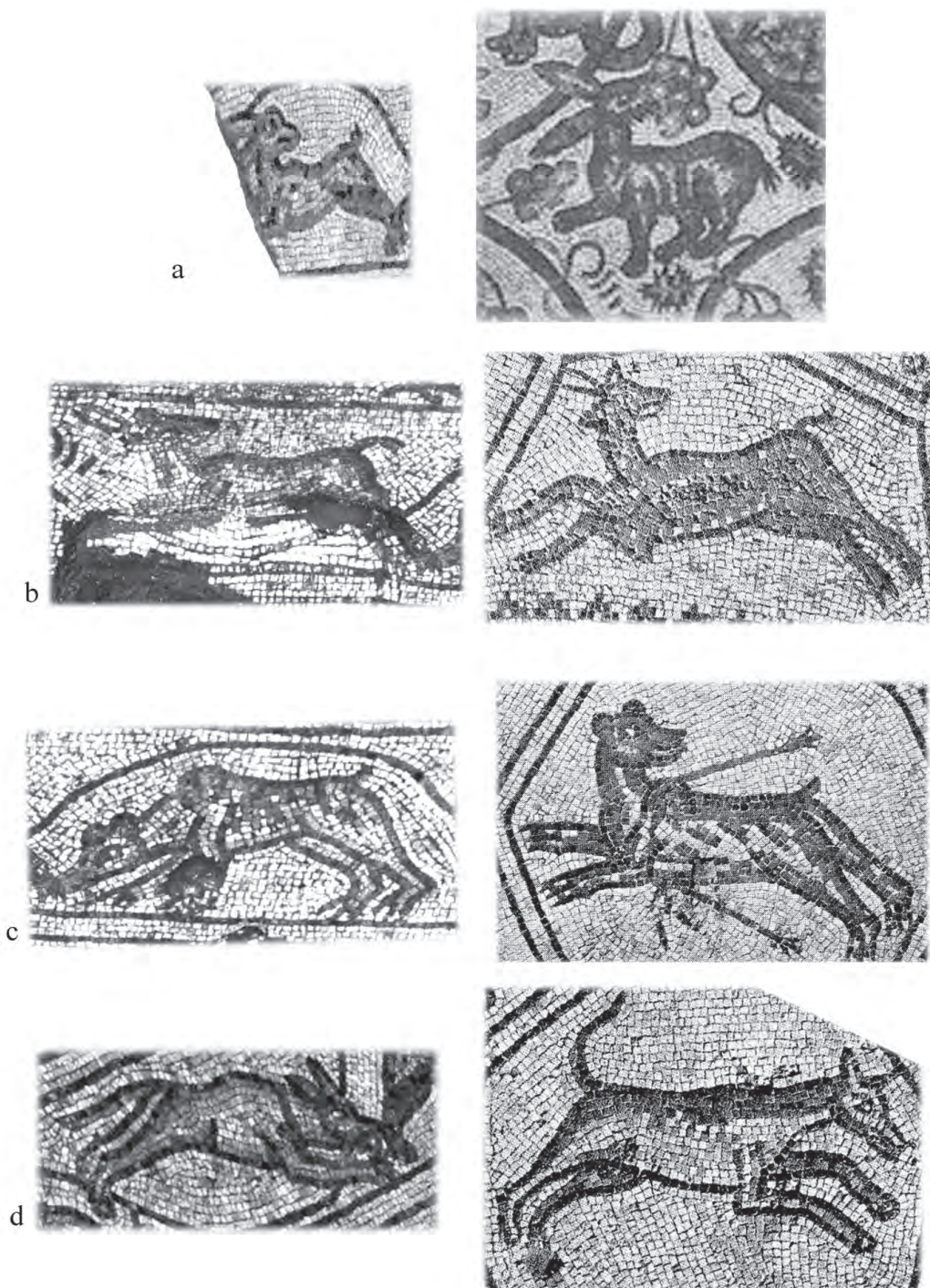


Figure XII-10. Animal figures on Beth She'an mosaics.

Dating

The Monastery was dated by its two mosaic inscriptions to 567-9 (Fitzgerald 1939: 2) and it is the only absolutely dated mosaic.

The dating of the House of Leontis mosaic, determined by the excavator and other scholars as the mid-5th century, perhaps continued in use until the 7th century (Zori 1966: 124; Lifshitz

1974: 82; Roth-Gerson 1987: 37-8 based on the dedication inscription in the central panel of the House of Leontis; Talgam 1999: 82). However, none of the scholars supported their dating with any kind of evidence. Avi Yonah (1981: 275) dated the House of Leontis to the 6th century, again, without providing any verification. The synagogue mosaic was dated by the excavator to



Figure XII-11. Animal figures on Beth She'an mosaics.

the second half of the 6th century (Bahat 1981: 85) on the basis of the ornamentation, that is, the general dating of the inhabited scroll design.

From the style, composition, and execution of the mosaic pavements of the Leontis House synagogue and the Monastery at Beth She'an it can be concluded that the same artist(s) executed the pavements in both buildings.³ Furthermore, the variety of themes depicted on the mosaics—the mythological episodes, Nilotic scenes and the inhabited vine scrolls in the synagogue and the calendar, vintage, and village life on the Monastery—attest to the artist's or workshop's ability and competence to elaborate and execute various themes and motifs.

The proof presented above demonstrates that a mosaicist(s) was employed at Beth She'an for the

decoration of mosaic pavements of both Jewish and Christian structures, probably during the middle or second half of the 6th century.

These mosaic pavements indicate that artists produced works of art which satisfied the demands of the local clientele, Jews and Christians alike, and that various communities employed the artists concurrently. The mosaicists may have been Jews or non-Jews, using pattern books favoured by each of the different arts and religions. Similar designs would be used, but sometimes specific symbols for each client would be added to the synagogue or church mosaic pavement, such as the menorah in the central medallion in the Beth She'an synagogue.

The Beth-She'an Monastery pavements resemble in their subject matter and style the upper

³ But see Saller and Bagatti (1949: 131-132), who maintain that two different artists produced the Monastery

mosaics, one the months pavement and the other the vintage mosaic.

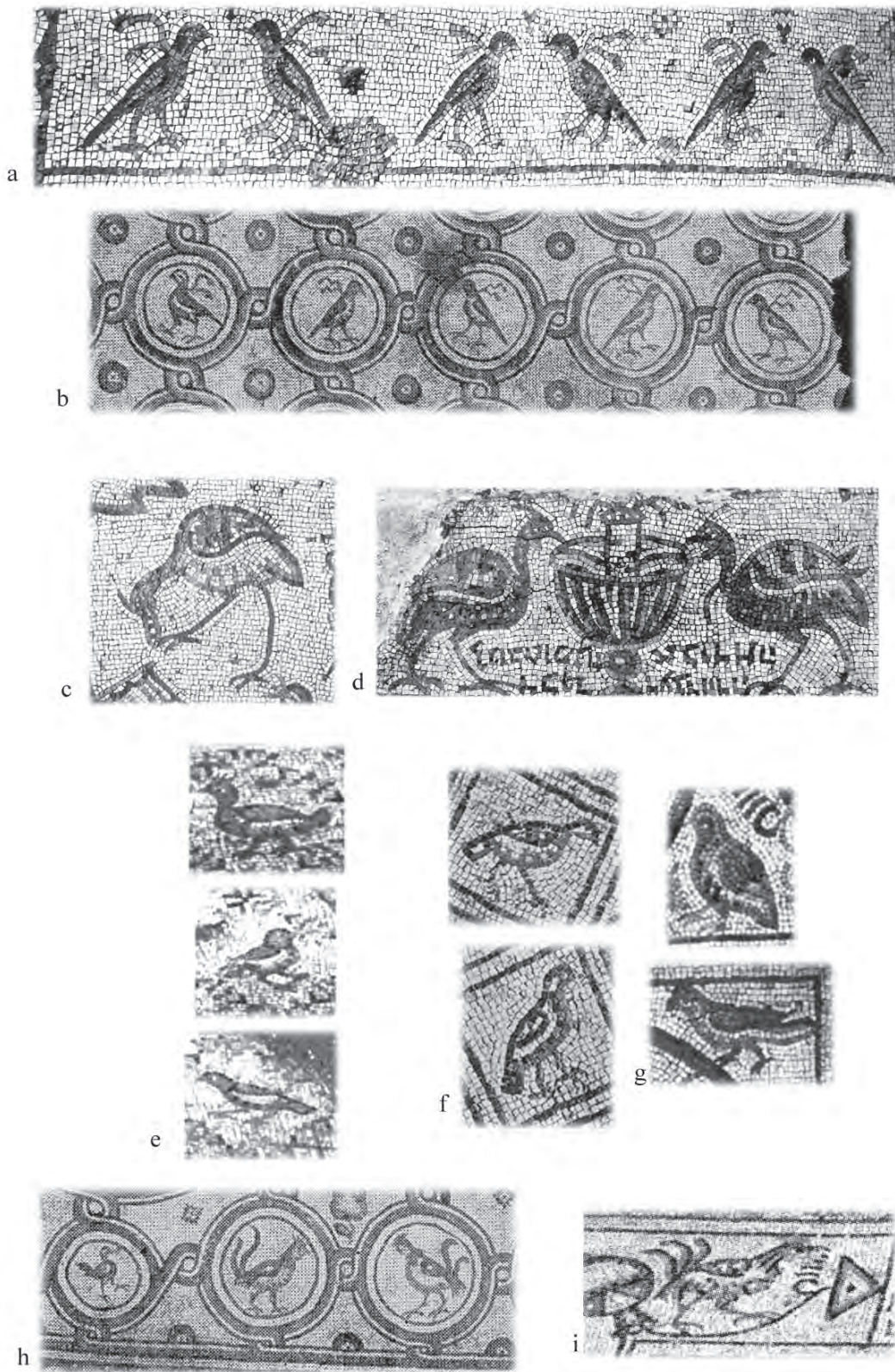


Figure XII-12. Birds on Beth She'an mosaics.

pavements of the 6th-century tomb chamber at El Hammam, also in Beth-She'an. The El-Hammam narthex pavement contains a panel depicting representations of the twelve months, arranged in two groups of six. There was probably a space between the two groups, which originally contained either an inscription or perhaps the figures of the Sun and the Moon. (pl. VIII.3a; fig. VI-14).

Avi-Yonah (1936: 29-30) claims that the Monastery pavement was the work of a local artist who tried to imitate the foreign master who executed the funerary chamber mosaic at El Hammam (which he dates to 530).⁴ He further contends that there were two apprentices who completed the details of the mosaic, inserting their own mannerisms, one on the eastern part and one on the western part (1936: 16, 30). The one who worked on the eastern part of the El-Hammam mosaic was the artist, perhaps the monk Elias (whose inscription was found in the monastery), who later laid the pavements of the Monastery.

However, it seems that the resemblance between the pavements of the Monastery and El Hammam is more in subject matter than in style and execution. Although the themes in the two are similar—a calendar with the twelve months and the inhabited scrolls composition, the general designs are completely different, as are the two pavements' styles; nor are the figures, animals, and birds alike in their details.

The Gaza Workshop

The style, execution of details, schematic form of the two mosaics of the Gaza-Maiumas synagogue and the two mosaic pavements of the Diakonikon chapel of the Byzantine Church near Jabaliyah (Gaza region) provide evidence that these mosaics were composed by the same artist/s or workshop.

Two mosaic compositions survived at the Gaza-Maiumas synagogue (Avi-Yonah 1981b: 389; Ovadia 1969). On a section of the western end of the pavement in the central nave is a fragmentary representation of King David as a musician, identified by the inscribed name דָּוִד *David* in Hebrew (pl. IV-3). His figure in frontal

posture is rendered in the recognized iconographical manner of Orpheus. He appears wearing a royal costume, crowned with a diadem and a nimbus over his head. David sits on a decorated box-like throne and plays the cithara, which is placed to his right on a cushion positioned on the throne. To the king's right only a lioness, the head and neck of a giraffe and an elephant trunk or a serpent, listening to the music, are preserved. David's sitting posture and the way he plays the instrument is similar in many of the Orpheus mosaics.

The mosaic in the synagogue's southernmost aisle renders the inhabited vine scroll design, consisting of three columns and at least eleven rows of medallions, dated by inscription to 507/8 (pl. VI.1; fig. VI-1). The design is composed of alternating rows of animals and birds, and some objects in the central column. Most medallions contain beasts and birds; the arrangement is of three animals in the medallions of each row, connected horizontally, especially the three animal chase scenes. In the other rows a pair of the same animals facing each other in a heraldic composition flank either a bird or a beast depicted in the centre. The central axial column shows no objects except a bird-cage and a commemorating Greek inscription in the axial column flanked by a pair of peacocks.

Two different artists for the two Gaza synagogue mosaics, are posited by Barash (1980: 29-33) the David-Orpheus and the inhabited vine scrolls. He maintains that the executions of the pavements differ in subject matter, style, technique, and quality. Barash compares David wearing the crown and robes to the Byzantine emperor, representing the combined musical and royal attributes. He sees a relation to the tradition of the lost 6th-century model of the Vatican *cosmas* (Barash 1980: fig. 20, only the seat is perhaps similar). He further likens the David mosaic to the mosaics in the Great Palace at Constantinople in its arrangement of figure and animals, its colourist effects, and its classical qualities of the Justinian Renaissance; these proliferated down the coastal regions of Syria and Antioch. Barash concludes that the inhabited scrolls mosaic design, having several comparable contemporary mosaics, was created by a local workshop; whereas he suggests, without any evidence, that the David mosaic with its high quality and technique was done by a foreign artist, a travelling mosaicist of a superior class 'who may have had some special

⁴ Saller and Bagatti (1949: 132) suggest that Avi-Yonah's earlier date for the El-Hammam mosaic than the Monastery mosaic, on stylistic grounds alone, as unconvincing.

connections with Egypt, and perhaps with Syria' and was acquainted with 'the major trends of mosaicists working in the countries of the eastern Mediterranean'.

However, I propose that the two Gaza-Maiumas mosaics, in the nave and aisle, are similar in style and execution of details: the white background arrangement; on the David mosaic all details of figures and objects are outlined by three white lines of tesserae—likewise the details of the animals in the inhabited scroll pavement (pls. IV.3; VI.1); the rendition of the lioness in the side medallion of the inhabited scroll mosaic is similar to the lioness listening to the playing David (pl. XII.6a,b). The head of the giraffe, which survived on the David panel, is identical to the giraffe in the side medallion of row 7 of the inhabited scroll mosaic (pl. XII.7a).

The pair of giraffes at the Gaza synagogue in two inhabited vine scroll medallions are rendered in a natural pose with their bodies covered by a lattice work of thin light lines separating dark patches and blotches (pl. XII.7a); a similar depiction in pose and body of a giraffe appears on the pavements at Be'er Shem'a (pl. XII.7b) and in an inhabited acanthus scrolls border on the Be'er Sheva pavement (pl. XII.7c) (Cohen 1968: 130; Dauphin 1978: 408, pl. 14). Similar giraffes are depicted at Kissufim (pl. XII.7d). Different spots ordered as cross-like or round marks appear on the giraffes found at Beth She'an Monastery Room L, Petra church north aisle, (pl. XII.7e-g) Madaba, and Jabaliyah Baptistry hall. Similar spots appear on the leopards at Ma'on and Caesarea (pl. VII.14d; fig. VII-3a). The similarity of the giraffes at Gaza, Be'er Sheva, and Kissufim might indicate that the Be'er Sheva pavement, though fragmentary, might have been composed by the same craftsmen/workshop of Gaza and Jabaliyah, or it might point to a similar model as the source of the animal representation. Another proposition is that the giraffes in the Gaza and Negev region were depictions of nature observation while the others were rendered from some model (see Chap. VII, pp).

The two Gaza synagogue mosaic pavements, though differing in subject matter, are in fact closely related in style and execution, hence evidently created by the same mosaicist/s. These were possibly local artists who worked in the region.

The Byzantine church near Jabaliyah has an elongated Diakonikon chapel with two mosaic

pavements—a panel and a larger field, which suffered from iconoclasm and show several repairs to faces and bodies; these mosaics are dated by an inscription to 451 (Humbert 1999: 216, pl. XI top; Humbert et al. 2000: 123-124).

The Diakonikon chapel was paved with two mosaic sections. The western field illustrates pastoral and animal chase scenes on a white background, in five registers (pl. VII.10a): (a) the lowest level shows a palm tree flanked by a pair of bulls and fruit trees at both ends. A rabbit clings to the palm tree trunk. (b) A lion chases two stags. (c) two crouching figures. One holds perhaps a bird in his hands, the other looks at a dog seated next to him; a rabbit is above them. A figure holding a stick and carrying a bird cage walks to the left. (d) A lioness and her cub leap to the right, perhaps towards an ostrich of which only one leg has survived; eagle wings have survived at the left end. (e) The upper register shows in the centre a fruit tree with a Gaza amphora and a basket hanging from its branches, flanked by a leaping bear on the right which probably pursues a galloping horse to the left.

The eastern section of the Diakonikon chapel is a floor panel showing a pastoral scene on a white background (pl. VII.10b). From left to right it shows a shepherd holding a goat by its horns, a sheep and a goat eating from a fruit tree from which a Gaza amphora hangs, and a dog with a collar looking back at a fleeing rabbit; at the right a figure reclines on a rock. The inscription dates the panel to the mid-5th century—451. The excavators (Humbert et al. 2000: 124) maintain the scene might be perhaps a recollection of pagan mythology.

The above two mosaics at Jabaliyah have many shared traits, such as the trees, the Gaza amphora, the rabbits, and the figures wearing similar tunics; all these indicate the pavements were executed by the same artist/s.

Comparison of the mosaics in the Gaza-Maiumas synagogue and in the Diakonikon chapel near Jabaliyah demonstrates that the former were influenced by the latter, or that the work was created by the same workshop or artist/s, as revealed in several features.

The white background style and the coloured base lines on which the animals are placed in levels 3-5 of the Jabaliyah field are akin to the same base line depicted under the lioness on the David mosaic panel at Gaza (pls. IV.3, VII.10).

The related style of rendition of the animals

at Gaza and Jabaliyah, such as the dark outline of the body and bright patches depicting muscles and parts of the body is another shared feature (pls. XII.6). The depiction and style of animals are alike: the lioness and cub at Jabaliyah are rendered in similar fashion to the lioness and cub at Gaza, especially the head and its details; the pursuing posture and the position of the tail of the Jabaliyah lioness is similar to the pose and tail of the tigress at Gaza (pl. XII.6d,e). The bending pose of the lioness on the David mosaic at Gaza is similar to the pose of the (damaged) bending sheep in the centre of the Diakonikon chapel's eastern panel (pl. XII.6b,c). Note especially the treatment of the inward-turning hind feet of the lioness at Gaza and of the lion chasing the deer at Jabaliyah. A line of dentils in the David's attire is similar to the line in the rock on the eastern panel at Jabaliyah (pl. IV.3, VII.10b).

The Gaza amphora hanging from a fruit tree on both pavements (Humbert 1999: 216; Humbert et al 2000: 124) has an elongated body with two small handles and is used as a wine vessel, probably produced in the Gaza and Ashkelon area (Mayerson 1992; Israel 1995: 125-130; Waliszewski 2001: 225-6, fig. 5). Several Gaza vessels are depicted in a similar fashion on other mosaic pavements (pl. XII.6f-h). A hanging amphora used as a dovecote is similar to the Petra vessel which appears in the central medallion in row 5 of the vine rinceau at St. Stephen's church at Be'er Shem'a. An elderly bearded man is holding a Gaza amphora in both hands in row C4 in the north aisle of the Petra church (pl. XII.6h; Waliszewski 2001: 225-6). Possibly similar amphorae are depicted being carried on camels or on boats on several mosaic pavements. An amphora being transported on land on the back of a camel is portrayed at Kissufim church (pl. VII.18a). Transported on water, several (two to three) amphorae are depicted in a boat on the Haditha pavement and on a boat in the mythological scene at the House of Leontis in Beth She'an (pl. V.7a,b).

These pavements show some sense of humour, as well as knowledge of nature, displayed in the renditions of the rabbit at the palm tree trunk on the western field at Jabaliyah and the lioness feeding her cub in the Gaza inhabited medallion (pls. VII.10, XII.6a).

This comparative examination illustrates the similarity between the pavements, although there is a gap in their dating. The Jabaliyah mosaic is dated to 451 while the Gaza synagogue mosaic is

dated to 508/9. However, the pavements might be the work of a small family workshop, a traditional product of generations of artists who worked in the Gaza region for at least 60 years, and who possibly made the mosaic at Be'er Shev'a too.

The Ma'on and Be'er Shem'a Workshop

The pavement at the Ma'on-Nirim nave synagogue is one of the examples rendering the inhabited vine scrolls design (pl. VI.2; fig. VI-5). Although the same design appears on a number of synagogue and church mosaic floors, each is created by different craftsmen. However, the Ma'on pavement has quite a number of affinities with the Be'er-Shem'a nave mosaic.

Generally, the designs of the inhabited vine scrolls on the Ma'on synagogue mosaic are closely symmetrical; differences are noticed between the few identical flanking animals that survived; there is a disparity in the hares' size and pose, a difference in the elephants' trunks and their caparison (fig. XII-13); but the palm trees and doves are identical.

The artist illustrated the animals in natural poses, following the Hellenistic prototypes more closely; he is also notable for a certain bucolic humour observed in scenes such as the hen that has just laid an egg (pl. VI.19a). The mosaicist depicted in realistic detail the symbolic illustration of the seven-branched menorah and some of the items in the central axial column.

A distinctive technical idiosyncrasy which characterize the Ma'on artist is the muscular bulge on the shoulder of almost all the animals and beasts; another trait peculiar to the Ma'on artist is the eyes of all animals and birds, created as a round circle with a dot in the centre (pl. XII.8 left column). Another stylistic indication is the manner in which the vine scrolls, leaves, and grapes are represented. The vine leaves are naturalistic and leafier. The grapes are usually the same colour, their form oval with a few irregularly shaped (pl. XII.5c,d).

Avi-Yonah (1960: 34) contends that the artist of the Ma'on mosaic was either a gentile, judging from his ignorance of the Hebrew script and the same design scheme used also in churches; or, judging from the faithful depiction of the Jewish symbols, a Greek-speaking Jew, possibly from the Diaspora, who was employed by a rustic community which concurred in the choice of designs used also in churches, albeit with the



Figure XII-13. Ma'on pavement: a comparable pair of elephants and hares.

addition of the symbolic Jewish representations.

Avi Yonah further suggests that the earlier Ma'on mosaic and the later Shellal mosaic are the products of the same workshop, which he locates at Gaza (see Chap. VI, pp). The similarities he noted are the same repertory of beasts and birds, the likeness of the amphorae (almost completely destroyed at Ma'on), and the rings joining the vine branches. Yet there are also differences in the execution of the animals, birds, and objects. The similarity in the general design scheme is apparent, but this might indicate a similar source rather than the same executing hands.

The nave mosaic in St. Stephen's church at Be'er-Shem'a (Khirbet el-Far), dated to the mid-6th century (Gazit and Lender 1993: 275-6), contains five columns and eleven rows of inhabited

vine scrolls issuing from a vase in the middle of the bottom row flanked by a pair of lions, each in two medallions (pl. VI.5). Although the design looks symmetrical it is not as rigid and heraldic as the other group II compositions. Only three rows are arranged with alternating animals and birds, similar to the Ma'on mosaic. Though the mosaic belongs to the group of inhabited vine scrolls, the composition is different in some aspects, notably the medallions of the axial central column, which are only partly filled with objects while other medallions contain the unique addition of humans figures. The symmetry is carefully maintained, although almost all rows have different flanking scenes: some animals are presented in different poses (row 2); each bull in row 4 is rendered in a different posture; dissimilar animals, a lioness

and a leopardess, constitute the flanking pair in row 3; diverse scenes of pursuit, a dog chasing a vixen and a bitch chasing a rabbit, are seen in row 5, and a panther chasing a deer flanked by a wolf in pursuit of an ibex in row 8; a man leading a donkey and a man leading a camel in row 6; a man leading an elephant with a rider flanked by a man leading a giraffe in row 9.

Except for the peacocks, few birds appear on the Be'er-Shem'a mosaic: pheasants in row 2, a guinea-hen in row 3, ducks in row 7, and a crane in row 9. On the Ma'on pavement birds alternate with animals in all rows.

The human figures depicted in the axial row and the figures rendered in the side columns at Be'er Shem'a are similar to the common depictions in compositions of other inhabited scroll of groups VI-V (see tables VI-1, 2; pls. VII.15-18).

A relation between the inhabited vine scroll pavements at Ma'on synagogue and the Be'er Shem'a church lies in their somewhat stylistic likeness: the general scheme of the inhabited vine scrolls with five columns and the central column containing objects is similar, although the Be'er Shem'a mosaic is less symmetrical and has the addition of human figures in some of the medallions (pls. VI.2,5). The border of both nave mosaics has the same design of interlacing flowers, although at Be'er Shem'a the central carpet has a more elaborate double border of interlacing flowers with a guilloche border in between. In a few cases the figures are rendered outside the medallions in both pavements. Similar flanking scenes occur on both pavements: a pair of lions flank an amphora in the bottom row at Be'er Shem'a, and a pair of peacocks flank a fruit bowl in the top row, while at Ma'on the scenes are the other way round: the bottom row originally showed a pair of peacocks flanking an amphora, and a pair of lions flanking the menorah are in the top row.

The all-important stylistic renditions of the vine leaves in the two mosaics are comparable (pl. XII.5c-d). They are quite naturalistic, with a central palmate of five or seven fronds, placed freely and irregularly, in two colours; the leaves point up and down at Ma'on, while almost all leaves point up at Be'er Shem'a. Note in particular the leaf rendered under the double basket at both Be'er Shem'a and Ma'on (pl. VI.15a,d).

Some of the bunches of grapes are similar (pl. XII.5c-d), oval in shape. The clusters are

mostly regular, shown as lit from below, rendered with a dark brown outline, and coloured red in the upper part and white in the lower. The medallions at Ma'on and Be'er-shem'a alike are connected vertically and horizontally with rings.

The execution of animal bodies and other details on the two pavements is comparable (pl. XII.8): they are portrayed quite naturally in realistic poses: note the walking lions, the bear with his lowered head, the horses, and the bull at Be'er Shem'a; the crouching bull, the hares, and the dog running and crouching at Ma'on. The animals in both mosaics are rendered with a dark outline, which surrounds the figures, the bodies are rendered with lines of half-circling tesserae. The particular execution of the eyes, round or oval with a dot in the centre, appears on animals' and birds' faces at Ma'on and at Be'er Shem'a. Similar eyes are depicted on human faces at Be'er Shem'a.

A distinctive muscular bulge on the shoulder of some of the animals is seen on both pavements (pl. XII.8). At Ma'on it is more pronounced, and is observed on the ibex (row 3), buffalo (row 4), fat-tailed sheep (row 5), hare (row 6), two-antlered stag (row 7), hunting dog (row 9), and lion on the left (in the last symbolic panel) (pl. XII.8c,d,f).

At Be'er Shem'a the same bulge is noticed on the sheep (row 2), lioness (row 3), and bulls (row 4). The resting bull on the left is almost identical to the Ma'on buffalo in posture and other details. The parallel lines on the animals' bodies is another common trait on the two mosaics, for example, the bull, sheep dog, and lion at Ma'on (pl. XII.8c,d,f) and the bear and lion at Be'er Shem'a.

The pairs of peacocks—although at Ma'on in the bottom row and at Be'er Shem'a in the top row—are comparable in the two pavements; the body fills one medallion, the tail the other, and the head is outside the medallion (pl. XII.8a); they walk forward towards the central medallion containing a vessel. The guinea-hens in the mosaics are almost identical (pl. XII.8e). Comparable also are the sheep's face at Ma'on and the horse's face at Be'er Shem'a (pl. XII.8d); the chasing dogs in both mosaics are alike in many details (pl. XII.8f).

These considerable similarities might suggest that both pavements are the product of the same workshop, though perhaps by different craftsmen who might have been trained in a similar manner but had somewhat particular tendencies and used

different themes based on comparable models.

The mosaics of the Gaza region and the Negev (the southern *limes*) at Be'er Shem'a, Be'er Sheva, Gaza, Jabaliyah, Kissufim, Ma'on, and Shellal might have been created by a workshop centred perhaps at Gaza, with teams working on mosaics of these sites during the 5th–6th centuries executing various themes. Another possibility is that a local trend or fashion, artistic connections, and exchanges of themes and motifs were the source for the similarities in the pavements described above. In particular note the appearance of exotic animals such as the elephant, giraffe, and zebra, which are almost exclusively depicted on mosaics of this region and are portrayed realistically through observations from nature (pl. XII.7a-d). By contrast, the giraffe on the mosaic in room L of the Beth She'an Monastery, and the giraffe, zebra, and ostrich on the mosaic of the Old Diakonikon-Baptistry at the Basilica of Moses on Mt. Nebo, seem copied from a model (pls. VII.15c; XII.7e-g). The Kissufim mosaic has some comparable vignettes and affinities with the other mosaics in the region (see above).

The only named mosaicists in the region are Victor and Cosmas from Ashkelon, as seen on a Greek inscription on the Jabaliyah mosaic (Humbert et al. 2000: 125). This may indicate that the workshop was located in nearby Ashqelon rather than Gaza.

Zoological Catalogues

The existence of zoological catalogues is intimated by the assortments of birds that appear on several pavements: in the Jerusalem Armenian church, in Chapel G in the Beth She'an monastery, and at Caesarea (pl. VI.3; figs. VI-7, XII-7, XII-14). Further evidence for the existence of botanical and zoological catalogues is Hellenistic interest in the natural sciences and the gardens cultivated by the Ptolemies (Avi-Yonah 1960a: 21).

The mosaic of Chapel room G in the Beth She'an Monastery shows a field of 80 linked medallions arranged in thirteen rows (fig. XII-7), each containing the figure of a bird. Two additional large medallions near the west door contain confronting peacocks. The birds are arranged in groups of eight, except for the top three rows with four. Many of the birds walk from right to left; most of the exceptions are found mainly in the northern column. In some of the rows the same

species are rendered close together in groups of two or three; some birds in rows 4-5 are rendered upside-down. Some of the birds are depicted in confronting pairs, for example, in row 7.

The mosaic floor in room I of a Byzantine villa or church at Caesarea (late 6th-early 7th century) shows a field of 120 interlaced medallions, in 12 rows and 10 columns, containing various species of birds, a single bird in each medallion. The wide border renders wild animals chasing tame animals separated by fruit trees (fig. XII-14; VII-3) (Avi-Yonah 1958: 61; Reich 1985: 210-211, fig. 2, pl. LII 4,7; Spiro 1992: 250). Only eleven different species are represented, appearing several times, in an unusual arrangement of diagonal lines descending from right to left. The birds include duck, flamingo, goose, guinea fowl, ibis, partridge, peacock, pelican, and pheasant.

The Jerusalem 'Armenian' Church nave is decorated with an inhabited vine scroll mosaic, dated to the 6th century (Avi-Yonah 1933: 36, no. 132; Evans 1982). The mosaic composition consists of five columns and nine rows (pl. VI.3, fig. VI-7;). The vine trellises issue from an amphora emerging from an acanthus leaf in the middle of the first row, flanked by a pair of peacocks and birds. An assortment of alternating birds face the axial column (except in row 4), depicted with objects such as baskets, a bowl, or a bird-cage; almost all flanking birds of the inner columns are identical, as are the birds in the two outer columns. The birds include cock, dove, eagle, flamingo, goose, hen, ibis, ostrich, partridge, peacock, pheasant, stork, and swallow

Animal catalogues might have been the source for the various depictions of flanking animals in compartments such as at the pavements in el-Maqerqesh chapel at Beth Guvrin (fig. VIII-3), in Horvat Berachot church (fig. XI-1a), and at Gerasa.

On several mosaics an interesting treatment of wild animals shows them reclining, bending their heads in a submissive posture (pl. VI.20): at Gaza, the bending head of the lioness in the Orpheus scene is obvious (pl. IV.3; pl. XII.6b); at Be'er Shem'a the pose is seen in the leopardess and the lioness in row 3, the bull in row 4, and the bear in row 7 (pl. VI.5). On Mosaics I and II in Petra church (pls. VI.6-8) many of animals on one side of the heraldic composition bow their heads.

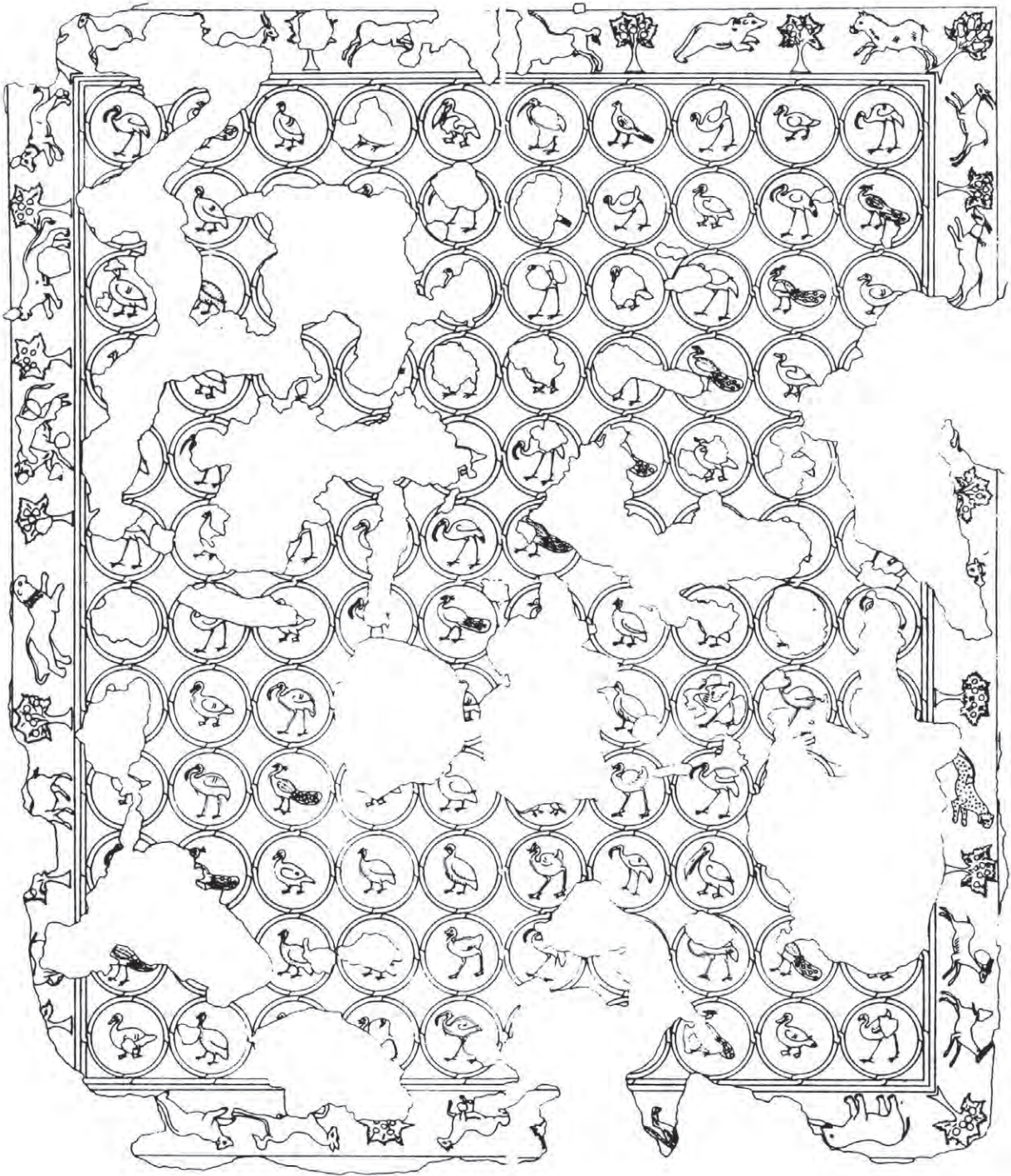


Figure XII-14. Caesarea, birds mosaic.

The School of Madaba

Piccirillo conducted thorough research, and published the mosaics of Jordan. He proposes (1989: 324-342) that the School of Madaba is actually various teams of mosaicists that worked at Madaba and in the environs Mt. Nebo and Umm al-Rasas. Piccirillo maintains that these teams were

influenced in their repertory and composition by other centres of the Byzantine Empire, and gradually developed exemplars from the original Hellenistic period with the re-awakening of a Classical style which reached its peak in the Justinian era.

Piccirillo dates 530 as the starting point of the golden age of Jordan mosaics. Among the earliest

results were mosaics in the old Diakonikon-Baptistry chapel of the Memorial of Moses at Siyagha (530) and in St. George's church at Mukhayyat (535/6), both on Mt. Nebo, which were accomplished by known artists:

Piccirillo (2005-6: 415-427) describes teams of mosaicists that designate several schools or workshops which produced mosaic pavements in the area from the late 5th to the 8th century. Inscriptions indicate the creation of pavements by one or teams of two or three mosaicists.

Two teams of three mosaicists worked at Mt. Nebo, two kilometres apart. The members of one team, who signed their names Soel, Kaium, and Elias in an inscription, composed the mosaics of the the old Diakonikon-Baptistry (Piccirillo 1993: 22, 146, figs. 166,183; 1998: 274-277, figs. 12-13,23-40). An inscription records that mosaicists of the second team, Nauma, Kyriakos, and Thomas, worked on the mosaic of the St. George's church pavement (Piccirillo 1993: 178, figs. 244, 248; 1998: 320). This mosaic is composed of the inhabited acanthus scroll design depicting scenes of vintage and hunting in the medallions, and an ornate border with personification of the seasons and masks. The field and border design of this mosaic is similar to that on the pavement of the inhabited acanthus scroll in the Upper Chapel of the Priest John at Mukhayyat, (Piccirillo 1993: 38, figs. 230-245). Especially comparable are the renditions of the personification of Ge with the two young offerers at her sides.

A third team of mosaicists was active in the Mt. Nebo region and its work was based on the same stylistic tradition. This team composed two of the inhabited vine scroll mosaics: the lower pavement of the chapel of Priest John and the lower mosaic of the Kaianus Church in 'Uyun Musa Valley on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1989: 335; 1993: 21, 176, 189, figs. 234-243, 271-275). Piccirillo (1993: 21, figs. 422-423, 429, 431,434,436,440) proposes that the same stylistic tradition is evident in two other mosaics in the area of Esbus: the west panel of the sanctuary in the upper church of Massuh and the pavement in the north lower church; their relationship is apparent in the lettering of the inscriptions, the crow-step band, and the same rigidity of animals and birds albeit with inconsistency in execution.

A fourth team of mosaicists was active in the village of Nebo and produced the two mosaics in the church of Sts. Lot and Procopius and in the Upper Chapel of the Priest John (Piccirillo 1998:

366). These two pavements have the same pattern of chiaroscuro on bodies of animals (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 123). Figures are similar in the portrayal of faces, eyes, and in the work on hands, legs, and feet (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 202, 207, 218-220; 2005-6: 415).

The mosaic of the Church of the Deacon Thomas in 'Uyun Musa on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: 187, figs. 253-256, 265; 1998: 330-343), has some parallel scenes, and some of the figures are similar to those on the mosaic of Sts. Lot and Procopius rendered in a superior quality (pls. VII.10,11) (Piccirillo 1993: 165-6, figs. 202-207; 1998: 344-350); the Deacon Thomas figures are less naturalistic, but some of the rendition and colour is better.

The Madaba mosaics of the Chapel of the Martyr Theodore, the upper Baptistery chapel (the Cathedral church complex) and the Madaba mosaic map can perhaps be attributed to the same group identified as the School of Madaba (Piccirillo 1991: 121; 1993: 34, 96, 118, 174, 206, figs. 96-97, 62-72, 103, 202, 209, 252-253; 1993a: 27, 32).

Two workshops were active in the town of Umm al-Rasas-Kastron Mefaa in the late 6th century at the time of Bishop Sergius, and a third workshop operated in the 8th century (Piccirillo 1995: 397; 2002: 548). One workshop team was responsible for four mosaic pavements; the mosaics of the Church of Bishop Sergius (within the castrum) and of the Church of the Rivers (the northern of the two joined churches inside the wall) were paved by the same mosaicists (Piccirillo 1995: 393). The two are rendered in the same style. The nave mosaics are designed with the similar inhabited acanthus scroll field and vine scrolls border (Piccirillo 1993: 234, 240, figs. 365, 369, 389-392). The same team probably worked on the mosaic of the Church of the Priest Wa'il, which show similar technique and colour, and similar treatment of the face and trees, although the execution is inaccurate and more naïve (Piccirillo 1995: 397). The same workshop most likely executed the St. Paul's church (Piccirillo 2002: 548-549). Stylistic affinities can be found also with other mosaics dated to the second half of the 6th century: the mosaic of the crypt of St. Elianus at Madaba with the rainbow technique (Piccirillo 1993: 125, figs. 124-127; 131-136), and the Theotokos Chapel in the monastery at 'Ayn al-Kanisah on Mt. Nebo (Piccirillo 1998: 363, note 88) (pl. X.3). These churches were used at

least up to the first half of the 8th century CE.

Piccirillo proposes that a team of itinerant mosaicists decorated three mosaic pavements. Two are at Mt. Nebo, namely the two lateral south chapels—the Baptistry Chapel and the Theodokos Chapel of the Basilica of Moses, and the Church of the Lions at Umm al-Rasas (Piccirillo 1993: 150-151, 236, 240, figs. 173, 200, 338, 340, 373, 376, 378; 1992: 211-225; 1995: 393-394, 397; 1998: 304-306, 367). The similarities among the three pavements are in the field border, and in their programmes, that is, the rectangular panels in front of the altar decorated with two gazelles, bulls, or lions facing each other between trees replete with fruits or flowers. The resemblance is also seen in the gazelle in the Theotokos Chapel and the gazelle in the Church of the Lions. The Church of the Lions has a different inhabited acanthus scrolls field from those at the Church of the Rivers and the Church of Bishop Sergius. All three pavements suffered from the iconoclastic crisis. Piccirillo (1998: 306) contends that the same team of mosaicists produced the three mosaics ‘rather than the different teams simply used the same models’. Piccirillo (1995: 393, 397) concludes that the craftsmen of these workshops ‘used the same sketchbook circulating among them, although they differentiate from each other in the final result’.

The mosaic pavements of the Church of St. Stephen at Umm al-Rasas–Kastron Mefaa (Piccirillo 1993: 35-36, 200-201, figs. 299-312) were laid by two different teams of mosaicists who left their inscriptions. The geometric pavements according to an inscription were created by Staurachius son of Zada from Hesban (Esbu) with his colleague Euremius in 756. An anonymous group worked on the nave pavement and left an inscription: ‘O Lord remember your servants the mosaicists, whose names you know’ (Piccirillo 1993: 47, 238, figs. 346, 384; Dunbabin 1999: 203). Piccirillo (1998: 364, 367; 2001: 632) suggests that on the basis of the method of writing the mosaicists Staurachius and Euremius were also responsible for the work on the contemporary mosaics of the church of the Virgin Mary at Madaba (767) and the restored mosaic of the Theotokos Chapel in the monastery at ‘Ayn al-Kanisah on Mt. Nebo (in 762); they were the last mosaicists to work in the Madaba–Mt. Nebo region.

Iconoclasm and repair on these mosaics is salient. The iconoclasts evidently disfigured the

animated figures of the composition, but were careful to repair the mosaics, changing the motifs, possibly with the same tesserae.

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The many mosaic pavements of Palaestina and Arabia reveal and attest to the achievements of a great number of workshops and schools, but with their own preferences and tendencies. The workshops, many in villages and rural communities, might have been established by, and operated from large centres; some of the mosaicists might have been itinerant, travelling the area for their work. Dunbabin (1999: 193-194, 197) claims that the mosaicists who worked on the mosaics in the area from the 5th century on must have come from centres in Syria.

The mosaic pavements show differences in execution and design, indicating preference of some motifs and compositions by craftsmen or workshops; some demonstrate local inclinations, regional uniqueness, and the idiosyncrasy of the individual craftsman. Many distinctive details and features are repeated, occasionally sharing the same basic scheme sometimes with identical elements. Based on the various designs of the inhabited scrolls Dauphin (1987: 189) maintains that the geographical distribution is significant in defining workshops.

Dunbabin (1999: 301-302) accurately concludes, ‘The standard repertory is composed of schemata on the basis of which figures, groups and scenes can be constructed. The use of such figural schemata was used for many subjects... The craftsmen’s role was to combine, to vary, and to embellish these schemata, and to distribute them over the surface to be decorated, but seldom to invent completely afresh’.

It may be reasonably inferred that Jewish artists from families with long traditions of inherited craftsmanship worked primarily for Jews, but were also employed by Christians and pagans. This may be deduced from the similarities among stylistic features of synagogues, churches, and temples in the Galilee and Syria, and also by synagogal and church architecture and mosaic art, particularly during the sixth century. Contemporary Jewish literature namely the Talmud (BT Sanhedrin 29a), mentions the existence of Jewish artists and craftsmen who also worked for Christians and pagans, as well as the attitude of

Jews to artists and craftsmen. Among the various crafts the builders are mentioned first; they (and craftsmen) were held in high esteem.

D. *Sources of the Repertory and the Transmission of Motifs*

The source of the similarity in pavement design and content is controversial. The question is how these motifs, designs, and schemes were transmitted among craftsmen. The sources that inspired the craftsmen in the circulation of classical models and other motifs are difficult to determine precisely.

The debate concerns revealing a definite source of the illustrations, the possibilities of passing on motifs, designs, and patterns, and the distribution of imagery; all these might have been achieved by the following means.

- Model or pattern books: this hypothesis arises from the ostensible similarity of types of representation or genre renditions proposing sketches as aids to the mosaicists.
- The taste and choice of the artist and patron.
- Examples of depictions in other media.
- A mosaicist's studio, illustrative reserves and sources of his personal sketch-book.
- The practice of designs and patterns passed down in a family team or workshop including sketches and creative inventions.
- Visual ideas supplementing the remembered images of the mosaicist.

The mosaicist most probably was able to transmit through his work a visual scheme; was evidently capable of memorizing and recalling parts of the repertory which was utilized to create a two-dimension design. Themes could have been studied during training and apprenticeship, and other subjects and elements accumulated throughout the working life.

Most scholars agree that the consistent and frequent use of identical compositions, motifs, and patterns, and the wide range of themes found in mosaic art, sculpture, and funerary art, suggest the existence and use in antiquity of some model or pattern books: collections of the repertoire of compositions, schemes, and designs (Avi-Yonah 1981b: 375; 1960a: 21; Kitzinger 1965b: 7; Dunbabin 1978: 23; 1999: 302-303; Dauphin 1978a; Roussin 1985: 45; Hachlili 1988: 391-395;

1998: 449-451; Trilling 1989: 37). No such book, however, has ever been discovered. Although found at sites widely separated in distance and time, designs are often depicted in a similar stereotypical manner. The widespread use of zoological and botanical motifs that could hardly have been known at first hand from nature also proves that many themes and motifs were codified into pattern books. Furthermore, the uniformity of form and content seen in the art of this period can only be the result of models being taken from sketch books. Any differences in the style and execution of a similar theme are to be imputed to the individual artists' skill and style. Further evidence of the existence of such sketch books is that the size of animals or objects is uniform, regardless of actual proportions. The inhabited scroll pavements (pls. VI.1-11), for instance, show birds and animals of similar size, suggesting that the artists did not interpret the drawings but simply copied them. One assumes that pattern books were arranged according to composition and subject matter, and included themes, designs, motifs, and patterns. It is probable that these books were passed on from generation to generation within the same artist families. If this is so, it may explain the time range of some of the themes.

The general composition of the floor, the details of the pavement, the individual patterns and motifs, the symbolic objects, and the designs were probably taken from pattern books according to individual or communal taste. This can be deduced from the uniformity of and similarity in composition and motif. However, as the individual styles are obviously different, many artists and workshops must have produced mosaics in different parts of the country. Also, certain motifs such as the bird cage and particular combinations recurring in synagogues or churches may have been preferred by their respective communities without specific significance being attached to them.

It is wrong to base a school or workshop on the design of the mosaic composition, or on the contents of the mosaic (i.e., to assert that one school created a single uniform design as Avi-Yonah [1975a] argued regarding the group of eight inhabited scroll pavements he attributed to a 'Gaza School'). Rather, the elements and composition of the mosaics were a matter of personal selection perhaps from pattern books, by the donors or sometimes by the artists.

Furthermore, the designs, which were often

depicted in a stereotyped manner, have been found at various sites widely separated in distance and time. The zodiac is an example of this phenomenon. The zodiac scheme appears in the same formal rendition on the synagogue mosaic floors at Hammath Tiberias (late 4th century), Huseifa and Sepphoris (late 5th century), and Beth 'Alpha and Na'aran (6th century). The zodiac design on all these mosaics consist of a square frame containing two concentric circles containing the same themes: the sun god (or the Sun) in a chariot; twelve radial units, each containing one of the zodiac signs and bearing its Hebrew name; the personifications of the four seasons in the corners of the square frame (pls. III.1-4; figs. III-3, 4). Yet there are differences in the depiction and in the execution of the figures in each zodiac design, a circumstance that underlines the development of a distinctive scheme and model for decoration of synagogues distant in date, and indicates dependence on some common source, presumably a sketch book.

A similar pattern book source may be ascribed to the comparable Torah shrine panels containing the Ark, or the Torah shrine accompanied by a pair of menoroth and ritual objects, which ornament the mosaic pavements of the synagogues at Beth 'Alpha, Hammath Tiberias, Na'aran, Sepphoris, and Susiya (pls. II. 1,2; figs. II-8-10). A comparable panel depicted on the mosaic of the Upper chapel of Priest John at Mukhayyat (pl. II.3a) might have relied on a similar source.

The popularity of the inhabited scroll composition might also imply the possible existence of pattern books (Dauphin 1978a: 408-410). The consistent design with the recurrent themes, episodes, and objects (pl. VI.1-11; figs VI-1-18), and as noted above, the uniform size of animals and objects on the inhabited scroll pavements, with disregard for the actual proportions, is further justification for positing the existence of such sketch books; it suggests that the mosaicists did not interpret the drawings but simply copied them.

The same recurring vignettes of the farming scenes rendered within the inhabited scrolls design may also designate a common source based on a model book. The widespread use of zoological and botanical subjects that could hardly have been known at first hand from nature also confirms that many themes and motifs were codified into pattern books. Episodes such as animal chase and battle, and hunting of big game (pl. VII.5-13), show distinct conventions, which are already noted

in earlier mosaics in North Africa and Syria; they apparently indicate the use of a similar source, plausibly a pattern book. Personifications such as Earth, the Four Rivers of Paradise and the seasons might also have relied on pattern-book models.

The artists used these models with a great deal of freedom in composition, scale, traditional scenes, particular figures, specific features, and various details, which in many instances vary widely. Numerous repertory elements and designs such as scenes of hunting and vintage, the zodiac design and some biblical scenes were created by different artists in different periods, indicating that the mosaicist's apparent task was to take a basic scheme and enhance it, and add his own idiosyncratic and original style and features.

These books were no doubt passed on from generation to generation within the same artist families, which may explain the time range of some of the themes (Dauphin 1978a: 408). Piccirillo (1991: 129) presumes the existence of handbooks with drawings compiled in the imperial centres. Dunbabin (1999: 302) believes that 'some of the repetition of motifs... can be accounted for in other ways, but that nevertheless collections of models or patterns in some form must have existed'.

From an analysis of the existing material it is possible to surmise that the pattern books were arranged according to several criteria and would have been composed in a schematic form for border designs, the general field, catalogues or sketch-books for animals, birds, and human scenes, with themes such as village life, grape harvesting, and hunting.

These model books (presumably made of papyrus, parchment, or wooden boards) probably contained designs, motifs, and patterns, and were inherited by the artists' families or the workshops. This might explain the time range of some of the themes. It is also quite evident that many of the motifs chosen from these model books apparently appealed to the local communities. The use of such books would tend to speed the process of preparing and executing the mosaic pavement, and it could also explain the popularity of the themes.

Some scholars argue that other considerations in the transmission of the motives should also be examined.

Bruneau (1984: 241-272) maintains that no model or pattern books existed. He argues that there was a preferred repertory, but that its

repeated use was supplemented by fresh and inventive schemes, which counter the idea of a model book. He argues that the only association that exists between mosaics of the same theme are those which can be ascribed just to the subject itself, to the choice made by artists of the same background who might select similar depictions, and possibly would have consulted a common origin, such as a mosaic, a textile, or an illustrated manuscript; though many of the same or similar themes might still show variation and differences. However, his supporting examples are too randomly chosen, his contentions are not too convincing, nor does he look at the question outside mosaics (Dunbabin 1999: 302, n. 48; Talgam 2002: 12-13).

Balmelle and Darmon (1986: 246-247 and Brueneau in the discussion p. 249) maintain there was no need for pattern books, and the transmission of the iconographic tradition was passed on from master to student orally during the formation of a *pictor*. Proof lies in the fact that even if the iconography is similar it is not identical. However, this fact can serve equally well to prove the existence of pattern books: iconography, schemes, and conventions are similar because they are based on a common pattern book; differences in execution are simply the result of the artist's talent. But Kitzinger (in the discussion in Balmelle and Darmon 1986: 248) contends that the *pictor's* design was used in various media, and elucidates the correspondence of graphic designs which served the *pictores* in different places. Hunt (1994: 123) assumes that the transmission of motifs should be attributed to the designers/mosaicists, and that the inscriptions on mosaics suggest that they are 'specific working practices by artists collaborating in small, often family, groups or units'.

There are some scholars who maintain the artists' sources for the motifs, their technique and the repertoire of designs is based on the circulation of classical models, on examples of depictions in other media, on a mosaicist's studio tradition and on a practice passed down in a family, or among groups and teams of workshops.

There may well have been a studio practice in which motifs, themes, designs, and patterns in common use passed down in a family or workshop; they might have contained illustrated notes on various fields of expertise, special interests, traditional elements, and the like, and may have been the exclusive property of the mosaicist. The recurrence of a group of motifs could be the result

of the artists' training, which included learning the designs and the repertoire of the workshop. Exchange and circulation of ideas among artists resulted in the distribution of themes and motifs.

Another possibility is that the creative process of reproducing episodes and patterns from memory and innovation yielded sketches by the mosaicist for repeated use. The artist mirrored or imitated the bucolic life he witnessed. An obvious example is the milking of a goat on the Kissufim mosaic (fig. VII-10). The different renditions of the grape-treading action (pl. VII.3) was the outcome of the mosaicist's own observation rather than copying from a pattern book. The same holds for the Gaza amphora illustrations (pl. XII.6f-h), which were drawn by the mosaicist from the real thing. The depiction of the giraffe is a useful example of two different approaches, one showing the native giraffe (pl. XII.7a-d), hence possibly drawn from nature by the mosaicists of the Gaza region, the other giraffes (pl. XII.7e-g) apparently copied from a model.

The natural world, animals, beasts, birds, and humans were portrayed with accurate standard characteristics, such as posture, gestures, and movements acknowledged from the surrounding natural environment. Some typical episodes were selected from activities witnessed in the arena; however, they complied with traditional conventions, so that the mosaicist presented renditions similar in many aspects.

Examples of depictions in other media, especially portable items, were a readily available source for reproduction in mosaics pavements. For instance, the Nile Festival building mosaic at Sepphoris shows the Nilometer rendered as a round tower mounted on a rectangular base with a vaulted opening, and a putto on another putto's back who engraves the number IZ (Weiss and Talgam 2002: 61, 67-68). The similar episode appears on a 6th-century silver bowl from Perm (now at the Hermitage Museum, dated by imperial stamps to 491-518) (fig. XII-15) and on Coptic textiles (Volbach 1961: 41,360-361, pl. 252; Netzer and Weiss 1992a: 38; 1992b: 76-78; Weiss and Talgam 2002: 67).

The Jerusalem Orpheus mosaic shares several common points with the ivory pyxis from San Columbano monastery at Bobbio and from the Abbey of St. Julien Brioude (dated to the end of the 4th century: Volbach 1952: no. 91, pl. 28; 1961: 28, 327, pl. 84; Jesnick 1997: 84-5,



Figure XII-15. Comparable Nilometer scene rendered on the Sepphoris mosaic and a silver plate from Perm.

figs. 11, 14) which render Orpheus surrounded by various animals. The similarity is noted especially in the portrayal of a centaur and Pan as listeners to Orpheus on both the mosaic and the pyxis (fig. XII-16).

Likenesses exist between the portrayal of the pair of lions and bulls' heads on the Sepphoris synagogue pavement and in the Tiberias stone relief (fig. IX-2). Some affinities between the grape treading scenes on mosaics (pl. VII.3) are present on the Korazim synagogue stone relief (Yeivin 2000: pl. 15a, 4).

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Several phenomena should be considered. A surprising fact is that few of the pavements can be attributed to the same artists or workshops. Only a small number of mosaics noted above demonstrate that the same artist or workshop team created two or more pavements. A few mosaics deemed to have been executed by the same teams. Among them sometimes it is evident that one floor was created by the master mosaicist, another probably by an apprentice or less experienced artist. For example, the nave pavement of the church at Kursi might have been executed by a master mosaicist, while the rest of the church pavements were probably produced by an



Figure XII-16. Comparable Orpheus scene rendered on the Jerusalem mosaic and a ivory pyxis.

apprentice/s (Tzaferis 1983: 23). Quite evidently, most of the mosaic pavements of a structure were executed by local mosaicist/s. If an itinerant artist created a mosaic some stylistic features should be visible. Conceivably, the mosaicists of these single-structure pavements might have been local artist who were also builders, stonemasons, and masters of other crafts. Other phenomena are the similarities in the same theme though clearly not executed by the same hand. The most noticeable example is the inhabited scroll rendered on fields and borders, which decorates many of the 6th-century mosaic floors of synagogues and churches. The similarity of the general theme is quite obvious, but there are no stylistic affinities between them, except for some resemblance in the pavements of Ma'on and Be'er shem'a. The subject-matter likeness is most probably due to a fashionable trend based on a similar source, possibly in the form of a sketch-book.

The general scheme, composition, and outline of some designs are an indication of a model which the mosaicists followed. Such are the Torah shrine façade panels, the zodiac design with all its details, the elements of the Nilotic scenes which are traditional parts of the scheme, the inhabited scroll

designs, and some of the items within the medallions. Yet details in these designs, though recurring, do not always follow a precise model, see the bird-cages, double baskets, baskets which are illustrated in different patterns (pls. VI.13-16).

The Be'er Shem'a inhabited vine scrolls mosaic illustrates only two of the vintage episodes: the flute player, and the figure leading a loaded donkey. The other episodes with human figures are pastoral scenes, such as a shepherd, the nursing woman, a figure holding an object, the figure leading a camel, another leading a giraffe, and a figure riding an elephant.

The mosaic of the inhabited vine scrolls in the north aisle of Petra church has no episodes of vintage. The human figures are depicted only in pastoral scenes such as a shepherd, three figures holding various objects, and figures with a camel (pls. VI.6-8). The mosaic in the church's south aisle also shows pastoral scenes of a different nature, such as fishing and bird catching, as well as personifications.

Some of the renditions of arable and hunting scenes (see Chap. VII) follow traditional conventions that perhaps were adapted to models that served the mosaicist. Examples include some of

the vintage scenes on the inhabited vine scrolls mosaics of the Beth She'an area and the Jordan mosaics. These pavements show the characteristic features of the farming scenes: the vintager gathering the grapes; a porter carrying the basket of grapes; transportation of grapes from the vineyard to the press by a donkey loaded with baskets; treading the grapes, pressing in the wine press; the flute player and a hare eating grapes (Table VII-1, pls. VII.1-4, figs. VII-1,2). Some of these features are rendered similarly, probably following a pattern or a convention. The vintager and porter appear in an almost identical posture and details; in the transportation of grapes by a loaded donkey, the figure usually leads with one hand and carries a stick in the other. Several different episodes of the grape-treading scene (pl. VII.3) have either figures treading or a pair of figures treading on either sides of the vine press. The flute player in all cases is rendered in an identical posture, sitting on a basket and holding the flute in both hands (pl. VII.4), except for the flute player at Sts. Lot and Procopius (pl. VI.11). The hare eating grapes is depicted in various postures (fig. VII-2).

Animal chase and combat is illustrated in a similar manner deriving from traditional patterns in which the animals leap towards their prey (pl. VII.5, 8), or confront each other as in the snake and mongoose combat (pl. VII.6) or in an vicious assault of beasts on animals (pl. VII.9).

Hunting scenes are noticeably rendered after traditional models: a hunter on foot is armed with a lance, which he holds in both hands assaulting the beasts, sometimes he is a soldier holding a shield; a mounted hunter on the right attacks a beast depicted on the left (pls. VII.11-13). The portrayals of the presentation of beasts for public display show different episodes, but they all depict African figures leading the animals (pl. VII.15).

Pastoral scenes again attest to some conventional model guiding the mosaicist. The shepherd in the posture of legs crossed, left hand resting on his staff and right hand raised above his head is a common depiction on several of the mosaics (pl. VII.16). Figures leading camels on the Kissufim and Be'er Shem'a pavements are almost exactly the same in posture and clothing, and seem to be based on the same model; the Petra illustration depicted in three medallions is wholly different (pl. VII.18). The men approaching a tree in a fowling scene on the 5th-century Diakonikon mosaic at Jabaliyah and on the 6th-century

mosaic in Petra church, though dated to different periods, are quite similar in their rendition, possibly being based on a similar model (pl. VII.19). On the other hand, every fishing and fishermen's illustration is unique (pl. VII.20).

A number of mosaic pavements show traditional themes, which seem to express the artist's singular rendition presenting his own interpretation of the customary and recognized scenes. Examples are some of the hunting and pastoral episodes at Kissufim, which show unusual scenes of the hunter and the bear, the prancing zebras, the giraffe, and elephant (pl. VII.7). The lower mosaic at the Old Diakonikon on Mt. Nebo illustrates a shepherd sitting on a rock watching his flock (pl. VII.16i). Some of the zodiac signs at Beth Alpha are unusual, especially Virgo with her red shoes, who sits on a throne, and Aquarius, depicted as a figure drawing water from a well with a bucket (pls. III.8c,10b).

The spread of similar mosaics is frequently attributed, albeit with little evidence, to the existence of central workshops that trained local craftsmen, or to itinerant mosaicists (Dunbabin 1999: 273). Lavin (1963: 244) suggests that a great number of North Africa schools and workshops, 'though perhaps operating from headquarters in the larger centers, were doubtless itinerant'. Itinerant teams of mosaicists who travelled widely may have practised their craft over a wide area, which would account for the similarity in designs and patterns in different localities. The appearance of exotic animals like the giraffe and elephant, led by figures in ethnic attire, might indicate motifs produced by travelling mosaicists who were familiar with them, or reflect actual incidents in which such figures and animals visited the villages during celebrations.

The appearance of Jewish symbols and designs in synagogal and funerary art attests to the involvement of the Jewish community and the donors in the building and decoration of the religious structures. They would have been assisted by Jewish pattern books, and perhaps also by the artists themselves, when choosing the layout, composition, and motifs to be included in the designs. Whenever the Jewish community wanted to add specific significance to an ornamented floor they would insert Jewish symbols. These symbols would have clearly indicated the difference between the local Jewish and Christian edifices, and emphasized the function of the edifice. The Jewish community would also have availed itself

of designs from general pattern books, for example, when they used the inhabited scroll pattern on their synagogue floors, a pattern that also appears on church pavements; or when they decorated their synagogues with geometric mosaic pavements devoid of expressions of Judaism.

Those responsible for the choice of the composition and design could adapt the images to the local taste and choice. Classical themes could be portrayed by mosaicists who may have altered the images or the meaning. Designs could be created of typical images with a new fusion of details and stylization. The general repertoire of the mosaics attests that the same themes and imagery persisted throughout the Roman-Byzantine world; the variety is the result of the mosaicists' skill and ability. The same conventions are observed on many of the mosaics, demonstrating a common source and tradition and upholding and utilizing the image in various ways.

The patron might have chosen popular traditional themes and episodes to display his activities, and at times perhaps imported imagery, which the mosaicist introduced according to the design and formulae that were requested of him and that accorded with his expertise. Donors were apparently free to choose whatever they liked from the available sources; however, other criteria such as the space available or the wishes of the community leaders were probably also taken into consideration when the composition was chosen and designed. Trilling (1989: 66-69) argues that in the Great Palace in Constantinople the patron was the author—the emperor himself or someone in his court—of the mosaic conception and programme, which was formal and thematic. 'The choice and placement of individual scenes was the responsibility of an artist, the mosaic's designer. It was he who gave a precise visual form to the patron-author's intellectually ambitious but visually incomplete conception'. Dunbabin (1999: 323) maintains that it is difficult 'to assess the extent to which the content of mosaics was determined by the wishes of the patrons... a substantial proportion of the imagery suited the interests of the class who commissioned them, and could be used to communicate a message about the cultural expectation of their owners, as they defined their position in society'.

The task and contribution of the clergy, bishops, priests, deacons, monks, high officials, and the communal leaders (who are mentioned on inscriptions) were probably to oversee the general

plan of the ornamentation. They had to ensure that the content of the mosaics suited the communal manner and position of the church or synagogue. Hence, no biblical scenes or saints are rendered on church mosaic pavements, and no rural or everyday life scenes are depicted on synagogue mosaic pavements.

Inscriptions and portraits might indicate the patrons' and donors' role in the mosaic production and how much influence they may have exerted on its subject matter. Regarding the mosaics which present patrons' inscriptions and illustrated portraits, they no doubt donated the money for the work, but could also have been involved in determining the content. This is even more plausible considering that some men of religion are mentioned among the individuals named on church and synagogue pavements (see Chap. XI, pp). Other benefactors whose inscriptions are found include the laity, men and women, individuals, families, and communities (Saller and Bagatti 1949: 202-203). The donors' involvement in the choice of the subject matter might be perceived at the Sepphoris synagogue on the inscriptions in the circular frame of the inner circle of the zodiac, and in many of the other panels (Weiss 2005: 203-208; Di Segni 2005: 209-223), which were most likely specially chosen for their location and content. The same could be envisioned for the inscription in the central medallion on the Church of the Apostles at Madaba, which names the three donors and the mosaicist (Piccirillo 1993: 106, fig. 78). The patrons at times conveyed their requests and wishes for preferred popular themes and for iconographic ideas they were familiar with, directing the mosaicists as to the extent and form of the pavement designs.

The same could be assumed for pavements that display inscriptions of the mosaicists. These might designate their involvement, beyond the actual making of the pavement, through the influence they enjoyed and possibly through being the driving force behind the choice of the content of the mosaic. Saller and Bagatti (1949: 168) maintain that the inscribed and named mosaicists were both the executors and the designers of the mosaic pavement. Hunt (1994: 122) agrees with this assumption, and further considers the artist 'as a cultural producer who operates within a framework of social and economic relations with the patrons, the market and so on'.

The inscriptions accompanying some of the synagogue and church mosaic pavements in Israel

and Jordan mention the artist by deed and name. A few of the inscriptions mention one mosaicist, which might single him out as the master mosaicist, or the only artist, who created the pavement; other inscriptions relate to two or three mosaicists, who could have had the same rank, or the first mentioned was the master and the others his apprentices or family members.

The mosaicist could have referred to the themes from his individual repertoire; the artists at times alluded to a contemporary fashion or trend for a prime choice; they might have displayed a sketchbook for the patrons and community leaders to choose from. Occasionally a mosaicist of eminent standing may have been instructed to use his own skills and experience.

Designs are often depicted in a similar stereotypical manner, but are found at sites widely separated in distance and time. The motifs evidently cannot be associated with particular compositions or schools but seem to indicate a particular choice by the artists and donors. The recurring elements and scenes in several mosaics, usually rendered similarly or identically, attest that designs were taken from a common pattern book. The mosaicists applied creativity in adjusting motifs influenced by models in other media, such as sculpture, ivories, silver, and textiles, to contemporary designs. The similarity of style and iconography between the mosaics and other local art might suggest that the mosaicists were local. Designs, motifs and patterns were apparently shared by artists with the addition of various

changes and innovations in the iconographic repertoire created by local mosaicists.

Similar iconographic models, genre representations, animals and birds types intimate a definite basic source. However, this is still an open issue, lacking clear evidence on whether this source comprised a sketch or model book, a tradition inherited by a mosaicist's family, or a mosaicists' workshop or studio; the pattern books could be the underlying guide. Yet any differences in the style and execution of a similar theme are to be imputed to the individual artists' skill and style.

Proof lies in the fact that while the iconography and motifs are similar, they are not identical. Still, this fact can be used equally to prove the positive existence of pattern books: iconography, schemes, and conventions are similar because they are based on a common book.

Mosaicists in different regions utilized the imagery with several variations, amended and revised features of traditional iconography, and underlined or emphasized aspects of the pavement designs. Differences in execution are due to the considerable latitude in the artist's handling of the pattern and his competence. From comparisons among the mosaic pavements of the various synagogues and their local Christian and pagan counterparts, it can be inferred that artists and workshops were employed simultaneously by various communities that probably relied on some common source for the different designs and symbols.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CONCLUDING REMARKS, COMMENTS, AND OBSERVATIONS

The floor was only part of the general ornamentation program of a building, which contained frescoes, wall mosaics, liturgical decorations, and furniture. The walls might have been decorated with biblical scenes or Christian symbols and themes. For example, the apse of St. Catherine in Sinai shows wall mosaics with religious motifs, and wall mosaics decorate the churches of Ravenna. Remains of wall mosaics are found in the Cathedral at Madaba, at the Memorial of Moses on Mt. Nebo and in St. Stephen's church at Umm al-Rasas. Plastered walls with paintings of plants and figures were discovered in many churches in the region (Piccirillo 1989: 337-340). Painted wall decoration and inscriptions painted on the pillars were found also at the synagogue of Rehov (Vitto 1981: 92). Christian writers described the interior decoration of the Gaza churches, which included saints and episodes from the New Testament (Waliszewski 2001: 264). Nevertheless, the mosaics location on the floor had a better chance of surviving than other parts of the buildings.

Mosaics had a clear-cut function: to pave rooms, halls, and aisles in a great variety of structures. Every mosaic pavement was distinguished by its particular location, the style and features of the images, and the iconographic variety of its depiction and significance. Above all, each mosaic carried different meanings for observers. The mosaic ornamentation provided a singular quality in its powerful images and its iconography, themes, and representations, which conveyed and revealed the hopes and goals of the contemporary society and their cultural setting.

The repertoire of the visual imagery decorating the mosaics contains many elements: traditional motifs, Classical themes, symbols, biblical scenes and everyday life episodes, representations of flora and fauna, the inhabited scrolls, and Nilotic vignettes. Many of these components ornament mosaics in a variety of pagan, Christian, and Jewish structures. However, certain selected and deliberately distinctive themes characterize the mosaics of either churches or synagogues. The

Torah shrine panel, the zodiac, Jewish symbols and biblical scenes feature exclusively on synagogue pavements. The cross, rural and genre scenes such as farming, hunting, combat, and personifications as the symbols of the universe distinguish the church floors.

A. Notes on Composition

The mosaic pavement, while an artistic concept, was also perceived as a floor. The early Byzantine mosaicists produced the pavements fully aware of the practical character of the floors, serving primarily as a surface on which the visitors could walk (Dauphin 1980: 128-131; 1997: 4-5).

Almost all the designs of synagogue and church mosaics are made to produce the greatest impact from a single viewpoint. This is at the entrance, with the design seen the right way up, and looking towards the building's focal point. In the church this is the apse and altar at the eastern end; in the synagogue it is the Torah shrine (as an aedicula, niche, or apse) on the Jerusalem-oriented wall. The mosaic usually consisted of an overall design such as the inhabited scroll, or was divided into elements, panels, and compartments.

The development of the mosaic pavements in the late 4th-8th centuries features a unity of the design, all-over compositions, and continuous and repetitive carpets with preference for prolific ornamental designs with the characteristic style of figures. The compositions are vital, vivid, colourful, organized, and natural, with assorted imagery well dispersed and balanced (Dunbabin 1978: 223-226; 1999: 194-196; Dauphin 1980: 132-3; 1997: 5).

Some essential traits characterize the mosaics. These are a plain background, and figures, animals, trees, and buildings frequently rendered in the same size. Naturalistic elements, symmetry, movement, and figures are detached and patched together. Frequently the composition is adjusted to its content. Some devices of composition bind all fields together: a strict symmetry,

sometimes relaxed, an unbalanced setting, scattered and spread forms, objects, and figures (Schaapiro 1960).

The scenes rendered on mosaics are usually groups of two figures; illustrated items and figures are rendered freely in space, in 'isolation in combination'. Each item is depicted alone but the whole composition is linked by various means. In geometric and organic scrolls each medallion is an independent unit filled with animated figures or objects, usually rendered in isolation from each other but surrounded by static patterns (Avi-Yonah 1960a: 20-23; 1975: 41). A typical characteristic of Oriental art, *horror vacui*, is apparent in almost all designs. Every space is filled: between medallions, around or among motifs, the background, and so on. Another distinct feature is that figures and objects are the same size regardless of their real proportions and scale. The depictions are made conceptually instead of in the visual illusionistic Graeco-Roman manner. Compositions include figurative art and iconic and mythological themes, which are depicted in sections, and as rhythmic and antithetic units.

Some of the mosaics show figures facing in all directions in an organized manner, particularly in the diagonal compositions of animals that appear mainly in side rooms (pl. IX.3; fig. IX-6): the Caesarea ibex, the Church of the Apostles at Madaba, the Mosaic of Paradise at Madaba, and the Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius at Mukhayyat on Mount Nebo (Piccirillo 1993: figs. 89, 139, 213). The inhabited vine scroll design in the Caesarea villa (fig. VI-17) can be observed from every side.

Many of the borders are treated as a frame, enclosing the main ornamented field mosaics. The border motifs could be observed in all four directions, upside-down from the entrance, upright on the upper part, and in other positions on the sides, usually different from the general orientation of the field mosaic they frame. Examples are almost all the inhabited scroll borders and meander borders, the Beth 'Alpha synagogue border, the Beth She'an B synagogue border, and the Caesarea birds mosaic border (pls. VI.4, VI.10; figs. II-3, VI-10, 14; XII-14). An exception is the border of the mosaic in el-Maqerqesh chapel at Beth Guvrin. Here the border frames the field, but the lower part at the entrance is observed upright, like the main mosaic (fig. VIII-3).

Some features in the development of style and composition in the 5th-6th centuries should be

noted (Talgam 1998: 82-3). A transition to carpet mosaics, with emphasis on the floor as a unified and firm surface, characterizes pavements of the 5th century, with their stylized and flat composition. A dark outline surrounds complete areas and figures, and creates a flat impression, with sharp division between light and shadow. Anatomical details are portrayed in a stylized and spare manner with no illusion of movement. Sometimes a more naturalistic approach is perceived; tesserae of almost the same size are used throughout the mosaic, with the background arranged in straight and organized rows of the cubes. Important to note is the return of figured subjects.

Significant changes in figure portrayal are notable in the mid-6th century, characterized by the 'Justinian Classicism' (during the reign of Justinian 527-565). This was a return to the ideas of Classical art, featuring variable movement, illustrating a stylistic reform and innovation. Somewhat later the composition and figure style is starting to follow a standard scheme.

Several compositional types of mosaic pavements are noted. A common type is images enclosed in frames, many of them within organic carpets such as the inhabited vine or acanthus scrolls; these framed representations are combined into grid or interlace designs, at times without any theme or chronological connection—merely an assortment of subjects. The design is symmetrical, with a vertical axial column containing objects flanked by antithetical pairs of animals and birds. A feature of these mosaics is the lack of regular scale in the images, which are made to fit the medallions.

Another composition is free figures, which Lavin (1963: 236) terms 'inventory compositions' and Dauphin (1980: 132-3; 1997: 5) calls the scatter of figures. The images are dispersed over the field. Examples are the Diakonikon pavement at Jabaliyah and the Nilotic scenes at Tabgha, Beth Leontis at Beth She'an, and Sepphoris (pls. V.3, VII.10; figs. V-1,2). Other pavements are arranged in panels or registers on a plain light background with no ground lines. The mosaics are unbound, as schematic individual or scene representations of unconnected vignettes; rural life, animal combat, and the hunt are related, but many are self-contained scenes devoid of unity or association. Such arrangements appear at the aisle mosaic in Kissufim church, the first panel of the nave pavement in the Al-Khadir church at Madaba, and on the Old Diakonikon mosaic on

Mt. Nebo. Some scenes evoke the compositions and episodes on the mosaic floor of the Byzantine Imperial Palace in Constantinople (Trilling 1989: 41-44).

A composition characteristic of some synagogue nave pavements (figs. II-1-8) is seen at Beth 'Alpha, Beth She'an A, Hammath-Tiberias, Hammath-Gader, Na'aran, and Susiya (Hachlili 1988: 347-354, Scheme A). The design shows three rectangular panels: one, usually in front of the Torah shrine, depicts Jewish symbols (Hachlili 1976: 47-49; 2000: 154; 2001: 59); the central panel has the zodiac design. The third panel at Beth 'Alpha, and the sixth band at Sepphoris, contain the biblical scene of the Binding of Isaac; Na'aran and Susiya render the biblical scene of Daniel in the Lions' Den.

This design highlights the importance of the programme-scheme of the panels and their content, the significance of each panel, and the impact of the whole pavement. Characteristic of the synagogue pavements are a recurring programme, a fixed composition, a stylistic fashion, and consistent iconography, while church floors are noted for more variety in their designs and subject matter.

B. *Interpretation and Implications*

Some synagogue pavements delivered more than the evident ornamentation of the structure (see the questions raised by Dunbabin 1999a: 744). Particular significant here are the synagogue mosaics of Beth 'Alpha, Beth She'an A, Hammath-Tiberias, Hammath-Gader, Na'aran, and Susiya (Hachlili 1988: 347-354, Scheme A). The scheme, form, and content are identical in all, despite their different dates and locations. The recurring visual images and subject matter influenced the reading of the mosaics and augmented the roles which the decoration of the floor could perform. The inherent implications of the floor panels were most likely plain to the community members: the Jewish symbols commemorated the Jerusalem Temple; the Zodiac as the calendar was the frame of the annual rites now enacted by the community. The biblical scenes referred to traditional literature, and the visual images intimated God's intervention, the rescue, and the hope of salvation.

Rural life on church pavements indicated a connection with contemporary life. These mosaics

were presumably intended to convey various messages to community members looking at the pavements. The scenes could have represented the exalted pursuits of the patrons, or victory in battles; they might have illustrated the various inhabitants of land and sea, or embodied the symbol of human life. Some designs or motifs might have incorporated a deeper level of connotations, perhaps of symbolic aspects.

In images containing citations from Isaiah and Psalms alluding to the End of Days, seen in churches and in the Beth Midrash at the Meroth synagogue, the appropriate biblical reference is purposely located above each particular illustrated animal pair, hence is directly addressed to the viewers.

Inscriptions rendered on large areas of the pavements had further importance. They were evidently intended to be read, and they expanded the role of the floor decoration. Such an example is the long *Halakhic* text depicted on the Rehov synagogue mosaic, recording the tithes and seventh-year produce in many districts in the Holy Land. It was apparently copied from a literary text and had various purposes, among them conveying the actual knowledge and memory of traditions and practices. Another example is the inscription on the 'En Gedi synagogue pavement with the names of earliest people in the world, a list of the twelve zodiac signs and the twelve months of the year, the names of the three biblical forefathers, and most significantly a curse and a list of four offences for which the town's community would be held accountable. It was expressly meant to be read by the synagogue population, and abided by (figs. XI-4,5). Some Christian churches also used the floor as a medium for the written word (Donceel Voûte 1988: 465-475; Dunbabin 1999a: 743-744).

The patron/donor played a part in commissioning the work and in approving the content and the inscriptions, they had a significant role in the choice of the ornamentation (Dunbabin 1999a: 741-742). Evidence of this assumption lies in the location of the donors' dedicatory inscriptions. At the Sepphoris synagogue they are at the top of each nave panel (fig. II-2); more especially, one inscription is in the circular frame of the zodiac panel (pl. III-2). This is unusual, and, moreover, it was evidently an integral part of the mosaic. The Church of Apostles at Madaba likewise has an unusually located dedicatory inscription, which contains the name of the mosaicist

(Piccirillo 1993: fig. 78): around the central medallion with personification of the Sea. It indicates the same contribution by the benefactors, and perhaps by the mosaicist too, in the rendition of this mosaic. These and other examples designate the involvement of the patrons in the choice of the subject matter.

On some synagogue floors dedicatory inscriptions record 'the holy community' which donated and contributed the mosaics. This clearly attests to their involvement in the pavement work, and perhaps also in the choice of the themes. Examples are the inscriptions on synagogue pavements of Beth 'Alpha, Beth She'an small synagogue, Huseifa, Jericho, Ma'on (Naveh 1978: nos. 39, 43, 46, 57, 69) and Gerasa (Roth-Gerson 1987: no.10).

The floors of structures were decorated with mosaics. Considering that a floor would be in full view of the building's owner or by the community, the subject matter and its implications had to be considered and respected. On the other hand, the fact that the floor would be trodden on had to be taken into account also. Accordingly, the choice of themes and vignettes for the mosaic of the synagogue and church pavements carried great significance.

New subject matter and changes in figure compositions are characteristics of early Byzantine art. The subjects include all-over geometric, floral, and vegetal designs, animal friezes, figure scenes, including hunting, with some allusion to the *venationes* of the amphitheatre, animal chase and combat, genre vignettes such as rural activity, topographical themes, personifications, and calendar themes. These subjects and themes reflect the interests of a class of cosmopolitan patrons who commissioned the pavements (Dunbabin 1978: 223, 227-228; 1999: 299-300).

The decorations of synagogues and churches differ in concept and treatment. The iconographic programmes on the church mosaics greatly diverge from those on synagogue pavements.

Not much of Christian doctrine is shown on the mosaic pavements, and the recognition of the themes on them was much less significant than those on the synagogue pavements. Waliszewski (2001: 264) comments, 'it is clear...how little the floor mosaics meant in comparison with the decoration of the walls and ceilings'.

The main differences in themes of the 5th- and 6th-century mosaic pavements of synagogue and church are the following. The synagogue used for

its decoration revered themes, a variety of images, iconography, and symbolism. It took Jewish symbols—the menorah, ritual objects, the Ark of the scrolls, and the conch, which acquired greater significance after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in memory of the Temple and its rites. The portrayals probably served as actual images of the ceremonies conducted in the synagogue. The zodiac as a yearly calendar, biblical scenes as part of Jewish tradition and legend, animals, birds, and a few episodes of animal chase also appear, probably in the community's clear knowledge that they belonged to some general code; the two literary Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions covering large spaces are rendered in the side narthex (figs. XI-4,5). Possibly the presentation of the written word on the pavement, in preference to the figured designs, might have been the decision of the local community.

Whereas church mosaics show assorted vignettes of farming, hunting, personifications of natural forces, and portraits of donors, only two biblical episodes, of Jonah and Adam, appear on church pavements. Moreover, on synagogue pavements human figures appear only in biblical scenes, with biblical citations consisting only of single words or parts of sentences to explain the scene; the zodiac design does portray the sun god and figures for the signs (naked at Hammath Tiberias) and the seasons, but farming and hunting scenes, and portraits of benefactors, were eschewed. Church pavements, by contrast, show exactly the opposite, rendering rural life episodes and portraits of benefactors; biblical scenes are avoided. The difference apparently was connected to the clear-cut divergence in perception and attitude to treading on the pavements. The emphasis in synagogal art on symbolic and iconographic images might have been the result of a need of the Jews to distinguish their places of worship from those of the Christians (Hachlili 1988: 370, 403).

The Concept of Neutralization of Idolatry

Mosaic floor decorations include iconographic and symbolic elements, a paradox that needs to be emphasized; even biblical scenes with a representation of the Hand of God, as in the Binding of Isaac at Beth Alpha (pl. IV.1b), were considered fit subjects for a floor that was constantly trodden on: Torah shrines, menoroth and other ritual objects were also deemed suitable for the

pavements of Hammath Tiberias, Beth Alpha, Na'aran, and Susiya (pls. II.1,2).

Judaism was indifferent to pictures and did not ascribe to them any sanctity, so there was no reason to prevent the depiction of representations on pavements on which people walked (Hachlili 1988: 285, 379). The Jews of this period were indeed unafraid of idolatry (Urbach 1959: 204). No law forbids the depiction of religious subjects in Jewish art. Furthermore, walking on pavements with such depictions ensured that no sanctity or sacred quality, which would cause their being worshipped, could be attached to the scenes. Such a depiction could not be treated as a 'graven image' prohibited by the law. This might have been the reason why even pagan elements such as the zodiac were used. Judaism attached much more importance to the written word, as may be deduced from the iconoclastic destruction of the Na'aran synagogue pavement, in which the letters, however, were preserved, and from the synagogues at Rehov and 'En Gedi, where the floors paved with long inscriptions were left untouched. Although these floors were trodden on, the Jews still considered ornamenting their synagogue pavements with images and ritual objects. This might have reflected the concept that an image stepped upon will lose its sacrosanct quality. It will prevent the worship or idolatry of such images: as long as the 'graven images' are trodden on they cannot be considered sacred and consequently no danger of worship could exist (Hachlili 1988: 287, 300, 379).

Jews intentionally included biblical scenes and religious symbols among the subject matter used to adorn synagogue mosaic floors. Avi-Yonah (1960b: 32) maintains that Jews of the Talmudic period were 'notoriously insensitive to images, whether symbolic or Biblical'. However, it seems more likely that this reflects Jewish avoidance of the worship of 'graven images', proscribed at the end of the second of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20: 15; Deut. 5: 1-9: 'Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them'. The concept of neutralization of idolatry is attested by the notion that stepping on an image necessarily eliminated its sacrosanct quality. In this way the Jews struggled against idolatry, acting on the principle that as long as the 'graven image' was widely represented on synagogue floors, and would be trodden on, the pernicious influence of idolatry could be neutralized.

The avoidance of rural genre and hunting episodes intensifies the impression given by the synagogue floor ornamentation of spirituality, appreciation, and the place as a devout haven far removed from everyday life.

The church mosaic pavements of the 4th-5th centuries consisted mainly of carpets with floral and geometric designs, which occasionally contained a cross. Sacred figurative images were represented on church mosaic pavements only to a limited extent. During the 6th century church floors included scenes of hunting, vintage, genre subjects, animals, and birds, whose relevance to the Christian context was not always clear. These depictions might have been a representation of the 'World as it is' or the Earthly Paradise (Avi-Yonah 1972: 122). Yet it remains difficult to determine the actual reason for the patrons' and donors' choice of such subjects (Kitzinger 1965: 8-11). These designs could have been chosen from what was available in the assumed prevailing pattern books. As the Christians hesitated to tread on sacred images, their iconographical and symbolic images may have decorated wall mosaics, which did not survive.

The church pavement decoration was a much more down-to-earth setting. It reflects an evident ban on symbols. Only few examples of a cross appear in prominent positions. Biblical scenes are rare—only a few biblical citations together with confronting animals, and an aversion to the rendition of saints is attested. Many church pavements are rendered with farming scenes, beasts assaulting animals, hunting and bucolic life vignettes, architectural representations of cities and villages, and portraits of male and female benefactors. The church ornamentation on many pavements provided a place with a sense of consolation, reassurance, and ease, were people acknowledged scenes from their own life, personifications of natural forces, submissions of hope for a better future, and gratitude to God for prosperity.

Animals and beasts, including combat or hunting, birds, plants, and objects, are depicted on both synagogue and church pavements, usually filling geometric or organic compositions. These domestic, wild, and exotic animals, and birds, as well as a variety of plants, represent a rich repertoire of the country's nature. Biebel (1938: 301) explains their popularity 'by their inoffensive character and variety and decorative effect which they add to the floors'. They were probably

part of the repertory of pattern books used by mosaicists.

The mosaics give us some indication of the society which created them. The two communities, Jewish and Christian, treated the decoration of their edifice floors quite differently. The church pavement designs display and reflect both rural and urban life in the Byzantine period. The various renditions of village activities and hunting episodes reveal everyday bucolic life of the inhabitants in the countryside, while the architectural representations of buildings and a walled city (which appear mainly on church pavements in Jordan: Piccirillo 1993: 26-37) apparently were meant to represent urban life. Avi-Yonah (1960a: 23) contends that the influence of the aristocratic classes is featured in the hunter's portrayal as a victorious emperor (pl. VII. 11-13); the villagers on the other hand are presented by the shepherd (pl. VII. 16), whose life is sometimes cheered by the flute player or by exotic visitors such as the man leading his giraffe (pl. VII.4, 15). Synagogue pavement ornamentation, on the other hand, features motifs of Jewish symbols, the Jewish yearly calendar, and biblical scenes. It reflects the Jewish tradition, ritual conventions, and belief while refraining from representing everyday life.

The social aspect of the mosaic pavements is reflected in the involvement and participation of members of the community in the building of the edifice and in the contribution to its ornamentation. This is apparent from the inscriptions mentioning frequently the clergy, bishops, priests, and monks at each place. Many of the donors, including women, clearly contributed to the choice of the subject matter selected for the pavements decoration.

C. *Were the Mosaic Pavements Designs Purely Decorative or Invested with Symbolism?*

Scholars debate what significance can be applied to mosaic compositions and designs which include recurring motifs of humans, animals, rural episodes, and hunting vignettes. Many of the themes have a secular character, similar to the ornamentation of earlier mosaic pavements of Roman villas in North Africa. To what extent may the mosaic have lost its symbolic dimension and become purely decorative? Were compositions like the inhabited scrolls invested with symbolism? Are the depictions allegorical and symbolic,

or are they literal, describing various activities of a local community? Do the iconographic themes perform a decorative function, or carry a religious meaning with a symbolic role? Did the implications of the mosaic designs change as they moved from the secular to the religious setting?

Some scholars maintain the mosaic pavements had a decorative function alone. Others believe that the iconographic themes and compositions on mosaics of churches and synagogues of the Byzantine period reflect an iconographic symbolic program. Others still hold an intermediate approach: the mosaics are symbolic as well as decorative (Talgam 2000: 95-98).

Biebel (1938: 302-305) and Crowfoot (1941: 40-41) argue that most mosaic pavements are secular, and their popularity was due to their highly valued ornamentation design.

Among the scholars who interpret the compositions and motifs as symbolic are Saller and Bagatti (1949: 92-98). They maintain that these pavements (with scenes such as pastoral life, fishing, and boating) represent ordinary local country life. However, they interpret the symbolism of the vine as allegory: 'both the Christians and the Jews believed that they were the vineyard of the Lord... under His special protection could produce rich spiritual fruits'. The mosaics might represent activities taken from real life, indicating a prosperous agricultural community in these areas. Grabar (1968: 53) contends that the vine scroll mosaics, and their content of bucolic life, objects, and animals, 'show how the secular symbolic image of a specific landed property becomes in the hands of the Christians the image of the earth in general and in particular the ideal land governed by God'. Evans (1982) relates the Jerusalem inhabited vine scroll mosaic to early Armenian sources, and associates the birds with the symbolism of resurrection. Piccirillo (1989: 338-9) maintains that the iconography of the Madaba school mosaics reminds the onlooker of the Lord's creation, and the vine especially is connected with God. Trilling in his assessment of the mosaic of the Great Palace in Constantinople provides an insight and interpretation of the same subject matter, which appears also in church mosaics in Palaestina and Arabia. He states (1989: 58, 66, 68): 'There are only three categories of subject matter in the mosaic, and every identifiable scene belongs to at least one of them. The categories are *rural or idyllic life*, *animal violence* and *protection* (hunting, soldiers combating wild animals; some

represent combat in the arena). From the way in which these categories are related it is possible to deduce the meaning of the mosaic as a whole. The artist has created an analogue of human society and its relation to the natural world... fights between men and beasts ... embody and symbolize the triumph of civilization over nature... The three divisions of the mosaic subject matter correspond quite literally to divisions the personality... As an allegory of human nature'.

The pavements of the churches of the Priest John and of St. George at Khirbat al-Mukhayyat on Mt. Nebo are interpreted by Maguire (1987: 67-72) as representing the association between heaven and earth; the images appear to show the animal kingdom dominated by men as signs for the created world. Maguire maintains that 'it is possible for the motifs in any given mosaic to differ among themselves with respect to the density of their meanings. Some motifs could be intended only in their literal sense, others could carry several levels of symbolism... However it is an open question how many, if any, of these meaning were in the designer's mind when he set the eagle and the caged bird on the central axis of the floor'. He further contends that some mosaics 'bring together into one composition portrayals of Earth, of the food she provides, of man's mastery over domestic animals, and of his defenses against wild beasts, and that these images have a close parallel in the ninth sermon of St. John Chrysostom'. Thus, 'like the Christian commentators, the makers of the mosaics were defining humanity's place in the natural world created by God' (Maguire 1987: 72).

Piccirillo (1989: 337-340) claims that many of the designs on Jordan church mosaic floors, such as the scenes of shepherds, farming, hunting, and animal combat, are meant to praise God's creation of the world and commend his grandeur and the superiority of man; the significance of this concept is intensified by such inscriptions as those at the Theotokos Chapel in the Basilica of Moses on Mt. Nebo: 'O Creator and Maker of all things, Christ our God...'. A similar inscription appears around the medallion with a personification of the Sea in the nave of the Church of the Apostles: 'Lord who has made the heavens and the earth...' (Piccirillo 1993: 91, 200). Many of the images and other iconographic elements such as the rivers of Paradise, the eagle, the peacocks, and in particular the Madaba map received a new significance of the Christian faith. Waliszewski (2001: 264-5)

contends that the Petra church mosaics may be read at three general levels. On the highest level the mosaics symbolize God's domain, rendering the world's flora and fauna and man's work. The seasons could be interpreted as symbols of the world and God's rule over time.

For some scholars, the design intended to be decorative could at times also have a symbolic purpose. Dauphin (1978b: 31-34) is correct in claiming that the 'readings', namely interpretations, of the inhabited scroll pavements can be discerned on three different levels. The first is the rural community's identification with the pictures of everyday life that they see. The second is identification by the more cultured citizens, who recognize the birds, animals, and humans as a representation of God's creation, and the pavements as a gift of thanks. On the third level the clergy show an affinity: they might recognize and interpret details in the vine composition as symbols of Christ and the church. She concludes, 'Neither symbolism nor decoration are inherent in the inhabited scrolls. It is simply a neutral theme, read, understood and interpreted according to the mentality of the onlooker, for the life of artistic motifs is far longer than that of their original significance...the inhabited scroll...taking on different meanings according to the period, the religion, the building and the onlooker'.

Antique imagery encompassed many levels of significance, in which differences in culture, experience, and spirit played a part (Jesnick 1997: 117). Some of the designs convey ideas and relate essential conception. Merrony (1998: 443) focuses on the significance of religious and secular iconography in the early Byzantine period: 'An iconographic dichotomy between ecclesiastical buildings, churches and synagogues, on the one hand, and villae on the other'. He maintains that different iconographic traits exist: mythological scenes are typical of the villa but do not occur in a Christian or Jewish religious context; whereas vintage rural and genre scenes appear in churches and are absent from the villa context and synagogue pavements.

Dunbabin (1978: 230-233) holds that some motifs are purely decorative, while several secular episodes might have had Christian significance. She further maintains (1999: 198) that the genre scenes inserted in the inhabited medallions might sometimes appear anecdotal, 'but often it is clear that there is a unifying underlying significance... The church floor becomes an image of the earth,

with its varied inhabitants, its produce, and its work needed to maintain it: in a complete programme of decoration, the earthy creation on the floor would complement the heavenly sphere of the apse and vaults, while the walls illustrate God's covenant with man'.

Though the formal iconography is sometimes age-old, new forms are crafted and other patterns are altered. Many of the traditional elements are preserved, while change is apparent in the compositions, especially in the diverse artistic creations. Old traditions merge with new conceptions displaying the changing spirit of the period.

Artists perceived and applied suppleness in the relation of image and concept. The iconography of many of the images was not revered, and the attitudes, postures, and other features of the illustrations were conventional but not determined or

shaped by a systematic canon. No major centre of authority seems to have existed, controlling or directing the iconographic repertory. Usually there was no single accepted manner for the portrayal of the images, but there was an inclination to limit the iconographic assortment and to repeat traditional schemes, patterns, and formulae. The variety of representational types such as actions, postures, costumes, and attributes could be changed, and might vary from a simple hint to a detailed description, not always conveying the same concept.

Influences on the formation of the visual imagery came from literary conventions, tradition, and ritual customs, as well as contemporary art; religious, philosophic, social and historic manifestations are expressed through the illustrative construction of the mosaics.

LIST OF SITES

Site	Date Centuries CE	Structure type
<i>Israel (Palaestina Prima & Secunda)</i>		
‘Asida, Khirbet	5th.	church
Be’er Shem’a	6th	church
Be’er Sheva	6th	baptistry
Berachot, Horvat	6th	church
Beth-’Alpha	518-527	synagogue
Beth Leontis, Beth She’an	5th	mansion
Beth Loya, Horvat	6th	church
Beth She’an, small synagogue B	6th	synagogue
Beth She’an, synagogue A		Synagogue Samaritan (?)
Caesarea:		
• Seasons mosaic (Field C)	c. 450	mansion
• Ibex mosaic (Area NN)	5th-6th	hall
• Inhabited scrolls (Room 11029)	6th	villa
• Birds mosaic (Field Q)	6th	mansion
Deir el-’Asfur	6th	chapel?
Ed-Deir, Khirbet	5th-6th	cave-church
El-Beiyûdât, Khirbet	5th-6th	church
El-Hammam, Beth She’an	c. 530	tomb chamber
El-Hirbe	4th	Samaritan synagogue
El-Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin	6th	chapel
El-Waziya, Horvat	6th	church
Emmaus	5th-6th	Villa? or church?
‘En Gedi	6th	synagogue
‘En Hanniya	5th-6th	church
‘Evron	5th	church
Gaza-Maiumas (Gaza Strip)	508/9	synagogue
Haditha	6th	chapel
Hammath Gader	6th	synagogue
Hammath Tiberias	4th	synagogue
Hazor-Ashdod	512	church
Herodium, eastern church	5th-6th	church
Hippos-Sussita, North-East church	late 5th-6th	church
Huseifa	late 5th-6th	synagogue
Jabaliyah (Gaza Strip) ecclesiastic complex:		
• Diakonikon		diakonikon
• Baptistry	451	Baptistry
• Church	6th	church
	732	church
Jericho	6th-7th	synagogue

Site	Date Centuries CE	Structure type
Jerusalem:		
• Armenian mosaic	6th	church
• Orpheus mosaic	6th	church
Kissufim	576	church
Kursi	582-587	church
Lod	4th	villa
Ma'ale Adommim, Khirbet el-Murassas, St. Martirius		monastery
• narthex	end 5th	
• kitchen	6th	
Mahat el-Urdi, Beth Guvrin	6th	church
Mamshit (Kurnub)	5th	West church
Ma'on- Nirim	c.538	synagogue
Martyr, Tel Mastaba, Beth She'an,	6th	church
Meroth		
• David with Goliath weapons	5th	synagogue
• End of Days	7th	<i>beth midrash</i>
Monastery of Lady Mary, Tel Mastaba, Beth She'an	567-9	monastery
Na'aran	6th	synagogue
Nahariya	6th	church
Ozem	5th-6th	church
Rehov	6th	synagogue
Samara, Khirbet	4th	Samaritan synagogue
Sede Nahum	6th	chapel
Sephoris		
• House of Dionysos	4th	villa
• House of Orpheus	late 3rd	villa
• Nile Festival Building, Room 6	5th or 6th	mansion
• Synagogue	late 5th	synagogue
Shavei-Zion	485/6	Church
Shellal	561/2	Church
Sokho, Khirbet	6th	chapel?
Susiya, Horvat	6th	synagogue
Tabgha	5th	church
Tiberias, Mt. Berenice	late 6th	church
Tiberias, North synagogue	6th	synagogue
Yaphi'a	6th	synagogue
<i>Gaza Strip</i>		
Gaza-Maiumas	508/9	synagogue
Jabaliyah, ecclesiastic complex:		
• Diakonikon	451	diakonikon
• Baptistry	6th	baptistry
• Church	732	church
<i>Jordan (Palaestina Tertia)</i>		
Petra	c. 550	church

Site	Date Centuries CE	Structure type
<i>Jordan (Arabia)</i>		
Al-Khadir, al-Quwaysmah, Madaba,	6th	church
Al-Quwaysmah, Church of St. Kyriakos		church
Anastasius, Bostra,	6th	chapel
Apostles church, Madaba	578	church
Baptistry Chapel, Siyagha, Memorial of Moses, Mt. Nebo	597	chapel
Bishop Sergius, Umm al-Rasas	587/88	church
Burnt Palace, Madaba	6th	mansion
Cathedral chapel, Gerasa	6th	chapel
Church of the Lions, Umm al-Rasas	574 or 586, or 589	church
Church of the Palm Tree, Umm al-Rasas	6th	church
Church of the Rivers, Umm al-Rasas	579 or 594	church
Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo	6th	church
Elias, Maria, Soreg, Gerasa	6th	church
Esbu, North Church	6th	church
Gerasa synagogue	530/531	synagogue
Hippolytus Hall, Madaba	6th	mansion
Kaianus, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo, lower	early 6th	church
upper	6th	
Khirbat al-Kursi, Philadelphia	6th	chapel
Khirbat al-Samra	634	church
Madaba map	mid-6th	church
Ma'in, Acropolis church	719/20	church
Martyr Theodore, Madaba	562	chapel
Massuh, Esbu, upper church	5th	church
New Baptistry chapel, Memorial of Moses basilica Mt. Nebo	late 6th	chapel
Old Diakonikon Baptistry, Memorial of Moses, Mt. Nebo, lower mosaic	530	church
Peter & Paul, Gerasa	540	church
Priest John, Khirbat al-Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo, lower mosaic	late 5th–	chapel
upper mosaic	565	
Priest Wa'il, Umm al-Rasas	586	church
Qam	6th	chapel
Sts. Cosmas and Damianus, Gerasa	533	church
St. George, Khirbat al-Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo	535-6	church
St. John the Baptist, Gerasa	531	church
St. Paul, Umm al-Rasas	6th	church
St. Stephen, Umm al-Rasas	717/8 or 785	church
Sts. Lot & Procopius, Khirbat al-Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo,	557	church
Suwayfiah, Philadelphia,	6th	chapel
Theotokos Chapel, 'Ayn al-Kanish re-decoration	late 6th 762	chapel

Site	Date Centuries CE	Structure type
Theotokos Chapel, Siyagha, Memorial of Moses, Mt. Nebo	7th	chapel
Umm al-Manabi	6th	church
Zay al-Gharby	6th	church
Zoara	7th	church
<i>Syria</i>		
'Ain el-bad	6th	church
Antioch, 'Worcester Hunt'	Late 5th	mansion
Antioch (Daphne), Yakto Complex Megalopsychia Hunt	450-460	mansion
Deir es-Sleib		church
Deir el-'Adas	722	church
Houad	568	church
Haouarte south	485/6	church
Haouarte north	486/7 or 501/2	church
Khan Khalde	503 or 506	church
Qum Hartaine	5th-6th	church
Sarrin (Osrhoène)	6th	
Sorân	491, 493	church
Tayibat al-Imam, Hamah	442	church
<i>Lebanon (Phoenicia)</i>		
Jenah	6th	church
Jiyé	5th-6th	
Qabr Hiram	575	church
Zaharani I, first annex	524	church
Zaharani II, second annex	535	church



a



b

ΕΠΙΤΟΥ
 ΘΕΩΦΙΑ
 ΣΤΑΤΟΥ
 ΚΑΙΑΦΙ
 ΜΤΑΤΟΥ
 ΕΠΙΚΟΤΟΥ
 ΗΜΟΝΗΑΤ
 ΚΙΑΝΟΥΣ
 ΕΙΩΤΕΦ

VII.10 Jabalyah Diakonikon mosaic pavements: a. nave; b. panel.



VII.11 Hunter on foot with spear or a lance combating a beast: a. Tiberias, Mt. Berenice church upper mosaic; b. el- Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin; c. Chapel of the Martyr Theodore, Cathedral, Madaba; d. el Hammam, Beth She'an, two scenes; e. Old Diakonikon lower mosaic, Siyaga. Memorial of Moses, Mt. Nebo; f. Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo; g. Sts. Lot and Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo.



a



b



c



d

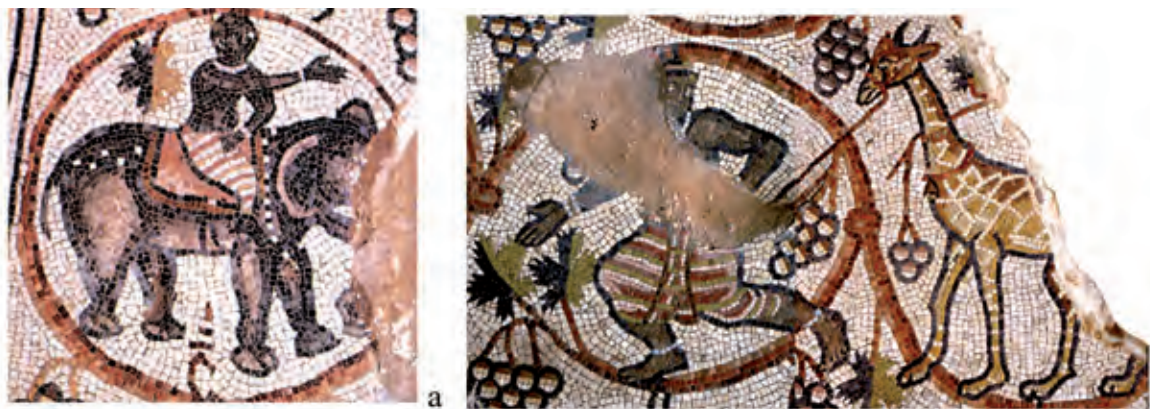
VII.12 Hunter/soldier on foot with shield: a. Kissufim; b. Beth She'an Monastery, Room L; c. Old Diakonikon lower mosaic, Siyaga. Memorial of Moses, Mt. Nebo; d. Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo.



VII.13 Mounted hunter: a. Kissifim; b. el- Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin; c. Old Diakonikon lower mosaic, Siyaga. Memorial of Moses, Mt. Nebo; d. Chapel of the Martyr Theodore, Cathedral, Madaba.



VII.14 Feline with cub: a. Gaza synagogue; b. Jabaliyah diakonikon; c. Kissufim church; d. Ma'on-Nirim synagogue; e. Tiberias, Mt. Berenice church upper mosaic.



VII.15 Presentation of animals for public display: a. Be'er Shem'a, two episodes; c. Beth She'an Monastery, Room L; d. Old Diakonikon lower mosaic, Siyaga. Memorial of Moses, Mt. Nebo.



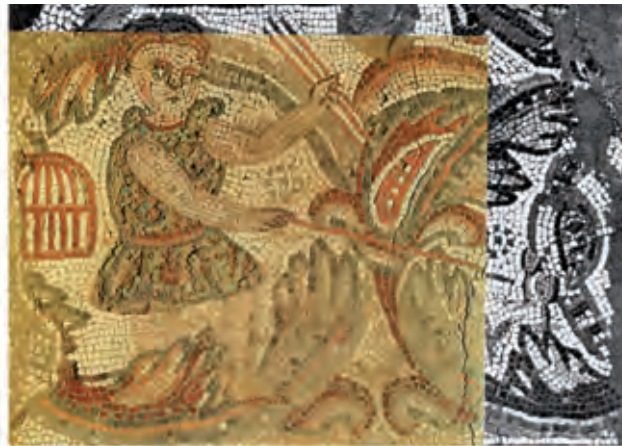
VII.16 Shepherd: a. Be'er Shem'a; b. el Hammam, Beth She'an; c. el- Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin; d. Beth She'an Monastery, Room L; e. Petra; f. Deacon Thomas, 'Uyun Musa, Mt. Nebo; g. Lot and Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mt. Nebo; h. Suwayfiya; i. Old Diakonikon lower mosaic, Siyaga. Memorial of Moses, Mt. Nebo.



VII.17 Women, men depicted in daily life and rural activities: a. Be'er Shem'a, two episodes; b. Beth 'Alpha border; c-d. Jabaliyah diakonikon, two episodes, one episode on panel; e. Petra Church, three scenes.



VII.18 Figure leading camel: a. Kissufim; b. Be'er Shem'a; c. Petra; d. Suwayfiyah.



a



b



c

VII.19 Fowling: a. Nahariah; b. Jabaliyah diakonikon; c. Petra, south aisle.



a



b



c

VII.20 Fishing: a. Beth Loya, two episodes; b. Sepphoris, Nile Festival building; c. Petra church, south aisle, two scenes.



VIII.1 a. Country: Aigyptos, Nile Festival building, Sepphoris; b. The Ocean, Petra Church, south aisle: B6-7.



VIII.2 Seasons: a. Caesarea: Spring, Winter; b. el Maqerqesh, Beth Guvrin; c. Petra church, south aisle (B2,8,14,17).

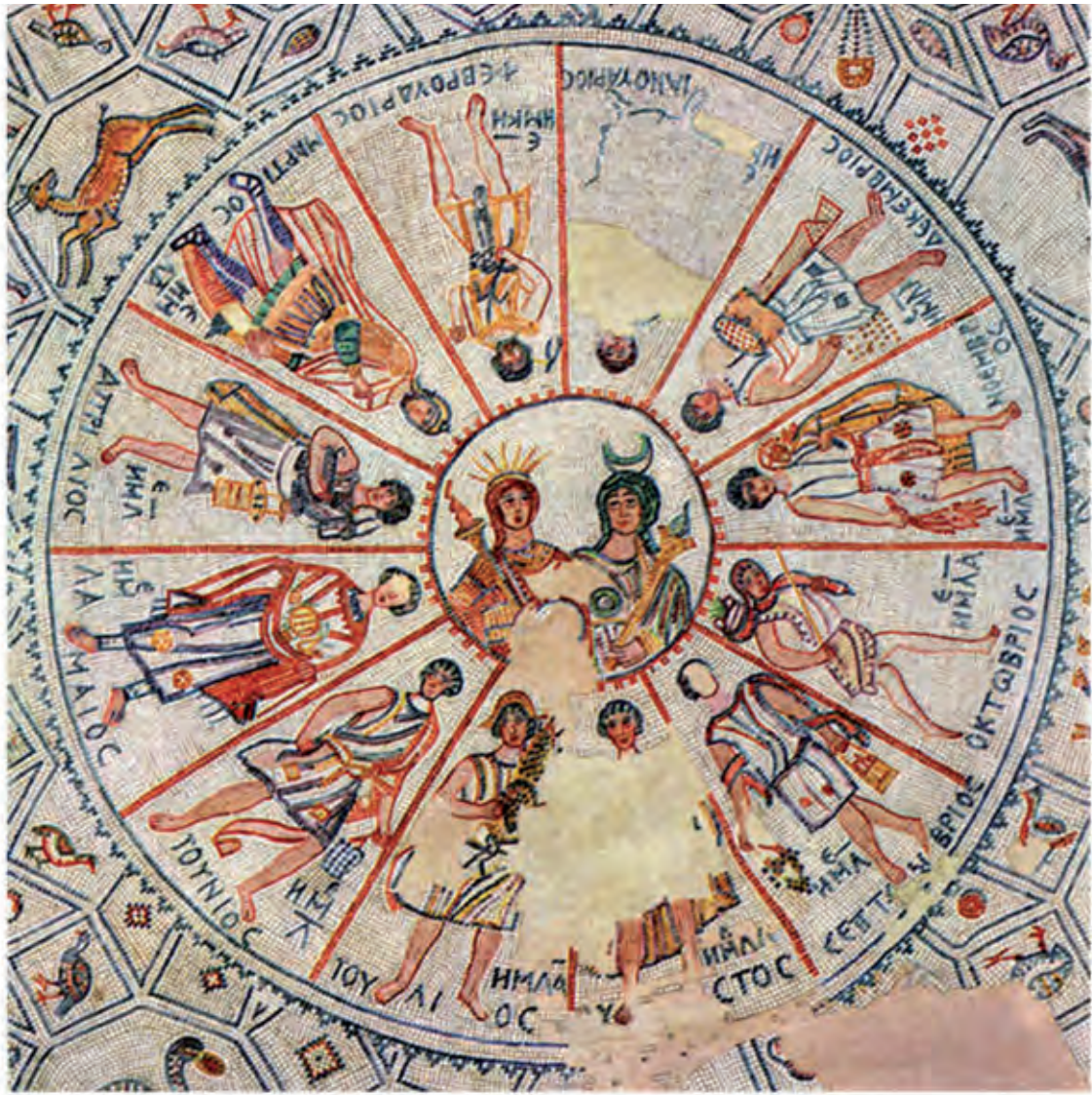


a



b

VIII.3 El Hammam, Beth She'an narthex: a. Five surviving months; b. Spring.

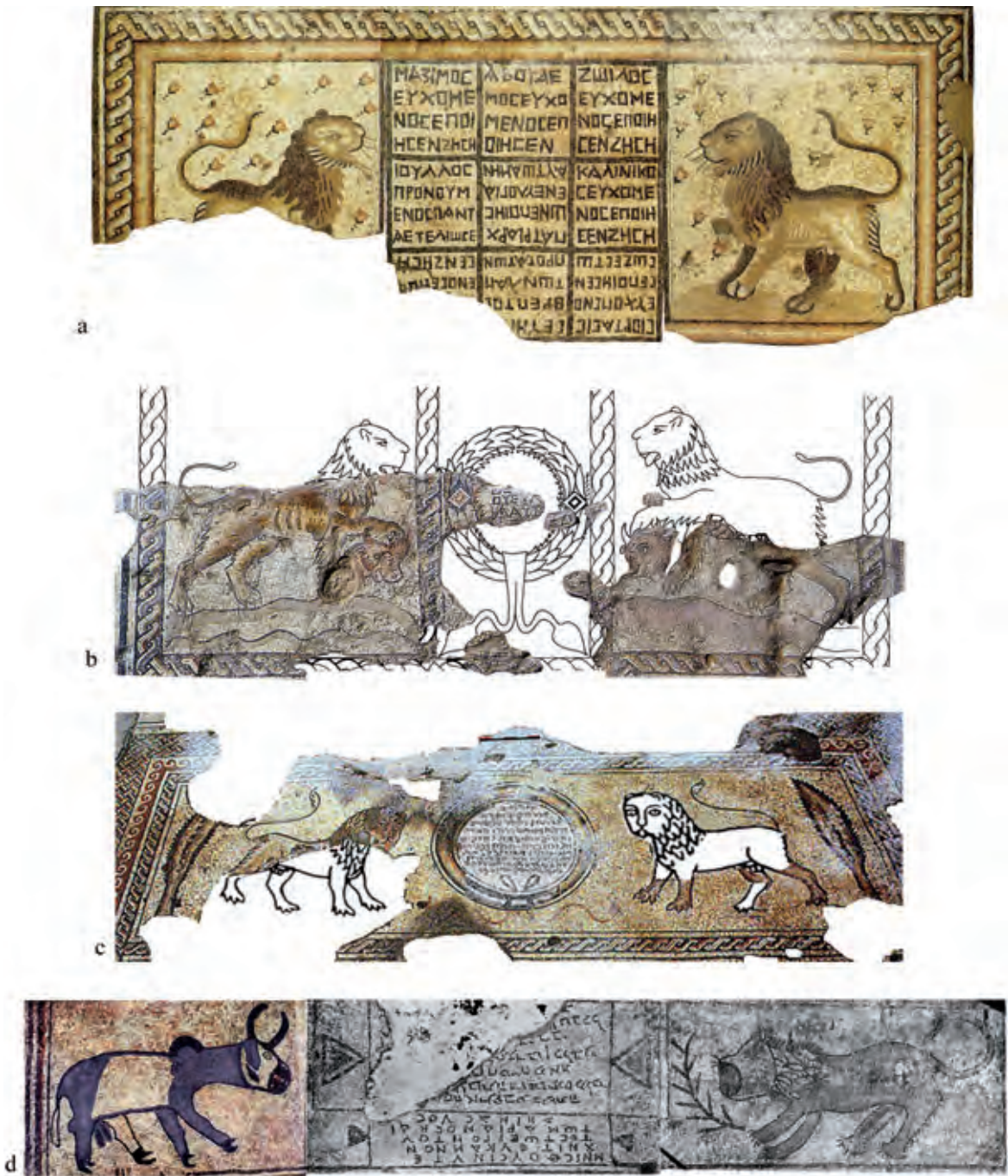


a



b

VIII.4 Beth She'an monastery, Hall A: a. months; b. Sun and Moon.



IX.1 Lions flanking inscriptions on synagogue pavements: a. Hammath Tiberias; b. Sepphoris; c. Hammath Gader; d. Beth 'Alpha.



a



b



c

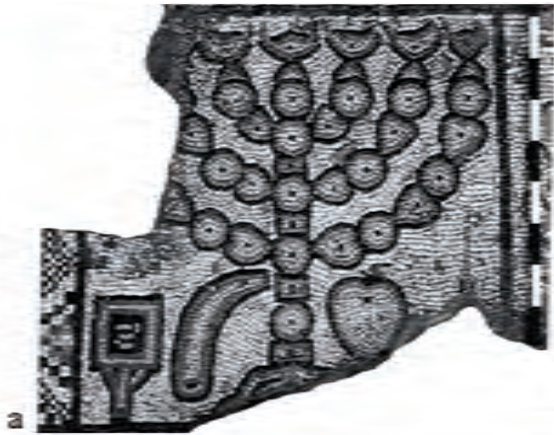


d

IX.2 Flanking birds: a. Beth Shean, small synagogue, guinea-fowl flanking a vase and inscription; b. Kursi-birds flanking basket; c. Nahariya, peacocks flanking amphora; d. Mamshit, peacocks flanking vase.



IX.3 Animals in a diagonal design: Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius, Mukhayyat, Mount Nebo.



IX.4 a. Huseifa, unidentical menoroth flanking an inscription; b. 'En Gedi, birds emblem nave mosaic.



a



b



c

X.1 a. Na'aran synagogue gazelles; b. Beth Loya border; c. Kursi basilica southern aisle.



X.2 Susiya synagogue: a. panel Torah shrine; b. surviving fragments the zodiac; c. surviving fragments of Daniel.



X.3 The nave mosaic of the 6th century Chapel of Theotokos in Wadi 'Ayn al-Kanish, Mt. Nebo.



X.4 Jabaliyah church, north aisle.



a



b

XI.1a,b a. Ma'on-Nirim synagogue, menorah flanked by lions; b. Beth She'an small synagogue central medallion after restoration.



XI.2 Crosses on mosaic pavements: a-b. Shavei-Zion; c. Hippos-Sussita, North-East church; d-e. Hazor-Ashdod; f. Ozem.



a

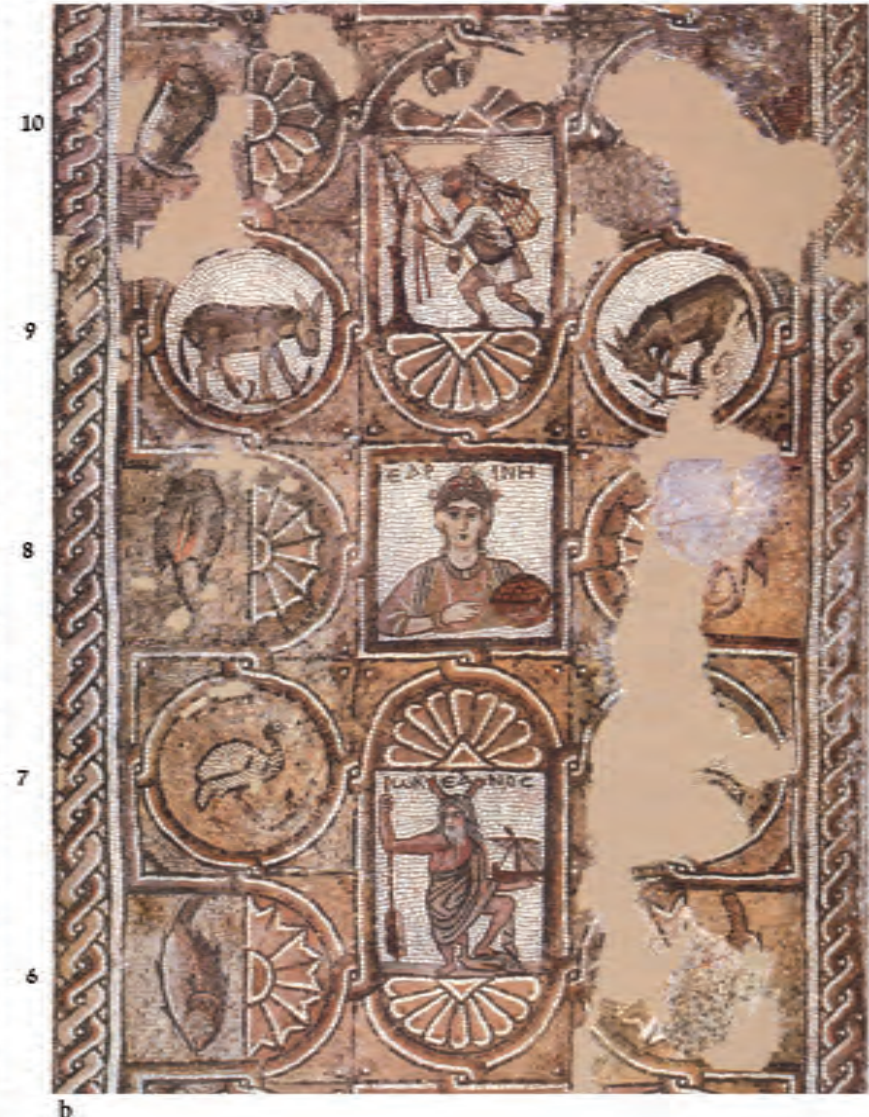


b

XI.3 Portraits of donors: a. Kissufim; b. Jerusalem, the Orpheus mosaic, lower panel.



XI.4 Tabgha, Church of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes (pavement behind altar) a basket with loaves flanked by a pair of fishes.



XII.1-2 Petra Church, South Aisle mosaic pavement.





XII.3 Petra Church: Similarities between Mosaics I and II.



a



b



c

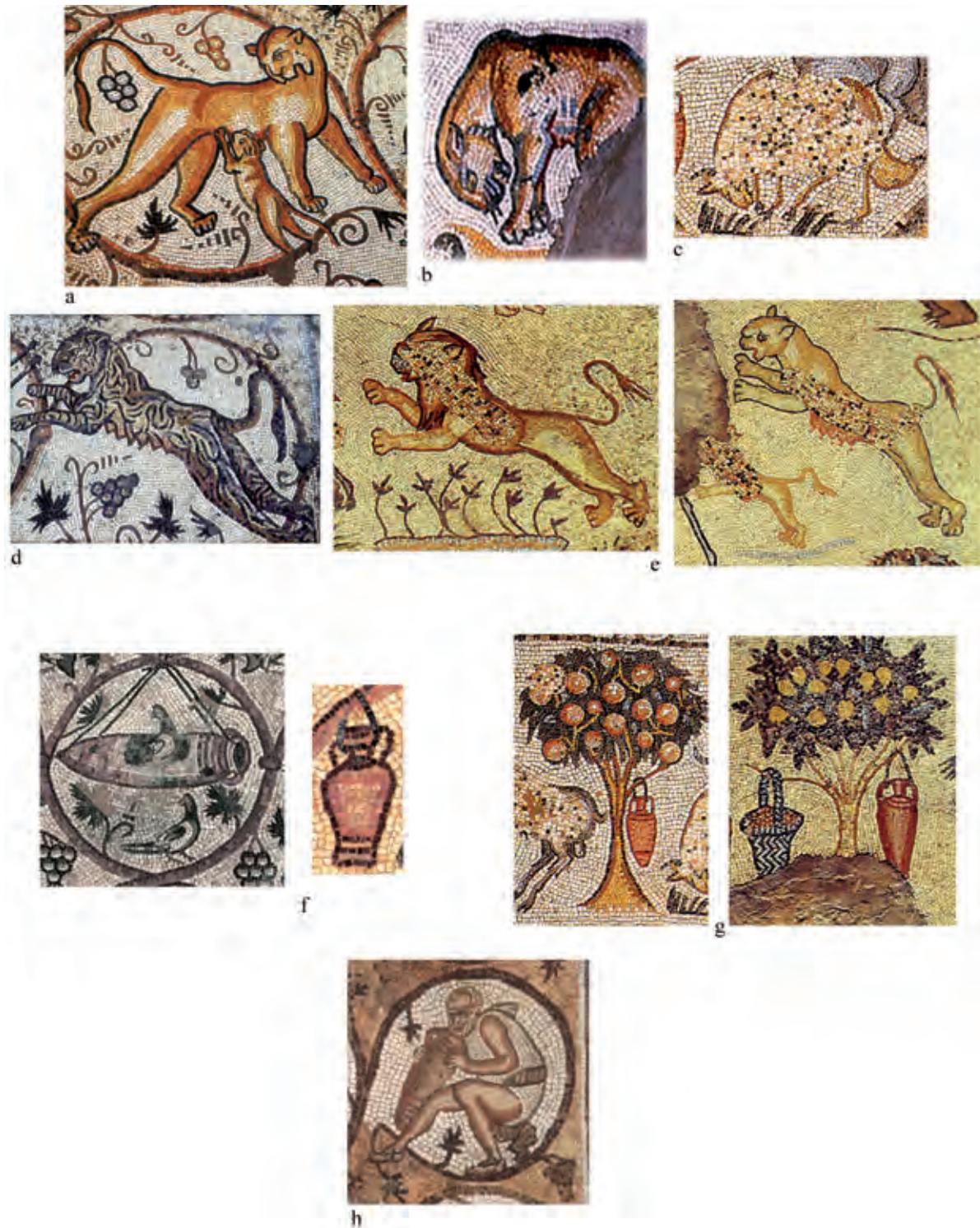


d

XII.4 Beth Leontis, Beth She'an: a. upper and b. central mosaic panels, birds; c. birds, Beth She'an small synagogue border pavement; d. bird, H. Brachot.



XII.5 Similarities between leaves and bunches of grapes: a. Beth She'an synagogue v; b. Beth She'an Monastery, Room L; c. Ma'on synagogue v; d. Be'er Shem'a church.



XII.6 Similarities between animals: a-b. Gaza synagogue; c. Jabaliyah Diakonikon; d. Gaza synagogue; e. Jabaliyah Diakonikon. The Gaza amphora; f. Be'er Shem'a church; g. Jabaliyah Diakonikon, two scenes; h. Petra church.



XII.7 Giraffes depicted on mosaic pavements: a. Gaza synagogue; b. Be'er Shem'a; c. Be'er Shev'a church; d. Kissufim; e-f. Beth She'an Monastery, Room L and Hall A; g. Petra church.



XII.8 Similarities between animals on the Ma'on synagogue and Be'er Shem'a church mosaics.

GLOSSARY

<i>Aedicula</i>	Stone structure housing the Ark.
Aniconic art	The absence of representations of humans and animals in art.
Apse	Semi-circular recess in a synagogue or church building.
Ark of the Scrolls	Chest housing the Torah scrolls.
Dado	Finish to the lower part of the walls of a room made to imitate a pedestal or other architectural feature such as tiling.
Chiaroscuro	Dark line with dentils on a light background
Emblema	A panel prepared separately and integrated into the mosaic, sometimes in the centre.
Ethrog	Citron fruit, a ritual object.
Frontality	Form of artistic presentation in which human figures in a composition are oriented toward the observer and not related to each other.
<i>Halakha</i>	Accepted decisions in rabbinical law.
<i>Horror vacui</i>	Ornament filling all available space.
Isocephaly	Principle observed in ancient art, of representing the heads of all the figures at nearly the same level.
Lulav	Palm branch, a ritual object.
Menorah	Seven-armed candelabrum.
<i>Midrash</i>	Rabbinical biblical commentaries using a scriptural interpretation method.
<i>Miqveh</i>	Ritual bath.
<i>Mishna (M)</i>	Collection of binding precepts which forms the basis of the Talmud and embodies the contents of the oral law. Compiled by Rabbi Judah Hanasi, probably at Sepphoris, c. 200 CE.
Nilometer	A structure built to measure the height of the Nile's flood.
<i>Oceus</i>	Main reception room in Hellenistic and Roman houses.
<i>Opus Sectile</i>	Floors made of coloured stone tiles forming geometric designs.
<i>Quadriga</i>	A chariot drawn by four horses
Shewbread table	One of the three ritual objects placed in the Temple sanctuary.
Shofar	Ram's horn, a ritual object.
<i>Talmud (T)</i>	Body of Jewish traditional law consisting of the Mishna and the Gemara. Two editions exist, the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud.
<i>Targum</i>	Aramaic translation and paraphrasing of portions of the bible, committed to writing from about 100 CE onwards.
Tessera	A cubic stone or glass creating the mosaic base
Torah shrine	An architectural structure either an aedicula, niche or apse, containing the Ark of the Scrolls.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ACR</i>	<i>Ancient Churches Revealed</i> . Tsafir, Y. (ed.). Jerusalem. 1993
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang Römischer der Welt</i>
<i>ASR</i>	<i>Ancient Synagogues Revealed</i> . Levine L.I. (ed.). Jerusalem 1981
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Cahiers Archéologiques</i>
<i>CAHL</i>	<i>Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land New Discoveries</i> . G.C. Bottini, L. Di Segni, and E. Alliata (eds.). Jerusalem 1990
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>Eretz Israel</i>
<i>HA</i>	<i>Hadashot Arkheologiot</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>JAC</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JFA</i>	<i>Journal of Field Archaeology</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JPOS</i>	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSQ</i>	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LMGR</i>	<i>La Mosaique Gréco-Romaine</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

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