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### **Greece and Rome in the Near East: General Aspects, Problematic and State of Research in Ancient Israel – Introductory Paper**

The main issue proposed in this session is the presentation of several aspects of two great general concepts commonly termed as 'Hellenization' and 'Romanization'<sup>1</sup> in the Land of Israel as reflected by archaeological, epigraphic and artistic material revealed in the past years. The impact of Greek and Roman civilizations in the Land of Israel has a special character mainly due to the encounter with the strictly anti-iconographic and monotheistic minded Jewish culture<sup>2</sup>. Ancient Israel was in fact included into the frame of the Greek world during and after the conquest of the East by Alexander the Great even if many signs of 'pre-Hellenistic Hellenism' could be notified in this geographical area and dealt with during the past years<sup>3</sup>. The Greek, and later on, the Roman impact on the region became evident by urbanism, architecture and artistic activities reflecting social, economic and cultural changes following Classical principles. This paper tends to present the architectural changes through the Hellenistic and Roman periods in the Land of Israel including some artistic aspects as well. We forward a few words in favor of the precedence of architectural activity during the pre-Hellenistic periods as a comparative basis for the examination of the Hellenistic, and then Roman cultural penetration against the background of the latter. Thus, for instance, from the period of King David onwards an intensive building activity, architectural decoration included, seems to have been controlled mainly by the Phoenicians. While Lebanese cedar and cypress for the Temple of Solomon, which were provided by King Hiram of Tyre, were shipped along the coast to Jaffa and from there to Jerusalem, stone, we are told by the Bible, was quarried in the vicinity of Jerusalem<sup>4</sup>. One of the greatest achievements of Israelite stone architecture was the creation of the Proto-Aeolic capital, which had an impact on the further development of Classical architectural decoration<sup>5</sup>. Later on, the famous ivories of the Palace of Ahab (869-850 B.C.E.) at Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, are particularly worthy of mention. Two small crouching roaring lions carved in the round represent outstanding examples of an iconographic art mainly determined by the Phoenicians. The fact that Ahab's wife Jezebel was the daughter of the King of Sidon obviously strengthened these ties<sup>6</sup>. Judean reactions were accordingly rather bitter: the Prophet Amos (8th century B.C.E.) complains of the 'ivory beds' and ivory panels adorned with images symbolizing everything that was wrong with the Israelite

<sup>1</sup> For updated and concise articles about these two terms see now *Brill's New Pauly*, s.v. 'Hellenization' and 'Romanization', with references.

<sup>2</sup> For this issue see APPLEBAUM 1989; LEVINE 1999.

<sup>3</sup> This subject is beyond our presentation here, though partly it is subject of O. Tal's contribution to this session; cf. WEINBERG 1976.

<sup>4</sup> 1 *Kings* 6-8; 2 *Chronicles* 2-4; *Ezek.* 40: 1-43: 12.

<sup>5</sup> WESENBERG 1971; SHILOH 1979.

<sup>6</sup> CROWFOOT, CROWFOOT 1938.

society of his time - social injustice and idolatry<sup>7</sup>. For the Persian period, before the conquests of Alexander the Great, little is known concerning architecture and art. It seems, however, that strong Phoenician influences were felt in these fields of activity<sup>8</sup>.

## **I. Hellenistic and Herodian Palestine<sup>9</sup>**

### *1. Architecture and architectural decoration*

With the conquests of Alexander the Great and the foundation of a great number of settlements by Greeks or Hellenized ethnic groups in the region, Ancient Israel entered a new era. The use of architectural and artistic elements following Greek classical and 'Hellenistic' principles now became part of the regular activities carried on both by Gentiles and by basically anti-Greek Jews. Since the greatest share of cities of the Hellenistic period were destroyed either by the Hasmoneans or the Parthians and were extensively rebuilt by Herod the Great, not much was preserved. One of the earliest Hellenistic monuments of the area is the Palace of the Tobiads, the 'Qasr el Abd', at Araq el Amir (Jordan), where the mixing of Classical Orders with local Oriental elements is evident<sup>10</sup>. The same picture can be drawn from the remains of both 'Greek' sites, such as Samaria, Dor, Marissa, Tel Anafa, Tel Ye'oz (Yavneh-Yam) and 'Jewish' sites, such as Jerusalem, Masada, and Jericho<sup>11</sup>.

During this period, the use of ashlar in building became standard. Continuing the older traditions, both Phoenician and Israelite, builders of Hellenistic Palestine improved this technique by adapting it to new elements from Asia Minor or Greece. The walls of Dor or the round tower of Samaria of the third and second centuries B.C.E. and the walls of Sartaba / Alexandreion or Doq (above Jericho) from the time of Alexander Jannaeus are just a few examples. In addition to this, the use of stucco for covering and decorating walls in a pseudo-architectural style also seems to have been adopted during that period, as for example the walls of Tel Anafa<sup>12</sup>. Marble, however, was not used in carrying out those building projects, and, as yet, only a few remains of sculptures are known, as we shall see below.

A real architectural revolution occurred in the Land of Israel during the reign of Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.E.) and his descendants up to the Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. It was a monumental architecture realized according to a combination of local traditions with a strong impact of Hellenistic and Roman principles tending to a somewhat exaggerated monumentality<sup>13</sup>. The most prestigious building project doubtlessly was the construction of the Second Temple at Jerusalem, which was considered a monument comparable with such achievements in the Greco-Roman world<sup>14</sup>. At that time, a grand building program, without precedent in the country, transformed Caesarea (old Straton's Tower), Samaria (becoming now Samaria-Sebaste), Antipatris (old Afeq/Pegae), etc. from ruins or totally neglected sites into flourishing cities. The harbor of Caesarea Maritima was definitely an outstanding logistic and architectural project as emphasized by Flavius Josephus and evidenced by the underwater archaeological project carried out at the site<sup>15</sup>. The main trend of this building phase continued to be the massive use of ashlar for both walls and vaulted structures (such as at Herodium),

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<sup>7</sup> KING 1988, 142–149.

<sup>8</sup> STERN 1982.

<sup>9</sup> For general overviews of the Hellenistic periods see ARAV 1989; KUHNEN 1990; for archaeological sites and bibliographical references see *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land (NEAEHL)* (Ed. Stern, E. a.o.) (Jerusalem and New York 1993); recently updated by Vol. 5 (2008).

<sup>10</sup> WILL ET AL. 1990.

<sup>11</sup> FISCHER, TAL 2003.

<sup>12</sup> GORDON 1979.

<sup>13</sup> Very useful the recently published collection of papers JACOBSON, KOKKINOS 2009; see KASHER, WITZTUM 2007 for an original approach toward a psycho-historical examination of Herod's deeds.

<sup>14</sup> As expressed in the Rabbinic literature, such as BT, Sukkah 51b; BT, Baba Bathra 4a: "He who has not seen the Temple in its full construction has never seen a glorious building in his life...."; Flavius Josephus' descriptions of the Temple are impressive: AJ, XV, 388–420, NIESE, ed., 402–408; *Id.*, BJ, V, 184–237, NIESE, ed., 459–467.

<sup>15</sup> OLESON, RABAN, HOHLFELDER 1989.

which lasted actually until the Late Antique period. The Temple Mount, the Patriarchs' Tombs at Hebron, the remains of Caesarea Philippi, the temples of Caesarea and Samaria-Sebaste and many other structures of this period illustrate this trend. The vitality of Hellenistic royal architecture was now combined with and adapted to the new style which began to be popular under Augustus, yet unlikely the latter marble has not been used in Judaea<sup>16</sup>, except some rudimentary use for *opus sectile*<sup>17</sup> and some minor art fragments such as head of a marble Silen, which was found at Herodium and attributed to the Herodian period<sup>18</sup>. Among different Roman influences in architectural planning and design most strident is the use of *opus reticulatum* – this very typical western Roman technique – by the builders of both Herod's lifetime and his successors, such as at Jericho, Jerusalem, Caesarea Maritima and Caesarea Philippi (Paneas; modern Banias)<sup>19</sup>.

During the Hellenistic and Herodian periods, all three main classical orders were used in Ancient Israel, as was usual in the Mediterranean. Even a strong mixing of orders might be pointed out like in the latter<sup>20</sup>. Only during the Herodian period, can a clear tendency towards the use of the Corinthian style be felt and, moreover, even towards the use of the regular style<sup>21</sup>, as known from the capitals of that time and as told by Flavius Josephus in his account on the Temple, mainly the *basileios stoa*: "the number of all the columns was a hundred-and-sixty-two, and their capitals were ornamented in the Corinthian style of carving, which caused amazement by the magnificence of this whole effect" (ant. XV, 414).

The last stage of architectural activity prior to the long destructive period of 66-135 C.E. belongs to the Jewish-Roman interchange of the 1st century C.E. Besides the activity carried out by Herod's descendants, the creation of the province of Judaea in 6 C.E. gave new impulses, mainly to its 'two' capitals, the political one, Caesarea<sup>22</sup>, and the traditional one, Jerusalem<sup>23</sup>. Josephus also mentions new projects, which meanwhile have been attested also archaeologically, such as the complexes of Paneas (Caesarea Philippi)<sup>24</sup> and the foundation of Tiberias by Herod Antipas<sup>25</sup>. Monumental tombs of Jerusalem, mainly from the Kidron Valley<sup>26</sup> and that of Helen of Adiabene<sup>27</sup>, attest to the last works of architecture and art before the great changes which occurred at the end of the 1st and the beginning of the 2nd centuries C.E.

## 2. Sculpture of Hellenistic Palestine<sup>28</sup>

A priori, figurative sculpture is not to be expected among Jews living in Palestine until the radical changes occurring in their attitude towards the interpretation of the Second Commandment: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image..." (*Exodus* 20: 4, 5; *Deuteronomy* 5: 8, 9). And, in fact, for the periods starting with King David, figurative sculpture was found mainly in aberrant complexes, such as the Phoenician determined Palace of Ahab at Samaria.

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<sup>16</sup> In many cases Josephus Flavius was probably misled by the white shining stucco as applied to walls, since this technique was widely and successfully used by Herodian artisans; see FISCHER, STEIN 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Such as in the bathhouse at Jericho: NETZER 1977, 9, fig.11; for the pavement of the orchestra in the theater at Caesarea see ALBRICCI 1965.

<sup>18</sup> NETZER 1985, fig. p. 85 Interesting to note that the isotopic composition of its marble points to Pentelikon, a marble source which was very popular in Augustan Rome, together with the new re-discovered Carrara quarries!

<sup>19</sup> BEN-ARIEH, NETZER 1974. As for Jericho, the excavator attributes its use to the presence of Roman artisans brought there by Herod, see NETZER 1977.

<sup>20</sup> For Hellenistic period architectural decoration in Palestine see FISCHER, TAL 2003; for Herodian and Early Roman period Jerusalem still invaluable AVIGAD 1954; see also JAPP 2000; LICHTENBERGER 1999; ROLLER 1998.

<sup>21</sup> FISCHER 1990.

<sup>22</sup> See various articles in: JACOBSON, KOKKINOS 2009; LEVINE 1975.

<sup>23</sup> *NEAEHL*, s.v. Jerusalem; ant. 19,7,2; bell. 2,11,6.- It is worthy of mention that later on the suspension of large-scale building activity in Jerusalem resulted in unemployment affecting 18,000 workers! see ant. 20,219-222, cf. SCHALIT 1969, 329, n.64.

<sup>24</sup> Various articles in: WILSON 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Ant. 18,2,3; cf. *NEAEHL* IV, cols. 1171-1177 (G. Foerster).

<sup>26</sup> AVIGAD 1954.

<sup>27</sup> KON 1947.

<sup>28</sup> This subtitle emphasizes the lack of sculptural evidence from Herodian period Palestine, beside some few outstanding examples, such as the marble Silen from Herodium (see above) and mainly a marble cuirassed statue from Samaria-Sebaste. For the latter see below.



Fig. 1 - The Apollonia Totenmahlrelief.

Although we should expect sculptural remains from non-Jewish contexts, only scanty findings have been made for the Persian period Palestine where, in fact, none real valuable sculptural material has been unearthed. One outstanding item is a *Totenmahlrelief* from Apollonia-Arsuf (fig. 1) made of Pentelic marble of the well-known fourth century B.C.E. Attic type<sup>29</sup>.

During the Hellenistic period, Hellenized cities of Palestine probably cultivated 'regular' Greek sculpture, but unfortunately the finds are rather scanty due probably to the heavy Hasmonean destruction aiming mainly such 'artistic' targets. Several inscriptions, which can be related to sculptural activity and some scattered fragments, however, attest to such activity<sup>30</sup>. Beside this, a few examples of some sculptural works could be noted, such as the marble headless male and the *kourotrophos* female torso from Samaria, and the recently discovered marble male figure (a priest?) from 'Akko (Ptolemais)<sup>31</sup>.

An outstanding example, however, is the colossal marble head from Scythopolis (fig. 2), presumably of Alexander the Great. It was unearthed at Tell Beth She'an (Tell el Hosn), not far from the remains of a

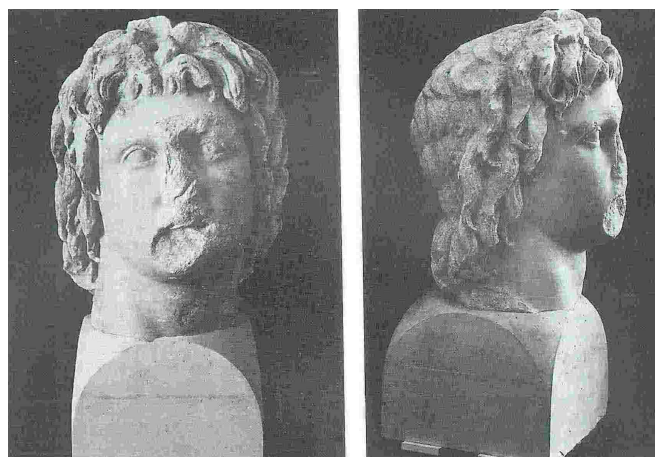


Fig. 2 - The Beth Shean colossal head.

<sup>29</sup> The site of Apollonia-Arsuf lies on the Mediterranean coast of Israel, at a distance of 17 km. north of Joppa (Yafo) and 34 km. south of Caesarea; see FISCHER, TAL 2003, with bibliography.

<sup>30</sup> For a still invaluable review see WENNING 1983.

<sup>31</sup> REISNER ET AL. 1924, I, 383; II, Pls. 76aa, 79g (Samaria); STERN 1991, 104 (Akko).

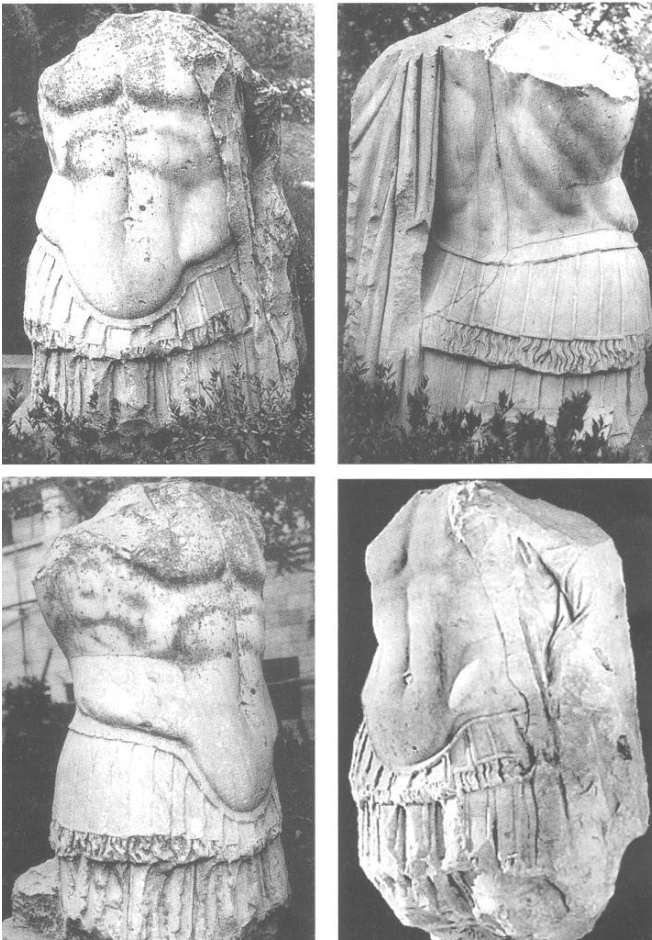


Fig. 3 - The Samaria cuirassed statue.

temple<sup>32</sup>. Other fragments of destroyed sculptural works such as the head of a marble herm from Dor and the fragment of a head of a marble statuette from Yavneh-Yam found in the Hasmonean destruction layer make it rather attractive to link them with the sources referring to Simon the Hasmonean's activity, saying: "[The Maccabees] were removing every pollution purifying the houses in which idols stood" (1 Maccabees 13:47)<sup>33</sup>.

The Herodian architectural 'boom' following the short intermezzo of the gentile revival of Pompeius and Gabinius was carried out in general without the use of figurative sculpture, a fact which is worthy to be noted: no images of the king are known, neither from coins nor from other artifacts; there was no figurative art retrieved from the Herodian complexes at Masada, Jericho or Herodium. Flavius Josephus stresses the anti-ionic attitude of his time (Ap. II, 12; bell. II, 75) but largely describes the use of colossal statues erected in the Temple of Augustus and Roma at Caesarea (bell. I, 21, 7 [414]), which are lost<sup>34</sup>. A real monumental sculptural achievement of this period seems to be that of a headless cuirassed statue of marble discovered by the Harvard University Expedition at the Herodian Augusteum in Samaria-Sebaste (fig. 3), which probably depicted an emperor (Augustus?)<sup>35</sup>. Such a trend lasted also under the king's descendants. Thus,

Josephus mentions that after the death of Herod Agrippas (in 44 C.E.) the Caesarea mob looted "the images of the king's daughters"(ant. 19, 9, 1 [356-357]).

## **II. Roman Palestine: Historical and Architectural Background**

Ancient Israel entered the framework of Roman monumental civic and religious architecture and sculpture, marble industry and marble trade included, after the two Jewish Revolts against the Romans, that of 66-70 C.E. (the First Jewish Revolt) and 132-135 C.E. (the Bar Kokhba Revolt)<sup>36</sup>. During the consolidation of Roman Imperial power under Hadrian the province was reorganized and renamed Syria-Palaestina undergoing

<sup>32</sup> For Beth Shean-Scythopolis sculptural history see ROMANO, FISCHER, forthcoming.

<sup>33</sup> FISCHER 2006.

<sup>34</sup> A rather strange story is that regarding the Golden Eagle required by Herod to be attached to the Temple in Jerusalem (ant. 17,6,1, 149-163; bell. 1, 648-655).

<sup>35</sup> REISNER, FISHER, LYON 1924, I, 176, Nr. 210A; II, Pl. 79e-f; see FISCHER 1998, 159, Nr. 182 (wrongly dated to the Severan period); correct dating by FITTSCHEN 2002; for an interpretation of this statue within the context of Herod's pro-Roman policy see now WEBER 2008. It is worthwhile mentioning that the marble of this item has been identified as originated in Carrara, which would shed a further light on the relationships between Herod and Augustan Rome. My thanks are going to Professor Norman Herz (University of Athens/Georgia) who was the first to identify the origin of this marble with the Carrara quarries.

<sup>36</sup> AVI-YONAH 1984.

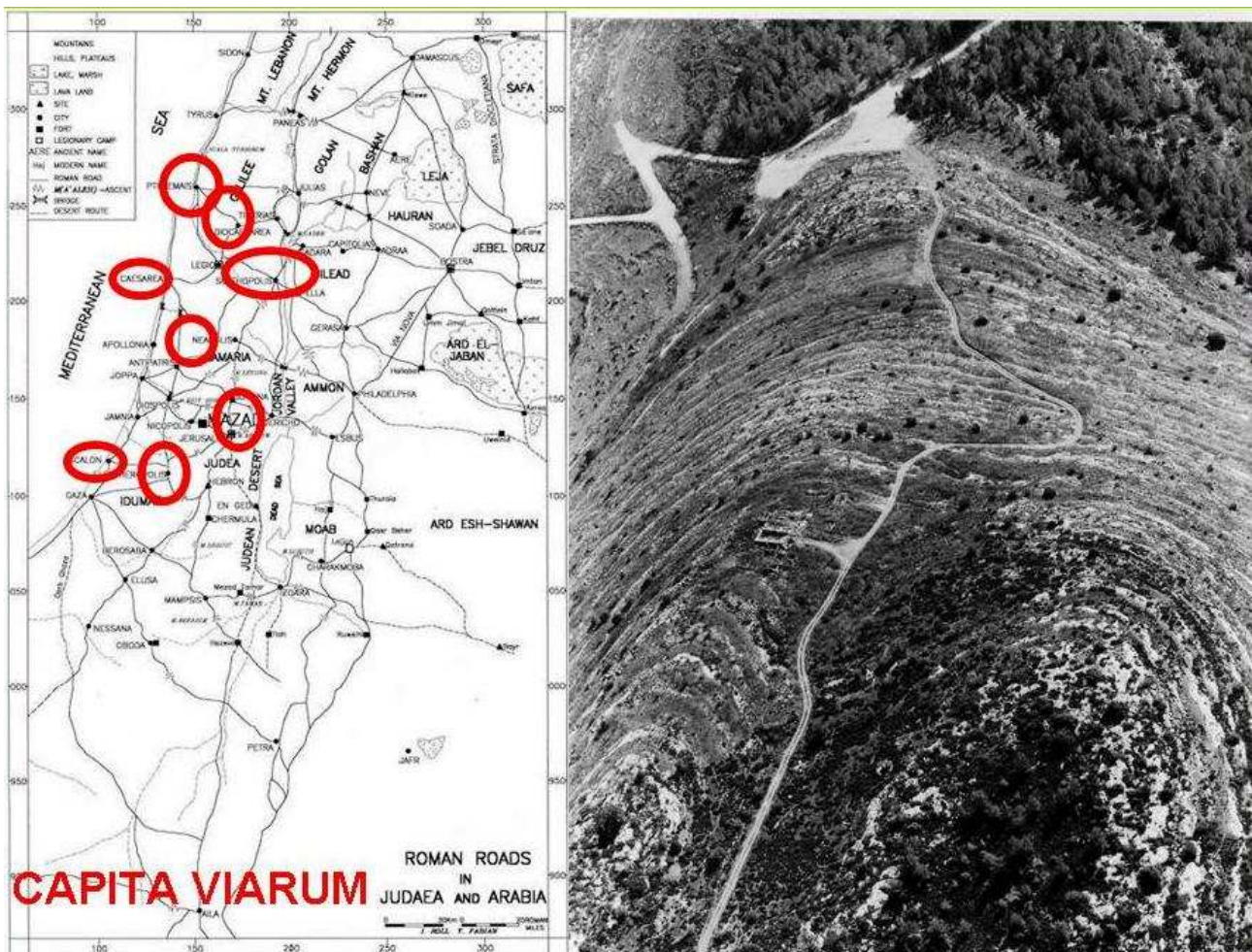


Fig. 4 - Map of Roman Palestine with capita viarum and air view of the Emmaus-Jerusalem road.

changes in almost all domains of life, through the Antonines with its peak under the Severans<sup>37</sup>. During the Severan period all these changes were officialized, some towns even obtained city-status, and the status of others was upgraded. In fact, monumental architecture and artistic activity carried out according to Hellenistic and Roman principles was not new to Palestine, since it was introduced in this area already by Herod's the Great building program in the second half of the first century B.C.E.

The new architectural concept was based on civic centers including the 'forum and basilica' concept, often with a temple replacing earlier ones (in our case, mainly Herodian). Theaters have been identified/unearthed in the majority of Palestinian main towns. *Thermae, palaestrae* and aqueducts became regular parts of the latter, as well as amphitheatres and hippodromes<sup>38</sup>. A network of roads based on *capita viarum* including milestones and road-installations (fig. 4) linked all the cities of the country reflecting the impact the Imperial way of life had on Palestine<sup>39</sup>. These changes affected not only the pagan inhabitants, apparently the only ones interested in Roman stability, but it seems that to a certain degree this stability was more or less equally enjoyed by the Jewish and Samaritan inhabitants, at least those living in larger cities and within the limits of political fluctuations and intermittent crises. Some of the Talmudic sources reflecting this period shed a light on

<sup>37</sup> MILLAR 1993.

<sup>38</sup> SEGAL 1995.

<sup>39</sup> Emphasized by various case studies regarding the road system in Roman Palestine and its social impact such as FISCHER, ISAAC, ROLL 1996.

such attitudes. Perhaps the most famous one is that debating the advantages and disadvantages of the 'Roman way of life' against the background of Jewish Palestinian society:

*R. Jehudah, R. Jose, and R. Simeon were sitting and Jehudah, the son of proselytes, sat before them. R. Jehudah opened the conversation, saying: "How beautiful are the works of this nation (the Romans). They have established markets, they have built bridges, they have opened bathing-houses." R. Jose said nothing, but R. Simeon b. Johai said: "All these things they have instituted for their own sake. Their markets are gathering-places for harlots; they have built baths for the purpose of indulging themselves in their comforts; they have built bridges to collect tolls from those who cross them."* (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 33b; after Epstein ed.)

One of the main characteristics of this monumental architecture was the use of imported stones, such as granite mainly used for columns imported from the Troad, and marble, mainly for decorative purposes, in some cases, however, even for tectonic components (bases, columns). Since no natural sources of marble are located in Palestine it is obvious that marble had to be imported, it seems from the whole spectrum of quarries from all over the Mediterranean as demonstrated by both petrographic and isotopic examinations. Thus, architectural details, revetment slabs, statues, sculptures and sarcophagi were imported to Palestine. This was one type of linkage with the Imperial system<sup>40</sup>.

### 1. Marble Architecture and Sculpture in Roman Palestine

Roman Palestine underwent a real urban revolution after the Jewish revolts: Caesarea<sup>41</sup>, Ascalon<sup>42</sup>, Scythopolis<sup>43</sup>, Sepphoris<sup>44</sup>, Eleutheropolis<sup>45</sup>, Aelia Capitolina<sup>46</sup> and many other cities became now peripheric centers imitating the main centers of the Empire. This development included the use of the same building types – reflecting the same social needs – and similar architectural design and décor.

Marble statues and sculptures are found at a great number of sites of Roman Palestine following the changes occurring there in the second and third centuries C.E., as described above.

Among them the main harbor cities of Ascalon and Caesarea, as well as some inland cities such as Samaria-Sebaste and Beth Shean-Scythopolis played an important role both in using and diffusing marble sculpture. On the other side in Palestine, an independent school of art did not develop after the Hellenistic period, so that we may expect a sculpture depending almost completely on imports of copies or, at most, the finishing of such copies. These are, with very few exceptions, not real replicas of famous Greek statues. Perhaps the lost colossal statues of Augustus, imitating the Olympian Zeus and that of Roma, copying the Hera of Argos, which adorned the temple of Augustus and Roma erected by King Herod at Caesarea were the single opera nobilia of Palestine. In addition to these, there are some statues having much in common with rather famous prototypes, without being real copies of them, for example: the Zeus of Gaza (fig. 5), the

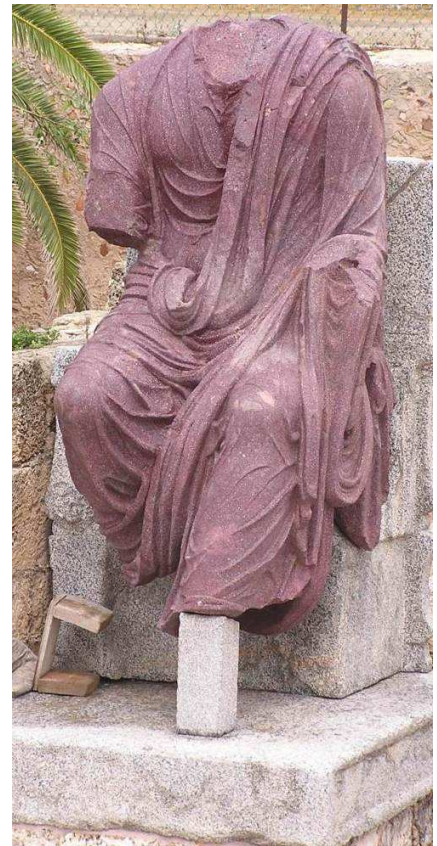


Fig. 5 - The Caesarea porphyry statue of Hadrian.

<sup>40</sup> For this issue see FISCHER 1998.

<sup>41</sup> Among many publications of the Caesarea archaeological activities a good overview could be found in the *Caesarea Papers* (supplements of *JRA*), and RABAN, HOLM 1996.

<sup>42</sup> STAGER 1991; for the Ascalon basilica see FISCHER 1995.

<sup>43</sup> TSAFRIR, FOERSTER 1997; for selected buildings from Roman time recently published see MAZOR, ARFAN 2007.

<sup>44</sup> MEYERS, NETZER, MEYERS 1992; recently among many others: WEISS 2005 (with further bibliography for the last years' archaeological activities).

<sup>45</sup> A first volume of archaeological reports recently published: AVNI, DAHARI, KLONER 2008.

<sup>46</sup> For a good overview, see s.v. Jerusalem, *NEAEHL*; recently ELIAV 2005.

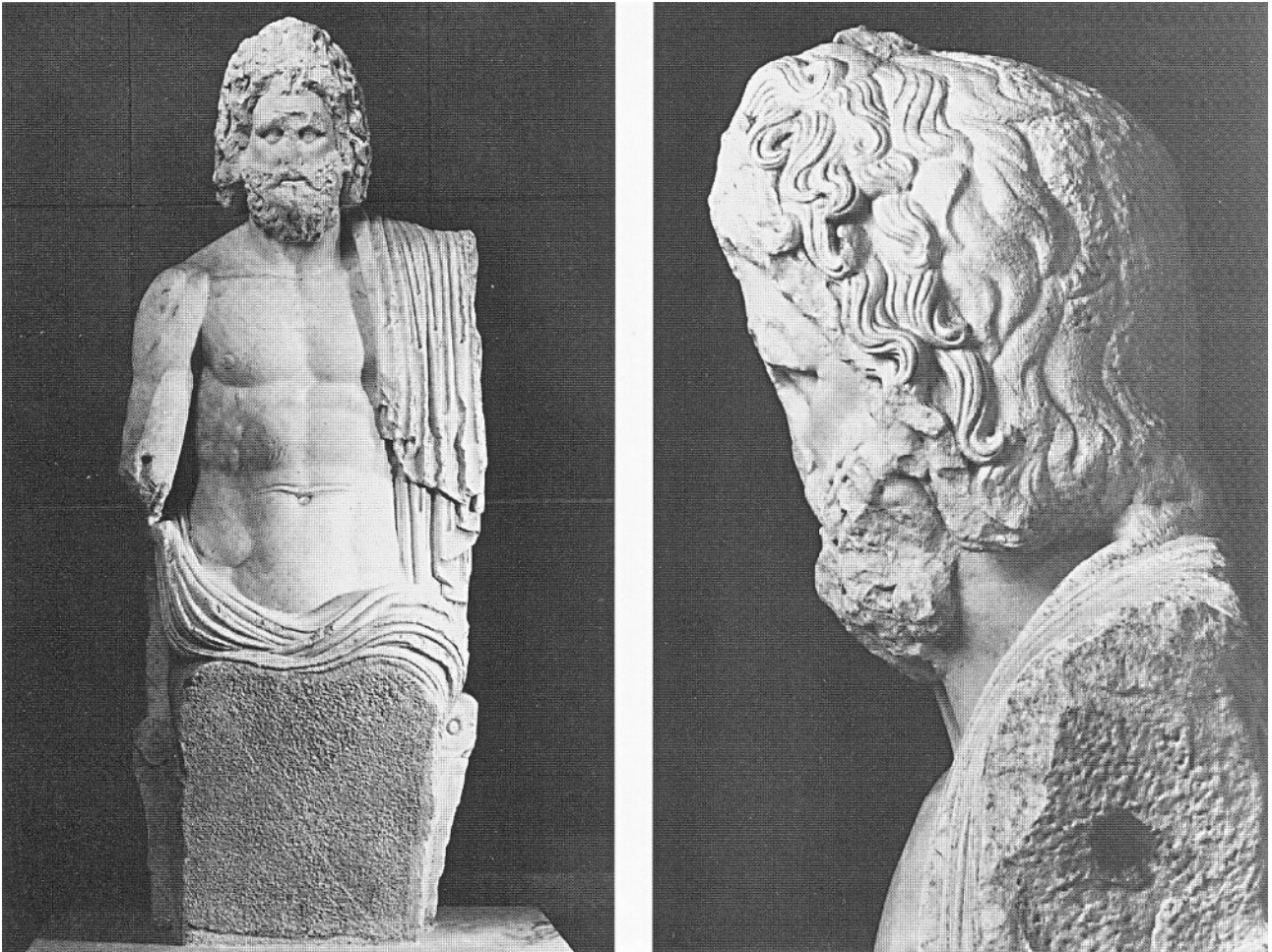


Fig. 6 - Statue of Zeus from Gaza.

porphyry statue of Hadrian from Caesarea (fig. 6), the Crouching Aphrodite of Ascalon and Caesarea and others. On the other hand, adaptations of prototypes for local purposes are evident, such as the Amazon or Fortuna representing the Tyche of Caesarea. Nevertheless, the examination of items and their tentative attribution to original structures follow the same principles as were usual for Roman sculpture. It seems likely that the customary employment and location of sculpture in Roman Palestine were similar to those in other parts of the Empire.

About 40% of the marble sculpture of the Roman period recorded in Israel originated in Caesarea. Since Caesarea was founded by Herod as a new city, and the Emperor's cult was from the beginning propagated as the main cult, it seems likely that sculptures were created for the purposes of this cult. Oxyrhynchus Papyrus No. 1380 ('The Invocation of Isis'), lines 93-99, mentions the worship of Isis at Caesarea<sup>47</sup>. The lack of traditional gods was compensated at Caesarea by the Imperial cult, which was strongly emphasized. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to state that a part of the varied pantheon of gods represented at Caesarea should be attributed to the Imperial cult. Although ca. 25% of Caesarean sculptures may be identified as representations of gods<sup>48</sup>, since all are headless it is difficult to state whether they were cult-statues and thus reflect the cults worshipped at Caesarea. The following gods are depicted: Aphrodite, Apollo, Artemis, Asclepius, Athena, Hygeia, Isis, Kybele, Mithras, Serapis and Tyche. In fact, only two temples have been identified at Caesarea: the

<sup>47</sup> GRENFELL, HUNT 1915.

<sup>48</sup> GERSHT 1987, 138.



Temple of Augustus and Roma erected at the foundation of the city by Herod and unearthed in the early sixties<sup>49</sup> and the Late Roman *Mithraeum*, which was set up in one of the southern warehouses of the Herodian harbor<sup>50</sup>. On the other hand, we have some indications of the existence of a *Hadrianeum*<sup>51</sup> and a *Tibereum*, as revealed by the well known inscription of Pontus Pilatus<sup>52</sup>. As for the *Hadrianeum*, Avi-Yonah's identification of the large porphyry statue as the Emperor Hadrian makes it likely that it was the cult-statue of this temple. The cult statues of Augustus and Roma are lost, but signs of the Imperial cult may be seen in connection with statues of Tyche of the Amazon type<sup>53</sup>.

Oriental gods are represented at Caesarea, as was usual throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. Partly because of their origin and history, these gods were better received in the East than in other regions, but we should remember that they are represented as Hellenized or even Romanized deities. The only one which could be identified was the *Mithraeum*, represented by its cult-object, the marble-medallion depicting a Mithraic scene. The outstanding statue of Artemis Ephesia, however, seems also to have been connected with the Ephesians, who were scattered throughout the Empire and as such were presumably also active at Caesarea. A great share of the statues and sculptures found at Caesarea obviously decorated the theater, where they were discovered: muses, deities, masks, etc. Frequently they do in fact match the character of the buildings they adorn, but often it appears, however, that they were not intended to fulfill a programmatic plan<sup>54</sup>.

## 2. Sculptural types and their location

### *Civic centers*

The forum and its adjacent structures represented the main location of statues in a Roman city<sup>55</sup>. At present, however, the only example from Roman Palestine is the basilica of Ascalon. Here the upper storey of the façade of the doorways between the central hall of the basilica and its apse were embellished with four figured pilasters representing *Victoriae* and Isi-Tyche in high relief and ranging to a height of 3,60 m<sup>56</sup>. It seems likely that in continuation of the policy of furthering the Imperial and civic idea that started with Augustus, cities of the Empire used their civic centers as a demonstration of loyalty by displaying sculptures reflecting the ideology of the principate and portraying the *princeps*, personifications of his political program or outstanding citizens<sup>57</sup>.

A special place was given in Roman cities to the Imperial cult<sup>58</sup>, even if sometimes this has been overestimated. In any case, cuirassed statues, nude statues, large civilian statues dressed in abundant togas and colossal statues have been often referred to the main sculptural repertoire of Imperial cult.

Tyche represented the city's essential elements as linked with the Imperial power: at Ascalon, Isi-Tyche is probably connected with other representations of Imperial victory. At Caesarea, the representation of diverse types of Tyche doubtlessly signifies the varied beliefs associated with the cult of Tyche. As already mentioned, this goddess was very often portrayed on coins and gems. Her representation as both patron of the city and its harbor and, by holding a protome of the Emperor, reflection of the linkage with the Empire and its main cult, are relevant as well. A statue of Tyche unearthed at Scythopolis may be added to the list of sculptural representations of this goddess<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> BJ I, 21, 7 (414); LEVINE 1975, 19; RINGEL 1975, 40–2.

<sup>50</sup> BULL 1974.

<sup>51</sup> LEVINE 1975, 21–22; RINGEL 1975, 44–45. Another Hadrianeum was probably erected at Tiberias, at least according to Christian sources and coins.

<sup>52</sup> FROVA 1965, 217–220; see also LEVINE 1975, 20–21.

<sup>53</sup> FISCHER 1991, no. 4, with further references.

<sup>54</sup> Reminding Cicero's famous almost hopeless question, "Bacchis vero ubi est apud me locus?" (*Ad Familiares* VII 23,2).

<sup>55</sup> ZIMMER 1989, 52.

<sup>56</sup> The basilica of Ascalon is presented below in more detail.

<sup>57</sup> Following ZIMMER 1989, 52–53; cf. ZANKER 1988; ZANKER 1987.

<sup>58</sup> PRICE 1984, 156–162; 181–188; STEMMER 1978, 147–148.

<sup>59</sup> That at Scythopolis the image of Tyche was of enduring significance is evident from her fine representation in the mosaic pavement of a Byzantine house, see *Archaeological Newsletter* 91, 10, fig. 8.

## Temples

The evidence for the attribution of sculptures to temples is rather scanty. However, sculptures of gods found in Palestine may be tentatively attributed to them. Their identification must be based on their depiction in both architectural decoration and coins and gems.

## Theaters

In the Roman Near East, theaters often represented the most elaborated buildings of the cities<sup>60</sup>. They served as 'exhibition' centers, both for official cults, the Imperial cult included, and artistic representations of subjects related to the Greek and Roman theatre itself. The two main theaters excavated until now in Israel, namely those of Caesarea and Scythopolis, were richly decorated with sculptures of all kinds, as is evident from the material presented above. Both architectural sculpture (such as the supporting telamons of Caesarea) and statues were used. Certainly, various artistic representations relating to the theater<sup>61</sup> should be mentioned: muses and masks, satyrs, nymphs, genre-sculptures, dramaturges and philosophers, etc.

## Thermae

*Thermae* were among the most popular establishments of the Roman Empire and places for venerating both traditional gods and the Emperor. Statues like those of Asclepius, Hygeia, Hermes, the Nymphs, but mainly Aphrodite, may be easily attributed to bathhouses. That baths were often named after deities and adorned with their statues and sculptures is well known<sup>62</sup>. The controversy concerning the role played by sculpture in *thermae* is still going on. Do sculptures have an educational character or do they represent merely decorative aspects<sup>63</sup>? For this point it would be of interest to recall the Jewish attitude towards the use or refuse of *thermae*, as revealed by a dispute between the Greek Peroqlos and Rabban Gamaliel II of Akko (1st-2nd cent. C.E.) preserved in the *Mishnah*<sup>64</sup>:

"A. Peroqlos b. Pelosepos asked Rabban Gamaliel in Akko, when he was washing in Aphrodite's bathhouse, saying to him, "It is written in your Torah, and there shall cleave nothing of a devoted thing to your hand (Dt. 13:18). How is it that you're taking a bath in Aphrodite's bathhouse?"

B. He said to him, "They do not give answers in a bathhouse."

C. When he went out, he said to him, "I never came into her domain. She came into mine. They don't say, 'Let's make a bathhouse as an ornament for Aphrodite'. But they say, 'Let's make Aphrodite as an ornament for the bathhouse.'

D. "Another matter: Even if someone gave you a lot of money, you would never walk in your temple of idolatry naked or suffering a flux, nor would you piss in its presence.

E. "Yet this thing is standing there at the head of the gutter and everybody pisses right in front of her."

F. It is said only, "...their gods" (Dt. 12: 3) - that which one treats as a god is prohibited, but that which one treats not as a god is permitted."

## Private complexes (Villas)

There are only a few remains of villas in and around the larger towns of Roman Palestine, and so we do not know if marble was also used there for architectural purposes. Assuming that the provincial elite of Palestine held the same attitude towards Classical art and its use in interior decoration as their Western colleagues,

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<sup>60</sup> SEGAL 1995.

<sup>61</sup> BIEBER 1961. For the decoration of Roman theaters, see FUCHS 1987.

<sup>62</sup> DUNBABIN 1989, 15–16; 32, with some Christian sources concerning Roman baths filled with idols.

<sup>63</sup> MANDERSCHIED 1981, 28–46.

<sup>64</sup> *The Order of Damages (neziqin)*, *Abodah Zarah* 3:4. A new translation by J. Neusner, New Haven 1988, 665.

several pieces uncovered in Roman Palestine may have belonged to villas. Thus for example, smaller objects, such as statuettes of gods, muses, heroes, etc. could be attributed to this category. Also portraits and busts of both 'famous' persons and 'ordinary' citizens were presumably also used to decorate villas. Portraits of Euripides, Sophocles and Olympiodoros may be assigned to richer villas of Caesarea<sup>65</sup>. It is perhaps worthy of mention that a statuette of Jesus Criophorus was found at Caesarea south of the Crusader wall in an ordinary Christian house without any signs of a church or other 'official' Christian structures. Portraits of Ascalonite women or that from the 'Jordan Valley' were probably admired by the inhabitants of such *villae urbanae*. Perhaps some representations of gods were also part of this interior decoration. As mentioned several times above, since in almost all cases we are not in the possession of the heads of the statues, it is impossible to state whether they were cult or decorative statues. A last point should also be considered in this context: since in antiquity the practice of representing private persons as gods, their attributes included, was popular, it would not surprise that a share of the statues of gods, presented here, at least the smaller ones, represented ordinary mortals. 'Ordinary' mortals represented as Asclepios/Aesculapius are common<sup>66</sup>. Perhaps such representations which resembling Asclepius, which occur at Ascalon or Caesarea may be assigned to this category. In this case, however, they also could have been displayed in private complexes. On the other hand, the statue of Asclepius from Shuni is so outstanding in character and design that, although a small statue, it can be identified as part of the decoration of the 'Asclepeion' unearthed there, even if it was not the main cult-statue. One of the few villas from Roman (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries C.E.) Israel was unearthed at Apollonia-Arsuf (north of Jaffa); it seems to have been planned and designed according to typical Roman principles correctly considered by the excavators as reflecting a certain Romanization of the area<sup>67</sup>.

### 3. *The Ascalon and Qedesh case studies*

The picture presented above, should be illustrated by the short presentation of two architectural and artistic monuments, namely the Ascalon basilica and the temple at Qedesh, Upper Galilee. Their choice was not done by hazard but is an attempt at presenting structures fully reflecting the Imperial impact of relationship between main centers and peripheric centers on the one side, as it was the case at Ascalon, and another one, representing the activity of a remoted area in the shade of peripheric centers, as in the case of Qedesh. Both sites chosen here could be dated in the Severan era, which is considered the peak of the Roman Imperial cultural impact in the Near East, and both of them emerge from the meeting of traditional, Hellenistic and Roman elements.

#### 3. 1. *The basilica of Ascalon*<sup>68</sup>

Ascalon was one of the most important towns of the southern part of the Palestinian Mediterranean coast. The history of Ascalon and the role it played were mainly determined by its geographic position being both a harbor at the Mediterranean and a knot-point on the main roads from the earliest history onwards<sup>69</sup>. During the Roman period the city flourished as one of the main multi-ethnic coastal cities enjoying its position and tradition. One of the main buildings known from the Roman period is a basilica. It is a rectangular structure of 110 X 37 m, consisting of a semicircular hall (apse, with a radius of 13 m) with tiers of seats and an elongated hall. The main floor of the building consisting of three naves was based on monolithic grey granite columns from the Troad and Corinthian capitals and entablature made of Proconnesian marble. The main decorative complex belonged to

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<sup>65</sup> FISCHER 1998, figs. 138-140.

<sup>66</sup> WREDE 1981, 195-196, No. 3, pls. 1, 2 and 4.

<sup>67</sup> ROLL, TAL 2009.

<sup>68</sup> The finds from the Ascalon basilica have been published by me (FISCHER 1995; 1998) yet their context and mainly interpretation could still be considered and re-considered for issues of sculpture and its milieu as I am attempting to do here. For Ascalon's history and archaeology and any details regarding the items and their architectural background the reader is referred to FISCHER 1995.

<sup>69</sup> STAGER 1991.

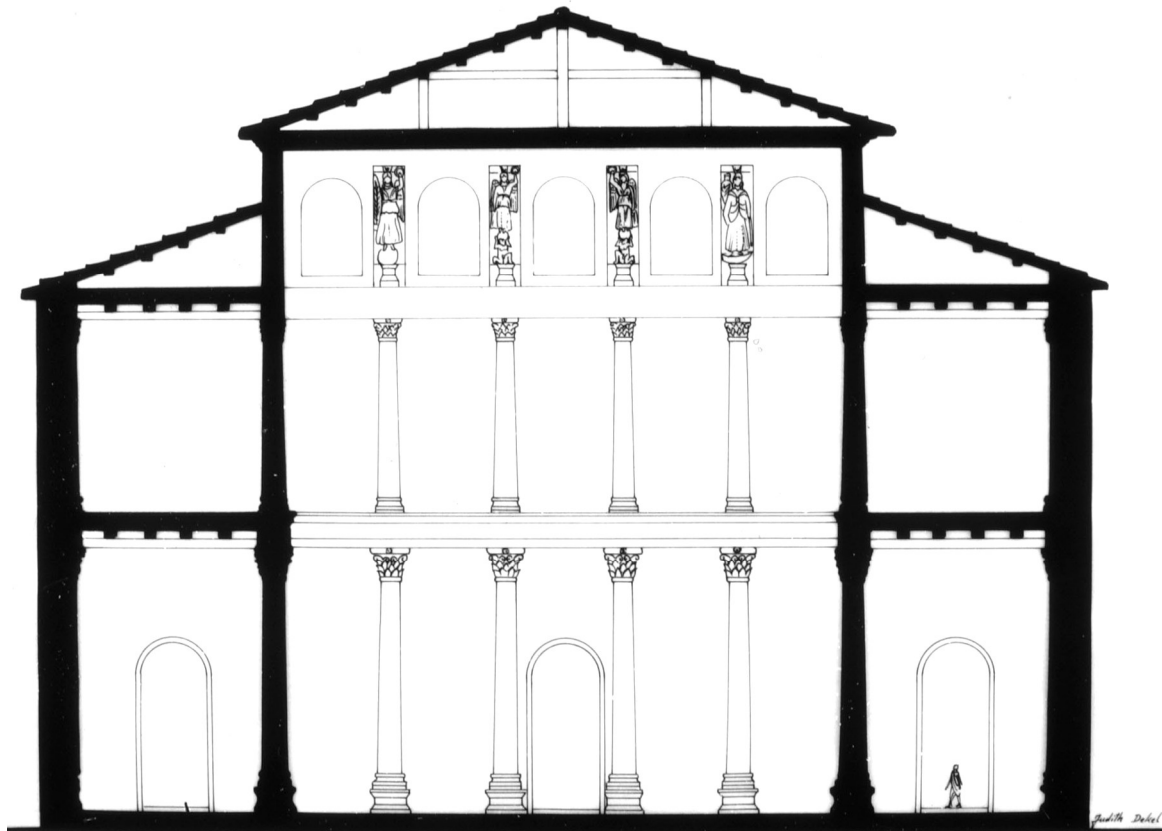


Fig. 7 - The Ascalon basilica inner façade.

the entrance to the apse including figured pilasters, which, according to one which is completely preserved had a height of 3,60 m. Beside the one which was complete, fragments of other three such pilasters have been unearthed in that area, representing four pilasters which presumably had decorated the upper storey of that façade (fig. 7). The best preserved item (fig. 8) represents a *Victoria on globe and a kneeling Atlas*; it is 3,60 m high, 0,90m wide and 0,70m deep. Two further pilasters seem also to depict *victoriae* following the first example. The fourth item, however, depicts two figures: the main figure is a woman depicted frontally resembling "korai" of the "caryatid type". She wears a *polos* separated from her hair by a diadem with an emblem in the center. Some attributes of Isis can be distinguished on her *polos*: a crown of stars with a crescent moon and ears of corn (wheat). It is difficult to discern whether she wore a turiform *polos*. She is dressed in a short sleeved *chiton* and a robe ending in frazzles, which is tied between the breasts by a girdle forming an "Isiac" knot. Her hair is carefully combed, framing the forehead and the oval face; two long

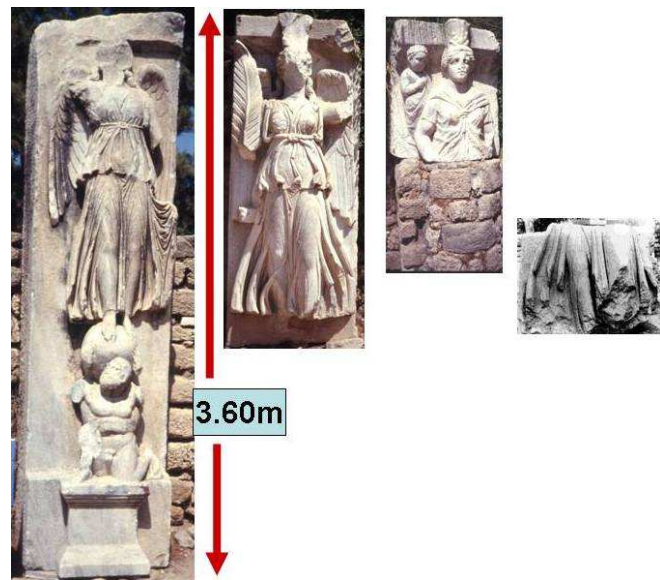


Fig. 8 - The Ascalon figured pilasters façade.

locks fall from the neck upon the shoulders, as is typical of representations of Isis. It seems that there is enough evidence to conclude that it was an Isis, depicted in this case as Tyche-Fortuna or Isi-Tyche. Behind the main figure, and to her right, a second figure is depicted. It represents a man/boy in a standing position, wearing a himation. Both his face and hand are conceived as those of a child. His locks are framed by a diadem with an emblem in its center. A five-pointed star can be discerned in the centre of the diadem, even if this is no longer distinct. In the past this person has been unanimously identified as Horus, the son of Isis. It seems, however, more plausible to identify him with a priest of Serapis or a worshipper<sup>70</sup>. Actually, the representation of a divinity together with a worshipper or a priest was rather common in Eastern art, especially at Palmyra and Dura Europos of the second and third centuries C.E. There too, deities are always central figures, while the others are smaller and in a somewhat lateral position, often even slightly pushed backward. Judging from the shape of the building, it seems adequate to locate these pilasters in the "attica" of the central nave, joined to the wall containing the windows<sup>71</sup>. Beside this rich figurative architectural decoration several further sculptures were found in the area of the Ascalon basilica. Among them worthy to be mentioned are an over life-sized *Cuirassed statue of an Emperor*, a *Crouching Aphrodite* and a statue of *Hermes* representing a variant of a type frequently occurring in Roman copies is mentioned to have been found in the same area.

The subjects of the figural decoration of the pilasters and their location in the upper part of the main wall of the apse seem to point to a certain "*Bildprogramm*" used by the builders. Research of the last few years has revealed the close connection between Roman art and the need to transmit messages. This is determined by contemporaneity, even if formulas are archaic or classicistic. All become symbols.

The Ascalon pilasters should be understood in relation to their historical context, which is the Severan period. The key to any interpretation seems to be the combination of the representation of Victoriae and Isi-Tyche. The Victoriae are depicted with a large variety of attributes and manners of representation: landing on a globe, holding a palm branch, and/or wreath. All these representations have an Imperial message. Moreover, in the case of the best preserved pilaster, where Victoria is represented on a globe supported by a kneeling Atlas, a further element of Imperial victory can be distinguished: the enemy (Parthians? forces of Pescennius Niger?) in the figure of the kneeling Atlas bearing a heavy burden as a punishment.

The pilaster with the depiction of Isi-Tyche would represent the local, civic counterpart of the program, as was also usual in other urban monuments throughout the Empire either. The cult of Tyche as a city-goddess was practiced in almost all Palestinian cities, at least judging from her representation on coins. Perhaps the predilection showed by Severan emperors towards Isis and her entourage had its impact on the representation of the Tyche of the cities as well. It seems therefore, that a combination of the general, ecumenical Imperial message, linked with the Emperor's cult and local, civic feelings of a group of citizens is evident from the material presented above. The decoration of the basilica, which was the city's main official building, was a suitable opportunity for combining these two elements.

During the Severan period a high point was reached in the good relationships between the Imperial house and the cities in the provinces. The Severans encouraged civic development, monumental building activity included. For Palestine this was one of its most flourishing periods: the Severans granted several Palestinian sites city status, others received increased privileges, the road system established by Hadrian was now fully developed, as evident from milestones and road-installations. Septimius Severus himself twice visited the country; the first time (winter 194/195 C.E.) he punished cities that supported Pescennius Niger and rewarded those which supported him. During his second visit (between 199 and 202 C.E.) he rebuilt the provinces and the cities, even those which had suffered from the earlier repression, and praised their support in the Parthian Wars.

The architectural-sculptural complex of Ascalon examined here represents the essence of the synthesis of Imperial and civic ideas. Basilicas became the most appropriate structures to propagate these ideas and marble the artistic language harmonizing them from province to province. Due to the fact that the Greco-Roman Near East has been just lately included in the field of research of Classical art such analysis of correlation

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<sup>70</sup> See Antje Krug's contribution in FISCHER 1995.

<sup>71</sup> A similar arrangement is found at the Severan basilica of Leptis Magna; see WARD-PERKINS 1952.



Fig. 9 - The Qedesh temple façade.

between architectural structures and their artistic decoration against the background of their social frame has been done so far only in a few cases. Presentations of sculptural finds have been done for several sites at a mostly high level yet they have not crossed the threshold into the world of social reconstruction<sup>72</sup>.

Since the whole architectural and sculptural complex described here is based on marble, the examination of the latter's sources can also lead to several relevant conclusions as compared with the general trend in Roman Palestine. The main bulk of the Ascalon marble items originate in Proconnesus, only some of them came from other main Mediterranean sources. An almost similar situation seems to have occurred at several North African centers of the Roman period as well, such as Leptis Magna<sup>73</sup>. At the latter, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E. even an increase in the importation of Proconnesian marble could be observed, on the account of marble from Carrara. Architectural and artistic similarities between Ascalon and Leptis Magna, as already revealed above seem to receive a further emphasis from the examination of their common marble sources.

### 3.2. *The Temple at Qedesh, Upper Galilee*

In the early eighties of the last century some trial excavations were carried out at the Roman period temple at Qedesh, in Upper Galilee (fig. 9) leading to several concluding articles<sup>74</sup>. Ancient Qedesh was a city in the territory of Phoenician Tyre as revealed by several written sources from the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods. Following the latter, it had a rather rich history of Hellenization and implicitly conflicts with the Jewish population from the neighborhood. According to both epigraphical and archaeological evidence, it flourished during the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries C.E. The remains of a monumental temple have been attributed to this period. Until today, its eastern wall standing upright to a height of about 14 m represents a well-known feature in the area. The temple is a rectangular building (20.66 x 31.25 m, including the eastern protico) located at the western part of a large peribolos (55 x 85 m). The whole complex was built and decorated with local limestone (fig. 10). In general it was designed and decorated in a similar way to about forty Roman period temples surveyed and partly

<sup>72</sup> As I pointed out when I presented the Ascalon basilica complex for the first time (FISCHER 1995). Recently Elise Friedland (2003) has wonderfully presented a vivid reconstruction of the socio-artistic picture of the Gerasa East bath. Her hermeneutic approach done in the 'Betrachter im Bilde' tradition served me as a stimulating example in preparing this chapter of my paper.

<sup>73</sup> WALDA, WALKER 1984; 1988.

<sup>74</sup> A main preliminary report remains FISCHER, OVADIAH, ROLL 1984; for epigraphic remains see FISCHER, OVADIAH, ROLL 1986; for some special numismatic relationship see AVIAM 1985; for the cult problematic see OVADIAH, FISCHER, ROLL 1993.

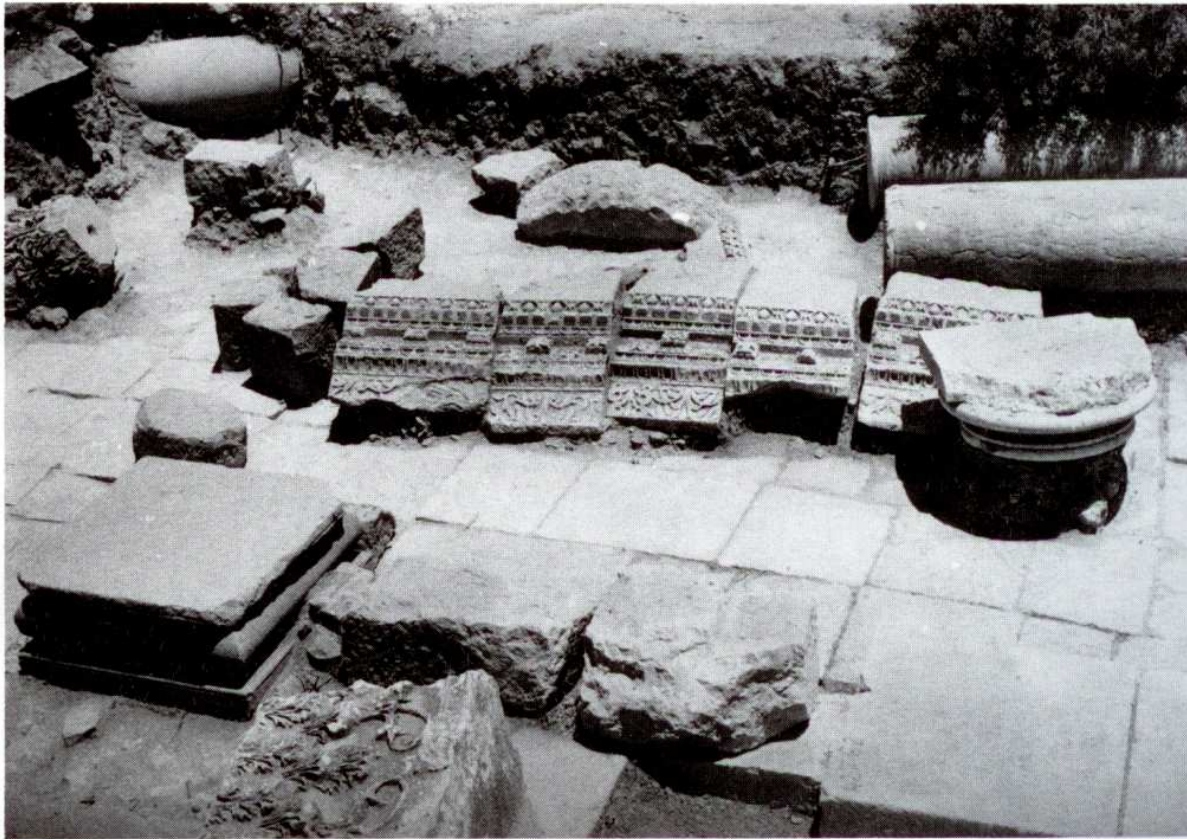


Fig. 10 - The Qedesh temple architectural items.

excavated in Southern Lebanon and Syria<sup>75</sup> which led to its attribution to the Syro-Phoenician sphere defining it as the 'southernmost link in the chain of Roman temples in this region'<sup>76</sup>. The temple was a hexastyle prostyle building with a richly decorated entablature and Corinthian capitals reflecting the best quality of provincial architecture and art imitating models from main art centers (fig. 10). Various architectural items bear decorations which seem to reflect the cultural background of the temple, such as large eagles and altars, masks, musical and celestial instruments, such as lyre, drum and crescent and star. Some of these elements brought the excavators to the attribution of the temple to the cult of Baalshamin, the popular Near Eastern version of Zeus/Jupiter or Apollo. That the main deity was a heavenly deity seems to be reflected also by one of the Greek inscriptions found at the site mentioning a *syngeneia* of 'the holy god of the sky'<sup>77</sup>, a clear transliteration of the local Semitic Baalshamin. The outstanding feature of the design of the temple remains the tri-portal main (eastern) façade with a grandiose main

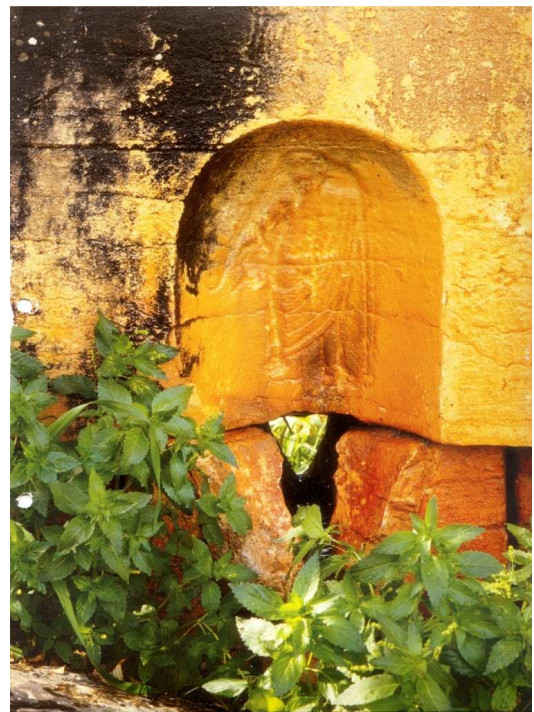


Fig. 11 - The Qedesh temple *togatus* niche.

<sup>75</sup> KRENCKER, ZSCHIEZSCHMANN 1938.

<sup>76</sup> FISCHER, OVADIAH, ROLL 1984, 168.

<sup>77</sup> FISCHER, OVADIAH, ROLL 1986, 61.

entrance and two lateral regular entrances where the main entrance threshold was about 1 m above the level of the lateral entrances. Beside this, niches were carved into the façade close to both lateral entrances including channels crossing the wall into the interior of the cella and high reliefs of craters accompanying the channel entrances. Above the channel of the southern entrance a niche has been preserved with the relief of a man wearing the toga and holding a poring juglet in his right hand. It seems to be an invitation directed to the visitors to pour into the channel the oil/wine/incense they have brought with them and intended for the priests of the temple (fig. 11). It seems also that the façade was created for both public approaching the building at the lateral doorways yet on the other side avoiding the passage through the main doorway. There was also a possibility that the main entrance high elevated threshold was used as a 'bema' for the priests announcing their announcements, perhaps as part of some oracular activities carried out at this temple<sup>78</sup> or the presentation of cultural objects or statues of the god itself<sup>79</sup>. Both the building design and the peculiar details revealed above as well as some of the decorations point to a local interpretation combining foreign principles with traditional cultural activity. From the inscriptions found at the site we can deduce that a certain 'god of the heaven' was venerated not mentioning his name explicitly – as a sort of Near Eastern silent approach towards gods – by a population which at least following the names was mainly an Oriental one, sometimes with reminiscences of an onomasticon used by Hellenized oriental population. Corroborating the data provided by this short presentation of the temple at Qedesh we may conclude that it represents an architectural and cult complex of a peripheric area reflecting social achievements of a quasi-rural society emerging at the hinterland of main provincial centers. It should be regarded here as a counterpoint of the Ascalon basilica presented above.

### **Concluding remarks**

#### *Roman Palestine: Late 'Hellenization' and 'Romanization'*

Corroborating the data of this survey the picture emerging is that of an Oriental society adapting several Hellenistic elements though within a certain refraining from a massive penetration of the latter. This picture seems to correlate with that of the 'city foundations' occurring during that period, which does not necessarily reflect a pure 'Hellenic' approach<sup>80</sup>.

Thus there is no real evidence of imported and locally made sculpture in Hellenistic Palestine, perhaps partly due to heavy destructions of sites from that period by the Hasmoneans and by later Pompeian/Gabinian/Herodian overbuilding but in my opinion mainly to a certain reality. Even if Mediterranean marble was known by part of the population of Hellenistic Palestine, at least due to some references in contemporary literature and archaeological evidence revealed above the realia are overwhelming<sup>81</sup>. After the Herodian 'intermezzo' including monumental Greco-Roman architectural and decorative elements, Palestine entered the Imperial Roman frame after the pacification of the region about mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E. One of the main trends of this stage of development was the adapting of the 'Marmorstil' – a rich veneer-style employing marble which has been developed by Asia Minor cities of the Flavian period<sup>82</sup>. The whole development seems to have been a new one, inspired by the Augustan 'revolution', including architecture and art and their significance. Paul Zanker (1988) clearly pointed out that, in fact, the stimulus for this long-term development was the political and social changes begun in the Empire and provinces by Augustus, combined with the imposition of a well organized Imperial cult providing a common basis of the newly created Empire. All over the Roman world Imperial cult generated deep transformations in the civic space of almost all cities. The Roman marble quarrying and trading system organized and developed at the turn of the first and second

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<sup>78</sup> A comparison with the oracular Apollo temple in Didyma, Turkey is not to be excluded.

<sup>79</sup> As reflected by some Roman city coins from Phoenicia, see AVIAM 1985.

<sup>80</sup> As pointed out by O. Tal, in a conference held at Jerusalem in February 2009: I thank Dr Tal here too for putting the whole material at my disposal before its publication.

<sup>81</sup> FISCHER 1999; FISCHER, TAL 2003, 32–33.

<sup>82</sup> WALKER 1981.



centuries C.E. created a framework for the spread of this 'Marmorstil' (marble style) accompanying those changes. Also Palestinian main cities joined this trend adapting the 'Marmorstil' which brought its contribution to the redesign of buildings erected previously under Herod while local stone has been used. These became civic centers bearing the new image typical of Roman Imperial structures, including the message implied in their architectural and sculptural design based on imported marble.

In this paper I had the occasion to present a picture on *adaptability, imitation and originality* of architecture and sculptural design of both Hellenistic/Herodian but mainly Roman cities of Palestine. Adaptability rather than imitation are evident for sculptures and their use. Types of sculpture spread all over the empire were used here as well after being adapted to the character and function of the specific buildings, such as muses to theaters, statues of Aphrodite to bathhouses, Victoriae to public buildings, cuirassed statues to Imperial cult shrines or niches. As I pointed out above, it is less an imitation since in my opinion statues and sculptures have been imported after that their design and even partly their finish have been carried out in the countries of origin of the marble, i.e. Asia Minor. Imitation of such types is mainly linked with local material attempts carried out already shortly after the first import boom but mainly later through the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. when a decrease of marble import can be felt.

Summing up, it seems rather obvious that certain social layers of Roman Palestine has indeed accepted the 'advantages' of Roman way of life, independent of their ethnic and religious origin. At a glance civic centers of Roman Palestine including their main structures have been adorned with imported marble statuary, partly used for the presentation of power, as an impact of the imperialist tendency of Rome during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries C.E. The city became the instrument of Roman imperialism, as Zanker has pointed it out, that Rome as a "permanent architectural stage" has been imitated by others and thus the city "literally was stuffed with political imagery"<sup>83</sup>. Roman Palestine can definitely be regarded as imitating this situation. In fact, and in spite of the huge cultural tradition of the Near East, aspects dealt by me here seem to be part of a new implanted trend, which can be considered a certain aspect of Romanization. Marble industry and trade system are a basic and solid starting point of such a phenomenon. Let us not forget that Palestine shows during this time real expressions of Romanization such as Roman style roads, milestones, military camps, *cardo&decumanus* based cities etc. The Roman 'armature' as McDonald (1986) puts it is here, and is rapidly filled with artistic content based on marble art and adapted to local needs<sup>84</sup>. Without exaggerating the colonial aspect of Roman Palestine (since it seems that a great part of the population, even that of the elite, was a Near eastern one) we can agree with symptoms of colonial impact, such as "actions which leave an imprint...on the physical and mental landscape"<sup>85</sup>. The artistic expressions presented here reflect aspects of impact of Roman imperialism, perhaps that of acceptance of Roman way of life, that of less resistance to imitation of the latter, as it was the case in a great part of Roman provinces<sup>86</sup>. Isn't the famous rabbies' conversation/dispute about advantages and disadvantages of Roman way of life a vivid example of both such an acceptance and resistance (see above)?

Corroborating the data presented here, the final point, which seems to me one of the most crucial ones in understanding the background of the success of 'Romanized' marble art penetrating the country regards in my opinion the relationships between center and periphery<sup>87</sup>. In fact the main center – Rome – was dominating over the cities imitating it by means of sub-centers, a kind of semi-periphery. In our case such a semi-periphery is represented by Asia Minor main cities such as Ephesos, Aphrodisias, Perge and others, also controlling the main marble quarries, workshops and marble trade in the eastern Mediterranean. Judging from the Ascalon case study and its comparanda, mainly Leptis Magna, and their common factor in terms of both use of Proconnesian marble and similar sculptural design and program we may conclude that peripheral centers of different values meet here. Roman Palestine became a real peripheral area absorbing the marble art without any

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<sup>83</sup> ZANKER 1988, 302–307; 323–324.

<sup>84</sup> HÖLSCHER 1994, 140–143.

<sup>85</sup> LYONS, PAPADOPOULOS 2002, 9.

<sup>86</sup> MATTINGLY 1997.

<sup>87</sup> For various issues see mainly contributions in: CHAMPION 1989; see also ROWLANDS, LARSEN, KRISTIANSEN 1987.



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