GREEK AND ROMAN IMPACT IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT: THE ARCHITECTURAL AND ARTISTIC RESPONSE. MARBLE AS A CULTURAL FACTOR

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Abstract: Ancient Israel (Figure 1) as part of the Near East has encountered the Greek and Roman cultures in their various phases and has partly assimilated partly rejected them through a long lasting interaction. The main issue proposed in this paper is the presentation of several aspects of such an interaction commonly termed as 'Hellenization' and 'Romanization' as reflected by archaeological, epigraphic and artistic material which has been revealed by the archaeological research carried out in Israel during the last decades. The main topics included will cover the transition from 'Orientalism' to 'Hellenism' and will focus on some of the main highlights of Greek and Roman presence in Ancient Israel from the Hellenistic to the Roman period and their problematic as represented by archaeological activity of the last decades. One of the main issues is the use of various building and artistic materials, mainly that of marble. There is no natural marble in the Land of Israel so that it had to be imported from the various marble quarries and workshops around the Mediterranean (Fischer 1998). An overview of some of the main remains of architecture, and architectural and sculptural decoration of the area will be presented. It includes Iraq el-Amir, Marisa, Jerusalem from the Hellenistic period, a selection of aspects of Herodian architecture and decoration; Caesarea, Ascalon and Scythopolis (Beth Shean) and the remoted pseudo-rural areas (Qedesh as a case study) as part of the Roman consensus and modus vivendi; architecture and decoration of the transition to the Late Roman and Byzantine period as reflected by civic and religious monuments as part of the Classical heritage.
Keywords: Ancient Israel; Roman Architecture; marble; Orientalism; Hellenism; Romanization; Middle East Archeology.

Resumo: Israel antigo (Figura 1), como parte do Oriente Próximo, teve o encontro com as culturas grega e romana em suas várias fases, assimilando-as e rejeitando-as parcialmente por meio de uma interação duradoura. A principal questão proposta neste artigo é a apresentação de vários aspectos de uma interação comumente denominada 'helenização' e 'romanização', refletida pelo material arqueológico, epigráfico e artístico revelado pelas pesquisas arqueológicas realizadas em Israel durante o últimas décadas. Os principais tópicos incluídos abrangerão a transição do 'orientalismo' para o 'helenismo' e se concentrarão em alguns dos principais destaques da presença grega e romana na antiga Israel do período de transição entre o helenístico e o romano, assim como a sua problemática representada pela atividade arqueológica da últimas décadas. Uma das

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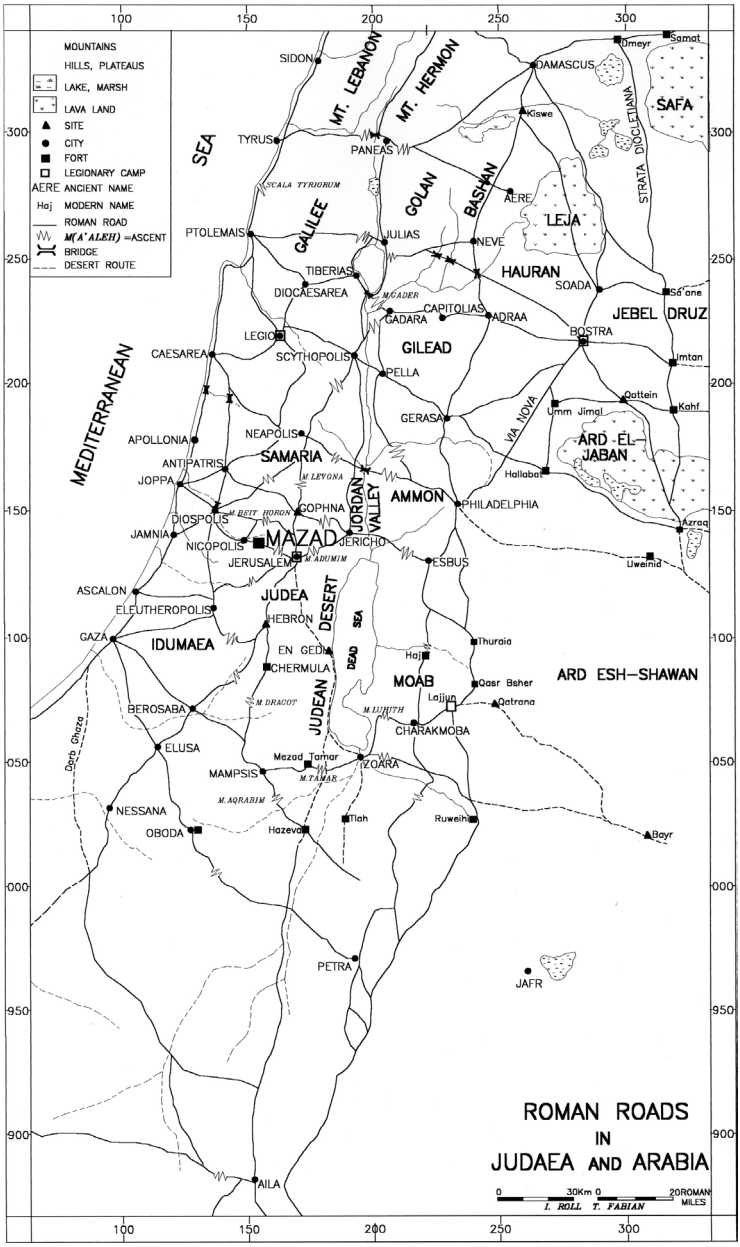
principais questões é o uso de vários materiais artísticos e de construção, principalmente o mármore. Não há mármore natural na Terra de Israel, portanto ele teve que ser importado das várias pedreiras e oficinas de mármore do Mediterrâneo (Fischer 1998). Uma visão geral de alguns dos principais vestígios da arquitetura e a decoração arquitetônica e escultural da área serão apresentadas. Isso inclui Iraque el-Amir, Marisa e Jerusalém do período helenístico, uma seleção de aspectos da arquitetura e decoração herodianas; Cesareia, Ascalon e Scythopolis (Beth Shean) e as áreas pseudo-rurais remotas (Qedesh como um estudo de caso) como parte do consenso romano e modus vivendi; arquitetura e decoração da transição para o período romano e bizantino tardio, refletida por monumentos cívicos e religiosos como parte do patrimônio clássico.
Palavras-chave: Israel Antigo; Arquitetura Romana; mármore; orientalismo; helenismo; Romanização; Arqueologia do Médio-Oriente.

Resumen: El antiguo Israel (Figura 1), como parte del Cercano Oriente, se encontró con las culturas griega y romana en sus diversas fases, asimilándolas y rechazándolas parcialmente a través de una interacción duradera. La principal pregunta propuesta en este artículo es la presentación de varios aspectos de una interacción comúnmente llamada 'Helenización' y 'Romanización', reflejada por el material arqueológico, epigráfico y artístico revelado por la investigación arqueológica realizada en Israel durante las últimas décadas. Los temas principales incluidos cubrirán la transición del 'orientalismo' al 'helenismo' y se centrarán en algunos de los aspectos más destacados de la presencia griega y romana en el antiguo Israel desde el período de transición entre helenístico y romano, así como su problemática representada por actividad arqueológica de las últimas décadas. Uno de los principales problemas es el uso de diversos materiales artísticos y de construcción, principalmente mármol. No hay mármol natural en la Tierra de Israel, por lo que tuvo que importarse de varias canteras de mármol y talleres en el Mediterráneo (FISCHER, 1998). Se presentará una visión general de algunos de los principales rastros de la arquitectura y la decoración arquitectónica y escultórica de la zona. Esto incluye Iraq el-Amir, Marisa y Jerusalén del período helenístico, una selección de aspectos de la arquitectura y decoración herodianas; Cesarea, Ascalon y Escitópolis (Beit She'an) y áreas pseudo-rurales remotas (Qedesh como estudio de caso) como parte del consenso romano y modus vivendi; arquitectura y decoración de la transición al período romano y bizantino tardío, reflejado en monumentos cívicos y religiosos como parte del patrimonio clásico.
Palabras clave: Antiguo Israel; arquitectura romana; mármol; orientalismo; helenismo; Romanización; arqueología del Cercano Oriente.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OBODA
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MT. HERMON
SCALA TYRIORUM
GALILEE
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JERICHO
JORDAN VALLEY
AMMON
PHILADELPHIA
ESBUS
PELLA
GERASA
GADARA
CAPITOLIAS
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HAURAN
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Qasr Bsher
Qatrana
ARD ESH-SHAWAN
Darb Ghazza
Mezad Tamar
ZOARA
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ROMAN ROADS
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JUDAEA AND ARABIA
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The main issue proposed in this paper is the presentation of several aspects of two great general concepts commonly termed as 'Hellenization' and 'Romanization' (*Brill's New Pauly*, s.v. 'Hellenization' and 'Romanization') 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 (APPLEBAUM, 1989; LEVINE, 1999). 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 (TAL, 2006). 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 and artistic changes through the Hellenistic and Roman periods in the Land of Israel. 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 (1 **Kings** 6-8; 2 **Chronicles** 2-4; **Ezek**. 40:1-43:12; for use of local quarries in Byzantine Jerusalem, see Procopius, **de aedificiis** 5, 6; cf. TSAFRIR, 2001). 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 (WESENBERG, 1971; SHILOH, 1979). 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 (CROWFOOT AND CROWFOOT, 1938). 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 society of his time - social injustice and idolatry (KING, 1988, p. 142-149). 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 (STERN, 1982).

I. Hellenistic and Herodian Palestine (KUHNEN, 1990; see TAL, 2006)

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 (WILL et al. 1990). 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 (FISCHER & TAL, 2003b).

During this period, the use of ashlars 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, Tel Yeoz and other sites (FISCHER, ROLL & TAL, 2008). 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 BCE) (ROLLER, 1998) and his descendants up to the Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. 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 (JACOBSON & KOKKINOS, 2009; KASHER & WITZTUM, 2007). 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. The *Babylonian Talmud* (**Sukkah** 51b; **Baba Bathra** 4a) says: "He who has not seen the Temple in its full construction has never seen a glorious building in his life...". Also Flavius Josephus' descriptions of the Temple are impressive (AJ, XV, 388-420; BJ, V, 184-237). At that time, a grand building program, without precedent in the country, transformed Caesarea (old Straton's Tower; see RABAN & HOLUM, 1996), 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 (OLESON, RABAN & HOHLFELDER, 1989). The main trend of this building phase continued to be the massive use of ashlars for both walls and vaulted structures (such as at Herodium), 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, except some rudimentary use for *opus sectile* and some minor art fragments such as head of a marble Silen, which was found at Herodium and attributed to the Herodian period. Interestingly, however, is 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 (NETZER, 1985, p. 85). For all these sites, our main source is Flavius Josephus' writings. Regarding the use of marble, 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 and labeled it as marble (FISCHER & STEIN, 1994; cf. FISCHER, 1999).

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) (JACOBSON, 2002). As for Jericho, the excavator attributes its use to the presence of Roman artisans brought there by Herod (NETZER, 1977). It

is rather obvious that Roman techniques have crossed the borders of the Empire already during this early stage of development (see recently SCHÖRNER, 2016).

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 (FISCHER & TAL, 2003b). 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 (FISCHER, 1990), 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" (*AJ*. 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 (LEVINE, 1975a; 1975b), and the traditional one, Jerusalem (for a recent overview see GALOR & BLOEDHORN, 2013; recently published collection of reports: *Jerusalem*). Monumental tombs of Jerusalem, mainly from the Kidron Valley (AVIGAD, 1954) and that of Helen of Adiabene (KON, 1947), 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

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.

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. 2: Apollonia *Totenmahlrelief*)** made of Pentelic marble of the well-known fourth century BCE Attic type (FISCHER & TAL, 2003a).

Fig. 2. The Apollonia Totenmahlrelief.

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 (WENNING, 1983). 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) (FISCHER, 1998). An outstanding example, however, is a colossal marble head from Scythopolis (**Fig. 3: Marble Head of Alexander the Great, Scythopolis),** presumably of Alexander the Great. It was unearthed at Tell Beth She'an (Tell el Hosn), not far from the remains of a temple (FISCHER, 1998, p. 38, Ph 1a-b).[2] Other fragments of destroyed sculptural works

2 Recently, however, Irene Romano (University of Arizona at Tucson) has prepared a study about this item, defining it as an over life-sized portrait of Alexander the Great of the Severan period, made of Aphrodisias marble. A first publication is forthcoming by the Israel Museum Studies in Archaeology. My thanks are going to Irene Romano for sharing her results with me.

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*" (**I Maccabees** 13:47) (FISCHER, 2006).

Fig. 3a - Fig. 3b: Marble Head of Alexander the Great, Scythopolis .

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. Despite the monumental architectural complexes built under Herod the Great there was no figurative art retrieved from Masada, Jericho or Herodium (see archaeological reports *Herodium*, *Masada*, *Jericho*; cf. NETZER, 2001; see now PORAT, CHACHY & KALMAN, 2015). Flavius Josephus stresses the anti-iconic attitude of his time (Flavius Josephus, Ap. *BJ* II, 12; II, 75) but largely describes the use of colossal statues erected in the Temple of Augustus and Roma at Caesarea (*BJ* I, 21, 7 [414]), which are lost. 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. 4: Cuirassed statue from Samaria-Sebaste**), which probably depicted

an emperor (Augustus?) (REISNER, FISHER & LYON, 1924, I:176, Nr. 210A; II, Pl. 79e-f; see FISCHER 1998, 159, Nr. 182; FITTSCHEN, 2002; WEBER, 2008). Against the preference of Greek marble sources in the Land of Israel it should be emphasized that the marble of this item originates in Carrara, which would shed a further light on the relationships between Herod and Augustan Rome.[3]. Such a trend lasted also under the king's descendants. Thus, Josephus mentions that after the death of Herod Agrippas (in 44 CE) the Caesarea mob looted "*the images of the king's daughters*" (ant. 19, 9, 1 [356-357]).



Fig. 4a - Fig. 4b - Fig. 4c: Cuirassed statue from Samaria-Sebaste

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 CE (the First Jewish Revolt) and 132-135 CE (the Bar Kokhba Revolt) (AVI-YONAH, 1984; FISCHER, 1998). During the consolidation of Roman Imperial power under Hadrian the province was reorganized and renamed Syria-Palaestina undergoing changes in almost all domains of life, through the Antonines with its peak under the Severans (MILLAR, 1993). During the Severan period all these changes were officially recognized, 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 BCE.

3 A first examination has been carried out in 1988 by the late Professor Norman Herz (University of Athens/Georgia) who was the first to identify the origin of this marble with the Carrara quarries. Recently it has been re-examined by Yannis Maniatis from the Demokritos Institute in Athens, Greece with whom we will republish this sculpture. Professor Maniatis has reinforced the results of the former examination.

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 amphitheaters and hippodromes (SEGAL, 1995). A network of roads based on *capita viarum* including milestones and road-installations linked all the cities of the country reflecting the impact the Imperial way of life had on Palestine (FISCHER, ISAAC & ROLL, 1996) **(see Fig. 1: map, p. 15).** 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 Jewish Talmudic sources from the 6th century CE yet reflecting the Early Roman period shed a light on 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 (FISCHER, 1998).

1. Marble Architecture and Sculpture in Roman Palestine

Roman Palestine underwent a real urban revolution after the Jewish revolts: Caesarea (RABAN & HOLUM, 1996), Ascalon (FISCHER, 1995), Scythopolis (TSAFRIR & FOERSTER, 1997), Sepphoris (WEISS, 2005), Eleutheropolis (AVNI, DAHARI & KLONER, 2008), Aelia Capitolina (ELIAV, 2005) and many other cities became now peripheral 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 (**Fig. 5: View of Roman Scythopolis**). All of them reflect the political, social and religious impact Roman Empire had in the area. The main deities and cults propagated around the whole Empire received now a special status in Roman Palestine as well (BELAYCHE, 2001) altogether with a strong impact on local milieu as well (see below, case study of the Roman temple in Qedesh).

Fig. 5: View of Roman Scythopolis.

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 CE, as described above.

Among them the main harbor cities of Ascalon and Caesarea, was well as some inland cities such as Samaria-Sebaste and Beth Shean-Scythopolis played an important role both in using and diffusing marble sculpture. A glance at the marble yard of Caesarea Maritima (**Fig. 6: Caesarea Maritima, marble yard**

in the harbor area) should be sufficient as an illustration of the massive import and diffusion of marble and other imported stones (granite, porphyry etc.) 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 probably 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 (FISCHER, 1998, s.v. sites), for example: seating statue of Zeus from Gaza, **the porphyry statue of Hadrian from Caesarea (Fig. 7),** 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 (see FISCHER, 1998, s.v. sites). 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.

Fig. 6: Caesarea Maritima, marble yard in the harbor area.

Fig. 7: The porphyry statue of Hadrian from Caesarea Maritima

About 40% of the marble sculpture of the Roman period recorded in Israel originated in Caesarea (best overview: GERSHT, 1987). 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. 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, since all are headless it is difficult to state whether they were cult-statues and thus reflect the cults worshipped at Caesarea (GERSHT, 1997; FISCHER, 1998). 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: Temple of Augustus and Roma erected at the foundation of the city

by Herod and unearthed in the early sixties and the Late Roman Mithraeum, which was set up in one of the southern warehouses of the Herodian harbor. On the other hand, we have some indications of the existence of a **Hadrianeum** and a perhaps also a **Tibereum** as revealed by the well-known inscription of Pontus Pilate (whether a temple or just a secular building honoring the emperor; see TAYLOR 2006, with updated references to this issue). 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 (FISCHER, 1991, Nr. 4 with references; see TAYLOR, 2006).

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 (FROVA, 1965).

2. Sculptural types and their location

Civic centers. Ascalon as an example

The forum and its adjacent structures represented the main location of statues in a Roman cities (ZIMMER, 1989, p. 52). One example from Roman Palestine is the basilica of Ascalon, which was one of the most important harbor towns of the southern part of the Palestinian Mediterranean coast (FISCHER, 1995). During the Roman period the city flourished as one of the main multi-ethnic coastal cities enjoying its position and tradition. The basilica is a rectangular building measuring 110 X 37m, consisting of a semicircular hall (apse, with a radius of 13m) 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 the entrance to the apse including figured pilasters (**Fig. 8: Ascalon, reconstruction of the figured pilaster wall**), which, according to the one which is completely preserved had a height of 3,60m. (**Fig. 9: Ascalon, figured pilaster of Nike/Victoria and Atlas**) representing a ***Victoria*** *on globe and a kneeling Atlas*; 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 resembling the Tyche-Fortuna or Isi-Tyche type. Behind the main figure, and to her right, a man/boy in a standing position is depicted, wearing a himation. 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. It seems plausible to identity him with a priest of Serapis or a worshipper (KRUG, in FISCHER, 1995). 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 where 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, as it was the case for instance at the Severan basilica of Leptis Magna (WARD-PERKINS, 1952). 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.

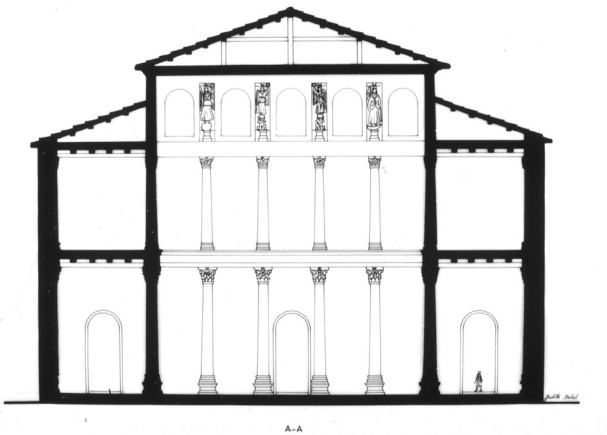

Fig. 8: Ascalon, reconstruction of the figured pilaster wall.

Fig. 9: Ascalon, figured pilaster of Nike/Victoria and Atlas.

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 *"Bild-programm"* 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 with their Imperial message and Isi-Tyche representing the local, civic counterpart of the program. 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 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. They also were the place for the propagation of the *Imperial cult* (PRICE, 1984, p. 156-162; 181-188; STEMMER, 1978, p. 147-148). 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.

Theaters

In the Roman Near East, theaters often represented the most elaborated buildings of the cities (SEGAL, 1995). 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 (FROVA, 1965) and Scythopolis (MAZOR & ATRASH, 2015), 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 should be mentioned: muses and masks, satyrs, nymphs, genre-sculptures, dramaturges and philosophers, etc. (FUCHS, 1987).

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 (MANDERSCHEID, 1981; DUNBABIN, 1989, p. 15-16; 32). 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? 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* (*The Order of Damages* (*neziqin*), *Abodah Zarah* 3:4) (A New Translation by J. NEUSNER, NEW HAVEN, 1988, p. 665):

> 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, 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 (FISCHER 1998, Figs. 138-140). 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 (WREDE, 1981, p. 195-196, No.3, pls. 1,2 and 4; NEUDECKER, 1988). 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 Asclepios 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 (1st-2nd centuries CE) 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 (ROLL & TAL, 2009).

The impact of the marble in local spheres. The temple of Qedesh (Upper Galilee) as an example.

The peak Classical architecture and art has reached in Roman Palestine in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE had a real impact on the remoted areas of the provinces in the area. Here almost exclusively local stones were used for building and decoration. The issue of center and periphery is relevant for this development. One of the intriguing cases is the Roman period temple discovered at Qedesh in Upper Galilee (Northern Israel). The temple has been partially unearthed in recent past (FISCHER, OVADIAH & ROLL, 1984) (**Fig. 10: Air view of the temple at Qedesh**). The temple is a rectangular building (20.66 X 31.25m, including the eastern protico) located at the western part of a large peribolos (55 X 85m). It was designed and decorated in a similar way to about forty Roman period temples surveyed and partly excavated in Southern Lebanon and Syria (**Fig. 11: Qedesh, architectural items**) (KRENCKER & ZSCHIETZSCHMANN, 1938; FISCHER, OVADIAH & ROLL, 1984, p.168). 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 (**Fig. 12: Qedeshm, symbolic features**). 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'** (FISCHER, OVADIAH & ROLL, 1986, p. 7-61), **a clear transliteration of the local Semitic *Baalshamin*.** Niches where 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 man wearing the toga and holding a poring juglet in his right hand (**Fig. 13: Qedesh, niche with relief of *togatus*).** 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, perhaps as part of some oracular activities carried out at this temple or the presentation of cultural objects or statues of the god itself, as reflected by some Roman city coins from Phoenicia (AVIAM, 1985). 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.

Fig. 10: Qedesh. Air view of the temple

Fig. 11: Qedesh, architectural items

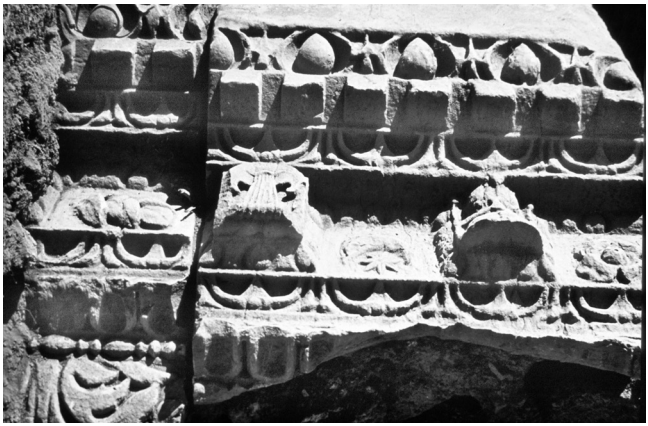

Fig. 12: Qedeshm, symbolic features

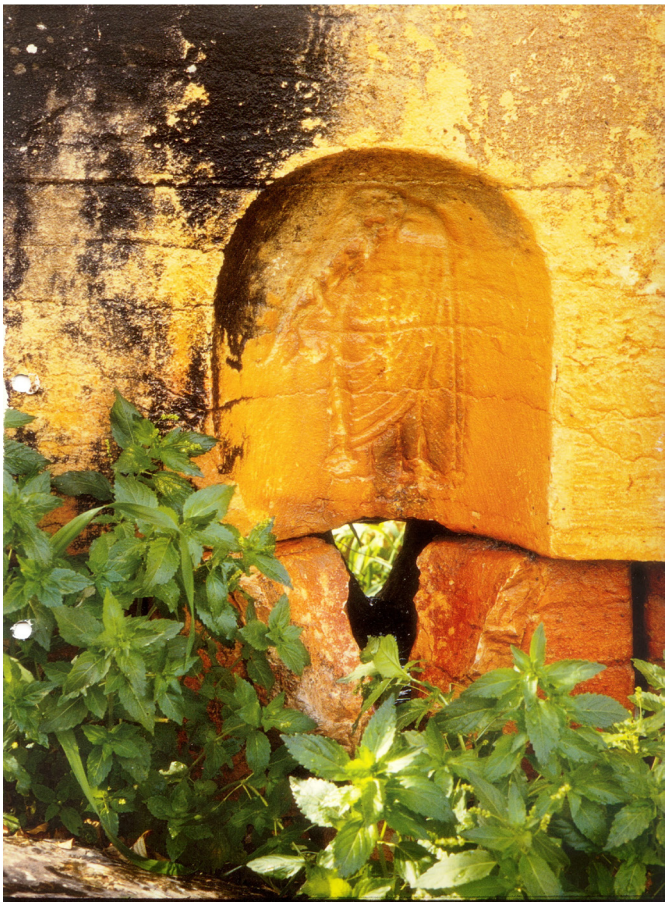

Fig. 13: Qedesh, niche with relief of a togatus

Concluding remarks

Roman Palestine: Late 'Hellenization' and 'Romanization'

The picture emerging from the data of this survey 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. One of the main points we had to reveal here was the role marble has played as a building and artistic material imported from abroad becoming a cultural factor in the diffusion of Hellenic and Roman

principles of life. That this special stone has become a central issue in social archaeology combined with laboratory examinations searching for the scientific background of the origin of marble and workshops has been acknowledged by the foundation of an association focused on these matters, which is ASMOSIA.[4]

Thus there is no real –evidence of imported and locally made sculpture in Hellenistic Palestine (beside a few exceptions mentioned above), 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 (FISCHER, 1998; FISCHER & TAL 2003a, p. 32-33). Thus, Jewish sources from the Hellenistic and Roman period such as the Septuagint and the Mishna and Talmud knew about the Parian and the Proconnesus marble quarries, which probably had become rather popular in the region (FISCHER, 1999). 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-2nd century CE. One of the main trends of this stage of development was the adapting of the '**Marmorstil**' (marble style) – a rich veneer-style employing marble which has been developed by Asia Minor cities of the Flavian period (WALKER, 1981). 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 centuries C.E. created a framework for

4 *Association for the Study of Marble & Other Stones in Antiquity* (ASMOSIA) was founded in Il Ciocco, Lucca, Italy, in May 9-13, 1988. The first Proceedings were published as N. Herz and M. Waelkens (eds.) 1988. *Classical Marble: Geochemistry, Technology, Trade* (NATO ASI Series E, Applied Sciences, Vol. 153). Dordrecht-Boston. Here the basis was laid for an interdisciplinary approach of research of marble and other materials through history. Meanwhile 12 conferences have been organized and their proceedings published. A further conference (XIII) will be held in Vienna in September 2021. For the place of marble in the Levant in general and the Land of Israel in particular during antiquity see Fischer 1998; 2002; 2018.

the spread of this '**Marmorstil**' 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. 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 3rd century CE 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 (as it has been put by the Rabbinic literature, see above), 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 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. 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" (ZANKER, 1988, p. 302-307; p. 323-324). 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 be 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 (HÖLSCHER, 1994, p. 140-143). 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" (LYONS & PAPADOPOULOS 2002, p. 9). 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 (MATTINGLY, 1997). 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)?

One of the most crucial aspects in understanding the background of the success of 'Romanized' marble art penetrating the country refers to the relationships between center and periphery (CHAMPION, 1989; ROWLANDS, LARSEN & KRISTIANSEN, 1987). 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 Lepcis 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 serious attempts at the creation of an art of itself at least that based on marble. This has to be become part of architecture and art based on local stones as reflected by the rich Scythopolis architecture and art (ROMANO & FISCHER, 2009), and the Qedesh case study presented here. Statuary and its architectural and social environment enjoyed the Roman Imperial frame creating the conditions for both renaissance of Hellenistic tradition, partly based on Oriental background, and the renewal penetrating every domain of life.

It comes to emphasize even more the strength of the Roman Empire combining all those traditions with a new order. It seems that citizens of Roman Imperial period had become aware of the power the Empire had, a sort of awareness of Romanization. The use of the main 'Classical' languages – Greek and Latin – as a differentiated way by different social groups is also a special symptom of late Hellenization and intensive Romanization (ECK, 2003). The Jewish and the Christian reaction to this late Hellenization and Romanization is worthy to be emphasized (FRIEDHEIM, 2006; NOVAK, 2001), combining both traditional and freshly absorbed Roman influences (see below, Byzantine epilogue).

The Byzantine epilogue

That Constantine's the Great rule has led to deep changes in the Roman Empire's religious and social history is unanimously accepted yet what the degree of this transition was is still debated. Palestinian cities offer an interesting field of research for this issue, as it has been pointed out for Beth Shean-Scythopolis as a case study for a smooth and slow transition between Greco-Roman principles and Christian attitudes (TSAFRIR & FOERSTER, 1997). At a certain moment, however, such a tolerance was broken leading to the picture of demolished shrines, decapitated statues and a strong overbuilding by Christian monuments. The descriptions coming from Gaza in the year 401 CE give the best and most violent picture of this change in attitude: *"the rubbish that remained from the marble work of the Marneion...<it was decided> to lay down for a pavement before the temple outside the street, that it might be trodden under foot not only of men, but also of women and dogs and swine and beasts"* (MARC DIACONUS, **vita. Porphyrii** 76). It seems, however, that this is also not the final picture. The Christian Byzantine society, as well as the Jewish one, knew how to absorb and reuse the rich Classical heritage, which has been infiltrated into the Near East from the Persian period onwards. Christian churches as well as Jewish synagogues and their artistic decoration, mainly mosaic pavements are a clear example of the absorption of Classical heritage including a whole bunch of iconographic depictions (e.g.: PICCIRILLO, 1993; WEISS, 2005). They represent the results of a real and deeply founded 'Helenization' which went through the Roman cultural process, in fact the 'Romanization'. The use and mainly reuse of marble artifacts through Late Antiquity has also been an important factor of this process as reflected in almost all urban and even rural sites in Palestine (e.g. Apollonia: FISCHER, TAMBAKOPOULOS AND MANIATIS, 2018). The process has taken place within the frame created by the Roman rule in the region, and is in a certain way the victory of Romanization. It is therefore not too surprising when a certain Lauricius traveling in remoted Wadi Ram (Southern Jordan/*Arabia Petraea*) has left for us the following message: Πωμέοι ἀεὶ νικώσιν. Λαυρίκιος ἐγράφα. Χαίρε Ζήνων ('The Romans always win; I, Lauricius wrote, Hail Zenon') (SARTRE, 1993, p. 165-182, No. 138; cf. ISAAC, 1994, p. 168)

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