

CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

Bright Beginnings: Jewish Christian Relations in the Holy Land, AD 400-700

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This paper shows that Christian and Jewish relations in the Holy Land between the fourth and seventh centuries, according to the archaeological evidence, were characterized by peaceful co-existence. Written sources¹ suggest that until the seventh-century Persian invasion, the three provinces of Byzantine Palestina enjoyed overall peace. Occasional Jewish and (especially) Samaritan rebellions disturbed this general tranquility but these were successfully put down. Despite evidence indicating periodical natural disasters, such as earthquakes and droughts, both textual and survey data suggest that the Byzantine period was a time of prosperity and of population—and settlement—expansion. In these terms, the period appears to mark the highest point in the history of the region until the twentieth-century. This only serves to highlight the question of whether this peace extended to inter-communal and inter-personal relations.

This work uses archaeological evidence and analysis to investigate the nature of intercommunal relations on the level of everyday life. The basis of this paper is a comprehensive catalogue of excavated Byzantine sites in Palestina. The compilation was possible due to the many published excavations of Byzantine sites in modern Israel and Jordan. I will be using this evidence to look at several indications of interaction between the two communities. I will first look very briefly at textual evidence for Jewish-Christian relations and then go on to look at the archaeological evidence. I will discuss religious architecture and decorations, burials and site distributions. I will also look at secular evidence for religious identity and chronology. As will be demonstrated below, despite revolts by Jews and Samaritans, as well as anti-Jewish polemics by church fathers, the archaeological record shows peaceful and amicable Christian-Jewish relations.

¹ See for example:

אלון ג' תש"ג-תשט"ז תולדות היהודים בארץ ישראל בתקופת המשנה והתלמוד א-ב תל אביב ובי-יונה מ' תש"ו בימי רומי וביזנטי ירושלים

הר מ"ד (עורק) 1985 התקופה הרומית ביזנטית: תקופה המשנה והتلמוד והשלישון הביזנטי (70-640) (ההיסטוריה של ארץ ישראל ירושלים

P. Schaefer, *The History of the Jews in Antiquity: The Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (1995).

ברס ד' ואחרים (עורכים) תשמ"ה ארץ ישראל מחורבן בית שני ועד הכיבוש המוסלמי, ב: הממצאים הארכיאולוגיים והאומנותיים ירושלים

E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule* (1981).

גפני י' תשס"ב 'ארץ ישראל בתקופת המשנה והטלמוד: חקר שנות דור, השגים ותהיונות' *קמדת*, 100, 226-200

Brief Textual Review

Anti-Jewish views developed very early in church history. Beginning with the church fathers, the destruction of the temple was utilized as confirmation for the thesis that Mosaic law had been abrogated and replaced by the Christian faith. The unwillingness of Jews to accept Jesus was seen as a crime against God.²

In the fourth century, Chrysostom continued to disparage Judaism. He presented the Jews as perverting the will of God because they continued to follow their laws and refused to accept Jesus and the changes he had wrought. In his sixth and seventh sermons against the Jews, Chrysostom ridicules them for continuing to follow their laws when their legitimacy had been destroyed with the temple and its priesthood. Chrysostom does not stop there, however, and the virulence of his sermons against the Jews in Antioch is notable.³

These early sources have been used by some scholars to paint quite a bleak picture of Jewish-Christian relations in antiquity.⁴ Even so, other scholars have interpreted Chrysostom's homilies as a deterrent to Christians wishing to participate in Jewish rites, rather than an attack on the Jews themselves. This indicates quite the reverse of the normal understanding of hostile Christian-Jewish relations and shows a possible Christian fascination with Jews.⁵

These sources, therefore, provide a confusing and conflicting picture of the relations between Christians and Jews in the Byzantine Period. One wonders to what extent these homilies and polemics influenced common Christians and what impact this had on their relationships with their Jewish neighbors. Our ignorance is of particular concern when we examine evidence for these relations at their very beginning. The fourth century sees Jewish communities and organized Christian communities co-existing for the first time and is a critical area of study if we wish to understand the development of Jewish-Christian relations throughout history. We turn therefore to archaeological evidence to try to clarify the picture.

Religious Structures

The most obvious and most important type of archaeological evidence for the presence of religious communities is their religious structures. The catalogue⁶ includes 46 structures identified as Jewish synagogues and 139 structures identified as Christian churches. It also includes four additional structures, the identification of which is contested and unclear. It might be expected that two distinct religious groups (Jews and Christians) would also have two distinct types of religious structures—or at least distinguishing features that would prevent any problems of identification. This is not the case, however, and it is perhaps surprising that only four religious structures have defied classification. It is, in fact, remarkable that many structures have been

² Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, XII and XXIII.

³ I. Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch* (Cambridge, 2007), 85.

⁴ See for example: L. V. Rutgers, *Making Myths. Jews in Early Christian Identity Formation* (2009).

⁵ A. Meeks and L. Wilken, "Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era" *SBL Sources for Biblical Study* 13 (1978): 30-35

⁶ E. Ribak, "Religious Communities in Byzantine Palestina: the Relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, AD 400 – 700", *BAR International Series* 1646 (2007): 189-558.

firmly identified with one of the religious groups given that the structures retain so many similar features.

It is very difficult to differentiate structures identified as Jewish synagogues and churches. Both may be halls, basilicas, or rooms in secular structures (See Figure 1), yet there are some differences. No cave or centralized structure was used as a synagogue, although these were used as churches and churches show a greater range of sizes. Burial is another defining characteristic. Any house of worship containing a grave is probably a church, but most churches did not contain graves. However, basilicas with three rows of columns are far more likely to be synagogues than churches (See Figure 1). Many more churches had apses and triple apses are found only in churches (See Figures 2 and 3), while synagogues appear to have had a single entrance more often than those identified as churches (See Figure 4). Only synagogues show a different number of entrances at different stages in their structural history. Many synagogues were lined with benches and very few structures identified as churches contained benches (See Figure 5). Although both synagogues and churches contained *bemas*, the existence of two *bemas* may be an indication that a structure was a synagogue. Thus, although very similar, there were structural characteristics that may enable us to recognise a synagogue from a church and to recognise features typical of synagogues or churches where they occur in a structure of another sort.

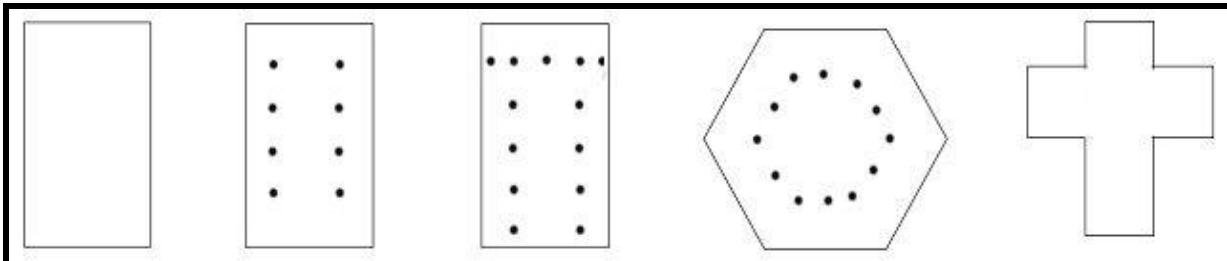


Figure 1. Basic plans

Left to Right: Open hall, two-aisled basilica, three-aisled basilica, centralized octagon, centralized cruciform

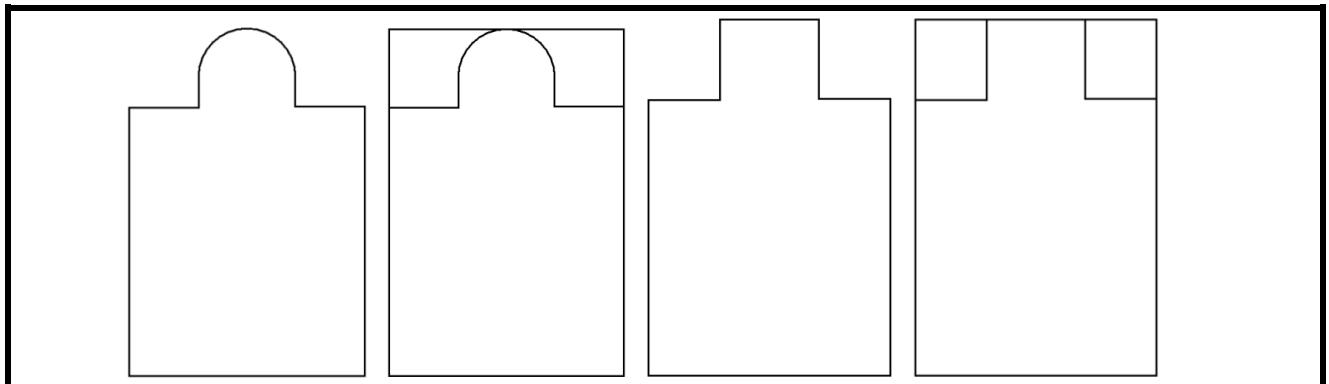


Figure 2. Basic apse types

Left to Right: Single semi-circular external apse, single semi-circular Internal apse, single external rectangular apse, and single rectangular internal apse

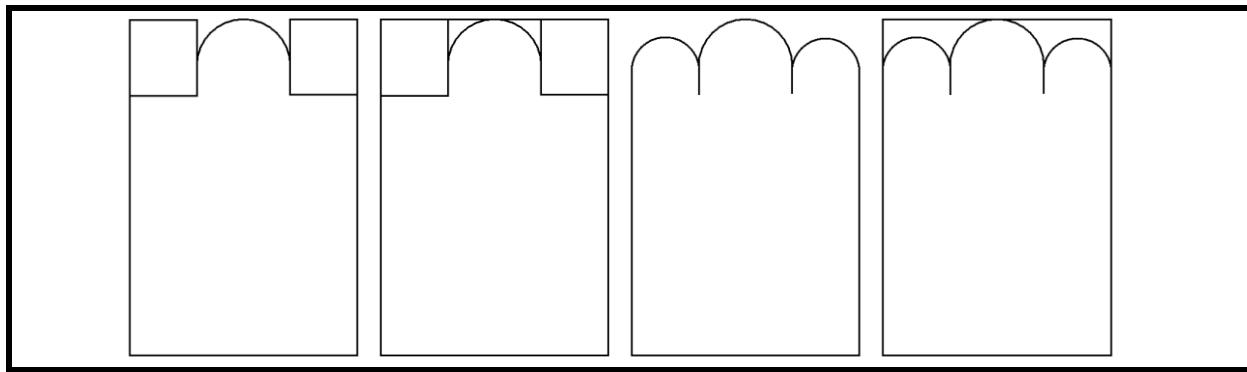


Figure 3. Apses in relation to flanking structures

Left to Right: Single semi-circular external apse flanked by two rooms, single semi-circular internal apse flanked by two rooms, triple semi-circular external apses, and triple semi-circular internal apses

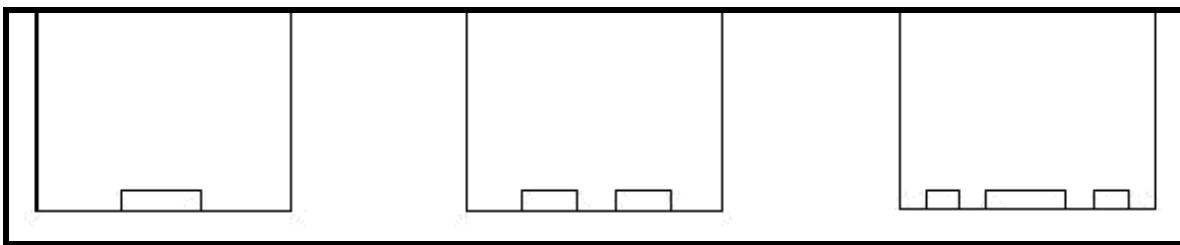


Figure 4. Basic types of entrance configuration

Left to Right: Single entrance, double entrance, and triple entrance

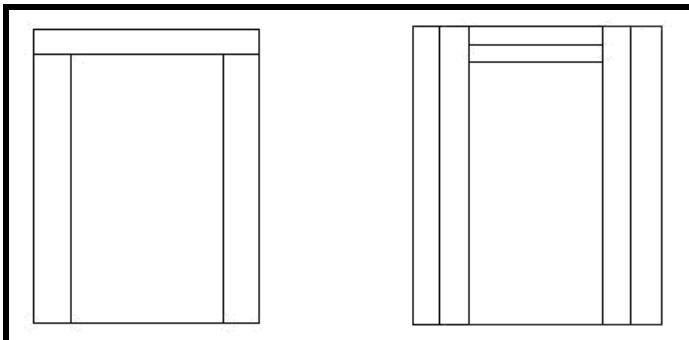


Figure 5. Bench layout

Left: Single benches, Right: Stepped benches

This evidence indicates that any structures claimed by their excavators as synagogues or churches cannot be positively identified as such if they lack any of these distinguishing features. It is very likely that architectural features alone will never provide all the evidence necessary to ascertain the religious identity of every religious structure of this date in this area. This lack of differentiation between the religious architecture of the two religious groups shows how much Jews and Christians in Byzantine Palestina had in common. It is, therefore, necessary to examine other characteristics of these buildings in order to seek differences and similarities between the places of worship.

Mosaic Floors

The most popular surviving form of decoration of religious buildings, mosaic floors, provides the most plentiful evidence for comparison between churches and synagogues. A detailed study⁷ of the different motifs in the mosaic floors of churches and synagogues shows that the frequency of each of the patterns in each of the religious structures is similar. This may suggest either that they carried no additional religious meaning or that this meaning was acceptable to all of the groups concerned.

Geometrical motifs were very popular in religious structures. Geometric designs could, of course, carry religious symbolism—such as crosses formed from intersecting circles, a common early Byzantine motif. However, most geometric designs found on mosaics in Palestina seem to lack such symbolism. They are found in the majority of churches and only slightly less in synagogues.



Figure 6. Geometric mosaic detail from the Synagogue at Hammat Tiberias

The use of plant motifs exhibits a similar trend. Again, we see a clear similarity in the patterns in the two religious structures. The motifs presumably carried no specific religious meaning or one that was acceptable to all of these religious groups. Animal motifs appear to be less frequently used but occur more frequently in churches than synagogues.

⁷ E. Ribak, "Religious Communities in Byzantine Palestina: the Relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, AD 400 – 700", *BAR International Series 1646* (2007): 50-61.



Figure 7. Plant motif from the Heptapegon church mosaic



Figure 8. Lion detail in the Hammat Tiberias Synagogue mosaic

Depictions of objects are the least popular of all the motifs discussed but appear slightly more in churches than synagogues. It appears that while churches and synagogues used geometric and plant motifs extensively in their mosaic floors, animal motifs and depictions of objects were used more in churches than in synagogues. They may be seen as replaced, in part, with portraits and depictions of Biblical stories in Jewish synagogues.



Figure 9. Baskets detail in the Kursi church mosaic

Clear religious affiliation can be found in the use of religious symbols in the mosaic floors. The clearest religious symbols on the floors may be divided into crosses and the Jewish symbols of the *menorah*, ark of the law, *shofar*, *lulav*, *ethrog*, and incense shovel. Not surprisingly, crosses appear only in churches, but they also occur only in a small number of churches. More than half of the mosaic floors in synagogues include Jewish symbols.



Figure 10. Jewish religious symbols detail in the mosaic floor at Hammat Tiberias synagogue

As can be seen above, motifs used in the religious structures in Byzantine Palestina are repeated so often that in the 1940s Avi-Yonah concluded that the mosaicists worked from similar pattern-books throughout the region. These pattern books, said Avi Yonah, were used to decorate buildings belonging to both Christians and Jews.⁸ The analysis so far appears to confirm Avi-Yonah's conclusions and pattern-books may well explain these similarities.

Although it can be seen that specific patterns in relation to the use of mosaic art do emerge to distinguish the different religious structures, it can clearly be seen that these patterns are very subtle. Much like the architectural evidence, they will probably not allow us to identify the

⁸ M. Avi-Yonah M. "Mosaic Pavements in Palestine (A Summary)" *QDAP* III (1934): 60-73

religious identity of most structures alone. A puzzling feature of these mosaic floors, iconoclastic damage, can shed more light on the relationship of the two religious groups.

Iconoclasm

One of the most mystifying features of the mosaic floors in Byzantine Palestina is the damage found in a number of them. What is of particular interest is that only a minority of mosaic floors were left after iconoclast activity with gaping holes where animals and human figures used to be. At the majority of them, destroyed images were replaced with geometric or plant motifs, tesserae, or mortar. This clearly indicates a continued use of the religious structures.



Figure 11. Detail of duck damaged by iconoclast activity in the Kursi church mosaic

This raises the question of why only these synagogues and churches suffered iconoclast damage. If the reason was centralized policy, then why were no more than a minority of buildings affected? There were, after all, many floors in churches and synagogues featuring human and animal figures. The answer may lie in the location of the religious structures. The majority of the mutilated floors appear to be located in Judea and around Jerusalem (Beth Loya, Ein Hanniya, Asida, Shokko, Shilo, Na'aran, Ein Duk, and Susiya). Two are in the Galilee (Meroth and Kursi) and one is in modern Jordan (Mehin). That is, seven out of the eleven religious structures with mosaic floors that suffered iconoclast damage are found in the same area.

It is unlikely that this is coincidence. That this group includes five churches and two synagogues suggests the possibility that at least some of this iconoclasm was a local phenomenon shared among Jews and Christians. If this was a product of Yazid II's ban of living images, then his rule cannot have been effective across his territory. It seems more plausible that this phenomenon was a local movement and that the communities using the religious structures were responsible for the iconoclasm. Furthermore, there is no reason why this iconoclastic episode must be later than the Byzantine period.

This suggests that a dislike of depicting human and animal figures in places of worship may have been shared among Jews and Christians in Judea and the Galilee. If so, this implies a common religious movement among Jews and Christians based on a shared theological view and is the first time that such a movement has been identified using archaeological evidence

alone. This further suggests that the Jewish and Christian communities were on amicable terms, in this case possibly even engaging in a shared theological decision.

This could mean that the mutual influence of Christians and Jews went beyond mere architectural or decorative elements and actually touches on interpretation of a religious law common to them both. In this particular instance it may actually indicate ideas and concepts that have co-evolved in the Jewish and Christian communities in Palestina, although one community actively influencing the other in this regard cannot be ruled out. It may even imply that religious debate took place between Jews and Christians in Palestina in such a way as to enable common theological views to be reached.

Inscriptions and Names

Another informative feature of mosaic floors is the many inscriptions that have been found in them. Recorded inscriptions are in three main languages: Greek, Aramaic, and Samaritan. Greek is found in churches and synagogues, for example in the church at Magen and the Hammat Gader synagogue. Aramaic inscriptions are found in synagogues, for example in the synagogue in Hammat Gader. It appears that the two religious communities shared the Greek language but that Jews also used other languages for religious inscriptions. Linguistic, cultural, and ethnic affinities create social groups.⁹ That Greek was shared by both Jews and Christians in Byzantine Palestina is possibly indicative of the ease of communication between them and could hint at the possibility of a closer inter-communal relationship than might otherwise be apparent.

These inscriptions also show that it is usually impossible to distinguish between Jewish and Christian worshippers using the names in the inscriptions. Semitic names appear in churches (for example, the name Zachariah on a dedication inscription in the church in Shilo) as well as in Jewish synagogues, such as Hanninna in the Beth Shean synagogue. Greek and Latin names also appear in both churches, for example at the church at Magen and synagogues, as at Beth Shean.¹⁰

The use of language by the two communities can be explained in two ways. The first is that these two groups were, as suggested above, culturally similar to one another in many respects. Another (although not opposing) possible explanation is that Jews and Christians may have also interacted with each other to a greater extent than written sources imply. It is possible that dedication inscriptions mentioning Semitic names in churches do not indicate that these Christians have Semitic origins. These inscriptions may show that these Jews were involved with the Christian community for reasons of trade, politics, protection, personal or family friendships, or local connections—for example as inhabitants of the same area or even village. This may have been the case in the Latin and Greek names in Jewish synagogues.

Support for this explanation may be found in a ten-line Aramaic inscription from the synagogue at Hammat Gader. This mentions five Greek names: Hoplis, Proton, Salostis, Proros, and Potis, and a Semitic name: Haninna. But the title *comes* in the inscription is followed by one of the Greek names.¹¹ Sukenik argues that the use of this title in the dedicatory inscription indicates

⁹ For a discussion see for example: F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (1969), 10-16.

¹⁰ M. Avi-Yonah , "Mosaic Pavements in Palestine (A Summery)," *QDAP* III (1934): 60-73.

¹¹

that the synagogue was built no later than the first half of the fifth-century. As according to the Theodosian Code, Jews were no longer allowed to have senior positions in the Byzantine administration after 438 AD and to carry titles such as *comes*¹². However, a simpler explanation may be that the *comes* Proros was a Christian official who wished to make a contribution to the Jewish synagogue for personal, religious, business, or political reasons.

Once we have examined the religious structures themselves, a study of their distribution in the landscape can provide us with additional information about Christian-Jewish relations.

The Overall Distribution of Excavated Religious Structures

Site distribution is based on the catalogue of published Byzantine sites¹³ (See Map 1) plotted on a map of Byzantine Palestina. These distributions suggest that most areas of Palestina contained a mixture of Jews and Christians. These groups were usually not confined exclusively to particular areas, but lived side-by-side. However, the exact mix of religious communities varied from area to area and the clustering of churches and synagogues suggests that a few localities were mostly Jewish or Christian. Palestina Tertia seems to have had a smaller Jewish community than the other provinces to judge from this evidence, while Palestina Secunda was perhaps the most "mixed" of the provinces.

Religious structures of more than one religious group were found in nine settlements in Byzantine Palestina: Capernaum, Sepphoris, Beth Yerah, Beth Shean, Caesarea, Tiberias, Zur Natan, Jericho, and Ashkelon. Out of these only five were major Roman towns: Beth Shean, Caesarea, Tiberias, Jericho, and Ashkelon. The rest were rural settlements: Capernaum, Sepphoris, Beth Yerah, and Zur Natan. Thus, although it would be tempting to reach the conclusion that religious groups mingled only in major cosmopolitan settlements, this is not shown by these distributions. The fact is both towns and small rural settlements show evidence of co-existence.

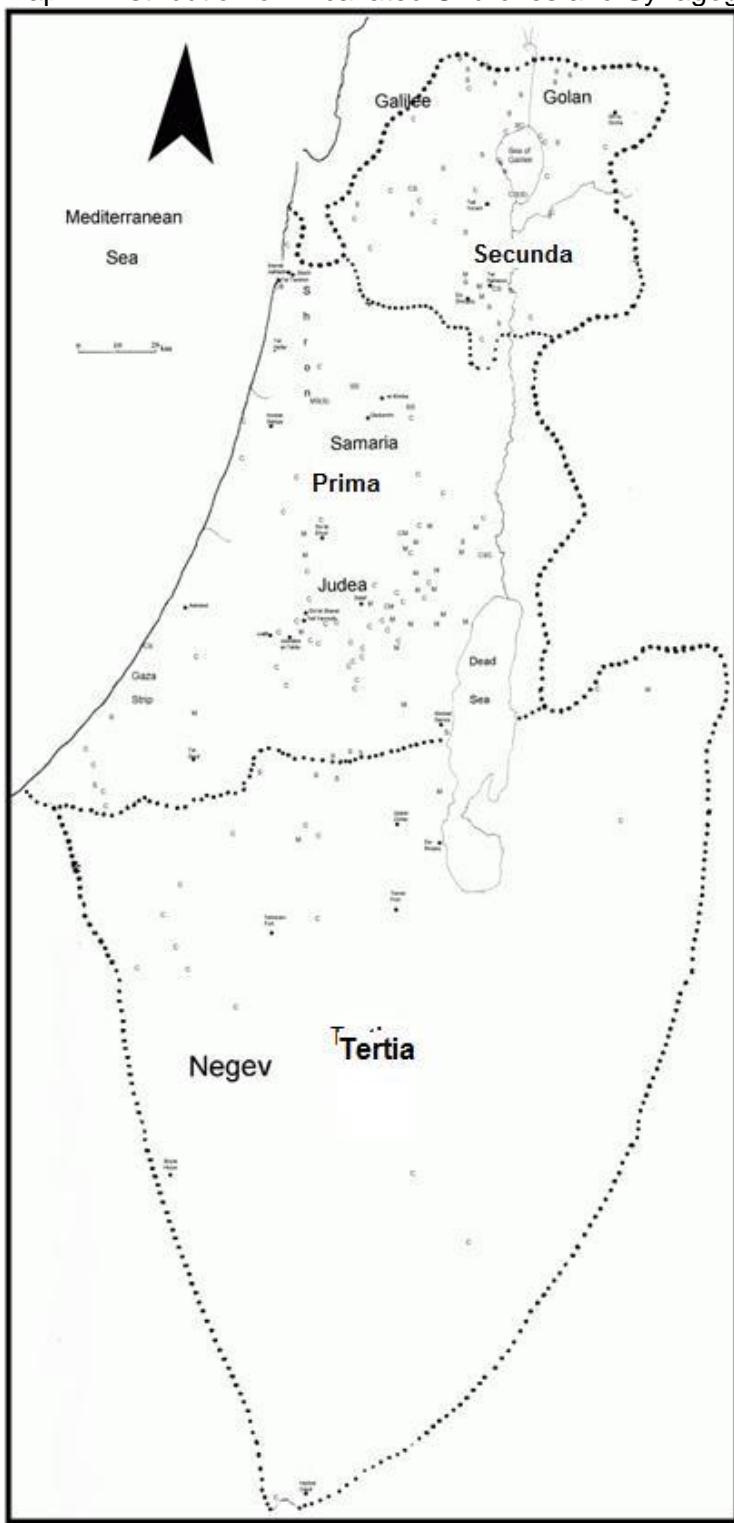
נוה י' תשל"ח על 601פ' ואבן, הכתובות הארמיות והערניות מימי הכנסת העתיקים ת"א, 55-54

¹²

סוקניק אל' לא כותרת' תרצ"ה ק/בז ג, 59

¹³ Ibid., 189-558.

Map 1. Distribution of Excavated Churches and Synagogues in Byzantine Palestina



C-Church, S-Synagogue, SS-Samaritan Synagogue, M-Monastery

Having examined the religious structures of the Jewish and Christian communities in the Holy Land, it is appropriate to compare them with churches and synagogue of the same period elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire.

Comparison to Religious Structures in the Byzantine Empire

A brief study¹⁴ into the architectural and decorative characteristics of religious structures in the Byzantine Empire outside of Palestina found no major differences between churches and synagogues in the rest of the Empire and those found in Palestina.¹⁵ The use of a single apse or niche in Byzantine synagogues, as compared to the triple apses and apse flanked by two rooms in those in Palestina may indicate the greater influence of church architecture on synagogues in Palestina. However, possible hints of church architecture can be seen in the design of other Early Byzantine synagogues, as can be seen in the case of the ‘synthronon’ at Sardis.

Moving away from religious evidence into semi religious evidence, we will now examine Jewish and Christian burials.

Burials

Burials took place in two contexts in Byzantine Palestina¹⁶: In or near religious structures or in cemeteries without religious structures. Burials in religious contexts are found in churches and monasteries but not in synagogues. Burials in more secular contexts are found in cemeteries, burial caves, and individual graves near settlements. It is probably safe to assume that most burials at churches and monasteries were those of Christians and these were employed here in an effort to identify local Christian burial customs and then attempt to establish any differences between Christian and Jewish burial practice in Byzantine Palestina.

A detailed comparative analysis¹⁷ between burials in definably Christian and more “secular” contexts, outside the scope of this paper, provides no new light on the difference between the burial customs and practices of Jews and Christians. Christian symbols do appear to indicate the religious identity of the individuals using them and this appears to hold true in burials as well as in other contexts. However, no Jewish symbols were found in burial contexts and nothing, apart from the most obvious forms of Christian symbolism, can be seen to provide us with information about the religious identity of the buried individuals. This may be an indication of the extent to which the different religious communities used similar burial customs—so much so that currently no methods are available to distinguish them from one another.

Secular Evidence for Religious Identity

Religious structures and burials are not the only way for us to ascertain the presence of the different communities in the landscape of Palestina by means of archaeological evidence. It may be possible to fill in the many blanks left by using so-called “secular” evidence to recognize religious identity.

Unless one credits the evidence of religious symbols on portable artifacts, secular domestic contexts in Byzantine Palestina often produce, at best, ambiguous evidence for the religious identity

¹⁴ E. Ribak, “Religious Communities in Byzantine Palestina: the Relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, AD 400 – 700”, *BAR International Series* 1646 (2007): 34-41.

¹⁵ Ibid., 63-72.

¹⁶ Ibid., 189-558.

¹⁷ Ibid., 172-186.

of those who lived in them. It is also true that symbolism is not always as clear-cut as might be imagined. Specifically “religious” artifacts or religious symbols were often acceptable in more than one religious context. Christians can in principle (and could in the Byzantine period) use virtually every “Jewish symbol” to symbolize Christianity.¹⁸

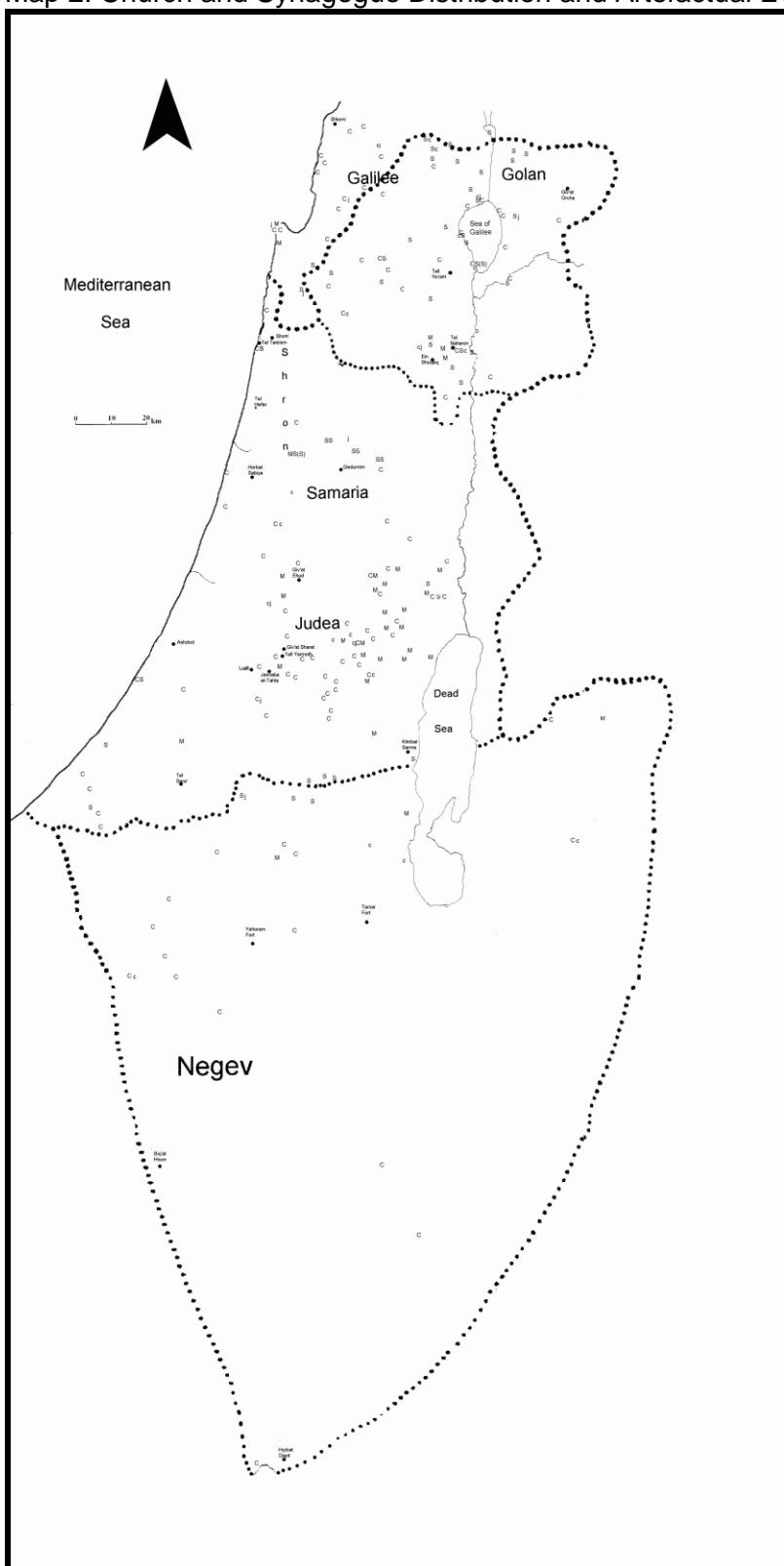
In secular domestic contexts, animal bone studies (when available) may provide the best indicator of the presence of Jewish and non-Jewish communities because of Jewish dietary laws. Unfortunately, the number of detailed and reliable animal bone studies is small. Nevertheless, Brian Hesse and Paula Wapnish have shown that settlements with known Jewish populations did not engage in pig farming. This demonstrates, they suggest, that the social identity expressed in dietary law regarding pig-consumption is archaeologically recoverable.¹⁹ This seems a possible way of evaluating the degree of correlation between religious symbols on artifacts and religious identity.

Another reliable tool for distinguishing Jewish presence are *miqves* (Jewish ritual baths), but these are only found infrequently in domestic structures. However, the majority of secular sites have neither animal bone study nor *miqves* to indicate religious affiliation.

¹⁸ See for example: S. Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (2005), 146-163.

¹⁹ B. Hesse and P. Wapnish. “Can Pig Remains Be Used for Ethnic Diagnosis in the Ancient Near East?” in N.A. Silberman and D. Small, eds., *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past and Interpreting the Present* (1997), 241-251.

Map 2. Church and Synagogue Distribution and Artefactual Evidence



C-Church, S-Synagogue, SS-Samaritan Synagogue, M-Monastery,
c-Artefactual Evidence for Christians, j-Artefactual Evidence for Jews/Samaritans

The analysis²⁰, which is outside the scope of this paper, appears to show a connection between the symbols decorating the artifact and the religion of the people who used it. Anomalies do occur, but no more than can be explained by a close relationship between religious communities. Despite the small number of animal bone studies, a correlation between symbols and animal bone evidence is apparent. This has clear implications for the study of Byzantine Palestina. The evidence from Qasrawet, Jalame, Capernaum, Shiqmona, Bethany, Gezer and Tarshiha suggests that Christians and Jews may well have lived together in the same settlements. However, it should be stressed that artifacts carrying religious symbols are not enough in themselves to indicate a place of worship. All this might show is that persons of a particular religion were at a site.

It is interesting to note that in Palestina Secunda this artifactual evidence appears to "echo" the evidence of religious structures regarding the distribution of the religious communities. This correspondence may encourage greater confidence in using artifactual evidence in this way. In the case of Capernaum, both artifactual and religious evidence indicates a Jewish and Christian community. Horbat Kanaf shows both religious and artifactual evidence for Jewish occupation. Tiberias shows religious evidence of Christian and Jewish groups and artifactual evidence for Christians. Beth-Yerah also shows evidence for Christians and Jews or Samaritans, although artifactual evidence supports a predominantly Christian identity, rather than a Jewish/Samaritan one. In Mishmar haEmek, religious and artifactual evidence both indicate a Christian community. In Beth Shean, there seems to have been both Jewish and Christian communities from both types of evidence.

The most interesting results of artifactual analysis perhaps occur where the religious structures and artifactual evidence imply different interpretations. In the northern Galilee, Bar'am and Gush Halab seem to have been Jewish settlements but we find artifactual evidence for the presence of Christians. This further "breaks up" the cluster of evidence for Jewish settlement in the area. Jalame may be added on this basis to the "Beth Shean" group of settlements. As both Jewish and Christian artifactual evidence was found in Jalame, this is perhaps another indication of co-existence between Christians and Jews in the Beth Shean Valley.

Unlike the situation in Palestina Secunda, the artifactual evidence from Palestina Prima tends to alter the picture derived from examining religious structures. In Judea, there were very few synagogues but artifactual evidence indicates that Jews are likely to have lived in the area. The existence of a Jewish community is also suggested by artifactual evidence at Beth Goverin, Bethany, and near Amaos. This may indicate a Jewish minority in the predominantly Christian region of Judea. Without this artifactual evidence it would be easy to say that there were no Jews in Judea, apart from the north-eastern Negev, yet this was clearly not the case.

In the northern Sharon, there is ample evidence that the inhabitants of the Ramat haNadiv villa were Christians. It is located near Caesarea—a settlement that, as we have seen, had both a Jewish and a Christian population. Artifactual evidence of Jews was also found in Samaria. Whereas churches were found in Samaria, there is no evidence of Jewish synagogues in the region. So artifacts provide the only archaeological evidence for the existence of both Jews and Christians in this area.

²⁰ E. Ribak, "Everyday Artifacts as Indicators of Religious Belief in Byzantine Palestina" in K. Dark, ed., *Secular Buildings and the Archaeology of Everyday life in the Byzantine Empire* (2004), 123-132.

In Palestina Tertia, artifactual evidence supports the picture derived from religious structures even more completely. In Horbat Rimon, both artifactual evidence and a synagogue demonstrate a Jewish community. In Nessana, artifactual and structural evidence equally attest a Christian community. At a-Lagon, a church and artifacts indicate that the fort was manned by Christians. Overall, artifactual evidence does not change the picture of the distribution of religious and ethnic communities in Palestina Tertia outlined above on the basis of religious structures alone.

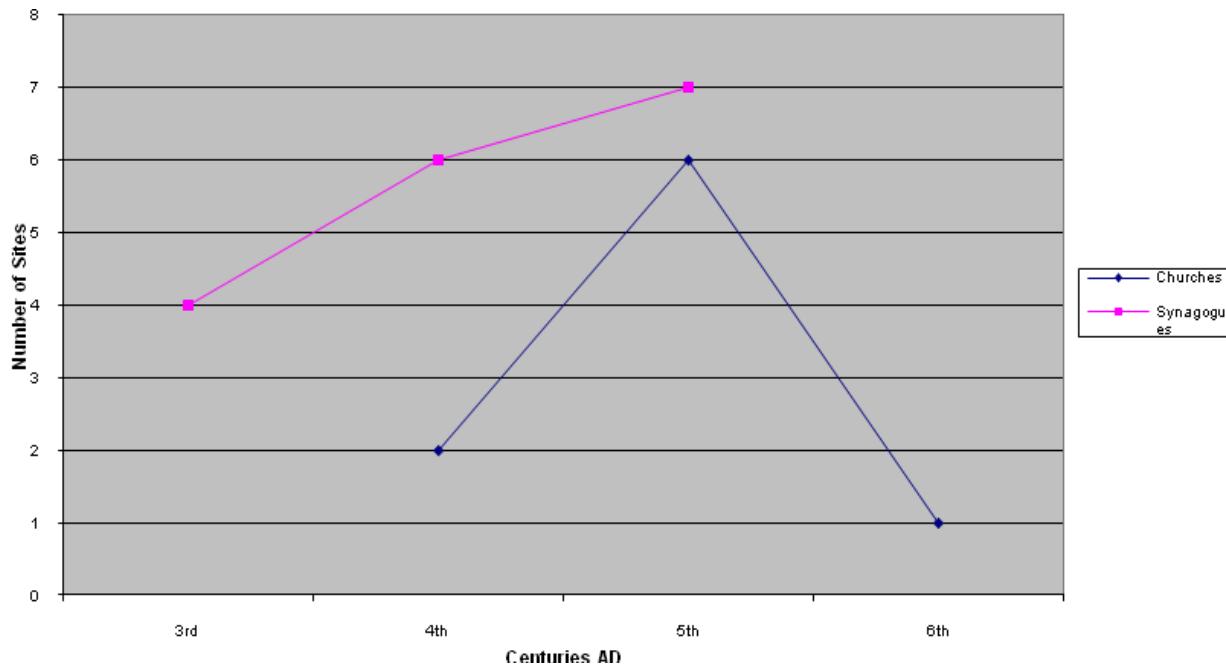
It can be seen, therefore, that artifacts may indicate religious identity in Byzantine Palestina but that this consolidates, rather than overturns, the general picture derived from religious structures regarding the composition and distribution of the religious communities of Byzantine Palestina.

Having examined the religious and secular archaeological evidence available in the Holy Land, we will now conclude this study by looking at the chronology of the sites to get a picture of exactly when these sites were used.

Chronology

The most problematical aspect of archaeological research in Byzantine Palestina is chronology. Complete reliance on the excavator's dating, even for comparatively well-dated sites, is seldom possible. Only in those cases where sealed finds are reported and the site is dated using them, or where scientific methods such as radiocarbon dating are employed, is it possible to rely upon the excavators' conclusions. However, in many cases excavators say only that they base their dating on "stratigraphical analysis" without giving more details, even in what are apparently intended to be "final reports" of excavations. It is difficult to treat these sites without suspicion if nothing more is known about this alleged analysis and it cannot be examined and commented on by other scholars.

This leaves us few trustworthy site-chronologies that may be used in the study of Byzantine Palestina. Most of these sites are dated by finds in their foundations, providing a *Terminus Post Quem* for construction. The sum of these results may be expressed in the following graph:



Graph 1. TPQs for the Foundation of Religious Structures

Although this is a relatively very small number of sites compared to the total of 286, these TPQ construction dates can be seen to provide an interesting spread of dates for Byzantine synagogues. One has a TPQ to the first-century and one in the mid-Roman period, but the rest are spread from the third to the fifth centuries. Four synagogues have a third-century TPQ, six have a fourth-century TPQ and seven have a fifth-century TPQ.

Unfortunately, even fewer churches have good TPQ dating. Nevertheless, the spread of TPQ dating for churches is very interesting. One church is designated as having a "Post Roman TPQ," two churches have a fourth-century TPQ, six have a fifth-century TPQ, and one a sixth-century TPQ. In addition, an anomaly presents itself in the shape of a religious structure with no obvious designation as either a church or a synagogue, or perhaps even a very early mosque that was constructed after the beginning of the seventh-century.

It is worth noting that whereas four synagogues have TPQ dates in the third-century, there are no churches with similar data. Churches begin to appear in Byzantine Palestina after the beginning of the fourth-century, when an increase in the number of synagogues can also be seen. A steady increase in the number of churches and synagogues constructed after the fifth-century is also clear, the number of synagogues going from six to eight, whereas the number of churches rising from two to three. This can be seen to support the idea of the continuity of both religious communities in Byzantine Palestina. According to these data, no synagogues were built after the fifth-century, whereas churches were built after the beginning of the sixth-century. The beginning of the construction of churches in Palestina after the beginning of the fourth-century does not appear to have hindered in any way the construction of Jewish synagogues. Rather, the increase in numbers of both churches and synagogues at the same time seems to indicate two thriving communities.

Conclusion

Architecture, mosaics and burials indicate no significant variation in practice between Christians and Jews in Palestina. Nor can one identify a discrepancy in the range of wealth between these two communities, although of course some churches attracted greater patronage from imperial and official sources. This is in contrast to the inferences drawn by scholars such as Cyril Mango, who argue that the wealthy were Christian officials, clergy and major landowners, whereas Jews were largely barred from official service.²¹ The obvious prosperity seen in Jewish synagogues and domestic settlements show that Jews as well as Christians clearly grew prosperous in Palestina. This refutes the suggestion that only Christians enjoyed the fruits of the Empire's wealth and, if this derived—even in part—from agriculture it also attests not only the productivity of the region but also probably the existence of wealthy Jewish landowners.

The settlement distribution data show that the landscape of Palestina contained Jews and Christians living side-by-side, sometimes in the same settlements. There were some mostly Christian and mostly Jewish areas, but even these contained representatives of the other religious groups, at least in the towns. This residential co-existence provides a context for the relations seen so far and may further support the pattern of peaceful co-existence indicated by analysis of the excavated religious structures and burials.

The limited chronological data for the construction of structures in Byzantine Palestina confirms the general impression of prosperity and population expansion. The construction and reconstruction of churches, synagogues, and secular structures peaks in the fourth and fifth centuries, just as wealth and population numbers also rise during these centuries. This may demonstrate the extent to which the peaceful relations and co-existence of the religious communities of Palestina were beneficial to its prosperity and well-being of those who lived within the provinces.

Texts record revolts by Jews and Samaritans against Byzantine rule, as well as virulent diatribes by Christians against Jews in Palestina and its surroundings. The archaeological record, however, shows exactly the opposite: peaceful and amicable Jewish-Christian relations. Indeed a veritable Golden Age.

²¹ C. Mango, *Byzantium: the Empire of New Rome* London, (1980), 32-59.