

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Synagogue in Ancient Palestine

Current Issues and Emerging Trends

22–24 September 2016

University of Helsinki



Conference program and other information

The conference is funded by:



Centre of Excellence in Changes in Sacred Texts and Traditions
Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki

Centre of Excellence
Faculty of Theology,
University of Helsinki

Reason and
Religious
Recognition

The conference is organized in
co-operation with:



Foundation
of the Finnish Institute
in the Middle East

Welcome!

Welcome to the conference “The Synagogue in Ancient Palestine: Current Issues and Emerging Trends”! In this booklet we will provide you with information on the conference program, abstracts, and travel information.

The study of synagogues in ancient Palestine is flourishing more than ever. In the last decade at least four synagogues — one from the Late Second Temple-period (Magdala) and three dating to Late Antiquity (Kh. Wadi Hamam, Horvat Kur, Huqoq) — have been exposed by different archaeological expeditions. There is a thriving debate among scholars regarding the functioning and significance of these buildings within the Jewish communities of Palestine. Another continuing debate among archaeologists is the identification and dating of the exposed architectural remains. The excavations of the three above-mentioned late-antique synagogues have exposed richly decorated mosaic floors, which has added to our knowledge of the development of Jewish art. The conference “*The Synagogue in Ancient Palestine. Current Issues and Emerging Trends*” provides an opportunity for our speakers and participants to discuss current issues in the field.

Funding for the conference is generously provided by the *Centre of Excellence in Changes in Sacred Texts and Traditions* and the *Centre of Excellence in Reason and Religious Recognition*, both Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki. The conference is organized in co-operation with the *Foundation of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East*.

The Organizers

Rick Bonnie, Raimo Hakola & Ulla Tervahauta

Conference Program

Wednesday September 21, 2016

Location: University of Helsinki, Porthania Building (Yliopistonkatu 3), Sali II

- 18:00 **Public lecture** organized by the Finnish Institute in the Middle East (FIME):
“*Samson in Stone: New Discoveries in the Ancient Village and Synagogue at Huqoq in Israel's Galilee*”, Prof. Dr. Jodi Magness (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)
- 19:00 **Reception** for conference participants
Location: University of Helsinki, Faculty of Theology (Vuorikatu 3), Faculty room (5th floor)

Thursday September 22, 2016

Location: University of Helsinki, Main building (Yliopistonkatu 4/Favianinkatu 33), Sali 10

- 9:15-9:30 **Opening words** by organizers

Session 1: Contextualizing synagogue art

- 9:30-10:20 **Keynote lecture:** *Visual vs. Virtual Reality: Interpreting Synagogue Mosaic Art*
Zeev Weiss (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel)
- 10:20-10:50 *A Re-reading of the Japhi'a Circle*
Géza G. Xeravits (Selye J. University, Slovakia)
- 10:50-11:20 *Coffee & tea break (30 min.)*
- 11:20-11:50 *The Style of the Synagogue of Beth Alpha Mosaics*
Lidia Chakovskaya (Moscow State University, Russia)
- 11:50-12:20 *The Appearance of the Menorah in Ancient Jewish Art*
Gary Gilbert (Claremont McKenna College, USA)
- 12:20-13:50 *Lunch (1.5 hours)*

Session 2: Leadership, power and daily life in the synagogues

- 13:50-14:40 **Keynote lecture:** *Writing as Power: Texts and Daily Life in Ancient Levantine Synagogues*
Karen B. Stern (CUNY Brooklyn College, USA)
- 14:40-15:10 *The Role of Jewish Priests in Early Synagogue Leadership and Worship*
Matthew J. Grey (Brigham Young University, USA)
- 15:10-15:40 *Coffee & tea break (30 min.)*
- 15:40-16:10 *The Upper Room as Triclinium? Textual and material evidence*
Eric Ottenheijm (University of Utrecht, the Netherlands)
- 16:10-16:40 *The Art of Persuasion: The Socio-Political Context of Public Synagogue Debates in the Second-Temple Period*
Jordan J. Ryan (Wheaton College, USA)

17:30-18:30 **Visit** to the Helsinki Synagogue (Rabbi Simon Livson)

19:00 **Dinner** for conference presenters

Friday September 23, 2016

Location: University of Helsinki, Main building (Yliopistonkatu 4/Favianinkatu 33), Sali 10

Session 3: Synagogues in the late antique landscape

9:30-10:20 **Keynote lecture:** *Floors, Benches, and a Platform. The Synagogue at Horvat Kur as Liturgical Space*

Jürgen K. Zangenberg (Leiden University, the Netherlands)

10:20-10:50 *Galilean Synagogues in the Context of Ancient Religious Competition*

Raimo Hakola (University of Helsinki, Finland)

10:50-11:20 *Coffee & tea break (30 min.)*

11:20-11:50 *How Many Synagogues Were Found, Where and Why?*

Chaim Ben David (Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee, Israel)

11:50-12:20 *The Torah shrine in Byzantine synagogues*

Ulla Tervahauta (University of Helsinki, Finland)

12:20-13:50 *Lunch (1.5 hours)*

Session 4: Early synagogues and the 70 CE 'watershed'

13:50-14:20 *The Early Roman Synagogue at Khirbet Qana*

Tom McCollough (Centre College, USA)

14:20-14:50 *Reassessing the Impact of 70 CE on the Origins and Development of Palestinian Synagogues*

Wally Cirafesi & Anders Runesson (University of Oslo, Norway)

14:50-15:20 *Coffee & tea break (30 min.)*

15:20-15:50 *A Jewish Village and a Public Building from the Second Temple Period and the Bar Kokhba Revolt at Horvat 'Ethri, Judean Shephelah*

Boaz Zissu (Bar Ilan University, Israel)

15:50-16:20 *Early Synagogues: Some thoughts on the why and how of their appearance*

Rick Bonnie (University of Helsinki, Finland)

Saturday September 24, 2016

Location: University of Helsinki, Main building (Yliopistonkatu 4/Favianinkatu 33), Auditorium XIII

Session 5: Dating the late antique synagogues

9:30-10:20 **Keynote lecture:** *The Huqoq Synagogue: A Regional Variant of the Galilean Type*

Jodi Magness (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA)

10:20-10:50 *Ancient Synagogue Dating and the Primary Source Data Divide*

Chad Spigel (Trinity University, USA)

- 10:50-11:20 *Coffee & tea break (30 min.)*
- 11:20-11:50 *Dating Capernaum Synagogue by Stylistic Method. Some Aspects of its Reconstruction*
Svetlana Tarkhanova (Russian Academy of Architecture and Building Science, Russia)
- 11:50-12:20 *Supporting a regional typology of the ancient synagogues in Israel*
Mordechai Aviam (Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee, Israel)
- 12:20-13:00 **Discussion and closing words** by organizers
- 13:00-14:30 *Lunch (1.5 hours)*
- 14:30-17:00 Helsinki city center tour (optional)
Gathering spot: Front side of the University of Helsinki Main Building (Fabianinkatu 33, on the side of the Senate Square)

Abstracts

WEDNESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2016

This public lecture is organized by the Finnish Institute in the Middle East (FIME)

Samson in Stone: New Discoveries in the Ancient Village and Synagogue at Huqoq in Israel's Galilee

Jodi Magness

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Since 2011, Professor Jodi Magness has been directing excavations in the ancient village of Huqoq in Israel's Galilee. The excavations have brought to light the remains of a monumental Late Roman (5th century CE) synagogue building that is paved with stunning and unique mosaics, including depictions of the biblical hero Samson and the first non-biblical story ever found decorating an ancient synagogue. In this slide-illustrated lecture, Professor Magness describes these exciting finds, including the discoveries made in the summer 2016 season.

THURSDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2016

Visual vs. Virtual Reality: Interpreting Synagogue Mosaic Art

Zeev Weiss

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Ancient synagogue art varies in both subject matter and artistic quality. While the exterior walls of some synagogues in the Galilee and Golan were adorned with decorative elements, most synagogue buildings focused on enhancing the inner space of the prayer hall. Already noticeable in the Late Roman period, and intensifying significantly in the course of the Byzantine period, many motifs that were incorporated in synagogue art were inspired by Graeco-Roman and early Christian iconographic traditions, albeit varying from one community to the next.

This paper will present an overview of synagogue art from in late antique Palestine in light of recent finds, primarily its floor mosaics. Three synagogues will serve as the focus of the discussion—Khirbet Ḥamam (late 3rd–early 4th centuries CE), Sepphoris (early 5th century CE), and 'En Gedi (late 5th–early 6th centuries CE). Although each mosaic contains a variety of depictions arranged in their own unique layout, they nevertheless reflect some of the major trends characterizing Jewish mosaic art in this era. Several theories regarding the interpretation of synagogue mosaics will be discussed in light of recent scholarship, methodological difficulties relating to certain interpretations will be addressed, and alternative approaches that could facilitate future studies of these synagogue mosaics, and others, will be proposed.

A Rereading of the Japhi'a Circle

Géza G. Xeravits

Selye J. University, Komarno

At the western end of the nave of the Japhi'a synagogue scanty remains of a complex mosaic panel are preserved. In a rectangular frame two concentric circles appear, the area between the circles is populated by a series of smaller medallions. One and a half of them are actually preserved, but it is clear that originally there were 12. Scholars interpret this panel in two different ways. On the one hand, Sukenik holds that it is the representation of the twelve Israelite tribes, whereas Goodenough understands it as the circle of zodiac. Both interpretations have their serious pros and cons. This presentation rereads the available evidence—textual, iconographic, and epigraphical—and evaluates the earlier interpretations; then, it tries to contextualise the Japhi'a circle into the art of Late Antique Palestinian synagogues.

The Style of the Synagogue of Beth Alpha mosaics (6th century CE): The clash between the text and the image and the emergence of new aesthetic of the sacred

Lidia Chakovskaya

Moscow State University

Beth Alpha and its famous 6th century CE mosaics occupy a special place in the history of Jewish Art as well as of Byzantine Art. Discovered in 1928 and published in 1932 by E.L. Sukenik it had occupied until recently the place of one of the most characteristic images of Jewish Art of Late Antiquity. Among the striking features of the mosaic was the combination of the extensive and elaborate program and the extremely graphic, expressive and primitivistic, even grotesque style. Another unique feature of the mosaic—the added Biblical quotations that animate the scene of the Sacrifice of Isaac. The origins of the style can hardly be explained by the lack of professionalism, for these same artists Marianos and Aninas are known for their other more conventional mosaic in neighbouring Beth-Shean.

The aim of my paper is to look at the style of the Beth Alpha mosaic as on a sort of experiment, in which artists had explored the problem of depicting the sacred. The methods used by the Beth-Alpha artist were never studied in detail. The style has no exact parallels in the Holy Land, but it had been noted by E.L. Sukenik that there is an obvious parallel here with the art of Christian Egypt, i.e. Coptic art with its bold expressionism. How can this comparison illumine our understanding today? The special bond between the image and the text also seems to be rooted in Egyptian tradition, where the text had developed out of image and preserved this connection. It appears, that in Beth Alpha the image becomes a special kind of text while the text acquires the qualities of the image. The usage of extant biblical quotations has few parallels among the mosaics of the Holy Land. It is exactly because the image is not enough that the text appears nearby. As such it is one of the brightest evidence of the profound transformation of culture, which took place in the first centuries of the CE., when culture became centred around the Text.

The clash between classical and anti-classical concepts is evident in the majority of the mosaic panels found in the Byzantine Palestine (as was recently described by R. Talgam), but in Beth-Alpha we see testing the classical art to its limits and exploring the other means of expression, such as the equality between the text and the image. The linear, volumeless character of mosaics, the paradoxical use of colour and perspective create a feeling of conscious denial of naturalistic principles in order to convey the situation of encountering the sacred, of being a witness of the very moment of the Sacrifice of Isaac and the birth of the Chosen people. It reveals the biblical idea that there always is a lap between the image and the depth of meaning, which could be found in texts. For ages the notion of beauty was vital for producing the work of art. Now it is the idea of the presence of the sacred which becomes central for the artist. The only mean of conveying it is through changing the usual Greco-Roman aesthetic. Dur-

ing the presentation I am going to explore E.L. Sukenik's idea of the Coptic origin of style of Beth-Alpha and suggest several other parallels to its style, found both in Egypt and in Ravenna.

The Appearance of the Menorah in Ancient Jewish Art

Gary Gilbert

Claremont McKenna College

Among the numerous images and motifs that decorate synagogues in Byzantine Palestine, the menorah certainly earns pride of place. The menorah, the seven-branched candelabra, is the most frequently represented images, found in Palestinian synagogues from the fourth century, such as Hammat Tiberias, through the sixth century, such as at Beth Alpha. Menorahs appear in floor mosaics and stone carvings. Often the menorah appears along with other objects associated with the Jerusalem Temple, such as the *luluv* and *ethrog*, the symbols of the festival of Sukkot. Representations of the menorah are not restricted to the synagogue, but appear in numerous other contexts, such as in the necropolis of Beth She'arim or on lamps or as a decoration in glass and jewelry. As common as representations of the menorah are in Byzantine synagogues and Jewish art more generally, they almost never appear in synagogues or any public display before the destruction of the Temple. The most notable exception is the menorah carved on the stone table from first century synagogue CE at Magdala. The development of the depiction of the menorah from absent to ubiquitous demands for an explanation. This paper attempts such an explanation by focusing on the display of the menorah taken from the Jerusalem Temple and put on display in the Temple of Peace in Rome. The paper argues that the decision by the Flavian emperors to exhibit the menorah as a sign of Rome's magnificent triumph in 70 CE prompted Jews to adopt the object as the primary symbol of their identity and the deity they worshipped. While the understanding and interpretation of the menorah may have changed over time, its adoption as the pre-eminent Jewish symbol begins with its rescue from becoming a sign of defeat to a symbol not only of communal and spiritual continuity, but also resistance to Roman power.

Writing as Power: Texts and Daily Life in Ancient Levantine Synagogues

Karen B. Stern

CUNY Brooklyn College

Remarkable archaeological and epigraphic finds continue to transform our understandings of the role of the synagogue in the daily lives of Levantine Jews in late antiquity. The most exciting and notable of these discoveries, however, are best described as monumental — smoothly dressed architectural features, carefully tessellated polychromatic mosaics, and precisely carved inscriptions — which record the generous activities of synagogue officials and donors. Such architectural, artistic, and epigraphic elements, exacted by professionally trained artisans for display to passersby, embed historical information critical for reconstructing the communal activities once conducted in synagogue buildings, including those of prayer, donation, and assembly. But other types of finds were also discovered inside and around synagogues of late ancient Palestine and Syria. These include inscribed ceramic sherds and metal sheets, deposited inside and around building foundations, as well as abbreviated texts and pictures, once scratched and painted onto walls, columns, and doorways. Such diverse genres of writing and decoration, often described as 'vernacular' or popular, appear to be aesthetically inferior to their monumental counterparts. This paper, nonetheless, advocates closer and more systematic attention to the composition and placement of these texts and pictures, to illuminate how ancient Jews used writing to transform their surrounding devotional environments. Examination of these types of inscriptions, through the lenses of landscape, spatial and anthropological theories, ultimately reveals otherwise unrecognized ways that Levantine Jews behaved within their synagogues.

The Role of Jewish Priests in Early Synagogue Leadership and Worship

Matthew J. Grey
Brigham Young University

Traditionally, scholarship on early Judaism has assumed that the socio-religious influence of priests was largely restricted to the cultic sphere of the Jerusalem temple, while other groups (including scribes, Pharisees, and proto-rabbis) were popular leaders of Jewish communities and institutions outside of a temple setting. However, a growing corpus of epigraphic, literary, and archaeological evidence suggests that, before 70 CE, the socio-religious influence of priests extended well beyond the Jerusalem temple cult and that, after 70, much of that priestly influence persevered within some circles of the Jewish community. In particular, priests during both the Second Temple period and Late Antiquity seem to have been much more involved in synagogue leadership and liturgy than was previously thought.

This paper will consider the evidence for priestly leadership in some synagogues and the role priests often played in facilitating synagogue worship both before and after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Evidence for priestly involvement in early synagogues can be found in dedicatory and funerary inscriptions, in a variety of literary sources describing synagogue liturgy, and in the surviving features of some synagogue buildings. This confluence of evidence suggests that, in several Jewish communities, synagogues were natural venues for priests to extend their influence on the local level while the temple still stood, and to continue providing ritual mediation between God and the community after the temple's destruction. This evidence also shows that priestly synagogue activity in Late Antiquity was not an innovation of the post-temple period, but was a continuation and natural development of priestly involvement in synagogue gatherings from their earliest days.

The Upper Room as *Triclinium*? Textual and material evidence

Eric Ottenheijm
Utrecht University

Lee Levine (*The Ancient Synagogue*, 2nd ed. [New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005], 393–95) argues that a synagogue could be used as well for common meals, even if some Rabbinic traditions view this practice negatively. This paper addresses the hypothesis that it may have been especially the upper room that could function as a *triclinium*, Hebrew *traqlin*. Both the New Testament and Rabbinic literature mention an upper room as a place of gathering of teachers and their disciples. While in the New Testament the upper room (*kataluma*, *anagaion*, or *huperooion*) is mentioned in connection with both dining and teaching, Rabbinic texts mention the upper room (*alya*) in legal discussions on private houses, but also in narratives on the policies of the Sages while being gathered. The functions of the upper room appear manifold: social, as a gathering place, as a living quarter, or as a storage room. Gathering in order to teach or discuss matters of Torah appear as well. While the Mishna discusses whether or not the upper room is part of a private house, and narratives about the Sages gatherings in an upper room are connected to private houses (f.e. the House of Nitsa or Aris in Lydda, T.Shabbath 15:7 et parr.; Sifrei Deut. 41; b.Kidd. 40a) other traditions (f.e. M.Eruvin 6:6) suggest upper rooms as dining facilities to be a part of a public building. Actually, the Rabbinic text discussing the order of a common meal (T.Berakhot 4:7) may refer to an upper room as well, since the guests are supposed to 'go up' (*alu*) to recline, a verb used in contexts of entering an upper room (m.Shabbath 1:4; y.Shabbath 1:4; Sifr.Numeri 115 et parr.). Could these upper rooms be part of synagogues? The Theodotos inscription, mentioning a *katalyma*, the upper room mentioned in the Stobi synagogue inscription, and remnants of staircases found in or near synagogues in the Galilee suggest some synagogues to have housed upper rooms, and probably used as well for lodging and dining. Even if some Rabbis warned against

alleged frivolities connected to housing these mundane functions in a sacred realm, Levine's assessment may be correct.

**The Art of Persuasion:
The Socio-Political Context of Public Synagogue Debates in the Second-Temple Period**

Jordan J. Ryan
Wheaton College

Recent synagogue research has helped to clarify the central role played by public synagogues in local-official administration and politics during the late Second-Temple period in Palestine. The public synagogue was a venue for legal and political deliberation and debate in Jewish locales. This paper explores how such debates were resolved and decisions were made by examining literary evidence drawn from the Hellenistic and early Roman periods as well as the architecture of Second-Temple period synagogue buildings. The picture that emerges from the evidence suggests that the popular assembly, including both the elites and the townspeople, would need to be persuaded of the wisdom of any given teaching or position, and that the outcomes of these discourses can be conceived in terms of honour and shame. Engaging in such discussions in public synagogues was a risky endeavor, as the public synagogue was a local-official institution in which one's social status, conceived in terms of honour and shame, could be made or broken. Prestige, reputation, and standing in the community were at stake. As such, at the core of the assemblies were people of high social status and influence, such as local council members, magistrates (ἄρχοντες), and patrons such as the ἀρχισυνάγωγοι, who were in competition to obtain honour. People seeking upward mobility, such as the scribes in the Gospel narratives, could also use the public synagogue as a place to obtain recognition and prestige, through convincing teaching, rhetoric, and public acts of piety or charity. Members of partisan associations might also be present in synagogue settings, aiming to further their specific group agendas. In order for any of these goals to be met, the public would need to be persuaded. Honour ultimately depends upon public recognition. As such, the townspeople played an important role in synagogue proceedings. If the majority of the townspeople could not be persuaded, an opinion or teaching would be rejected as folly. This study aims to illuminate the nature of the political role played by synagogues in early Palestinian Jewish society, and to shed light on the institutional workings of local-official synagogue gatherings.

FRIDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2016

Floors, Benches, and a Platform. The Synagogue at Horvat Kur as Liturgical Space

Jürgen K. Zangenberg
Leiden University

The summer campaign 2016 brought excavations in the synagogue of the Roman-Byzantine village on Horvat Kur in Galilee to a preliminary end. From next year on, Kinneret Regional Project will focus on the intensive analysis of the building and the preparation of its final publication. Time, therefore, to look back and recapitulate what has been found during seven excavation seasons between 2007 and 2016. After briefly introducing the site and aims of the project, the presentation will discuss evidence for dating the various phases of the synagogue site and a number of special finds and features.

It turns out that the synagogue, despite its relatively poor preservation, offers much detail to reflect about the social and liturgical functions for the congregation that built it. The synagogue's layout with various seating arrangements and a large platform, as well as extraordinary finds such as a mosaic

fragment with the depiction of a *menorah*, a single stone seat *in situ* and a decorated stone table in secondary use will help us understand the synagogue at Horvat Kur as liturgical space.

Galilean Synagogues in the Context of Ancient Social and Religious Competition

Raimo Hakola
University of Helsinki

The newly found synagogues at Horvat Kur and Huqoq have complemented the repertoire of impressive late antique synagogues in the eastern Galilee represented earlier by the synagogues of Capernaum and Chorazin. These synagogues now provide more material to examine these public buildings as manifestations of the aspirations of local communities. The communities in question had enough resources, both in terms of material and human capital, to build up and maintain these monumental building.

The paper tries to place the construction of Galilean synagogues in the context of ancient social and religious competition. It has been argued that ancient Jews found Greco-Roman agonistic culture as antithetical to Jewish ideals and, therefore, tried to find acceptable ways to express, for example, benefaction (*euergetism*). The paper suggests, however, that some aspects of social and religious competition could be relevant for understanding the building of monumental synagogues even in fairly remote, rural contexts. This competition could take place in two different ways: on the one hand, between rival, neighboring cities, communities and villages, and, on the other hand, between individuals who belonged to the same locale or community. The first type could be seen in the adoption and recycling of various common, Jewish as well as non-Jewish, themes and symbols in the decoration and architecture of synagogues. This phenomenon could be seen as an attempt to claim common and widespread cultural, social and symbolic capital (cf. Pierre Bourdieu). The second type can be seen in the culture of benefaction reflected in many synagogue inscriptions. The individuals who donated to public buildings such as synagogues participated in the culture of competing giving even though such practice is viewed with suspicion in some literary sources.

How many Synagogues were found? And where and why?

Chaim Ben David
Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee

In many books and articles the number of about one hundred ancient synagogues from the Roman and Byzantine period in the archeological data is mentioned. About 80% of them are known from the Byzantine province of Palaestina Secunda, mainly in the districts of Galilee and Golan. Most of the Synagogues are dated to the Late Roman and Byzantine periods while less than ten are dated to the Early Roman Period. The early ones were found more in Judea (Masada, Herodium, Jericho, Umm el-Umdan, Qiryat Sefer) than in the Galilee (Gamla and Magdala).

In our paper we shall explain the above geographical phenomena, note the main types of synagogues and show the difference between those found already in surveys and those found only in excavations. Synagogues belonging to the Galilean, Golan and South Judea types were found easily in surveys while those from the Second Temple period or those in the Jordan and Beit Shean valleys or in the big cities were usually discovered only by excavations, many of them by accident. Using data from high resolution surveys in Palaestina Secunda we will evaluate the potential number of synagogues from different periods and types that may be found in the future.

The Torah shrine in Byzantine synagogues

Ulla Tervahauta
University of Helsinki

This paper discusses archaeology and architecture of Torah shrines in Byzantine synagogues from the viewpoint of archaeological evidence that exists for now lost Torah Shrines and Arks. Remains of niches, platforms for aedicule-type shrines, or apses in ancient synagogues are usually explained as marking the place of the Torah shrine and the scrolls of the synagogue. These remains have been interpreted from different viewpoints as indicating changes in style, in the amount of scrolls kept in the shrine, or influence of Christianity particularly in the case of synagogues with apses that become more common in synagogues during the sixth century.

The large and relatively well preserved remains of a platform on the south wall of the Horvat Kur synagogue is placed into the context of Torah shrine remains. The archaeological remains of the platform in this synagogue provide important new evidence for Torah shrine types and styles in Galilee and contributes to the analysis of the development of the Torah shrines and Jewish faith in the Byzantine era. Despite closeness of Christian sites in Tabgha (Heptapegon/Church of Multiplication) and Capernaum no apse was built in Horvat Kur. However, the size of the platform can be read as suggesting a wish to give prominence to this structure, and it will be suggested that this wish for accentuation stems from rivalry and interaction with Christianity.

The Early Roman Synagogue at Khirbet Qana: Reflections on Origins and Function

Tom McCollough
Centre College

The ongoing excavations at Khirbet Qana have revealed a large public building (20m x 15m) that has architectural features (e.g., interior columns, benches along the interior walls) consistent with other buildings identified as synagogues. The ceramic data combined with Carbon-14 tests of plaster and mortar date the founding of this putative synagogue to the late first, early second century CE. Among other interesting aspects of this structure are its roof tiles which we have been able to identify as imported from Asia Minor. This paper explores several questions raised by the uncovering of this structure (and related artifacts) in a village with a population that we have estimated at 1200. Is it possible to identify the reason or reasons for the construction of this structure at this point in time? Does the erection of the building reflect the impact of the post-70 influx of Judean refugees into Galilee? Is the synagogue at Kh. Qana reflective of the rise of what S. Cohen calls a 'proto-rabbinic' presence in the villages of Galilee? Given that we do not have benefactors identified (as is true of most Early Roman synagogues), how is the construction of such a large structure (with its imported roof tiles) financed? And finally, in light of the synagogue seating capacity studies of C. Spigel, what would be the function of this structure that could seat at any one time only around 18% of the village population?

Reassessing the Impact of 70 CE on the Origins and Development of Palestinian Synagogues

Wally V. Cirafesi & Anders Runesson
University of Oslo

Recent scholarship on ancient Judaism has begun to reassess the significance of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE for the development of various aspects of Jewish life. The 2012 collection of essays edited by Schwartz and Weiss, *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History?*, aptly demonstrates this concern. Nowhere is this question more relevant than in research on the origins and development of Palestinian synagogues. The most commonly held view is that the events of 70 CE were, indeed, crucially significant, marking the origins or, at the least, some sort of discernable turning point in the his-

tory of the synagogue, such as a movement away from informal religious gatherings to a more formal (rabbinic) institution (e.g., Kee 1990, 1994, 1995; White 1990) or from a primarily social institution to an explicitly religious one (e.g., Hachlili 1997; Levine 2005). These views, however, are predicated upon (1) an anachronistic search for a later rabbinic synagogue in the pre-70 period; (2) a problematic disjunction between “society” and “religion” in the ancient world (Levine 2005); and (3) too narrow of a focus on the spatial (usually drawing upon archaeological evidence from the 3rd century; e.g., Hachlili 1997, 2013) and/or liturgical aspects (Elbogen 1993 [1913]) of synagogue research. In this paper we will argue that the events of 70 CE had virtually no direct impact on the origins and development of Palestinian synagogues. Rather, any development we do see in the post-70 period is due to matters of group identity formation within the emerging rabbinic movement and the struggle for power within mainstream Judaism in the face of the rise of Christianity (Runesson 2001: 485). In making this argument, we will offer the methodological suggestion that at least four aspects of research need to be investigated if we, particularly as historians, wish to learn something holistically about the development of synagogues. These four aspects are: (1) the spatial aspect (including synagogue architecture and art); (2) the institutional aspect (synagogue leadership structure and social organization); (3) the liturgical aspect (e.g., Torah rituals, prayers, blessings, festival celebration); and (4) the non-liturgical aspect (e.g., the synagogue’s judicial function and its role in village politics). We will thus survey a range of pre- and post-70 CE archaeological, epigraphical, and literary sources related to each of these four aspects to demonstrate that, during this period, the institution of the synagogue remained unaffected by the loss of the Temple.

A Jewish Village and a Public Building from the Second Temple Period and the Bar Kokhba Revolt at Horvat ‘Ethri, Judean Shephelah

Boaz Zissu

Bar Ilan University

Horvat ‘Ethri was excavated by B. Zissu and A. Ganor, on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The earliest phase is dated to the fourth century B.C.E. (Phase I). From the Hellenistic period (Phase II), scanty remains of walls, water cisterns and ritual baths (*mikwa’ot*) have been preserved. The archaeological evidence suggests that the inhabitants were Jews. During the first half of the first century C.E. (Phase III), planned residential quarters were constructed, enclosing two central plazas. Rainwater was collected into at least 12 water cisterns and 4 *miqwa’ot*. Beneath some of the rooms, small hiding systems were cut. The residents were Jews, as attested by *miqwa’ot*, stone vessels and typical burial practices. The settlement was partly destroyed in the Jewish War against the Romans. The site was re-settled between the Jewish revolts—70–132 C.E. (Phase IV). The smaller settlement consisted of rows of rooms, grouped around three rectangular courtyards. Alongside two courtyards, a public building (M), was erected. We assume that this building served as a synagogue. Underneath the buildings, typical hiding complexes were hewn. The settlement participated in the Bar Kokhba Revolt, and was violently destroyed.

The public building is part of an architectural complex, which included a broad hall (M1), a vestibule (M2), an outer court (M3), an inner courtyard (T9) and a *miqweh* (XI). The entrance gave access to the hall M1, while the opposite wall of the hall faced Jerusalem. The hall is rectangular (ca. 13 x 7 m). The ceiling was probably supported by three round columns, each consisting of several drums and topped by a Doric-like capital. The columns rested on three square pedestals. Alongside hall M1, an open court (M3) was established, with a rock-cut bench running along its length. A stepped corridor cut into the corner of M2 gives access into a public hiding complex (XV). The vestibule M2 gave access also to courtyard T9 with a stepped corridor descending into *miqweh* XI. It is assumed that public building M was the community’s synagogue between the two Jewish revolts and the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Soon after 200 C.E., the ruins were restored. This phase (V) continued through the fifth century C.E., when the place was abandoned.

Early Synagogues: Some thoughts on the why and how of their appearance

Rick Bonnie
University of Helsinki

Research on early synagogues has been flourishing for several decades now. This has been in part the result of the discovery of several communal synagogue buildings across ancient Palestine attributed to the first century B.C.E. and C.E., such as at Masada, at Gamla, and recently at Magdala. The appearance of these distinct buildings during the first century B.C.E. and C.E. is, however, followed by a relatively long period in the second and third centuries C.E. in which the evidence for these communal structures virtually disappears. The reasons behind this alleged 'hiatus' remain not well known and have instigated several theories in recent scholarship, which this paper will discuss and assess. As an alternative proposal, this paper will put forward the suggestion that some of the answers to the particular trajectory of the communal synagogue buildings in the first centuries C.E. may be found in the particularities of the why and how of the location, form and chronology of the early synagogue buildings. More specifically, it will be suggested that it is the strength of a Hasmonean influence among certain Jewish communities in Palestine that directed the appearance of communal synagogue buildings, while it the ebbing of such an influence in relation to the crushing of the two destructive revolts by the Roman military in the late first and early second century C.E. that eventually caused the virtual disappearance of such structures in the period afterwards. This then leads me to bring up 'house-synagogues' as a possible alternative to the survival of the synagogue as an institution in much of the second and third centuries C.E.

SATURDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2016

The Huqoq Synagogue: A Regional Variant of the Galilean Type

Jodi Magness
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The white limestone synagogue at Capernaum is perhaps the best-known ("classic") example of the Galilean type, characterized by the following features: a basilical layout with the long walls on the east and west; three entrances in the south (Jerusalem-oriented) wall; benches lining the interior; flagstone paved floors; platforms for Torah shrines inside the entrances on the south wall; a stylobate with columns and pedestals supporting a second-story gallery; and carved stone decoration concentrated around the windows and doors, especially on the outside of the south wall. Although Galilean-type synagogues traditionally have been dated to the second-third centuries, excavations indicate that the synagogue at Capernaum was constructed no earlier than the fourth-fifth centuries. Accumulating evidence suggests that other Galilean-type synagogues also date no earlier than the fourth-fifth centuries.

Since 2011, excavations at Huqoq have been bringing to light a Galilean-type synagogue that was built no earlier than the fifth century. This paper proposes that the Huqoq synagogue represents a regional variant of Galilean-type synagogues characterized by having mosaic floors instead of flagstone pavement. The paper also considers the development of Galilean-type synagogues over time, including associated phenomena such as deposits of small bronze coins under the floors and in the foundations.

Ancient Synagogue Dating and the Primary Source Data Divide

Chad Spigel
Trinity University

When did Jewish communities in ancient Palestine start building monumental synagogue buildings as places of worship? Were they constructing synagogues already in the second, third and early fourth centuries of the Common Era, or was this type of architecture an innovation in the late fourth and fifth centuries? One of the most well-known scholarly debates about synagogue dating focuses on the buildings excavated as part of the Meiron Excavation Project. According to the excavators, the archaeological evidence suggests that these buildings were constructed in the second and third centuries CE. Over the past two decades, however, Jodi Magness has argued that the archaeological evidence actually supports later chronologies, moving the construction of the buildings into the fourth, fifth and even sixth centuries.

In this presentation my goal is not to solve this debate. Instead, I will focus on a methodological issue that becomes apparent when analyzing the arguments presented by each side of the debate, and that significantly affects how we should interpret the competing historical conclusions. While most scholars have focused on the merits of the particular interpretations of the evidence to determine which chronology is more convincing, what has not received enough attention is the fact that the two sides of the debate did not have access to the same evidence. On the one hand, the excavators' chronologies are based on evidence that includes the excavation experience itself, notes taken in the field, discussions in the field and in the lab, unpublished photos and drawings, personal correspondence, etc. On the other hand, the revised chronologies are dependent primarily on the *published* evidence. The problem for the secondary analysis is that the archaeological data has deteriorated from excavation to publication. Whether the deterioration takes the form of data missed during the excavation, data deliberately omitted from publications by the excavators for various reasons, transcription errors, or the ephemeral nature of behind-the-scenes conversations, those using only published evidence are in an inferior position when it comes to access to data. Throughout the excavation and publication process, the excavators both have access to and create a variety of archaeological data and get to make choices about the primary source data they use; for the readers of publications, many of the choices about access to the primary source data have already been made for them. This presentation will use some of the unpublished data from the Meiron Excavation Project to illustrate the importance of unpublished data to the synagogue dating debate.

Dating Capernaum Synagogue by Stylistic Method. Some Aspects of its Reconstruction.

Svetlana V. Tarkhanova
Russian Academy of Architecture and Building Science

The number of investigations devoted to different aspects of the Capernaum synagogue is hardly countable. The dating of this architectural structure is still the most crucial question. The archaeological testimonies (Byzantine coins, found by C. Corbo, S. Loffreda) haven't found yet the stylistic confirmation. The problem is complicated by stylistically different decorative elements (lintels, capitals, entablatures). I suppose that some of them are surely spolia from the Greco-Roman period. But another considerable quantity of details was specially executed for the synagogue, for example all friezes with "peopled scroll" motif. By their style the major building phase of the synagogue can also be dated. The recent work of R. Amir (2012) brought a rational classification for these "peopled scrolls" friezes, but some peculiarities remained unnoticed. His dating of the friezes to the 2nd–3rd century CE is far from objective. My analysis of these entablatures, their structure, composition, character of decorative elements and style showed that the friezes from the Capernaum synagogue have little in common with any Roman artwork (sculptural or mosaic). Strangely they differ also from the Early Byzantine reliefs

(churches in Syria, Asia Minor) but have much in common with Early Byzantine floor mosaics (churches in Jordan). Among them several buildings from Madaba can be listed, which are dated precisely by the inscriptions to the second half of the 5th and even late 6th century CE. I propose the same date for the main building phase of the synagogue and its friezes. Also by the traditional reconstruction (first appeared in E.L. Sukenik's work in the 1930s and being quoted repeatedly until now) these friezes are inserted into walls of the second floor galleries. From my point of view "peopled scrolls" friezes were structurally connected with other parts of entablature decorated with the images of two eagles (cornice) and Tabernacle (frieze). Most probably they were decorating the main colonnades of the hall ("Π"-shaped) and formed a rectangular enclosure, running also over the main entrances and *byma* (southern wall). The most distinctive images should be located in the southern part (not northern, as usually accepted). These conclusions can offer a new point in the investigation of the Capernaum synagogue and influence some other aspects of research of Jewish art in Late Antique Palestine as it is the most complicated and beautiful monument of its kind.

Supporting a regional typology of the ancient synagogues in Israel

Mordechai Aviam

Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee

The common approach for classifying ancient synagogues was established by Nahman Avigad in the 60s of last century. He divided the synagogues into three groups: A) The "early" Galilean type, dated to the 2nd–3rd centuries CE; B) The "transformation" type, dated to the 4th century CE; C) The "late" type, dated to the 5th–6th centuries CE. He assigned the synagogues of Baram, Kefar Nahum, Korazim and others to the first type, Arbel and Kh. Shema to the second, and Bet Alfa to the third. The dating of the first group was based on the work of Kohl and Watzinger from 1905, the dating of the third group was based on the excavations of Bet Alfa in 1929 by Sukenik. The dating of the second was an attempt to fill the gap between the two other groups and his own unpublished, short excavations at Arbel. From the beginning of the 80s new information on dating the synagogues started to come to light and these were the results from the excavations at Kefar Nahum, Meron, Kh. Shema, Gush Halav, and especially from Meroth. It was clear now that the "early" Galilean type was not build only in the 2nd–3rd centuries CE but rather in the mid-third up to the 5th–6th centuries and that the "transformation" type was built at the same time.

It seems as if the right way to use a typology today for the ancient synagogues is to use the "regional" typology. I use today four typological groups, probably five and maybe sub-types: A) Mountainous Galilee (with a possible sup-type of Eastern Galilee); B) Valleys of Galilee; C) Golan; D) Hebron Hills; E) Urban. The new excavations of the last years support this typology and create clear borders, as well as some penetration between types along the "borders" of the regions. It is also clear that there are still a number of synagogues which cannot fall into one of these groups, and they should be studied in depth, as usually there is not enough information in their vicinity.

Travel information

Arriving in Helsinki

Helsinki's nearest airport is [Helsinki-Vantaa airport](#). From the airport, there are many easy connections to the city center (train station). The new train connection is the easiest and fastest (every 10 min.; duration: ca. 30 min. to center; cost: € 5,50). For more information and other connections (Public bus, Finnair City bus, Taxi), please visit [this website](#).

Helsinki is also easily reached by ferries from Stockholm (overnight trips) and from Tallinn (several ferries, duration ca. 2 hours). There is also a direct train connection to St. Petersburg (4 hours).

Public transport and Taxis

You can find information about timetables and routes of public transport at the [Helsinki Journey Planner](#). Ticket fares can be found [here](#).

There are numerous taxi stands around the city center. To order a taxi, you can call +358 100 0700 at any time (more information: [www.taksihelsinki.fi](#)). Taxis can also be hailed.

Restaurants and Cafes

In Helsinki's city center you can find plenty of restaurants and cafés. For restaurant tips, check out [eat.fi](#) and [Visit Helsinki](#) or ask any of the organizers.

Nearby cafés:

- ✓ Karl Fazer Café, Kluuvikatu 3
- ✓ Café Engel, Aleksanterinkatu 26
- ✓ Espresso Edge, Liisankatu 29
- ✓ Ciao Café, Aleksanterinkatu 28
- ✓ Torrefazione Fratello, Yliopistonkatu 6
- ✓ Café Neuhaus, Unioninkatu 32
- ✓ Gran Delicato Galleria Esplanad, Kämp Gallery, Pohjoisesplanadi 29

Internet access

Throughout Helsinki's city center, there is a free and fast Wi-Fi connection provided by the City of Helsinki. In and around the University of Helsinki, one can gain access to the internet using [eduroam](#). If you have already an eduroam user account from your home institution, you can use this to gain access at the University of Helsinki.

Other information

Information on the University of Helsinki:

- ✓ [Guide for Visitors](#)

Information on the Helsinki synagogue:

- ✓ <http://www.jchelsinki.fi/en/node/61>

Tourist information:

- ✓ [Visit Helsinki](#)
- ✓ [Helsinki's main attractions](#)

Information on events, shopping, museums etc.:

- ✓ [Helsinki This Week](#)

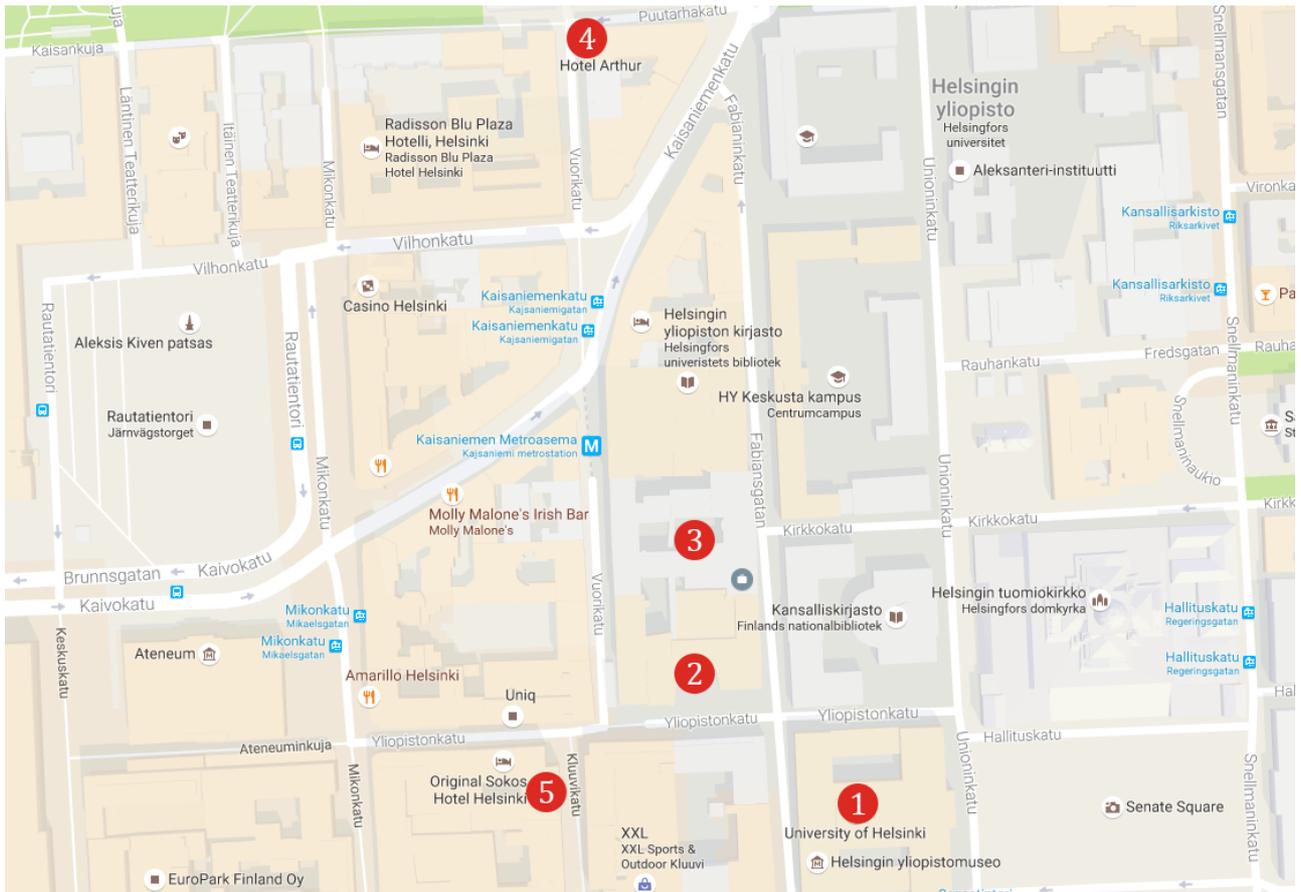
Traveler's info (e.g. currency, visas etc.):

- ✓ [Info for Travelers](#)



- 1 Helsinki central train station
- 2 University of Helsinki Main Building
- 3 Faculty of Theology
- 4 Porthania Building
- 5 Sokos Hotel Helsinki
- 6 Hotel Arthur

Map of the Helsinki city center with locations of train station, conference premises and some hotels near-by the conference premises. [Click here to download this map in a higher resolution.](#)



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| <p>1 Main Building, University of Helsinki
<i>Thursday-Saturday: Conference venue</i></p> <p>2 Porthania Building, University of Helsinki
<i>Wednesday: Public lecture</i></p> <p>3 Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki
<i>Wednesday: Reception in Faculty Hall (5th floor)</i></p> | <p>4 Hotel Arthur</p> <p>5 Original Sokos Hotel Helsinki</p> |
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Map of the University's City Centre Campus area with locations of conference venues and hotels nearby.