



ISRAEL INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES  
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

## **Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco Roman Period: Manifestations in Text and Material Culture**

MAY 19-21, 2014

### **Organizers**

**Zeev Weiss** (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

**Oren Tal** (Tel Aviv University)

(All lectures will take place at the IIAS, Feldman Building, Room 128, Edmond J. Safra  
Campus, The Hebrew University, Givat Ram)

## **Abstracts**

### **Monday, May 19**

#### **Keynote Lecture**

**Nicole Belayche (*Ecole partique des Hautes Etudes*): Enlightening Cults in Contact in the  
Hellenistic and Roman Southern Levant: At the Crossing of Texts, Images and  
Archaeological Data**

Contextualizing cults through a combination of texts, images and archaeological data (structures and objects) is in no way a new concern. Yet the project is rarely undertaken, and may present difficulties when studying the Southern Levant, particularly in *Iudaea-Palaestina*, over an extended period of time. We have to face two types of questions.

The first type of question is broadly methodological. It is shared by scholars of Greek and Roman religious *realia*. Yet it was never addressed comprehensively for this geographical area, nor for such an expanded timeframe (300 BCE-300 CE). To date, scholarly research has often differentiated between the Hellenistic and Roman periods, especially when dealing with the variety of regional political entities, from the Itureans to the north, the Nabateans to the south and east, through provincialization under the *imperium* of Rome. This range of questions includes:

- The variety of evidence within one given religious “system” (public religion, religion of the literate, ‘popular’ religion, etc.) making a fixed model difficult to define.
- The fluidity of both religious terminology and its usages in research (e.g. *teleste*, *temenos*, *adyton*, “cult statue,” “cult places,” “cultic objects,” etc.).
- The difficult dialogue between discursive and archaeological evidence, so well illustrated by Pausanias – thus enlightening religious interactions and cultural transfers in addition to proud textual declarations of religious self-identity.
- The contextualization of epigraphic documents.
- The pertinence for any Mediterranean regional area of models like city (*polis*) vs. villages (*komai*) or network theories.

The second type of questions relies on hermeneutics. It is more specific to the field of inquiry, and adds at least three complexities.

- The region under study is the place of religions (Judaism, then Christianity) coined as monotheistic within a polytheistic Greco-Roman Near East. Thus, “contextualizing cults” in this region must find a way within recent debates on the meaning of “monotheism” (among Old Testament scholars) and of “polytheism” (among Classicists), with its evolution in the Late Roman period into the so-called “pagan monotheism.” The way in which these categories are defined affects correlated questions, for instance that of figurative representation (the question of (an)iconism).

- The dialogue between texts and material culture is made more complex here because monotheistic religions are rooted in sacred texts within a pagan environment, without doctrinal tradition except in philosophical circles. It forces one to clarify interpretative lines for using “Scriptures,” theological and philosophical texts, as sources for religious *realia*.

- Ideological challenges, either confessional and/or political, in reconstructions of local identities and cultural interactions, cannot be ignored. Nor can identities be sharply delineated due to the sensitivity in the Southern Levant of two of the living Abrahamic religions, (for instance by New Testament scholars and within Rabbinic studies). Interpretation of archaeological data is not always free of these debates.

## **Session 1: Cult in Context**

**Moshe Fischer (Tel Aviv University): Sanctuaries, Cult and Images in Perspective:**

### Archaeology of Changes

“...The late-antique Near East was a kind of miracle, and its like has never been seen in that region again” (Bowersock 2006:122)

The rather dramatic events occurring in Gaza in 401 CE as related by Marcus Diaconus in his *vita Porphyrii* 76 could be taken as a starting point of our topic. We hear about the violent demolition of the pagan temples of the city, supervised by Porphyrius, who was called from Constantinople for this purpose! "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."

It seems obvious that in Gaza of the year 401 CE, monumental pagan temples, including their artistic design, were still standing and perhaps were even in use. This was likely the case in other Palestinian cities as well. Was the transition to the new era in other cities as dramatic as it was in Gaza? Although lacking such written sources, it seems that there is enough archaeological evidence to accept the existence of such a situation.

This paper focuses on the changes occurring in Palestinian sanctuaries, relating to both their function and to their artistic expression, after their peak at the end of the second, and the first half of the third centuries CE. Material evidence, building techniques, as well as cult objects and art are analyzed as is reflected in historical and epigraphic evidence.

One of the main questions concerns the development of these structures until around 300 CE, just before the major changes made by Constantine and his successors. There are examples that illustrate this process, such as several structures at Caesarea Maritima, Hippos-Sussita and Qedesh in Upper Galilee.

### **Michele Renee Salzman (UC Riverside): Aurelian and the Cult of Sol Invictus in the East and West**

The primary source for Aurelian's formulation of the cult of Sol Invictus, the *Historia Augusta*, relates that after this emperor's miraculous victory over Zenobia with the aid of a divine force (*vis numinis*), Aurelian went to fill his vows in the Temple of Sol Elagabalus, where he recognized the same divine form which he had seen in battle. Following this experience, Aurelian decided to build his temple to Sol Invictus in Rome (*HA Aurelian* 25.4). Since these texts make the Syrian god the inspiration for Aurelian's cult of Sol Invictus, scholars in the past decade turned increasingly to the archaeological evidence to argue that, "The cult of the Sol Invictus was neither new nor foreign."<sup>1</sup> Whereas recent scholarship has emphasized the continuities between Aurelian's cult of Sol Invictus and the earlier cult of Sol in Rome and the west.

No doubt, Sol was recognized as a god in Rome prior to Aurelian, but the emphasis on continuity has led to a tendency to ignore the innovative aspects of Aurelian's formulation of the cult of Sol Invictus. Indeed, my paper supports the notion advanced by

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<sup>1</sup> See especially S. Hijmans, "Temples and Priests of Sol in the City of Rome," *Museion*, III.10 (2010), 381-427 for a full bibliography.

some scholars that it was the Emperor Aurelian who instituted an innovative celebration to Sol on the winter solstice of December 25<sup>th</sup>. The inspiration for this may well have come from the East. In any case, the influence of eastern cult practices should not be ignored. Moreover, the fusion of elements perceived as eastern, with western traditions in the Aurelianic cult of Sol Invictus, helps explain why this cult became such a vital one in the late third and fourth centuries.

## **Session 2: The Public Sphere**

### **Avner Ecker (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem): People and Gods in the Cities of Roman Palestine and Arabia**

In antiquity, when a person chose to dedicate inscribed votives, or any other type of offering to a god, he or she could do so in private or in public, anonymously or nominally. By placing one's name near the name of a god in a large public inscription one publicized not only the deity but also oneself.

Three inscriptions from the stadium of Samaria-Sebaste illustrate the difference between types of dedications and dedicators: an anonymous acclamation to Kore as "The One Ruler of All, Great, and Unvanquished Goddess" was written by a person with no interest in self commemoration. Martialis, a teacher, wrote a small graffito on the wall of the portico asking that the Goddess remember him and his students – the good teacher was probably driven mostly by piety. But Calpurnius, son of Gaianus, High Priest of the Goddess, who set an altar in the center of the arena, may have expected to gain the favor of the public as well as the favor of the Goddess.

In this paper I present a selection of dedicatory inscriptions to gods from the archaeological record of the cities of Roman Palestine and Arabia. By positioning them in context, I attempt to understand the basic intentions of their dedicators, as well as if there are discernible guidelines regarding the placement of public inscriptions that mention the names of mortals alongside the names of immortals.

### **Andreas Bendlin (University of Toronto): Vespasian and the Oracular Traditions of the East: Divinatory Practice and Belief between Continuity and Change**

With the exception of Augustus, there is no other *princeps* to whom the ancient literary sources assign more omens than to Vespasian. Yet unlike Augustus, whose rise to power is symbolized through traditional Roman signs, Vespasian, from c. 67 to 70 CE, receives divine confirmation through forms of divination that encompass very different Mediterranean traditions: Roman *omina* and the responses of mantic experts; Yosef ben Matityahu's prophecies; Judean messianic predictions (appropriated by the Flavians) ; an oracle on Mount Carmel and another at Paphos; and Vespasian's encounter with Serapis through dream messages as well as the miraculous healings he himself performs at the Serapeum in Alexandria.

Scholars have linked these narratives to the Flavian need to support their claim to political supremacy, an interpretation that emphasizes one functional aspect of ancient divinatory systems, namely the reification of power through recourse to the divine. My paper chooses a different approach: it highlights – in accordance with one of the conference’s themes – the complementarities of different divinatory systems and beliefs (Roman, Judean, Alexandrian) and religious traditions (“polytheism” and “monotheism”) addressed in these narratives. Recent scholarship suggests that divinatory systems be read as “... institutional means of articulating the epistemology of a people” (Peek 1991: 2, 4). My paper attempts to unearth some of the “epistemologies” behind the divinatory practices and beliefs in the Roman East that Vespasian would have encountered (prophecies, dreams, oracles, incubation and healing). In addition it addresses their surprising convergence as articulated through peoples’ divinatory systems, and shows how the respective beliefs and practices altered religious perceptions of Romans, Judeans and Alexandrians alike as they were coming into contact and conflict.

**Zeev Weiss (*The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*): Cult and Culture: Amusing the Crowds under the Supervision of Gods and Caesars**

The introduction of public spectacles in theaters, circuses, and amphitheaters in first-century CE Palestine reshaped the urban landscape of the cities in the region, effecting a change in the leisure habits of their populations. The number of performances and the construction of such buildings increased over time, though the cultural repercussions were distinctly felt only in the second and early third centuries CE, when every city boasted at least one such monumental building.

My paper presents the data attesting to religious activity conducted in theaters, hippodromes, and amphitheaters (e.g., shrines, altars, statues, and reliefs). The compilation of archaeological, artistic, and literary material sheds light on the religious ceremonies held in these buildings in honor of gods and Caesars during religious festivals and on other occasions throughout the year. Cultic shrines inside these buildings, or open ceremonies held prior to performances, occasionally signify a strong tie with pagan cults even though the masses viewed these forms of entertainment (theatrical performances, athletic and equestrian competitions, and amphitheatrical shows) more in terms of fulfilling social and cultural needs, than as settings for religious activities. In light of the available data, I discuss the plausible connection between the conflicting aspects while analyzing their impact on the local communities in ancient Palestine.

### **Session 3: The Private Sphere**

**Ortal-Paz Saar (*Zefat Academic College*): Private Cultic Activities and Interreligious Contacts in Late Antique Palestine: The Case of Defixiones**

The use of binding or curse tablets (*defixiones/ katadesmoi*) was ubiquitous in the Greco-Roman world. These captivating objects make their appearance on the scene of ancient magic around the fifth century BCE and prevail for an entire millennium. They were employed towards a variety of ends: erotic, agonistic, economic and judicial. The men and women who used them came from all strata of society, but had one thing in common: the belief that a private appeal to supernatural entities, particularly to the powers of the underworld, may impact reality.

This paper focuses on *defixiones* uncovered in Palestine and employs archaeological data, information derived from magical recipes, and historical sources in order to discuss three interrelated topics. First, it examines ritual practices entailed by the *defixiones*. Second, the paper surveys references to supernatural entities found in these texts demonstrating how a private cultic activity, in the form of letters to the underworld, engaged with the public cults. Finally, the data amassed above is combined to address the question of interreligious contacts in Palestine, asking whether members of all religious denominations equally employed *defixiones* and if so, in what ways.

**Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom (*Independent Researcher*): Cultic Artifacts in Domestic Contexts from Roman Dora**

During the 1980-2000 excavation seasons at Tel Dor, a number of diverse artifacts were unearthed in the strata of the Roman period, shedding light on beliefs and rituals of the civilian population. Four groups of objects are discussed: lead plaques of a rider, lead mirrors, the marble sculpture of a sphinx, and lamps with Egyptian imagery depicted on the discus. The paper focuses on the local evidence and attempts to interpret it in a wider framework. The mounted horseman / warrior / god is a recurrent motif in the iconography of the Near East, not only in Roman times. Due to the absence of written sources, the interpretation as triumphant rider, victorious conqueror, successful hunter and the understanding of the cultic significance and practice associated with the lead plaques, remains ambiguous. Lead mirrors are known from the Levant and the Roman provinces in Europe, and a large number have been found in military camps and in the *canabae*. They were personal objects for both daily use and for grave goods with practical and votive purposes. The marble griffin with the wheel is evidence of the veneration and cult of Nemesis, which played an important role in connection with the *agones* or contests in the Roman arena. The Egyptian origin of the griffin is paralleled by Egyptian images on lamps, including herons, locusts and persons grotesquely depicted such as dwarfs, pygmies and *cinaedoi*. Lamps reflect their owners' religious and profane beliefs and practices in domestic and funerary contexts, as well as in public entertainment and amusement.

**Oren Tal (*Tel Aviv University*): Late Roman and Early Byzantine-Period Samaritan Cemeteries and Tombs in the Area of Tel Aviv: A Test Case for Death Rituals**

This lecture discusses Samaritan burial customs outside Samaria, based on finds from unpublished excavations at cemeteries and tombs in the sites of Tel Barukh, HaGolan

Street and Tell Qasile (located within the city limits of modern-day Tel Aviv). The tombs are associated with Samaritan rural populations due to their location and to the types of finds discovered, which include Samaritan lamps and epigraphic objects written in the Samaritan script. The lecture focuses on death rituals, evident from polysemic objects, namely those of utilitarian, symbolic and/or an apotropaic nature. Among the finds are Samaritan-inscribed copper-alloy pendants (amulets), rings, folded sheets, tubes (cartridges, inside which cultic objects were placed), bells, copper-alloy and iron nails, and animal bones buried in pits next to the tombs, evincing ritual activity of depositing cranial elements in funerary contexts. Additional burial finds include coins (some pierced and reused as pendants), and cowrie shells. The function of more ordinary finds such as pottery and glass vessels, metal objects and jewelry are also discussed. The presentation of the tombs and their contents contributes to an understanding of daily habits and beliefs in the afterlife of Samaritan communities living outside their heartland, expanding into the Palestinian lowlands.

## **Tuesday, May 20**

### **Session 4: Architecture**

#### **Rubina Raja (*Aarhus University*): Competing for Fame through Space: Zeus and His Competitors in the Southern Levant**

The cult of Zeus was strong in the southern Levant in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. In many cases the cult was based on already existing local cults of the highest gods, which in turn were assimilated within either the Hellenistic Zeus Olympios cult, or later within the Roman Zeus/Jupiter cult. Earlier cult sites were sometimes re-organized to reflect this development. In most cities that held a Zeus cult, there were also numerous other cults to be found, which persisted over centuries thriving alongside the supposed main cult of the specific city. The topic of this paper is to re-examine local cultic topographies at various case study sites in the southern Levant. In order to trace the ways in which local sanctuaries developed alongside each other, in competition, as well as in co-existence, and to examine whether the Zeus cult was in effect the strongest and most persistent cult, or whether other cults were just as present in the urban landscapes. Particular attention is given to the nature of the Zeus cult in the Roman period in the southern Levant.

#### **Andrew Overman (*Macalester College*): Horvat Omrit – the Transition from Local Shrine to Imperial Cult on the Galilee-Iturean Border**

Horvat Omrit is located in the NE corner of Israel in the foothills of Mt. Hermon on the land of Kibbutz Kfar Szold. Systematic archaeological excavations began at the site in 1999 and are ongoing. Among the discoveries at Omrit over the last fifteen years is a dramatic temple complex that contains at least three structures, one inside the other. Preliminary results of this discovery have been detailed in the 2011 publication, *The Roman Temple Complex at Horvat Omrit: An Interim Report*, J. A. Overman and D. N. Schowalter (eds), BAR International Series 2205. These different cult structures were built in rapid succession. In a very short period of time Omrit experienced at least four building phases, each representing a significant stage in the cultic history of the site and of the region.

Toward the end of the Hellenistic period a small, ornate shrine was founded on a hill on the east slope of the Hulah Valley just south of Tel Dan, contiguous with the southern slope of Tel Azaziat. This distinctive structure itself went through at least two building phases in only a few years. This structure was soon superseded by a much larger, more dominant Roman imperial structure. The shrine was buried and consequently well preserved. The imperial style structure that buried the shrine, called *Temple I*, was soon eclipsed and hidden by a subsequent *Temple II* toward the end of the 1st c. CE. Features of *Temple II* remained visible until the modern period. *Temple I* and the shrine were hidden until their discovery in the first decade of this millennium. This paper explores the possible functions of the phases of the Omrit temple complex, focusing in particular on the assemblages that may be isolated and connected to specific buildings and phases of this unique cult site. Furthermore, it explores the means by which the study of assemblages with identifiable stratigraphic contexts helps to illumine the roles, functions and purposes of these different temple stages.

**Shulamit Miller (*The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*): Markers of Pagan Cults in a Jewish City: Rethinking the Hadrianeum of Tiberias**

In the fourth century CE, Epiphanius the Bishop of Salamis, recorded in his *Panarion* the story of Joseph, an apostate Jew from Tiberias. The setting for Joseph's evangelizing within the city was on the ruins of the never-completed temple to the emperor Hadrian. On the basis of the architectural analysis of his excavations, as well as on the geographic data presented in the *Panarion*, Yizhar Hirschfeld identified the remains of a complex within the ancient city center as the *Hadrianeum* – a temple built in honor of the emperor's visit to the region in 129/130 CE. Contemporaneously, the facade of a temple appears on coins minted in the city in honor of the emperor's visit, possibly denoting the existence of such a structure at that time. Additional coins minted in Tiberias depict a variety of deities, likely reflecting other cults within the city. Albeit the paucity of sculptural evidence, which would aid in identifying cults, Rabbinic sources report the existence of such features within the public spaces of Tiberias.

This presentation aims to review the literary, numismatic, sculptural and architectural data relevant to the cultic milieu of Tiberias during the Roman period.



Furthermore, recent discoveries from Tiberias' sister/rival city, Sepphoris, are looked at as a comparative case study of pagan markers in a Jewish city. The evaluation of existing data in light of current scholarship demands the reinterpretation of the material at hand, thus producing innovative ideas regarding both the finds and the religio-cultural environment in which they functioned.

## **Session 5: Objects**

### **Boaz Zissu (Bar Ilan University): Votive Offerings from the Late Roman Period in the Te'omim Cave, Western Jerusalem Hills**

The lecture presents the results of an archaeological and speleological survey conducted by the author in the Te'omim Cave - a large karst cave located on the western edge of the Jerusalem Hills.

Since 2009, the cave has been explored by a team, headed by Boaz Zissu from the Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology at Bar-Ilan University in cooperation with Amos Frumkin, and the team of the Cave Research Unit at The Hebrew University. The 2009 season focused on inner chambers of the cave, which outstanding archaeological and numismatic finds indicate was used as a place of refuge by Jewish rebels at the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

The 2010-2012 survey seasons focused on the main chamber of the cave. The survey included mapping difficult-to-access crevices in this chamber and near the deep shaft. In addition, geological examinations were undertaken in the quarry located in the main hall.

The artifacts collected during 2010-2012 include a rich assemblage of oil lamps from the Late Roman Period (2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE). The oil lamps were inserted in karstic fissures and cavities all around the cave and near the deep shaft.

My paper suggests that the oil-lamps were votive offerings, related to a pagan ritual performed in the cave during the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. This hypothesis is based on the nature and location of the artifacts in the cave, and on parallels from other sites within this country as well as elsewhere in the Greco-Roman world.

### **Gideon Bohak (Tel Aviv University): Magic in the Cemeteries of Late Antique Palestine**

In the present paper my aim is to look for the connections between textual evidence and archaeological remains in ancient cults and rituals, corresponding with topics studied this year at the IAS in the framework of the Research Group "Contextualizing the Cult of the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period: Monotheism and Polytheism between Continuity and Change." I demonstrate both the potential and the problems of this approach by focusing on the realm of magic, where there is cultic activity, as well as textual and archaeological evidence, thus allowing a comparison of these different sources. I focus on one specific test case, namely the textual and

archaeological evidence pertaining to magical rituals performed in tombs and cemeteries in Late-Antique Palestine. I examine three bodies of evidence --

(a) the evidence of the magicians themselves, both in the form of the magical books and magical recipes they used, and in the form of the "finished products" (amulets, curses).

(b) the reports and descriptions of magical activities by people who in most cases did not practice magic themselves, and in some cases were heavily opposed to it.

(c) the archaeological remains of the magical rituals connected with tombs and cemeteries. For each type of source, I offer a dossier of the evidence, stress its advantages and shortcomings, and note the interrelatedness among these three bodies of evidence, while also noting their divergences.

## **Session 6: Imagery**

### **Alix Barbet (CNRS-ENS Paris): The Transmission of Funeral Painted Iconography from the World of Ancient Rome to the Early Christian Era**

When examining Roman wall paintings in tombs dating from the first century BC to the fourth century AD in the perspective of both ancient polytheistic cults and Christian monotheism, many ornamental and figural themes can be seen to have passed into the new religious beliefs with appropriate adaptations. It is not always easy to distinguish a Christian tomb from a Pagan one. In such cases, one can look for specific images, such as the Christogram or scenes from the Scriptures, whether Old or New Testament. Certain topics identified with a specific zone in the painting - lower, middle or upper - or indeed the ceiling or vaults, usually remain in the same location, without changing place.

### **Rina Talgam (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem): The Relations between the Temple and the Synagogue at the End of the Second Temple Period – New Archaeological Evidence**

The subject of this paper is a decorated stone that was found close to the center of the synagogue at Magdala by Dina Avshalom Gorni and Arfan Najar from the Israel Antiquities Authority. The stone, dated to the first century C.E, is a three-dimensional model of the Temple in Jerusalem. The paper discusses the morphological characteristics of the stone and their significance, searches for the stone's practical function and inquires about the identity of the community that ordered it. Other questions addressed are the implications of this unique object in the relationship between the synagogue and the Temple, as well as on our understanding of the Jewish liturgy within the synagogue before and after 70 CE. As the singularity of this object causes great interpretative difficulties the paper concludes with a discussion of research methods involved in its study.

### **Orit Peleg-Barkat (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem): Art and Cult in the Cities of**

### **Roman Palestine: Aelia Capitolina as a Test Case**

The days of Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina, from its re-foundation by the Emperor Hadrian until the rise of Christianity in the fourth century CE, remain the most obscure chapters in the history of the city. In contrast to the preceding Second Temple and succeeding Byzantine periods, the historical sources relating to Jerusalem are scarce, as are the archaeological remains. The concentration of Roman period inscriptions in the northern part of the Old City of Jerusalem, as well as the lack of relevant architectural remains found in the excavations headed by Nahman Avigad in the Jewish Quarter, led scholars to suggest that Aelia Capitolina was a rather small, sparsely populated city, territorially limited to the northern part of the Old City of today. Nevertheless, archaeological excavations conducted in the city during the last decade, as well as publications of older excavations, have brought to light substantial findings attesting to the existence of a road system and significant occupation also in the southern part of the city.

The new findings present a more accurate picture of Aelia Capitolina, offering an opportunity to re-examine various issues related to the character of the Roman city and its inhabitants, especially the pagan cults that were practiced therein. The architectural and artistic finds shed light on the location of the Capitolium, as well as on the Imperial cult and the cult of various gods, such as Tyche and Asclepius. They also offer a significant contribution to our understanding of the pagan image of the city, from which one can infer to other Roman cities in the region as well.

### **Wednesday, May 21**

#### **Session 6: Cult and Economy**

##### **Benjamin D. Gordon (Duke University): Land Tenure by the Jewish Cult in the Hellenistic and Early Roman Periods**

Sanctuaries and cults in the ancient world regularly held assets in land, the patron deity usually named as owner and the land itself protected as sacred. In biblical thought, God is portrayed as the true owner of the Land of Israel, an ideology surely modeled after landholding deities of the ancient Near East, but one that should not obscure the fact that the Jewish cult, like many others, managed and profited from individual plots of real estate consecrated to its deity. The legal foundations for the practice are codified in an addendum to the Holiness Code (Lev 27:16–25, 28) and expanded upon in Tannaitic teachings (e.g., *m. 'Arakin* 6–8 and *m. Me'ilah* 3). Yet major bodies of evidence on the question are missing for the intervening period between these sources, most conspicuously the era of remarkable growth of the Jerusalem sanctuary in the second century BCE–first century CE. For that era, fragmentary legal materials among the Dead

Sea Scrolls (CD 16:14–17; 4Q251:10, 14, 15) and disparate written accounts need to suffice (e.g., 1 Macc 10:25–45; *Spec. Leg.* 1.76; *AJ* 13.56; Rom 11:16). The issues they reveal are intriguing. They include a concern that land dedications to God not derive from unseemly sources, however profitable; that such dedications not be used as a means of blocking access to land by creditors, divorcées, laborers, or unwanted dependents; and that the proceeds from such dedications be protected scrupulously from financial loss and crimes of sacrilege. Concurrently, private ownership by Jewish priests of fields bearing the status of *herem* appears to have been commonplace in this era. Land tenure in the Judean hinterland was yet another facet of the Jewish cult's institutional reach far beyond the confines of its holy precinct in Jerusalem.

**Yonatan Adler (Ariel University): Ritual Purity in Early Roman Jerusalem: Between Priestly Cult and Popular Culture**

Although *miqwa'ot* and chalkstone vessels have been found throughout Israel, the unparalleled number of such finds in Jerusalem has conventionally been explained in terms of the special demands of the Temple cult and of the city's priestly residents. Ancillary to the singularly high concentration of these finds in Jerusalem, the fact that *miqwa'ot* and chalkstone vessels purportedly disappeared soon after 70 CE has been cited by many scholars as an indication that these two archaeological phenomena were somehow intricately connected to the Temple and its priesthood. However, in light of growing archaeological discoveries in recent years, the conception that Jerusalem and its Temple served as the main focal points for the observance of ritual purity deserves to be significantly reevaluated. New data indicates that regular, widespread use of *miqwa'ot* and chalkstone vessels was not at all unique to Jerusalem, but rather was commonplace to a comparable degree throughout Judea, forming part of a common Jewish material culture. Recent finds also show that these two archaeological phenomena continued unabated for decades after 70 CE, and as such their eventual disappearance should not be viewed as a consequence of the Temple's destruction. These new revelations encourage us to reinterpret the archaeological finds from Jerusalem as reflecting a broader societal phenomenon, rather than stemming from any singular sanctity of Jerusalem, the Temple or its priests.

**Hayim Lapin (University of Maryland): Jerusalem the Consumer City: Temple, Cult, and Consumption in the Second Temple Period**

The Jerusalem Temple in the late-first century BCE and first century CE was an institution that consumed, or redistributed significant quantities of agricultural product. Additionally, it required a great quantity of human labor, over several decades, to construct and maintain the rebuilt Temple and Temple platform. Yet the structure of the Jerusalem economy and the role of the Temple in it are poorly understood. This paper presents a model of the consumption needs of the Temple and city, and contextualizes the results in terms of the evidence for agricultural intensification and for the

administration of the Temple, including debates about the funding of the Temple's activities.

## **Session 7: Coins as Evidencing Cult**

### **Achim Lichtenberger (*Ruhr-Universität Bochum*): Coins and Cult: Some Methodological Considerations about Civic Cults and Civic Coins in City Coins of the Levant**

In my paper I discuss the source value of civic coinage in the Southern Levant for the reconstruction of religious life in the cities. In the Roman imperial period, civic bronze coins were minted by the cities of the East, depicting specific local subjects on their reverses. It is generally accepted that these coins portray public cults of the cities, thus providing a prime source for civic cults. Controversial however, is the question of depictions of temple architecture, which is the main subject of my paper. How reliable are depictions of temples? May we conclude from the depictions that such buildings existed in the cities? To what extent are these depictions reliable or are they just topical symbols of civic life? This problem has already been discussed for regions in Asia Minor, but no conclusive and generally accepted results were gained. In my paper I focus on cities of Palestine and neighboring regions, studying the archaeological evidence in relation to numismatic iconography, and discussing whether there is enough data available to tackle the question of the connection between civic cults and civic coins. Another aspect is whether it is possible to generalize the results or whether only specific local case studies can be undertaken.

### **Gabriela Bijovsky (*Israel Antiquities Authority*): An Unpublished Coin Type of a Nursing Woman**

The lecture presents a hitherto unpublished bronze coin showing the portrait of an imperial female on the obverse and a nursing woman nursing a baby on the reverse. The two first specimens were discovered during the 1990s at the excavations of Sepphoris and Tel Dover. These coins however, were completely worn, thus the name of the empress, mint and coin type remained unclear.

Twenty years later, thanks to the discovery of two well-preserved additional coins of the same type located in private collections, the identification of the coin was possible. This coin type was struck by Julia Soaemias, mother of emperor Elagabalus, in 223 CE at the mint of Caesarea Paneas. Based on archaeological, epigraphic, literary and numismatic evidence, it is suggested here that the nursing woman on the reverse is the nymph Maia.

The lecture discusses the iconographic and ritual aspects that connect Maia to the cult of Pan and the city of Caesarea Paneas in particular.

### **Yoav Farhi (*The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*): Heroes and Deities on the Coins of**

### **Gaza under Roman Rule**

The city of Gaza is located on the southern coastal strip of Roman Palestine near the Mediterranean Sea, on the road to Egypt. This city has a long and impressive history from the Bronze Age to the Ottoman period. The first coins to be minted in this region were probably produced at Gaza under Persian rule, in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. The city also struck coins during the Hellenistic, Roman and Islamic periods. The last coins in the name of the city were struck under the Ayyūbids, ca. 1235 CE.

After Pompey's reorganization of the east, a new era was established at Gaza. All the Roman coins of the city, both the pre-imperial, and coins with imperial portraits, are dated according to this era, which starts in the autumn of 61 BCE.

Pre-imperial coins appear in Gaza from 52/1 BCE, while coins with Roman imperial portraits range from Augustus (5/6 CE) to Gordian III (241/2 CE). Under Roman rule, more than 300 types and 500 variants were struck in the name of the city. The obverse of the coins usually depicts portraits of members of the imperial family, most frequently the emperor himself, while the reverse generally features religious images pertinent to the city such as local deities, heroes and cults. The common types in Gaza show the figures of: Marnas (with and without his temple), Tyche – the City Goddess (with and without her temple), Heracles (and his club), Io, Minos, Artemis and Apollo.

The data presented in the lecture is based on my thesis *The Coinage of Gaza in the Roman Period (1st Century BCE-3rd Century CE)*, which was written under the supervision of Prof. Yoram Tsafir, Dr. Leah Di Segni, and the late Prof. Alla Kushnir-Stein, and includes a thorough study of some 2800 coins struck in the name of the city of Gaza under Roman rule.

## **Session 8: The End of Paganism**

### **Yoram Tsafir (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem): Temples and Churches – the Archaeological Evidence of the Christian Triumph**

### **Guy Stroumsa (University of Oxford): Patterns of Rationalization in Late Antique Religion**

Processes of rationalization reflect the conscious, reflexive effort to bring more rationality to a religious tradition, set of rituals or of beliefs. While the term implies a relationship between religion and reason, it mainly emphasizes a process: religions are susceptible, over time, to developing a more rational argumentation, both in polemics and in reflection about themselves. Rationalization then, is a reflexive process. But it seems to be a collective process rather than the intellectual activity of individual thinkers. I propose to call "late antique religion" the late antique religious *koinē*, the shared religious platform created by the dynamic contact between the different religions.

According to the Oxford social and cognitive anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse, there are, in all societies, two essential modes of religiosity: the doctrinal mode and the imagistic one. I argue that both the dogmatic and the imagistic modes, referring to

routinized and charismatic forms of religion, are present in the “rationalization” of late antique religion.

**Robert Lamberton (*Washington University in St. Louis*): The Beginnings of Philosophy of Religion and the Fate of Polytheism in the Late Antique Levant**

At the beginning of the Hellenistic period, there were structures in the Levant intended for polytheist as well as monotheist religious ritual. Later, probably in the 4th century CE, buildings dedicated to Greek polytheistic cults ceased to be built, others were destroyed, while a new category of "monotheistic" structures – Christian churches – became widespread. By the 5th century, the polytheistic structures and cults had disappeared. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the mosque joined the church and the synagogue, and whatever remained of earlier polytheistic architecture was in ruins.

Evidence for the experience of the last polytheists must be “teased out” of a complicated and fragmentarily preserved literature. Was there a perception among 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century polytheists that something was lacking, or in need of repair in the traditional cults? Iamblichus, a Syrian Neoplatonist thinker of the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, (who has been called the first philosopher of religion), has been seen as trying to "reinvigorate" polytheistic cults through theurgy. Proclus, one of the last Athenian "successors" of Plato in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, has been associated with a new "scripturalism," a new attempt to shore up the polytheist cults through texts. Both initiatives are backward-looking and nostalgic, but both give evidence of reactions to the situation expressed by the archaeological record.