

# **SCRIPTA CLASSICA ISRAELICA**

YEARBOOK OF THE ISRAEL SOCIETY  
FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES

**VOLUME XLI**

**2022**

The appearance of this volume has been made possible by the support of

Bar-Ilan University  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
The Open University  
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PUBLISHED BY  
THE ISRAEL SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES  
<http://www.israel-classics.org>

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Price \$50

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Camera-ready copy produced by the editorial staff of *Scripta Classica Israelica*  
Printed in Israel by Magnes Press, Jerusalem

# SCRIPTA CLASSICA ISRAELICA

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## A Provincial Palace (*Praetorium*) in Tiberias? The Archaeological Finds and the Evidence of the Literary Sources

Joseph Patrich, Eran Meir and Aharoni Amitai

*Abstract:* The large building (ca. 2500 sq. m.) of interest in this article is located in the southern civic center of the old city of Tiberias. It is symmetrical in plan, a basilical hall oriented east–west served as its core, and it has been dated to the third or fourth century CE. Underneath, in a deeper layer, the remains of an earlier structure, dated to the first or second century CE, came to light. Due to its elaborate decorations, typical of Herodian times, the prevalent opinion is that these are the remains of the palace of Herod Antipas, the founder of Tiberias, that later served Agrippa I. If this is indeed the case, then after the Herodian dynasty ended with the death of Agrippa II (100 CE), this Herodian property came into the possession of the Roman provincial regime. In the early third century, Tiberias became a Roman colony, the seat of the great rabbinic academy and the Jewish patriarch. Rabbinic and Roman literary sources indicate that three emperors (Hadrian, “Antoninus,” and Diocletian) visited the city and that it was frequented regularly by Roman officials including the governor of Judea-Palestina, who held assizes that handed down death sentences there. Hence, Tiberias was an “assize city” in the judicial circuit system (*conventus*) of the Roman governor, who also served as the supreme judge. Accordingly, it is suggested that the palatial building of interest in this article was a *praetorium*—a provincial residential and administrative complex and not just an elaborate private mansion.

*Keywords:* Tiberias, *praetoria*, palatial mansions, *conventus* circuit, assize city.

### THE BUILDING

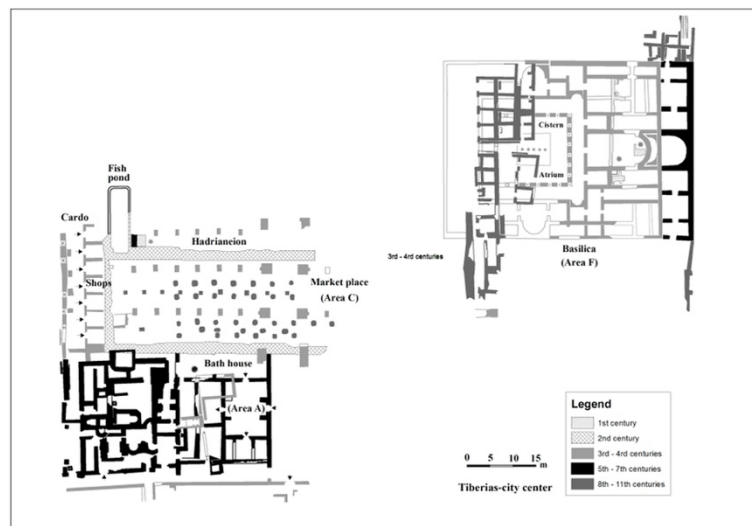
Our focus here is a large building (2500 sq m in area) located in the south of the ancient civic centre of Tiberias, some 350 m north of the Southern Gate, 100–150 m from the shore of the Sea of Galilee and 80 m NE of the ancient bathhouse (Fig. 1). It was first uncovered in 1964 in an excavation directed by Adam Druks (Fig. 2).<sup>1</sup> The vast apse that is a prominent feature of this structure led Druks to identify it as a basilica, attributing it to the second–fifth centuries. A group of coins from the beginning of the fourth century was uncovered in the northern aisle, as Druks termed it. He also uncovered earlier finds of the first and second centuries. Asher Ovadiah (1970) interpreted the building as a Christian basilica. Yizhar Hirschfeld started excavations at

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\* Prof. Uzi Leibner read an earlier version of this paper, providing useful comments and several bibliographical references. We are deeply indebted to him. A Hebrew version of this article was published in *Sion* 87 (2021), 159–187.

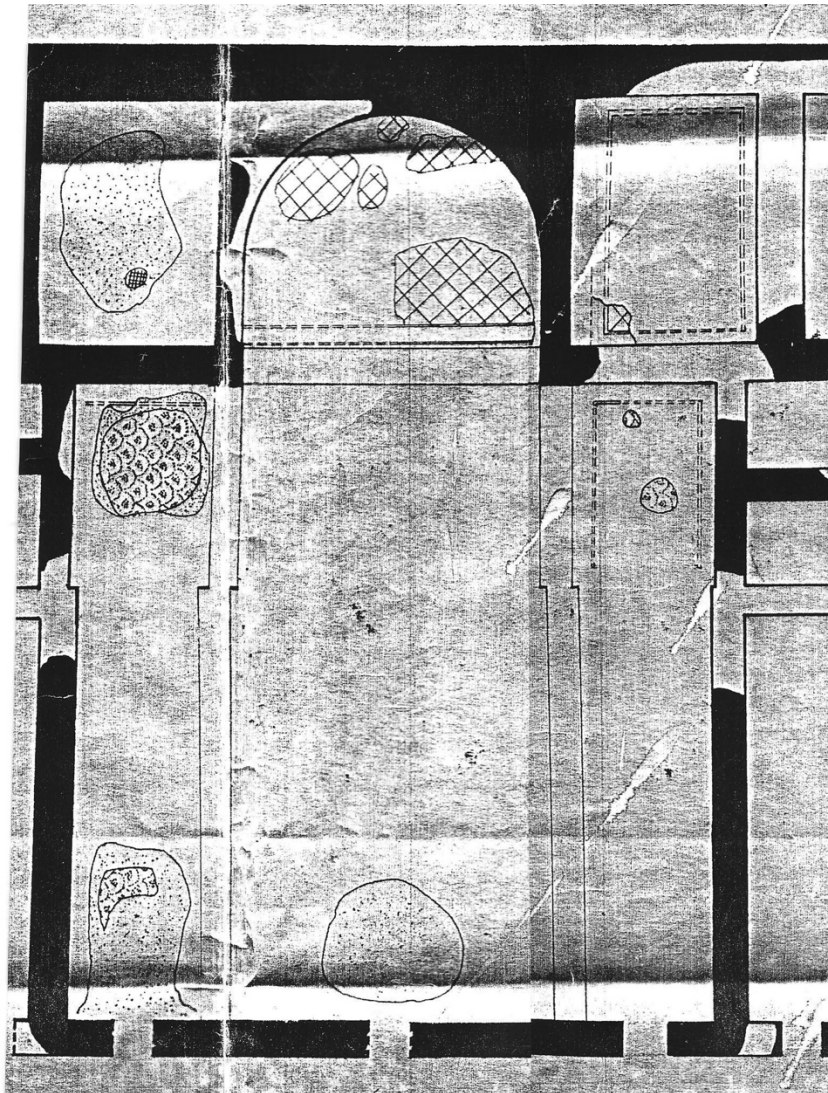
<sup>1</sup> Druks 1964; 1965. The bathhouse had been excavated earlier, during 1954–56, by B. Ravani. For a description of the building and its mosaics, see Talgam 1988.

the site in 1993<sup>2</sup> and again, together with Katherina Galor, in November 2004 and March 2005.



*Fig. 1. The excavated areas. The various phases of the basilica is depicted on the right. On its west only a row of Abbasid shops (8th-11th c. CE) were uncovered so far. Area C, on the left, is the Umayyad mosque and to its south (Area A), the Late Roman bathhouse. (Dov Porotski, Hirschfeld's archaeological expedition to Tiberias. Courtesy Sh. Miller); graphical modifications: Leticia Barda.*

<sup>2</sup> Hirschfeld and Amir 1997, 38–40. Hirschfeld led six more seasons of excavations in the city centre between 2004 and 2006 and one more, in 2008, was held at the site after his death. In archaeological excavations at the foot of Mt. Berenice he also uncovered a theatre. This was later entirely exposed in 2009 by Walid Atrash and Avner Hilman, who dated it to the early first century CE, close to the foundation of the city. Its area was enlarged in the first half of the second century CE and it was drastically reduced in size in the Byzantine period. See Atrash 2012.



*Fig. 2. Plan of the basilica uncovered in Adam Druks excavations, including sections of mosaic floors. The apse depicted in the plan is the easternmost one, belonging to the latest phase (IAA archive).*

These excavations greatly expanded the area exposed and the excavators, like Druks, correctly concluded that this was not a Christian basilica but rather a monumental secular building, erected in the fourth century.<sup>3</sup> An elaborate mansion, with a different

<sup>3</sup> Hirschfeld and Galor 2007. For the date of the structure, see *infra* note 6. The excavation were continued later on under Hirschfeld's sole direction, but a final report has not yet published so far. Hirschfeld (1993) had stated before he started excavations at the site that



architectural layout, was already standing in this location in the first century. Following his excavations of 1993, Hirschfeld attributed this earlier phase (Area F, Stratum V) to the first–second centuries. In contrast to the basalt masonry of the later structure, the mansion’s walls were of limestone (some stones with dressed margins). Several floor levels were encountered, one of colourful *opus sectile* tiles and another of well-polished limestone pavers, as well as patches of well-trodden pebbles and a square pier *in situ*. The finds above the floors included pottery and coins of the first and second centuries. Due to its splendour, Hirschfeld and Galor suggested that this was the palace of Herod Antipas, the founder of Tiberias in 19/20 CE.<sup>4</sup> This date was confirmed by the underfloor finds of the 2004–2005 seasons of excavations. It was suggested that the palace was destroyed in a large conflagration attributed to the first Jewish Revolt of the Jews against Rome, but the pottery and coins found above the floors indicate that it was still in existence in the second century. If this was indeed the palace of Herod Antipas, then this Herodian estate later became a Roman provincial or imperial property.<sup>5</sup>

Some time later, the basalt structure with which we are concerned was erected in place of the ruined palace.<sup>6</sup> This is a large, symmetrical building comprising more than thirty halls and rooms, adorned by mosaic floors and murals. It contained a vast basilical hall (7.4×12.8 m plus an apse 6 m in diameter), located to the east of a peristyle courtyard (15.2×14.4 m) with a water cistern (170 cu m) below. The cistern is roofed by elongated basalt beams resting on ten arches supported by a central E-W row of five columns. Two deep apsidal exedras were installed at the northern and southern ends of the courtyard. The eastern and western porticos (2.6×24.5 m) ended in semi-circular niches on each side. The apsidal hall, the courtyard and the wings to its west and east had a common E-W axis of symmetry. The palace stood perpendicular to the *cardo* and some 70 m to its east (Fig. 3).<sup>7</sup>

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Druks’s basilica was a civic basilica serving the administrative and judicial services of Tiberias. See also Meir 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XVIII, 36–38; *Life* 12–13, 65–9. Next to the palace were a royal bank and archives (*Life* 39).

<sup>5</sup> For such examples, see below.

<sup>6</sup> The upper walls of the building, built of basalt, were coated on the inside, and seemingly also on the outside, by a thick layer of plaster. Architectural members like column bases and drums, pedestals and pavers were of white limestone. According to Hirschfeld, this was Stratum IV in the history of the building. In the preliminary publications different dates were assigned to the beginning of this stratum. In the coloured map (Fig. 1) accompanying some of the publications, it is attributed to the third–fourth century. In the archaeological report of 1993 (Hirschfeld and Amir 1997), its beginning is dated to the mid fourth century, while in the article addressing the 2004–2005 excavations (Hirschfeld and Galor 2007) the date given is the fourth century in general. Miller (2011; 2015; 2018, 167–9), who analysed the mosaics, dated its foundation to the late fourth–early fifth century, stating that the still unpublished small finds (pottery and numismatics) confirm this date. Hopefully, the final report will soon be published with a detailed presentation of the small finds to substantiate this attribution.

<sup>7</sup> According to Hirschfeld and Meir (2006), the basilical structure was a public building erected in the fourth century and serving for several centuries. According to them, the *cardo* and the underlying urban substructure in this area were laid out in the second–third century (Stratum VI). A temple in honour of Hadrian, the construction of which remained

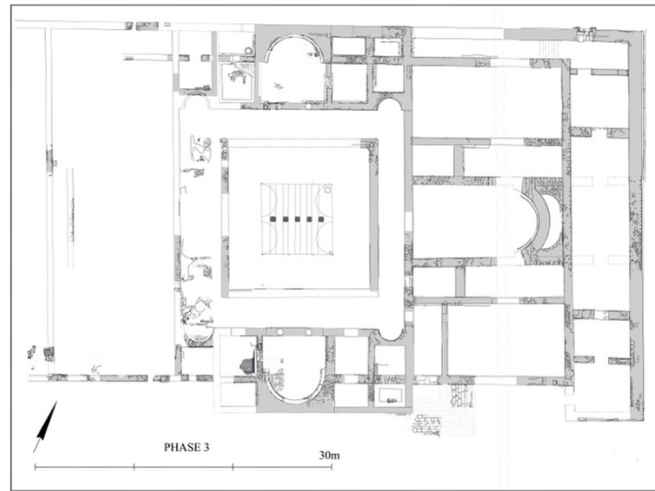


Fig. 3. The basilical structure. A. Plan (A. Iamim, Hirschfeld's archaeological expedition to Tiberias. Courtesy Sh. Miller); B. General view from the west (Photo Y. Hirschfeld).

unfinished, was erected in the second century. A thick foundation wall of basalt seemingly marks the southern line of the area on which it was built. Earlier remains, attributed to the first century, were uncovered under this wall. It was also suggested that in the fourth century a public market (*macellum*) roofed by several rows of piers was built over the area extending from the bathhouse to the temple. Later excavation, however, indicated that there was no Roman-Byzantine market in this area and that the piers belonged to a Muslim mosque. In the Byzantine period a church was built over the northern side of the Hadrianeum compound. Cytryn (2016), relying on numerous parallels, interprets the piers structure as a large Friday mosque, a proposal put forward years ago by Gideon Foerster and also considered by Hirschfeld's expedition.

The ground level here slopes down to the east, towards the Sea of Galilee. Hence, in the eastern wing the remains of two storeys are discernible. In the northernmost wing are the unique remains of two small underground cells, each with a plaster floor and a bench. Low, narrow slot-like windows open to the outside (two windows in the eastern cell, one in the western), excluding the possibility that these were storage spaces. It has been suggested that these were prison cells.<sup>8</sup> The eastern wing is an addition delineated by a 1.25 m thick wall, attributed to Stratum III of the complex (fifth century).<sup>9</sup> It has the appearance of a long corridor, 5.8×39 m in dimensions and mosaic paved. At the end of the fifth century or the beginning of the sixth, the apsidal hall was extended eastwards and the mosaic floor of the corridor was cut by the new apse (7 m in diameter). Inspection of the published plan (Fig. 4) suggests two sub-phases here. In the first sub-phase the apse was somewhat squashed, leaving free passage in the corridor behind it, while in the second the deeper apse blocked any possible passage behind. In this shape the building was in use continuously until it fell in ruins in the earthquake of 749 CE.

It was suggested that the apsidal hall and the deep exedras served as reception and entertaining spaces—the public wing of the complex. The western wing, nearer to the *cardo* and only partially exposed, was interpreted as the private wing. It was also suggested that the main entrance of the complex was from this side, set on the building's principal axis of symmetry. Two other openings were located on the south. A wide staircase of white limestone ascending to one of them is an indication of its importance, and hence this may have been the main entrance to the building. As for the private wing, it makes sense to suggest that it was in fact located in the eastern wing, overlooking the lake and remote from the public wing and the tumult of the *cardo*. This issue deserves further consideration. A northern entrance (Fig. 4), adorned by two door-posts set on finely cut bases, led to the lower storey near the NE corner of the complex and may have served as the main entrance to the private wing. Neither a kitchen nor a bathing wing, two essential components of a private dwelling, was uncovered. Hence, Hirschfeld concluded that this was not a mere private mansion but an imperial villa—an administrative palace (*praetorium*).<sup>10</sup> In antiquity, the term *praetorium* designated various structures in both the military sphere (referring to the residence of the chief commander) and the civic sphere, such as the residence of the emperor or that of his representative the governor, as well as halls of justice and even road stations in the service of imperial officials. In Late Antiquity, after the Diocletianic reform had assigned military authority to the *dux*, the term was used mainly in an urban civilian

<sup>8</sup> Meir 2012, pp. 72, 104–5. The northern wall on the inside of which they are built is 1.23 m thick.

<sup>9</sup> Thus Hirschfeld in the 1993 excavation report. According to another opinion, the eastern wing is original in its entirety and only the extended apses are later additions.

<sup>10</sup> Hirschfeld and Amir 1997, 36 and Hirschfeld and Galor 2007, 226. Hirschfeld also wondered, cautiously, whether this was the seat of the great law court of the Jews in Tiberias. On p. 229 he emphasized the absence of any finds pointing to a regular domestic function. For these reasons, and due to an architectural resemblance, he concluded that it was a governmental building like the *praetorium* of the Byzantine governor at Caesarea, but in the service of the Jewish Patriarch. There are no finds, however, that suggest a Jewish affiliation for this complex.

context to designate the governor's residence; thus in texts as well as inscriptions, in both Latin and Greek.<sup>11</sup>

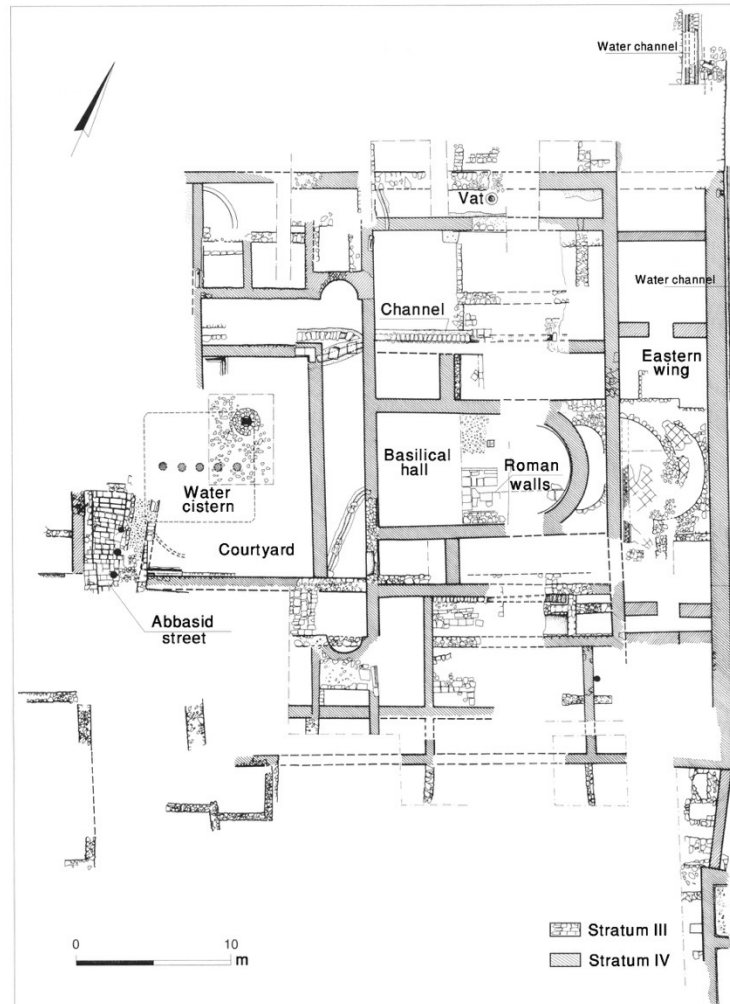


Fig. 4. Phases in the evolution of the basilical structure eastwards. Before the installation of the eastern apses during the sixth century, there was a mosaic-paved corridor to the east of the western apse (Sh. Miller, M.A. thesis, Fig. 43).

<sup>11</sup> See Momsen 1900; Egger 1966; Lavan 2001. Another study providing a survey on *praetoria*, mainly of the early empire, is Schäfer 2014. In pp. 346–7 there he presents a list of ancient sources (texts and inscriptions) addressing *praetoria* as governor's residences and administrative quarters, among them sources that refer to places of justice and seats of assizes (*conventus*) (ibid., p. 347, including Volubilis and various Egyptian cities).

Zeev Weiss (2016) rejected Hirschfeld's proposal, claiming that this was the residence of a regular wealthy citizen, although in bringing parallels from the Roman world he shows awareness of the architectural resemblance between such residences and a governmental palace. His student, Shulamit Miller (2011; 2015; 2018, 167–9), had also interpreted it as a regular *villa urbana*. But since architectural layout alone cannot determine the purpose and function of the complex, and in the absence of an identifying inscription, this issue seems to remain open for interpretation according to a scholar's individual preference. Nevertheless, a question should be asked: is Hirschfeld's proposal at all plausible? Was there a Roman government residence at Tiberias? And if so, when and where did it stand? But prior to addressing this question, it would be appropriate to present a brief historical survey of the city and its urban evolution.

#### TIBERIS – A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH

Tiberias was the capital of the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas son of Herod the Great, its founder. The tetrarchy included Galilee and the Peraea. The city was built in 19/20 CE over tombs, and hence conservative Jews refrained from settling there.<sup>12</sup> In 39 CE, after Antipas went into exile, Gaius Caligula donated his estate, including Tiberias, to Agrippa I.<sup>13</sup> In 43 CE King Agrippa hosted in his palace at Tiberias a group of oriental rulers, clients of Rome like himself: Antiochus king of Commagene, Sampsigeramus king of Emesa and Cotys king of Armenia Minor, as well as Polemo, who held sway over Pontus, and Herod his brother, who was ruler of Chalcis.<sup>14</sup> In 54 CE (Neron's first regnal year), Tiberias was attached to the kingdom of Agrippa II,<sup>15</sup> the capital of which was Caesarea Philippi/Paneas, and continued to be a part of his kingdom until his death.<sup>16</sup> Its status as capital of Galilee was awarded to Sepphoris, and the royal bank and the archive were transferred there.<sup>17</sup> In 66 CE, during the Great Jewish Revolt, the city was surrounded by a wall at the initiative of Flavius Josephus,

<sup>12</sup> *Ant.* XVII, 36–8; Avi-Yonah 1951, republished 1968. It should be mentioned that no tombs were actually uncovered under the buildings in any of the excavated areas, although they may have existed farther north in areas that are as yet unexcavated.

<sup>13</sup> *Ant.* XVII, 237.

<sup>14</sup> *Ant.* XIX, 338 (LCL 433, pp. 372–5).

<sup>15</sup> *Ant.* XX, 159. Joseph b. Simai, 'a steward of the king' who had a courtyard in Shihin, was perhaps his *epitropos* (thus Sh. Klein, *Beitrag* p. 66, n. 1 and Graetz, *MGWJ*, 1881, p. 484). He may have been appointed over Tiberias (a proposal to be considered) rather than over a rural area. On him see *BT, Shabbath*, 121a; there, and in parallels where it is not said that he was an *epitropos* of the king, the courtyard that he owned in Shihin is mentioned. See *Tosefta Shabbath* (ed. Lieberman), 13:9; *JT Nedarim* 4:9 (38d, MS Leiden); *Deuteronomy Rabba* (ed. Lieberman), *VaEthan*: "What is the meaning of 'with all thy heart'?" (Information given only in the *BT* should sometimes be taken with a pinch of salt.)

<sup>16</sup> The date of Agrippa II's death is debated. Only a few of the scholars who have addressed this issue will be mentioned here. According to Dan Barag (1977, 58), he died in 95/6 CE. Alla Kushnir-Stein (2002, 131, note 32), after examining all of his coinage, concluded that he died in 88/9 CE. Nikos Kokkinos (2003), reached the conclusion that his year of death was 100 CE, and more recently David M. Jacobson (2019), claimed that it was 94/5 CE.

<sup>17</sup> *Life* IX, 37.

the military commander of Galilee on behalf of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> In 100 CE Tiberias came under direct Roman rule. In the mid second century, after being purified from burial defilement by Simeon bar Yohai, Tiberias became an important Jewish centre. This was seemingly the location of the encounter in which ‘Antoninus’ informed Rabbi of his intention to make the city a colony.<sup>19</sup> It does indeed seem that the city received this status, although the evidence of city coinage under Elagabalus (218–222 CE) turned out to be false.<sup>20</sup> The leading Jewish institutions gradually moved there, first the great academy under Rabbi Yoḥanan (d. 279 CE) and later the residence of the patriarch, R. Yehudah Nesiah, the great-grandson of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, which was transferred from Sepphoris.<sup>21</sup> Among the first deeds of the patriarch was the rebuilding of the city wall, dismantled by Vespasian. The mainly Jewish city took part alongside Sepphoris and Lod/Lydda in the Gallus Revolt (351/2 CE), following which it was damaged.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *War* II, 572; III, 465.

<sup>19</sup> *BT Avodah Zarah* 10a: ‘Antoninus once said to Rabbi: It is my desire that my son Asverus should reign instead of me and that Tiberias should be declared a Colony’. Oded Avisar (1973, 81–4), suggested that the Roman king should be identified with Septimius Severus and opined that the meeting took place while the Jewish Patriarch came to the city to bathe in its hot springs. Most scholars identify Antoninus with Caracalla, his son (211–217 CE), but there are other opinions, and this is not the place for further elaboration. An encounter between a sage (not Rabbi Judah the Patriarch) and Romans when the former arrived at the hot springs of Tiberias is mentioned in *JT Berakhot* 9:1, 13a–b (column 67 in the edition of the Hebrew Language Academy). The name of the ruler mentioned there is Sophianus (סופיינוס). The historical background may be the years of war between Septimius Severus and Pescinius Niger. In the parallel reference in *Yalqut Yoel*, only one man (הז גברא) is mentioned, and the ruler’s name is Popianus (פופיינוס).

<sup>20</sup> Thus Kushnir-Stein 2009. But see the discussion of this issue in Oppenheimer 1991, 75–8, indicating (*ibid.*, note 63) that the only evidence of Tiberias being a colony comes from a marriage contract of 1035 CE in the Cairo Geniza, which refers to Tiberias as a colony (מדינתא טיבריא קלוינא). But he also says that the activity of *strategoī* (the equivalents of *duoviri*) side by side with *bouleutai* in its civil administration already in the time of Rabbi speaks for the city’s colonial status, since the duovirate system was in place only in colonies and the Severii are known to have bestowed colonial status on many cities. Oppenheimer also associates the bestowal of colonial status with the gradual transfer of the leading Jewish institutions from Sepphoris to Tiberias.

<sup>21</sup> Safrai 1982, 161.

<sup>22</sup> Geiger 1982. There are scholars who question the severity of this revolt and its impact on the Jewish settlement. According to the literary sources (both Christian and Jewish), damage took place in Lod, Tiberias and Sepphoris: Hieronymus, *Chronikon* 24 (GCS, p. 238); *Psiqta Rabbati* 8:29b. According to Hieronymus, Sepphoris and Tiberias were set on fire when the revolt was suppressed, and likewise many villages, including Lod. A survey of the scholarly opinions was given by Mor 1989. But since then, new finds have come up. A hoard of 2,755 coins uncovered in the Neve Yaraq neighbourhood of Lod, the latest of which is of 351/2 CE, may indicate that the city was indeed damaged in this revolt. See Bijovsky, 2007. There is no clear-cut evidence of damage in any other site, perhaps as a result of the more severe destruction caused in many sites by the earthquake of 363 CE, which may have obliterated the damage of the revolt that took place just a few years earlier.

Christianity, promoted by Emperor Constantine, came to the city in the fourth century. The first church uncovered so far in the city centre is dated to the late fourth or early fifth century.<sup>23</sup> It is quite possible that in its first phase it was the tiny chapel built by Constantine's *comes*, Joseph (see below).

Flavius Josephus mentions the city council (*boule*), a synagogue, the city wall and the hippodrome. An armoury of Herod Antipas for 70,000 soldiers is also mentioned;<sup>24</sup> seemingly, at least part of it was stored in Tiberias. In the Rabbinic sources we hear about the city's gate (פילי של טבריה) and its castle (קסטרה דטבריה), academies, markets, workshops of glass and pottery vessels (פחורא and אילסיס), stadium, bathhouse, latrine, synagogue of the *bouleutai*, *mausolea*, etc.<sup>25</sup> A bathhouse with a dome in Tiberias is already mentioned in the days of R. Aqiva (first third of the second century), as well as in the time of R. Yoḥanan (third century).<sup>26</sup> Parts of Tiberias and its hinterland (like Sepphoris and its hinterland, and many other cities) were demolished by the earthquake of 363 CE.<sup>27</sup> Traces of this catastrophe have not been uncovered so far in the excavations, but it is reasonable to assume that Tiberias, like the cities in its vicinity (Sepphoris, Sussita, Scythopolis), was indeed harmed by this seismic event.

#### A PALACE / *PRAETORIUM* IN TIBERIAS – THE EVIDENCE OF THE LITERARY SOURCES

As we have seen above, a ruler's palace stood in Tiberias from its inception. This was the palace of Herod Antipas, the founder of the city, who made it the capital of his tetrarchy in place of Sepphoris. It was a spectacular structure, adorned with animal sculptures; the ceilings of some of its rooms were gilded and it had 'candelabra of Corinthian make, royal tables and a large mass of uncoined silver'. During the First Revolt it was set on fire and these objects were plundered.<sup>28</sup> It is reasonable to assume that the palace, like all Herodian palaces, also included a bathhouse. As indicated above, in a limited area in the lowest level of Hirschfeld's excavations the remains of a lavish Herodian palace came to light, built of typical Herodian ashlar, columns with a coating resembling marble, *opus sectile* floors, and walls covered with frescoes in the style of the Herodian palaces at Masada, Cypros, Jericho and Caesarea. The small finds from below the floors indicate that the palace was constructed in the first century. Hence, Hirschfeld concluded that this was the palace of Herod Antipas.<sup>29</sup> If this is indeed the case, it makes sense to assume that this Herodian estate later became a Roman

<sup>23</sup> Cytryn 2016.

<sup>24</sup> *Ant.* XVIII, 251.

<sup>25</sup> For a collection of the relevant literary sources see Hirschfeld 2005. See also Lieberman 1908, 292. For the interpretation of *ilsis* as a stadium see idem 1932, 208–9, while others have suggested that *ilsis* refers to the glass industry zone (thus Hirshman, *Qoelet Rabba*, p. 187). פחורא is the pottery industry zone.

<sup>26</sup> *JT Sanhedrin* 7:13, 25d (7:11, col. 1306 in the Academy ed.); *Midrash Tanḥuma, VaYeḥi* 6. See Hirshman 1988.

<sup>27</sup> Brock 1977, 276, article 11.

<sup>28</sup> *Life* 65–9.

<sup>29</sup> Hirschfeld and Galor 2007, 223–4, notes 39–40.

provincial or imperial property, since it is customary that private property of an existing regime passes to a new regime.<sup>30</sup>

Surprisingly, a tradition about a palace associated with Hadrian's visit to Tiberias is preserved in Rabbinic sources that describe two encounters of the emperor with an old Jewish man:<sup>31</sup>

'Hadrian, let his bones rot, was walking up from Tiberias to the Land of Israel when he saw an old man planting saplings. Said Hadrian: Old man, old man, up at sunrise free at sunset— had you toiled in your youth you would be free of toil in your old age. Said the old man: By your life sir, I have toiled sunrise and sunset and what He wants He does.

<sup>30</sup> Thus, for example, Herod's palace in Caesarea became the *praetorium* of the Roman procurators, then the palace of King Agrippa I, and finally the palace of the Roman governors. Likewise, Herod's palace in Jerusalem became the *praetorium* of the Roman procurators, and the Hasmonaeans' palace there became the residence of King Agrippa II. In about one fifth of the forty-eight cities discussed in Haensch 1997, the Roman regime inherited the buildings of the pre-Roman period. This was also the case, for example, in Alexandria, Antioch and Syracuse (*ibid.*, 374).

<sup>31</sup> *Leviticus Rabbah* 25:5 (ed. Margalioth), MS Munich 117; *Qoelet Rabbah* (ed. Hirshman) 2:20. The anecdote is in Aramaic. For the literary evolution of this narrative in the various Rabbinic sources, see Fraenkel 1981. In *Qoelet Rabbah* the first encounter took place in the outskirts of Tiberias (באלין שבילי דטבריא) and the second, in which the old man brought the fruits of his trees to the emperor, in the palace. In *Midrash Tanhuma* (ed. Buber), *Qdoshim* 8, Tiberias is not named. Likewise in *Midrash Tanhuma* (ed. Warsaw), *ibid.* In *Yalqut Shimoni, Torah, Qdoshim* (501), the first encounter also occurred in the outskirts of Tiberias. The palace is not mentioned explicitly, but the narrative is similar.

Another text indicating that Hadrian was wandering in the region of Tiberias is given in *Midrash Tan'aim* for Deuteronomy 26 (ed. David Tsvi Hoffmann, Tel Aviv 1964; reprint of Berlin 1909 edition, 262). The emperor stepped down from his carriage and bowed down in respect before a young Jewish girl (קטנה אהת בת ישראל). The episode occurred on the Hammat Gader Ascent, not far from Tiberias. (For a parallel see *Midrash HaGadol on the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy* 26, 19. In *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* 15 the event took place in Rome and the Jewish girl covered in sores was a baby thrown in the garbage). The redaction of *Midrash Tan'aim*, like many halakhic midrashim, is attributed to the second half of the third century (Ben Eliyahu *et alii*, 2012, 75).

According to Margalioth, the editor of *Leviticus Rabbah* (Introduction, pp. xxviii–xxxiii), this Hebrew and Aramaic midrash received its final redaction in Eretz Israel no later than the mid fifth century, about the time the *JT* was redacted, and an earlier edition of it, an Aggadic Leviticus midrash that was the basis of the present version, already existed at the end of the fourth century. There are scholars who propose a later date for its redaction, the latter part of the fifth or the early sixth century (Ben Eliyahu *et alii.*, 2012, 83–5). *Qoelet Rabbah* is also an Eretz Israeli midrash, but it was redacted in the sixth or early seventh century, before the Muslim conquest (ed. Hirshman, pp. xvii–xix). However, there are scholars who find Babylonian traces (finally redacted in the seventh century) in it (Ben Eliyahu *et alii.*, 2012, 94–3). The geographical reality reflected in it is Galilean: U. Leibner *apud* Hirshman, pp. cxvii–cxxv. *Midrash Tanhuma*, comprising three collections of Aggadic midrashim on the Torah, is also of Israeli-Galilean origin in its essence. It was crystallized in the first half of the ninth century. *Yalqut Shimoni*, a collection of midrashim originating in various Rabbinic sources, was seemingly assembled in Frankfurt in the early thirteenth century. Despite its late date, it is an important source for the reconstruction of lost midrashim.



Said Hadrian: By your life old man, if these saplings yield in your lifetime, let me taste them. The old man was fortunate and the saplings yielded in his lifetime. So he filled a basket with figs and went and stood in [Hadrian's] presence. Said [the emperor]: Who are you? And he replied: I am the old man whom you passed by and told, if these saplings yield in your lifetime let me taste them. Said [the emperor]: Empty his basket and fill it with dinars. That having been done to him he went home and told his family. When the neighbor heard that, she went and said to her husband: Son of dark, son of dark, have you heard that this king loves figs? Her husband asked her: How do you know? She told: Our old neighbor filled his basket with figs, and it was filled with dinars. So he got up before daybreak and filled his saddlebag and loaded the donkey and went and stood in the emperor's presence. When he was asked "who are you" he told them: I have heard that this king loves figs. [The emperor] told [his servants]: Go and make him stand **at the gate of the palace** and every one who happens to pass by throws [one of his fruits] in his face. That having been done to him he went home and told his family. They told him: Praise your Creator that they were figs rather than citrons, and that they were ripe rather than unripe' (*Leviticus Rabbah* 25.5, Munich MS; tr. Hasan-Rokem 2003, 86–7).

One could argue, of course, that this is merely a didactic anecdote, a joke without any historicity behind it, rather than a record of a real event. The didactic purpose is indeed evident, but the important issue for our concern is not whether this was a real event, but rather its *Sitz im Leben*; to what extent it is imbedded in actual reality and what is the probable time of its composition. The historical context of this story was examined by Peter Schäfer and to a lesser extent by Galit Hasan-Rokem.<sup>32</sup> It will be scrutinized somewhat further below.

As is well known, the attitude to Hadrian in the Rabbinic sources is ambivalent.<sup>33</sup> In the early years of his regime, he was favourable towards the Jews both in Egypt and in Eretz Israel. Several Rabbinic passages in which he is presented as an enlightened emperor, conversing with R. Joshua ben Ḥananiah while asking to understand the essence of Judaism,<sup>34</sup> reflect this period.<sup>35</sup> He also promised to rebuild the Jewish

<sup>32</sup> Schäfer 1981, 241–2; Hasan-Rokem 2003, with endnotes at the end of the book. Schäfer maintains that one should differentiate between the content and the frame, and that a visit of Hadrian to Tiberias indeed took place. He opines that the positive characterizations of Hadrian in Rabbinic literature are those born out of the immediate context of the events, whereas the negative ones were created out of later reflection on the events. See also Herr 1973.

<sup>33</sup> Oppenheimer 1982, 42–7.

<sup>34</sup> The issues discussed by the two were the essence of the divinity, the creation of the world, the Ten Commandments, the resurrection of the flesh, the angels, the Sabbath, etc. See, for example, *BT Shabbath* 119a: The emperor said to R. Joshua b. Ḥanania, 'Why has the Sabbath dish such a fragrant odour?' 'We have a certain seasoning,' replied he, 'called the Sabbath, which we put into it, and that gives it a fragrant odour.' 'Give us some of it,' asked he. 'To him who keeps the Sabbath,' retorted he, 'it is efficacious; but to him who does not keep the Sabbath it is of no use'; *BT Holin* 59b–60a; *Psikta Rabbati* 21 (ed. Ish-Shalom), 99a. See also Herr 1973. In pp. 286–7, note 121 there, Herr addresses the anecdote at our concern. Herr finds equivalence between the friendly attitude of Hadrian towards the old man (and that young Jewish girl, *supra* note 31) and what is told about his behaviour towards common people in *Scriptores Historiae Augustae. Vita Hadriani* XX.1: 'Most democratic in his conversations, even with the very humble, he denounced all who, in the

Temple. Thus, in *Genesis Rabbah* (Vilna ed.), *Toldot*, 64 we read: ‘... In the days of R. Yehoshua ben Chananiah the evil kingdom (Rome) decreed to rebuild the Temple. Papos and Lulianos (two brothers who were later martyred in Lod) set up tables from Akko to Antioch and supplied the pilgrims from the diaspora with silver, gold and all of their needs ...’.<sup>36</sup> Hadrian’s intention to let the Jews participate in building the temple in his new city is implied in the *Epistle of Barnaba* XVI, 4 against the Jews: ‘This is happening now. For because they went to war, it was torn down by their enemies, and now the very servants of their enemies will rebuild it.’<sup>37</sup> The story about the meetings between Hadrian and the old Tiberian expresses respect towards the emperor rather than fear of him. It reflects the first phase of the attitude of the Jews towards the emperor,<sup>38</sup> which is the only feasible period for the composition of this narrative. It is indeed rooted in historical reality.

In this context, we should mention another source speaking about the house of Caesar (בֵּי קֵיסָר), i.e. his palace (rather than his household), in the period with which we are concerned. It served as the venue of a controversy between R. Joshua ben Ḥananiah and a *min* concerning God’s favour and its avoidance.<sup>39</sup> It is not clear if this encounter

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belief that they were thereby maintaining the imperial dignity, begrudged him the pleasure of such friendliness’ (tr. D. Magie, LCL 139, London–New York 1922, pp. 60–61).

<sup>35</sup> This early period of positive attitudes towards Hadrian is also reflected, so it seems, in the Fifth Book of the *Sibylline Oracles* 46–9, of Egyptian Jewish authorship: ‘And after him another will reign, a silver-headed man. He will have the name of a sea. He shall also be a most excellent man and he will consider everything. And in your time, most excellent, outstanding, dark-haired one’ (ed. J.J. Collins 1983, 394). These verses reflect, so it seems, the attitude towards Hadrian following his first visit to Jerusalem and his acts in favour of the Jews of Egypt in the aftermath of the revolt against Quietus (*infra*).

<sup>36</sup> [https://www.sefaria.org/Bereishit\\_Rabbah.64.10?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en](https://www.sefaria.org/Bereishit_Rabbah.64.10?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en).

<sup>37</sup> *Épître de Barnabé*, Introduction, traduction et notes par P. Prigent. Texte grec établi et présenté par R.A. Kraft, Paris 1971. English translation: ‘Epistle of Barnabas’, in: *The Apostolic Fathers*<sup>2</sup>, translated by J.B. Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer, edited and revised by M.W. Holes, Grand Rapids, MI 1989, p. 183. For a Hebrew translation see Schwartz 1981, 339–40, including a discussion of the correct version of the text and various scholarly opinions about the temple which the Epistle addresses and the identity of its builders. Many scholars are of the opinion that the builders were exclusively Gentiles and that no Jews took part in the building. Thus, for example, Schürer 1973, 535–6. Other scholars dismiss the idea that Hadrian had ever intended to rebuild the Jewish temple. For a survey of the various literary sources (Jewish, Gentile and Christian) pertaining to rebuilding the temple and the foundation of Aelia Capitolina, discussing their historicity, see also Alon 1967, 270–89 (Hebrew).

<sup>38</sup> The derogative attitude shown to the emperor at the very beginning of the story (‘Let his bones rot’) is surely an addition reflecting a later period, after the brutal suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt.

<sup>39</sup> *BT Hagiga* 5b. The arguments were expressed by gestures, a hand covering the face expressing avoidance and a lifted, stretched hand expressing divine favour. R. Joshua ben Ḥananiah also used to go to the *odeum* (בֵּי אֹדְיָן) for such discourses with *minim* in the presence of the Caesar (Hadrian) (*BT Shabbath*, 152a: ‘The emperor asked R. Joshua b. Ḥanania, “Why did you not attend the *Be Abedan*?”...’ There was an *odeum* in Caesarea and the emperor, while staying there, could have resided in the *praetorium* of the Roman governor in this capital city. For more on R. Joshua ben Ḥananiah, one of the most

took place in Tiberias, but the palace used by Hadrian in Tiberias is the only palace that is mentioned in the Rabbinic sources.

A *Hadrianeion*<sup>40</sup> in Tiberias is mentioned by Epiphanius, a monk of *Palaestina* who became bishop of Salamis, Cyprus, in the story about the activity of Joseph, an emissary of the Jewish patriarchs, who had converted to Christianity and received the rank of count (*comes*) from Emperor Constantine, committing himself to erecting churches in Jewish settlements.<sup>41</sup> According to Epiphanius, this was perhaps a temple that was not completed. Scholars associate it with a city-coin from the time of Hadrian, issued in 119 CE and depicting a tetrastyle temple. If this is the case, it is reasonable to assume that it was related to Hadrian's early visit.<sup>42</sup> These facts have led scholars to the conclusion that Hadrian passed through Tiberias when visiting the country.<sup>43</sup> It would have made sense for the leadership of Tiberias to make the decision to build the temple in the emperor's presence.

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renowned Tana'im of the second generation and favoured disciple of R. Yoḥanan ben Zakai, see Margalioth 1976, 453–8 (Hebrew). See also *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII, New York–London 1906, pp. 290–92 (art. Joshua ben Hananiah by Solomon Schechter and Wilhelm Bacher) (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/8913-joshua-b-hananiah-anchor5>) where the encounter of *BT Hagiga* is said to have taken place in the emperor's palace.

<sup>40</sup> Literally, *Hadrianeion* is a structure or institution related to Hadrian. This term occurs in a Greek inscription of the fifth–sixth century uncovered in Caesarea, in which it refers to a civic installation for the distribution of bread, *gratis*, to a privileged sector of its citizens. See Patrich 2019 and 'in press'. A monolithic porphyry statue of Hadrian sitting on a throne incorporated in secondary use in this complex originated, so it seems, in an early temple in Hadrian's honour that stood in the city. In Constantinople, however, this term refers to an aqueduct that brought water to a large reservoir (the present-day Yerebetan Serayi) installed by Justinian underneath Ilus Basilica (*Chronicon Paschale*, ed. L. Dindorf, CSHB 14, Bonn 1832, p. 619, line 2, Eng. tr. Whitby and Whitby, Cambridge 1989, p. 110). In an entirely different sense *Hadrianeion* designates the Perpetual Edict, the law book composed at Hadrian's initiative. Thus in the Greek translation by Paeanius of Caesarea of the book of Euthropius (a Caesarean as well, both of the fourth century), *A Brief History of Rome (Historia Breviarium ab Urbe Condita*, VIII.17, 4). For the significance of this edict in the framework of the emperor's judicial reform, see Fritz Pringsheim, 'The Legal Policy and Reforms of Hadrian', *Journal of Roman Studies* 24 (1934), pp. 141–53; Kaius Tuori, 'Hadrian's Perpetual Edict: Ancient Sources and Modern Ideals in the Making of a Historical Tradition', *Journal of Legal History* 27:3 (2006), 219–37.

<sup>41</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* XXX, 4, 1–12, 9 (Eng. tr., F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Book I, pp. 133–41); Tsafirir 1988; Rubin 1982.

<sup>42</sup> Actually, there is a series of city-coins issued in that very same year. See Meshorer 1988, 99–100; Kindler 1973. City-coins were not issued between 120 CE and the reign of Commodus. Hadrian renewed the urban layout of Scythopolis, Tiberias' neighbour to the south, and seemingly also visited there. See Di Segni and Arubas 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Thus, for example, Holum 1992. Holum attributed the Tiberias visit to 129/130 CE. He was not aware of the implications of the 'Hadrian and the Old Man' narrative or of Epiphanius' testimony about the foundation of Aelia Capitolina during an earlier visit by Hadrian to Judaea/Palaestina.

These are Epiphanius' words:

'(12, 2) ... There was a very large temple in the town already, I think they may have called it the Hadrianeum. The citizens may have been trying to restore this Hadrianeum, which was standing unfinished, for a public bath. (3) When Josephus found this he took the opportunity from it; and as he found that there were already four walls raised to some height, made of stones four feet long, he began the erection of the church from that point... (9) Though they harmed the man on many occasions, he eventually restored part of the temple at Tiberias and finished a small church.'<sup>44</sup>

Epiphanius was not sure if the term refers to the unfinished temple. He says that the citizens (mostly Jewish at that time) wanted to convert it into a bathhouse, and that finally Joseph succeeded in erecting a small church on part of it. Lieberman (1945/6) suggested that Epiphanius confused *Hadrianeion* with *Herodeion*, the ruined palace of Herod Antipas, and associated it with *BT Avodah Zarah* 50a: 'The palace of King Jannaeus was destroyed. Idolaters came and set up a Mercurius there. Subsequently other idolaters came, who did not worship Mercurius, and removed the stones with which they paved the roads and streets. Some Rabbis abstained [from walking in them] while others did not. R. Yoḥanan exclaimed, "The son of the holy walks in them, so shall we abstain!"' According to Lieberman, the naming of R. Yoḥanan implies that Tiberias was the arena of this episode and the ruined palace of Jannaeus was Herod Antipas' palace, over which idolaters erected a sanctuary to Mercury/Hermes, and then other idolaters (whom he identifies as Christians) took its stones and used them as road pavers. He adds that the bathhouse that replaced the ruined temple in Epiphanius is the one adorned with statues addressed by R. Yoḥanan in his conversation with the Gentile Bar Derossai.<sup>45</sup> Both Epiphanius and these Rabbinic sources preserve the memory of the transformation undergone by a large architectural complex in Tiberias.

If we accept that there was indeed a palace in Tiberias in Hadrian's time, it makes sense to assume that this was the restored palace of Herod Antipas that had become an imperial property,<sup>46</sup> and that it regularly served the Roman provincial administration. Moreover, when an official of high rank, such as an emperor or a governor, visited the city he would be accommodated there rather than in a tent, however elaborate.<sup>47</sup> A stay

<sup>44</sup> *Supra* note 41, 12, 2–9, pp. 140–41.

<sup>45</sup> *JT Avodah Zarah* 4:4, 43d (col. 1402 in the Academy edition): 'R. Yoḥanan said to Bar Derossai: "Go down and break all the idols which are in the public bath." He went and broke all of them except one. Why so? R. Jos b. Bun said: "Because one Jew was suspected of offering incense on it."' (Lieberman 1945/6, 365).

<sup>46</sup> In other words, setting the palace on fire at the beginning of the First Revolt did not demolish it. As indicated above (although one should wait for the final report), the small finds (pottery and coins) retrieved from above the floors of the earlier structure date from the first and second centuries CE. The first-century CE stratum was reached only in limited sectors, and extending the excavation of this stratum may yield a more detailed picture. In addition, as mentioned above, it seems that the Herodian palace spread over a much larger area than that excavated so far, including the site of the bathhouse. Thus, for example, segments of walls with Herodian frescoes in situ uncovered outside the northern entrance of the complex mark the NE corner of the Herodian palace.

<sup>47</sup> Notably, according to Malalas, *Chronographia* XII.38, tr. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, Melbourne 1986, p. 167, in 289 CE Diocletian built a

in Tiberias had the advantage of offering the pleasures of its sea shore and its healing hot springs. Accordingly, it is also reasonable to assume that it was this building, the former palace of Herod Antipas, that lodged ‘Antoninus’ when he met Rabbi.<sup>48</sup> There are also important non-Rabbinic literary testimonies to imperial sojourns in Tiberias. Diocletian resided in Tiberias for at least three summer months, from May 31 to August 31, 286 CE, a prolonged stay, while dealing with state affairs: three imperial edicts in his name (together with that of Maximian, his co-Augustus) were issued in Tiberias during this visit!<sup>49</sup>

Let’s return now to the story of Hadrian and the Old Man. Were there indeed two visits of the emperor in Tiberias? (in the first it is said that the emperor met the old man planting fig saplings, and in the second the old man brought fresh figs from his garden to the palace). According to the late compilations *Midrash Tanhuma* and *Yalqut Shimoni*, the second encounter occurred when Hadrian came back to Tiberias after a three-year war.<sup>50</sup> So did Hadrian visit the country twice? The answer is positive. The first visit was

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palace to be used by visiting Caesars in Daphne of Antioch, since earlier they had erected tents in the woods and stayed there. I am indebted to Catherine Saliou for this important reference. The later imperial legislation (*infra*) indicates that in Late Antiquity there were palaces to host an emperor or a governor on the move throughout the empire. It was the duty of the governors to keep them in good condition and reside there, rather than in the villas of local wealthy residents.

<sup>48</sup> *Supra* note 19.

<sup>49</sup> These are the three edicts: *Codex Justinianus* I 51.1 (July 14); IV 10.3 (May 31, in one of the MS); V 17.3 (August 31). See Justinianus, *Corpus Iuris Civilis* II: *Codex Iustinianus*, pp. 88, 153 and 212 respectively, ed. P. Krueger *et al.*, Berlin 1954 (16th ed.) (<https://heinonline.org/HOL/Index?index=beal%2Fcrpsirs&collection=religion>) ([www.cambridge.org/core/books/corpus-iuris-civilis/9EC30A3837B126D56DD96472E1560784](http://www.cambridge.org/core/books/corpus-iuris-civilis/9EC30A3837B126D56DD96472E1560784)). For references and discussion see Barnes 1982, 50–51 and notes 25, 26. I am indebted to Prof. Uzi Leibner for drawing my attention to this point and to Dr. Yuval Shahar (2021, 254), for the bibliographic references. Barnes (*ibid.*) notes the probability that during this period he also came to Caesarea (the provincial capital), but the facts that these imperial edicts were issued from Tiberias and that no edict is known to have been issued in Caesarea suggest that Tiberias was his headquarters during this prolonged stay. Barnes also refers to earlier studies of Jewish scholars, familiar with the Rabbinic sources, who suggest another visit of Diocletian to the province, as well as to Paneas and Tyre, at some time between 296 and 302 CE. For Hadrian’s visit to Tiberias (without reference to the above-mentioned edicts) see also Shalit 1961, col. 430; Avi-Yonah 1976, 127. Diocletian also stayed in Paneas, another city with healing springs (perhaps in the former palace of Philip the Tetrarch, which also served King Agrippa II), summoning the Jewish patriarch there from Tiberias for a hearing. See *JT Trumoth* 8:4, 46b–c (8:11, col. 252 in the Academy edition); *Genesis Rabbah* 63:8: דיקליש קיסר היה רועה חזירים בטבריה ... היו יוצאים תיגוקות והיכוהו. אחר זמן נעשה מלך, ירד וישב בפניאס. For his stay in Paneas see also *JT Shvi’it* 9:2, 38d (col. 210 in the Academy edition).

<sup>50</sup> Three years is a long enough time from planting to the first crop of fruit (oral information from Prof. Gideon Ne’eman, an expert on fig trees, to whom we are grateful). Hence, it is quite possible that we have here common agricultural knowledge rather than a typological number. Likewise, the ‘Parable of the Barren Fig Tree’ of Jesus Christ (Luke 13:6–9) implies that a fig tree that does not bear fruit after three years is suspected of being barren: ‘6 And he told this parable: A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came

in 117 CE, immediately after his coronation (August 11, 117, in Antioch) on his way to Egypt. In late September and October 117 he was already in Alexandria, issuing there several edicts ordering the Greeks to end their persecution of the Jews following the Diaspora Revolt, known in the Rabbinic sources as the Quietus Controversy, which had erupted in 115 CE.<sup>51</sup> Hadrian also ordered the removal of Lusius Quietus, who had brutally crushed the Jewish revolt in Mesopotamia, from his post as governor of Judea. On his way to Egypt Hadrian passed through the province, including Jerusalem (August or September 117), quenched the revolt and took several administrative and military measures, including the elevation of the administrative status of the province to consular (some time before 120 CE), and increasing the number of military units there.<sup>52</sup> This visit is addressed in detail in another treatise of Epiphanius.<sup>53</sup> According to Epiphanius, Hadrian was ill when he left Antioch for Egypt, and consequently the famous healing springs of Tiberias (and Hammat Gader) might have been an appropriate destination *en route*. Elsewhere Epiphanius mentions the *Hadrianeion* of Tiberias, seemingly a temple built in Hadrian's honour (*infra*). Scholars view this building and a series of city-coins from the early years of his rule (*infra*) as evidence for Hadrian's visit to the city. According to Epiphanius, it was during this visit that the emperor decided to rebuild Jerusalem. The supervision of the works was entrusted to Aquilas, a Greek intellectual of Pontus and his relative; the city was called Aelia after him. Aquilas became a Christian and then converted to Judaism, and in due course translated the Bible into Greek under the guidance of R. Joshua ben Hananiah and R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. Rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, however, was not part of the program.<sup>54</sup>

The second visit of Hadrian to the province took place after the winter of 129/30 CE, thirteen years, not three, after the first visit. It is mentioned by Cassius Dio. According to him, during this visit Hadrian founded a new city named Aelia Capitolina in place of Jerusalem, with a temple of Jupiter replacing the Jewish temple.<sup>55</sup> The archaeological

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seeking fruit on it and found none. 7 And he said to the vinedresser, "Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?" ...' (ESV).

<sup>51</sup> Capponi 2010, 489–501.

<sup>52</sup> Capponi 2010, 496–9.

<sup>53</sup> Epiphanius, *De mensuris et ponderibus* 14 = PG 43.260–61 = *On Weights and Measures*, 14 (Greek version). An English translation is given in Baker 2012, 158.

<sup>54</sup> Di Segni 2014. There are scholars who dismiss this testimony of Epiphanius about the foundation of Aelia in 117 CE; thus Schürer 1973, as well as Baker 2012; Cotton Paltiel and Ecker 2019. Cotton and Ecker ignore the convincing arguments of Capponi 2010 and Di Segni 2014, as well as the evidence of the archaeological finds (*infra*). Years ago, Theodor Mommsen (1927, 242) accepted Epiphanius' report of Hadrian's visit to Jerusalem as authentic.

<sup>55</sup> Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LXIX, 12, 1–2, Eng. tr. E. Cary, Loeb Classical Library 176, pp. 446–7. Di Segni (2014) suggested that Epiphanius' testimony about the foundation of Aelia refers to a decision in principle, following which the city plan was laid out and works of infrastructure commenced, while that of Cassius Dio refers to the inauguration of the city during Hadrian's second visit. See also Capponi 2010.

finds made in the excavations of the eastern cardo, to the west of the Western Wall, substantiate this testimony.<sup>56</sup>

Hence, there were indeed two visits of Hadrian to the province, and it seems that in both he passed through Tiberias (and since he was ill when leaving Antioch, he may well have taken a bath in its healing springs).

#### TIBERIAS – A PROVINCIAL ASSIZE CITY

As was customary in the Roman provincial administration, a governor was obliged to inspect his realm in a yearly circuit, holding assizes in particular cities at appointed times,<sup>57</sup> listening to petitions and hearings and inspecting taxation assessments. The judicial authority was a major duty of a provincial governor and in judicial and other texts he is regularly referred to as a judge (*iudex*). Namely, trials were held before him not only in the provincial capital but also in privileged cities along his circuit, known as assizes,<sup>58</sup> not in all of them each year. When he headed a trial, only serious cases were brought for his judgment, including those entailing the death sentence and litigations associated with larger sums of money than those brought in the municipal law courts in civic basilicas, headed by the *defensoris civitatis*.<sup>59</sup> In various literary sources in Greek, Latin and Syriac, there are scattered mentions of the governor arriving to preside over a trial, or of prisoners awaiting his arrival, in cities of the province (Lod, Sepphoris, Gaza, Ascalon, Jerusalem and Emmaus).<sup>60</sup> In order to prevent long delays, the governor was

<sup>56</sup> Weksler-Bdolah 2020. The finds indeed indicate that the course of the street was marked, supporting walls were built and fills were poured in the first phase, and the street was paved in a second phase, nearer to Hadrian's second visit. For a critical review see Magness 2020.

<sup>57</sup> Known as assize circuit, tournées judiciaires or Konventusbezirk in the scholarly literature.

<sup>58</sup> Lat. *conventus*; Gr. ἀγορά δικῶν, ἡ ἀγοραῖος, ἡ ἀγοραῖα. See *infra*, notes 64, 65. *Conventus* also had a territorial meaning, designating that sector of a province that is subject to an assize. A lively description of the impact of judicial convention headed by a governor on the life and economy of an assize city is given by Dio Chrysostom (flourished ca. 115–140 CE), speaking about Celaenae (Apamea of Phrygia) in the early second century CE: 'And what is more, the courts are in session every other year in Celaenae, and they bring together an unnumbered throng of people—litigants, jurymen, orators, princes, attendants, slaves, pimps, muleteers, hucksters, harlots, and artisans. Consequently not only can those who have goods to sell obtain the highest prices, but also nothing in the city is out of work, neither the teams nor the houses nor the women. And this contributes not a little to prosperity; for wherever the greatest throng of people comes together, there necessarily we find money in greatest abundance, and it stands to reason that the place should thrive ... So it is, you see, that the business of the courts is deemed of highest importance toward a city's strength and all men are interested in that as in nothing else. And the foremost cities share this business each in its turn in alternate years' (Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse*, 35, 15–17, ed. Cahoon and Crosby, London 1940, III: 389, 405–7).

<sup>59</sup> J.M. David, 'Le tribunal dans la basilique: evolution fonctionnelle et symbolique de la République à l'Empire', *Architecture et Société. De l'Archaïsme Grec à la fin de la République romain. Actes du Colloque international organisé par le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et l'École Française de Rome, Rome 2–4 décembre 1980*, Paris 1983, 219–41; Färber 2014, 203–9.

<sup>60</sup> For a survey and references see Di Segni 1996, 582–4. Lod/Lydda is mentioned as a seat of law court already in the mid 1<sup>st</sup> c. CE (*Ant.* XX, 130–131). Tiberias, addressed in the

allowed to nominate secondary judges (*pedanei iudices*) for the assize cities to discuss less serious matters.<sup>61</sup>

And lo and behold: at the end of the third or the early fourth century, we are told in *JT Berachot* 2:8 5c (col. 23 in the Academy edition) that a governor was sitting at court in Tiberias:

‘When Rebbi Yasa ascended here, he went to a barber. He wanted to bathe in a public bath of Tiberias. He met a scoffer who hit him once on his neck and said: The noose of this man is loose. There was an administrator (אַרְכֹנָא) sitting who was interrogating (קָאִים דְאִין) a robber. He went and stood there all laughing opposite him. The administrator asked him: Who was with you? He looked around and said: The one who is laughing here was with me. He fetched him, interrogated him (וּדְנִיָה), and he confessed about one murder. When they both went out, carrying two beams, Rebbi Yasa passed by going to the bath. He said to him: That noose which was loose you already tightened.’<sup>62</sup>

According to Lieberman (1980, 7), this anecdote ‘is stamped by a seal of truth’, namely it reflects historical reality pertaining to people, time and place. Namely, at the time with which we are concerned (the end of the third century or the beginning of the fourth, the time of Diocletian’s regime) there was in Tiberias a place where the governor was sitting in court, and this was adjacent to a bathhouse—a location that befits the building with which we are concerned.

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Rabbinic sources (*infra*), is not in her list. This list indicates that for *Palaestina*, the *conventus* system (the yearly circuit of the governor in his province) did not disappear following the administrative reforms of Diocletian, as Lavan (2001, 46) had maintained. Likewise, Libanius and the imperial legislation given below (notes 66–74) refute this assumption of his. This issue was discussed in detail by Färber 2014, *infra* note 65.

<sup>61</sup> *Cod. Just.* 1.16.8 (July 28, 362 CE). This practice was earlier forbidden by Diocletian.

<sup>62</sup> Rebbi Yasa is Rebbi Yassi, a Babylonian sage who immigrated to Tiberias at the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century. The ‘administrator’ in this English translation is the archon, the provincial governor. He alone could inflict death penalty. Thus Garnsey 1968, who asserts that the *ius gladii* - the power to impose the death sentence was available to all governors from the Julio-Claudian period at least (55).

*JT Berakhot* 9:1, 13b (col. 67 in the Academy edition) mentions an archon named Alexandrus who had sentenced a robber, seemingly a governor sitting on the judge’s throne and not a Gentile head of the city council and judge, as maintained by Yudelevitz (1950, 63 and note 1), who ascribes this event to Tiberias. The city judge was the *defensor civitatis*. The English translation (H.W. Guggenheimer, *Studia Judaica* 18, 2000) renders here ‘prefect’.

For archon in the meaning of provincial governor see Liddle, Scott, Johns, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, revised edition, Oxford 1996, p. 254, ἄρχων II.2: governor of a dependency or a province. According to Mason (1974, 27, 111), the use of ἄρχων for provincial governors is common in literature. Thus in Plutarch (d. ca. 120) Aelius Aristides and Lucian (2<sup>nd</sup> c.), Cassius Dio (d. ca. 235) and Philostratus (d. ca. 250). Mason notes that it is perhaps appropriate to see here influence from the Attic movement in literature. In local Palestinian context *archontes* likewise denotes provincial governors; thus, for example, in Anecdote 165 of John Moschus, *Pratum Spirituale*. In the epigraphic finds, in five out of six inscriptions of the fifth century (Elusa) and sixth century (Scythopolis/Beth Shean), the term denotes provincial governor and in only one case, of the third century (Paneas), a city magistrate of high rank. See Di Segni 1997, inscr. nos. 5, 100, 101, 103, 104, 266.



Hence, Tiberias had the status of assize city. Government officials, including the governor himself, came there on a regular basis. Thus, in *BT Shabbath* 145b we read: אמר רבי יצחק: אין לך כל רגל ורגל שלא באתה בולשת לציפורי. ואמר רבי חנינא: אין לך כל רגל ורגל קמטון. אגמון/הגמון. שלא בא לטבריה אגמון/הגמון וקמטון ובעל זמורה. derives from *comes*, an adviser and aide, and בעל זמורה is seemingly a *lictor*, an attendant and bodyguard of the governor holding a bundle of laurel branches tied together with an axe (*fasces*), marking the governor's imperial authority.<sup>63</sup> This system of judicial circuits of Roman governors in the assize cities of the Roman realm, practiced in the early empire,<sup>64</sup> continued into Late Antiquity,<sup>65</sup> the period of time to which the basilical building is assigned on the basis of the archaeological finds published so far. This system is attested in *Iudaea / Syria Palaestina* since it was ruled by a governor of a senatorial rank, immediately after the suppression of the first Jewish revolt against Rome.<sup>66</sup>

This reality, pertaining to the governor/judge's duty to tour his province to dispense justice and levy taxes, is well reflected in Late Antique texts and in imperial legislation.<sup>67</sup> In the course of this circuit he had to reside in official buildings and maintain them, rather than to stay in private residences. A law of 458 CE prohibited the coercing of residents of cities *en route* to supply provisions for an arriving judge/governor for more than three days per year.<sup>68</sup> About a century later, a *novella* of Justinian of 545 CE forbids the provincial judges (i.e. the governors), and those subordinate to them, while passing through a city, to impose upon its inhabitants the expenses of the trip. These should be covered from their own budget.<sup>69</sup> The legislation states that the judge/governor has to set up law courts in places where people need them,

<sup>63</sup> The English translation (Soncino edition) is far from accurate: 'R. Isaac said: There is no single festival when troops did not come to Sepphoris. R. Hanina said: There is no single festival when there did not come to Tiberias a general with his suite and centurions.' Although this note occurs only in the *BT*, it reflects Roman administrative practices in Eretz Israel, not in Babylonia. However, as far as is known, the assize circuit was held once a year or every two years, not three times a year (but perhaps אין לך כל רגל ורגל is just a phrase). Elsewhere we read about an encounter between R. Yohanan ben Zakai and a hegemon. For references and discussion see Herr 1973, 273–5. On the Jews and sages of Tiberias see Yudelevitz 1950; Cohen 1966.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example: Burton 1975; Haensch 1997, 234–7: Konventussystem. And for the end of the Republican period and the early empire in the provinces of Asia and Achaëa see Fournier 2010, 41–98. I am indebted to A. Laniado for reference to this book.

<sup>65</sup> Carrié 1998. Färber 2014, 161–74: Statthalterreise und Amtssitz in der Spätantike.

<sup>66</sup> Cotton and Eck 2005, especially p. 37 and note 59. Since this article was published a new Greek papyrus from Naḥal Hever, formerly considered to be Nabatean, was announced (P. Cotton, *olim* ExHev. se. nab. 6), in which a *conventus* of the governor Tineius Rufus in the *Peraea* – a part of the province *Iudaea*, is mentioned. An Israeli-Austrian team is preparing it for publication. I am indebted for the anonymous reviewer of the Hebrew article for this information and to Prof. Hannah Cotton for permission to mention it here.

<sup>67</sup> Thus, for example, Libanius, *Oration* 45, 24 (Loeb Classical Library 452, pp. 180–83).

<sup>68</sup> Nov. *Majorianus* 7, 17 (458 CE), Eng. tr. C. Pharr, *Codex Theodosianus*, Princeton 1952, p. 559.

<sup>69</sup> Novella 128.22 ([https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/N128\\_Scott.htm](https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/N128_Scott.htm)).

not in pleasant places to stay.<sup>70</sup> The law courts were in roofed halls rather than in the forum, open to the sky. Archives and rooms adapted to judicial discourse (*secretaria*) next to the halls of justice were required.<sup>71</sup> The governor was also obliged to visit remote estates and villages.<sup>72</sup> It was forbidden to allow ordinary people to reside in imperial palaces, and it was the governor's duty to enforce this and take care for their appropriate maintenance. A governor who violated these regulations would be fined.<sup>73</sup> A provincial governor was not only allowed to reside in an imperial palace<sup>74</sup> but was obliged to do so, or to stay in a praetorian building, rather than staying in a private dwelling and using it for his administration. Whoever violated this rule would have to pay a fine in order to repair the neglected property.<sup>75</sup> Agents (*stationarii*) of the governor's headquarters in the capital (*officium*) were stationed in the cities, one in each, and their duty was to report on crimes and serious violations of the public order. Like a police force, they had the authority to control public order as well as the imperial post, the city gates and the levying of taxes on incoming goods, but they were not allowed to have prisons of their own.<sup>76</sup> A government building seemingly served as headquarters for the activity of these agents in an assize city.

At the end of the sixth century we hear about the governor of Tiberias and its surrounding area.<sup>77</sup> It is reasonable to assume that he had a residence in the city. Tiberias surrendered to the Muslims in 636 CE, the treaty of surrender guaranteeing a smooth transfer of power. Under the new rulers Tiberias became capital of Jund al-Urdun in place of Scythopolis/Beth Shean, the capital of the former Palaestina Secunda. A mint was installed in the city, issuing coins bearing the city's name.<sup>78</sup> Several modifications

<sup>70</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 1, 16, 12, Eng. tr. C. Pharr, Princeton 1952, p. 29 (369 CE).

<sup>71</sup> Lavan 2001, 54–5; Färber 2014, 179, 235–82.

<sup>72</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 1, 16, 11, *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 7, 10, 1, Eng. tr. C. Pharr, *Codex Theodosianus*, Princeton 1952, p. 169 (405 CE).

<sup>74</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 7, 10, 2, Eng. tr. C. Pharr, *Codex Theodosianus*, Princeton 1952, p. 169 (407 CE).

<sup>75</sup> *Cod. Just.* 1, 40, 15 (471 CE), ([http://www.uwyo.edu/lawlib/blume-justinian/ajc-edition-2/books/book1/book\\_1-40rev.pdf](http://www.uwyo.edu/lawlib/blume-justinian/ajc-edition-2/books/book1/book_1-40rev.pdf)). Hundreds of years earlier, while Pliny the Younger served as governor of Bithynia on behalf of Trajan, while sojourning in Perusa (Bursa) he was staying and working in a building labeled *hospitium* - a hospice - rather than in the house of one of its wealthy man. Radice renders here (Pliny, *Letters* X, lxxx, 1, Loeb classical Library 59, pp. 268–269) governor's residence. According to Philostratus (*Vita Sophistae* I, 25, 534, Loeb Classical Library pp. 112–113), while Antoninus Pius was governor of Asia, he settled himself in Smyrna (Izmir) in a house of the wealthy, at the absence of its owner, and when the owner had arrived, he was expelled in shame at midnight.

<sup>76</sup> Jones 1964, Vol. 1: 521, Vol. 2: 1219, n. 114; Vol. 1: 600, Vol. 2: 1248, n. 89, deriving from these edicts: CTh IV.xiii. 2 and 3, of year 321; VI.xxix.1 of 355; VIII.iv.2 of 315; VIII.v.1 of 315; Di Segni, *supra* note 60.

<sup>77</sup> Brock 1973, 314. His name was Genadius (ܓܢܢܝܢ in Syriac), and he is not known from any other source.

<sup>78</sup> In the Umayyad period, bronze coins: first imitations of Byzantine *folleis* in denomination of 40 *nummi* and later, after el-Walid's monetary reform (end of the seventh century), Arabic

took place in the building with which we are concerned, which has been identified by scholars as the residential palace of the Muslim governor (*dār al-imāra*). Nearby, on the site of the Roman-Byzantine “market”, a large Friday mosque was constructed at some time during the Early Islamic period.<sup>79</sup>

#### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

To sum up, from Flavius Josephus we know that Tiberias had a government palace from its very inception under Herod Antipas. It is reasonable to assume that under Muslim rule, when it became the capital of Jund al-Urdun, a palace of the new ruler stood there. And what about in between? The Rabbinic sources indicate that Tiberias was an assize city – a point that was un-noticed so far;<sup>80</sup> that a government palace (*praetorium*) existed there during the Roman-Byzantine period as well, that it was frequented by emperors (Hadrian, ‘Antoninus’ and Diocletian). It makes sense that the new Muslim regime would have continued to use the same building for the same purposes, after making certain repairs and elaborations.<sup>81</sup> Was this the basilical building located in the south of the civic centre, as suggested by Hirschfeld (who, however did not examine the literary sources presented here and considered a “Jewish identity”)? If the Herodian structure uncovered in the lowest level of the excavation (Fig. 5) was indeed the palace of Herod Antipas, as is the prevalent opinion, it certainly became Roman imperial estate and most probably continued to serve as a governmental building in later generations as well. The proximity to a bathhouse is in accord with some of the texts presented above.<sup>82</sup>

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coins. Under the Fatimids there were also gold coins in denominations of one and of a quarter dinar. See Kedar 1973.

<sup>79</sup> Cytryn 2009a; *eadem*, 2009b; *eadem*, 2015. The governor of Jund al-Urdun, for which Tiberias served as the capital, could of course have also resided in the adjacent extramural Umayyad palaces of Khirbat al-Minya on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee and Sennabris on its SW shore. I am indebted to Prof. Katia Cytryn-Silberman, whom I consulted about the interpretation of the building with which we are concerned during the Early Islamic period. Despite the absence of Arabic literary sources, I share her opinion that this was the governor’s palace.

<sup>80</sup> As a matter of fact, it would have been bizarre if the most important Jewish city in Galilee since the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. and on, the seat of the patriarch and of the great Rabbinic academy, would not have been such a city, forcing its citizens to be summoned elsewhere for Roman provincial jurisdiction.

<sup>81</sup> The *praetorium* of the governor of Palaestina Secunda (not yet uncovered) presumably stood in Scythopolis, its capital. But government palaces (*praetoria*) of smaller scale seemingly existed in all provincial assize cities as well, and the governor resided in them when he arrived to administer law there.

<sup>82</sup> There was certainly more than one bathhouse in Tiberias. The mosaics uncovered by Bezalel Ravani in the bathhouse in the 1950s, not far from the building at our concern, were dated to the end of the fifth century and no later than the early sixth century (Talgam 1988), but according to the excavator the remains of an earlier bathhouse are hidden under this structure. From the literary sources we know of a bathhouse in the time of Rabbi Aqiva (during Hadrian’s reign in the second century) and that of Rabbi Yoḥanan (in the third century). The bathhouse with the statues that were removed on Rabbi Yoḥanan’s instructions was located in the former complex of Antipas’ palace (attributed in *BT Avodah Zarah* 50a to Jannaeus). It is quite certain that this palace, like all Herodian palaces, had a bathhouse.



*Fig. 5. The finds in the lower level of the excavation to the west of the apses. A. View from SW (Photo Y. Hirschfeld); B. View from above (Sky View, Nov. 2005).*

However, according to the preliminary archaeological reports published so far, there is a chronological gap between the building attributed to Herod Antipas, which continued in use into the second century, and the Late Roman palace, attributed by Hirschfeld to the third–fourth century. The reports, however, are preliminary, and the

excavation reached the levels of the Herodian palace only in a limited area. Hopefully the final report will provide a more precise picture.<sup>83</sup> It is difficult to assume that a Herodian palace that became a Roman imperial possession was left desolate in the city centre for a long period while the Roman governors and their officials frequented the city in an orderly manner year after year and an agent of the governor, the *stationarius*, regularly stayed there.

To be sure, in the absence of identifying inscriptions it is impossible to determine with certainty what was the essence of this building. Was it just a palatial private mansion, or was it a *praetorium*—a palace of the Roman administration? However, as noted above, the architectural plan alone is not enough to refute Hirschfeld's original proposal that in the absence of typical residential functions, such as a kitchen or a private bathhouse, the complex should be identified as an administrative, public structure (though not of the Jews, as he tended to believe). One should certainly not reach a conclusion about the essence of such a building without consulting the literary sources, which attest that Tiberias was an assize city visited in an orderly manner by governors and from time to time also by emperors.

A pertinent question is what are the differences between a regular palatial mansion and a provincial administrative palace? This issue was examined by Luke Lavan with special attention to governors' *praetoria* and functional aspects that are found in an administrative structure but are absent in the house of a regular wealthy citizen.<sup>84</sup> He is

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<sup>83</sup> Thus, for example, the various phases of the central hall are not clear. According to the plans published so far (Figs. 1, 3, 4), the impression is that at first it was a rectangular hall, typical of Herodian and Early Roman reception halls; in a second phase, its inner eastern corners were rounded by building additions; then a small apse was installed nearby on the west, as was customary in the Late Roman period; and in a fifth phase, dated to the sixth century, the hall was extended eastwards in two sub-phases by the building of a new apse at this end, blocking (first partially and then entirely) the earlier corridor behind. Hopefully, the final report will provide a precise date for each of these phases. Are phases 1–4 all of the fourth to sixth centuries? According to Hirschfeld and Amir (1997, 36), several closely superimposed floor levels were encountered in the space between the westernmost apse and the wall to its east. Moreover, from the preliminary reports it is not clear what was the impact of the earthquake of 363 CE on the urban layout. Its footprints are easily recognized both in Scythopolis to the south and in Sussita on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, as well as in Sepphoris to the west. The above-mentioned letter attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem lists Tiberias among the cities affected. It is reasonable to assume that the limestone palace of Antipas was demolished by this earthquake and the basalt palace was later erected in its place, and that during the construction of its deep foundations the latest occupational layers of the earlier palace were obliterated.

<sup>84</sup> Lavan 1999. Lavan examined seventeen Late Antique structures identified by various scholars as governors' residences. In a critical analysis of the archaeological finds and other records, he classified them into four categories of certainty: probable, possible, uncertain of low probability and improbable. The first group comprises only Cogn, Aquincum, Gortyn and Ptolemais of Lybia. In the second group are Cirencester, Gorsium, Caesarea Maritima (by now there should be no doubt about the identity of both of its *praetoria*) and Carthage. His last two groups include Cordoba, Justiniana Prima/Caričin Grad, Serdica, Sardis, Ephesus, Aphrodisias and Syrian Apamea. He opined that in most of these cases we have to do, at most, with private wealthy mansions. In an appendix he added a list of six structures

aware that from the architectural point of view *praetoria* belong to the group of houses of the wealthy, but in terms of functionality they must include components suitable for several extra administrative activities, such as chambers (*secretaria*) adjacent to the law court for consulting on judicial matters with advisors and lawyers before the trial in the absence of the litigant, offices for clerks dealing with other matters, such as taxation, and a prison. In the absence of identifying inscriptions, it is almost impossible to assign a specific activity to every room or wing in Tiberias. However, it seems likely that the two underground chambers described above were rightly interpreted as prison cells—a point in favour of the *praetorium* interpretation.

One should note that Lavan's perspective was limited to permanent residences of governors in provincial capitals. He was not aware of the fact that *praetoria* were available to governors in assize cities as well, as indicated by the literary sources listed above, among them Leo's edict of 471 CE.<sup>85</sup> Thus, for example, there is a reference to such a *praetorium*—the palace of the proconsul of Palaestina—in Jerusalem (his regular seat was in Caesarea, the administrative capital of the province, not in Jerusalem).<sup>86</sup> It is also quite plausible that the Lod Villa, adorned with lavish mosaic floors of imperial quality, belongs to this category, since Lydda was an assize city already in the mid 1<sup>st</sup> c. CE, as was indicated above, and in the early 4<sup>th</sup> c. this conclusion is derived from the story of the Egyptian confessors, about one hundred in number, who were sent to be tried before Firmilianus, the governor of Palaestina, in the sixth year of the Diocletianic persecutions (309 CE).<sup>87</sup> The Lod Villa, located in an exclusive neighbourhood,

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considered in the past to be governors' residences, among them "Theodosius' Palace" in Stobi, the Terrace Peristyle House above the theatre of Ephesus, the "Palace of the Bishop" in Bostra, and the "House of the Dux" in Apollonia of Cyrenaica, for which later research has indicated that there are no ground for such an interpretation. However, many of these cities were assize cities – a point he did not take into consideration when trying to establish their function. (In an email of Sept. 2, 2020, he excludes Cirencester from the second group, and as for the other structures, he agrees that some of them might have served as government *praetoria*, despite the absence of clear-cut evidence.) Schäfer (2014), examined the *praetoria* of Aquintum, Qarnuntum, Apulium, Caesarea Maritima (2), Dura Europus and Gortyn, in addition to Cologne, to which most of his study is dedicated.

<sup>85</sup> Supra note 75.

<sup>86</sup> Jerome, *Epistle* 108.9 ('The Itinerary of Paula and Eustochium'). The state prison in which Anastasius, *dux Palaestinae*, had Patriarch Iohannes arrested in 516 CE was seemingly located there. See Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sabae* 56, p. 150 in the E. Schwartz edition. One should not confuse this *praetorium* with the *praetorium* of Pontius Pilate, where according to some pilgrims Christ was sentenced to be crucified.

<sup>87</sup> Eusebius, *De Martyribus Palaestinae* 29, Syriac version (411 CE), ed. W. Cureton, London–Paris 1861, p. 27. Some scholars maintain that Eusebius' words about 'a large city in the land of Palestine, teeming with population, of which all the inhabitants were Jews. It is called in Aramaic tongue Lud, and in the Greek it is called Diocaesarea' refer to Sepphoris/Diocaesarea, rather than to Lydda/Diospolis, and that this is a mistake in the Syriac version. Thus Klein 1939, 131, note 10. However, Cureton, the editor and translator of this text into English (p. 65), maintained that the correct reading should be Diospolis. Lieberman (1939–44), embraced and elaborated this conclusion, as did many other scholars. See Alon 1967, Vol. 2, p. 258 and notes 123–4; Dan 1984, p. 66, note 46; Rosenfeld 1997, p. 89 and note 6. And indeed, it is more likely that the hundred Egyptian confessors were

comprised two mosaic paved wings, a northern wing with a triclinium and a southern wing with a peristyle courtyard. It was built in several stages during the third and fourth centuries and was occupied for a long period of time. It went out of use some time later, in the Byzantine period.<sup>88</sup>

Another example of a Late Antique *praetorium* not located in a provincial capital mentioned by Luke Lavan, in addition to Jerusalem, is the Palace of the Giants in Athens. It seemingly served for hosting emperors, although this is not confirmed by any literary source or inscription.<sup>89</sup> It would be a reasonable conclusion that other monumental residences located in assize cities had such a function, although in the absence of epigraphic evidence they have been interpreted as houses of the rich rather than *praetoria*. The imperial legislation mentioned above attests that in Late Antiquity there were buildings for lodging provincial governors in assize cities along their judicial circuits. The literary sources discussed above indicate that Tiberias was such a city. The history, the architectural plan and the location of the building with which we are concerned suggest that it was indeed a *praetorium*.

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taken to Lod, located nearer to Caesarea, and that they were sentenced there by the governor, whose regular residence was in Caesarea. They were condemned to forced labour in the copper mines of Feinan, on the eastern side of the 'Aravah. They never reached Caesarea. Lod, unlike Sepphoris, is located on the highway from Egypt to Caesarea, a point already raised by Lieberman. In this period Lod was indeed a mainly Jewish city. In the Greek version (8.1, p. 144 in Bardy's edition), it is said that the event took place 'in the land of the Jews', and that the number of condemned fetched to the governor of Palaestina for trial was ninety-seven. The name of the city is not given there. Jerome (*Chronicon* ad 283 *Olympiade*, ed. Helm, GCS 24, p. 238), at the end of the fourth century, indicates in reference to the Gallus revolt that Lydda/Diospolis was indeed a Jewish city, like Tiberias and Sepphoris.

<sup>88</sup> Avissar 1996; 1999; 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Lavan 2001. A *praetorium* of a governor in Athens is mentioned already before this palace was installed. And in Olympia that neither was a provincial capital, another structure that served consuls is mentioned. Thanks are due to Luke Lavan for this information (in an email, Sept. 2, 2020), yet unpublished. In Volubilis of Mauritania Tingitana (Morocco), which was not a provincial capital but it was frequented by the governor, he would reside in the *praetorium*, adjacent to his administrative compound (*officium*). It contained stables, a large complex of rooms that seemingly served his *comites*, and dwellings and working rooms for clerks. See Haensch 1997, 377, 497–9.

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