ICS NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL CATACOMB SOCIETY

AN OCCASIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE SOCIETY *FALL 1994*

OUR RAISON D'ETRE

The International Catacomb Society is dedicated to the preservation and documentation of those rare vestiges of history which illustrate the common influences on Jewish, Christian, and pagan funerary practices during the time of the Roman Empire. It also strives to increase understanding among faiths by circulating exhibits, sponsoring lectures, and disseminating information and publications of interest.

ACTIVITIES

The Society sponsors and hosts public exhibitions and lectures in the United States and abroad in cooperation with educational and cultural institutions. The operating expenses of the Society are financed by private donations and project grants. Contributions are tax-deductible. Members receive all mailings, periodic newsletters, and invitations to special events.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's curious how certain thoughts will enter the mind at apparently unrelated moments, even when there are significant distractions. Last month, I was sailing through the Corinth Canal, heading into the Aegean Sea. It was sunset, and the experience of a fair-sized ship negotiating this narrow, palisaded waterway with barely a few meters to spare was dramatic and impressive. In the middle of this excitement, I suddenly thought of our Catacomb Society, wondering where it would be heading. Please rest assured: I do not have an abnormal fixation/attachment to the ICS; although I do confess an affection for the Society and its membership. Nice people. Interesting people. Good values. No, this aberration of thought was indeed traceable to a logical sequence of associations: I had learned earlier that the canal was begun by the Roman emperor, Nero, using thousands of Jewish slaves rounded up in Palestine. Nero, in my mind, was connected with destruction in the city of Rome. It was not a giant leap of irrationality to get from Jewish slaves, destruction, and Rome, to Jewish catacombs in Rome and to our Society. That I had just come from visiting Pompeii and had there spoken about Dr. Baldassare Conticello, the Director of the site and a Vice-President of our Society, further contributed to my "Society" associations. All in all, it was quite a normal event of the mind. Trust me. However, the theme of that thought lingered on: with the passing of our founder, Estelle Brettman, what of ICS's future? Where should the Society be heading?

Certainly, the direction of our Society will be determined ultimately by the membership and the Board of Directors, with the Executive Board (and the President) leading the way in the process. So there I was, sailing the Aegean Sea, and thinking about ICS's future. I thought about "our" Roman catacombs becoming more a thematic symbol and metaphor for the Society, the prototype for study, conservation, and education, but now in other related areas. We would preserve both our ecumenical emphasis as well as our triadic art/archaeological/religious thrust. The Roman catacombs, their epigraphy and history, have given insight into a time and place where there were significant long-standing social and cultural interactions between pagan Romans, diaspora Roman Jews, and newly-emerging Roman Christians. The study of these sites, as Mrs. Brettman's work has shown, points up powerful and influential cultural determinants on all these three religions, with influences rooted both in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt and in the contemporary Hellenistic and Roman cultures.

Now that we are bringing much of our current catacomb work to completion, and, as a Society, we look to the future, a view from this multicultural perspective may help serve as a rationale and a guide in our task to widen our field of vision. It certainly broadens our base, and, it's a start.

Howard Weintraub, M.D.

BRETTMAN MEMORIAL LECTURE, OCTOBER 23, SEE PAGE 15 FOR DETAILS!

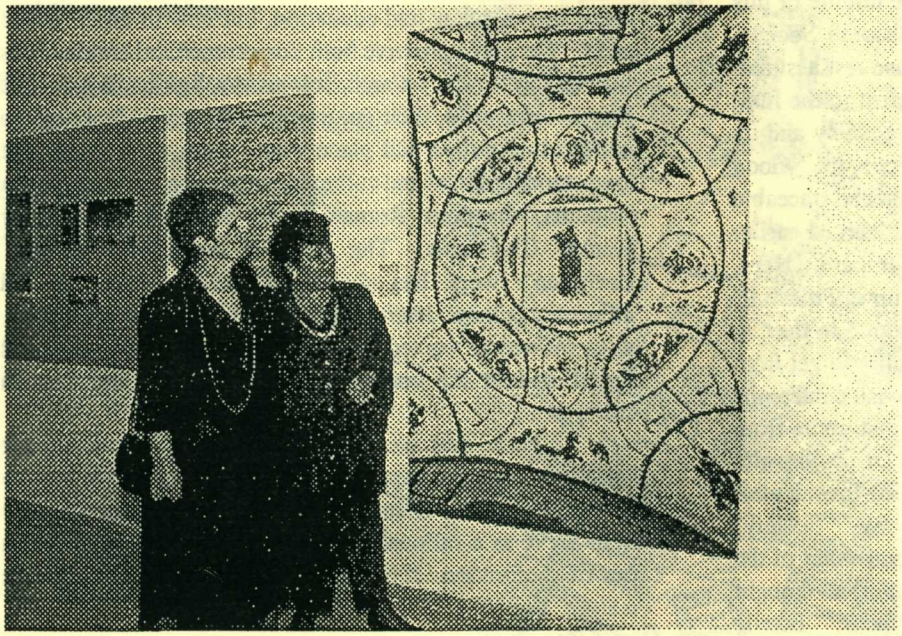
Vaults of Memory Opening at the Bible Lands Museum

The recent opening of *Vaults of Memory* at the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem was a great success for the Society and the Museum. Sandy Sheiber-McNair and Douglas McNair were in Jerusalem and represented the Society at the opening. They were also given a special preview of the exhibit prior to the official opening by a museum intern. During the opening events, Sandy was asked by Batya Borowski, Director of the Museum, to say a few words on behalf of the Society. She expressed our delight at having the exhibit shown at the Bible Lands Museum and spoke of Estelle Brettman's dream of having the exhibit travel to Jerusalem.

The handsome installation was designed by Clifford La Fontaine, a New York designer, who refurbished the exhibit with new mountings. The images were clustered on large panels, which helped the exhibit to flow more easily and maintained unity within thematic sections. The beautiful lighting also greatly enhanced ease of viewing. Many of the panels were cleverly arranged in series along the walls of a narrow corridor, recalling the home of the original catacomb paintings. The text-panels and captions for the exhibit were bilingual, with Hebrew translations supplementing the English version. A Hebrew catalog was also prepared.

Entrance to the exhibition at the Bible Lands Museum.
Photo: © ISRANET News and Media Ltd.

Sandy Sheiber-McNair and Douglas McNair view new exhibit panel commemorating Estelle Brettman and her work as the founder of ICS and the creator of Vaults of Memory.
Photo: © ISRANET News and Media Ltd.



Sandy Sheiber-McNair and Batya Borowski view a panel of the exhibition.
Photo: © ISRANET News and Media Ltd.

Cleverly-designed section of the exhibition in a long, narrow hallway, echoes the catacomb corridors shown on the exhibit panels.
Photo: Courtesy of Sandra Sheiber-McNair and Douglas McNair.

Archaeological Evidence for the Interaction of Jews and Non-Jews in Late Antiquity

Leonard V. Rutgers

Dr. Leonard Rutgers currently holds a research position at the University of Utrecht and has done extensive research on the Jewish catacombs of Rome. He is the author of a forthcoming book *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: An Historical, Epigraphical and Archaeological Study on the Interaction of Jews and non-Jews in the Roman Diaspora*. The International Catacomb Society hopes to sponsor a lecture by Dr. Rutgers in Spring, 1995 since his work is of such interst to our members. This article is reprinted from the *American Journal of Archaeology* 96 (1992) with the permission of *AJA* and the author.

INTRODUCTION

For some time it has been customary to consider the notion of "isolation" as the keyword for understanding how Jews shaped their lives in Imperial Rome. Thirty years ago Momigliano, studying the relatively large collection of Jewish funerary inscriptions from Rome, remarked that the Jewish community in the capital of the Roman Empire was distinguished by its self-containedness and lack of contact with contemporary non-Jewish society.[1] Recently, Solin, in a valuable and meticulously documented study on Jews and Syrians in the Western part of the Roman world, took up Momigliano's view and argued very much along the same lines.[2]

The view that the Jewish communities of the Diaspora formed an alien element, although based on a critical analysis of literary and epigraphical remains, echoes conclusions reached in the historiography of Judaism in the late 19th and early 20th century. Both stress the otherness of Jews in an environment insensitive and often openly hostile to their concerns. Writing about the Jewish catacomb under the Vigna Randanini, near the junction of the modern Via Appia Pignatelli and the Via Appia Antica, an anonymous author in the *Catholic World* of 1879, although not completely unsympathetic to the Jews, "a wonderful people," notes that "there is a cold and cheerless look about the place very different from that of any neighboring Christian catacomb so full of the warmth of faith and hope."[3] This and comparable remarks show that in the last few decades of the 19th century, only years after the Jewish ghetto in Rome had finally ceased to exist, historians were still very much aware of the misery that until recently had characterized daily life within its now demolished walls. To them it seemed no less than reasonable to suppose that not only for those Roman Jews whose attempts at societal emancipation had been frustrated until the last days of the Risorgimento, but also for the poverty-stricken Jews of antiquity, living their miserable lives in Trastavere, "everything new was evil and dangerous" and that, consequently, "like everywhere isolation was their fate."[4] Further corroboration for the view that hostility existed between the Jewish and Christian communities was adduced from references in the literature of the later Roman Empire.

It is undeniable that late ancient literary sources suggest that while pagan circles seem to have grown more appreciative of Judaism as the centuries passed,[5] Christian hotheads had, by the fourth century, become violently anti-Jewish. The well-known destruction of a synagogue at Callinicon on the Euphrates in 388 and the ensuing clash between state and church was not an isolated occurrence. Also in Rome itself and elsewhere in what was commonly known as the civilized world, synagogues either went up in flames or were transformed into buildings for Christian worship.[6] The continuous attempts in the legislative sphere, starting in the late fourth century, to protect the *locus religionis* of the Jews show that such incidents were neither innocent nor exceptional.[7]

Not that Jewish communities remained completely passive during these turbulent years. When Jews, during the annual celebration of the festival of Purim, cheerfully—so one may suppose—carried around a representation of Haman they had crucified instead of hung, Christians seem to have been offended and the imperial court intervened, forbidding the custom by law in 408.[8]

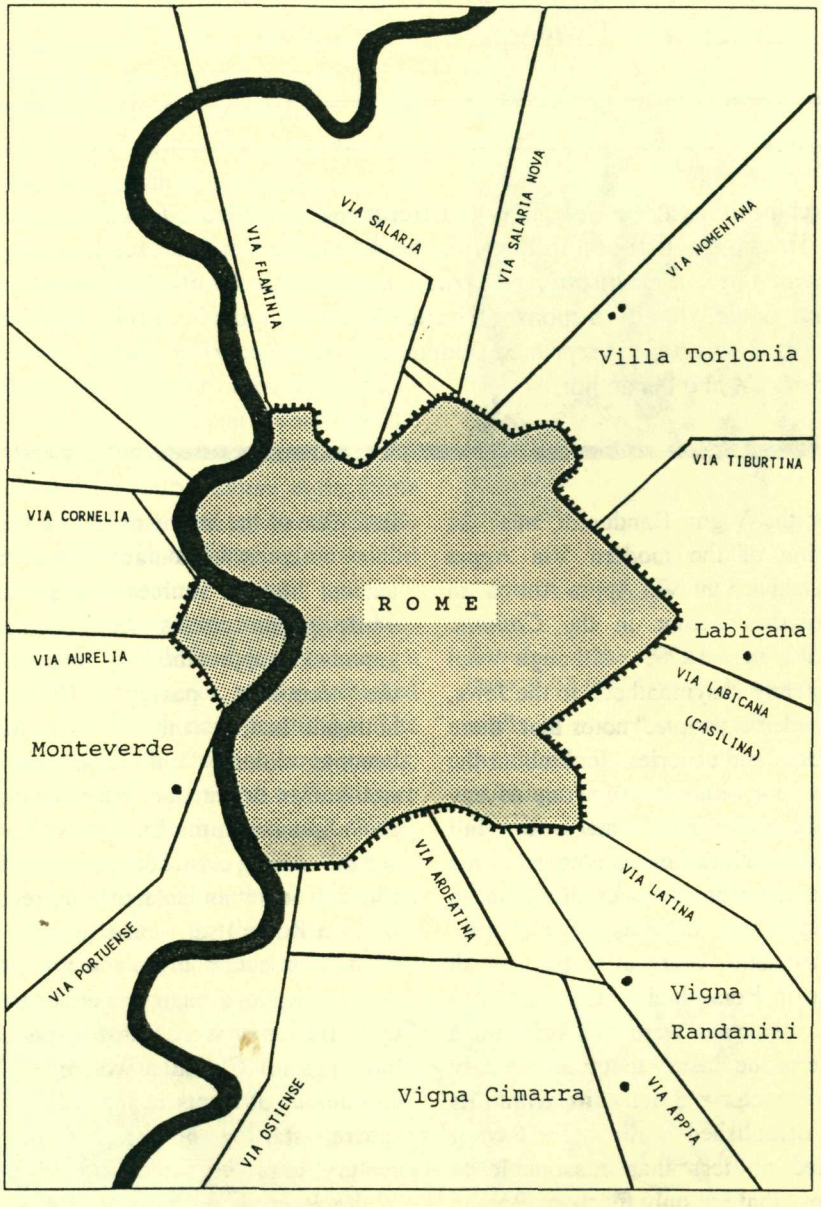


Figure 1. Map of Rome, including specific locations of Jewish hypogea and catacombs.

These sources belie the supposition that "the only ones to take pity on the Jews, to defend them from oppression...were the successors of the poor fisherman of Galilee," as our Catholic anonymous had still credulously assumed in 1879.[9] Nevertheless it would be equally incorrect to claim that in the later Roman Empire Jews, Christians, and pagans related to each other exclusively in terms of conflict or to apply reductionistically to this relationship such insufficiently defined concepts as "isolation." Though violent clashes occurred, the relationship between the groups under discussion was far more complex than one of vendetta-like conflict. There is considerable evidence that, for most of the time, a more or less peaceful coexistence was the rule rather than the exception.

Ever since the spread of Hellenistic culture in the eastern part of the Mediterranean basin, the question for Jews of how to preserve their heritage, on the one hand, and how to interact successfully with their pagan, and, later, the increasingly numerous Christian, neighbors, on the other, must have been as continuous as the solutions they found were multifaceted.[10] A passage in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* illustrates how subtle Jewish sensibilities could be when confronted with non-Jewish, in this case Greek, culture. After granting citizenship to the Jews in Asia, Lower Syria, and Antioch, Seleucus Nicator (ruled 312-281 B.C.) "gave orders that those Jews who were unwilling to use foreign oil should receive a fixed sum of money from the gymnasiarchs to pay for their own kind of oil."[11] In other word, some of the Jews one encounters here were willing to enjoy the pleasures of an essentially Greek athletic and educational institution, the gymnasium, but nonetheless insisted on using only oil provided by their own co-religionists.[12]

Study of the Jewish archaeological remains from the city of Rome, the largest coherent body of archaeological material pertaining to a Jewish Diaspora community in the Roman period, along with comparative Jewish funerary materials from other sites around the Mediterranean, suggests that as late as the third and fourth century, the Jews continued to face the old problem of dealing with non-Jewish customs and lifestyles."[13] References scattered throughout the

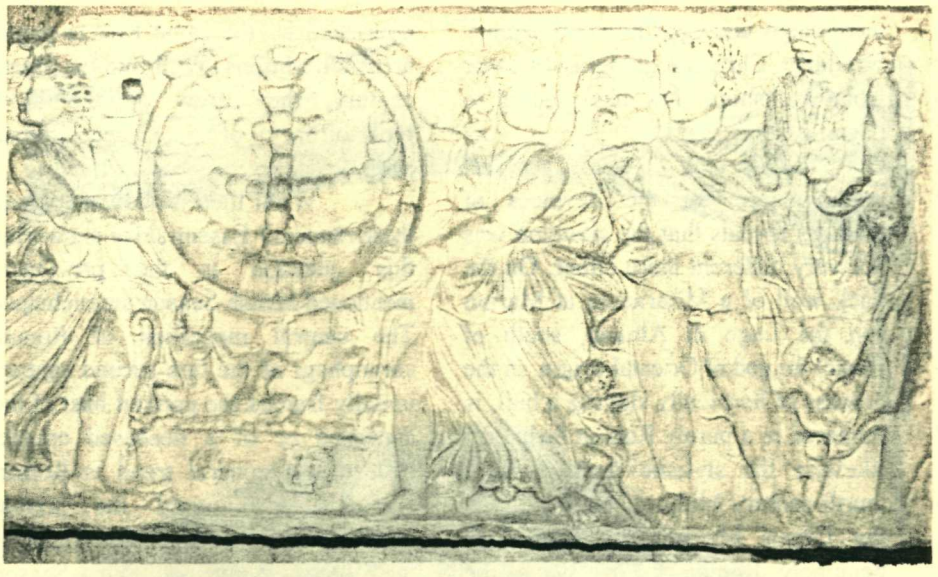


Figure 2. A fragment of a Season sarcophagus with sculpted menorah in clipeus. Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano. (Photo: author).

literature of this period, together with several laws integrated in the *Codex Theodosianus*, support inferences made on the basis of the archaeological finds: that well into the fifth century Judaism held a powerful attraction for at least segments of the Christian population. This implies that Jews were not as unsociable as certain Church fathers or rabbis might have wished. Due to the character of the available evidence, it is far from easy to determine the extent to which, in the later days of the *Imperium Romanum*, Jews came under outside influence. On the material level they most certainly did, yet how this fact bears on our interpretation of the religious life of the several Jewish communities in Rome is not unambiguous.

WORKSHOPS

The Jewish archaeological remains from Rome are almost exclusively funerary in character and predominantly stem from four Jewish catacombs, and two Jewish hypogea, all located around the *urbs*, outside the late third-century Aurelian city walls (fig. 1).[14] Although the collection of preserved sarcophagi and goldglasses is fragmentary in nature and the number of wall paintings is small, they nonetheless allow for several conclusions on the character of artistic production for, and possibly by, Jews in third- and fourth-century Rome.

The most striking feature of the approximately 40 Jewish sarcophagi from Rome is the dominance of pagan or at least religiously neutral imagery, in some cases to such an extent that it is impossible today to determine if these sarcophagi were used for Jewish or for non-Jewish burials.[15] On only four specimens are Jewish objects represented, one of which is but a casually incised graffito carved next to a short Greek inscription commemorating a certain Faustina.[16] The most splendid example among the pieces with a clearly Jewish iconography (fig. 2) has already been known for a long time, since it first turned up in the hybrid collection of curiosities gathered by the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680): it is a fragment of the front of a Season sarcophagus (or possibly loculus slab), displaying two striding Victories, holding a *clipeus* with sculpted menorahs, as well as several playing cupids, "the children of the Nymphs that govern humankind."[17]

Like other sarcophagi with relief decoration, the popular Season sarcophagi were ordered from stock. Although in the case of the Jewish sarcophagus fragment with the seven-branched candelabrum prominently displayed in its central medallion it is difficult to establish workshop-identity ("Werkstattgleichheit") with specific other sarcophagi belonging to the same group, there can be no doubt that the Jewish piece originated in one of the Roman workshops whose existence depended not on Jewish customers alone, but mainly on pagan and perhaps on some Christian clients who considered the religiously rather neutral imagery of Season sarcophagi inoffensive.[18]

There are also indications that goldglasses were made in workshops with mixed Jewish, pagan, and Christian clientele. Among the 14 known fragments of Jewish goldglasses[19] two pieces show a decoration that is so similar in patterning and the use of color to that of four non-Jewish goldglasses that Engemann is probably correct in supposing that one workshop manufactured all six examples.[20]

Finally, the decorative motifs framing the wall paintings in the Jewish Vigna Randanini and Villa Torlonia catacombs also have close parallels in contemporary pagan and Early Christian pictorial decorations. This again suggests that one crew of painters could be employed to execute a variety of decorative projects.[21]

That there is in the arts such a strong link, on the level of execution, between Jewish and non-Jewish artifacts in third- and fourth-century Rome is significant, but not exceptional. The archaeological record in Israel provides examples of the same phenomenon. Several lead sarcophagi, for example, all coming from the same mold (as the layout of the decoration indicates) were sold to either Jews of Christians after some menorahs or crosses had been stamped here and there on their sides and lids.[22] In Beth Alfa, two mosaicists, known through inscriptions as Marianos and Hanina, used their skills to enliven with designs the floors of a Jewish synagogue in nearby Beit Shean.[23] Although in the case of mosaic pavements it is admittedly not always easy to decide if stylistic and compositional resemblances should be explained through workshop-identity or through the use of the same patternbooks by different artists, the mosaics uncovered in a synagogue, a Christian monastery, and the House of Leontios, all in Beit Shean, may very well be the product of one specific group of craftsmen.[24] To give yet another example from the area, the overall appearance of some marble chancel screens suggests that one workshops could satisfy the iconographic needs of both Jewish and Christian communities.[25]

Moreover, the development of Early Christian art neatly mirrors that in the Jewish sphere. Before the end of the third century, Christians employed pagan workshops that provided them with sarcophagi on which bucolic or idyllic maritime scenes dominated framing an occasional ram-bearer or *orans*.[26] Only in the days after Constantine's conversion (or slightly earlier) did such neutral scenes derived from the pagan iconographic repertoire increasingly undergo Christianization.[27] Similarly, Christian goldglasses came from workshops that also catered to pagan customers.[28]

Last, a look at art manufactured for the devotees of Mithras reveals that the situation was not very different there either. On the back wall of a Mithraeum at Marino (on the Lago di Albano, south of Rome) the god of Oriental origin, in the process of heroically slaying a bull, is rendered in a purely Roman fashion;[29] likewise the stylistic features of a fourth-century Mithraic relief found in the Circus Maximus in Rome are genuinely Roman.[30] This being the case, it is hardly surprising to observe that the assistants of the valiant Mithras, the torchbearers Cautes and Cautopates, also have Graeco-Roman prototypes.[31]

In short, Jewish, Early Christian, and Mithraic art were all nourished by the same Roman-pagan artistic traditions. Well into the fourth century, they drew on the same repertoire of Graeco-Roman prototypes.

What then is "Jewish" about these remains? Essential for answering this question is the previously mentioned Jewish Season sarcophagus. The central medallion of Roman sarcophagi of the late second century usually framed the portrait bust of the deceased or of a deceased couple, reflecting a general trend in Roman funerary art toward the private apotheosis of the dead.[32] Significantly, the focal point of our Season sarcophagus with *clipeus* does not carry any portraits, but instead a menorah, in antiquity Judaism's most typical and widespread symbol. Comparably, in the upper catacomb under the Villa Torlonia (fig. 3), the menorah and the Torah shrine are in

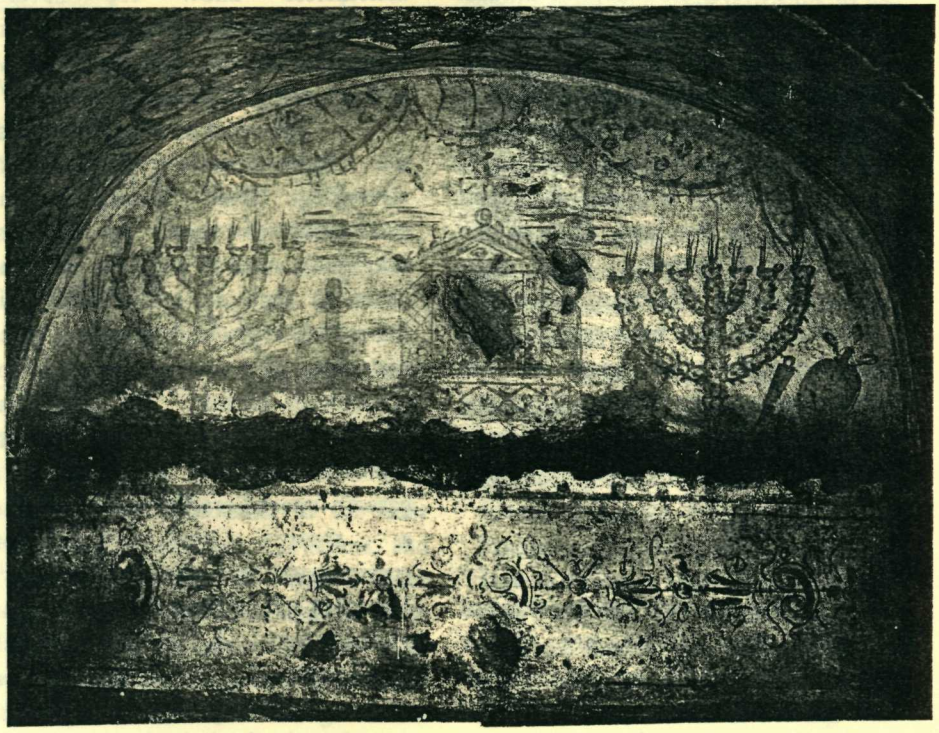


Figure 3. Painted arcosolium. Rome, Villa Torlonia catacomb. (Courtesy Pontificia Commissione di archeologia sacra).

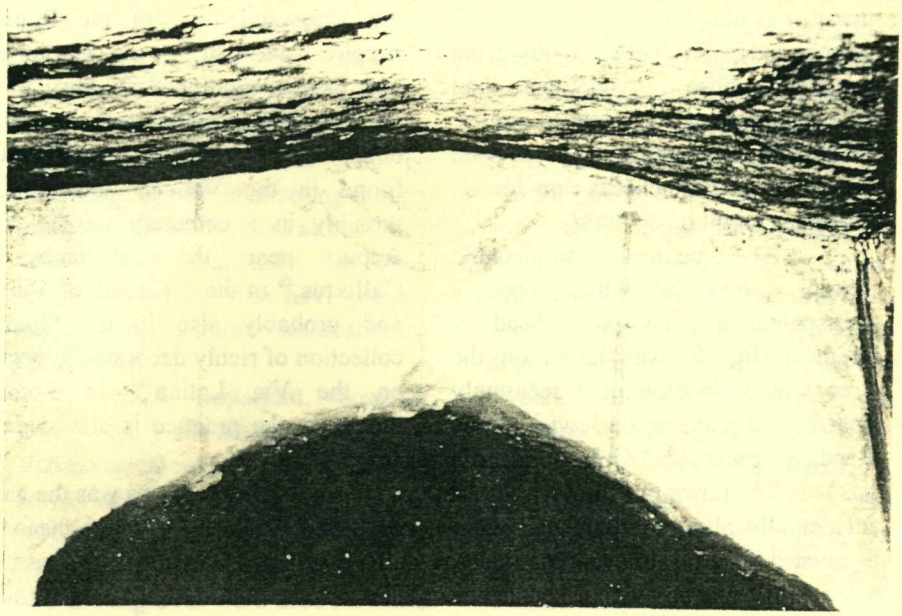


Figure 4. Wall decoration with painted menorah. Rome, Vigna Randanini catacomb. (Photo: author).

the center of the representations painted on the back wall of several arcosolia (all middle of the fourth century). Moreover, it was a large painted menorah that Bosio noted in December 1602 upon discovering the first Jewish catacomb in Rome south of Trastavere (now destroyed).[33] When, perhaps in the fourth century, Roman Jews decided to have a cubiculum in the Vigna Randanini decorated, a menorah, crudely rendered with a few lines in red paint on a ground of white stucco (fig. 4), was once again chosen to adorn the wall above the arcosolium facing the entrance.[34]

The centrality of objects derived from either the destroyed Second Temple in Jerusalem or from synagogal worship is a prominent feature of Jewish funerary art, not only in Rome, but all over the Mediterranean: a stupendous painted arcosolium in Venosa (Basilicata), two graffiti on the wall of a Jewish rock-cut tomb at Noto Antica (Sicily), similar incisions on the walls of Jewish hypogea at Rabat/Mdina on the island of Malta, a wall painting in a Jewish grave in the necropolis of Roman Doclea in present-day Dalmatia/Montenegro, and graffiti on the walls of a now destroyed Jewish mini-catacomb near Tripoli all have the menorah as the main theme of their decoration.[35] In the Jewish motherland itself, the menorah seems to have been an equally popular motif in graves, even though incised human figures and ships as well as painted floral and geometric designs occasionally also occur.[36]

Returning once again to Rome, it seems that although Jewish art technically and in part also iconographically had its roots directly in non-Jewish artistic traditions, it also displays a preference for an iconography that was outspoken in its Jewishness. Such a preference did not mean that subjects of pagan origin were automatically excluded: someone who wanted to use for burial in a Jewish catacomb a sarcophagus decorated on both sides with Muses could do so, apparently without problems.[37]

When in 168 B.C. the Roman consul Aemilius Paullus, after his victory over Perseus, appropriated a pillar-like structure in Delphi, the monument, although Greek in style, came to carry a message that was unequivocally Roman.[38] It is obvious that this deed, although signaling Aemilius Paullus's appreciation of Greek culture as well as his political aspirations, did not turn him into a sophisticated phihellene overnight. Similarly one cannot simply suppose that the non-Jewish elements in Jewish art from Rome by themselves show that Roman Jews were receptive to Roman society and its values. Yet, the fact remains that it must have been perfectly normal for a Jew to walk into a non-Jewish workshop to order a sarcophagus, just as there was nothing abnormal in the attempt of a non-Jewish salesman to fill such an order as satisfactorily as possible.

Although it is not the purpose of this article to investigate the complex question of how ancient Jewish art and symbols may be interpreted, it should be noted that the Jewish fascination with pagan iconography implies at least superficial familiarity with and appreciation for the old myths of the Greeks and Romans. Even when in Jewish contexts the choice of Classical themes seems to have been rather limited,[39] Jews shared to an extent with the pagan "man in the street" knowledge of the Graeco-Roman pantheon with its colorful gods. They may have detested the idea of invoking these immortal pagan supermen, but when it came to artistic fashion, some Jews were receptive to what was in vogue in contemporary pagan society.

That the *same* artistic motifs and inscriptional formulae could enjoy popularity among *different* religiously affiliated groups becomes especially discernible in the field of popular beliefs. Hence it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, for modern scholars to decide with which religion users of charms and amulets identified themselves.

Like the Chaldei, considered constant mischief-makers by the Romans, Jews in Roman antiquity were among those traditionally associated with magic. Juvenal, for example, described how superstitious women in first-century Rome had no scruples consulting a Jewess, styled as "interpreter of the laws of Jerusalem" and *fida internuntia caeli*.[40] Three and a half centuries later, Augustine in a passage stressing that "miracles were made known to help men's faith," tells how Petronia, a lady of great social distinction from the town of Uzalis near Utica in North Africa had, when she was sick, first consulted a Jew who outfitted her with some exotic sort of belt. Finally she paid a visit—as one was supposed to—to the shrine of a Christian martyr in Carthage, a step that had evidently not entered her mind earlier.[41]

Not only literary sources, but also archeological finds point to the importance of "the Jewish connection" with things magical. Names such as Iao, Adonai, and Sabbaoth so frequently encountered on amulets were Jewish in origin,[42] although one cannot be sure if, at a later stage, they were always written by Jews, for the inscriptional evidence is syncretistic in character to such an extent that the dividing line between Jewish and non-Jewish incantations often gets completely blurred.[43] Be that as it may, finds from Jewish and other sites prove that just as non-Jews tried to ward off demons and malevolent spirits by using amulets whose invocations had ultimately originated in Jewish circles, so certain Jews seem to have been convinced of the benefits non-Jewish talismans might bring them.

At Rome, next to amulets the Jewish origin of which appears undisputed, a glass paste head of Medusa (fig. 5) was found on the breast of a skeleton in a seemingly undisturbed grave in the Jewish Vigna Randanini catacomb.[44] Only now that it has become known that in Jewish (and incidentally also in Christian) tombs excavated in Israel, Samaritan amulets were discovered in situ, the apotropaic (?) Medusa from Rome loses some of its poignancy.[45] Jewish literature of the period, e.g., the *Sefer ha-Razim* (dating to the fourth century or later) with its incantations to Helios, Aphrodite, Hermes, and the moon, further supports the notion that Jews were directly exposed to pagan magic and superstition.[46]

In conclusion, the difficult question of how much importance should be attached to the Jewish archaeological finds from Rome has to be addressed briefly. It is clear that on the material level the degree of interaction with the pagan world was considerable and that, notably in the case of amulets, the artistic traffic, and thus the stream of ideas, did not go just one way. Together with the evidence that will be presented below, this strongly suggests that on a day-to-day basis, a ghetto-mentality was not characteristic for Jewish life in third- and fourth-century Rome.

COMMUNAL CEMETERIES

With continuing excavations, it becomes increasingly clear that while the Christianization of the Roman Empire was in full swing, Christians and pagans continued to bury their dead together. In Rome itself, examples of this interesting phenomenon many be found in the Vatican necropolis,[47] possibly in a cemetery on the Via Appia, near the catacomb of Callixtus,[48] in the catacomb of Vibia, and probably also in the famous collection of richly decorated hypogea on the Via Latina.[49] In Roman provinces the practice is also widely attested.[50]

On this point, as was the case with material culture, Jewish customs were not very different from those of their non-Jewish contemporaries: Hecataeus of Abdera's observation that Jewish burial customs had changed after the Jews had become subject to foreign rule was as true for late antiquity as it had been around 300 B.C.[51]

The following synopsis of Jewish burial sites from all over the Mediterranean proves that for the interment of the deceased members of their community, Jews used the same areas as non-Jews. Although it is impossible to determine if pagans, Jews, and Christians were buried in the same hypogeum or catacomb, it is beyond doubt that all these groups could make use of one and the same cemetery.

Before surveying these communal cemeteries, it is necessary to comment on methodological difficulties involved. More often than not, the original archaeological context is heavily disturbed and intrusive materials have been introduced into the graves.[52] Not only were tombs often subject to grave robbery, but also researchers in the past did not always excavate with the necessary care. Buonarotti, the first to publish, in 1716,

three magnificent examples of Jewish goldglasses, exemplifies how an antiquarian in the early 18th century would hunt for precious artifacts and inscriptions: entering catacombs "per divertimento" and discovering that one underground gallery had already been emptied out completely, he would simply proceed to the next one and happily give free rein to his destructive talents there.[53]

More important, however, than the disturbance of the archaeological record is the problem of how to identify Jewish graves and how to separate them from non-Jewish ones. The safest and simplest way to establish if graves were used for burial by Jews is on the basis of an inscription that can be considered Jewish for one reason or another.[54]

When inscriptions are lacking, an identification as Jewish is much more difficult. Sometimes the representation of objects with a distinctive Jewish flavor (first and foremost, the menorah) may be helpful. Although it is true that some early Christian authors, while writing about the seven-branched candlestick that had once adorned the Temple in Jerusalem, tried to appropriate this candelabrum for the Church, the menorah remained very much a Jewish object in late antiquity: the few fragments of actual menorahs that have been found (e.g., Tiberias, Ein Gedi, Tell Maon, and Sardis) all come from Jewish contexts, while many inscriptions that are certainly Jewish contain many menorahs as well, whether delicately rendered or crudely incised. It is furthermore remarkable that the few seven-branched candelabra that occur on Christian inscriptions have formal characteristics that differ from the traditional Jewish menorah with its seven semicircular branches.[55]

Yet, the decoration of pottery lamps shows that it is very hard to arrive at firm conclusions on the basis of such artistic evidence alone. In the third and fourth century not only Jewish but also Samaritan craftsmen chose the menorah as the decorative theme for the discus of their lamps.[56] Thus there seems to be no way to be sure that a lamp embellished with a menorah was used by Jews rather than by Samaritans, or, for that matter, Jews that had converted to Christianity, Jewish Christians, Christians, or maybe even pagans who simply liked the design.[57] Finds in synagogues and churches show that Jews and Christians used the same type of lamps,[58] and this fact may serve to explain the occurrence of a fourth-century lamp with *Chi-Rho* incised on its handle, unearthed in the otherwise Jewish necropolis at Beth She'arim (as long as this incision is understood as a Chrismon), or a lamp decorated with menorah discovered in a Christian necropolis in Sidon (Phoenicia).[59] To make matters more complex, there are lamps that, as far as their iconography is concerned, do not seem to fit into any clearly defined category at all: what to think of the two completely preserved specimens, uncovered at the turn of the century by Orsi at Citadella (south-eastern Sicily), both decorated with five-branched candlesticks?[60] They may be Jewish, but they also may not be.

To decide if tombs are Jewish by looking only at grave types or modes of burial is extremely hazardous as well. Contrary to what is often stated, there is nothing specifically Jewish about the loculi that were sealed with tufa and fragments of tiles,[61] and to posit the existence of Jewish graves from the lack of grave goods,[62] or to say that reburial and the presence of ossuaries must automatically point to a Jewish-Christian cemetery,[63] runs counter to everything that is known about Jewish burials in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.[64] Although in Rome graves cut perpendicularly to the wall and known under the name *kokhim* are confined to the Jewish Vigna Randanini catacomb and do not occur in Christian or pagan contexts, this grave type is so widespread in the eastern part of the Mediterranean that it can certainly not be considered as the Jewish grave type par excellence.[65] Last, but not least, the thickness of the wall between individual tombs does not tell us anything about the confession of the people buried in such graves.[66]

In Rome, following the prescription first formulated in the Law Twelve Table (451-449 B.C.), burials took place outside the city.[67] It is there, among pagan burial sites and Christian catacombs, that the Jewish tombs are to be found. Pagan tombs were discovered close to the Vigna Randanini catacomb,[68] and the same seems to have been the case with the Villa

Figure 5. Amulet depicting the head of Medusa. (From R. Garucci, Storia dell'arte cristiana *6 [Prato 1873-1880] pl. 491.4)*

Torlonia catacombs,[69] but it cannot now be determined if these burials were either earlier than or contemporary with the Jewish ones. Some finds, moreover, suggest that there must also have been Jewish graves outside of the Jewish catacombs, but lacking sound stratigraphical data, one cannot draw a very precise picture of such burials.[70]

It is generally said that the Jewish catacombs themselves were used exclusively for the interment of Jews; yet, in the light of the intrusive materials mentioned earlier, it is not an easy task to arrive at incontrovertible conclusions. Especially problematic in this respect are several inscriptions discovered in the Monteverde and Villa Torlonia catacombs, with a dedication to the gods of the Underworld as an opening formula.[71] Two of these plaques with the *DM*-inscription were probably reused, for they have a second, Jewish inscription on their back,[72] but in the case of other inscriptions,[73] reuse cannot so easily be proven. Rather than conclude that we are dealing with pagan epitaphs, I am inclined to follow Goodenough, who observed that "certainly the majority of Jews and Christians felt as Frey, with Müller and Bees, thinks they should have felt; as a result *DM* was not generally adopted by either group. This does not exclude the fact, however, that a number of Christians and Jews had no objections and did use the formula and their attitude has much to tell us."[74]

To infer the "exclusivity" of the Jewish catacombs by arguing that Jews and (full) proselytes were, and so-called "Godfearers" were not, buried there is incorrect.[75] Even though there is ample evidence for the existence of a group or individuals located on the fringes of Judaism,[76] the epithet *metuens* in itself is not Jewish and occurs with relative frequency on

Figure 6. Rock-cut tombs, the majority of which are Christian and one of which is Jewish. Noto Antica (Sicily). (Photo: author)

early Christian inscriptions as well.

While the evidence from Rome is thus not particularly strong in demonstrating the existence and use of communal cemeteries, an observation that holds true also for discoveries in the old and the new harbor of Rome.[77] Italian soil preserves other, less ambiguous, trace of the fact that "in death all were one."

Near Venosa (Basilicata) a Jewish catacomb has been known to exist since 1853 (and possibly since 1842), and another, possibly Jewish, catacomb was recently explored. Both are dug into a hillside honeycombed with hypogea or catacombs that, although they await future excavation, have already yielded finds that indicate that Christians used the same hill for burial.[78] If the evidence from pottery lamps is to be trusted (but see the remarks supra), one of the cemeteries of ancient Taranto (Apulia) may likewise have been used by Jews as well as by Christians:[79] "una serena convivenza delle parti" indeed![80]

Jewish finds from Syracuse (Sicily) are again more difficult to evaluate. In tombs, known as "dei Capucini," a Jewish inscription and lamps on which the menorah (in one case with five arms!) was depicted were found together with other lamps decorated with a monogram.[81] Jewish and Christian lamps from the Belloni, Trigila, and Bonaiuto catacombs attest to a comparable "promiscuità."[82]

In Agrigento, on Sicily's southern coast, the finds speak a less complicated language. When in 597 the majestic Doric temple, popularly known as the Temple of Concord, was transformed into a basilica dedicated to Peter and Paul, Christians started to construct their graves around the city's new religious center. Yet, directly next to the entrance to a catacomb of medium size dug by the Christians, a Jew was able to acquire a small chamber, as a fragmentary funerary inscription reveals.[83] In addition, discoveries at Mazzarino, near Piazza Armerina, and at Noto Antica, 30 km south of Syracuse, where in a rocky slope Jewish chamber can be found in the center of a row of Christian tombs (figs. 6 and 7), further attest to the close spatial relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish tombs.[84]

Many sites from across the Roman world could be added to the list

Figure 7. Arcosolium with incised menorahs. Noto Antica. (Photo: author)

of communal Jewish-Christian-pagan cemeteries: S. Antioco on Sardinia,[85] Rabat/Mdina on Malta, where Jewish hypogea lay dispersed among Christian tombs,[86] Doclea (Yugoslavia) where Jews were laid to rest in an otherwise pagan necropolis,[87] Thessaloniki,[88] several sites in Asia Minor,[89] possibly Tyre (Phoenicia),[90] Alexandria,[91] Teucheira,[92] maybe Carthage,[93] Edessa in Syria,[94] and even as far away as Egra (northern Arabia) one encounters Jewish tombs among those of the local non-Jewish population.[95] The recent discovery at Beth Guvrin, south of Jerusalem, of a fourth- to eighth-century cemetery used by both Jews and Christians shows that the phenomenon was not unknown in Palestine itself either.[96]

Furthermore, it is important to note that although in early Christian thought the dictum *vivere licet cum ethnicis, commori non licet* gained more and more acceptance over time,[97] and good Christians were not supposed to be interred with Donatists or pagans[98] (as the bishop of Spanish Merida, Martialis, was to find out to his surprise in 254),[99] rabbinic literature of the period contains no explicit ruling condemning the burial of Jews together with those holding different religious ideas.[100] Despite the statement "for heathens or slaves no rites whatsoever should be observed," made in the tractate *Semahot*,[101] the *Tosefta* as well as several *baraitoth* in the *Palestinian Talmud* state that just as in the case of the dead of Israel, so should non-Jewish dead be buried properly, a behavior prompted by the wish to preserve peace that was put into actual practice by Jews in Edessa.[102] A parallel to the just-mentioned passages, a *baraita* transmitted in the tractate Gittin of the *Babylonian Talmud*, goes so far as to state that non-Jewish dead are to be laid to rest with Jews that had passed away, again with an eye to guaranteeing peaceful relationships between the different groups involved.[103] Although Medieval Jewish commentators did not like this ruling, their ancient forebears apparently did not have much difficulty with such a decision.[104]

It is precisely against this background that the successful efforts of the always active Ambrose should be seen when, in 393, he came to the *post mortem* rescue of two Christian martyrs, Agricola and Vitalis, buried in a Jewish cemetery in Bologna *inter ipsorum (sc. Judaeorum) sepoltura*.[105] Had he known that other Christians as well, after receiving the crown of martyrdom, had undergone a similar treatment, the bishop of Milan would have been even more upset.[106]

Arguably, considerable importance may be attached to this funerary evidence. In the ancient world, the prospect of eternally wandering along the muddy shores of the "trista riviera d'Acheronte"[107] was to be avoided, as references in the literature, laws, and epitaphs of the period show, and proper burial, even of those who did not believe in some form of afterlife or other, had been a concern in Greece as much as it was to become in pagan or Early Christian Rome.[108] The same applied to Jews: even Aristides, a second-century Christian apologist who did not favor Judaism, was frank enough to recognize the Jewish respect for proper burial.[109] Thus nobody disagreed that the dead were impure, that "close human contact is considered a sacrilege," and that burial should take place outside the city's limits.[110]

In an area of life where good care and proper procedures were of prime importance, people must have acted very consciously. Consequently, when it is in this very area that one finds that many Jewish communities did not mind burying their dead close to those who had rarely heard about Mosaic law and had never been involved in rabbinic discussions, the conclusion becomes inescapable that we have here an uncensured and significant reflection of how Jews in the third and fourth centuries related to "others." Their daily lives were hardly affected by the sterile patristic discussions as to which faith really

constituted the *Verus Israel*. Their non-Jewish contemporaries, for their part, were able to relate to Jews more peacefully than Theodosius II's law codes concerning the protection of synagogues suggest.

LITERARY AND OTHER EVIDENCE

Several laws in the *Codex Theodosianus* testify that for many Christians who were not theologians and did not have the *otium* either to ponder extensively over the question of how to perceive the continuing flourishing of Judaism in relation to the Church's claims to primacy or to get upset about all sorts of petty definition problems,[111] boundaries were not always clearly etched. In a time when women employed in imperial weaving establishments had been "led by the Jews into the association of their turpitude," the emperor Constantine had taken legal steps against mixed marriages.[112] Yet, as late as 388 it was deemed necessary to stipulate by law that the government considered such marriages an act of adultery, worthy of nothing less than capital punishment.[113] Five years earlier, in 383, another law attempting to prevent Christians from converting to Judaism had been promulgated. The designated punishment, namely that the property of such apostates would fall to the fiscus, suggests that, just as in the case of mixed marriages, the authorities tried to put an end to a problem that to them seemed as burning as it was unendurable.[114]

Implicitly, such laws tell us not only something about those who did not find the message of the Church especially attractive or meaningful,[115] but also about the attitude of the Jewish community. Although further research is still needed to establish the precise nature and extent of Jewish proselytic activity in late antiquity,[116] and the evidence for proselytes to Judaism in Rome itself is unfortunately scarce in the extreme,[117] the prose *Refutations* by Ephrem the Syrian (who lived in Edessa after 363),[118] several Canons from a Council held at Laodicea in the 60s of the fourth century,[119] as well as several sermons of John Chrysostom from the years 386 and 387, known as the eight homilies against the Jews (although admittedly from the eastern part of the Roman Empire), support the impression left by the Theodosian Code that the discussion of religious topics was still possible and the conversion of Christian "renegades" to Judaism not unusual.

That such was the case, in some ways, could be expected, for in daily life it was simply impossible for Jews, Christians, and pagans to get exclusively in touch with the members of their own respective groups. For example, the lawgivers of late antiquity had pragmatically imposed the decurionate on Jews early in the fourth century when the fulfillment of the *munera* involved in this office had become a very dubious honor; since they did not force Jews to forsake the religion of their forefathers and convert to Christianity, they thus normalized dealings of non-Jews with Jewish magistrates.[120]

Yet, this was not the first time Jews found themselves confronted with pagan society and vice versa. When Tacitus observed in the early second century that Roman households "comprise nations with customs the reverse of our own, with foreign cults or with none,"[121] one can be quite sure that there were also Jews among those nations, for the Romans had enslaved them by the thousands on various occasions.[122] For Jews, being reduced to slavery in a household in Rome was the most direct way to be intensely exposed to un-Jewish ways of life, just as the ownership of Jewish slaves presented the Roman masters with a most casual opportunity to learn, if they wished, about Jewish customs and monotheistic theology. We do not know positively if the wealthy inhabitants of Rome forced their Jewish slaves to engage in pagan religious practices such as the cult of the *lares familiares*. We are also left to wonder if Jewish slaves once they had covered the road that led to freedom were, as freedmen, still participating in the daily ritual of the *salutatio* and the performance of other *officia* for the benefit of their former master and present patron.[123] In any event, the fact that in these "mixed" household ideas could be exchanged freely concerned the legal experts of the Codex Theodosianus when they tried to rule out the keeping of non-Jewish slaves by Jews—without much success, as a letter from 594 by Gregory the Great demonstrates.[124]

In this context it should also be observed that even for those Jews who had freely come to Rome, pagans were never far off, for just as the tombs of deceased Jews and non-Jews were situated close to one another, so were the houses of the living. In Rome, one of the center of Jewish settlement was in *Transtiberim*, present-day Trastavere, Augustus's *regio* XIV.[125] This piece of land, located on the left side of the Tiber and outside the *pomerium*, attracted foreigners from all over the world, making it Rome's most cosmopolitan district. As a study of the relationship between the available and known *vici* reveals, the area was densely populated and the ration of the spacious *domus* to the uncomfortable *insulae* was the lowest anywhere in the

city.[126] Thus ancient Trastavere was the setting for an urban life that, like some cities in the Orient today, was hectic and noisy. We may very well doubt if urban alienation went so far that Novius was your neighbor "whose hands you could touch while reaching out of the window, but who was at the same time as far away as Terentianus who now is governor of Syene on the Nile."[127] The living conditions in Trastavere being what they were, Jewish families could hardly avoid communicating with neighbors having different religious preferences.[128]

Of course the question of how much and in which ways the Roman Jewish community was affected by participating in pagan society remains speculative. Although the extant literary sources give us some clues, it is clear that the rabbis from the late first century onward in the continuous process of redefining Judaism (or to be more precise, their own group)[129] preferred, like their Christian colleagues, to focus on the differences rather than the similarities between themselves and other Jews, pagans, and Christians.

Jews, unlike for example Syrians, seem to have kept a strong sense of ethnic identity and were not readily absorbed into Roman society—as Augustine noted with some dismay early in the fifth century.[130] Approximately 50% of all epitaphs from the Jewish catacombs of Rome mention some function or other connected with the synagogue (i.e., the Jewish community), a percentage that rises 85% in the case of inscriptions on sarcophagi that were decorated with blatantly pagan imagery. Yet, this expression of belonging to the Jewish community, also expressed in the material record by means of the prominent display of the menorah in different artistic media, is not identical to a uniformity of ideas within that community. Even though there is some evidence for rabbinic activity in Rome, especially in the form of the much praised *beth midrash*[131] led by Matthia ben Heresh, there is not enough information available on the Jewish communities to the west of Palestine to say with reference to rabbinic authority of the influence of the Patriarchate that already in the third century, "the diaspora did not go its own independent way."[132]

The rabbis, knowing what had happened to Elisha ben Avujah, had categorically declared that the Greek language was one thing, but Greek wisdom another.[133] That this ruling was more or less observed, at least by the rabbis themselves, follows from the fact that Greek philosophical concepts did not find much acceptance in rabbinic literature, that the majority of Greek and to a lesser degree Latin loan words that permeated this literature are to be found in aggadic rather than in halakhic contexts, and that many other loan words concern artifacts used in daily life as well as synagogal furnishings and architecture.[134] In addition, community officials often bear Greek names.[135]

Yet, one wonders, how many Jews in Rome entertained ideas similar to those of the Palestinian rabbis? Even when there is rabbinic evidence for Rome, as in the case of Todos, it is extremely difficult to evaluate it historically.[136]

CONCLUSIONS

Although many complex questions remain unanswered as to how the different Jewish communities in third- and fourth-century Rome defined their boundaries, the archaeological and literary evidence presented in this article cumulatively suggests that the concept of "isolation" hardly does justice to them. Clearly, during the fourth century, societal changes took place only gradually; Jews, Christians, and pagans probably were on speaking terms for most of the time. I agree completely with Simon's statement that "c'est dans le philo-judaïsme populaire que réside l'explication véritable de l'antisémitisme chrétien."[137] But, sympathy to others did not per se equal a wish to convert. Just as most Jews did not change their religion, only a few of the many Christians that for various reasons felt attracted to Judaism took such a definitive step.[138]

It is in such occurrences as having oneself circumcised, while still designating oneself a Christian, or in calling Jews *serpentes*, yet consulting the rabbis about the interpretation of difficult Scriptural verses, that lies the uniqueness of the social and religious life of the fourth century.[139]

NOTES

The extensive notes and references to this article are unfortunately not included here due to space constraints but are available by request from the ICS office.

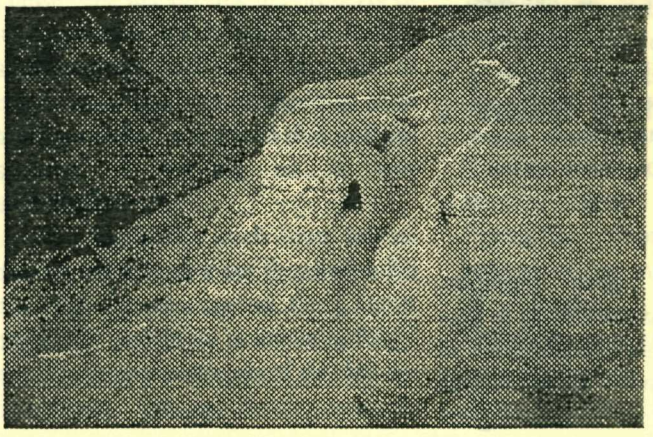
ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES

The Qumran Settlement: What's New? by Florence Wolsky

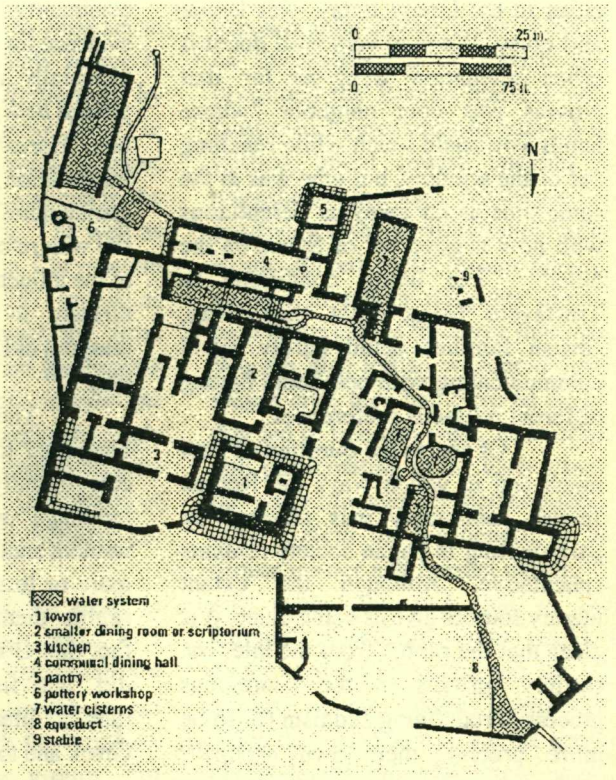
Just a few years after the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947 in caves in the cliffs above Wadi Qumran near the northeast corner of the Dead Sea, attention turned to the ancient ruins south of Cave I. These ruins were well-known to scholars. In the 19th century, they were identified as the remains of Gomorrah; later archaeologists recognized the surface structures to be Roman. Ongoing excavations at the site revealed Israelite constructions of the ninth to sixth century, and Prof. Frank Cross identified the place with the biblical "City of the Sea of Salt."

The debate as to the nature of these ruins continues. When Father Roland de Vaux began his excavations in 1951, he associated the site with the people who wrote and stored the scrolls in the caves, concluding that they were Essenes, and that the settlement had been their community. More recently, the complex was identified by one scholar as a winter villa and by another as a military fortress.

In an article in the *Biblical Archaeology Review* for September/October 1994 (pp. 24-35, 73-74, 76-78), Alan D. Crown and Lena Cansdale question those previous identifications, and make a persuasive case for their recognition of the site as a commercial way-station and inn—a resting place for traders from the East on their way with salt, spices, and other luxury goods to Jerusalem. The authors trace the probable routes across the Dead Sea from the western shores to Ein Gedi and northward, or directly to Qumran, where the travellers rested, paid customs tolls, ate in the dining halls of the complex, and transacted business in and around the settlement. From there, they travelled west across the so-called "Salt Road" to the Jerusalem markets or, ultimately, to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Nor do the authors believe that the writers of the non-Biblical scrolls were Essenes. Citing archaeological as well as written



Caves at Qumran in which the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered. Photo: Amy Hirschfeld



Plan of the settlement at Qumran (after Philip Davies, Qumran)

evidence, Crown and Cansdale point out how the principles that have been accepted as Essene doctrines differ from the texts of the scrolls and the material finds at the site and its surroundings. They contrast the descriptions of the peaceful, celibate, austere Essenes in the historical sources—Pliny, Josephus and Philo—with statements in the Scrolls regulating and advising on methods of making war, marriage, the treatment of slaves, property ownership, etc. The finds of women's and children's skeletons in the cemetery, high-quality imported pottery and glass-ware in some of the rooms, a hoard of coins—such finds would not be expected in a monastic community dedicated to piety and poverty. But they would fit the picture of a busy inn serving large groups of visitors in a thriving commercial and industrial settlement.

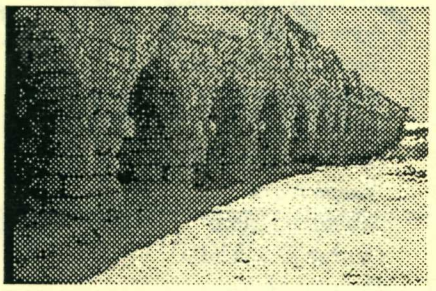
The unearthing of the scrolls, Prof. W.S. Albright said, was "the greatest discovery of modern times." Certainly the manuscripts have generated unending discussion and even controversy. Crown and Cansdale's ideas will undoubtedly elicit a vigorous response in their turn, and so the reverberations set off by the discovery of the scrolls may well continue on into the next millennium.

BRETTMAN MEMORIAL LECTURE

The Estelle Shohet Brettman Memorial Lecture for 1994 will be held on Sunday, October 23 at 4 p.m. at Rosovsky Hall, the new home for Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel at 52 Mt. Auburn Street in Cambridge. In "King Herod's Caesarea: Political Dream or Religious Nightmare?", Dr. Lisa Kahn, Visiting Assistant Professor of Art History in the School of Art, University of Tulsa, will present an overview of the important site of Caesarea Maritima in Israel. One of the most ambitious construction projects in history, the seaside city expressed the lust for power and fame of the Idumaean prince installed by the Romans in the 1st century B.C.E as king over the Jews.

Prof. Kahn, who received her Ph.D. in Art History from Boston University in 1990, has extensive archaeological experience, having risen through the archaeological ranks during multiple seasons of excavation in Grand, France, Akhera and Kourion in Cyprus, Mirobriga in Portugal, and Soulosse, France. She has been working at Caesarea since 1990, where most recently she has been serving as Registrar and Objects Conservator for the Vault Project, and Director of the University of Tulsa Summer Study Program. She has received numerous honors and awards, including the George Barton Fellowship at the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, and several Kress Foundation Fellowships. An upcoming project for her in Israel will be the study of a large collection of glass fragments discovered in a closed vault near the shore of Caesarea, significant because of the rarity of finding such a large corpus of ancient glass in a long, secure context.

The Caesarea Museum.
Photo: Amy Hirschfeld.



Roman aqueducts at Caesarea.
Photo: Amy Hirschfeld

Prof. Kahn will discuss Herod's building projects, focusing on new discoveries of the remains of a Herodian Roman temple of great size and beauty which once overlooked the harbor. The lecture, co-sponsored by Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel, is free and all are welcome.

WALTER PERSEGATI LECTURE

ICS members and friends who were lucky enough to hear Walter Persegati's superb 1993 Brettman Memorial Lecture on the cleaning of the Sistine ceiling (as well as the unfortunate ones who missed it) will be pleased to hear that he will be speaking in Boston again on Wednesday, October 26, at the Museum of Fine Arts, at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Persegati, International Coordinator of Friends of the Vatican Museums, retired in 1990 after 19 years as Secretary General of Vatican Monuments, Museums and Art Galleries and was directly involved with the Sistine Chapel project. His illustrated overview will include the final phase of the project, the cleaning of Michelangelo's "Last Judgment." Tickets: $7.50 (MFA members, seniors and students); $9.00 (non-members). It is anticipated that this lecture will be sold out, so anyone who is interested should call ahead to check on ticket availability.

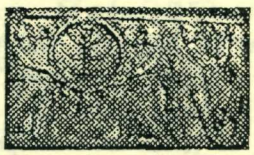
OTHER LECTURES OF INTEREST

November 4, 1994
"The Volcanic Landscape: Sounds, Sights, and the Cultural Response." The 16th Annual Tufts University Colloquium on Sardinian Archaeology. Time and location to be announced. For more information, call Prof. Miriam Balmuth, 617-627-3216.

November 15, 1994
"What Can Be Learned from the Dead Sea Scrolls?" A Lecture by Dr. Hanan Eshel, Hebrew University, Jerusalem and Visiting Scholar, Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University. Cosponsored by the Harvard Semitic Museum and the Boston Society of the AIA. For more information, call 617-495-4631.

March 17-19, 1995
"Sardinian Stratigraphy and Mediterranean Chronology." An international conference to be held at Tufts University, Medford, MA. For more information, Call Prof. Miriam Balmuth, 617-627-3216.

April 4, 1995
"Roman Sculpture in the Greek Style." A lecture by Prof. Miranda Marvin, Wellesley College. The AIA-Hanfmann Lecture. Time and location to be announced.



Brettman Memorial Lecture,
October 23, 1994

Parking for the lecture will be available in two lots bordering on Grant Street.
Rosovsky Hall is at 53 Mt. Auburn Street.