



QEDEM

Yosef Porath • The Synagogue at En-Gedi

64
2021

Yosef Porath

THE SYNAGOGUE AT EN-GEDI



QEDEM 64
The Institute of Archaeology
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

QEDEM

Monographs of the Institute of Archaeology

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY
OF JERUSALEM

64

Editorial Board

URI DAVIDOVICH, ERELLA HOVERS, UZI LEIBNER, NAVA PANITZ-COHEN, ZEEV WEISS



2021

Yosef Porath

THE SYNAGOGUE AT EN-GEDI



*Published with the assistance of
Les Amis Belges de l'Université Hébraïque de Jérusalem*

Front cover:

View of the Phase IIA synagogue, looking north, with the En-Gedi oasis in the background (photo: Zev Radovan)

Back cover:

Top: *left:* central panel of the bema mosaic; *right:* the copper, seven-branch menorah

Middle: *left:* pottery lamps from the synagogue; *right:* medallion in the southern aisle's mosaic

Bottom: *left:* detail of peacocks from the southeastern corner of the nave's mosaic; *right:* silver pendants shaped like a flower and a seven-branch menorah

©

Copyright by the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

ISBN 978-965-92825-7-9

ISSN 0333-5844

Designed by Noah Lichtinger

Printed by Printiv, Jerusalem

CONTENTS

Preface	IX
List of Figures and Tables.....	XI
List of Abbreviations.....	XVI
Chapter 1: Introduction and Background – <i>Yosef Porath</i>	1
Geographic and Historical Background.....	1
The History of Research	5
Overview of the Barag-Porath Excavations at En-Gedi	6
Chapter 2: Architecture and Stratigraphy – <i>Yosef Porath</i>	11
Introduction.....	11
Stratum V	13
Stratum IV.....	14
Stratum III.....	17
Stratum II	18
The Village Houses	40
The Area North and West of the Synagogue.....	45
Stratum I.....	46
Summary	46
Chapter 3: The Mosaics of the En-Gedi Synagogue – <i>Zeev Weiss</i>	55
The Mosaic Pavement in the Early Synagogue, Phases IIC–IIB.....	55
The Mosaic Pavement in the Later Synagogue, Phase IIA.....	58
Iconography, Iconographical Layout and Significance.....	72
Stylistic Analysis.....	77
Technical Aspects.....	79
Conclusions.....	79
Chapter 4: The Inscriptions of the En-Gedi Synagogue – <i>Haggai Misgav</i>	83
Introduction.....	83
The Hebrew-Aramaic Inscription in Mosaic Floor 222.....	83
Discussion.....	88
An Inscription on Plaster.....	95

Chapter 5: Ship Graffiti Depicted in the En-Gedi Synagogue – <i>Zaraza Friedman</i>	99
Description of the Maritime Scene	100
Sailing on the Dead Sea	102
Discussion and Summary.....	103
Chapter 6: The Ark and the Bema of the Phase IIA Synagogue – <i>Yosef Porath</i>	105
The Ark	105
The Bema	107
Suggested Reconstructions of the Ark and the Bema	107
The Seven-Branch Menorah	112
The ‘Seat of Moses’	112
Summary	112
Chapter 7: The Architecture of the En-Gedi Synagogue: A Comparative Study – <i>Yosef Porath</i>	115
Synagogue Architectural Typology in Southern Judea and the Dead Sea Region..	115
Development of the En-Gedi Synagogue’s Architectural Plan.....	116
Chronology of the En-Gedi Synagogue’s Construction	118
Synagogue Architectural Typology and Chronology: A Review	118
The En-Gedi Synagogue in Regional and Inter-regional Context	122
Chapter 8: The “Secret of the Town” of the En-Gedi Community – <i>Yosef Porath</i>	127
Introduction.....	127
The Balsam/Opobalsamum Plant in the Holy Land.....	127
Summary and Conclusions.....	130
Chapter 9: Pottery Vessels – <i>Yosef Porath</i>	133
Pottery from Courtyard House D.....	133
Pottery from Courtyard House A	137
Pottery from the Phase IIA Synagogue.....	138
Chapter 10: Pottery Oil Lamps – <i>Yosef Porath</i>	141
Wheel-Made Lamps	141
Mold-Made Lamps.....	143
Multi-Nozzle Lamp.....	148
Discussion	151
Chapter 11: Glass Vessels from the En-Gedi Synagogue – <i>Yael Gorin-Rosen</i>	153
Introduction.....	153
Methodology	154
Technology.....	156
Typology	156
Discussion and Conclusions.....	170

Chapter 12: Coins from the En-Gedi Synagogue and Its Environs – <i>Gabi Bijovsky</i>	175
Introduction.....	175
Methodology	175
The Isolated Coins	175
The <i>Minimi</i> Assemblage.....	176
The <i>Folles</i> Hoard	176
The Ark Hoard	177
Discussion.....	179
The Coin Catalogue	182
Coin Plates	198
Chapter 13: Metal Objects – <i>Yosef Porath</i>	205
Nails.....	205
Metal Objects from the Ark and the Bema	205
Appendix: Analyses of the Metal Objects – <i>Sariel Shalev</i>	215
Chapter 14: Dendroarchaeological Investigations – <i>Nili Liphshitz</i>	219
Chapter 15: Animal-Bone Remains from the En-Gedi Synagogue – <i>Nimrod Marom and</i> <i>Guy Bar-Oz</i>	221
Introduction.....	221
Materials and Methods.....	221
Results.....	222
Taxonomic Composition.....	224
Summary and Conclusions.....	225
Chapter 16: Remains of Textile on a Coin Hoard – <i>Naama Sukenik</i>	231
Chapter 17: The Synagogue at En-Gedi: Chronological, Historical and Cultural Conclusions – <i>Yosef Porath</i>	233
Chronology and History of the Synagogue.....	233
Summary and Discussion.....	235

CHAPTER 3

THE MOSAICS OF THE EN-GEDI SYNAGOGUE

Zeev Weiss

In the course of excavating the synagogue at En-Gedi, two superimposed mosaics were uncovered, reflecting two different phases in the building that was in continuous use from the late third or early fourth century through the sixth century CE. As in the rest of the village, the finds uncovered in the synagogue indicate that it was destroyed in a fire in the early seventh century CE. The mosaic in the first phase of the building (Phases IIC–IIB) adorned the prayer hall and the entrance area; it was simple in both its patterns and colors, compared to the mosaic of the later phase (Phase IIA) (Fig. 3.1). The discussion below describes each mosaic separately and is followed by analyses of the iconography, style, and technique.

This study refers to the plates appearing in Balmelle et al. 1985 and 2002 (abbreviated in this

chapter as DG) to identify the various patterns in the En-Gedi mosaics.¹

The Mosaic Pavement in the Early Synagogue, Phases IIC–IIB

The entire synagogue is paved with a simple mosaic that is relatively well preserved, except for an eroded section near the southeastern corner of the building. The mosaic floor was laid with the construction of the synagogue (Phase IIC) and remained in continual use throughout its first two phases, even after some architectural changes were introduced into the building (Phase IIB). The entrance area (L235) and the southwestern room (L224) have a simple white mosaic, and the prayer hall (L125) is decorated with a rectangular carpet arranged in three



Fig. 3.1. Aerial view of the synagogue (Phase IIA); looking northwest. Note the eroded mosaic and the two superimposed mosaic floors in the southeastern corner of the building (lower left)



Fig. 3.2. The mosaic of Phases IIC and IIB in the prayer hall (L125); looking west. Note the large area of plastered floor repairs

separate, square panels lying parallel to the building's long axis (Figs. 3.2–3.3). The floor was damaged and repaired in antiquity, when smooth plaster covered the holes where tesserae were missing, and other tesserae in secondary use were set at a different orientation than the rest of the floor.

The rectangular carpet (8.03x3.23 m) is located approximately in the center of the prayer hall, parallel to its long walls (Fig. 3.2). It is composed of monochrome tesserae surrounded by a 5.5 cm-wide triple black filet (DG 1t) enclosing three separate square panels (1.55x1.45 m), each of which is encompassed by different geometrical designs. The three panels are arranged parallel to and 0.90 m away from the long sides of the rectangular carpet's borders, although the distance between the panels themselves is not uniform, ranging from 0.9–1.0 m (Fig. 3.3). The patterns in the three panels feature alternating black and white tesserae with some reddish stones randomly interspersed, mainly in the border of the northern panel.

The three panels will be described from north to south. The northern panel was damaged with the later construction of W288 and W122 with the expansion of the synagogue in Phase IIA (Fig. 3.4). Only the

southern half of the panel has been preserved, in addition to a small section of its northern border. The black-tesserae border features two simple filets (DG 1a) separated by a row of tangentially poised, serrated black squares (forming hourglasses), each containing a white or red stone (DG 15c) in its center. The motif of this panel, if there was one, was completely destroyed with the construction of W288.

The central panel was partially damaged and then repaired in antiquity with white plaster and some tesserae in secondary use (Fig. 3.5). The black border includes two simple filets (DG 1a), separated by a band of checkerboard patterns arranged in two rows of squares (DG 1n). Part of the inner border comprises two parallel lines of a double filet (DG 1i) separated by a 4 cm-wide band of smaller white tesserae. The outer line forming the corner thus facilitated the reconstruction of this inner panel as measuring ca. 0.56x0.66 m.

The southern panel (Fig. 3.6) is the only one that is almost-completely preserved. Its border is composed of a sawtooth pattern (DG 10g), followed by a simple filet (DG 1a), and its interior features a single swastika (0.45x0.45 m) with double-filet arms. Swastikas have been found mainly along the borders



Fig. 3.3. The mosaic of Phases IIC and IIB in the prayer hall (L125); looking east



Fig. 3.4. The northern panel in the mosaic floor of the prayer hall (L125); looking south. Note the damage caused by the construction of W122 and W288 in Phase IIA



Fig. 3.5. The central panel in the mosaic of the prayer hall (L125); looking south. Note the patches of mosaic lacunae filled with white lime-mortar



Fig. 3.6. The southern panel featuring a swastika in the mosaic of the prayer hall (L125); looking south

or in the main carpet of Roman and late antique mosaics, either set in continuous rows or rendered as intricate meander patterns. In ancient Palestine, the intricate swastika meander pattern appears in mosaics, architectural decorations, and ossuaries from the first century CE (Rahmani 1994: 33, Cat. Nos. 78, 334, 517, 746; Hachlili 2009: 10; 2013: 39–40). Later on, similar running patterns appear on the architectural decorations of a few Galilean and Golan synagogues (Hachlili 2013: 102, 147–148, 471–472), as well as in several mosaics adorning private houses, synagogues, and churches in the region (Tsafrir and Hirschfeld 1979: 306; Tzaferis 1982: 224–226; Vitto 1996;

122–127; Magen Peleg and Sharuch 2012: 354–356). A single swastika similar to the one from En-Gedi is found on a Samaritan oil lamp dated to the third–fourth centuries CE, and it is also known elsewhere on Roman and late antique monuments and artifacts (Levi 1947: Vol. 1: 419; Sussman 1978: 243 and Cat. No. 18; Grandi 1991: 91; Maguire 1994: 268, 273–274). The swastika is a decorative element that was already known in Greek art, but in late antiquity, it may have been imbued with a more significant meaning, as, for example, from the realm of magic (Ovadia 1980: 149–151; Maguire 1994: 274).

The simple layout of the mosaic carpet on the floor of the early prayer hall has no parallels in other ancient Palestinian and Diaspora synagogues. Such a layout was more suitable to side rooms, corridors, or courtyards, and was found mainly in Roman houses, although in several places—unlike the mosaic in En-Gedi—the outer frame touches the inlaid panels. Such a mosaic carpet appears in the eastern corridor of the House of Dionysos in Sepphoris (Talgam and Weiss 2004: 117–118), in the center of the colonnaded courtyard in Tiberias (Talgam 2004: 27–30), and in the central passageway of a villa in Byblos, Lebanon (Chéhab 1959: Pl. 1). A parallel closer to the En-Gedi mosaic layout may be found in the House of the Evil Eye in Antioch, Syria, where the carpets in the two aisles of the colonnaded courtyard were adorned with geometric panels inside a simple black frame (Levi 1947: Vol. 1: 28–29; Vol. 2: Plate XCIII a–b).² A similar arrangement appears in the corridor of another house in Antioch (Levi 1947: Vol. 1: 90).

Style and Technique

The absence of stylistic characteristics in the early synagogue mosaic makes it difficult to determine, even roughly, the date of its execution. However, the simplicity of the mosaic's layout and decoration, which resemble those known in Roman houses—in contrast to the preference for running geometric or floral carpets from the Byzantine period—may infer a relatively early date of construction for Phase IIC, sometime in the late third or early fourth century CE.

The limestone tesserae of the mosaic in the prayer hall (L125) are black, white, and red. Larger white tesserae were used in the entrance area (L235) and the southwestern room (L224). The tesserae in the decorated central mosaic carpet are slightly smaller in comparison to those in the area surrounding it and

in the entrance area. The density of tesserae in the decorated section is 91 per sq dm, and in the area surrounding the central carpet, it is 56–63 per sq dm. The density of the tesserae in the mosaic section preserved behind the bema, close to the corner of walls W96 and W98, is 25 per sq dm. The mosaic in the southwestern room was similarly executed; however, the density of the tesserae in the entrance area (L235) is 25–30 per sq dm.

The Mosaic Pavement in the Later Synagogue, Phase IIA

In the late fifth or early sixth century CE, the synagogue was renovated; the nave was embellished with a colorful mosaic containing figural images, geometric and stylized floral designs, and menorot, while the western aisle displayed one long inscription divided into several paragraphs (Fig. 3.7). The trapezoidal building, now divided into a nave and three aisles on its east, south, and west, had one running mosaic floor with variously designed carpets in each area. Since no alterations were detected in the floor laid in the southwestern room (L224), its simple, white mosaic remained intact throughout Phase IIA as well.

The later synagogue was destroyed by heavy fire. Imprints of burnt roof beams were visible on the building's floor, and even today, these traces are evident in the main hall, aisles, and around the bema. The description below will begin with the mosaic installed in the nave (L100) and the bema (L119), and then continue with the three aisles, presenting them clockwise—from the east (L99), to the south (L112), and finally, to the west (L222).

The Nave (L100)

The area south of the bema is decorated with a square carpet (5.70x5.76 m) encompassing a small, square panel (2.5 sq m) in its center; both are aligned with and almost completely parallel to the synagogue's long walls (Fig. 3.8). The mosaic carpet is decorated with an orthogonal pattern of intersecting circles, forming saltires of quasi-tangential spindles and concave squares, with one tessera in the center of each spindle (variation of DG 237a). The spindles were made of red tesserae and outlined with black stones. One black tessera was set in the center of four concave squares close to the southwestern corner, as well as in the southeastern corner of the mosaic. Such



Fig. 3.7. Aerial view of the Phase IIA synagogue and its mosaics (north on top) (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

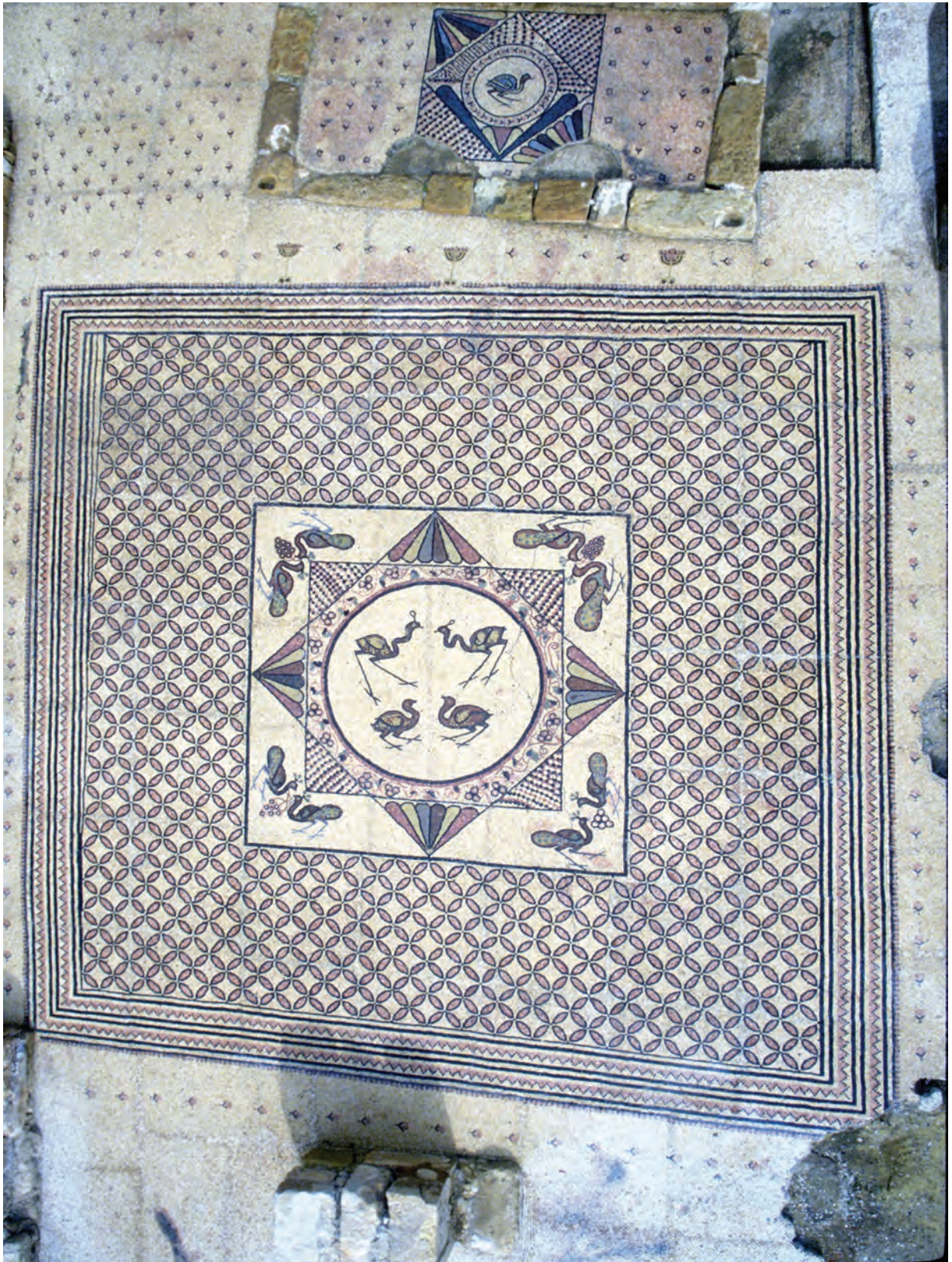


Fig. 3.8. Detail of the mosaic carpet in the nave (L100), viewed from above, with the bema (L119) to its north. Note the three menorot located between the central carpet and the bema (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

a design is well known in the region, first appearing in the Herodian era in the caldarium of the bathhouse at Cypros (Hachlili 2009: 8), and later on in the churches of Beth Saḥur (Ovadia and Ovadia 1987: Cat. No. 25), Khirbet el-Murassas (Magen and Talgam 1990: 119), and Herodium (Netzer 1990: 166–168), at times with a floral design or a cross composed of five tesserae in the center of the concave squares.

The inner panel (Fig. 3.9) in the center of the mosaic carpet features a square containing a star formed by one square superimposed on another, with a 45-degree difference between them (1.70x1.77 m and 1.68x1.66 m), creating beveled chevrons in the corners of the outer square (DG 295d). A circle (outer diameter 1.49 m) inside the star is framed by two double filets (DG 1i) in red and black, and depicts two pairs of birds against a white background, arranged one above the other (Fig. 3.10). The four birds, whose interplay of reddish-brown and brown bodies, with mustard-yellow spots to accentuate their feathers outlined in black, face each other and are oriented northwards. The birds lack realistic details and are therefore difficult to identify. The top pair looks like crowned cranes (*Balearica regulorus*), and the bottom two are apparently male francolins (*Francolinus*) or male partridges (*Alectoris*).

A running vine of leaves and grapes with interplaying pink and dark red colors fills the area between the central medallion and the eight triangles of the star; the serrated leaves appear either in black and green or black and pink; the reddish-brown grapes are outlined in black and contain a white dot in their center.

The eight triangles of the star are decorated with an alternating checkerboard pattern of squares comprising four tesserae each (variation of DG 111d), and a motif that can be identified either as a conch pattern or a stylized floral design (Figs. 3.11–3.12). The checkerboard pattern is composed of alternating pink, dark red, white, and black tesserae. The axial ribs or petals of the latter motif are outlined in black and rendered symmetrically, from outside inwards, in brown, mustard-yellow, gray, and dark red tesserae. The tip of each triangle is marked by a curved line from which the conch pattern or stylized petals rise upwards.

Each of the beveled chevrons in the corners of the outer square contains a pair of peacocks facing each other, with a cluster of grapes between them (Figs. 3.13–3.16). The peacocks seem to be holding the vine

tendrils in their beaks, except for the pair located in the southwestern beveled chevron (Fig. 3.16). Their bodies are rendered in shades of brown—light brown, dark brown, or grayish brown—with a few green patches; the feathers of the train exhibit an interplay of brown, gray, mustard-yellow, and green, while the five eyespots (*ocelli*) were executed in green and marked by individual round, black tesserae. The crest of each peacock features three coronas (“crown feathers”) topped with a round, green element emphasized by a black dot.

The mosaic carpet in the nave is enclosed by a wide frame of varying sizes on each of its four sides (see Fig. 3.8). The northern side is 41 cm, the eastern side 46 cm, the southern side 43 cm, and the western side expands from 45 cm in the south to 56 cm in the north. The frame is composed of several features from outside inwards—a 4.5 cm serrated and asymmetrically shaded black and red band (DG 6e), a 2.5 cm double black filet (DG 1i), a 6 cm red and black sawtooth pattern creating the effect of a serrated zigzag (DG 9c), two successive 2.5 cm double black filets (DG 1i), and another 7 cm red and black sawtooth pattern (DG 9c). The innermost band of the frame was executed differently on each side of the mosaic carpet—the northern side features a double black filet (DG 1i), the eastern side two successive double black filets (DG 1i), the southern side a double black filet (DG 1i) followed by a single filet (DG 1a), and the western side a double black filet (DG 1i) followed by another filet varying in size from south to north, beginning with a 14 cm-long single black filet (DG 1a), replaced by a 43 cm-long double black filet (DG 1i), and replaced again by a 58 cm-long triple filet (DG 1t). At one point, the triple filet splits into two 1.28 m-long bands, the outer one a double black filet and the inner one a single black filet (Fig. 3.17). This innermost single filet widens at one point into a double black filet measuring about 60 cm long. About 1.9 m from the northwestern corner of the mosaic carpet, it splits again into two single black filets (DG 1a); the inner part branches after 1.35 m and widens into a double filet that continues until it reaches the corner.

A row of spaced, recumbent pink rosebuds with black stems surrounds the central carpet (DG 83a) on four sides. Three seven-branch menorot are interspersed at varying distances along the northern row, next to the bema (see Fig. 3.8). Each row of rosebuds is located at a different distance from the main carpet, and in some cases, is not even parallel to



Fig. 3.9. The mosaic floor in the nave (L100), viewed from above (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Fig. 3.10. Four heraldic birds featured in the central circle of the mosaic in the nave (L100) (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)



Fig. 3.11. A triangle on the northwestern side of the star, decorated with an alternating checkerboard pattern (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)



Fig. 3.12. A triangle on the western side of the star, decorated with a motif identified as either a conch pattern or a stylized floral design (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

it. The row on the eastern side runs parallel to and 8 cm from the main carpet, and the row on the western side runs ca. 7 cm from it. The row on the northern side runs 22 cm from the main carpet in the west to 10 cm in the east. The row on the southern side runs 30 cm from the main carpet in the west to 18 cm in the east. The direction of the flowers is identical in the two parallel rows on either side of the main carpet. The rosebuds on the northern and southern sides of the main carpet face east, whereas those on the eastern and western sides are oriented to the north, except for the last four rosebuds on the northern end of the western row that face the opposite direction.

The three seven-branch menorot, executed in

mustard-yellow, are identical in shape, but differ in height (Fig. 3.18–3.20). The western menorah is 32 cm high, the central one 30 cm high, and the eastern one 26 cm high. Each has a central stem, six arms, a tripod base, and a horizontal bar stretching across the top. The serrated file of poised squares made of four tesserae each, executed in red and black, was meant to illustrate the seven flames on the menorah. Brown tesserae filled the area between the arms, and round brown elements were incorporated in the menorah's base. These dark shades were meant to emphasize the mustard-yellow color of the menorah against the light background of the mosaic floor.

The mosaics on both sides of the bema at the



Fig. 3.13. Two peacocks facing each other, with a cluster of grapes between them, in the beveled chevron located in the northwestern corner of the outer square of the mosaic in the nave (L100)



Fig. 3.14. Two peacocks facing each other, with a cluster of grapes between them, in the beveled chevron located in the northeastern corner of the outer square of the mosaic in the nave (L100) (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)



Fig. 3.15. Two peacocks facing each other, with a cluster of grapes between them, in the beveled chevron located in the southeastern corner of the outer square of the mosaic in the nave (L100) (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)



Fig. 3.16. Two peacocks facing each other, with a cluster of grapes between them, in the beveled chevron located in the southwestern corner of the outer square of the mosaic in the nave (L100) (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)



Fig. 3.17. The frame of the mosaic carpet in the nave (L100) incorporating several patterns. Note the differences in the execution of the innermost black file of the frame in the northwestern corner of the mosaic. The northern side features a double black file, whereas the western side was developed into several black filets of different widths (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

northern end of the prayer hall were executed differently. The mosaic east of the bema is plain white, whereas the one to its west is decorated with rows of recumbent pink rosebuds with black stems (Fig. 3.21). Those adorning the lower, southern section (1.1 m) appear in diagonal rows, whereas those in the upper, northern section (ca. 1.7 m) are arranged more sparsely and in parallel rows (Fig. 3.7). Mosaics decorated with rows of polychrome rosebuds are well known in the region in both private and public spaces (synagogues and churches). However—unlike the mosaic in En-Gedi—the buds are always arranged in parallel rows and are uniformly distributed over the floor (Ovadia and Ovadia 1987: Cat. Nos. 114, 215, 227, with references to the sites under discussion; Weiss 2005: 161–162; 2009a: 12; Miller 2015: 251–252).



Fig. 3.18. The western menorah next to the bema (L119)



Fig. 3.19. The central menorah next to the bema (L119)



Fig. 3.20. The eastern menorah next to the bema (L119)



Fig. 3.21. The mosaic carpet west of the bema (L119), decorated with rows of recumbent rosebuds (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

The Central Carpet: Technical Matters

The creation of the synagogue mosaic in Phase IIA is characterized by various inconsistencies, including the execution of the central mosaic frame, and especially the innermost band which, as described above, is designed differently on each side of the carpet. As a rule, mosaicists were consistent in the execution of the patterns and sequences of the various bands of a mosaic frame. Although some inconsistencies can be detected in ancient Palestinian mosaics, at En-Gedi, the artist or his apprentice improvised a solution for dealing with a problem they faced in the course of laying the mosaic.³ Two options may offer a plausible explanation for the lack of uniformity of the innermost band, but it seems that only the second scenario below may better explain what led to the creative solution applied here.

1. The width of the central carpet with the orthogonal pattern of intersecting circles on its southern side (4.78 m) is 6 cm wider than its northern end (4.72 m), and its distance from the western colonnade is 4–5 cm greater in the north (81 cm) than in the east (77–78 cm). Theoretically, one can argue that these differences, together with the desire to place the carpet in the center of the nave at a relatively equal distance between the eastern and western colonnades, affected the design of the western side of the mosaic frame, which increased in size from south (45 cm) to north (56 cm). This suggestion assumes that the mosaic carpet was made from the inside outwards, and that the frame was executed last. If that were the case, why were adjustments made on the innermost bands of the frame and not on the outer one, which was supposedly created upon completion of the mosaic carpet?
2. Alternatively, I maintain that the mosaic carpet was made in two consecutive stages from different directions. In the first stage, the artists made the carpet, working from the inside outwards. After completing this section, they moved on to the rest of the frame, working from the outside inwards. To do so, they had to ensure that the carpet would look as if it were located in the center of the nave and relatively equidistant from the eastern and western colonnades, thereby maintaining the quadrate layout and following the sequence of designs in the frame. After calculating the necessary measurements and determining the boundaries of the mosaic carpet, the mosaicists began laying the tesserae, it would seem, from the outermost bands.

The latter suggestion (No. 2) is based on two main considerations: (1) the six outer bands were designed uniformly around the entire mosaic; (2) only the innermost band of the frame was executed differently on each side of the mosaic carpet. After completing the outer bands, which were uniformly executed on all four sides, they needed to overlap the remaining gap between the wide frame and the inner carpet. The size of the gap on each side is different, apparently because the central mosaic carpet was not a perfect square, the distance from the western and eastern column bases varied from one spot to the next, and probably also because some inaccurate measurements were taken during work. The mosaicists found creative solutions to bridge the gaps on all four sides: on the northern side, they laid a single band of a double black file, on the eastern side two double black files, on the south a double and a single black file, and on the west the inner double black file was executed in varying thicknesses, while splitting it a few times into several bands.⁴

The Bema (L119)

A separate mosaic carpet (2.82x1.40 m), surrounded by a border of three to five lines of white tesserae, was set in the locus of the rectangular bema, which was enclosed by low walls that probably supported a wooden chancel screen (Fig. 3.22). The white tesserae inside the mosaic carpet, beyond the border, were set diagonally, as elsewhere on the synagogue's floor. The center of the mosaic carpet is decorated with a square panel containing floral and geometric designs (Fig. 3.23).

This central square panel (1.18x1.19 m) contains a circle or medallion (outer diameter 66 cm) inscribed in a poised square (81x84 cm; variation of DG 293 a–b). A bird, apparently a partridge, is depicted on a white background in the central medallion. It faces right (east) and is oriented to the north, in the direction of the Torah ark; its head is brown, its neck is white, and the rounded body contains an interplay of brown, reddish-brown, and white, suggestive of the shades of the bird's feathers. Curved black, gray, and white lines emphasize the wings. The central medallion is surrounded by a 9 cm frame composed of two single black filets (DG 1a), separated by a ring of spaced, recumbent rosebuds.

The poised square is decorated with two different motifs divided in the middle into two equal

Fig. 3.22. The ark (L101) and the bema (L119); looking north. Note the mosaic in and around the locus of the bema



Fig. 3.23. The mosaic carpet in the locus of the bema (L119) (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

isosceles triangles. The northern one is decorated with checkerboard patterns of irregular squares (combination of DG 111 a–b), composed of alternating pink, white, and black tesserae (Fig. 3.24). The size and density of the squares on the western side of this triangle are different, and the stones close to the left base angle have no particular order.

The motif in the southern triangle is not easily identifiable. It seems to contain a pair of elongated club-shaped designs adjacent to its sides, emerging from the southern corner of the square. They are narrow at their bottom, widening upwards, and terminating with a bulbous line. Another pair of smaller, but similar designs appears between them. The former



Fig. 3.24. The panel in the locus of the bema (L119) portraying a bird inside a medallion inscribed in a poised square (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

pair is composed of gray tesserae with a few single black tesserae set irregularly across the surface, and the latter pair is composed of mustard-yellow stones separated by a triangle of light red tesserae. The two pairs of “clubs” seem to resemble the axial ribs of the outer square panel, although their proportions are completely different. Alternatively, the two pairs of “clubs” and the colored areas between them could be interpreted as an unidentifiable stylized flower (a calyx with a petal?) or as a stand with four arms that was meant to hold the central medallion.

The four triangular areas in the corners of the outer frame are decorated symmetrically with a checkerboard pattern of squares comprising four tesserae each (variation of DG 111d) at the opposite sides of the square, and with a motif that can be identified either as a conch or a stylized floral design. The checkerboard pattern is composed of alternating reddish-brown, white, and black tesserae. The nine axial ribs or petals of the other motif are also rendered diametrically, on either side of the square, with mustard-yellow, light red, brown, and gray tesserae, some appearing twice.

Recumbent rosebuds appear in parallel rows west of the central panel. A row of equally spaced, serrated polychrome squares (DG 5a) was added at some distance south of this floral carpet. The mosaic east of the central

square is also arranged in parallel rows, but combines two different elements: a frame of equally spaced, serrated polychrome squares surrounding eight rosebuds arranged in two parallel lines. Two serrated polychrome squares are preserved south of the central panel. The mosaic is partially destroyed here, but it seems that such squares were also depicted along the southern end of the central panel. A reconstructed line would have been part of a larger row of serrated polychrome squares that continued southwards and across the entire mosaic carpet, thus connecting the two side panels.

Pink and black tesserae were used to create the decorative elements around the central panel. As elsewhere, the rosebuds are pink and their stems black. The outer frame of the serrated polychrome squares is black and their interior is pink with a lighter dot inside.

The Eastern (L99) and Southern (L112) Aisles

The eastern aisle has a simple, undecorated, white mosaic. A round medallion (diameter 47 cm) depicting a bird and a single rosebud is preserved in the southern aisle, near the southwestern corner of the prayer hall (see Fig. 3.7). It is framed by a 4 cm-wide triple filet (DG 1t) composed of two rows of black tesserae and a pink row between them (Figs. 3.25–3.26). The bird faces to the east, towards the single rosebud, but is

Fig. 3.25. The southern aisle (L112) and the benches constructed along W106. Note the round medallions in front of the lower bench; looking south



oriented southwards, opposite the focal point of the building. The bird's body is gray, light gray, and pink, and is outlined with black tesserae. The rosebud is pink and the stem is black.

Another medallion, 1.57 m to its east, was destroyed and repaired with plaster in antiquity (Fig. 3.27). The existence of two medallions in the southern aisle, and their relationship to the adjacent columns and benches, suggest that a third medallion, now lost due to the damage of modern earth moving, was inserted further to the east, where the mosaic is eroded, in order to maintain the hall's symmetry.

The Western Aisle (L222)

A long carpet divided into eight panels decorates the western aisle (Fig. 3.28). It measures 8.96 m long and 1.57 m wide on its northern end and 1.82 m wide on its southern end. Five compartments within this mosaic carpet contain 21 lines of an inscription divided into several paragraphs (references to the inscriptions below cite the line numbers assigned by Misgav in Chapter 4). The letters were executed in black tesserae set against a white background.

A row of spaced recumbent rosebuds was arranged around the carpet (DG 83a), except at the southern end, where they appear in two parallel rows. Each rosebud is located at a different distance from the main carpet, and some are not even fully parallel to it. The northern row is located 19–21 cm from the main carpet, the eastern row 7–11 cm from it, the



Fig. 3.26. The intact, western round medallion depicting a bird in the mosaic located in the southern aisle (L112) (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)



Fig. 3.27. The defaced and plastered repair of the medallion in the mosaic located in the southern aisle (L112)



Fig. 3.28. The mosaic floor in the western aisle (L222) and the synagogue's courtyard (L206). Note the imprints of fallen burnt roof beams on the mosaic floor; looking northwest

southern row 17 cm from it, and the western row ca. 4–8 cm from it. Additional spaced recumbent rosebuds arranged in two parallel rows were incorporated between the aisle's columns. As elsewhere throughout the synagogue mosaic, all the rosebuds are pink and have a black stem.

The entire mosaic carpet is enclosed by a frame (11 cm) comprising two features—an outer sawtooth pattern in pink and black (DG 9c) and an inner double black filet (DG 1i). The description below of the eight panels in this aisle is presented from north to south. The panels appear successively, one beneath the other, but are separated by one or two mosaic bands stretching across the carpet. The dimensions below represent the inner measurements (width and height) of each panel.

Panel 1 is somewhat irregular in shape (1.36–1.43x2.21–2.08 m) and contains a grid of serrated black, pink, and white filets (DG 124d) and blank white compartments (Fig. 3.29). The southern end of the panel is bordered by a double black filet (DG 1i).

Panel 2 is trapezoidal, widening towards the east (1.43x0.31–0.46 m), resulting from the shape of Panel 1 that ends on its southern side with a diagonal

line (Fig. 3.30). Its northern and southern sides are bordered symmetrically with a double black filet (DG 1i) followed by a pink and black sawtooth pattern (DG 9c). A row of four recumbent pink rosebuds with black stems runs across the panel against a white background.

Panel 3 (1.48x1.28 m) is adorned with a lattice pattern of elongated scales with multicolored rosebuds in each (DG 219c), except for the northern row, which contains serrated triangles (see Fig. 3.30). The lattice pattern covers three quarters of this mosaic carpet and the remaining area (ca. 32 cm) at the bottom contains a two-line inscription (lines 1–2) set against a white background. The panel is bordered on its northern and southern sides with a double black filet (DG 1i). The white scales are outlined with successive rows of pink and black tesserae; the rosebuds are pink and the stems are black. Such a lattice pattern with multicolored rosebuds appears in the region for the first time in both synagogues and churches of the fourth century CE (Dothan 1983: 51; Ovadiah and Ovadiah 1987: Cat. Nos. 8, 122, 168; Netzer 1990: 166–169, Figs. 5–6).

Panel 4 (1.48x0.81 m) contains several paragraphs arranged in six lines (lines 3–8; see Chapter 4, Fig. 4.4), with a slightly larger space between the third and

Fig. 3.29. The western aisle (L222): Panel 1 (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)



Fig. 3.30. The western aisle (L222): Panels 2–3 (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)



fourth lines. A double black filet (DG 1i), followed by a red and black sawtooth pattern (DG 9c), borders this carpet on its northern side and only a double black filet demarcates it from the south.

Panel 5 (1.50x0.73 m; see Chapter 4, Fig. 4.5) contains the longest paragraph (lines 9–16) in the mosaic and is defined on its northern and southern sides by a double black filet (DG 1i).

Panel 6 (1.51x0.50 m), which contains a small paragraph (lines 17–18; see Chapter 4, Fig. 4.6), is bound on its northern and southern sides with a double black filet (DG 1i), followed by a red and black sawtooth pattern (DG 9c). The white tesserae

in the trapezoidal area between the northern border and the paragraph are set diagonally, in contrast to the white background of the paragraph, in which the stones are set in relatively vertical lines to conform with the letters.

According to Misgav (see Chapter 4), the form of the letters in this panel, which were executed differently from those in the other paragraphs of the inscription, and the change in the direction of the white tesserae around the letters, suggest that the panel contained another design that was later removed in order to insert this paragraph. An examination of the methods used to execute the work

on this panel suggests yet another possibility. First, it is important to note that the size and shape of the white tesserae appearing throughout the panel are uniform. The bichrome sawtooth pattern on either side of the panel was executed similarly, yet its meeting point with the white background differs on either side. As in Panel 2, there appears to be a clear borderline here between the upper bichrome sawtooth pattern and the trapezoidal section with the diagonal white tesserae beneath it. In contrast, the white tesserae at the bottom of the panel are fully integrated into the sawtooth pattern, as in Panel 4. The white tesserae here, as in the other lines throughout the inscription, are arranged in relatively straight lines to conform with the letters.

What, then, could be the reason for the change in direction of the white tesserae in this panel? In light of the above, we would argue that the paragraph was not inserted in a second stage, but was incorporated when the entire mosaic carpet was laid. If the paragraph had been added at a later stage, then the repair would be more visible to the naked eye. The cutting of the original mosaic and the insertion of the new section would have left a distinct borderline all around the paragraph and not only above it. In such a case, the mosaicist would have chosen tesserae that were slightly different from those used in the original mosaic.⁵ As there is no clear incision around the inscription, and since the white tesserae used throughout this panel are of uniform size and cut, it appears that—except for the change in direction of the white background and the shape of the letters—everything here was executed in one go.

Moreover, the change in the form of the letters does not reflect a later addition, but rather a change in hands. One may assume that the mosaicist executed the inscription throughout the mosaic carpet except for this specific section (lines 17–18) which, for some unknown reason, was possibly made by an apprentice (see discussion below).⁶ It seems that the original intention was to create a simple white panel, but while laying the tesserae it was decided to add another paragraph to the inscription. The sequence was as follows: from top to bottom, the work began by laying the white tesserae in diagonal lines. After being instructed, the apprentice ended this section in a diagonal straight line and then completed the panel with the additional paragraph while executing this section as elsewhere in the carpet.

Panel 7 (1.56x1.18–1.33 m) is decorated with

a framed orthogonal pattern of irregular octagons adjacent to and intersecting the short side to form squares and oblong hexagons (DG 169b) (Fig. 3.31). The squares in the middle of the octagons are bounded by a symmetrically shaded black, pink, and white band; the diagonal sides of the octagon are serrated and have similar colors. A geometric element composed of five short parallel lines in black, pink, and white appears in the middle of each square and oblong hexagon. The panel is bounded on the northern and southern sides by a double black file (DG 1i). The design in this panel was well known in the region in the late fifth and sixth centuries CE, and was found, for example, in the churches at Bahan, el-Makr, and Hazor-Ashdod; the compartments at these sites at times include a more intricate design and, compared to En-Gedi, exhibit a better balance and symmetry (Ovadia and Ovadia 1987: Cat. Nos. 8, 76, 93).

Panel 8 (1.62x1.28 m) (damaged in the center; see Fig. 3.28) is decorated with a lattice pattern of elongated scales containing multicolored rosebuds (DG 219c), as in Panel 3, although they are turned in the opposite direction (Fig. 3.32). The lattice pattern in the lower, southern part of the panel faces upwards, and above it, to the north, is a dedicatory inscription (lines 19–21; Fig. 4.7) against a white background.

Iconography, Iconographical Layout, and Significance

In late antique Palestine, mosaic carpets richly decorated with figurative and colorful depictions were placed in the synagogue's nave, while the mosaics in the aisles usually featured simpler geometric or floral designs. In principle, the mosaic floor at En-Gedi maintains the same layout, albeit on a more moderate scale, except for the western aisle, which contained one long carpet with various dedicatory inscriptions and other matters of communal concern.

Iconography

Most of the features in the En-Gedi mosaic have parallels in ancient Jewish art. The mosaicist, using the sources at his disposal, designed the various motifs according to familiar patterns from other mosaics of both religious and secular provenance in late antique Palestine. This is true with regard to the geometric carpet discussed above and the vine in the central panel, which is a well-known motif in ancient Jewish

Fig. 3.31. The western aisle (L222): Panel 7 (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

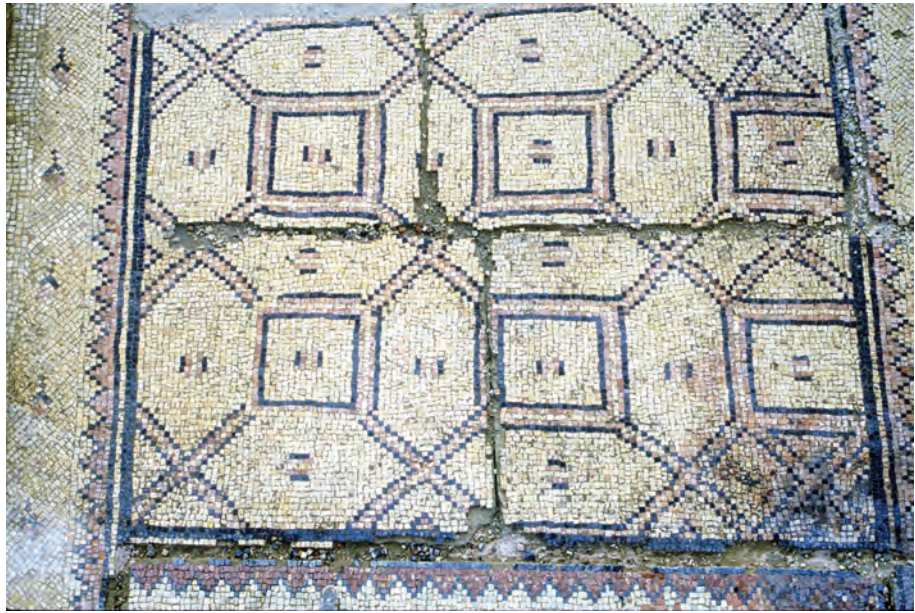


Fig. 3.32. The western aisle (L222): The southern section of Panel 8, with imprints of fallen burnt roof beams on the floor (photo by Zev Radovan, courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)



art. In late antique mosaics, vine branches, leaves, and grapes were, in most cases, schematically portrayed. In several places, they were depicted independently, but more often, as at En-Gedi, they were placed within a border or shaped, as in other locales, in a grid of inhabited vine scrolls covering the entire carpet (Weiss and Talgam 2002: 89; Hachlili 2009: 142–143).

Birds, depicted at times in pairs or alongside chicks, appear frequently in ancient Palestinian mosaics, although sometimes it is difficult to identify the exact species. Birds of various types are depicted

in Nilotic mosaics, at times set in mosaic borders, or filling spaces between other designs (Hachlili 2009: 106, 141; 2013: 460–464). Peacocks are easier to identify due to their crown and decorated train feathers. In the small synagogue at Beth Shean, a single peacock appears en face with outspread tail feathers, but in most cases, peacocks appear in profile, in pairs, and on either side of an amphora, with a long, folded tail (Bahat 1981: 83–84; Hachlili 2009: 139–140; 2013: 464–466).

The seven-branched menorah, in its many

variations, appears often in the Jewish art of ancient Palestine and the Diaspora (Hachlili 2001: 41–120; 2018). The depiction of the menorah originated in the Second Temple period; however, since the end of the second century CE and in subsequent centuries, the menorah was incorporated almost everywhere. At times, free-standing menorot made of marble or limestone adorned the synagogues in ancient Palestine and the Diaspora (Kroll 2001: 42, 44–45; Amit 2003: 154–165). At En-Gedi, a small, copper menorah stood in the west, near the Torah ark, and a silver pendant in the shape of a menorah decorated the parochet (curtain) covering the ark (for further details, see Chapter 13).

The wide and varied distribution of the menorah indicates that it served as a significant symbol which could be interpreted in many different ways (Levine 2000: 131–153). In several synagogues, two menorot and various other Jewish symbols appear on either side of an architectural façade in one panel at the top of the mosaic, near the bema. In some cases, a single menorah, together with a few ritual objects in abbreviated form, are featured in the center of the mosaic (Hachlili 2013: 285–338). Artistically speaking, the three menorot at En-Gedi are small compared to the above-mentioned examples. They seem somewhat marginal in the outer frame surrounding the central carpet (see Figs. 3.8, 3.18–3.20). However, such a depiction is not unique; a smaller-sized menorah also appears as a marginal motif—either outside the main carpet or inside its border—in the synagogues of Ma‘oz Ḥayyim and Gerasa, for example (Biebel 1938: 318–323; Tzaferis 1982: 225). Thus, the location of the three menorot in front of the bema at En-Gedi, despite their size, signifies their importance for the local community.

The menorot at En-Gedi follow the well-known format used in ancient Palestine and the Diaspora throughout late antiquity, each resting on a tripod base. In the Second Temple period, the base of the menorah is depicted as solid and is shaped in various ways (Habas 2003: 332–335). In contrast, most depictions of the tripod base from the Roman-Byzantine period are characterized by either straight, rounded, or even angular legs (Hachlili 2001: 131–146). The curved branches are fully schematic, devoid of the calyxes and petals of the Tabernacle menorah described in the Bible, or alluded to in several menorot depicted in other ancient Palestinian synagogues (Weiss 2005: 73–74). The horizontal bar

across the top of the menorah’s arms appears in many depictions from the third century CE on, when it did not serve as a decorative motif, but had a functional purpose (Negev 1967: 193–201; Avigad 1976: 272). It connected the menorah’s arms and served as a base for the beakers holding the oil and wicks, which are schematically depicted on the three menorot in the En-Gedi mosaic.

Iconographical Layout

In late antique synagogues, the layout of the mosaic carpets featuring figurative images in the nave took various forms. At Hammath-Tiberias (Dothan 1983: 33–52), Na‘aran (Benoit 1961: 167–170), and Beth Alpha (Suknik 1932: 21–43), for example, the central carpet was divided into three unequal bands, and at Sepphoris into seven, with the depiction of the zodiac in the center of all four synagogue buildings (Weiss 2005: 55–60). A slightly different layout emerges in the synagogues at Khirbet Wadi Ḥamam, Ḥuqoq, and probably also at Merot and Ḥorvat ‘Ammudim, where, in addition to the mosaic adorning the nave, panels portraying biblical themes were incorporated in the aisles, each occupying the space between columns (Weiss 2016: 128–133, with references to earlier studies). Other carpets with a slightly more intricate overall design are known at Ma‘on Nirim, Gaza Maiumas, and the small synagogue at Beth Shean, where figurative images are arranged in a series of vine medallions, with vine tendrils issuing from an amphora located at the bottom of the mosaic carpet (Hachlili 2013: 265–269).

Unlike the above, the layout of the mosaic carpet in the synagogue at En-Gedi features a geometric pattern covering almost the entire nave, directing its focus of attention to the central panel containing the birds and peacocks (see Fig. 3.7). Geometric carpets in the nave are known in other late antique synagogues, such as Ḥammam Gader, Ma‘oz Ḥayyim, and probably Rehov (Levine 2005: 258–268; Hachlili 2013: 269–272). At some sites, a single pattern stretched across the entire carpet and, at others, the mosaic comprised two or more panels, each featuring a different design. At times, animals were depicted in these mosaics: a bird was incorporated in a border design at Ma‘oz Ḥayyim (Tzaferis 1982: 224–225), and at Ḥammam Gader (Suknik 1935: 35–38), two lions positioned on either side of a dedicatory inscription were placed in one panel above the geometric carpets and next to the bema.

Although the mosaic carpet in the En-Gedi synagogue contains a geometric design surrounding a limited set of figurative images, and resembles mosaics appearing in some of the synagogues mentioned above, its compositional concept is more sophisticated. It contains a central panel that can be seen from all four sides of the mosaic and, at the same time, the medallion with the four birds in its center directs attention to the bema, the focal point in the building (see Fig. 3.8). While such a layout has not yet been found in any other synagogue in ancient Palestine, it follows, at least conceptually, a well-known pattern in other fifth- and sixth-century CE mosaics in the region and beyond. Geometric or floral designs appearing in some mosaics from this period produced a uniform, overall pattern, whereas diverse animal depictions in others were arranged so that they could be viewed from all four sides. At times, a central motif—an isolated image or a medallion—was placed in the center of these mosaics, creating a focal point that could be seen from only one of its sides (Lavin 1963: 189–195; Dunbabin 1999: 176–185). These features find expression in several mosaics at Antioch, such as the Striding Lion mosaic, the Ktisis mosaic, and the Megalopsychia Hunt, but they are also known in our region (Levi 1947: 321–323, 326–344, 347; Hachlili 2009: 281–283; Talgam, Shadmi and Patrich 2012: 86–94). At first glance, it seems that the comparison in this case is only partial. The central panel in En-Gedi, which appears within a larger geometric carpet, contains a smaller number of animals and lacks the diagonal composition that characterizes the above-mentioned mosaics. Despite the differences, it seems that the En-Gedi mosaic follows similar guidelines for the layout of such mosaics. As elsewhere, the star and four pairs of peacocks at En-Gedi can be viewed from all four sides, while the inner medallion serves as a focal point in the central carpet.

The inscription in the En-Gedi synagogue, with its various paragraphs, is set in the western aisle, contrary to the custom prevailing in other synagogues in the region, where some, if not all, of the inscriptions appear in the nave (see Figs. 3.27–3.28, and further discussion by Misgav in Chapter 4). The main inscription opens with naming the ancestors of humankind, followed by the calendar (a list of the 12 zodiac signs and the 12 months of the year), and then a list naming two sets of biblical figures. It continues with a dedicatory inscription, spelling out the community's concerns and expectations, and, finally, closes with additional

dedicatory inscriptions referring to individuals or the community as a whole. Some of the biblical figures named in the inscription, and especially the list of the zodiac signs and the twelve months of the year, denote themes that are portrayed figuratively at other sites (see discussion below).⁷

The length of the inscription in the En-Gedi synagogue resembles, to a certain extent—and despite the chronological gap—that of the inscription found in the Rehov synagogue, which, in contrast to En-Gedi, is located in the narthex, outside the prayer hall (Vitto 1981: 91). The inclusion of the inscription in the western aisle, adjacent to the courtyard leading into the building, is interesting and raises the questions as to who, and, mainly, why they were clustered in one area? Theoretically, this could have been an aesthetic decision made by the mosaicist, who wished to maintain the layout of the carpet in the main hall and the proportional balance of its interconnecting patterns. If this were the case, then he just as easily could have distributed the inscriptions in the two other aisles or in the available areas west or east of the bema. Alternatively, it seems that their location opposite the synagogue's entrance stemmed from the desire that the inscriptions be seen by those entering the prayer hall. Dedicatory inscriptions, which were intended to honor the synagogue's donors, were placed in a prominent position within the building, in some places even facing the entrance so that they would receive their due recognition from their fellow-congregants upon entering the building; such was the case in the synagogues at Ḥammath-Tiberias (Weiss 2009b: 329–339), Beth Alpha (Sukerik 1932: 43–47), and Ḥuseifa (Makhoully and Avi-Yonah 1933: 128–130). The halakhic inscription at Rehov, the longest Jewish inscription in our region, also faces those entering the synagogue from the north (Sussmann 1976: [especially] 91–95). This could have also been the case at En-Gedi, although the inscription here, with its numerous paragraphs, faces in one direction (northwards), parallel to the western aisle's long axis and perpendicular to the entrances that gave access from the courtyard to the prayer hall. Given the contents of the inscription, it seems that either the patrons or the community as a whole wished to place them opposite the entrance, possibly because it was impossible to distribute all of them evenly in front of the synagogue's entrance; on the advice of the mosaicist, they seem to have adopted the other solution.

Significance

The preference for a verbal rather than a figurative depiction when listing the components of the calendar and other biblical themes in the western aisle seems to reflect the local community's aniconic approach. This tendency conforms well with the relatively abstract decorations employed in the nave and elsewhere in the synagogue, which included only a small number of birds and peacocks, but no human figures. Besides these aniconic elements, which are incongruous with other fifth- and early sixth-century CE synagogues exhibiting an abundance of figural motifs, what factors influenced the selection of the austere designs in the En-Gedi mosaics? According to Ovadiah, the spiritual leaders of the local community adopted a stringent attitude in keeping with the Second Commandment, at the time when other communities chose to employ figural images (Ovadiah 2010: 307–310). Hachlili and Levine dated the En-Gedi synagogue to the late sixth century CE without an explanation, yet they maintain that internal Jewish and religious pressures here, as well as in several other communities, led to a shift from figural representations to aniconic patterns even before the advent of Islam and the iconoclastic controversy (Hachlili 2009: 216; Levine 2012: 240–242). Accordingly, several synagogues in the late sixth and seventh centuries CE were devoid of images and bore only floral and geometric designs, as well as inscriptions.

Talgam, too, attributes these changes to the local community's strict adherence to the Second Commandment, but she further argues, following Kitzinger, that this was in response to what was happening in the Christian world. The tendency of the Christians to display images became stronger in the late sixth century CE, and the Jews, at least in some circles, chose to adopt a strict approach of observing biblical law, using it effectively for polemical purposes (Kitzinger 1954: 130, note 204; Talgam 2014: 405–409).

The above suggestions are thought provoking, but may be irrelevant to the En-Gedi synagogue. Whether the change in the Jews' attitude towards figural art resulted from internal communal pressure, as Hachlili and Levine argue, or from an external response to the Christian worship of figurative images, as Talgam suggests, both agree that it transpired in the late sixth or early seventh century CE. Such a late date is by no means relevant to

the En-Gedi synagogue (Phase IIA) and its unique mosaic, which was constructed a century earlier, by the late fifth or early sixth century CE at the latest. Furthermore, geometric patterns and inscriptions cover a large area inside the synagogue, yet birds and peacocks are also portrayed prominently, even close to the Torah ark, and are visible from all vantage points. If it was the community's intention to eliminate figurative art for the reasons mentioned above, then we would expect it to avoid such depictions altogether, as was done later on, with the rise of Islam, in the synagogues at Ḥammath-Tiberias (Stratum 1a) and Jericho (Levine 2005: 258–268; Hachlili 2013: 269–272).⁸

Compared to other locales, the members of the community at En-Gedi were relatively conservative in choosing the designs to decorate their synagogue. They abstained from using human images, especially those originating in pagan art, rejecting the iconographical language employed by other Jewish communities at the time. Nevertheless, they did not avoid figurative motifs altogether but, for some reason, chose to display only fowl. In fact, although geometric patterns covered large areas of the synagogue, more than a few birds and peacocks were incorporated—in the main hall, the southern aisle, and in front of the Torah ark. No effort was made to marginalize or hide these figures; on the contrary, they are centrally depicted and visible from almost everywhere in the hall. Therefore, the evidence at hand does not support the assumption that the local community strictly observed the Second Commandment and avoided figurative images.

One would assume that the aniconic features in the En-Gedi synagogue—geometric and floral patterns, texts, and the minority of figurative images—reflect a compromise made by the community or its patrons when deciding how to decorate their prayer hall. It is indeed possible that some community members who wished to observe the Second Commandment requested to avoid figurative images, while others, more liberal in their attitude towards Graeco-Roman culture, wished to employ such depictions in the mosaic.⁹ In practice, the patrons or the community as a whole at En-Gedi, seem to have reached a compromise and made a decision to minimize the number of figurative images, avoid human figures, and use only birds and peacocks. It is equally possible that some other communities in the region made an autonomous decision to adopt a similar approach. At Ḥammath Gader (Sukenik 1935: 35–38), a large panel with two

lions was featured at the far end of the central mosaic carpet, at Ma'oz Hayyim (Tzaferis 1982: 224–225), a bird was incorporated in the mosaic's border, and at Rehov, a long inscription was placed in the narthex (Vitto 1981: 91–92). The mosaic floor inside the prayer hall at Rehov contains geometric and floral designs, but the pavement is badly damaged and therefore it cannot be ascertained whether it bore images or only nonfigurative elements. The nonfigurative approach at En-Gedi and elsewhere was by no means affected by events, nor does it reflect trends that transpired in the region, either within the Jewish community at large or in response to some external behavior.

It is also possible that the selection of such motifs in the mosaic does not necessarily signify the community's strict interpretation of the Second Commandment, but may result from either their economic ability to finance the work or reflect the artist's qualifications, which, as indicated in the following section, were not particularly high. The execution of a fine, figurative mosaic carpet with an assortment of scenes and a large palette of colors presumably would have been more expensive to produce than a less-complicated and simpler mosaic.¹⁰ The means available to the local community at En-Gedi were apparently limited and it therefore chose to decorate its mosaic with simple patterns. It is possible that the community's financial state forced them to hire a less-qualified artist whose remuneration would have been relatively low. It is equally possible that the local community had trouble finding a skilled mosaicist who would be willing to come to En-Gedi and therefore had to settle for a less-qualified artisan. The wealth and prosperity of an individual or of the community as a whole may be measured by the quality of the public buildings, private homes, and other small objects used by the local population. The houses in the village, especially those adjoining the synagogue in En-Gedi, are characterized by their simplicity (Hadas 2005: 41–49, 66–70; 2016; Hirschfeld 2007: 644–653). They were constructed of fieldstones and mudbricks, their walls and floors were coated with mud plaster, and the flat roofs were made of palm-tree trunks. Not a single house was decorated with wall paintings, and only a few houses had mosaic floors made of large white tesserae, all of which indicate, albeit indirectly, the financial ability of the local inhabitants who practiced a seemingly modest lifestyle.

The paragraph in the inscription referring to the community's secret, located in the western aisle, may

also reflect its financial status (see Misgav, Chapter 4 and Porath, Chapter 8). Most scholars connect the secret of the community with the growing of balsam and the manufacture of ointment, which provided the community with economic stability (for evidence of growing balsam at En-Gedi, see Hadas 2007: 161–173). Whatever may have been the community's secret in the late fifth and early sixth centuries CE, when its members decided to renovate the synagogue building and expand the prayer hall—undoubtedly posing a financial burden on the community—there was a fear that someone would reveal the secret to the gentiles and thereby harm their economic stability. Exposing the secret could ultimately threaten the welfare of this community, which was not particularly wealthy; this single long inscription in the synagogue expressed concern for the community's livelihood and apparently bespoke a period of financial restraint, rather than one of prosperity.

The unique selection of motifs in the En-Gedi synagogue mosaic may have been influenced by more than one factor. On the one hand, it reflects the desire of the community or its patrons to reach a decision that would be acceptable to everyone. On the other hand, it mirrors the local community's financial means to fund such work, which included the renovation of the synagogue building, expansion of the prayer hall, and its decoration with colorful mosaics. In either case, whoever made this mosaic and chose its various depictions in the late fifth or early sixth century CE employed motifs that were well known in the region.

Stylistic Analysis

The birds and peacocks adorning the synagogue mosaic are noted for their simplicity, two-dimensional appearance, unique decorative style, and distinct lines. Each is portrayed separately against a white background, at times with a floral motif—a cluster of grapes or a rosebud—beside it, seemingly floating in space (see Fig. 3.9). Each bird is represented in profile with its legs apart, giving the impression that it is walking while turning its body slightly outwards, towards the viewer (see Fig. 3.10). By illustrating the legs in such a manner, in addition to some shading of the body, the artist wished to achieve a naturalistic effect, even though the foreshortening is completely inaccurate. The anatomical details added in some places, such as the interplay of colors on the

partridge's body, the peacock's train of feathers with eyespots, and his crest, are schematic and merely decorative (e.g., Fig. 3.14).

The artist made an effort to provide the birds and peacocks with a voluminous effect, yet the result is limited, flat, and lacking detail. In doing so, he used some color shading, a play of contrasting colors set within straight lines, a change in the direction of the stones, and outlining the body and some organs, mainly the wings and eyes, the latter formed by a round black stone encircled by tiny white tesserae. Outlining was also used to emphasize other details in the mosaic, such as the grapes and the conch, or the stylized floral design. In some places, the artist used large areas of color that contributed to the flat and schematic appearance of the images.

The form of the birds in the En-Gedi synagogue mosaic resembles the figural style of the Byzantine mosaics in ancient Palestine in some ways. As elsewhere, they are schematic, stylized, lacking anatomical details, and appear in almost full profile. Mosaics with similar stylistic features, especially in portraying the birds, were found, for example, at Beth Leontis (Hachlili 2009: 125, 258–260), Khirbet el-Murrassas (Magen and Talgam 1990: 109–152), and Khirbet Asida (Baramki and Avi-Yonah 1933: 17–19), which are dated to the late fifth and early sixth centuries CE, a date befitting the Phase IIA synagogue at En-Gedi as well.

The quality of a mosaic should be assessed not only by its style, but also by the way in which the artist executed his work. The layout of the En-Gedi synagogue mosaic is relatively simple, containing a set number of carpets in various parts of the prayer hall. At first glance, the workmanship seems good and balanced; however, a thorough analysis of the mosaic indicates a series of errors, inaccuracies, and lack of attention to detail. This is reflected, first and foremost, as mentioned, in the central mosaic frame of the carpet (see Fig. 3.17). Other details in the mosaic were also rendered inaccurately, at times upsetting the balance and symmetry, as, for example, in the execution of the checkerboard pattern in the inner panel of the central carpet or in the panel on the bema. The checkerboard pattern in the northeastern and southwestern triangles of the central carpet was executed more accurately than in the northwestern and southeastern triangles, in keeping with the sequence of the pattern, the size of the squares, and the interplay of colors (see Fig.

3.10). Such imprecisions are more pronounced in the poised square in the panel decorating the bema. The size, direction, and density of the squares in the checkerboard pattern on the western side of the triangle were executed differently from those on the eastern side, and close to the left base angle, the stones appear to have been placed in no particular order (see Fig. 3.24). This stands in contrast to the checkerboard pattern in the two triangular areas in the corners of the outer frame, which were more balanced and accurate.

The artist's work is also characterized by a lack of consistency and continuity. For example, different types of decorations were laid on either side of the central panel on the bema. Parallel rows of recumbent rosebuds were laid west of the panel in the locus of the bema, while a frame of spaced and poised, serrated polychrome squares surrounding eight rosebuds was laid to its east (see Fig. 3.23). The mosaic at the northern end of the prayer hall, on both sides of the bema, was executed differently as well. To the east there is a plain white pavement and, to the west, rows of recumbent rosebuds are arranged arbitrarily over the carpet; in the lower southern section they appear in diagonal rows and at the upper northern end, in parallel lines (see Fig. 3.7). Inconsistencies are also evident in the arrangement of the rosebuds around the central mosaic carpet. The distance between the central carpet and the surrounding rosebuds differs from one side to the other, and the three menorot north of it are of varying heights. The flowers on the northern and southern sides of the mosaic face eastwards, whereas they are oriented northwards on the eastern and western sides; however, the last four rosebuds on the northern end of the western row are turned, for some unknown reason, in the opposite direction.

The mosaic carpet in the western aisle also exhibits imprecision in the execution of various components. A single row of spaced, recumbent rosebuds appears on three sides of this carpet, whereas the fourth (southern) side has two parallel lines (Fig. 3.28). The panels on the western aisle are rectangular, but the two northern ones are irregular in shape, owing to poor planning, incorrect measurement, and sloppiness in the course of work (see Figs. 3.29–3.30). The shapes of the letters are consistent throughout the carpet, except for lines 17–18, which are smaller, square, and formatted less carefully. Finally, the design of the geometric pattern in Panel 7 is also inconsistent (see

Fig. 3.31). The artist did not follow a precise pattern throughout the panel; the dimensions and relationship between the various parts are distorted, unlike the relatively high-level execution of the geometric grid pattern in Panel 1 and the repetitive geometric pattern in the central carpet.

The finds clearly indicate that some segments of the floor were poorly executed compared to other sections in the same part of the mosaic exhibiting better quality. This is evident at times even with regard to one geometric pattern that appears twice in one frame; in one section, the artist retains the well-known geometric pattern, while in another it is replete with inconsistencies. The varying portrayal of these details was by no means accidental, since it is assumed that a single mosaicist would follow a certain format, design, and style. Therefore, it seems that at least two people—an artisan and an apprentice—laid the tesserae, as was the case, for example, in the synagogues of Sepphoris (Weiss 2005: 173), Beth Alpha (Sukenik 1932: 47), and Beth Shean (Zori 1967: 159). It is generally assumed that in the Roman and Byzantine period, a number of artisans would collaborate on one mosaic. A master craftsman would concentrate on the more complex designs, while one or several apprentices would execute the repetitive patterns and plain borders (Neal 1976: 246; Dunbabin 1999: 286–288). This was probably true at En-Gedi as well, where the more experienced artisan executed the sophisticated parts and his less-skillful apprentice was responsible for completing other sections of the floor by copying existing designs created by the master. This certainly would explain some of the inconsistencies found in the En-Gedi synagogue mosaic.

Technical Aspects

An examination of the number of colors, the size of the tesserae, and the materials used in the mosaic allows us to draw a correlation between the various decorative elements and the technique used to maintain the quality of the floor. The figurative sections in the main hall are slightly more colorful in comparison to the mosaic carpets in the western aisle and between the columns, where white tesserae cover large areas. The tesserae in the decorated sections were laid in accordance with the designs, while elsewhere, beyond the colorful carpets, they were arranged in diagonal lines, apart from the border

areas near the building's or the bema's walls, where three or four parallel rows of tesserae conformed to the line of the wall.

The tesserae are made of limestone. Fourteen colors can be distinguished in the figurative section of the mosaic—five shades of red, four shades of brown, mustard-yellow, light green, gray, black, and white. An average of only three or four colors was used in the geometric sections and in the borders surrounding the central panel in the main hall and western aisle. The eyes of the birds were executed with special stones. The pupil was emphasized with a round black stone and the iris was composed of small, irregular white tesserae (see Figs. 3.13–3.16). Round black or white stones were also in the eyespots of the peacock's tail and in some isolated grapes.

The tesserae in the floral and figural sections are slightly smaller in comparison to the stones used in the geometric sections of the mosaics. The mosaicist altered the size of the tesserae to conform with the complexity of the depictions. The density of the tesserae in the plain white mosaic carpets in the eastern and southern aisles is 49–63 per sq dm, 72 per sq dm in the geometric carpets of the main hall, including the borders, and 72–91 per sq dm in the western aisle, including the inscription. The density of the tesserae in the geometric features—the vine in the central panel appearing within the larger carpet in the main hall or on the bema—is similar to the other geometric elements in the building's floor, with 72–91 per sq dm. The motif inside the triangles, constituting the central feature in the main hall and the bema, identified either as a conch or a stylized floral design, exhibits a higher density of tesserae, with 90–108 per sq dm. The birds in both sections were also of a slightly higher density, with 100–120 per sq dm. The most delicate feature—the face—had a density of 196–224 tesserae per sq dm.

Conclusions

The two phases of the mosaic floors in the En-Gedi synagogue are characterized by their simplicity, flatness, and low color palette, although the floor installed in the later building is far richer than the former. The iconographic layout of both mosaics is unique in ancient synagogue art, yet each finds parallels in other Roman and Byzantine floor mosaics. In terms of the iconographic profile of each floor, not much can be said about the first phase, in which two

of the three panels were mostly destroyed, other than the fact that it features patterns known mostly from domestic mosaic art. In contrast, most of the details in the mosaic floor's second phase find some expression in ancient synagogue art.

The synagogue at En-Gedi provides important information about this rural community, which was rooted at the site since the Second Temple period, including the manner of construction within the bounds of the village, the architectural plan and, above all, important details concerning the colorful mosaics in both phases. The construction of the first synagogue in the late third or early fourth century CE is important for assessing the ongoing discourse regarding synagogues in general, and art in particular, in this early phase. As at Khirbet Wadi Ḥamam, it indicates that synagogues, architecturally structured and decorated with mosaics, were established institutions already in Roman times. The mosaic floor of the En-Gedi synagogue's first phase stood for a long time, indicated by its missing or worn sections that were repaired in plaster and some tesserae in secondary use that were arranged in a different direction than the rest of the floor.

In the course of expanding the synagogue in the late fifth or early sixth century CE, new, more-embellished mosaics were laid to cover the entire floor of the new building. In planning and executing these new mosaics, the artist or the local patrons chose a set of themes to meet their community's needs. The layout of the new mosaics, as well as their components, provide further insights into the nature and scope of ancient synagogue art, but are also indicative of the diversity of Jewish society in late antique Palestine. The nonfigurative approach adopted by the En-Gedi community was by no means affected by any known historical events, nor does it reflect current trends in the region; it was forged solely by the circumstances and needs of the local community.

The mosaics decorating the En-Gedi synagogue are only one component reflecting the cultural and religious life of this peripheral settlement, yet they nonetheless provide important information for future studies about this village. It is hoped that the publication of the synagogue's mosaics so many years after its excavation will engender new and dynamic discussions regarding ancient Jewish art, and will promote the study of additional, as yet untapped, dimensions of this topic in late antique Palestine that these silent stones can afford us.

NOTES

- ¹ I would like to thank my research assistant, Dr. Shulamit Miller, for her help in recording the technical information about the mosaic and for discussing various issues pertaining to its production and unique layout. The illustrations in this chapter are published courtesy of the En-Gedi expedition, unless otherwise specified.
- ² A similar arrangement appears in the corridor of another house in Antioch; see Levi 1947: Vol. 1: 90.
- ³ The use of various-sized bands around the central carpet was implemented in the eastern room of the House of Dionysos in Sepphoris in the early third century CE and in the synagogue of Beth Alpha in the early sixth century CE, especially in the northern part of the mosaic; see Sukenik 1932: Pl. 27; Talgam and Weiss 2004: 119.
- ⁴ Inconsistencies in the designs that have been noticed in several Roman and late antique mosaics stemmed from a failure to calculate the layout of the pavement beforehand; see Neal 1976: 245–246; Dunbabin 1999: 286–288.
- ⁵ A Greek inscription from Sepphoris was replaced at a later stage with an Aramaic one and, although the reason for this change and the preference of Aramaic is unknown, the repair of the mosaic is clearly evident; see Weiss 2005: 208.
- ⁶ The letters in the Aramaic inscriptions in the Sepphoris synagogue, located in the main hall and aisle, are shaped differently than those between the columns. According to an analysis of the mosaic there, it has become clear that two craftsmen, possibly an artisan and his apprentice, worked on a single mosaic; see Weiss 2005: 173, 202–208.
- ⁷ For example, Abraham and Isaac were portrayed at Beth Alpha and Sepphoris (Sukenik 1932: 40–42; Weiss 2005: 141–161), Noah at Gerasa (Biebel 1938: 319–322), and the well-known zodiac motif in several synagogues of ancient Palestine, although only the figural depiction in Sepphoris contained both the signs and the personifications of the months; see Weiss 2005: 104–141, with references to other studies.
- ⁸ According to Fine (2000: 192–194), the rise of Islam was more significant for Jewish aniconism than for Christianity, as synagogues were willing to adopt the aesthetics of the new hegemony in their buildings.
- ⁹ Hints of such disagreement among communal members find expression in rabbinic literature and in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan; see Fine 2005: 118–121.
- ¹⁰ The edict of Diocletian from 301 CE (*Edictum de pretiis rerum venalium*) that fixed the maximum price to be paid to various craftsmen distinguished between two types of mosaicists—*musaearius*, who received 60 denarii per day, and *tessellarius*, who received 50.

Although it had been suggested that the difference between the two terms was meant to distinguish between wall and floor mosaicists, Dunbabin (1999: 275–276) argued convincingly that it differentiates between the maker of fine decorative mosaics and the maker of simpler pavements.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amit, D. 2003. *The Synagogues of Horvat Ma'on and Horvat 'Anim and the Jewish Settlement in Southern Judea*. Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem. (Hebrew).
- Avigad, N. 1976. *Beth She'arim, III*. New Brunswick, NJ.
- Bahat, D. 1981. The Synagogue at Beth-Shean. Pp. 82–85 in L.I. Levine (ed.). *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*. Jerusalem.
- Balmelle, C. et al. 1985. *Le décor géométrique de la mosaïque romaine, I: Répertoire graphique et descriptif des compositions linéaires et isotropes*. Paris.
- Balmelle, C. et al. 2002. *Le décor géométrique de la mosaïque romaine, II: Répertoire graphique et descriptif des décors centers*. Paris.
- Baramki, D.C. and Avi-Yonah, M. 1933. An Early Christian Church at Khirbat Asida. *QDAP* 3: 17–19.
- Benoit, P. 1961. Un sanctuaire dans la région de Jéricho: la synagogue de Na'arah. *RB* 68: 161–177.
- Biebel, F.M. 1938. Mosaics. Pp. 297–351 in C.H. Kraeling. *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis*. New Haven.
- Chéhab, M.H. 1959. Mosaïques du Liban. *BMB* 15 (115 planches).
- Dothan, M. 1983. *Hammath Tiberias*, Jerusalem.
- Dunbabin, K.M.D. 1999. *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, Cambridge.
- Fine, S. 2000. Iconoclasm and the Art of the Late Antique Palestinian Synagogues. Pp. 183–194 in L.I. Levine and Z. Weiss (eds.). *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity* (JRA Supplementary Series 40). Portsmouth, RI.
- Fine, S. 2005. *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology*. New York.
- Grandi, M. 1991. Zagarolo (Roma). Località Palazzolo. I mosaici della villa Romana. *Bollettino di Archeologia* 8: 83–91.
- Habas, L. 2003. An Incised Depiction of the Temple Menorah and Other Cult Objects of the Second Temple Period. Pp. 329–342 in H. Geva (ed.). *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem Conducted by Nahman Avigad, 1969–1982, II*. Jerusalem.
- Hachlili, R. 2001. *The Menorah: The Ancient Seven-Armed Candelabrum*. Leiden.
- Hachlili, R. 2009. *Ancient Mosaic Pavements: Themes, Issues, and Trends*. Leiden and Boston.
- Hachlili, R. 2013. *Ancient Synagogues—Archaeology and Art: New Discoveries and Current Research*. Leiden and Boston.
- Hachlili, R. 2018. *The Menorah, Evolution into the Most Important Jewish Symbol*. Leiden and Boston.
- Hadas, G. 2005. Excavations at the Village of En Gedi. 'Atiqot 49: 41–71 (Hebrew).
- Hadas, G. 2007. The Balsam Afarsemon and Ein Gedi during the Roman-Byzantine Period. *RB* 114: 161–173.
- Hadas, G. 2016. Dwelling Houses near the Synagogue of Ein Gedi Village in the Byzantine Period. Pp. 89–92 in J. Patrich, O. Peleg-Barkat and E. Ben-Yosef (eds.). *Arise, Walk through the Land: Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Land of Israel in Memory of Yizhar Hirschfeld on the Tenth Anniversary of His Death*. Jerusalem (Hebrew).
- Hirschfeld, Y. 2007. *En-Gedi Excavations, II: Final Report (1996–2002)*. Jerusalem.
- Kitzinger, E. 1954. The Art of the Images before Iconoclasm. *DOP* 8: 83–150.
- Kroll, J.H. 2001. The Greek Inscriptions of the Sardis Synagogue. *HThR* 94: 5–127.
- Lavin, I. 1963. The Hunting Mosaics of Antioch and Their Sources. A Study of Compositional Principles in the Development of Early Mediaeval Style. *DOP* 17: 181–286.
- Levi, D. 1947. *Antioch Mosaic Pavements, I–II*. Princeton.
- Levine, L.I. 2000. The History and Significance of the Menorah in Antiquity. Pp. 131–153 in L.I. Levine and Z. Weiss (eds.). *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*. Portsmouth, R.I.
- Levine, L.I. 2005. *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (2nd edition). New Haven.
- Levine, L.I. 2012. *Visual Judaism in Late Antiquity: Historical Contexts of Jewish Art*. New Haven and London.
- Magen, Y. and Talgam, R. 1990. The Monastery of Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim (Khirbet el-Murassas) and Its Mosaics, Pp. 109–152 in G.C. Bottini, L. Di Segni and E. Alliata (eds.). *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land: New Discoveries Essays in Honour of Virgilio Corbo*. Jerusalem.
- Magen, Y., Peleg, Y. and Sharuch, I. 2012. A Byzantine Church at 'Anab el-Kabir. Pp. 331–384 in N. Carmin (ed.). *Christians and Christianity, IV: Churches and Monasteries in Judea*. Jerusalem.
- Maguire, H. 1994. Magic and Geometry in Early Christian Floor Mosaics and Textiles. *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 44: 265–274.
- Makhoul, N. and Avi-Yonah, M. 1933. A Sixth-Century Synagogue at 'Isfiyâ. *QDAP* 3: 118–131.
- Miller, S. 2015. The Late Antique Mosaic of Tiberias: Artistic Trends and Architectural Contexts. *EI* 31: 247–255 (Hebrew).

- Neal, D.S. 1976. Floor Mosaics. Pp. 241–252 in D. Strong and D. Brown (eds.). *Roman Crafts*. London.
- Negev, A. 1967. The Chronology of the Seven-Branched Menorah. *EI* 8: 193–210 (Hebrew).
- Netzer, E. 1990. The Byzantine Churches of Herodium. Pp. 164–176 in G.C. Bottini, L. Di Segni and E. Alliata (eds.). *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land: New Discoveries Essays in Honour of Virgilio Corbo*. Jerusalem.
- Ovadiāh, A. 1980. *Geometric and Floral Patterns in Ancient Mosaics: A Study of Their Origin in the Mosaics from the Classical Period to the Age of Augustus*. Rome.
- Ovadiāh, A. 2010. Conservative Approaches in the Ancient Synagogue Mosaic Pavements in Israel: The Cases of ‘Ein Gedi and Sepphoris/Zippori. *LA* 60: 307–317.
- Ovadiāh, R. and Ovadiāh, A. 1987. *Hellenistic, Roman and Early Byzantine Mosaic Pavements in Israel*. Rome.
- Rahmani, L.Y. 1994. *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel*. Jerusalem.
- Sukenik, E.L. 1932. *The Ancient Synagogue of Beth Alpha*. Jerusalem.
- Sukenik, E.L. 1935. *The Ancient Synagogue of El-Hammeh (Hammath by Gadara)*. Jerusalem.
- Sussman, V. 1978. Samaritan Lamps of the Third-Fourth Centuries A.D. *IEJ* 28: 238–250.
- Sussmann, Y. 1976. A Halakhic Inscription from the Beth-Shean Valley. *Tarbiz* 43: 88–158 (Hebrew).
- Talgam, R. 2004. Mosaic Floor. Pp. 27–30 in Y. Hirschfeld. *Excavations at Tiberias, 1989–1994* (IAA Reports 22). Jerusalem.
- Talgam, R. 2014. *Mosaics of Faith: Floors of Pagans, Jews, Samaritans, Christians, and Muslims in the Holy Land*. Jerusalem and Pennsylvania.
- Talgam, R. and Weiss, Z. 2004. *The Mosaics in the House of Dionysos at Sepphoris: Excavated by E.M. Meyers, E. Netzer and C.L. Meyers* (Qedem 44). Jerusalem.
- Talgam, R., Shadmi, T. and Patrich, J. 2012. The Vine-Trees Mosaic from Caesarea Maritima and Its Architectural and Archaeological Context. Pp. 77–104 in D. Chrupcala (ed.). *Christ is Here! Studies in Biblical and Christian Archaeology in Memory of Michele Piccirillo*. Milan.
- Tsafriř, Y. and Hirschfeld, Y. 1979. The Church and Mosaics at Ĥorvat Berachot. *DOP* 33: 291–326.
- Tzaferis, V. 1982. The Ancient Synagogue at Ma‘oz Ĥayyim. *IEJ* 32: 215–244.
- Vitto, F. 1981. The Synagogue at Rehob. Pp. 90–94 in L.I. Levine (ed.). *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*. Jerusalem.
- Vitto, F. 1996. Byzantine Mosaics at Beth She‘arim: New Evidence for the History of the Site. *‘Atiqot* 28: 115–146.
- Weiss, Z. 2005. *The Sepphoris Synagogue: Deciphering an Ancient Message in Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts*. Jerusalem.
- Weiss, Z. 2009a. The Mosaics of the Nile Festival Building at Sepphoris and the Legacy of the Antiochene Tradition. Pp. 9–23 in K. Kogman-Appel and M. Meyer (eds.). *Between Judaism and Christianity: Pictorials Playing on Mutual Grounds*. Leiden.
- Weiss, Z. 2009b. Stratum II at Hammath Tiberias: Reconstructing Its Access, Internal Space, and Architecture. Pp. 341–342 in Z. Rodgers, M. Daly-Denton and A. Fitzpatrick-McKinley (eds.). *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Seán Freyne*. Leiden.
- Weiss, Z. 2016. Decorating the Sacred Realm: Biblical Depictions in Synagogues and Churches of Ancient Palestine. Pp. 121–138 in U. Leibner and C. Hezser (eds.). *Jewish Art in Its Late Antique Context*. Tübingen.
- Weiss, Z. and Talgam, R. 2002. The Nile Festival Building and Its Mosaics: Mythological Representations in Early Byzantine Sepphoris. Pp. 55–90 in J.H. Humphrey (ed.). *The Roman and Byzantine Near East, III* (JRA Supplementary Series 49). Portsmouth, RI.
- Zori, N. 1967. The Ancient Synagogue at Beth Shean. *EI* 8: 149–167 (Hebrew).