

Ancient Synagogues—Archaeology and Art:
New Discoveries and Current Research

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Ancient Synagogues—Archaeology and Art: New Discoveries and Current Research

By
Rachel Hachlili



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Cover image: The Qasrin synagogue during the excavations, 1984. Photo courtesy of Zeev Radovan.

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

To my Family

Gad, Guy, Liat, Niv, Sigal, Andrew, Oren and Romi

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PHOTOS

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DRAWINGS

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PREFACE

The new synagogue excavations in the last decades, together with the lively debates on the theme, have brought to light a large body of new material on ancient synagogues, which now allows for a comprehensive treatment of the art and archaeology of this important institution. The compilation of this recently excavated material, and especially the latest results, together with previous materials, current research, and studies on this specific subject, is now ripe for presentation.

This book emphasizes various aspects of synagogue archaeology and art which are dealt with in detail, including some particularly neglected aspects of the field (such as coins, women, inscriptions, etc.).

The discussion takes the form of a general comparison, divided according to topics such as architecture, art, Jewish symbols, biblical narrative tales, and other specific subjects, which together create what I hope is a conclusive case for the existence of a distinctive Jewish synagogue architecture and art during the Second Temple and Late Antiquity periods.

Special reports on two excavations I was personally involved in are presented at some length: Qasrin in Chapter III and the Supplement at the end of the book, which is devoted to the final report of the excavations at Qazion.

A deeper understanding of the artistic Jewish heritage left us by our ancestors can help to penetrate the mists of time separating us from those periods.

I should like to mention my indebtedness and special gratitude to Liel Almog, my English editor, for her thorough and diligent work.

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