

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DATING

The dating of the synagogues in the Land of Israel is one of the most deliberated topics among scholars. Excavations and their ensuing data such as inscriptions, pottery, coins, architecture, and art, facilitate the determination of synagogues' dating, as do historical considerations.

1. SYNAGOGUES DATED BY INSCRIPTIONS

The most reliable evidence for dating synagogues is provided by inscriptions, which supply accurate dates for the construction or restoration of synagogue buildings. However, few inscriptions with accurate dates have been found in this context:

- (1) A Greek dedicatory inscription, discovered in the mosaic pavement of the southernmost aisle of the Gaza synagogue within a medallion flanked by a pair of peacocks (Fig. XIV-1), refers to the year 569 of the era of Gaza, that is, 508/9 CE (Avi-Yonah 1966; Roth-Gerson 1987:no. 21).
- (2) At Beth Alpha there are two inscriptions, one in Aramaic and one in Greek. The Aramaic inscription, near the entrance on the mosaic floor (Fig. XIV-2), mentions the reign of the emperor Justinian, probably Justinian I (518–527 CE) as the period the mosaic was laid down, and includes the donations and a blessing for the donors (Sukenik 1932:43–47; Naveh 1978:72–73). The names of the artists who created this mosaic, Marianos and his son Hanina, appear on the Greek inscription (Fig. X-6a); these are the same artists who, according to a Greek inscription at Beth She'an synagogue A (Fig. X-6b), executed a room there, thus dating that room, if not the entire synagogue, to the same period.



Figure XIV-1. Greek dedicatory inscription, Gaza.



Figure XIV-2. Aramaic inscription, Beth Alpha.

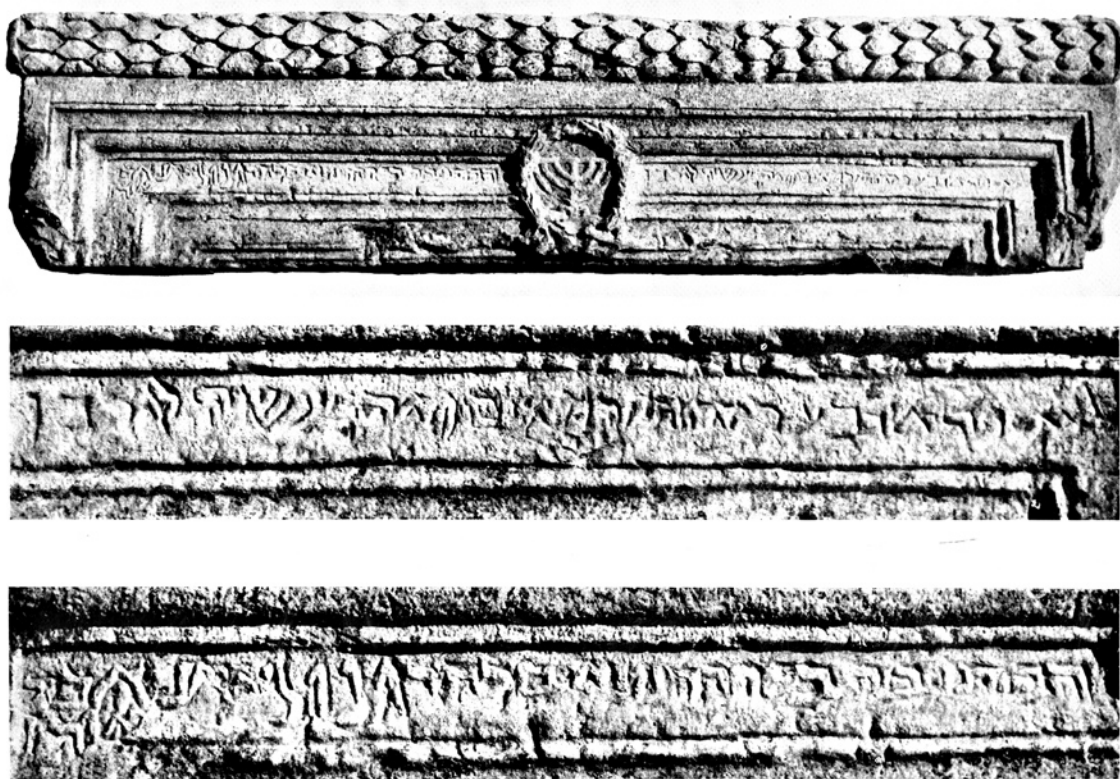


Figure XIV-3. Hebrew inscription, Nabratein.

- (3) The engraved Hebrew inscription on the Nabratein lintel flanks a menorah within a wreath (Fig. XIV-3). The excavators maintain that the lintel originated in Synagogue 2a and was later reused on the southern entrance of Synagogue 3; the lintel was then inscribed with a dedicatory inscription stating that the synagogue was built “494 years after the destruction [of the Temple],” that is, in 564 CE (Avigad 1960a:52–3; Naveh 1978:4–6; Meyers and Meyers 2009:31–2, 63, 399–401, Figs. 15, 16).
- (4) On one of the arch stones found at the Deir ‘Aziz synagogue, the number 290 was inscribed, and Di Segni interprets it as the number of years that had elapsed since the Temple destruction. This would set the synagogue in about 359/360 CE (Ben David 2007b:53).

Several other inscriptions have been found which furnish dates by inference:

- (5) A Greek inscription on fragments of a chancel screen from Ashqelon, dating to 604 CE, is suggested to have come from an as yet undiscovered synagogue (Lifshitz 1967:no. 70; Roth-Gerson 1987:no. 2).
- (6) The Beth She'an B small synagogue should be dated to about the mid-sixth century CE, as its mosaic pavement was probably executed by the same mosaicists who worked in Room L of the Beth She'an monastery, which is dated by an inscription to 567–569 CE (Fitzgerald 1939:l, 9, 16; see the discussion of the mosaicists from Beth She'an, Hachlili 2009:254–264).
- (7) At Dabura in the Golan, a Hebrew inscription carved on a lintel (Fig. XIV-4) mentions the head of a school, Rabbi Eliezer ha-Qappar, a famous tannaitic sage who lived at the end of the second to early third centuries CE. This information offers a date for the synagogue or Beth midrash that may have been built there (Urman 1971:406–408; Naveh 1978:no. 6).
- (8) A damaged mosaic dedicatory inscription in Hebrew, found at the Susiya synagogue next to the main entrance, originally included a date only a part of which survived (Naveh 1978:no. 76).
- (9) An interesting inscription was found at Qazion (Galilee) (see Figs. S-46, 47). This inscription, carved on a lintel face, commemorates a dedication by Jews of a building in honor of Septimius Severus and his family. It is now dated to 198/9 CE, based on recent research (Harvey 2013). This building is probably not a synagogue.

It appears that all the dates found in inscriptions at excavated synagogue are in the sixth century CE. There are two exceptions—the Qazion inscription from the end of the 2nd c. CE and the Deir 'Aziz inscription, likely dated to the 4th century.

The coins found in many excavations also provide dates for the construction, reconstruction, and restoration of synagogues (see Chapter XII). In the Galilean synagogues, coins have determined the dates of Gush Halav (Meyers et al. 1979:45; 1981:75, 77) and of Nabratein Synagogue III in the sixth century (Meyers et al. 1982:36). At H. 'Amudim, coins and pottery date the synagogue to the late third and early fourth centuries CE (Levine 1981:80–81). At Korazim coins of two groups were found (Meshorer 1973): (a) those dated 134–340 CE; and (b) those dated 390–early fifth century, placing the first stage of the Korazim synagogue in the second to fourth centuries, followed by a fifty year gap between 340–390 CE. Korazim is mentioned by Eusebius as being in ruins at the beginning of the fourth century (Yeivin 1973:157) (see Table XIV-2 for dating of each synagogue). The Golan synagogues of 'En Neshut, Kanaf, and Qasrin are dated by coins to the fifth or sixth centuries CE (Maoz 1980:24). Some levels of the synagogues at 'En Gedi (Barag et al. 1981:119) and Rimmon (Kloner 1984:67–69) are dated by coins.

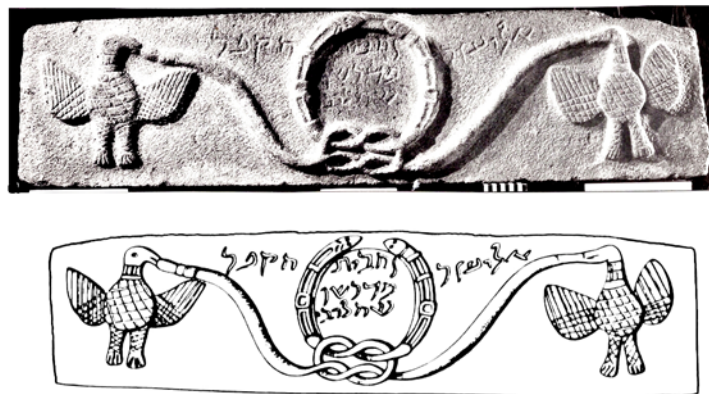


Figure XIV-4. Hebrew inscription, Dabura.

Synagogues in the Land of Israel were constructed continuously during the Roman-Byzantine period. Apparently there were two peak periods of synagogue construction: during the mid- or late third and early fourth centuries, when most of the Galilean synagogues were erected; and during the sixth century, when many of the characteristic Byzantine synagogues were built. Consequently, each synagogue requires a separate examination to determine its date, based on archaeological finds, artistic style, and historical context. This is the subject of the following discussion.

2. DATING GALILEAN SYNAGOGUES

The most animated debate among scholars concerns the date of the Galilean synagogues, and Capernaum in particular. The controversy surrounding the typology and dating of these synagogues is enlivened by the thorough scientific reports of four Upper Galilee synagogues—Gush Halav, H. Shem‘a Meiron, and Nabratein—published by the team of the Meiron Excavation Project archeologists (Meyers, Kraabel and Strange 1976; Meyers, Strange and Meyers 1981; Meyers, Meyers and Strange 1990; Meyers and Meyers 2009; 2010), and Korazim (Yeivin 2000; May 2000; May and Stark 2002). The challenges regarding the architecture and dating of the Capernaum white synagogue are related to the fact that only a fraction of the excavation report has been scientifically published and many of the essential aspects and facts still await publication.

The Galilean synagogues of, H. Shem‘a, Gush Halav, Meiron Nabratein II, and H. ‘Amudim were erected in the late third century CE. Meiron was abandoned in 360 CE and H. Shem‘a was destroyed by an earthquake in 419 CE, whereas Gush Halav thrived until 551 (Meyers 1981:77). Several of the Galilean synagogues, it is asserted, were destroyed by the earthquakes of 306, 363, and 419 (Russel 1980) and were subsequently restored. Chen (1978), who, on the basis of the survey by Kohl and Watzinger (before excavations conducted in recent decades) examined the proportions and metrological properties of some Galilee synagogues, among them Bar‘am, Capernaum, ed-Dikke, Korazim, Nabratein, and Umm el-‘Amed, maintains that the planning module and techniques of these synagogues are designed according to early Byzantine practices and thus none of them could have preceded the reign of Constantine the Great.

I prefer to rely on the work of the excavators who were present at the site, constantly checked the development of the finds and evidence, and published the results in such a way that other scholars are able to dig into their reports and interpret the finds in a new way.

2.1 *Dating of the Upper Galilee Synagogues*

Table XIV-1. Building history and dating of Gush Halav, Meiron, Nabratein, and H. Shem‘a synagogues (Meyers, Meyers and Strange 1990:9, Table 1.2b).

Date CE	Gush Halav	Meiron	Nabratein	H. Shem‘a	Period
ca. 135–250			Synagogue I, Period II		Middle Roman
ca. 250–306	Synagogue, phase I	Synagogue	Synagogue 2a		Middle to Late
ca. 284–306	Period I	Stratum IV	Period III, Phase a	Synagogue Phase I, Stratum III	Roman
ca. 306–363	Synagogue, phase II		Synagogue 2b		Late Roman
ca. 306–419	Period II		Period III, Phase b	Synagogue Phase I, Stratum III	
ca. 364–460	Synagogue, phase III				Byzantine 1
ca. 460–551	Period III				
ca. 460–551	Synagogue, phase IV				Byzantine 2a
ca. 564–700	Period IV		Synagogue 3 Period IV		Byzantine–Early Arab

Table XIV-2. Nabratein.

Meyers and Meyers 2009:27, chart 2				Magness 2010	
		Date CE	Period	Date CE	
Synagogue 1	Period II	ca. 135–ca. 250	Middle Roman		
Synagogue 2a	Period III, Phase a	ca. 250–306	Late Roman		
Synagogue 2b	Period III, Phase b	ca. 306–363	Late Roman	ca. 360–400 or later	<i>One synagogue</i> Phase 1, construction
Synagogue 3	Period IV	ca. 564–700	Byzantine early Arab	660–700/800	Phase 2

The excavators propose the following dating for the synagogues at Nabratein (Meyers and Meyers 2009:27–67; 396–401, chart 2; 2010):

- *Synagogue 1* (Period II) is a broad house (Middle Roman).
- *Synagogue 2* (Period III) is divided into two phases:
 - *Synagogue 2a* was badly damaged and partly collapsed in the earthquake of 306 CE.
 - *Synagogue 2b* was repaired and rebuilt at once with no visible gap. Based on the numismatic and pottery data, the end of this phase came in 363 CE after the earthquake, and not as a result of the Gallus Revolt; the drought of 362/3 CE may also have contributed to the abandonment of the site and synagogue for about 150–200 years. The site was resettled in about 500 CE but not the synagogue.
- *Synagogue 3* (Period IV). The rededication of the synagogue in 564 CE is commemorated in the lintel inscription and the coins and ceramic data support a late 6th c. date for Synagogue 3. The coins sealed by the floor date no later than 700 CE, which indicates the end of this building.

Nabratein is distinguished from the other three Upper Galilee synagogues by its use of figural sculpture and its divergent chronology. Nabratein Synagogue 3 flourished by the 6th c. and shows a varied and unique group of special issue Byzantine-Arab coins; the site was abandoned in 700 CE or slightly earlier (Bijovsky 2009:385–6, and Chart 11; Meyers and Meyers 2009:402–403).

Magness (2010:Table 1) proposes different dates. On the basis of the floor levels, pottery, and coins, she claims that Nabratein had only one synagogue building, with two phases which in plan and dimensions match the excavators' Synagogue 3: Phase 1—the building was constructed around the second half of the fourth century CE and repaired in 564, or alternatively it was first constructed in 564 and destroyed by fire; Phase 2—the upper floor was laid ca. 660–690 and the synagogue continued in use through the eighth century. However, Meyers and Meyers (2010:67) assert that Magness's proposed chronology for Nabratein “does not fit the chronological profile of the site”, arguing that their dating is founded on the ceramic corpus, the numismatic profile, architectural fragments, and other material culture items found at the site, all dating to the Roman era or to the earlier synagogues; the Nabratein inscribed lintel, according to Meyers and Meyers (2010:73) and Avigad (1960), was spolia reused from an earlier structure and the inscription was added in Period IV with the rebuilding of Synagogue 3. They conclude (p. 74) that the evidence shows that Nabratein flourished in the Byzantine period until its abandonment at the beginning of the 8th c. CE.

Table XIV-3. Gush Halav.

Meyers, Meyers and Strange 1990:8, Table 1.2a				Maoz 1996	Netzer 1996	Magness 2001a, b Milson 2007
		Date CE	Period			
Synagogue I	Period I	ca. 250–306	Middle-Late Roman	Early 3rd		
Synagogue II	Period II	ca. 306–363	Late Roman		One synagogue first half 4th–mid 6th	
Synagogue III	Period III	364–460	Byzantine 1			One synagogue second half of 5th–late 7th or 8th
Synagogue IV	Period IV	ca. 460–551	Byzantine 2a			

The excavators' division of the Gush Halav synagogue's history into four phases (Meyers, Meyers and Strange 1990:8, Table 1.2a) (table above), is challenged by Netzer (1996:450–452) who maintains that the excavated synagogue of Gush Halav was erected in Period II (306–363), not Period I (250–306) and was not destroyed in the earthquake of 363 but continued to function until the mid 6th century.

Netzer (1996:450–452) contends that the synagogue was erected in the first half of the 4th c. as a singular architectural unit. The only renovations in the structure were the raising of the floors in the western side room by changes in the aedicule platform and a possible repair of the east stylobate. Maoz (1996:424) claims an early 3rd c. CE date for the Gush Halav original structure. He argues that the excavators at Gush Halav and Meiron only dated the reconstruction phase and missed the ashlar synagogue's original phase, which was destroyed and robbed during the years of the 3rd c. crisis.

Magness (2001a:3–18, 37; 2001b:80–85) argues that based on coins and pottery from relevant loci, the original synagogue building at Gush Halav was erected no earlier than the second half of the 5th c. and continued without reconstructions or major destructions, including earthquakes, until it was abandoned in the late 7th or 8th CE. This dating is supported by the dates of the hoard coins. Milson (2007:42–45) claims that the four phases of the Gush Halav synagogue as suggested by the excavators are not clearly attested, nor is the evidence for the earthquake of 306 CE assured; the two plaster layers in the hall, the pottery from below the floor, and the finds from the bedding provide the original phase of the synagogue with a *terminus post quem* in the late 4th century CE, not the second half of the 3rd. He further argues that the prayer hall was probably constructed in the 5th century, had one main phase, and continued in use until the late 7th or early 8th centuries CE.

Strange (2001) presents more evidence for the existence of Synagogue I, in the form of the reused cut members destroyed by an earthquake and found beneath the floor. Meyers (2001:62) defends his Gush Halav dates: "founding was in the late 3rd c., a major renovation in the 4th, and a collapse by earthquake in 551."

The excavators conclude that the H. Shem'a synagogue had two phases, with some changes in the structure's architecture (Meyers et al. 1976; Meyers and Meyers and Strange 1990:9, Table 1.2b). In both phases—Synagogues I and II—a fragment of a stone base with columns and capitals was found on the southern Jerusalem-oriented wall. For phase II, the excavators propose a wooden aedicula on the stone base of phase I (Meyers 1976:49, 72–73, Figs. 3.9, 3.11).

Netzer (1996:453–455, Figs. 1–5) claims that the synagogue of H. Shem'a was only one structure, erected at the end of the 3rd century CE or the beginning of the 4th (the excavator's Phase II) with

Table XIV-4. H. Shem'a.

Meyers et al. 1976		Netzer 1996		Magness 2010
		Date CE	Period	
Synagogue phase I	Stratum III	ca. 284–306	Middle to Late Roman	<i>One synagogue + sub-stages</i> End of 3rd or early 4th
Synagogue phase II	Stratum IV	ca. 306–419	Late Roman Byzantine I	<i>One synagogue</i> Late 4th or early 5th abandoned in 8th

sub-stages such as the addition of the bema, and was destroyed by an earthquake. A bench was built along all the walls when the synagogue was erected, while the stone platform for a wooden aedicula was a later addition. He holds that at both H. Shem'a and Gush Halav, some of the architectural parts were *spolia* from earlier structures.

Magness (1997, 2001b:85–86) argues, based on one (two?) coins, that the H. Shem'a Synagogue II construction date was no earlier than the late 4th or early 5th c. CE; she suggests that “differences between the two synagogues, such as the addition of the bema . . . may reflect constructional or occupational phases in the lifetime of the Synagogue II structure.” The smashed architectural fragments found incorporated into Synagogue II could have derived from an earlier synagogue, but Magness suggests that they could have come from more than one building and that there is no evidence linking them to the earthquake destruction of 306; according to her, the building might have been abandoned during the 5th c, when there was a decline in occupation. She also remarks that evidence suggests that during the second half of the 5th c, the population included Christians. The synagogue was already abandoned when it collapsed in an 8th c. earthquake.

Strange (2001:76–78) remarks rightly that there is a debate as to whether Synagogues I and II should be considered two separate Strata or one Stratum with a rebuild. Further, he describes the fills beneath the floors, which contained Middle and Late Roman pottery and earlier finds but no 4th c. coins, and therefore concludes that the 306 CE earthquake most likely destroyed H. Shem'a Synagogue I. The pottery and coins found within the later synagogue (II) date it to about 406 CE and the excavators dated its destruction to the earthquake of 419 CE.

Magness (2001b:80, n. 4) agrees that the H. Shem'a and Gush Halav synagogues were destroyed by an earthquake, but proposes a different chronology based on almost the same scant evidence.

Magness's proposals are not convincing; her identification of an 'occupational phase' at H. Shem'a as an earlier phase is only a semantic distinction from what the excavators preferred to recognize as Synagogue I. Also, her proof for a late earthquake at Gush Halav is not more reliable than the excavators' for earlier ones.

2.2 Other Galilean Synagogues

The Arbel synagogue had two phases. Phase I is dated to the 4th c., Phase II to the 6th to mid-8th c. CE.

The Bar'am upper synagogue was recently excavated: Aviam (2001:165–166; 2007:37) dates this upper synagogue building, based on the coins and ceramic data, to the 5th–6th centuries CE. The lower Bar'am synagogue is dated to the second half of the 4th century CE (Aviam 2001:168–9; 2004:159–161; 2007:33–4, Fig. 1).

The synagogue at Meiron (Stratum IV) is apparently one of the earliest synagogues, having been dated to the 3rd–4th c. CE (ca. 250–365, Middle to Late Roman periods) by the excavators (Table XIV-1;

Fig. III-31,4). The excavators conjecture an aedicula on the west side of the main entrance (Meyers et al. 1981:12, Fig. 2.5; Meyers, Meyers and Strange 1990:9, Table 1.2b).

2.2.1 Capernaum

It is difficult to evaluate the Capernaum building chronology for two main reasons: first, only a small part of the excavated coins and ceramic finds has been published; second, the exact provenance of most of the finds is not provided by the excavation reports published to date (also Magness 2001a:21–22). Thus the controversy on the date of Capernaum continues unresolved for now.

The controversy is generally based on the existence of two main different criteria for the dating of the white limestone synagogue:

- (1) The ‘traditional dating’, the earlier dates supported by some scholars (Avi-Yonah 1961; 1973b; 1981; Foerster 1971; 1992:315–16 which is still maintained by Tzafrir 1995b:153–156; Maoz 1996; see Milson 2007:47, n. 47) who maintain that the criterion for dating Galilean synagogues should be artistic-historical, and thus assign the construction of the Capernaum white synagogue to the 3rd c. CE; this dating is based on a comparison of the Capernaum architectural style with that of contemporary art and architecture in Syria and Asia Minor.
- (2) The excavators and other scholars put the date in the late 4th to 5th or even 6th c. on the basis of ceramic and coin data (Loffreda 1979; 1993; 1997; Magness 2001a).

The excavators (Corbo 1975:113–170; 1976; 1982; 1984; 1986; but see Loffreda 1997) maintain that the construction plan consisted of several stages, which included first the synagogue hall and then the entrance balcony platform and courtyard, which they dated on the evidence of the coins in the foundations and fill below the pavement (in three strata A-C) to the second part of the 4th c. The last stage of construction was the paving of the courtyard after 474 CE, the *terminus ante quem* for the completion of the synagogue building. Thus, according to this thesis the building was constructed over a period of 110 years (Tzafrir 1995b:152).

Loffreda concludes (1997:231–2) that the construction of the Capernaum synagogue was in fact a single project completed through successive phases, and that its use as a synagogue was initiated only after all its component parts—the hall, eastern courtyard, side-room on the northwest, and south balcony—had been completed. The excavators provide dates for the construction of different parts of the synagogue. Based on the recent identification of many coins found in all parts of the synagogue building, however, the initial date proposed now for the construction of the hall does not precede the beginning of the 5th century, while the final date of the project is set in the last quarter of the 5th century (Loffreda 1997:233). It may be assumed that a prayer hall already functioned before the construction of the eastern courtyard and the entrance balcony. These conclusions diverge slightly from the excavators’ earlier dating—beginning not earlier than the second half of the 4th c. and completed at the beginning of the 5th (Loffreda 1972:25–26; 1981:52; Corbo 1975:168). Loffreda suggests that the study of the coins and the ceramics might lead to the conclusion that the

Table XIV-5. Capernaum.

Capernaum White Synagogue	‘traditional’ by décor style	Excavators	Taylor 1993	Magness 2001a	Runesson 2007
Date CE	Second part of 3rd–early 4th c.	Second part of 4th–late 5th c.	5th c.	First half of 6th c.	5th or 6th c.—abandoned in the 7th c.

setting of the stone floor of the hall should be assigned to the final phase of the project. However, the archaeological report of the Capernaum excavation is not yet complete. Only the coins of Trench 12 and some of the ceramic finds have been published.

At the excavation of the Capernaum synagogue a 'basalt stone wall' and a first-century stone pavement were found in the central nave. Corbo contends that both elements belong to the first-century synagogue, while Loffreda (1993:49; 1997:239) suggests "that the 'basalt stone wall' constitutes an intermediate stage between the first-century synagogue and the white synagogue of the late fourth century A.D."

2.2.1.1 *The Phenomenon of the Capernaum Coins and Trench XII*

Arslan (1997) reports 20,323 coins found sealed under the pavement in a small area of the northeast corner of the Capernaum synagogue courtyard, of which 3,058 specimens, corresponding to 15% of the total, were chosen at random and only the 1,925 legible ones were analyzed. The result shows that "the coins have been issued from II-I centuries B.C., until a little after 476 (the second reign of Zeno. The examination was concentrated on those coins with mint indications (557 = 18.21% of the coins examined) with an attempt to determine the ways and times of flow of supply of the small coins in the area—above-all during the IVth and Vth centuries." This means they were probably assembled over a long period of time, about 600 years, and apparently constituted a dump. The fact that only about 2/3 of the selected coins (the only group published scientifically) are identified is problematic. The result of the coins from Trench XII should be used only to date the corner of the courtyard, not the synagogue.

According to the excavators' report, the coins from Trench XII were embedded in the mortar layer underlying the stone pavement, spread out in Stratum C between the upper layer and the slabs of the floor, or between the first and second layers of mortar (Corbo 1972:231, Fig. 22; Loffreda 1973:1; 1997:227).

It is possible to assume that the flagstones located between the two courtyard entrances became worn with time; they were then removed and the coins were dumped in the corner. The stones were replaced and some of the coins were caught in the mortar used to tighten those stones; within a short time, no difference would have been seen between the old and new stones.

Avi-Yonah (1973:44) argues that the statements of the excavators are still relevant: (1) He suggests that the basalt pavement in Trench 2 and the wall in Trench 6 belong not to a private house but to the remains of an earlier public building (a synagogue?). (2) He objects to the term 'hermetic' and the explanation that the fill (Stratum B) could have been spread throughout the building and that the layer of mortar (Stratum C) was placed over it and sealed it. (3) There may be other interpretations for the numismatic evidence.

Russell (1980:56–57), followed by other scholars, included Capernaum among the sites with unrecognized destruction by the earthquake of 363, but he reached a conclusion opposed to that of the traditionalists. He accepts "the late chronology proposed for the synagogue of Capernaum, but would suggest that its construction occurred after the site suffered damage during the earthquake of 363."

On the basis of the surviving Corinthian capitals at the Capernaum synagogue, Bloedhorn (1989:51–52) concludes that two groups of capitals (Figs. 1, 2) found in the synagogue date to the second half of the 3rd c. and he connects them to the basalt foundations of an early 3rd c. structure; he also maintains that after the 363 CE earthquake, some architectural and ornamental elements were reused in the newly reconstructed late 4th c. synagogue that was erected on the earlier foundations. The four capitals (Figs. 3–6), including the capital decorated with a menorah found in the side courtyard complex, are dated to the 5th c. CE. The courtyard was added at this time. Fisher (1986) divides the

Capernaum capitals into four groups and dates the Corinthian capitals there to the last quarter of the 3rd c. CE.

Scholars still insist that the decorations at Capernaum belong to the 3rd to early 4th c. CE artistic setting rather than to a later period (Tzafrir 1995:152–157). Tzafrir suggests also that the coins might have created a wrong impression; however, the numismatic data does indicate that 5th century coins were present in the fill of the Capernaum hall as well as in the eastern courtyard and the balcony, all found in clear stratigraphic contexts (Loffreda 1997:237). Tzafrir (1995:161) states that “Since Meroth is agreed to belong to the late 4th or 5th c. it seems that Capernaum is considerably earlier. This conclusion, based on stratigraphic and numismatic evidence, is now supported by comparison with Meroth . . . the formative group of the early type of Galilean synagogues was created and shaped during the 3rd and early 4th c.”

The Capernaum synagogue is dated by Amir (2007:45, 48) to the second half of the 3rd c. CE, based on the ornamentation style of the workshop groups, the style of the Corinthian capitals (based on the research of Fisher and Bloedhorn), and the comparison of the architectural ornamentation with that of the 4th c. CE Korazim synagogue. This approach, which confirms an earlier date for the Capernaum décor, suggests its probable influence on the later artists of Korazim.

The latest finds from Capernaum date the construction of the synagogue to the end of the fourth—early fifth centuries CE (Corbo 1972; 1975:113–169; Loffreda 1973; 1981; 1993; 1997) on the basis of pottery and coins found in the fill under the pavement. Chen (1990:350–51) verifies the later date of the synagogues at Capernaum and others by metrological and mathematical calculations, but his moduli are not really convincing.

Capernaum was a Jewish town in the Roman and early Byzantine periods according to Taylor (1993:292–293, 337–338), who maintains that the economic boom created in part by Christian pilgrims is visible in the limestone synagogue built in the 5th c. “The historical and archeological evidence clearly points to the beginning of the 4th c. CE as the time at which pilgrimage to certain Christian holy sites began and the sites themselves were developed.” Taylor claims that “in the 5th c. CE the combination of material prosperity and threat posed by Christian legislation may have been a prime reason why the Jews of Capernaum built the white synagogue . . . It should not cause skepticism that they embarked on a project to make their synagogue far outshine the Christian structure (at this stage only the little *domus ecclesiae*).” She argues that according to the archeological evidence the Jewish authorities of Capernaum were in charge, as they “permitted the construction of a small Christian pilgrimage site,” and from the new wealth received from the Christian tourists together with contributions by the community, they erected the white limestone synagogue.

The dating of the Capernaum synagogue by the excavators is based on numismatic and ceramic data, much of which is still unpublished. Magness (2001a:18–26) dates this synagogue to no earlier than the first half of the 6th c. CE. She maintains that the synagogue architectural style, though resembling 2nd and 3rd c. CE Syrian temples, was used until a much later date. She bases her arguments on a few Byzantine coins out of a collection of 2,920 coins which were disregarded by the excavators. Of the coins from Trench XII, the latest ones (3 altogether) date to Zeno’s second reign (476–491), which brought Arslan (1997:247, nos. 1911–1913) to the conclusion that the synagogue was completed shortly after 476. Magness (2001a:23–26) argues that these coins, as well as some imitation Axumite coins circulated in the late 5th and 6th c. CE, provide a *terminus post quem* for its construction. She further contends that the pottery found beneath the synagogue, imported wares dating mostly to the 4th–5th c. and some to the early 6th c. CE, is consistent with the coin evidence; hence, she dates the construction of the synagogue, the *terminus post quem*, to the early 6th c. CE.

Runesson (2007:239, 255–57, Table 1) suggests four periods for the Capernaum synagogue: (a) Synagogue I, a basalt synagogue, found beneath the limestone synagogue II nave dated to the 1st c. CE; (b) renovation and expansion of the first basalt synagogue between the 2nd and 4th c. CE (no proof at all is presented for this speculation); (c) Synagogue II, a new synagogue of limestone, was built in the 5th c. CE using the earlier basalt synagogue walls as foundations and *spolia* collected from 3rd c. Galilean synagogues for its construction; (d) the final addition of the atrium/courtyard to the east. The Capernaum synagogue was abandoned in the 7th c. CE.

The excavations at Capernaum prove that two synagogues were built: Synagogue I, the basalt synagogue, in the 1st c. and Synagogue II, the white limestone synagogue, dated to the end of the 4th through the 5th centuries. Despite some features shared with the older Galilean synagogues, the plan and structure of the Capernaum synagogue is nevertheless quite different, with its side courtyard, balcony, many entrances, and elaborate décor; some of these architectural parts originated in the 3rd c. and some may have been in second use in the later structure.

2.2.2 Korazim

According to Yeivin (2000:30*–31*), the date of the Korazim synagogue is problematic because parts of the synagogue were erased and the excavations have not produced any chronologically significant finds. The chronological data, based on pottery and coins found in the synagogue loci and Building E, indicate that “the construction of the synagogue was initiated at the beginning of the 4th century CE, for some reason halted, renewed and completed in the second half of the 4th c., not completely in line with the original plan.” The building was repaired several times while it “continued in use until the end of the 6th CE when it was abandoned and never reused again.”

The hoard of coins in Building E is proposed by Yeivin (1973:157; 2000:30*) as having been deposited c. 340 CE, in the first period of use of the synagogue. Ariel (2000:36*–37*) notes that this assemblage “provides tentative support for the date of construction of the synagogue between 308 and 340 CE . . . It seems reasonable that the coins found in and around the synagogue point to an occupation spanning the entire Byzantine period.”

The Korazim architectural décor is dated by May (2000:53*–54*) on stylistic grounds: the reliefs on the inner frieze and the ‘Seat of Moses’, which are comparable to Golan synagogue décor, are dated to the 5th c. CE, whereas the outer cornices and friezes, which are close in style to the Capernaum decorations, are slightly earlier. May and Stark (2002:247–248) contend they are able to formulate a ‘stratigraphic’ sequence for the decoration: they date Workshop I (carving of the outer décor and the Torah Shrine) slightly later than the second half of the 3rd c. CE, in concert with the date for the Capernaum architectural decoration (Bloedhorn 1989:52); they suggest a 5th c. date for Workshop II (which was responsible for the inner décor) and slightly later for Masters G and H.

The Korazim synagogue is dated by Amir (2007:36) to the beginning of the Byzantine period—the first half of the 4th c. CE, based on its artistic style and on the diagonal Ionian capitals chronology, for which there are comparable dated examples in south Syria.

Based on the few pottery shards, one bowl, and coin analysis, Magness (2007) dates the construction of the synagogue to the late 5th century CE.

Table XIV-6. Korazim.

	Yeivin 2000	May and Stark 2002	Amir 2007	Magness 2007
Basalt Synagogue + repairs	Beginning of the 4th–end of 6th c. CE Abandoned	Early 4th c. CE	First half of the 4th c. CE	Late 5th c. CE

2.2.3 *Meroth*

The excavations at the synagogue of Meroth present several stages in the building's history (Ilan & Damati 1987:186; 1989:58; Ilan 1989:37; 1991:41–43; Damati 2000; Magness 2001a):

Table XIV-7. Meroth

Ilan and Damati 1987:186		Damati (2000)	Magness (2001a:27)
Synagogue IA	400–450		
Synagogue IB	450–500	End of 4th–mid-6th c. (2000:42)	
Synagogue II	500–620	Second half of 6th–mid-8th c. (2000:54)	Late 5th or 6th c. CE
Synagogue III	620–1200	Mid 8th–beginning of the 13th c. (2000:70–71)	

2.3 *Dating of the East Lower Galilee Synagogues*

2.3.1 *H. 'Amudim*

The H. 'Amudim synagogue is dated to the 3rd to early 4th c. CE, with a mosaic pavement that may have been a later addition (Kohl and Watzinger 1916:74; Levine 1982:10–11). Maoz (1996:423) contends that H. 'Amudim with the mosaic is a later building above an earlier structure that was almost completely destroyed, probably in the 3rd c. crisis. Leibner (2009) maintains that H. 'Amudim might have been abandoned for a period during the early Byzantine period and resettled on the southern hill during the middle Byzantine period, in the 5th c. CE; from then on the building was not utilized. The building stones were used for construction in the southern area, and it is not clear if it was by Jews.

2.3.2 *Wadi Hamam*

The Wadi Hamam basalt synagogue with its mosaic pavement is dated to the late Roman period—end of the 3rd or beginning of the 4th century CE; the mosaic pavement might have been destroyed around the mid-4th c., perhaps by the earthquake of 363. Changes and renovations in two phases were conducted during the 4th c. The rubble and collapsed position of many architectural fragments found above floor level, the pottery of the latest phase which is typical of the 4th to early 5th c., and some coins, indicate that the synagogue's final phase was destroyed by an earthquake around the late 4th or early 5th century CE (perhaps the 419 earthquake?); the later changes in the building represent the fading of the local congregation (Leibner 2010a:230–236).

Architectural limestone fragments in second use—ornamented parts, limestone carved benches, capitals, cornices, colored plaster and stucco fragments similar to examples from the Herodian early Roman period—indicate that the basalt synagogue structure at Wadi Hamam made use of elements from an earlier monumental limestone structure probably located near the site.

2.3.3 *Huqoq*

The synagogue was built in the late 4th c. CE (Magness 2013a). Britt (2013) compares the Huqoq mosaic to 5th–6th c. Antioch mosaics and suggests that based on stylistic qualities, the mosaic at Huqoq should be dated to the fifth and sixth centuries CE. The surviving parts of the Huqoq mosaic are so small and damaged that their style is very difficult to compare or date.

2.3.4 *Kafr Misr*

The Kafr Misr synagogue has three phases:

- Phase I—early 3rd–4th centuries.
- Phase II—early 4th–mid-5th c.
- Phase III—mid-5th–early 7th c.

Phase I of the synagogue was constructed in the early 3rd c. CE and lasted until the early 4th c. (Onn 1994:132–133). Based on the finds, it is likely that Phase I was destroyed as a result of the earthquake in 306 CE. Based on the mosaic pavement and finds, Phase II is dated to the early 4th or the first half of the 5th c. CE. Phase III is distinguished by the construction of an apse and the laying of a new mosaic and is dated to the mid-5th–early 7th c. CE.

2.3.5 *Sepphoris*

The dating of the Sepphoris synagogue construction (*terminus post quem*) is determined by the finds in debris sealed by the mosaic floor: Phase I—5 coins (2nd–4th c. and no later than 400 CE) were found together with pottery and glass in sections in the floor's bedding after removal of the mosaic, indicating a date in the early Byzantine period; Phase II—8 coins (the latest dated to the second half of the 4th c.) were found with pottery above the floor (Weiss and Netzer 2005:38–39). “The synagogue was founded in the early Byzantine period. The numismatic evidence from the mosaic's bedding and the debris beneath it enable a precise dating—the early 5th CE, corroborated by the stylistic analysis of the mosaic floor. These data serve as a *terminus post quem* but, moreover, it seems that the synagogue was built no later than the first or second decade of the 5th century. The similarity in some features with the Nile Festival building dated to the beginning of the 5th c. reinforces this proposed date for the synagogue.” The destruction of the synagogue is known from debris above the destroyed building's remains, which included the latest pottery, lamps, and coins from the mid-7th century and later. Thus, the *terminus ante quem* is the end of the Byzantine period and the building was completely destroyed in the Umayyad period.

3. DATING GOLAN SYNAGOGUES

The dating of the settlements and synagogues in the Golan is in disagreement (see Table IV-1): Urman (1985:183–4; 1995:607–617) maintains that the Jewish settlements existed and built synagogues as early as the 2nd or 3rd c. CE, while Maoz (1995, I:340; II:5, 19) contends that the Golan synagogues were constructed during a short period from the mid-5th to early 6th c. CE (450–525 CE). In his survey, Ben David (2000, 2007b:53–58) suggests that Jewish settlements existed in the 2nd and 3rd c. but the synagogues were constructed in the mid-4th c. CE. However, he also argues that in the Roman period (2nd–3rd c.), smaller structures may have been utilized as rural synagogues, in contrast to the later monumental synagogues which were built during the economic prosperity of the Byzantine period.

3.1 *Qasrin*

The first excavators of the Qasrin synagogue described their findings in short provisional reports, if at all. The archive of the IAA has no data on the earliest excavations, in 1971 and 1975–6, except for some basket cards and plans drawn in 1975–6.

Urman, who excavated Qasrin in 1971 (1984:532; 1995b:466), distinguished three stages of the synagogue based on stratigraphy, pottery, and coins although no scientific report was ever published. He dated these stages as follows:

The first stage of the synagogue was built in the first half of the 3rd century and continued through to the mid 4th c. To this stage belongs Floor 1, a layer of plaster grooved to imitate stone slabs. The second stage, from the second half of the 4th to the 6th centuries, had the platform of the Torah Shrine in the center of the southern wall as well as a mosaic floor (Floor 2) that was laid on top of the plaster floor. The third stage is dated to the beginning of the 7th c., based partly on a hoard of 82 coins (598–603) discovered near the northeast corner of the Torah Shrine by M. Ben-Ari and S. Bar-Lev (Ariel 1996). To this stage belongs plaster Floor 3 laid above the mosaic one. The final destruction of the synagogue was in an earthquake in the 8th century CE. In the 12th century, the northern part of the hall was rebuilt and a small niche was constructed facing south with stones taken from the ruins of the southern part. Urman suggests, based on ceramics found on the upper floor, that this latest level was a Christian structure and that a cross was carved in the wreath on the portal lintel. However, there is no indication of such a find. Maoz (see below) claims this structure was a mosque.

According to Maoz and Killebrew (1988:5–6, and note 2–4), Qasrin Synagogue A was constructed in the late 4th century CE and is dated through the early 5th, based on the pottery assemblage (comparable to the pottery at Meiron Stratum IV), though a single coin dated to 218/19 CE was found beneath the floor. Pottery of the 2nd and 3rd c. CE was found beneath the floor of synagogue A, perhaps belonging to an earlier settlement on the site.

Based on the coins of Anastasius I (498–518) found below the northern bench, Maoz (1995, II:11–12) now proposes that the Qasrin synagogue was constructed at the beginning of the 6th c. CE (together with ‘Assaliyye, Qusibiyye and Yehudiyye), and belongs to the latest architectural style in the Golan.

A terminus post quem for the erection of synagogue B—the early 6th c.—is based on about 120 bronze coins; Maoz (1993:1221) mentions 180 coins of which 64 were identified; the latest are nummi from Anastasius I (498–518) that were found during the 1982–4 excavations, scattered in the fill of dirt and small stones below the upper step and behind the lower step of the two-tiered benches along the north wall in synagogue B (Maoz and Killebrew 1988:18, notes 2, 5). Ariel (1996:71) contends that they should probably be dated between 491 and 498 CE. However, it is possible that the

Table XIV-8. Qasrin.

Maoz-Killebrew (1988:6)				Urman (1984:532; 1995b:466)		
		Date CE	Stratum			Date CE
Synagogue A	floor #1	Late 4th–5th c.	V	Synagogue I	floor #1	First half of the 3rd century–mid 4th c.
Synagogue B	floor #2	6th–7th c.	IVA	Synagogue II	floor #2	Second half of 4th–6th c.
	floor #3		IVB	Synagogue III	floor #3	7th–8th c.
Resettlement of village		Mid-8th c.	III			
Mosque		13th–15th centuries	II	Christian structure		12th c.
Syrian village		Late 19–20th centuries	I			

coins were scattered during repairs and so do not necessarily reflect a construction date, only a renovations date. Ariel suggests further that the most probable historical setting for the deposition of the hoard of 82 coins dated 598–603 (found in Urman's third stage) was the Persian conquest of Syria and Palestine between 611 and 614.

It seems that the construction of Synagogue I should be dated to approximately the same time as the earliest excavated houses in the Qasrin village (i.e. late 3rd to mid-4th centuries CE (Killebrew 1993:1223) due to the similar ceramic and numismatic evidence found under their floors. Synagogue II, a reconstructed and expanded version of the original synagogue has been dated to the late 5th—early 6th centuries CE, based on numerous coins found behind the stone benches along the northern wall. The final renovation of Synagogue II is dated to the early seventh century CE by a coin hoard found underneath Floor 3. Based mainly on the evidence from the village excavations, the synagogue went out of use in the mid-eighth century, perhaps due in part to the well-documented earthquake of 746/47.

The most recent excavations at the Qasrin site were conducted by Zingboym (2009), who found remains of two buildings along its southwestern fringes. The pottery, glass objects, and coins found at the area date the erection of the buildings to the later part of the third century CE, and they continued to be in use until the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth centuries CE.

3.2 *Dabiyye*

The construction date for the single synagogue phase—the late 5th or early 6th century CE—is based on architectural, coin, and ceramic evidence, though no numismatic or ceramic finds could be attributed with certainty to the synagogue occupation phase (Maoz 1991; Ariel 1991; Killebrew 1991).

3.3 *Deir 'Aziz*

The earlier synagogue at Deir 'Aziz is dated to the second half of the 4th century CE (about 359/360), based on remains such as architectural fragments, ceramic tiles, colored plaster, and a Greek inscription. The later synagogue structure is dated to the second quarter of the 6th century or earlier, in the beginning of the reign of Justinian (527–565 CE), on the evidence of architectural fragments and coins found beneath the pavement (Ben David and Ma'oz 2004:62; Ben David 2007b:52–53; 2007c:48–49).

3.4 *'En Nashut*

The 'En Nashut synagogue revealed three strata and four living periods (Maoz 2010:18):

- I robbery of stones from the synagogue ruin.
- II 5th c. CE, the construction of the synagogue.
- IIa 6th c. CE, alteration to the synagogue.
- III 4th c. CE, remains of walls antedating the synagogue.

The construction of the 'En Nashut synagogue is dated to around 475 CE, based on 191 coins (115 identified) found under the paving in front of the main entrance of the synagogue that were possibly buried there during the construction—a tradition noted also at the Golan synagogues of Dabiyye, Kanaf, and Qasrin (Maoz 1993:412). Ariel (1987:147–148) contends that the 'En Nashut numismatic evidence, including the threshold foundation deposit (L 109), points to a construction date around the mid-5th century CE. The building lived on until the late 6th c. CE.

3.5 *Kanaf*

Synagogue I at H. Kanaf (Stratum IIIA) was constructed in the Middle Byzantine period (beginning of the 6th c. CE), based on the evidence of ceramics and coins found in the foundation fills. The later Synagogue II (Stratum IIIB) was a reconstruction carried out in the second half of the 6th c., following an earthquake (Maoz 1993:847, 849–50).

3.6 *Umm el-Qanatir*

The synagogue is dated to the Byzantine period (4th–6th c.), with several renovations during the period of its existence (Ben David et al. 2006:112, 117).

4. DATING OF OTHER SYNAGOGUES

4.1 *Hammath Tiberias A*

The Hammath Tiberias A synagogue dating is in debate. The proposed dates appear in the table below.

Slouschz 1921	Vincent 1922	Oren 1971	Stacey 2002:259
3rd–4th c. CE	4th–5th c. CE	4th–5th c. CE	10th–11th c. CE

The Hammath Tiberias B synagogue is dated by Dothan (1983:64–67) on the basis of architectural evidence, inscriptions, and finds. Stratum IIb was constructed in the first half of the 3rd c. CE, during the early days of the patriarch R. Yehudah Hanasi (230–286) and lasted until the earthquake of 306. The date of synagogue IIa was based on the excavator's assumption that the 31 small worn coins "probably belong to the late 4th or early 5th c., thus giving a *terminus post quem* for the end of the synagogue of Stratum IIa." A later date, the late 4th–early 5th c. CE, is proposed for Hammath Tiberias synagogue IIb by Dunbabin (1999:189) and Talgam (2000:100), based on the geometric designs of the mosaic carpets. The synagogue was perhaps destroyed by the earthquake of 419 or was demolished by the congregation to enable the building of the large complex of Stratum Ib. However, this conclusion is problematic, as the coins could not be identified and came from unsealed locus 52.

Table XIV-9. Hammath Tiberias B.

Dothan 1983, 2000		Stacy 2002	Magness	Talgam
<i>Stratum</i>	<i>Date</i>			
Synagogue IIb	230–306			
Synagogue IIa	306–419		Late 5th c.	Late 4th c., based on mosaic design
Severus				
Intermediate Synagogue		6th–7th c.		
Synagogue Ib	423–mid-7th c.	Early 7th c.–749	Late 6th c.	
Synagogue Ia	Early 7th–mid-8th c.	c. 750–c. 900		

4.2 *Ma'oz Hayyim*

The existence of three successive synagogues, dating from the 3rd to 7th c. CE, has been confirmed at Ma'oz Hayyim. Synagogue A, the earliest, was constructed at the end of the 3rd or beginning of the 4th c. Synagogue B, which replaced the earlier synagogue, was an enlarged structure with an apse and mosaic pavements and has been dated to the 5th to early 6th c. Synagogue C, which shows signs of a setback with major changes in the structure, served during the 6th and beginning of the 7th c. CE and was then abandoned (Tzaferis 1982:242–244).

4.3 *South Judean Synagogues*

The development and chronology of the south Judean synagogues indicates that the earliest of them is Eshtemo'a I, possibly dating to the late 2nd or early 3rd c. CE. There was a second phase in the 4th c. that lasted until the 7th or 8th c. when a mosque was built in the third phase (Yeivin 2004:96*, 157). The 'Anim synagogue is dated to the 4th to 7th centuries CE; The Ma'on synagogue had two stages: Stage I is dated to the second half of the 4th century or early 5th c. CE and Stage II to the late 5th or early 6th c., with the building continuing to function until the 7th c. CE. Magen (2008a:254–55) maintains that the Susiya synagogue as well as those at H. 'Anim and H. Ma'on were erected in the late 5th or early 6th c. CE, using some of the earlier ashlar stones.

The broad structure type of building was replaced by the basilica type, though at Susiya, Eshtemo'a, and 'Anim the plan was preserved in spite of changes and renovations. The synagogue of Eshtemo'a (with the exedra, the three niches and bemas on the northern Jerusalem oriented wall) was built in a single stage in the later Roman period during the 2nd or 3rd c. or 3rd or beginning of 4th c. CE. In the second phase there were some repairs to the floors and the stairs in front of the niches, but these might have been later, when the building was used as a mosque. Yeivin (1992, 1993) dates the construction of the Susiya synagogue at the end of the 3rd or early 4th c. claims that it lasted until the 8th or 9th c. CE. Foerster (1988) dates the Susiya mosaics to the 6th c. CE. Amit (1995:155–6; 2003:180, xxiv, xxxvi–xxxvii) dates the construction of the Susiya synagogue to the late 4th or early 5th c. and claims that the building served until the 8th c. CE.

4.4 *'En Gedi*

The synagogue at 'En Gedi consisted of three phases (Barag 2006):

- Synagogue I (Stratum IIIB) was constructed at the end of the 2nd or early 3rd c. CE
- Synagogue II (Stratum IIIA) dates to the mid-3rd–mid 5th c. CE
- Synagogue III (Stratum II) existed in the mid-5th–early 7th c. CE

Table XIV-10. South Judean synagogues.

Yeivin 1992, 1993, 2004:96*, 157		Amit 1995, 2003	Magen 2008a
Synagogue	Date CE		
'Anim		4th to 7th c.	Late 5th–6th
Eshtemo'a I	2nd to 3rd or 3rd–early 4th c.		
II	4th–5th to 7th–8th c.		
Ma'on I		Mid-4th–early 5th c.	
Ma'on II		Late 5th/early 6th to 7th c.	Late 5th–6th
Susiya	3rd–4th to 8th–9th c.	Late 4th–early 5th to 8th c.	Late 5th–6th

4.5 *Ma'on (Nirim)*

The construction of the Ma'on (Nirim) synagogue is dated to the reign of Justinian I before 538 CE, based mainly on the numismatic evidence (Rahmani 1960:18). Yogeve (1987) dates the erection of the Ma'on (Nirim) synagogue in the second half of the 5th and no later than the beginning of the 6th c. The new mosaic and the apse probably date to the mid-6th c. and the synagogue was in use until the mid-7th c. CE.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 *Dating of the Galilean Synagogues*

Until recently scholars generally agreed that the first synagogues in the Land of Israel were constructed at the end of the second century CE and the beginning of the third... The assumption was that there was a chronological division of the synagogues into three types: the earliest type was the Galilean synagogues, built starting in the 2nd–3rd centuries CE and on; the second, transitional type consisted of broadhouse synagogues dated to the 4th–5th centuries CE; and the third and latest, Byzantine type, usually dated to the 6th century CE, had a basilica plan with an apse.

Recent synagogue excavations and current research strongly challenge the above typology and chronology. The controversy focuses on most of the synagogues of the Galilean type and especially on the synagogue of Capernaum (see above). The certainty regarding the existence of synagogues in the 2nd–3rd c. CE is based on their mention in the Mishna and the Tosefta and on limited archaeological evidence. Perhaps Jewish communities, like the Christian ones of the time, worshiped in private dwellings. “It is more plausible to suppose that the synagogue was still not widespread in the 2nd–3rd c., that it was found, as earlier, only in the largest settlements” (Schwartz 2001:226–27).

Scholars suggest three main approaches to the intensely debated topic of the dating, of Galilee synagogues, each yielding different conclusions and solutions (see also Amit 2007a):

- (1) Dating based on stylistic architectural features, even if the archaeological finds are later as a result of changes in the structure. Thus the early synagogues dated to the 3rd–4th c. are already monumental, as at H. 'Amudim, Gush Halav, Meiron, Nabratein, H. Shem'a.
- (2) Dating based on stratigraphy and finds, which are ascribed to the 5th–6th c. The stylistic architectural features (usually dated to an earlier period) might simply represent the continued use of an earlier style, as at Bar'am, Capernaum, and Gush Halav.
- (3) Dating based on a compromise that considers the synagogues to have been built in the Byzantine period but incorporating décor items that were *spolia*. In this approach, another possibility is that the older items were used in the same structure when it was rebuilt. *Spolia* is discernible at the synagogues of Bar'am, Capernaum, Gush Halav, H. Shem'a, and others.

5.1.1 *Considerations Raised by Each Approach*

5.1.1.1 *'Traditionalist' Dating*

The older dating (termed 'traditionalist') is based on stylistic features of the architecture and its décor, as compared with contemporary buildings in the area; this is especially relevant in the case of the Capernaum synagogue. The Galilean synagogues characteristic of the late Roman period were dated to the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE (Kohl and Watzinger 1916; Foerster 1992; Tzafrir 1995; Maoz 1996). The excavators (Meyers et al. [1976]; Meyers, Meyers and Strange [1981a] [1990]; Meyers and Meyers [2009]) of the upper Galilee synagogues of Gush Halav, Meiron, Nabratein, and H. Shema

corroborated the date, concluding that these synagogues were erected in the 3rd c. based on stratigraphy, architecture, coins, ceramics, historical data, and earthquake dates.

Tzafrir (1995a:80) claims the Galilean synagogues are a 3rd century CE Jewish invention and that no 2nd century synagogue structures existed; he further contends that there are no connections between the 3rd century Galilean synagogues and Second Temple period structures; Groh (1995:60), however, agrees with the dating of Meyers et al. (1982) for Nabratein Synagogue I (ca. 135–250 CE), which is the first Galilean broadhouse type building and the first with a pair of aediculae on the Jerusalem-oriented wall.

Ma'oz (1996) contends that the dating of the Galilean synagogues should be based on architectural and artistic style, on the historical background, and on archaeological stratigraphical considerations (which he regards as the least trustworthy). He argues that several of the Galilean synagogues were constructed as synagogues, with Bar'am as their prototype. He dates the origin of the synagogues of Bar'am, Gush Halav, H. 'Amudim (contending that H. 'Amudim is a later structure, built above the earlier, almost completely destroyed structure, probably in the 3rd c. crisis), Meiron and "parts" of Capernaum to the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd century CE, in the days of the presidency of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, who had ties with the Severan dynasty. These synagogues were destroyed during the years of the crisis (235–284); the synagogues of Gush Halav, H. 'Amudim, and Meiron were rebuilt at a later date, and he assigns the same date for Nabratein and H. Sumaka. He suggests that Capernaum and H. Shem'a were built in the 3rd and 5th centuries from *spolia*.

Levine (2005:176–177) states that monumental synagogues were constructed from the mid-3rd through the 4th c. CE, with a halt in building during the 5th c. (except for Capernaum and Sepphoris) and a new wave of synagogue building around the early 6th c. He proposes further that "construction of synagogues was an attempt by the Jewish community to demonstrate its vitality and power against the backdrop of the difficult events in the late 3rd c." Leibner (2009:399–404) opposes the late dating of the Galilean synagogues in the 5th and 6th c. (as suggested by Magness 2001, Schwartz 2001:208–212, see below), stating that the fact that the lower Galilee synagogues of Hamam and Beth Netofa predate the late 4th c. is of particular importance (he dates the initial phase of the building of the Hamam synagogue to the 3rd or early 4th c., based on his excavations). He supports the view of Meyers, Foerster, and Levine "that buildings of this style were first constructed no later than the late 3rd c." Leibner notes that all Galilee synagogues belonging to the first wave (except for Hammath Tiberias, Korazim, and perhaps Meroth) are dated by excavators to the late 3rd c. CE. His survey data "strengthen the impression that monumental synagogues belong mainly to the period from the end of the 3rd c. onward, and that this trend continued to spread during the Byzantine period, encompassing the vast majority of the villages in the area." Leibner further contends that his survey and the Lower Golan survey (Ben David 2005:194) provide a more satisfactory explanation. More than 30 sites were abandoned in the 3rd and 4th c. and no monumental structures were found in them. His answer is that "either there were non-monumental buildings for public gatherings (difficult to identify in a survey and even through excavation) or that there was an absence of public buildings altogether at some of the settlements of the period." The strong Christian presence in the late 4th and 5th c. even in Galilee, and the loss of the Jewish majority, created the need to unite the community around the synagogue institution and inspired the building of monumental synagogues which underlined and intensified Jewish community life.

5.1.1.2 Stratigraphy Dating

The second, and later, dating proposition for the Galilean synagogues is based on the stratigraphy and finds at the excavations, and ignores their architectural and artistic styles. At the Capernaum synagogue (Loffreda 1997), coins discovered beneath the floor indicated that the synagogue was

erected in the last quarter of the 5th century. Analysis of the pottery, coins, and stratigraphic finds at Capernaum, Gush Halav, and Korazim indicated to some scholars a similar later date for these synagogues—in the second half of the 5th century (Magness 2001a, and see rebuttals by Meyers 2001 and Strange 2001, who disagree with this later date; see also the response to both by Magness 2001b). A similar date (5th c.) was concluded by the excavators of the Bar'am synagogue, where many architectural decoration fragments found in second use are considered *spolia*, Aviam (2004:168) suggests that the Byzantine imperial laws did not permit the Jews to build new synagogues, and, in fact, in 423 CE a law was passed forbidding the rebuilding of synagogues [Codex Theodosianus XVI, 8,27] though the implementation of this law is difficult to prove), but allowing the renovation or restoration of older buildings.

Other scholars (Netzer 1996; Magness 2001a; 2007; Schwartz 2001), reanalyzing the excavation reports in concert with historical considerations, date the Galilean synagogues to the 5th century; some even to the 6th. They argue that the disparity is because many of the early architectural members are *spolia*, taken from earlier structures and reused in these synagogues. Magness (2001a:33–35) argues for a later date for several of the Galilean synagogues based on reexamination of the excavators' methodology and analysis of the pottery and coins. She suggests that the 5th c. Galilean style copied the earlier Syrian temples. She maintains that though the Galilean synagogues resemble Syrian temples of the 2nd and 3rd c. the style continued in use for many years, as can be seen also in 6th c. CE churches in the region. Magness (2001a:27) holds that the coins provide evidence that the synagogues were built, occupied, or restored during the 4th to early 5th c. CE. Her datings include: Gush Halav (based on ceramic evidence), constructed no earlier than the second half of the 5th c.; Capernaum, constructed no earlier than the first half of the 6th c.; and Meroth, in the late 5th or 6th c. CE. She argues further that the stylistic similarities with Golan synagogues dated to the 5th and 6th c. CE (by Maoz 1990:539) provide added grounds for this later dating and that this dating should not be ruled out strictly on the basis of the architectural and décor style. Magness (2001b:90) claims that in redating the Galilean synagogues she is not denying that synagogues existed in 2nd and 3rd century Palestine (and earlier). What she is saying is that the monumental synagogue structures with a characteristic plan and Jewish ornamentation and iconography developed only later in the 4th c. CE, perhaps in parallel with the increase in church structures, and that they coincided “with the strengthening of the priestly class in later Roman and Byzantine Palestine and may explain the Temple-oriented nature of the synagogue iconography.”

Seth Schwartz (2001:205–214) suggests that the urban synagogues did differ from the rural ones: Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, and Beth She'an each had more than one synagogue and used Greek in their inscriptions. These urban synagogues were more lavishly decorated, with more use of marble and with magnificent figurative mosaic pavements at Hammath Tiberias B, Sepphoris, and Gaza. But these synagogues were located in secluded or unremarkable areas of the city. They were contemporaneous with the rural ones and did not serve as models. However; rural synagogues such as Beth Alpha, Ma'on-Nirim, Na'aran, and others have the same features he assigns the urban synagogues. At Tiberias, which was the home of the patriarchs until the second decade of the 4th century CE and continued to serve as the center of the rabbinic movement in Palestine and as a place of literary production up to and after the Muslim conquest, only one synagogue has been discovered so far, in the northern outskirt of the city; he cites Hammath Tiberias B in the southern outskirt and constructed in the early or middle 4th c. CE. as the earliest remains of an urban synagogue.

Schwartz further contends that it was only around 500 CE that religious separation became the norm. Until the mid-4th c. the villages were inhabited by a mix of Jews, Christians, and pagans. By the later 5th or early 6th c., almost all villages had “a monumental, purpose-built, stone religious building,” which was either a synagogue or a church but not both. The exception is Capernaum and a few villages which had two synagogues (Bar'am) or two churches. He assumes that in every Jewish

settlement there was a synagogue by the late 5th or early 6th c. CE, arguing that in contrast to the opinion of other scholars (Levine 2000:171–72), synagogues were already functioning in the 2nd and 3rd c. CE as a crucial element and the central institution in Jewish village and town communities.

Schwartz dismisses all three of Maoz's (1996) arguments (see above); the resemblance of the synagogues to the Syrian shrines does not mean they were built at the same time. The temples remained in use through the 5th c. and could have been copied, and the Galilean style could have remained in use through the 6th c., as at Meroth and Nabratein. Some Galilean villagers, "when they decided to build synagogues, may have wished them to look appropriately 'sacred'." Before the 5th c. the only available models were the shrines built (and still maintained) by the pagan villagers in the neighboring districts; monumental churches, later an important model for synagogue builders, were still rare. Schwartz (2001:212) rightly refutes Tzafrir's (1989) conclusion, because there is no reason to assume that "high quality implies an early date, and crudity a late date. In reality apparent differences in quality tell us more about social and economic differences, or differences in esthetic sensibilities or religious predispositions."

5.1.1.3 *Spolia Dating*

The third proposed solution for the dating of Galilean synagogues combines the two already discussed above, with the proposal that the architectural decorations are *spolia* from earlier Roman period buildings (Netzer 1996; Maoz 1996; Aviam 2001; Magness 2001a) in secondary use in the synagogues of the Byzantine period. Aviam (2001:166–7) contends that the rebuilding of synagogues out of *spolia*, though difficult to prove, might have derived from the attempt to avoid the law against building new synagogues, legislated by Christian emperors at the end of the 4th century. Foerster (2004, 2007) suggests that the discrepancy in the architecture was due to the building of a new synagogue after completely removing an older structure on the same spot. Maoz (1999) proposes that the Capernaum white synagogue was originally a Roman building/s that was dismantled and rebuilt for the pilgrims who saw it as the synagogue Jesus had visited (see above, also Amit 2007a). Tzafrir (1995a) maintains that synagogues in the 5th–6th c. were reconstructed or built as replicas of earlier forms.

However, the proponents of this solution, examples of which are found at Bar'am, Capernaum, Gush Halav, H. Shem'a, and Nabratein, neither elucidate their claim nor provide any evidence as to the source of these items or the nature and exact location of the structures, and their thesis is barely acceptable; their conclusion is based on the assumption that 3rd c. structures with well-ornamented architectural and décor elements existed in the region. Some of these reused items, such as the Nabratein and H. Shema lintels with a menorah motif, would most likely have come from Jewish structures. Hence, there is no reason not to conclude the obvious: that some architectural items were reused, replaced, recycled, and sometimes buried in the different phases of the same synagogue, as proposed by the excavators of Gush Halav, H. Shema, and Nabratein (see also Foerster 2004, 2007).

In sum, several early Galilean synagogues are dated to the 2nd–3rd c. CE by the archaeological finds; these include Gush Halav, H. Shema, Meiron, and Nabratein (see Meyers 2013; Meyers and Meyers 2010). Others are dated later by the excavation data and their early architectural style is explained either as continued use of the same style in later periods, or as the architectural items being *spolia*.

5.2 *Dating the Golan Synagogues*

The dating of the Golan synagogues is also a debated issue and both the excavators and other scholars propose various dates based on the architectural stylistic features and on finds such as coins and pottery (see Table XIV-10).

Maoz (1993:539; 1995 II:8–12) maintains there are several dated synagogue stylistic groups:

- (1) The earliest Golan synagogues were constructed in the mid 5th century CE and they are the *‘En Nashut—Korazim group*: three synagogues—Korazim, H. Shura, H. Tuba—west of the Jordan, and six in the Golan (around the Bethsaida valley)—‘En Nashut, ed-Dikkeh, el-Ahsenniyeh, er-Rafid, Kh. Khawakha, Jarabe.
- (2) The second group includes synagogues erected in the second half of the 5th c. CE or towards its end (see Table XIV-10).
- (3) The third—the *Kanaf group*—is dated to the beginning of the 6th c. CE and includes Kanaf, Deir ‘Aziz, and el-Tayibe.
- (4) The *Qasrin group* includes Qasrin, ‘Asaliyye, Qusibiyye, and Yehudiyye, and is dated to the first quarter of the 6th c. CE.

Maoz (1993:545) contends that the earliest Golan synagogues were constructed in the second half of the 5th c. and that some were added in the 6th c. ‘En-Nashut, Kanaf, and Qasrin were damaged by earthquake in the 6th c. and repaired in the 6th and 7th c. along with others abandoned at the same time. Qasrin continued to function, perhaps until the mid-8th c. CE. Maoz’s group typology is far from accurate as it is based on only six excavated synagogues; the others he mentions are unexcavated sites and their survey yielded only meager data. For this reason, Urman (1995:611–617) criticizes Maoz’s description of the Golan synagogues and their dating and he (1984:532; 1995b:466) divides the Qasrin synagogue into three chronological stages: stage I—to the 3rd–4th c., II—to the 4th–6th c., III—to the 6th to 8th c. (see above). In contrast to the conclusions of Maoz and Levine, he maintains that the Golan synagogues date to the 5th to 7th c. CE and that there was continuous Jewish settlement in the Golan from the 3rd c. on, based on architectural features such as the Ionic capitals and the benches found already at Gamla and other later sites.

Ben David (2005; 2007a; 2007b:53–58) conducted a ceramic survey of 45 sites in the central Golan (including nine synagogue sites: the Gamla Second Temple period synagogue, ‘Assaliyyeh, Dabiyye, Deir ‘Aziz, ed-Dikke, ‘En Nashut, Kanaf, Qasrin, and Umm al-Qanatir). The analysis of the ceramic finds at those nine sites led Ben David (2005:194; 2007a:26–27) to support Ma’oz’s dating of four Golan synagogues (Dabiyye, ‘En Nashut, Kanaf, and Qasrin) to the Byzantine period, and he notes that the monumental Golan synagogues were not erected before the mid-4th century CE. Ben David (2005:3*) points out that about 15 settlements existed during the Middle/Late Roman period and disappeared before 350 CE, but none left architectural members typical of synagogues, while such finds appeared at 25 sites existing after 350 CE. He proposes, therefore (2007b:57), that small unobtrusive structures might have served as synagogues, which could explain their absence in the archeological data of the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. Magness (2001a:27) suggests a date for the Golan synagogues of Dabiyye, ‘En Nashut, Kanaf, and Qasrin in the late 5th or 6th CE.

Amir (2007:32–36, 50, Table) proposes a chronological development based on the Golan synagogues’ décor style and common motifs (see Chapter III):

- (1) The earliest group, dated to the first half of the 4th century, includes the synagogues of Korazim, ed-Dikkeh, el-Ahsenniyeh, er-Rafid, Kh. Khawakha, and Gadariyye.
- (2) The second group, dated to the mid-5th c., includes ‘En Nashut and Qasrin Synagogue A.
- (3) The third group, dated to the first half of the 6th c. CE, includes Qasrin Synagogue B, Kanaf (also based the excavation results), ‘Asaliyye, Batra, Dabiyye, Deir ‘Aziz, and Yehudiyye.

Table XIV-II. Dating of Golan synagogues.

Maoz (1993:539; 1995, II:8–12)			Amir (2007:32–36, 50, Table)			Magness (2001a:27)	
Group	Date CE	Synagogues in Groups I–IV	Group	Date CE	Synagogues in groups I–III	Date CE	Synagogues
I. <i>‘En Nashut—Korazim</i>	Mid 5th	‘En Nashut Korazim ed-Dikkeh el-Ahsenniyeh er-Rafid H. Shura, H. Tuba Jarabe Kh. Khawakha	I	First half 4th	ed-Dikkeh, el-Ahsenniyeh, er-Rafid, Gadariyye Kh. Khawakha, Korazim		
			II	Mid-5th	‘En Nashut, Qasrin Synagogue A.		
II.	Second half of 5th	Batra, Beth Lavi, Dabiyye Zawitan, Zumaimira. Umm el-Qanatir				5th–6th	Dabiyye, ‘En Nashut, Kanaf, Qasrin
III. <i>Kanaf</i>	Beginning of the 6th	Kanaf, Deir ‘Aziz el-Tayibe	III	First half 6th	‘Asaliyye, Batra, Dabiyye, Deir ‘Aziz, Kanaf Qasrin B Yehudiyye		
IV. <i>Qasrin</i>	First quarter 6th	Qasrin, ‘Asaliyye, Qusibiyye, Yehudiyye					

The style and execution of Golan Jewish art belong to a long tradition in the area, but are not uniform enough or of a high enough quality of craftsmanship to establish a relative stylistic chronology, and dating is difficult (Hachlili 1995:189–190; see also Turnheim 1987:172–177). Furthermore, the Golan objects were frequently found in second use; only six synagogues have been excavated, and even in those many of the fragments were found reused so that some of the architectural fragments might be earlier than others. The appearance of different artistic styles in the same building makes dating by style impossible. The ceramic and numismatic evidence proves that the Golan synagogues were built and flourished during the fourth to early seventh centuries CE.

Maoz’s (1995) division of Golan synagogues into chronological groups in relation to their architectural decoration is difficult to accept. He maintains that the first group of synagogues, erected in the fifth century, is defined by the decorated capitals, the choice of motifs, and Jewish symbols; the second group, synagogues built in the beginning of the sixth century, lack rich ornamentation. The dating of each synagogue should be determined by all the finds, and first and foremost their numismatic and ceramic data. The architectural decoration should then be dated accordingly.

5.3 Chronological Development of the Synagogues by Artistic and Stylistic Décor

Artistic styles offer dating data as well. The Galilean synagogues are unusual in the unity of their characteristic features—façades, architecture, and décor. This is seen at Bar‘am, Gush Halav, H. ‘Amudim, Meiron, and in some parts of the Capernaum synagogue, which probably constituted the original synagogue group, that was built in a short time based on the same prototype, giving the a date in the 2nd to early 3rd c. (c. 190–235 CE) (Kohl and Watzinger 1916:172–3; Foerster 1972:157; Maoz 1996:418).

Synagogue ornamentation is also taken into consideration for dating purposes. Representational art appears in architectural decoration of the fourth century, thus providing dates for Capernaum, Korazim, and other synagogue figurative sculpture (such as the Nabratein aedicula lintel and the H. 'Amudim façade lintel). Mosaic pavements are already present in the late third century (at Hammath Tiberias B level I, 'En Gedi I, H. 'Amudim), even though at that time they only display geometric designs, whereas from the fourth century on, mosaic pavements also portray figurative art. The biblical scenes depicted on mosaic floors are dated to the 4th (H. Hamam), 5th (Gerasa, Meroth, and Sepphoris) and 6th centuries (Beth Alpha and Na'aran).

The Torah Shrine, which was main feature of synagogue architecture, changed its form during the various periods. The aedicula was the earliest form of Torah Shrine and persisted until the sixth century in several synagogues. The development of the niche took place in the early fourth century, while the apse was an innovation found in synagogues erected during the sixth century. Therefore synagogues including apses (with the exception of the Golan and Galilee synagogues, where only Arbel and Deir 'Aziz have apses) are dated to the sixth century. (The synagogues with apses at Hammath Gader III and Ma'oz Hayim II may possibly have been built by the late fifth century.)

The destruction of the images in the Na'aran synagogue probably dates to the late sixth century CE, when there was a thematic change from figurative art to the use of inscriptions as well as floral and geometric designs in the mosaic pavements, possibly the result of iconoclasm. The destruction of figurative sculpture at Capernaum is also usually ascribed to Jewish iconoclasts. However, some sculpture and reliefs in the Korazim and other Golan synagogues did survive intact, which suggests another, simpler explanation: that the brittle limestone was less durable than the hard basalt.

Ornamentation in the form of carved lintels, friezes, and architraves, is a common feature of architecture in the northern part of the Land of Israel, as well as of Syria. The art is local with Oriental elements predominating; even the classical forms have a local touch, making it difficult to date by style, as local tradition was strong enough to retain a style through several generations of craftsmen and masons. This is proved by the Galilean and Golan synagogues which, despite their similar plans, architectural features, and ornamentation style, are dated to periods ranging from the late third to the sixth centuries CE. One example of this chronological difficulty is lintel type I, characteristic of the Galilean synagogues at Arbel, Bar'am, Meiron, Gush Halav, and Nabratein (Figs. V-2, 6, 7). The similarity in moldings, decoration, and size should indicate a late third-century date for the construction of all these synagogues' façades. However, these lintels continue to decorate the façades throughout the life of the synagogues—until the fourth century at Meiron and until at least the sixth century at Gush Halav. Thus, the dating of the Nabratein lintel to phase II is arbitrary. The sixth-century inscription was added to the lintel in phase III (as suggested by Avigad 1960). Moreover, by the time Nabratein III was rebuilt, in 564 CE according to the inscription, Gush Halav had already been destroyed (551 CE). The ed-Dikke synagogue side entrance lintel fragment also belongs to type I. This may indicate a fourth-century date for the construction of this synagogue, or even later if an earlier model from the Galilee synagogues was employed in the molding.

The Capernaum synagogue ornamentation is dated by scholars to the second half of the 3rd c. CE, based on the style of crafting, on the Corinthian capitals style (Bloedhorn 1989:52), and on the comparison of the architectural ornamentation with that of the Korazim synagogue which is dated to the 4th c.; all this confirms an earlier date for the Capernaum décor, which probably influenced the Korazim artists (Turnheim 1966:128; Amir 2007:45, 48).

May (2000:53*) and May and Stark (2002:247) formulate a 'stratigraphic' sequence for the Korazim decoration based on the similarities between the Capernaum and Korazim décor; they accept the date of the second half of the 3rd c. CE for the Capernaum architectural decoration (as suggested by Bloedhorn 1989:52) and date Workshop I slightly later. On grounds of style, May and Stark

(2002:248) suggest a 5th c. CE date for the engravings of the masters of Workshop II, which were executed *in situ*. The works of Masters G and H are later additions but are difficult to date. May (2000:53*) observes similarities in themes and basalt carving execution between Korazim and the Golan synagogue art, but the Korazim reliefs are more skillfully and more delicately crafted than similar reliefs from 'En Nashut, H. Khavakha, and a lintel from Dabura. May and Stark further maintain that the reliefs of the Golan synagogues at ed-Dikke and H. Khavakha were carved by the masters of Workshop II, yet, as the Golan reliefs were not found *in situ*, their presumed dating to the 5th c. CE (by Maoz 1995:Pls. 5, 26) is not convincing. In their relative dating of the décor, May and Stark ignore the stratigraphic evidence and the finds at Capernaum and Korazim, which play an important part in the current critical dispute regarding dating. They maintain that the characteristic engraving style and motifs in Golan art, which appear in the synagogues of ed-Dikke, el-Ahsennyeh, er-Rafid, H. Khavakha, and Ghadriyye indicate a regional style (see also Turnheim 1987:182; Amir 2007:37, Table). Amir concludes that stylistic resemblances and regional proximity date the Golan synagogues to the 4th c., in contrast to Maoz (1995:8–9) who dates the Korazim-'En Nashut group to the 5th c.

The style of the Korazim synagogues is visible in the eclecticism and variety of the chosen motifs which Amir (2007:32–36) dates to the beginning of the Byzantine period—the first half of the 4th c.—based on artistic style and on the diagonal Ionian capitals chronology. Amir (2007:48–50) describes the stylistic-artistic development in the décor of Galilee and Golan synagogues by tracing the stylistic and chronological development of the lion and eagle motifs: The pair of lions carved on the Nabratein aedicula lintel found in second use are dated to the 3rd c.; the Korazim three-dimensional lion is dated to the first half of the 4th c.; the 'En Samsam/'En Nashut relief is dated by its style to the mid-5th c.; while the lion on the relief from H. Kanaf is dated to the 6th c. The eagles engraved on the Beth She'arim mausoleum arch are dated to the end of the 2nd–3rd c; those on the Gush Halav lintel soffit date to the 3rd c.; the eagles carved on the Korazim and Jarba reliefs are dated to the mid 4th c.; the style of the eagles crafted on the 'En Nashut relief date it to the mid-5th c.; the eagle on the Umm el-Qanatir double capital, together with other items found at the site, should be dated to the last quarter of the 5th or first half of the 6th c. CE. This described development indicates that the Galilean ornamental style dates to the 3rd and 4th c., while the Golan décor style dates to the 5th and 6th c. CE.

Nevertheless, scholarly chronological conclusions based on stylistic typology, such as those of Tzafrir (1995), May (2000), May and Stark (2002), and Amir (2007), are difficult to accept; the style and execution more likely depended primarily on the artists' skills, on economic and social differences, and on religious tendencies. As Seth Schwartz (2001:212) correctly observed, there is no reason to assume that artistic skills and high workmanship entail an early date, while simple and unrefined work suggests a later one.

What is clearly observable is that early buildings that might have been synagogues were usually rebuilt using similar or even the same plans. Reconstructions made use of earlier parts from the same building that were recycled and/or of *spolia* taken from other structures, as we see at Capernaum and Bar'am, for instance. The practice of recycling rather than using *spolia* might be considered a phenomenon of Galilean synagogues.

In conclusion, the construction of synagogues in the Land of Israel was continuous throughout the Roman and Byzantine periods, though it seems to have been most prolific during two main periods: the late third and early fourth centuries CE when most of the Galilean synagogues were erected, and the sixth century when many of the characteristic Byzantine synagogues were built. Consequently, for dating purposes the historical context, excavation levels and stratigraphy, and the artistic style and finds of each synagogue need to be examined separately.