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THE CIVIC BASILICA IN THE DECAPOLIS AND JUDAEA-PALAESTINA

In the current paper, an attempt is made to gather the data on the limited corpus of Roman (second half of the 1st century BC — 4th century AD) basilicas, known in the cities of Decapolis and Judaea-Palaestina. The comparative description is given; wherever available — together with information on relationship with the urban context. The basilicas of Kanata, Hippos-Susita, Nysa-Scythopolis (2 structures), Beth She’arim, Sebaste and Ascalon are described in detail; the preference of the “ambulatory” type is apparent. The 2nd–3rd centuries reconstructions with monumentalization of features, conventionally called “tribunals”, were likely related to the imperial visits to the region and to the growing importance of the imperial cult. The basilica of the Jewish town of Beth She’arim differs from the rest with its nave and double-aisled plan and was possibly influenced by the Royal portico of the Jerusalem temple. The tendency not to reconstruct basilicas damaged by the 363 earthquake and the general tendency of obsolescence of this architectural form towards the Byzantine period is noted.

Keywords: civic basilica, Roman architecture, Decapolis, Judaea-Palaestina, imperial cult, classical archaeology

Introduction

The civic basilica debuted in the Roman Republic and soon became an important component in the city's public buildings ensemble. Social, political, legal and commercial activities were among its major uses, and it could be stated that the

a building might have looked like, but it was clearly intended to be used for public and private meetings, hearings and arbitrations — just like the civic basilica; see Bablitz's study on legal hearings held in the domestic basilica (Bablitz 2015). The interrelationship of both architectural forms was examined by Russel (Russel 2015). Our work, however, is concentrated solely on the civic basilica.
basilica was the center of urban life. Vitruvius (*De architectura* V.1.4–10) details how the basilica should be positioned in relation to the forum, elaborates on correct proportions, and appropriate decoration. These principles were realized with varying levels of accuracy in the monuments that survived to this day.

In the following lines we shall briefly discuss the origins of this architectural form and offer a comparative description of limited corpus of Roman (second half of the 1st century BC — 4th century AD) structures that have hitherto been discovered in the cities of the Decapolis and Judaea-Palaestina, spanning the territories of today’s Israel (including Judea and Samaria) and Syria.

**Basilica: its development and uses**

Much has been written about the emergence of the basilica, but it seems that the final word in the debate on this issue has not yet been said. The extensive literature includes such important milestones as the works by Müller and Ward Perkins (*Müller* 1937; *Ward Perkins* 1954); Balty’s and Nünnerich-Asmus’ profound researches (*Balty* 1991; *Nünnerich-Asmus* 1994), Welch recent attempt to delineate the origins of the basilica (*Welch* 2003) and Lackner’s study of the Republican structures (*Lackner* 2008).

Basilica evolved concurrently with the process of Hellenization, which brought to the Roman territories ideas from distant cultures: along with painting and sculpture also came Greek architecture, and its influences made their presence felt both in civic and domestic building (however, there was considerable conservatism in the cultic architecture). It had been suggested that the hypostyle halls of Delos and Syracuse (which, in their turn, were influenced by similar structures in Ptolemaic Egypt and in Persia) evolved from the stoai — roofed colonnades that flanked the agora in a Greek city, while the Roman basilica was merely a further development of these halls (see, for instance, *Anderson, Spiers* 1902: 173 and *Leroux* 1913). Others defend its uniqueness and being the fruit of architectural thought of the people of Rome, while elements borrowed from the Greek world “expressed with unique means and power the sturdy Italic soul” (*Durant* 1944: 92) and the entire plan was not merely a continuation of the previous type but rather its transformation with the Romans’ “own creative power” in accordance with their demand for “greater spaciousness than the Greeks had ever used” (*Müller* 1937: 255). Carter suggested that basilica’s development was forced by local factors, such as climate and various aspects of civic and commercial life, and supported his point of view with Suetonius’ report on construction of a new forum with roofed part — a basilica — by Augustus (*Carter* 1995: 41–42; *Divus Augustus* 29.1). Schneider also stated simply that basilica is an “Italian” rather than Greek invention, pointing to a distinct lack of similarity between βασίλειος στοά in Athens and Roman basilicas (*Schneider* 1950: 135).

Leroux, followed by Ward Perkins, tend to see in the basilica of Pompei (late 2nd century BC) a remembrance of a supposed predecessor of the “Greek type”, and thus due to its being turned with a short wall to the forum (*Leroux* 1913: 224 ff., 258 ff.; *Ward Perkins* 1954: 73–74). Müller objected to this assertion and pointed that the colonnades in a basilica steer the entrant into ambulatory movement in the aisles around the nave, while in a Greek hall (Megaron) the two colonnades lead the entering visitor in one direction only — towards the far end of the building and along its central axis. He also emphasized that the apse, and particularly the use of multiple apses, is a typically Roman innovation (*Müller*
1937: 250, 252, 255). Ward Perkins suggested that both orientations — longitudinal and transverse — are in fact two principal types of basilica, which had already been formed towards the end of the 2nd century BC (Ward Perkins 1954: 74). The orientation, as shall be shown below, was not necessarily dictated by topography or urban constraints.

The difficulty in determining the genealogy of the Roman basilica also stems from the multiplicity of meanings of the term, on the one hand, and from the large number of architectural forms named by it, on the other. In addition to the domestic basilica (see above, footnote 1) and the usual uses, such as seat of the magistrate, trade, money changing and judicial activity (Cic. Verr. 2, 5, 58; Cic. ad Att. 22, 14), epigraphic material contains mentionings of basilica argentaria (vascolaria), which housed money changers and silversmiths, and also basilicas vestilia, vestiaria and floscellaria, in which clothing, general goods and flowers, respectively, were sold (Robathan 1934).

In bad weather infantry and cavalry drills were conducted in special basilicas named basilica equestris exercitatoria; basilica principiorum served as the main structure in a military camp. Also worth mentioning are basilicas erected in affinity (not only physical proximity) with cultic centers, in particular, Basilica Hilariana in the complex dedicated to Magna Mater in Rome. In addition, basilicas are known to be attached to other public buildings, such as theatres and thermae (basilica thermarum) which’s purpose is obscure, but they might have been combining between the functions of a vestibule, apodyterium, cultic shrine and roofed space for exercise (similar to a palaestra) (Nielsen 1990, vol I: 50. See also Ward Perkins 1954: 74–75; CIL VI, 30973, 9209; CIL VII, 965; CIL VIII, 20156; CIL XII, 4342; CIL VI, 30973). It is important to emphasize that some of the basilicas were not “basilical” in the traditional sense: Basilica Argentaria in Rome was in fact a double-aisled structure; basilica vestiaria in Djémila (Algeria) was merely a hall with an entrance at one short end and an apse at the other, without inner partition by colonnades at all.

The earliest known basilicas are: Basilica Porcia (184 BC), Basilica Aemilia (170 BC) and Basilica Sempronia (169 BC) — all are located in Rome. Later constructional phases make it difficult to reconstruct their appearances, but it seems that at least some of them were separated from the forum by a colonnade alone, thus being a roofed continuation of the latter. During the second half of the 2nd century BC emerges also the basilical plan common to the region in question: a hall divided by four colonnades into a central nave with a clerestory, surrounded by an ambulatory. This new architectural canon, as reflected in the basilicas of Rome, served as a guideline to architects all around the Republic, and already in the middle of the 2nd century BC Cosa, a military colony “with no architectural pretentions of its own” (Ward Perkins 1954: 71), flaunted a basilica inspired by the examples in Rome.

However, Plautus mentions “basilica stayers”: subbasilicanos (Capt. 815) and maritos sub basilica (Curc. 472) — which necessarily indicate the existence of some basilica in Rome before Basilica Porcia was erected: Plautus died in 184 BC, while Captivi was completed before 200 BC. The details in the text (such as the smell of the fish) indicate the proximity to the market and the nature of the activity in the structure. It is possible that it was the basilica built after the fire of 210 BC, and Livy states explicitly that “there were no basilicas then [before the fire — HS]” (Ab Urbe 26.27.3; Russel 2015: 52, footnote 15). The fire destroyed the basilica of the enigmatic Atrium Regium (“atrium near Regia”), which was named after the place, according to Carter: the meaning of both
the Latin and the Greek names is “royal” (Ab Urbe 26.27.2–3 and 27.11.16; Carter 1995: 42). Since the word is an adjective (royal), it was suggested that originally it was attached to a noun “stoa” (Sear 1982: 22; Russell 2015: 52; Geographica V.3.8). Schneider, however, points to the fact that “basilica” in Latin is a noun, and thus supports his notion of “Italian” origin of a basilica (Schneider 1950: 135)1.

Basilicas in the Decapolis and in Judaea-Palaestina

The first direct contact of the region with the Roman world occurred following Pompey’s conquests, which put an end to Hasmonean theocracy and brought liberty to the Pagan cities. The poleis enjoyed autonomy within the province of Syria, many of them commemorated the event by starting the city’s era with the liberation year (61–64 BC). However, internal processes that took place on the background of the decline of the Republic did not allow to prepare the fertile ground for the architectural renaissance which began in the days of Augustus and lasted throughout the Principate period. It was an attempt in an imperial scale to create a political identity that would be evident throughout the empire, to the most remote provinces in the east and west. It is during that period that cultic, administrative and entertainment buildings were erected, new cities were founded, and numerous existing ones received their true urban identity.

It can be said in general that the basilica did not become a common architectural form in the Roman east2 (Ward Perkins 1954: 77; Raja 2012: 199), and Tsafir’s decades-old comment on the small, contrary to the anticipated, number of discovered structures is still relevant (Tsafir 1988: 91). In the region under discussion Roman3 basilicas are known from Kanata, Hippos-Susita, Nysa-Scythopolis (two structures), Beth She’arim, Sebaste and Ascalon (fig. 1). All these shall be discussed in the following lines.

Recent excavations in Gerasa partially revealed a large building, preliminarily called a basilica (Agusta-Boularot, Seigne 2005; Lichtenberge, Raja 2015: 484, 495), flanking from west a rectangular compound — temenos or forum.

Another structure, somewhat later than the aforementioned ones (erected in the 3rd–4th centuries AD), with a complex plan, was excavated in Tiberias; there is no unanimity among scholars regarding its identification. The first excavator named it a basilica (Drucks 1964: 16). The excavations were continued by Hirschfeld, who concluded that the edifice is a basilica that was possibly used for the seat of the Synedron (Hirschfeld, Meir 2006; Hirschfeld, Galor 2007: 226–229). Further study of the finds

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1 The identity of Atrium Regium and related structures was discussed and debated in great detail by Gaggiotti and Zevi (Gaggiotti 1985; Zevi 1991). The discussion was further continued by Welch, which concluded that the structure related to as «basilica» might have been a reception hall for Greek embassies, executed in the spirit of the Greek architectural tradition (Welch 2003). It would be best to close our brief review of basilica’s origin with Welch’s words: «One looks in vain for any clear evidence of transitional structures between the Greek stoa and the Roman Basilica» (Welch 2003: 9).

2 For the situation in the Roman west and Africa see the research by Laurence et al. (Laurence et al 2011: 170–202).

3 According to Tepper, a Ptolemaic shops structure discovered in Philoteria-Beth Yerah, which had been remodelled during the 2nd century BC by removing all the partition walls and replacing them with two rows of pillars, is in fact the earliest known basilica in the region (Tepper 1999). This structure was not included in the current paper, since it is not Roman. For the same reason non-ecclesiastical basilicas from the Byzantine period in Nysa-Scythopolis (Bar-Nathan, Mazor 1993: 38–40, fgs. 55–56) and in Caesarea (Holum 2008: 551–558) shall not be discussed here.
and of Hirschfeld’s scientific estate led others to identify the structure as a mansion with a peristyle court (Miller 2015: 249–252; Weiss 2016: 215–217); and such was Hirschfeld’s opinion in an interim report (Hirschfeld 1997: 38–39).

A colonnaded building, dating to the first quarter of the 3rd century AD, had been partially excavated at Dor. The remains can be interpreted either as a basilica or as an open court flanked by roofed colonnades, and in view of this uncertainty and limited exposure it was decided not to include it in this work (Stern, Sharon 1993: 128–131).

The remains of yet another colonnaded public structure, dating to the 3rd–4th centuries AD, probably attached to a forum, were exposed in Paneas, and during the initial phase of excavation it was proposed to consider it as a basilica (Tsaferis, Israel 1993: 1–2); it seems that the apse of the Byzantine church was attributed initially to the Roman structure. After a closer examination of the finds the structure was redated to the 1st–2nd centuries AD and the apse was not included among its elements anymore. The remains consist of walls and colonnades (including colonnades meeting point marked by a pillar with heart-shaped section), but they are insufficient for reconstruction of the plan. Branched clay pipes through which the spring waters were directed led the excavators to suggest that the structure was possibly a nymphaeum (Tsaferis 2008: 17–20).

The Royal Portico, considered by the eyewitnesses the Herod’s most magnificient building, was flanking the Jerusalem Temple mount from the south. It survived in a detailed description by Flavius (Ant. Jud. XV. 410–420) and in a number of architectural members. It undoubtedly was a three-aisled structure with a clerestory, and in a recent exhaustive study Peleg-Barkat suggests that the edifice, clearly influenced by Roman traditions, represented an early example of a transitional form combining the features of a Greek stoa and a Roman basilica (Peleg-Barkat 2017: 104, 112, fig. 3.2).

One last structure to be mentioned is known only from theoretical reconstructions: the basilica of Aelia Capitolina. According to Coüasnon it might have been located north to the forum, next to the temple of Aphrodite, and the complex built by Constantine the Great was erected in the 4th century above their remains: the basilical church on top of the civic basilica and the Anastasis on top of the temple (Coüasnon 1974: 41–44; Sperber 1998: 152, fig. 10.1). This is, of course, merely a theoretical reconstruction, as the limited excavations conducted cannot conclusively confirm this suggestion.

**Kanata**

Kanata of the Decapolis was re-established as a polis by Gabinius. During the 1st century AD it was annexed to the Province
of Syria and later turned into a colony within the province of Arabia by Septimius Severus; it was named after him Septimia Canatha. The city’s ruins have been surveyed several times. Pioneer works of Rey and de Laborde are to be mentioned (Rey 1861: 129, pls. 5–8; Laborde de 1837: pls. 54–55). The research was continued by de Vogüé, Butler, Brünnow and Domaszewski (de Vogüé 1865–1877: pls. 19–20; Butler 1904: 351, 402; Butler 1915: 346–351, figs. 313–316, pls. 21–24; Brünnow and Domaszewski 1909: 107–144, figs. 1000–1038). Amer et al. conducted a detailed study of the “serail” complex, to which belongs the basilica in discussion (Amer et al. 1982). A recent architectural survey and limited excavation had been conducted by a joint Syrian-German team (Freyberger 2000).

The remains occupy both banks of the wadi spanned by a bridge. They include streets network and a number of public buildings: temples, thermae, a theatre — mostly dating to the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. On the west bank a large compound, possibly used for the imperial cult, named by the first explorers a “serail”, is found (figs. 2–3). It consists of a smaller western structure from the Antonine period — a tetrastilos in antis temple (Segal 2013a: 199–200), and a large 3rd century basilica annexed to it. Both structures are oriented north-south, with their northern entrance, façades aligned along a piazza or a street. The structure’s dimensions: 18.50 × 57 m. (including the apse at the southern end). The doorways are located symmetrically. Two side portals, ca. 1.80 m. wide, lead to the eastern and western aisles, and the central one, ca. 3 m. wide, leads to the northern aisle and to the nave. Two additional openings connect the basilica with the temple, and others, visible in the basilica’s long walls, are apparently late. The walls are dry-stone constructed in opus quadratum technique. Both structures were heavily remodelled during the Byzantine period and turned into churches. According to the reconstruction offered by Amer et al., the inner space of the basilica was divided into a nave and four aisles by four colonnades, with 17 columns in the eastern and western aisles, 5 columns in the southern and 4 in the northern one. Lower intercolumn is ca. 1.80 m in every but the northern colonnade, where larger spaces were left in order to provide an unobstructed view of the inner space. The southern aisle is bordered by the tribunal, which consists of two rectangular rooms in southern and eastern corners, with their openings facing each other, and of an external apse ca. 7.50 m. wide (Butler, 1903: 402–405 and Amer et al. 1982: 264–265, pl. 2). Freyberger maintains that the structure originally was three-aisled, but this reconstruction seems less probable (Freyberger 2000: 146–147). Numerous architectural members are used in the later phase (Corinthian capitals, column drums, frieze fragments), but they do not necessarily belong to the initial structure and its order cannot be restored with any certainty.

### Hippos-Susita

“A town built on the hill”, possibly mentioned by Mathew the Apostle. The site has been excavated continuously since 2000 by a University of Haifa expedition, headed by Segal and Eisenberg (2000–2013) and since 2016 by Eisenberg and Kowalewska; a joint Polish team, headed by Młynarczyk and Burdajewicz, excavated the Northwest church complex and a Concordia University team, directed by Schuler, exposed the Northeast church and the neighboring insula. During the Roman period it was fortified and boasted a street network, thermae, an odeum and an impressive water supply system. The paved forum is crossed
Fig. 2. Kanata, plan (after Butler 1915: pl. XXI, after Rey 1861). The north is up, and not as marked.
Fig. 3. Kanata, the "serail" compound: the temple (left) and the basilica (Amer et al. 1982: 282, pl. 2)
by the main decumanus. It is flanked by 3 porticos from north, east and south and by a kalibe temple from west. From north the forum is bordered by the temenos with the prostyle temple and by the late 1st century AD basilica, which is turned to it with its short southern wall; the western wall of the basilica was reportedly built over the foundation courses of the temenos (figs. 4–5). Such a location was dictated by spatial and topography constraints (Segal 2013b: 79; Segal 2013c: 167). Since the floor level in the basilica is 1 m. higher than the forum and the decumanus, the access to the structure was facilitated by the paved plaza and steps leading from the decumanus. The structure measures 30×55 m. Three currently known portals are located symmetrically in the southern wall, with only the western portal facing the forum — the central and the eastern ones are facing the decumanus. The central portal is 5.70 m. wide; the width of the side portals is 3 m each. The central portal leads to the short southern aisle and to the nave, and the side portals lead to the western and eastern aisles. The floors were coated with plaster, and this simplicity contrasts with the wealth of the interior decoration. The walls rest on built foundations, with their lower courses built in finely dressed basalt, and upper — limestone ashlar. Inner faces of the walls were plastered and lavishly decorated with painted geometrical and anthropomorphic stucco reliefs, separated with stucco pilasters; the figurative reliefs are not common in the region and may indicate several repair phases during the 1st–3rd centuries. The inner space is divided by 4 colonnades, with 14 columns in long eastern and western colonnades and 4 in the short ones. The spacing between the columns of the southern colonnade in front of the central doorway was widened, in order to allow the entrant an unobstructed view of the interior, and of the forum and the decumanus — for those inside. The juncture points of the colonnades are marked by pillars with heart-shaped section. The columns stood on ca. 0.40 m. high attic bases, placed over 1 m. high built pedestals, adorned with cyma recta mouldings. In the intercolumniations of the long colonnades a number of smaller pedestals or podia survived, possibly for setting up statuary. The shafts are composed of 7 to 9 drums of varying height and diameter, they have entasis and are crowned with bipartite Corinthian capitals; total height of a column was

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4 As given by Segal (Segal 2013c: 168). In the latest report the length is 56 m. (Eisenberg 2017: 12).
5 As given by Segal (Segal 2013c: 169). In the latest report the width is 3.50 m. (Eisenberg 2017: 14).
Fig. 5. Hippos-Susita, the basilica (Eisenberg 2017: 15, fig. 10)
ca. 9 m. Traces of white plaster survived on all the elements of the columns; the shafts were coated with stucco designed to appear as vertical and spiral fluting. No entablament elements were found, and in view of somewhat problematic span of ca. 3 m. between the columns it was suggested that wooden entablament was used in the structure. Several marble elements, later than the construction of the basilica, were found; they may indicate, together with some of the stucco reliefs, repairs during late 2nd or early 3rd centuries, possibly simultaneously with the massive reconstructions of basilicas in Sebaste and Ascalon. Numerous fragments of white mosaic floor in the debris may suggest the existence of galleries; the evidence for roof is provided by large quantities of roof tiles and nails. The basilica collapsed during the earthquake of 363 and was not rebuilt (Segal 2013c: 165–181; Eisenberg 2017: 12–16; Rozenberg 2018: 335–344).

The Agora basilica

The structure is among the first to be built in the Roman city during the 1st century AD (figs. 6–7). It was located south to the Pre-Monuments street and west to the Agora Temples street, and it occupies north-eastern portion of the area Mazor believes to be the agora; he tends to see in such a location an influence of the Republican city of Rome (Mazor 2007a: 6–9, plan 1.3). Tsafir and Foerster suggested that the forum is yet to be found to the west of the basilica, under the Byzantine agora (Tsafir, Foerster 1997: 96).

The exposed remains suggest that the structure measured ca. 30 × 70 m. According to the excavators, portals might have been installed in the long walls. The walls were raised above built foundations, with the lower courses built of basalt and the upper — of soft Nari stone. Lime flagstone pavement survived in the north-eastern corner, near the portal, some parts of the structure might have been paved with marble during the later phase. The eastern aisle is built over a line of rooms open towards the street, which apparently served as shops. Since no evidence for vaults or arches was found, the excavators suggested that wooden beams might have served as the ceiling of the shops and, at the same time, as aisle’s floor. One complete short and beginnings of two long colonnades were unearthed in the northern half of the building, allowing to reconstruct a central nave surrounded by an ambulatory. The northern colonnade consists of four columns, the juncture point of the colonnades is marked by pillars with heart-shaped section. Massive reconstruction during the
Fig. 6. Nysa-Scythopolis, the city during the 1st century AD (Mazor 2007a: 8, plan 1.3). The Agora basilica is marked by number 2.

Fig. 7. Nysa-Scythopolis, the Agora basilica (Di Segni et al 1996: 337, fig. 1). Note the apse in the rear wall of the Central Monument (1) flanked by doorways (9).
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2nd century resulted in the area north to basilica being transformed into a piazza created by the meeting of the Monuments, the Valley and the Western Thermae streets; a mysterious Central monument was built into the basilica, blocking its northern aisle and shortening it by some 5 meters. The rear wall of the Monument serves now as the northern wall of the basilica, flanked by two monumental portals leading directly to the aisles; the western portal was narrowed at some point. The portals were constructed of white limestone, and the door leaves were generously decorated with bronze fixtures. The northern colonnade became engaged. The masonry of the second phase was built using a limestone of better quality than the Nari in the first phase. The walls were coated with plaster from inside and adorned with painted and stucco decorations, and also with opus sectile. The colonnades were constructed over built stylobates and bases, both executed in basalt. The column shafts were composed of half-drums (possibly due to the poor quality of the Nari stone), coated with stucco imitating fluting and topped with Ionic capitals. The debris contained various fragments of the entablement and architectural members in a smaller scale, possibly indicating the existence of galleries. The tribunal consists of an apse, 5.30 m. in diameter, flanked by the 2nd and the 3rd columns of the northern, now engaged, colonnade, and of a raised bema, measuring 0.80 × 2.40 m. The apse is decorated with colorful marble revetment. In front of the bema a hexagonal marble altar to Dionysos with a dedicatory inscription dating it to 141/2 AD was found. It is possible that the altar was used for offerings in front of an imperial statue that stood once on the bema. However, the upper part of the altar, its “working surface”, was deliberately removed at some point, and the altar in this state might have reflected the sympathy of the Christian citizens to the mythical founder and patron of the city, without necessarily being used for actual Pagan worship (Foerster,Tsafrir 1992: 3–7; Tsafrir, Foerster 1997: 95–96, 115–116, fig. 27; Tsafrir 2008: 119–129; Di Segni et al. 1996: 336–340).

The basilica was destroyed by the 363 earthquake and was not rebuilt, contrary to a number of other monuments. Tsafrir and Foerster suggested that the city authorities gave up its reconstruction since by that time the commercial role of the structure was significantly reduced by a large number of new shops, and the social meetings began to take place in churches (Tsafrir, Foerster 1997: 115–116). The area turned into a quarry for building materials and the ruins were built over by the Byzantine agora.

The Caesareum basilica

During the 2nd century the city, similarly to other cities in the region, experienced a strong momentum in construction activity. Its center was expanded significantly: the streets were now adorned with colonnades and propilei; new nymphae, thermae and a new theatre were built. Alongside the cult of the founding gods (Dionysos, Zeus, Nysa/Tyche) and Demeter-Persephone (to this dyad was dedicated the eastern agora temple), the imperial cult was also common in the city; Mazor and Najjar suggested that the monuments erected on the central crossroads served for this purpose, while the Central monument was identified as a monumental altar and the structure at the meeting point of the Paladius, the Northern and the Monuments streets — as a kalibe temple. In addition to those, between 130–150 (possibly, in the north-west of the city, on

6 It is undeniable that the churches were used for social gatherings, but it is impossible to ignore the fact that only two churches and a monastery were found in the outskirts, while no churches were unearthed in the city center.
top of a plateau overlooking its center, the caesareum complex was built (figs. 8–9). It was a large quadriporticus\(^7\) with a peripter-

\(^7\) The term used by the excavators. It should be noted, however, that the western porticus belongs, in fact, to the basilica, being its eastern aisle; its colonnade is 2 m. higher and decorated in Corinthian order, while the other colonnades of the temenos are topped with Ionic capitals. Nevertheless, at the meeting point of the western and the southern colonnades a heart-shaped pillar base was discovered, with a pedestal and a base engaged at their respec-
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al temple, flanked by the odeum from the south and by the basilica from the west (Mazor, Najjar 2007: 21; Mazor 2007c: 186–187; Mazor 2016: 368).

The identification of the complex as caesareum was based also on the proximity of entertainment buildings (odeum and bath house south to the basilica) (Mazor 2016: 367); however, Belayche doubted the identification of the whole compound as a caesareum and suggested, after Arubas, Foerster and Tsafrir, to recognize it as a “state agora” containing a smaller temenos with its temple (Belayche 2017: 11, footnote 95 and reference there).

Fig. 9. Nysa-Scythopolis, the Caesareum (Mazor 2007a: 13, plan 1.6)
Floor level of the basilica is higher by some 0.74 m. than the temenos' floor; 4 steps were discovered in the southern porticus leading into the eastern and southern aisles of the basilica. It is possible that similar arrangement existed once in the northern porticus, too. The structure could also have been accessed from the south, through two monumental portals ca. 5 m. wide, flanking the exedra and separating the basilica from the bath house. The portal antae were decorated in the Corinthian order. The basilica's dimensions: 35.50 × 112 m. (124 m. including the exedra). Its solid northern wall is a continuation of the northern porticus' wall and it is met by the solid western wall, which continues beyond the exedra into the bath house. The aisles were paved with large lime flagstones (0.40 × 1.50 m.); in the southern aisle the pavers were laid along north-south axis, and east-west — in the eastern. The inner space was divided into a nave and four aisles by four colonnades, with 26 columns in the long eastern and western colonnades and 5 in the short ones. The juncture points were marked by pillars with heart-shaped section. The stylobates are built of basalt gravel, bound with mortar; their slabs protrude above the floor level by 3–5 cm. 0.53 m. high Corinthian bases (upper diameter — 0.96 m.) were placed on top of 0.89 m. high pedestals ornamented with cyma recta mouldings. The shafts of the inner colonnades were likely monolithic, while those of the eastern outer colonnade were composed of drums with lower diameter of 0.96 m. and upper of 0.82 m.; their reconstructed height was ca. 7.10 m. The columns were crowned with Corinthian capitals 1.05 m. high. The total column height was ca. 10.67–10.82. m. The eastern outer colonnade, connected with the northern and southern colonnades of the temenos by pillars with heart-shaped section (see above, footnote 7), was similar to the inner long colonnades in all but the shafts construction. All the elements were executed in hard limestone originating in Gilboa mountains. No entablament, galleries or roof details were found; the excavators reconstructed a clerestory above the nave. The exedra — an apsidal wall, 17.35 m. wide and 8.50 m. deep, flanked with antae. The floor in exedra is higher than the floor in the aisle by 0.30 m.; this difference was bridged by two steps. The stone pavers were arranged in concentric half-circles, similarly to the orchestra floor in the odeum. According to the excavators, a statue of Dea Roma and of the emperor might have stood in the exedra (cf. Divus Augustus 52), while the entire complex was possibly erected in relation to Hadrian's visit in the spring of 130.

The basilica's fate after the earthquake of 363 is unclear. On the one hand, the numerous fallen architectural members on the floors may indicate destruction, on the other — one of the portals leading to the bath house may have been used during the 5th century, according to the excavators. The Pagan character of the complex was forgotten, and by the end of the 5th century it was stripped of all the Pagan elements; the temple was dismantled to the ground and the ruins of the basilica were, most likely, used as a source of building materials (Mazor, Najjar 2007: 52–55; Mazor, Amos 2007: 138–165; Mazor 2007b: 172–174; Mazor 2007c: 181–188).

**Beth She‘arim**

The town was an important center of Jewish learning. The main occupation phase belongs to the 2nd–4th centuries AD. Systematic excavations were undertaken by Mazar (1936–1940) and Avigad (1953–1959). Since 2014 a Haifa University expedition, headed by Erlich and Evyasar, has been exploring the site. The works exposed 22 catacombs, streets, private and public structures, including two basili-
The civic basilica in the Decapolis and Judaea-Palaestina
Fig. 11. Beth She’arim, the basilica (Mazar 1957: 155, fig. 1)
The civic basilica in the Decapolis and Judaea-Palaestina

buildings, one of which was identified as a 3rd century synagogue, and the other as a 2nd century civic basilica, allegedly constructed in the lifetime of Judah ha-Nasi. The basilica is located on the south-western slopes of the hill, with its longitudinal axis running north-east to south-west (figs. 10–11).

It measures 15 × 25 m. (40 — including the court) and it is built along a paved street, with a single opening leading to court with a number of cisterns. Turning left, the visitor enters a narrow antechamber and from it — into the main hall. Two fragments of the floor mosaic with geometric patterns survived. The walls were built over rock-hewn foundations, using large finely cut blocks with marginal drafting and flat boss. Their inner surfaces were coated with plaster and decorated with marble opus sectile; traces of plaster on the outer surface of the eastern wall were interpreted as a waterproofing (Tepper, Tepper 2004: 139). The inner space was divided by two parallel rows of 5 columns into a nave and two side aisles. The columns stood on simple square pedestals, laid on foundations built of two large blocks with leveling material underneath. The building has undergone several reconstructions, resulting in elimination of the narthex and enlarging the basilica by adding two columns to each colonnade. Of the architectural members mentioned are only “column fragments” and a Corinthian capital, without specifying the material. At the far end of the central nave an elevated bema, built of crude ashlars, is found (2 × 4 m, ca 1.20 m. high). The basilica was in use until the Gallus revolt (351–352); it might have served as a civic basilica or a seat of the Synedrion (Mazar 1957: 154–159; Vilnai 1978: 894; Tepper, Tepper 2004: 129–141; NEAEHL: 236–248; Tepper, Tepper 2004: 147–150).

Sebaste

Sebaste — a Herodian incarnation of the ancient city of Samaria. It was dedicated to Augustus, and included a stadium, a theater, temples, fortifications, colonnaded streets, a forum and a basilica (figs. 12–13). The city was destroyed during the Great Revolt (66–70 AD) and rebuilt as a colony in the days of Septimius Severus. Large-scale excavations were carried out by Schumacher, Reisner and Fisher on behalf of the Harvard University (1908–1910) and by the Joint Expedition, directed by Crowfoot, Sukenik and Kenyon (1931–1935). The basilica was excavated by the Harvard expedition, and re-examined by the Joint Expedition.

The forum is flanked by four roofed colonnades. The basilica measures 32.60 × 74 m., it is bordered by the western porticus of the forum; Segal specially noted the meticulous planning and execution of the complex (Segal 2017: 419). The only currently known portal, 3 m. wide, is located in the middle of its long eastern wall. The spacing between the columns of the western porticus was widened in front of the portal, in order to visually highlight the entrance and to allow unobstructed movement. An ascending flight of steps bridges a 1-meter elevation gap between the floors of the porticus and the basilica. The walls are founded on the bedrock. They are built of large ashlars cut from local stone. The early western wall was dismantled and replaced with a line of massive piers so as to allow the flow of large public masses. The floor of the nave is paved with lime flagstones, under which along the stylobates two drainages with southward

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8 The structure’s identification as a synagogue relies on its location, decoration and small finds, however, see Tarkhanova 2016: 97–98, 103, 106, 175 for recent discussion of orientation problem. It’s plan and dimensions are most closely resembling the structure in question (anterchamber, two colonnades, bema at the far end), and the further study should take into consideration both buildings.
Fig. 12. Sebaste, plan (Crowfoot et al. 1942: pl. I)
Fig. 13. Sebaste, the basilica (after Watzinger 1935: pl. 14, fig. 38).
flow direction were exposed. The long aisles are paved with undecorated (except for simple black frame and a red and black geometrical figure in front of the western entrance to the tribunal; the figure was not documented visually, and its location can only be estimated) white mosaic. The mosaic belongs to one of the later phases as it clearly doesn’t reach the northern aisle. The inner space was divided by 4 colonnades into a central nave and four aisles, with 16 columns in the long colonnade and 6 or 5 in the short. The short northern colonnade with its 7 columns is evidently late, and it belongs to one of the reconstructions; the stylobate of the original colonnade is covered by the tribunal masonry, but it can clearly be seen on the plans and photos. The stylobates are constructed of large blocks laid over the bedrock. Attic bases were placed on top of monolithic pedestals decorated with cyma recta mouldings. The shafts are monolithic with clear entasis, their bottoms are decorated with torus-fillet-cavetto, and tops — with torus. The lower diameter of the column is 0.735 m., the upper — 0.665 m. The columns were topped with Corinthian capitals of which 2 were found (the first one is 0.90 m. high and the second, belonging to a pilaster, is 0.57 m. high). The heights of the different elements slightly vary (ca. 0.70 m. for the pedestals, ca. 0.45 m. for the bases and ca. 6 m. for the shafts), and the difference might have been compensated with varying height of the capitals. The difference in the capitals’ measurements can also indicate the existence of galleries. Various fragments of cornices, friezes and architraves were found in the debris, one bears a fragmental monumental inscription which mentions Annius Rufus (see below). All the members are executed in local stone. The tribunal is occupying the northern part of the nave and eliminates the northern aisle. It comprises of a room (ca. 14 × 9 m.) with semicircular tiered seating arrangement, which capacity at a yet later phase was increased by including it within a larger apse accompanied by shortening the long colonnades from 16 to 12 and by fixing the doorways in the aisles. There were four or more levels, at least two of which belong to the first stage of the tribunal. The late apse and some related elements were dismantled without proper documenting: a monumental ascending staircase is seen on a photography taken before the dismantling; this element only appears as unstratified on the general plan (fig. 14). The diameter of the apse at the floor level is 4.40 m. Its floor is paved with local limestone slabs arranged in concentric semicircles; the center piece was marked by an iron staple with a ring. The floor of the room is paved with rectangular limestone flagstones; its level is 1.48 m. lower than the floors in the nave and in the aisles. It is unclear how the late northern colonnade is related to the room (whether it allowed access or observation, or whether it stood in front of a solid wall). Some additional, including marble, details can be seen in the basilica today, but they were likely transferred from other areas during the last decades by the villagers or exposed by illicit excavations.

9 Hamilton suggested that the drainages might point that the central part of the structure was not roofed and called to use the term «basilica» with caution (Hamilton 1961: 44).

10 In the Harvard expedition plan the stylobate is unstratified and its foundations are marked as belonging to the initial Roman phase, while in the section C–D the entire stylobate is correctly ascribed to the initial Roman phase (Reisner et al. 1924: vol 2, plan 12); the short unstratified north-south wall between the stylobate and the basilica’s northern wall serves as a buttress — a solution also observed in the basilica of Hippos-Susita, which’s northern aisle was built over a sloping cliff (fig. 5a). The most accurate, therefore, is the restored plan given by Watzinger (Watzinger 1935: pl. 14, fig. 36).

11 Some additional, including marble, details can be seen in the basilica today, but they were likely transferred from other areas during the last decades by the villagers or exposed by illicit excavations.

12 We therefore suggest that during the 1st phase there was no tribunal below the floor levels...
building as curia or bouleuterion, point at its fundamental similarity to the basilica of Ascalon and note the overall complicated phasing and dating of the structure (Boehm et al. 2016: 292, footnote 90).

The Harvard expedition detected two main phases — Herodian and Severan, while the latter takes place when the forum and the basilica lie in ruins. The Joint Expedition suggested that the basilica was erected (together with the forum and other structures) between 180–230 AD and not necessarily in the days of Septimius Severus, while the late phase (the apse and the mosaics) occurs during the Byzantine period, when the structure turns into a cathedral (Crowfoot et al. 1942: 37; Bagatti 2002: 77; Hamilton 1961: 43). The Late Roman dating for the basilica was based on the style of architectural decoration and on the paleography of the monumental inscription, which mentions merely a member of the magistrate, and not a Roman praefect of the 1st century, as was suggested by the Harvard expedition (Crowfoot et al. 1942: 35–36). Balty suggests the dating of the structure to the Severan period (Balty 1991: 507); Netzer also did not include it among the Herodian edifices (Netzer 2007: 73).

of the structure. The western stylobate can clearly be seen under the masonry of the later apse (fig. 15); it continues till the alleged point of its meeting with the northern stylobate, which did not continue farther westward (see above, footnote 10; Reisner et al. 1924; vol 2, pl. 50a), allowing us to reconstruct a regular plan with 4 colonnades. The 2nd phase included installing the small-apsed tribunal with a new colonnade south to it and possibly dismantling the original northern colonnade with complete or partial blocking of the northern aisle. During the 3rd phase, possibly following the collapse of the structure, the long colonnades were shortened to 12 columns, a larger apsidal construction with side staircase(s) was built around the original apse and over the northern stylobate and aisle. The mosaic floors and the alterations in the western wall belong to the 2nd or the 3rd phases (fig. 19: 6).

Ascalon

The city’s advantageous location as a major port along the Via Maris and the rich aquifer secured its prosperity through the millennia; Marcellinus puts it in the list of the most famous cities of Palestine (Re- rum XIV 8.11). The existence of some colonnaded or peristyle structures in the Early Roman city is hinted in Flavius' account on Herod’s construction there (Bell. Jud. I 21.11), but it reached the peak of its glory under the Severans — similarly to other cities in the Roman east. Theophanes, a high Roman official from Egypt, who travelled in the region between 317–323 AD, mentions seeing a theater, an odeum, a temple and the “Golden basilica” (Roberts, Turner 1952: 37).
no. 627, 213–220). An alternative reading has been offered by Boehm et al. (Boehm et al. 2016: 312, footnote 159). In the Talmudic literature there are references to some basilicas in the city, in which wheat was once sold (Tosefta Ohalot 18, 10). SIRKI (ץירקה), mentioned in Jer. Shviit 6, 1, also in the context of wheat trade, is said to be a corrupted form of BSILKI (בִּיסִילָק) — “basilica” (Gordon 1931: 366). Both mentionings are given in the name of rabbi Pinchas ben Yair, who lived in the city in the 2nd century and had likely seen the basilica(s).

The first excavation attempt was undertaken in 1815 by lady Hester Stanhope — an adventurer who was looking for a treasure. The works resulted in the exposure of a large colonnaded building, apparently Roman and possibly a basilica, in which she was able to distinguish between the “Pagan, Christian and Muslim” phases, and a statue of a Severan emperor, which was shattered following the discovery by the order of lady Stanhope. The structure’s masonry was looted and reused in a newly built fortress in 1832–1840, but it appears on an 1839 painting by Roberts; the remains were covered completely by an intensive agricultural activity and could not be seen anymore. The approximate location is in Grid 31 or 32 of the Leon Levy Expedition (Silberman 1984: 68–75; Schloen 2008: 143–148).

The first scientific excavation of the site was undertaken by Garstang and Phythian-Adams in 1920–1922, resulting in exposure of the “Herod’s peristyle” and theater-like “Senate house” adjoining it. Garstang suggested that the structure he excavated might be the one mentioned by Flavius

Fig. 15. Sebaste, the basilica. The western stylobate continues clearly below the larger apse masonry; the arrow points to the termination of the stylobate at its alleged meeting point with the northern short stylobate. Photo by the Author
(see above), and possibly the same one depicted on the Roberts’ painting (The Fund’s Excavation of Ascalon 1921; The Excavation of Ascalon 1921; Garstang 1922; Garstang 1924). Garstang’s peristyle reconstruction was further developed by Diplock (Diplock 1971: 13–14, pls. IX–X) and by Stager and Wapnish, who preferred the Severan date (Stager and Wapnish 1991: 40). The date to the Herodian era was supported by two inscriptions found in the vicinity of the monuments (Hogarth 1922: 22–23). Watzinger was the first to identify the structures as a basilica and a bouleuterion or an odeum; he suggested basilica’s possible use for the imperial cult and offered a Severan date for the structure (Watzinger 1935: 97–98).

Since 1985 the site has been excavated by the American expedition headed by Stager (till his death in 2017) and currently by Master, which continued the works in the basilica (2008–2012). As a result, the sequence of 7 phases was discerned in the complex, of which two belong to the construction of the basilica and its reconstruction:

• Phase 6 (early Roman) — 1st century BC–65 AD: construction of the basilica and bouleuterion;
• Phase 5: (Severan) — 193–235 AD: transformation of the bouleuterion into an odeum and wide reconstruction of the basilica (Boehm et al. 2016: 280).

The structure is located in the center of the city, south-east to the intersection of the cardo with the decumanus, along the north-south axis. (figs. 16–18). The location of the forum is not clear. Dimensions of the basilica (including the theater-like structure on the southern end): 110 × 39 m. Locations of the portals are unclear; different suggestions were offered (Garstang 1924: pl. II; Diplock 1971: pl. IX; Fischer 1995: fig. 23). The inner ambulatory around the nave was created by four colonnades, with 24 and 6 columns in the long and short colonnades, respectively, and pillars with heart-shaped section marking their juncture points. The data on the early phase’s construction methods, materials and decoration are not available. The theatre-like structure consists of an apsidal wall (15.66 m. in diameter) built of local Kurkar stone ashlers bonded with mortar and containing tiered seats. The apse was flanked by two rectangular chambers (5.68 × 5.82 m.). A portion of the plaster floor survived in the eastern chamber. The chambers might have housed the staircases leading to the galleries of the basilica (Boehm et al. 2016: 285–287, fig. 12). During the Severan reconstruction the plan of the basilica was preserved, except for the eliminated southern aisle, and the whole complex was monumentalized and sumptuously decorated. The colonnades (both columns and pillars with heart-shaped section) stood on white marble monolithic pedestals (0.80 m. high) with white marble Attic-Ionic bases (0.45 m. high). The shafts of the columns and the pillars were monolithic, made of brecciated marble; lower diameter of a column shaft was 0.80 m. They were topped with white marble Corinthian capitals. Entablement is represented by a single architrave block. Smaller marble Corinthian capitals probably belonged to the galleries, and in various reconstructions the existence of a clerestory is proposed, too (Boehm et al. 2016: 306–307). Fischer continued Garstang’s calculations and reconstructed 8.35 m. height for the main colonnades, 6 m. for the galleries and 4 m. for the clerestory, making total of 21.15 m. for the structure (Fischer 1995: 143). The “bouleuterion” received all the

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13 The debate was summarized by Boehm et al. (Boehm et al. 2016: 313–314).
Fig. 16. Ascalon, plan (Fischer 1995: XX fig. 2)
elements of a theatre-like structure, with cavea built over three concentric walls around orchestra that replaced the initial seating tiers, aditi maximi, scaenae frons and pulpitum flanked by versurae, which probably continued to serve as stairwells. Two vaulted passages in the outer wall, from its western and eastern sides, led into the building. Additional doorways in the scaenae wall were probably connecting the structure with the basilica. The orchestra was paved with marble opus sectile. The walls of the structure were adorned with marble, porphyry and columnatio of the scaenae frons. Smaller capitals of type and material similar to the main order capitals may tentatively (due to unclear provenance) be attributed to the galleries, with restored height of a colonnade ca. 6.30 m. (Boehm et al. 2016: 303–307).

other stones, as well as with stucco and painted decorations. Tiles and nails provide evidence for roof (See Boehm et al. 2016: 292–306). Four figurative pilasters adorned with mythological figures have been found in the theatre-like structure; their analysis and discussion were undertaken by Fisher and Belayche (Fischer 1995: 130–139; Fischer 2008: 494–498; Belayche 2001: 222–225). Fischer suggested, based on place of the discovery, that the pilasters adorned the façade of the theater-like structure at the clerestory level, and could have been seen from the basilica (Fischer 1995: 145–146, fig. 25). Boehm et al. noted that the pilasters could either be placed on the façade of the structure, as Fischer suggested, but at the galleries level, or incorporated in the scaenae frons (Boehm et al. 2016: 311).
An important feature was described by Garstang in the eastern aisle of the basilica: a room with doorways to north and south, decorated with alabaster and marble. A colossal foot and a human-size nude statue, both from marble, led the excavator to identify the structure as a shrine to Apollo\textsuperscript{15} (Garstang 1924: 28–29, pl. II). However, several additional sculptures, depicting deities and a Severan emperor (destroyed by lady Stanhope), were found in the vicinity of the basilica (Fischer 1995: 139–140; Boehm et al. 2016: 311–312). The foot and the emperor statue may indicate the imperial cult that was practiced in the structure (Fischer 1995: 146–148). A stone altar decorated with a thunderbolt or sheath of grain was reported to be found in the late fills behind scenae frons (Le Blanc 2010: 59).

The theatre-like structure was in use into at least the 5\textsuperscript{th} century, up to its dismantling and building over with dense domestic architecture, and it is possible that the basilica shared the same destiny.

**Discussion and conclusions**

The basilicas were constructed in the civic centers — Hippos-Susita, Nysa-Scythopolis (agora), Sebaste and

\textsuperscript{15} The statue lacks the divine attributes and it might depict a city patron, while the foot may represent Zeus or a personification of the demos of Ascalon (Boehm et al. 2016: 287, footnote 59, 311).
The civic basilica in the Decapolis and Judaea-Palaestina

Ascalon — or in relation to the temples and sanctuaries — Kanata, Nysa-Scythopolis (caesareum) (see Table 1 and fig. 19 for comparative descriptions and depictions). Transversal orientation is clear in Nysa-Scythopolis (caesareum, towards the temenos) and in Sebaste (towards the forum). The basilica of Hippos-Susita is oriented longitudinally towards the forum and transversally towards the temenos. Spatial orientation of the rest is unclear, but the preference of north-south axis is apparent; regardless to the surrounding elements all the basilicas (except for Ascalon and Sebaste) have known portals in short walls. The so called “ambulatory type” (Müller 1937: 258), with four aisles around a central nave, was clearly the preferred one: only Beth She’arim basilica has a different plan. In all except Hippos-Susita basilicas specially designated areas which can conventionally be called “tribunals” (apse, bema, room or attached structure with tiered seats) at one of the short walls are known. It is possible that the “tribunals” in the basilicas of Nysa-Scythopolis (agora) and Sebaste did not exist in the first construction phase; in Sebaste and Ascalon the existing “tribunals” were significantly extended in the Severan period. The massive renovations in the cities and (re)construction of “tribunals” were likely related to the imperial visits: Hadrian’s visit had possibly caused the construction of the caesareum complex and the remodelling of the agora basilica; Septimius’ travels in the region might have caused the massive reconstructions in the basilicas of Sebaste and Ascalon, and possibly in Hippos-Susita. The construction of the basilica in Kanata was likely related to Septimius’ activity too (re-establishing the city as a colony). It can also be surmised that these changes were forced by the growing importance of the imperial cult. Thus, a study on sculpture retrieved from public spaces (fora, basilicas and curiae, in particular) in the Roman west and Africa showed the citizens’ great interest in the emperors and their family members, to whom the vast majority of statuary was dedicated, while the basilica of Timgad did not contain non-imperial images at all (Laurence et al. 2011: 197–200). Explicitly cultic finds were unearthed in the basilicas of Nysa-Scythopolis (agora) and Ascalon — statues and altars, a possible evidence for statuary in the intercolumniations had been reported from Hippos-Susita; the basilicas of the caesareum in Nysa-Scythopolis and Kanata were clearly intended to serve as a part of reportedly cultic complexes.

The town and the basilica of Beth She’arim were planned, executed and used by a Jewish population and not necessarily in accordance with the norms accepted among their Pagan neighbors. It may be suggested with all due caution that the basilica’s plan (as well as the plan of the other structure, identified as a synagogue) was inspired rather by the spectacular Royal Portico of Jerusalem than by the Gentile structures. The identification of the structure as the seat of the Synedrion lends further support to this suggestion.

The decision not to reconstruct the edifices ruined by the 363 earthquake (Nysa-Scythopolis, Hippos-Susita) seems to reflect a new policy that develops in the cities, despite the evidence for erection and maintenance of public buildings. It was an adjustment to the new political, economic and social climate, a transition “from Polis to Madina” as it was coined by Kennedy (Kennedy 1985; Avni 2011; Avni 2014; Liebeschuetz 2001). However, Avni’s claim that the process which started in the Roman period with a transition called by Segal “from function to monument” (Segal 1997) ended with a full return “from monument to function” (Avni 2011: 329) is correct only in part. Despite the obsoletion of certain architectural forms, including basilica, numerous truly inspiring monuments
<table>
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<tr>
<th>«Tribunal»</th>
<th>Order</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apse flanked by rooms at the S short aisle</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>Cult (?)</td>
<td>Conversion into a church</td>
<td>3rd AD</td>
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<td>Abuts temple from E, doorways in short N wall</td>
<td>18.50 × 57</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corinthian</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Trade? Cult?</td>
<td>363 earthquake</td>
<td>Late 2nd — 3rd</td>
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<td>NE of forum, doorways in short S wall, abuts temple from E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apse with bema blocking the N short aisle</td>
<td>Ionic</td>
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<td>Ca. 30 × 70</td>
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<td>Exedra at the S short aisle</td>
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<td>Flanking the temple from W, access from S porticus, doorways to bath house in short S wall</td>
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<td>Bema at the SW short wall</td>
<td>Corinthian</td>
<td>Civic? Seat of Synodion?</td>
<td>Gallus revolt (351–352)</td>
<td>2nd/pre-351</td>
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<td>NE-SW</td>
<td>Along paved street, doorway to court in long SW wall</td>
<td>15 × 25(40)</td>
<td>Beth She’arim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apse with tiered seats, theatre-like room blocking the N short aisle</td>
<td>Corinthian</td>
<td>Civic?</td>
<td>Conversion into a church?</td>
<td>Severan/</td>
<td>1st BC/180–230 AD</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Flanking the forum from W, doorway in E long wall</td>
<td>32.60 × 74</td>
<td>Sebaste</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apse with tiered seats flanked by two chambers at the S short aisle, theatre-like structure blocking the S short aisle; room with statuary in the E long aisle</td>
<td>Corinthian</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Civic, cult (?)</td>
<td>193–235</td>
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<td>NS</td>
<td>SE to cardo-decumanus intersection</td>
<td>32 × 102/39 × 110</td>
<td>Ascalon</td>
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were erected during the Byzantine period. The Roman basilica’s function as a place for social meeting was taken by the churches, as it is well illustrated by the numerous churches in Hippos-Susita (Schuler 2017, fig. 1); the basilicas of Kanata and (possibly) Sebaste were turned into churches themselves16. The civic basilica was not needed anymore, and its ashlers and members were reused in new structures.

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16 There additional examples for such conversion from surrounding regions, too. However, it is impossible to ignore the lack of a decent replacement in Nysa-Scythopolis, see footnote 6.


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**ABBREVIATIONS**

*AJA* — American Journal of Archaeology.

*AJP* — The American Journal of Philology.

*AnalRom* — Analecta Romana.

*ArchCl* — Archaeologia Classica.

*BAR* — Biblical Archaeology Review.

*BÉFAR* — Bibliothèque des Ecoles Françaises d’Athènes et de Rome.

*CIL* — Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.

*DOB* — Dumbarton Oaks Papers.

*ESI* — Excavations and Surveys in Israel.

*HA-ESI* — Hadashot Arkheologiyot — Excavations and Surveys in Israel.

*IAA* — Israel Antiquities Authority.

*IEJ* — Israel Exploration Journal.

*JRA* — Journal of Roman Archaeology.

*JRAS* — Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.


*PBSR* — Papers of the British School at Rome.

*PEFQS* — Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement.

*PEQ* — Palestine Exploration Quarterly.