

Asher Ovadiah - Sonia Mucznik

## Dionysos in the Decapolis

*I begin to sing of ivy-crowned Dionysus,  
the loud-crying god, splendid son of Zeus  
and glorious Semele ... And so hail to you,  
Dionysus, god of abundant clusters!*<sup>1</sup>

The only archaeological evidence for the cult of Dionysos in the cities of the Decapolis dates from the Roman period, although the cult of the god may well have been integrated into the local pagan cults even earlier during the Hellenistic period.

The cult of Dionysos was introduced into the region of the eastern Mediterranean basin following the dramatic events and changes that took place in government and population as a result of the conquest by Alexander the Great. In some cases the Greek myths expressed significantly the cultural integration and Hellenization of the cities of the Decapolis. For instance, Nysa was the other name for Beth Shean/Scythopolis during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. This identification is controversial among ancient writers and modern scholars. Some have identified Beth Shean as Nysa, Dionysos' birthplace,<sup>2</sup> while legend also has it that Dionysos himself founded the city in the place where he had buried his nurse Nysa<sup>3</sup> on his way back from India. Pliny also refers to this tradition:

<sup>1</sup> *The Homeric Hymns* XXVI.1-2, 11: *To Dionysus*.

<sup>2</sup> The "birth" of Dionysos, his head emerging from Zeus' thigh, appears on city-coins since the time of Septimius Severus (Spijkerman 1978: 194-195, No. 23), Elagabalus (Spijkerman 1978: 200-201, Nos. 40-41) and Gordianus III (Spijkerman 1978: 203-205, No. 57; Meshorer 1985: 42, 114, No. 112).

<sup>3</sup> Nysa/Tyche sitting on a throne and nursing the infant Dionysos is depicted on coins from the time of Caracalla (Spijkerman 1978: 198-199, No. 32), Elagabalus (Spijkerman 1978: 206-207, Nos. 46-48) and Gordianus III (Spijkerman 1978: 206-207, No. 58; Meshorer 1985: 42, 114, No. 110). Nysa/Tyche's image and the different scenes of Dionysos' childhood and adventures appear on various coins from Beth Shean/Scythopolis (Spijkerman 1978: 188-209; Meshorer 1985: 41-42, 114 [Nos. 107-110A]).

..., *Scythopolim (antea Nysam, a Libero Patre sepulta nutrice ibi) Scythis deductis.*

..., Scythopolis (formerly Nysa, after Father Liber's nurse, whom he buried there) where a colony of Scythians are settled.<sup>4</sup>

The direct connection with Dionysos and his cult is confirmed by the various findings from the archaeological excavations in the cities of the Decapolis, especially in Beth Shean/Scythopolis, where the cult of the god was the most important one.<sup>5</sup> Historical evidence<sup>6</sup> and archaeological discoveries in Beth Shean/Scythopolis<sup>7</sup> corroborate the relation between Dionysos and this city during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, indicating that Dionysos became its patron.

### Architectural Evidence

The sacred architecture in the cities of the Decapolis provides scarce evidence for the cult of Dionysos. During the excavations in Beth Shean/Scythopolis, parts of a monumental structure were uncovered in the centre of the city, next to a fallen pile of building stones and architectural items. The remains of this structure are situated where the "Palladius" and the "Silvanus" streets meet (Figs. 1-3).

Two gigantic limestone columns that had broken upon falling, along with large and well-defined Corinthian capitals, protruded from the pile. When the entire building was uncovered, it became evident that it was a *tetrastyle* Roman temple with a gabled façade and a circular hall (*cella*).<sup>8</sup> The façade of the temple faces northwest and the piazza in front of it was paved with limestone.<sup>9</sup>

A broad monumental staircase leading up to the temple, the paved portico, some fallen columns, and the large underground space that supported the tem-

<sup>4</sup> Pliny, *NH* V.xvi.74.

<sup>5</sup> See Avi-Yonah 1962: 123-134; Ovadiah 1975: 116-124.

<sup>6</sup> Beth Shean was known as Scythopolis during the period of the rule of the Ptolemies in Eretz Israel. In the light of the connection between the Ptolemaic rulers and Dionysos, one can perceive the special position he held as the city god and the development of his cult there (see Tcherikover 1959: 102-103; Ovadiah 1975: 116, 124).

<sup>7</sup> In recent decades archaeological discoveries, accumulated in Beth Shean/Scythopolis, confirm the patronage of Dionysos and the existence of his cult. These include architectural remains (a temple?), inscriptions, coins, altars, statues and architectural decoration related to Dionysos. As for Dionysos' companions, only two reliefs depicting Pan's head, discovered at Beth Shean, have been published. See Ovadiah - Mucznik 2009: 84-93; Ovadiah - Turnheim 2011: 38-39.

<sup>8</sup> Foerster - Tsafirir 1988: 16.

<sup>9</sup> The temple façade is to some extent reminiscent of the round Temple of Venus in Baalbek (see Ragette 1980: 52-62; Foerster - Tsafirir 1988: 17). In addition, the archaeological evidence indicates that the façade columns of the temple stood in place until the earthquake of 749 CE.

ple, have survived.<sup>10</sup> The temple was erected on a *podium* set partially on an impressive system of basalt vaults,<sup>11</sup> creating a vast underground space that supported the temple (Figs. 4-5).<sup>12</sup> The southern end of the lengthwise vault ended in an apse, and a spiral stairway connected the vaults to the temple interior (Figs. 6-7).<sup>13</sup> This space was apparently used not only for structural purposes, i.e., for supporting the building above, but also most likely for cultic (perhaps, a mystery cult of Dionysos) or chthonic/oracular purposes, as in the subterranean *adyton* in the Hellenistic Temple of Apollo at Claros in Asia Minor.<sup>14</sup>

Neither inscriptions nor any other evidence have been found within this complex, therefore it is impossible to ascertain to which deity the temple was dedicated. However, it is possible to connect it to Dionysos and his cult, since an altar with a Greek inscription to the god was discovered in an adjacent basilica.<sup>15</sup> Among the items found in the piazza was a cylindrical stone base, on which a Greek inscription was engraved noting that a statue of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180 CE) was placed upon it by the city. In addition, hexagonal hollows for small altars were revealed in the piazza, in front of the façade of the temple.<sup>16</sup> Was the statue of the Emperor connected to the cult of Dionysos? If indeed this is the case, it could be an archaeological evidence for the Emperor's cult in Beth Shean/Scythopolis. It should be noted that, according to an inscription from Ephesus, the Emperor Hadrian was the "New" Dionysos.<sup>17</sup>

Since there is no unequivocal evidence indicating that this structure belonged to any particular god, the shape of the round hall (*cella*), like a *tholos*, and its relatively small dimensions led the excavators to consider the possibility that this was a *heroon* (commemorative temple or shrine), perhaps for Nysa, the

<sup>10</sup> Tsafirir - Foerster 1994: 94.

<sup>11</sup> In the course of the excavations, it became evident that beneath the temple was a set of two vaults running along its width and a third vault along its length, intersecting the other two vaults and forming a double cross.

<sup>12</sup> Tsafirir - Foerster 1990: 34, Ill. 44; Foerster - Tsafirir 1992: 8, Ill. 12. The system of vaults was intended to support the *podium* on which the temple was built, as is the case in other temples in Eretz Israel and abroad; for example, the Temple of Augustus and Dea Roma in Caesarea Maritima, the Temple of Augustus in Samaria/Sebaste, possibly also at Paneas/Banias (Temple of Asklepios?) and the Temple of Trajan in Pergamon. However, the space between the vaults suggests that a mystery cult (perhaps of Dionysos?) took place there.

<sup>13</sup> Tsafirir - Foerster 1990: 34-35.

<sup>14</sup> See Charbonneaux *et alii* 1973: 43, Ills. 41-42; Akurgal 1978: 136-138; Şahin 1998: 74-77 (Ills. 33-36, 38-39).

<sup>15</sup> Foerster - Tsafirir 1988: 17, 21, Fig. 17; Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: 105.

<sup>16</sup> Foerster - Tsafirir 1988: 16.

<sup>17</sup> See *IGRom* I: 17; Nilsson (1975: 61) points out that in Asia Minor there is a frequent merging of the cult of the Emperor with mystery cults. It should be noted that some Roman rulers identified themselves with Dionysos (see Cerfaux - Tondriau 1957: 314, 331). According to Hirschland (1967: 18, n. 10), G. Hanfmann suggested that there is a likeness between Dionysos' head on the capital at Sardis and portraits of the Emperor Caracalla.

nursemaid of Dionysos, or for Tyche/Nysa.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, inscriptions discovered in the city over the years, though not directly related to the temple, pay homage to Dionysos and Zeus Bacchus.<sup>19</sup>

The temple was dated to the 2nd century CE, though there are indications, according to the excavators, that it was built even earlier, namely in the 1st century CE. The Christians probably destroyed the temple in the 4th century CE.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the absence of architectural evidence for the cult of the god in Gerasa, C.H. Kraeling and I. Browning claimed the existence of a temple dedicated to Dionysos in the city. Kraeling stated “that the temple whose remains have come to light under the Cathedral was, as Mr. Crowfoot has suggested, a temple of Dionysus, and the older pagan rite a Dionysiac rite”.<sup>21</sup> According to Browning, “The majority of inscriptions relating to this Arabian God (Dushara / Dusares, who is identified with Dionysos. - authors) have been found in the area of the Cathedral where Crowfoot has suggested there was a temple of Dionysos. It is possible that there was a synthesis between Dusares and Dionysos, ...”.<sup>22</sup>

The presence of the god Dionysos at Gerasa probably emerged from the religious syncretism originating in the encounter between Western and local Eastern religions and cults. At the heart of this encounter lays the merge of Dionysos and the Nabatean god Dushara/Dusares,<sup>23</sup> whose cult probably had gained popularity among the Nabatean community living in Gerasa. The deity was probably introduced by the Nabateans during the Roman era, along with their extensive trade links to other cities in the Hauran region, including the cities of the Decapolis.<sup>24</sup> Dushara/Dusares was identified with Dionysos,<sup>25</sup> and was also portrayed surrounded by vines and bunches of grapes, resembling the depictions of Dionysos.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Foerster - Tsafirir 1988: 17; the excavators changed their earlier proposition and later they assigned the temple to Dionysos (Foerster - Tsafirir 2002: 80).

<sup>19</sup> See below, nn. 45-47.

<sup>20</sup> Foerster - Tsafirir 2002: 80.

<sup>21</sup> Kraeling 1938: 37.

<sup>22</sup> Browning 1982: 35-36, 92, 94, 143, 176-177, 182, 186. For the visual images of the remains of the Propylaea and the monumental staircase that led probably up to the Temple of Dionysos, see Browning 1982: Figs. 23 (p. 79), 108 (p. 178).

<sup>23</sup> Kraeling 1938: 37.

<sup>24</sup> According to Glueck (1965: 10), “Most of the gods and goddesses of their maturity seem at first glance to have been modeled completely after those of Greece, but closer examination reveals fundamental characteristics that are unquestionably Semitic”.

<sup>25</sup> See Glueck 1965: 56, 242, 317.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Sourdel 1952: 63-64; Ovadiah - Mucznik 2009: 87-88.

## Sculptural Evidence

The sculptural evidence recovered from several cities of the Decapolis owes its existence to the nature of the cult of Dionysos, derived from ancient traditions.

The marble statues found in Beth Shean/Scythopolis include one life-size statue of Dionysos presented as a nude youth, discovered in the *stoa* (Fig. 8). The arms and most of the legs have been destroyed, but in spite of the mutilation of the face, the beauty of the facial features can still be perceived. The god stands relaxed, his left thigh resting against a broken tree-trunk. It is possible that the statue once stood against a wall or in a niche, because part of its back has been left unpolished. His body appears soft, with undeveloped muscles; his face is young, beardless, with a dreamy expression. The long curly locks of hair fall onto his shoulders and chest, and he has a *taenia* on his forehead. He wears a rich garland of vine leaves and grape clusters in his hair. This garland creates a contrast with the soft, smooth and refined face and body. This statue was dated to the 2nd century CE.<sup>27</sup>

A marble torso without head and limbs is all that has survived of a statue of the god found in the theatre area at Beth Shean/Scythopolis; it is partially covered by an animal hide (*nebris*), the head of which (of a goat or a kid) lies on the left shoulder of the figure, while the rest is draped diagonally across the body (Fig. 9).<sup>28</sup> A long lock of hair dangles over the left shoulder; the bad state of preservation does not permit a more detailed description.

A head of Dionysos also appears on two double marble herms of the Janus type from Beth Shean/Scythopolis: the *taenia* on the forehead and the grape clusters in the hair over the ears suggest the identification as Dionysos. The head on the other side is much more damaged (Fig. 10).<sup>29</sup> Another herm of this type, larger than life-size, was also found at this site. On both sides the head is of a young beardless youth with grape clusters in his hair, and tied by a *taenia* (Fig. 11).<sup>30</sup>

A bust of the god, young and beardless, carved in high relief and placed among acanthus leaves, features on the capital of a column also from Beth Shean/Scythopolis. He has long curly hair with grape clusters attached; his face is wide with a heavy chin, and his eyes too are wide (Fig. 12).<sup>31</sup>

A somewhat damaged *protome* of the god is depicted between two acanthus scrolls in relief, on a frieze that decorated the *scaenae frons* of the theatre at Beth Shean/Scythopolis.<sup>32</sup> Although the image of the god has been mutilated, it can

<sup>27</sup> Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: 105-114, Figs. 1-2 (surviving height – 1.24 m).

<sup>28</sup> Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: 106, Fig. 3 (H – 0.84 m).

<sup>29</sup> IAA, Inv. No. 32.36 (H – 0.332 m); Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: 107.

<sup>30</sup> Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: 107, n. 6. This herm has not yet been published.

<sup>31</sup> Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: 107, Fig. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: 108, Fig. 8. Erotes appear here within acanthus scrolls.

be identified through the leopard skin (*nebris*) over his left shoulder and what seem to be bunches of grapes adorning his head (Fig. 13).

In addition, a portrait of the god figures on one of the sides of an hexagonal limestone altar uncovered at this site; below his head is a Greek inscription dedicated to the god. Dionysos is shown in high relief, as a young man, with large eyes and full mouth; he has a *taenia* and cluster of grapes in his hair (Fig. 14).<sup>33</sup> Pan's head is depicted on another side of this altar, while yet another side features the *syrix*, the *pedum* and the *thyrsos*.

Additional sculptural evidence of Dionysos is provided at Gadara by a marble head of the *Lykeios* type, dated to the 2nd century CE (Fig. 15).<sup>34</sup> The head is crowned with a 'baroque'-type hairstyle, parted to the sides and wreathed with ivy and vine leaves. The nose and the mouth are damaged, as are the hands, which originally were crossed together above the head. Furthermore, another marble fragmentary head, possibly of the god, found in the city, was part of the *podium* of a monument dated to the Imperial period.<sup>35</sup>

Two additional cities of the Decapolis yielded figurines depicting images of Dionysos. At Gerasa, a clay figurine was recovered standing on a plinth (H – 0,25 m), showing the young beardless Dionysos nude, except for an *himation* draped over his left arm and lower body. His left hand holds a scepter or *thyrsos*, while his right holds a cup of wine, tilted downwards to a panther crouching at his feet. His head is adorned with grape clusters.<sup>36</sup> A terracotta figurine of the drunken Dionysos was also discovered in the city of Abila, dated to the 2nd century CE. The god with a soft, feminine body and wavy hair, leans on a boy for support; his garment falls around his legs, while the wine spilling from his cup is consumed by a panther at his feet. This figurine, found in a tomb, suggest that the deceased was a believer in the Dionysiac cult, and envisioned a happy afterlife.<sup>37</sup> These figurines seem to imply that these are examples of the cult of the god in the private sphere.

### Numismatic Evidence

A number of coins with the image of Dionysos have been found in Beth Shean/Scythopolis, showing the god standing and holding the *thyrsos* in one hand and an *oinochoe* in the other, from which he is pouring wine over a small

<sup>33</sup> Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: 107, Figs. 5-6 (H – 0.83 m; W – 0.26 m).

<sup>34</sup> Weber 2002: 202-203, 398 (Pl. 4), Taf. 35 (B-C); Lichtenberger 2003: 108.

<sup>35</sup> Weber 2002: 203, 398-399 (Pl. 5), Taf. 35 (D); Lichtenberger 2003: 108.

<sup>36</sup> Iliffe 1945: 13 (No. 44), Pl. IV (44).

<sup>37</sup> Fuller 1987: 359-362, Fig. 179 (p. 553); Wineland 2001: 94, Fig. 59 (p. 197); Lichtenberger 2003: 76.

panther, perhaps reflecting a famous statue of the god in this city (Figs. 16-17).<sup>38</sup> On one particularly interesting coin Dionysos is depicted arising from Zeus' thigh, while Tyche looks on (Fig. 18);<sup>39</sup> and there are also several coins with Tyche/Nysa shown breast-feeding the infant god (Fig. 19).<sup>40</sup> On a bronze medallion, also from this site, Dionysos is shown standing, laying one hand on a child's head (Fig. 20).<sup>41</sup> This representation may refer to the participation of children in the *Anthesteria* festival.<sup>42</sup>

The image of Dionysos also appears on coins from other cities of the Decapolis, as for example, Canatha<sup>43</sup> and Capitolias.<sup>44</sup>

### Epigraphic Evidence

Dionysos is referred to in various Greek inscriptions. A Greek dedicatory inscription on a limestone altar found in the Roman theatre of Beth Shean/Scythopolis, reads:

[Θ]εῷ Διονύσῳ Γερμανός

*To the god Dionysos (dedicated) Germanos.*<sup>45</sup>

This altar and its inscription can be dated to the foundation of the Roman theatre, i.e., to the end of the 2nd or the beginning of the 3rd century CE.

The connection with Dionysos' cult is further emphasized on another hexagonal limestone altar from this site, decorated with portraits/masks of Dionysos, Pan and Silenus, on the front, and with Dionysiac attributes – *thyrsos*, *syrix* and *pedum* – on the back. The Greek inscription engraved within the *tabula ansata* below the portrait or mask of the god provides further epigraphic evidence:

<sup>38</sup> Spijkerman 1978: 189 (No. 5), 191 (Nos. 6, 12), 193 (No. 17), 201 (No. 44), 209 (No. 34a); Meshorer 1985: Nos. 105, 107, 109; Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: 109; Ovadiah - Mucznik 2009: Figs. 147-148.

<sup>39</sup> Meshorer 1985: No. 112; Ovadiah - Turnheim 1994: n. 4; Ovadiah - Mucznik 2009: Fig. 146.

<sup>40</sup> See Spijkerman 1978: 198-199, No. 32 (Pl. 43), 202-203, Nos. 46-48 (Pl. 44), 206-207, No. 58 (Pl. 45); Meshorer 1985: No. 110; Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: n. 5; Ovadiah - Mucznik 2009: Fig. 376.

<sup>41</sup> Spijkerman 1978: 195 (No. 21), 201 (No. 42), 207 (No. 59); Meshorer 1985: No. 107; Gittler 1991: Pl. 3 (3-3a, 4-4a); Ovadiah - Mucznik 2009: Fig. 149.

<sup>42</sup> Gittler 1991: 27; Ovadiah - Turnheim 1997: n. 21 (p. 113).

<sup>43</sup> Spijkerman 1978: 93 (No. 7); Meshorer 1985: No. 209.

<sup>44</sup> Spijkerman 1978: 101 (No. 10).

<sup>45</sup> Ovadiah 1975: 122 (No. 6).

Ἀγαθῆ τύχῃ | Θεῷ Διονύσῳ | κτίστη τῷ κυρίῳ |  
Σέλευκος | Ἀρίστωνος χα | ριστήριον, ἔτει ες'

*With good fortune. Seleucos (son) of Ariston (dedicated/made this altar) as a thanksgiving offering to the lord god Dionysos, the builder or founder, in the year 205 (corresponds to 141-142 CE).<sup>46</sup>*

Zeus with his epithet Bacchus, identified with Dionysos, is mentioned in the following Greek inscription from Beth Shean/Scythopolis, dated to the first half of the 2nd century CE:

[Ἀγαθῆι τύχῃι ἔτους γ[. .]	[ <i>With good for</i> ]tune. In the year 3[. .]
[ τῳι Διὶ Βάκχῳι]	[ to] Zeus Bacchus
[ ] Αἴας Νικο[. .]	[ ] Aias Niko[. .]
[ λινου κατ' [εὐχ]-	[ ]linos in [vow]
[ῆν] ναδὸν ἐκ τ[ῶν]	the temple from
[ιδίῳν] ἀνέθηκε[εν]	[his own expenses] dedicated. <sup>47</sup>

In addition, three inscriptions, dated to the 2nd century CE, have been discovered in the city of Gerasa, attributed to the Arabian God (Θεὸς Ἀραβικὸς), namely Dushara/Dusares, who has been identified with Dionysos.<sup>48</sup>

The cemetery at Hippos/Sussita yielded a basalt stone with a one-word Greek inscription bearing the name of Dushara (Δουσάρης).<sup>49</sup> This epigraphic evidence provides irrefutable testimony to the existence of the cult of Dushara/Dusares in this city.

\*\*\*

Numerous archaeological excavations in the cities of the Decapolis provide most of the evidence for the cult of Dionysos dated to the Roman period. According to H. Seyrig, the mysteries of Dionysos at Beth Shean/Scythopolis were associated with similar rituals conducted at the Temple of Bacchus in Baalbek.<sup>50</sup> He bases this proposition on scenes from the birth of Dionysos preserved in the

<sup>46</sup> Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: 107; Di Segni *et alii* 1996: 335-350; Di Segni 1997: 139-161; Ovadiah - Mucznik 2009: 91; Ovadiah - Turnheim 2011: 39.

<sup>47</sup> Seyrig 1962: 208-210, Fig. 1; Ovadiah 1975: 120 (No. 4); Turnheim - Ovadiah 1994: 109; Ovadiah - Mucznik 2009: 213; Ovadiah - Turnheim 2011: 37.

<sup>48</sup> Welles 1938: Nos. 19 (pp. 384-385), 22 (p. 386), 192 (pp. 442-444); see also Lichtenberger 2003: 235 and n. 2182.

<sup>49</sup> Ovadiah 1981: 101.

<sup>50</sup> Seyrig 1929: 351-353.

interior decoration of the temple. In the light of the numismatic evidence from Beth Shean/Scythopolis, Seyrig believes that the cult of Dionysos evolved in the Canaanite pantheon together with the deities of Zeus and Tyche.<sup>51</sup> V. Tcherikover views the consolidation of the cult of Dionysos in Transjordan, as well as at Beth Shean/Scythopolis, as deriving from the political activities of the Ptolemaic dynasty, which adopted the cult of Dionysos as its official cult in a manner similar to the adoption of the cult of Apollo in the Seleucid kingdom.<sup>52</sup> Thus, it is not improbable that the cult of Dionysos had already been brought to the Decapolis region in earlier times. Most of the archaeological evidence for the cult of the god derives from the city of Beth Shean/Scythopolis since, according to local tradition, Dionysos founded the city and was its patron.

Although it has not been ascertained which of the temples uncovered at Beth Shean/Scythopolis was dedicated to the god, it was probably the one that has partially survived at the meeting point of the “Palladius” and “Silvanus” streets.<sup>53</sup> It might be possible that the temple was dedicated to Dionysos and was perhaps used for the cult of Nysa as well.<sup>54</sup> The location of the temple in the centre of the city emphasizes its importance and thus strengthens this assumption, despite a virtual reconstruction suggesting that it might have been in another place in the city.<sup>55</sup>

The frequency of the image of Dionysos in the artistic media and the reference to the god in literary/historical and epigraphic sources provide comprehensive information on the popularity and importance of Dionysos during the Roman period, among the pagan inhabitants of the Decapolis. The cult of Dionysos in the Decapolis may be perceived as a local civic cult, while also as a private one, albeit in a minor way.

Asher Ovadia and Sonia Mucznik  
Tel Aviv University

<sup>51</sup> Seyrig 1962: 211.

<sup>52</sup> Tcherikover 1959: 102-103.

<sup>53</sup> Ovadia - Turnheim 2011: 38. A temple, found on Tel Beth Shean, previously assumed to have been a temple dedicated to Dionysos, is nowadays identified as a Temple of *Zeus Olympios* (see Ovadia 1975: 117).

<sup>54</sup> Turnheim - Ovadia 1994: 105.

<sup>55</sup> Tsafirir 1998: 214-215.

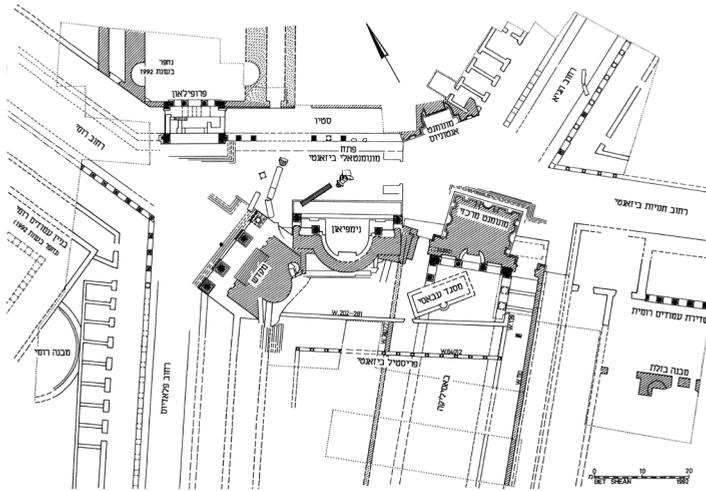


Fig. 1. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, plan of the city centre (north) and the *tetrastyle* temple attributed to Dionysos (after: Foerster - Tsafirir 1992: Fig. 2 [p. 3]).



Fig. 2. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, view of the Roman-Byzantine city centre, the paved square and the staircase leading to the *tetrastyle* Roman temple attributed to Dionysos, looking south-east (after: Tsafirir - Foerster 1994: colour plate between pp. 96-97).



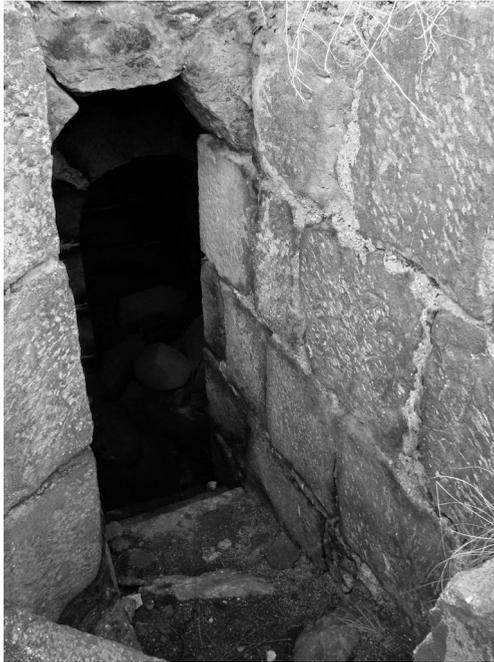
Fig. 3. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, view of the staircases of the *tetrastyle* Roman temple attributed to Dionysos, detail, looking east (photo: Asher Ovadiah).



Fig. 4. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, subterranean vaults of the Roman temple attributed to Dionysos (photo: Asher Ovadiah).



Fig. 5. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, subterranean vaults of the Roman temple attributed to Dionysos (after: Foerster - Tsafirir 1992: Fig. 12, top [p. 8]).



Figs. 6-7. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, spiral stairway connecting the vaults to the temple interior (photos: Asher Ovadiah).

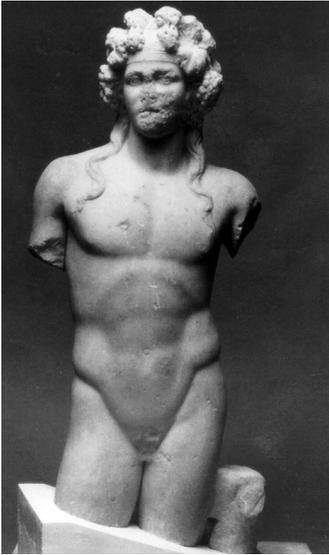


Fig. 8. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, the marble statue of Dionysos discovered in the *stoa* (after: Forster - Tsafir 1992: back cover).



Fig. 9. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, Dionysos' torso, with animal hide (courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority, neg. no. 48835).



Fig. 10. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, double herm of Dionysos, of the Janus type (courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority, neg. no. 11460).



Fig. 11. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, double herm of Dionysos, of the Janus type (photo: Asher Ovadiah).



Fig. 12. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, Dionysos' *protome* on the *abacus* of a Corinthian capital (after: Mazor 1988: Ill. 12).

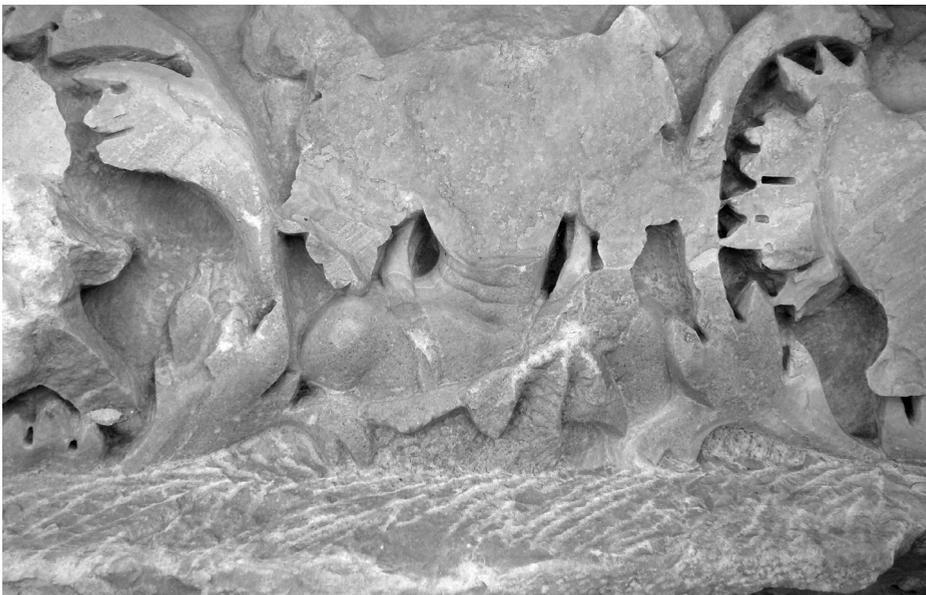


Fig. 13. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, Dionysos' *protome* carved on a frieze of the *scaenae frons* of the theatre (photo: Asher Ovadiah).



Fig. 14. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, Dionysos' head on the hexagonal limestone altar (after: *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, I, Jerusalem 1992, 218, s.v. 'Beth Shean' [Hebrew]).

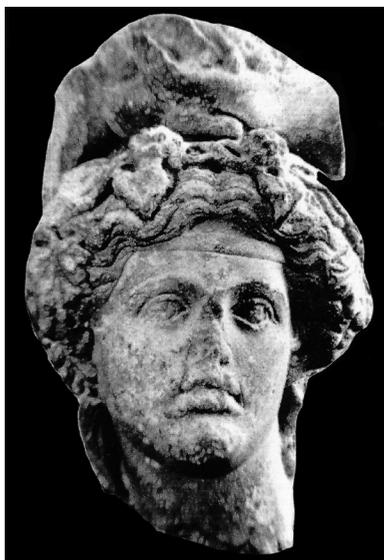


Fig. 15. Gadara, marble head of Dionysos (after: Weber 2002: Taf. 35B).



Fig. 16. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, coin of Dionysos, pouring wine over a small panther (after: Meshorer 1985: No. 105).



Fig. 17. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, coin of Dionysos, pouring wine over a small panther (after: Meshorer 1985: No. 109).



Fig. 18. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, coin showing Dionysos' birth from Zeus' thigh (after: Meshorer 1985: No. 112).



Fig. 19. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, coin depicting Tyche/Nysa breast-feeding Dionysos (Meshorer 1985: No. 110).



Fig. 20. Beth Shean / Scythopolis, bronze medallion with Dionysos laying a hand on a child's head (after: Gitler 1991: Pl. 3. 3-3A).

## Bibliography

- Akurgal E. 1978. *Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey. From Prehistoric Times until the End of the Roman Empire*, Istanbul.
- Avi-Yonah M. 1962. "Scythopolis", *Israel Exploration Journal* 12: 123-134.
- Browning I. 1982. *Jerash and the Decapolis*, London 1982 (repr. 1994).
- Cerfaux L. - Tondriau J. 1957. *Un concurrent du christianisme. Le culte des souverains dans la civilisation gréco-romaine* (Bibliothèque de théologie: Série III/5), Tournai.
- Charbonneaux J. et alii 1973. *Hellenistic Art* (The Arts of Mankind 18), London.
- Di Segni L. 1997. "A Dated Inscription from Beth Shean and the Cult of Dionysos Ktistes in Roman Scythopolis", *Scripta Classica Israelica* 16: 139-161.
- Di Segni L. et alii 1996. "A Decorated Altar Dedicated to Dionysos the 'Founder' at Beth Shean (Nysa Scythopolis)", *Eretz Israel* 25: 335-350 (Hebrew).
- Foerster G. - Tsafirir Y. 1988. "Centre of Ancient Beth-Shean – North", *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 91: 15-31 (Hebrew).
- Foerster G. - Tsafirir Y. 1992. "Beth Shean Excavation Project, 1989-1991: The City Centre (North)", *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 98: 3-29 (Hebrew).
- Foerster G. - Tsafirir Y. 2002. "Skythopolis – Vorposten der Dekapolis", in A. Hoffmann - S. Kerner (ed.), *Gadara-Gerasa und die Dekapolis*, Mainz am Rhein, 72-87.
- Fuller M.J. 1987. *Abila of the Decapolis. A Roman-Byzantine City in Transjordan, I-II* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington University), Saint Louis MI.
- Gitler H. 1991. "New Aspects of the Dionysiac Cult in Nysa-Scythopolis", *Swiss Numismatic Review* 70: 23-29.
- Glueck N. 1965. *Deities and Dolphins. The Story of the Nabataeans*, New York NY.
- Hirschland N.L. 1967. "The Head-Capitals of Sardis", *Papers of the British School at Rome* 35: 12-22.
- IGRom I*: R. Cagnat (ed.), *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes*, I, Paris 1911 (repr. Roma 1964).
- Iiffe J.H. 1945. "Imperial Art in Trans-Jordan: Figurines and Lamps from a Potter's Store at Jerash", *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* 11: 1-26, Pl. IV (44).
- Kraeling C.H. 1938. *Gerasa – City of the Decapolis*, New Haven CT.
- Lichtenberger A. 2003. *Kulte und Kultur der Dekapolis. Untersuchungen zu numismatischen, archäologischen und epigraphischen Zeugnissen* (Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 29), Wiesbaden.
- Mazor G. 1988. "Centre of Ancient Beth Shean – South", *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 91: 3-15 (Hebrew).
- Meshorer Y. 1985. *City-Coins of Eretz Israel in the Roman Period*, Jerusalem.
- Ovadiah A. 1975. "Greek Cults in Beth-Shean/Scythopolis in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods", *Eretz Israel* 12: 116-124 (Hebrew).
- Ovadiah A. 1981. "Was the Cult of the God Dushara-Dusares Practiced in Hippos-Sussita?", *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 12: 101-104.
- Ovadiah A. - Mucznik S. 2009. *Worshipping the Gods. Art and Cult in Roman Eretz Israel*, Leiden.

- Ovadia A. - Turnheim Y. 1994. "Peopled" Scrolls in Roman Architectural Decoration in Israel (Supplementi alla Rivista di Archeologia 12), Roma.
- Ovadia A. - Turnheim Y. 1997. "The Female Figure in the Dionysiac Mosaic at Sephoris", *Rivista di Archeologia* 21: 107-116.
- Ovadia A. - Turnheim Y. 2011. *Roman Temples, Shrines and Temene in Israel* (Supplementi alla Rivista di Archeologia 30), Roma.
- Pliny, NH: Pliny, *Naturalis Historiae* (trans. H. Rackham, [LCL 352], II, Cambridge MA - London 1989).
- Ragette F. 1980. *Baalbek*, Park Ridge NJ.
- Şahin N. 1998. *Klaros. Apollon Klarios bilicilik merkezi*, Istanbul (Turkish).
- Seyrig H. 1929. "La triade héliopolitaine et les temples de Baalbek", *Syria* 10: 314-356.
- Seyrig H. 1962. "Antiquités Syriennes: 81. Note sur les cultes de Scythopolis à l'époque romaine", *Syria* 39: 207-211.
- Sourdrel D. 1952. *Les cultes du Hauran à l'époque romaine*, Paris.
- Spijkerman A. 1978. *The Coins of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia*. Edited with historical and geographical introductions by M. Piccirillo (SBF. Collectio Maior 25), Jerusalem.
- Tcherikover V. 1959. *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, Philadelphia PA.
- The Homeric Hymns: The Homeric Hymns and Homerica* (trans. H.G. Evelyn-White, [LCL 57], Cambridge MA - London 1977).
- Tsafir Y. 1998. "The Fate of Pagan Cult Places in Palestine: The Archaeological Evidence with Emphasis on Beth Shean", in H. Lapin (ed.), *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Roman Palestine* (Studies and Texts in Jewish History and Culture 5), Bethesda MD, 197-218.
- Tsafir Y. - Foerster G. 1990. "The Beth Shean Excavation Project, 1988-1989", *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 95: 30-37 (Hebrew).
- Tsafir Y. - Foerster G. 1994. "The Hebrew University Excavations at Beth-Shean, 1980-1984", *Qadmoniot* 107-108: 92-116 (Hebrew).
- Turnheim Y. - Ovadia A. 1994. "Dionysos in Beth Shean", *Rivista di Archeologia* 18: 105-114.
- Weber Th.M. 2002. *Gadara - Umm Qēs I. Gadara Decapolitana. Untersuchungen zur Topographie, Geschichte, Architektur und der Bildenden Kunst einer "Polis Hellenis" im Ostjordanland* (Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 30), Wiesbaden.
- Welles C.B. 1938. "The Inscriptions", in C.H. Kraeling (ed.), *Gerasa. City of the Decapolis*, New Haven CT, 355-494.
- Wineland J.D. 2001. *Ancient Abila. An Archaeological History* (BAR International Series 989), Oxford.

