

JEW, PAGANS AND CHRISTIANS IN THE GALILEE

BY MORDECHAI AVIAM (LAND OF GALILEE 1). PP. 344, FIGS. 250, MAPS 10. UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER PRESS, ROCHESTER 2004. \$85. ISBN 1-58046-171-9 (CLOTH).

The author, a field archaeologist with 25 years of experience working in the Galilee, summarizes the book as follows (7):

This book contains 21 freestanding articles written between 1983 and 2004, most of them revised, all based on field surveys and excavations, and arranged in historical sequence. They combine the topography, geology, hydrology and landscapes of the Galilee with its historical sources and archaeological remains. The first article, as an introduction, deals with the question of the historical borders between Jews and gentiles from Biblical times . . . to the Byzantine period, and outlines the historical sequence of the book: the Hellenistic period (chapters 2–8), followed by the Roman period (chapters 9–14), and the Byzantine period (chapters 15–20). Chapter 21 deals with tombs from the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods.

Some of these articles deal with technical subjects not likely to interest anyone except specialists in archaeology and ancient technology (e.g., the three articles on viticulture and the production of olive oil, and the article on *columbaria*), but some deal with topics of interest even to those who are not archaeologically inclined. Chapters 1 (“Borders between Jews and Gentiles in the Galilee”) and 17 (“Churches and Monasteries from the Byzantine Period in Western Galilee”) make the case that rural Galilee in late antiquity was divided into Jewish and Christian zones, with few archaeologically attested intrusions of the one religious community into the domain of the other. Urban areas like Sepphoris were mixed, but rural areas were not. Aviam gives a precise map of the division.

Chapters 9–12 treat the archaeological evidence for the war against the Romans in 66–70 C.E. Many of the fortresses that Josephus claims to have fortified while serving as commander in the region were in fact fortified at that time. Of course archaeology cannot tell us who fortified them, but at least Josephus is ac-

curate when he reports that they were fortified. Aviam discusses other archaeological evidence for military actions in the Galilee, especially a series of caves that apparently was used as a hideout by the rebels.

Chapter 15, “The Ancient Synagogues at Bar’am,” is an excellent study of the difficulties in dating the so-called monumental or Galilean-type synagogues, whose best known representative is the synagogue at Capernaum. Stylistically they belong to the second, perhaps third, century C.E., but archaeologically many of them belong to the fourth or fifth century, perhaps even later. The only way to make sense of the data is to assume that at least some of these synagogues were constructed out of *spolia*, that is, the remains of earlier buildings. Aviam gives convincing evidence that this indeed was the case.

In chapter 21 Aviam surveys the variety and types of tombs and burial customs in the Galilee. Phoenician influence is readily apparent, especially in the north and west, but variations by ethnic-religious community (pagan, Jewish, Christian) and region are also apparent.

In sum, for those interested in the history of the Galilee and its cultures, this is an important book. Aviam is intimately familiar with his subject. He also writes clearly and well. The book is handsomely produced by the Institute for Galilean Archaeology of the University of Rochester (although one hopes that in future volumes, map *sigla* will be larger and easier to decode).

SHAYE J.D. COHEN

DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND
CIVILIZATIONS
6 DIVINITY AVENUE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138
SCOHEN@FAS.HARVARD.EDU