

LIST OF AUTHORS AND THEIR INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

- Agady Shoshana**, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Beth Shean Archaeological Project
- Amit David**, Israel Antiquities Authority
- Arubas Benjamin Y.**, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Beth Shean Archaeological Project
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UNPUBLISHED FRAGMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS FROM THE UPPER SYNAGOGUE AT GUSH HALAV

MORDECHAI AVIAM

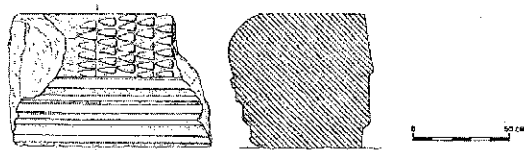
In 1863 the French traveler and scholar V. Guérin visited the Arab village of El-Gish, well identified as ancient Gush Halav, and noticed some substantial remains of what he identified as an ancient synagogue on top of the hill. It included four columns, a 'heart-shaped' column and some decorated broken parts of a door. His description makes it hard to determine whether they were all or part found *in situ*. During the second half of the nineteenth century scholars identified the massive remains of synagogues in Galilee and could clearly distinguish between synagogue remains and those of pagan temples such as the Roman temple at Qedesh in northern Galilee. When Guérin revisited the site a few years later the remains were all gone, and he notes that some of them were probably reused in the construction of the new church built at the very same spot. The SWP authors mention "column shafts, capitals and bases", the latter of which were not mentioned by Guérin, as well as a capital of the column shaft's size later discovered in the village. They did mention a pilaster capital in one of the houses which since then disappeared (Conder and Kitchener 1881:224).

Recently during a visit to the village some unfamiliar architectural elements were noticed by the author of this article, most of them in the courtyard of Mr. Manzur, a resident of the village, whose house is located on the upper southern side of the hill, below the probable location of the synagogue, in the old part of the Arab village.¹ The white clean architectural elements had no patina and the owner remarked that they were unearthed by a dredger close to his house and were moved into his yard under the authorization of the IAA inspector.

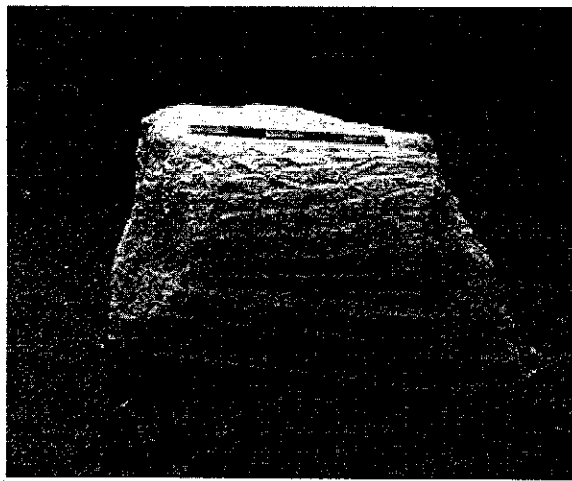
¹ I would like to thank Mr. Manzur and his family for their kind hospitality and attitude and their permission to photograph and draw the stones.

Other fragments of architectural elements were found lying around the church of St. Butrus located at the top of the hill. One of them, a conch, was transferred by the author to Meron Field School as approved by the IAA. Today some broken column shafts and masonry blocks are still visible near the church.

Fragments 1-3 are all located in Mr. Manzur's



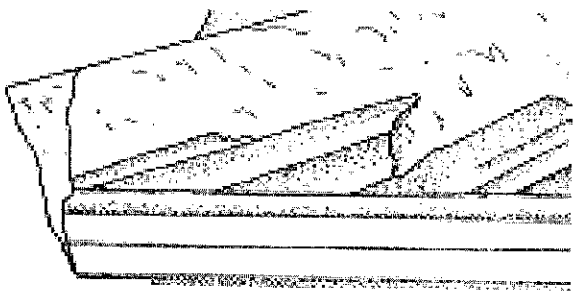
1. Drawing and section of the lintel.



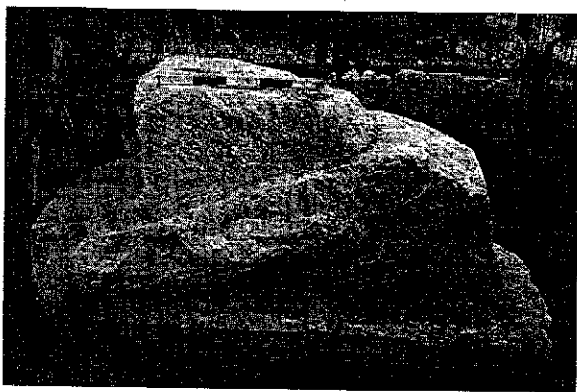
2. The lintel.

courtyard. Fragment no. 1 (Figs. 1, 2) is part of a lintel, 1 m. long, 0.75 m. wide and 0.75 m. high.² The

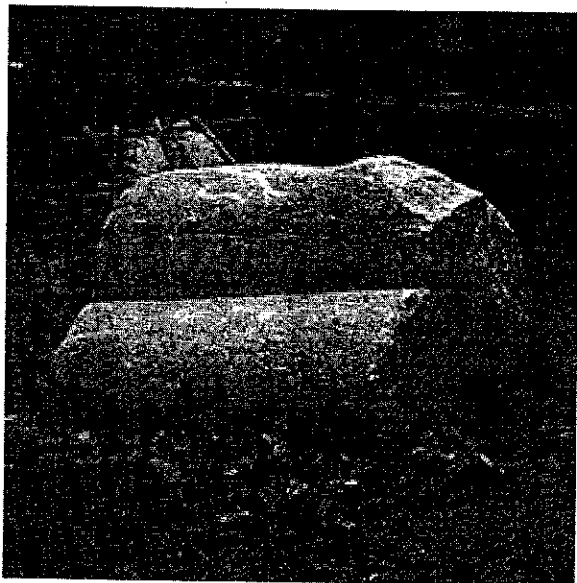
² All fragments were drawn at the site by Dina Shalem and traced by Sapir Ad.



3. Drawing of the gable corner.



4. The gable corner.

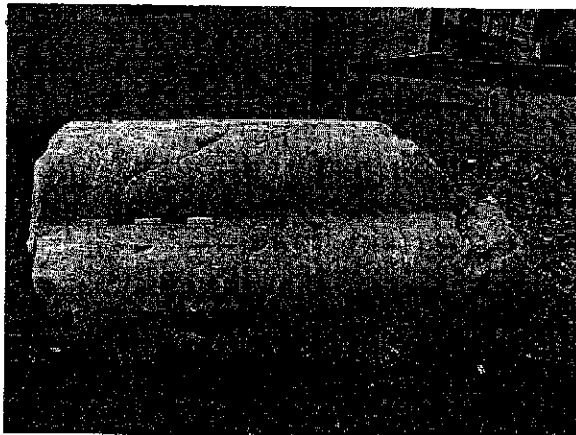


5. A fragment of "heart shaped" pillar.

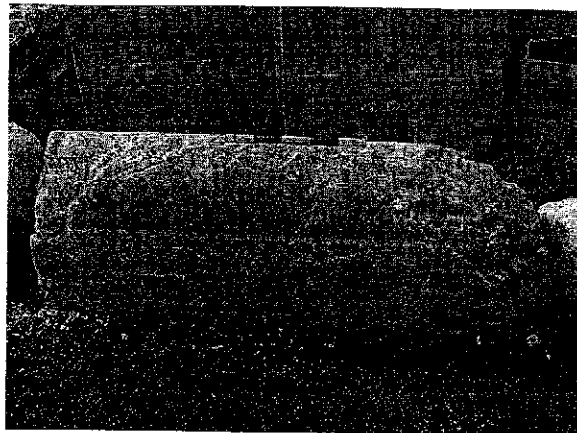
frieze is 0.35 m. wide and decorated by a 'scales' pattern.

Fragment no. 2 (Figs. 3, 4) – a gable corner equipped with an acroterion or a base for one, is 1.6 m. long, 0.95 m. wide and 1 m. high.

Fragment no. 3 (Fig. 5) – a 'heart-shaped' top pil-



6. A "heart shaped" pillar near St. Butrus church.



7. A "heart shaped" pillar near St. Butrus church.

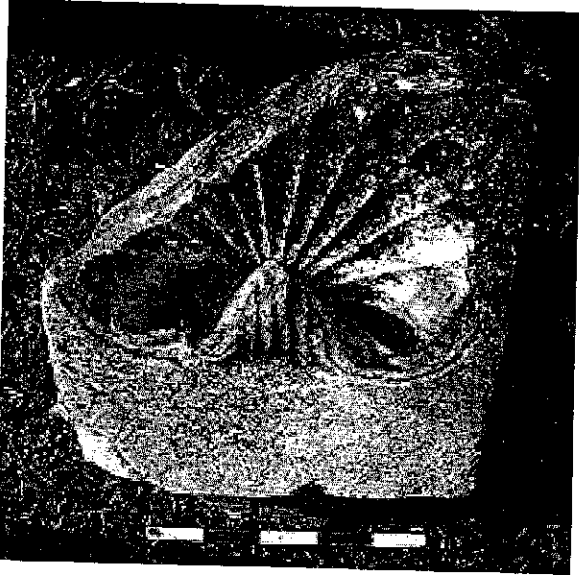
lar segment is 0.9 m. long and 0.50 m. in diameter in each of its semi-pillar.

Fragments nos. 4 and 5 (Figs. 6, 7) – two 'heart-shaped' pillars that are located near St. Butrus' Church. The first is 1.65 m. long and the second 1.75 m. long. Their diameters (0.48–0.45 m) are similar to those of the 'heart-shaped' pillars at the nearby synagogue of Bar'am.

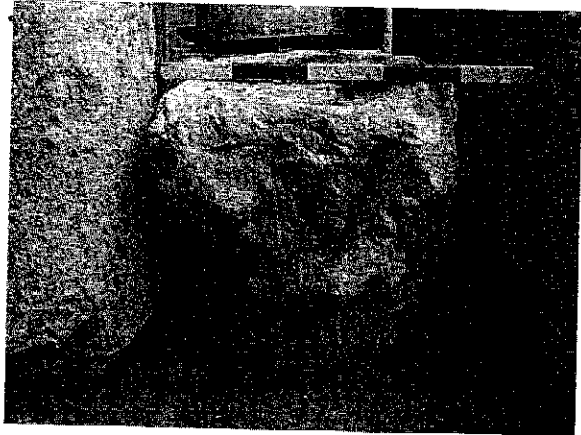
Fragment no. 6 (Fig. 8) – a well carved decorated conch (0.6x0.6x0.35 m), though the conch is not very deep (0.12 m). Judging by its size it might have been part of a decorated niche placed in the center of the gable as in Navoraya/Nabratein (Meyers et al. 1981), or above a window.

Fragment no. 7 (Fig. 9) – a Doric capital from Manzur's house, is 0.4 m. high with a 0.6 x 0.5 m. abacus, and a shaft section with a 0.25 m. diameter.

Fragment no. 8 (Fig. 10) – is part of the founda-



8. A building stone decorated with a conch.



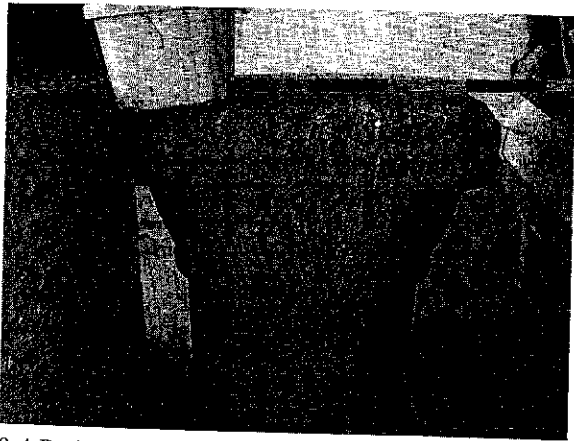
11. A Corinthian capital from a street at El-Gish.

m. long. Two rosettes seem to be depicted on each side with a small wreath at the center.

In the alleys of the old village, two more architectural fragments were discerned:

Fragment no. 9 (Fig. 11) – a Corinthian capital 0.5 m. high and 0.28 m. in diameter on its base. The design of the capital is relatively flat (although the leaves are largely destroyed) and can be dated to the fourth or fifth century CE.

Fragment No. 10 (Fig. 12) – the volute of an Ionic capital.

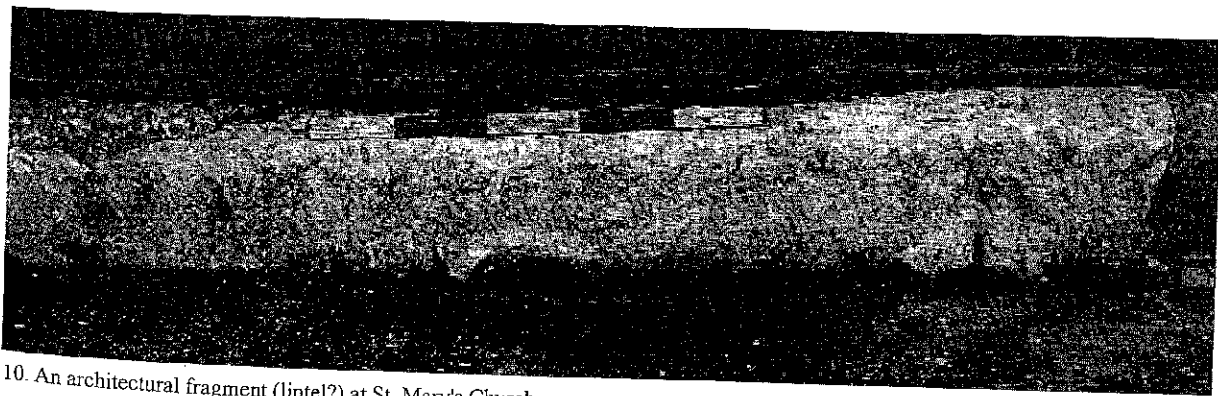


9. A Doric capital at Mr. Manzur's house.

tions of St. Mary's Church, and partly buried. Only the upper part of a decoration is visible and it is 1.4

Discussion and Summary

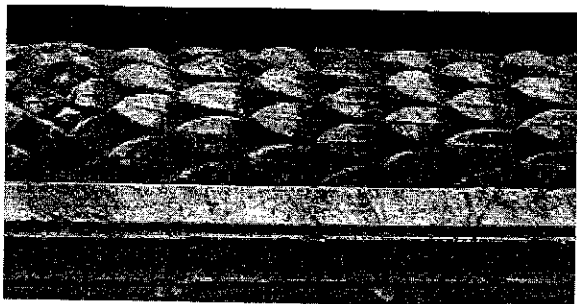
The construction of St. Butrus' (St. Peter) Church during the years 1862–3 destroyed the remains of the Upper Synagogue at Gush Halav, of which more remains might be buried around the church, though the chances of excavating them are very slight. The design of fragment no. 1 is similar to that of the eastern doorway at Bar'am, though there the width of the frieze



10. An architectural fragment (lintel?) at St. Mary's Church.



12. A fragment of an Ionic capital rebuilt in a wall.



13. The eastern door frieze from Bar'am.

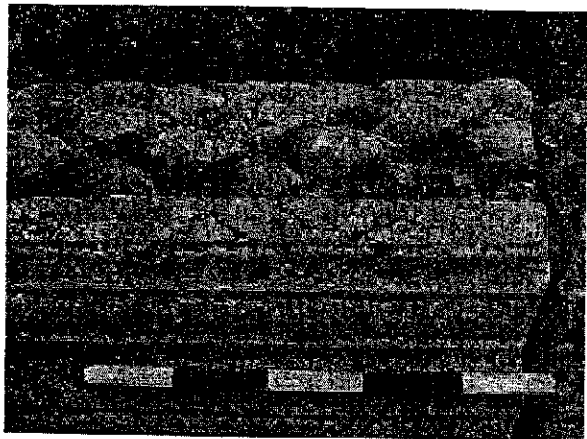
is only 0.2 m. The design of the scales at Bar'am is more delicate, placed one on top of the other with no gaps, while each scale has a central spine (Fig. 13).

A similar design was found on the entablature frieze of the portico of the synagogue of Bar'am, which is 0.18 m. wide, though its scales have no spine (Fig. 14).

Another frieze of that type is known from the main lintel of the Lower Synagogue at Gush Halav (0.16 m. wide), in which the scales are very much like those of fragment no. 1 (Fig. 15).



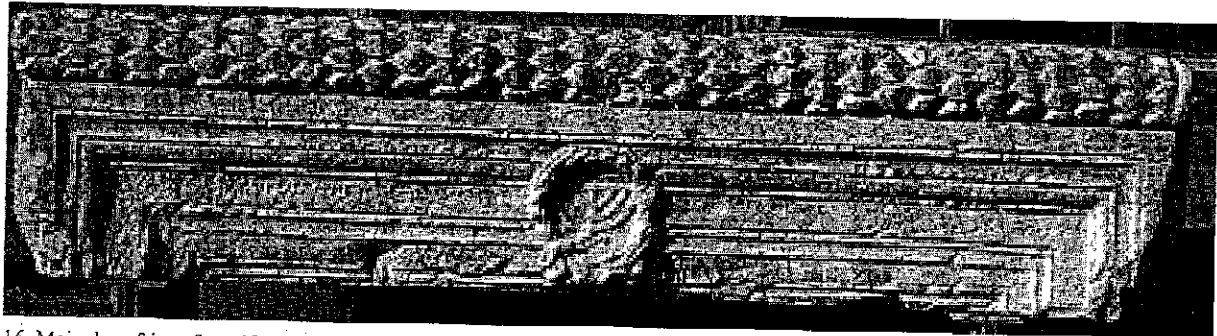
14. The portico frieze at Bar'am.



15. The main door frieze of the Lower Synagogue at Gush Halav.

The main lintel at Navoraya (0.19 m. wide; Kohl and Watzinger 1916: Fig. 195; Fig. 16) has the same design as that of Gush Halav as well as a frieze fragment from Khorazim (0.35 m. wide; Yeivin 2000:83, 6-7).

Another lintel decorated with scales, of basalt stone, of unknown provenance and of a simpler and quite flat type was found at Fir'in (Ilan 1991:56) and relocated in Safed (Avigad 1964:19). Foerster discussed the type of frieze in his work and finds its origin in the Hellenistic world, continuing extensively during the Early and Late Roman periods and declining towards the end of the Byzantine period (Foerster 1972:95, 138-139). A brief survey of Foerster's work, of Krencker and Zschietzschmann's survey of temples in Syria (1938) and of other Syrian temples visited later by Taylor (1967) shows that there are no remains of lintels decorated with scales in this region. Unlike many other influences on Roman Galilee, this type of architectural decoration in eastern Upper Galilee did not arrive from the



16. Main door frieze from Navoraya.

north. The many hundreds of architectural elements uncovered in the large scale excavations at Bet Shean did not reveal any lintel decorated with scales. Its most south-eastern appearance is in Khorazim, and according to Foerster's research, it can be found in various sites in eastern Syria and Jordan.

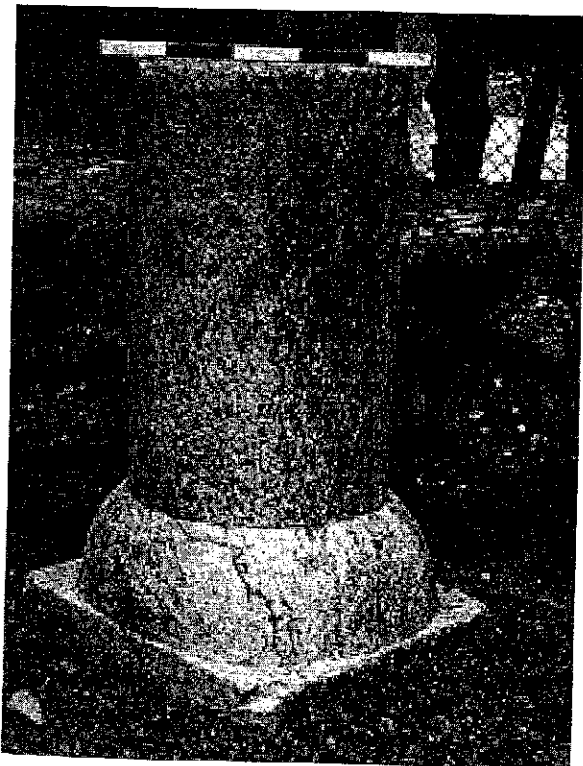
Judging by the size of the frieze of fragment no. 1 as well as its total size (the lintel is about 0.75 m. wide), it seems to be part of a considerably large member, probably of the main entrance to the synagogue. In comparison, the width of the main lintel at Bar'am is 0.6 m. The design of the architrave

fasciae below the frieze is similar to those of the lintel of the Lower Synagogue at Gush Halav and it seems that they were designed by the same school.

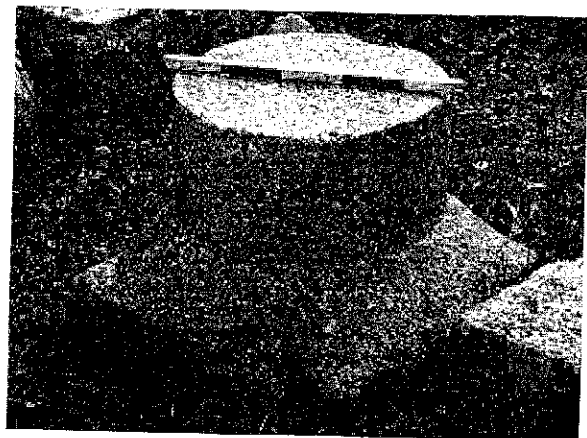
The design and general size of fragment no. 2 is similar to no. 1 and they might have originated from the same building. The design of a number of fasciae hints to a later date, presumably the fourth century CE. The diameter of the column drum and the heart-shaped pillars are similar to those at Bar'am. It therefore seems that the Upper Synagogue at Gush Halav was as large as the one at Bar'am, if not larger.

Doric capitals are not generally known from Galilean synagogues, as the 'Tuscanian' type is more common (Foerster 1972:118-119). Yet the Doric capital from the Upper Synagogue at Gush Halav is similar to three other, unpublished Doric capitals from Bar'am, whose shaft is 0.5-0.4 m. in diameter (Fig 17).

Capitals of the type were also found at the Lower Synagogue at Gush Halav (Fig. 18) and Navoraya (Fig. 19).



17. A Doric capital from Bar'am.



18. A Doric capital from the Lower Synagogue at Gush Halav.



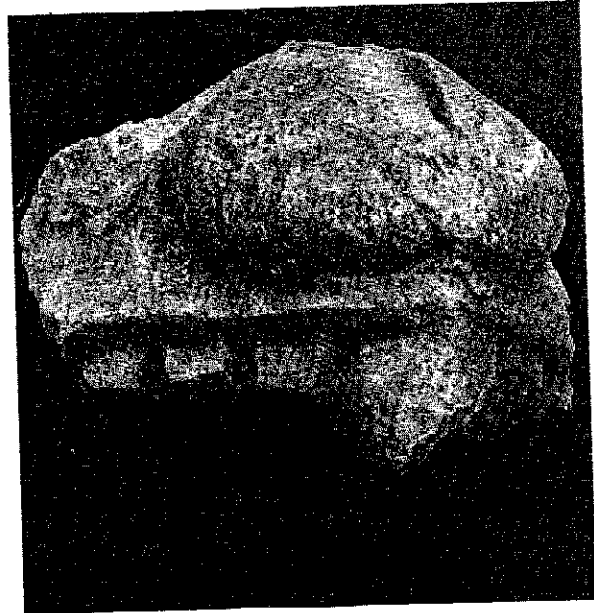
19. A Doric capital from Navoraya.

A similar capital, of a larger diameter with 'wings' on each side, was found at Khorazim (Yeivin 2000:43, 76).³ In his work Ma'oz discusses a group of Doric capitals from the synagogues of the Golan (Ma'oz 1995:234–235), while Foerster does not mention any Doric capitals. Ma'oz discusses the group and notes that it is hard to determine their exact date as they were not found *in-situ* in any dated excavation; yet, on the basis of comparison to finds from the Hauran, he suggests a Byzantine date (Ma'oz 1995:235). By its shaft size the Khorazim capital might belong to the second floor order.

Kohl and Watzinger, while discussing the Synagogues of El-Gish, also described a Corinthian capital from the Upper Synagogue (1916: Fig. 206), meaning that three types of capitals were in use in the Upper Synagogue.

There is no certainty that fragments no. 9 and 10 originated from the Upper Synagogue of Gush Halav, although they were found in close proximity. Their possible dating is not far from the other fragments. If they did originate from the synagogue, it will be another case that shows the variety of architectural orders used in the ancient synagogues. At Bar'am, the remains of Tuscanian, Doric, Ionic

³ Yeivin suggested that these wings were used to "shorten" the distance from the architraves but did not give any suggestions for the grooves on each side. A way to understand the grooves is as supporters for vertical wooden beams, that held a screen, maybe the only hint, up to now, for a women's section.



20. A possible fragment from the Torah Ark of the Lower Synagogue at Gush Halav.

and Corinthian capitals were found. At Arbel there are both Corinthian and Ionic capitals. At the Small Synagogue near Bar'am both Tuscanian and Corinthian capitals are known.

The evidence points to a date in the fourth-fifth centuries CE for most of the fragments.

Appendix

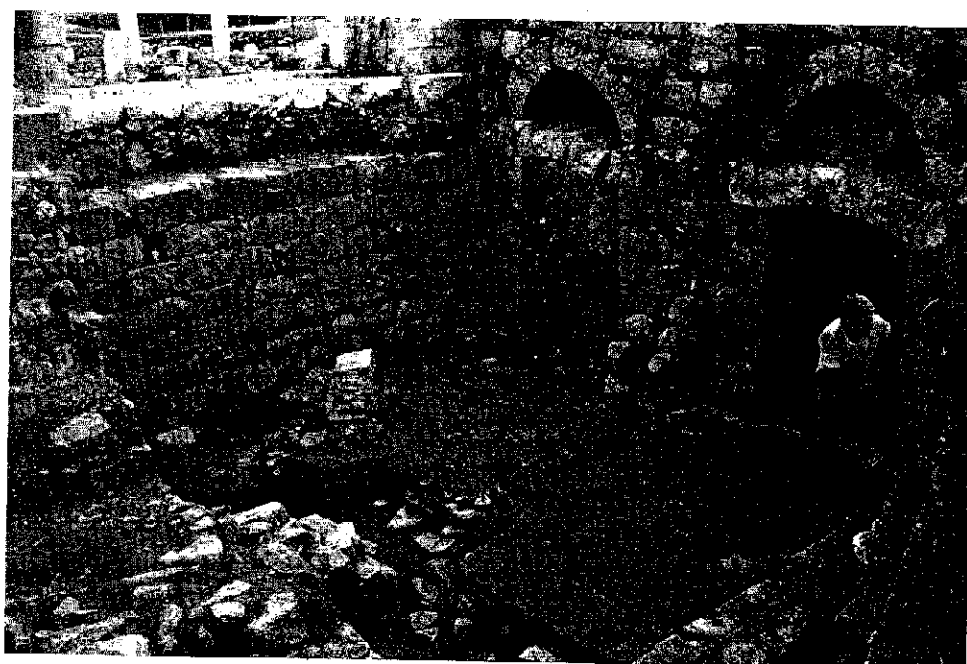
A fragment of a small order entablature (10 x 9 cm, 9 cm high) was found near the Lower Synagogue at Gush Halav. The fragment seems to belong to a small corner-cornice and it contains a corner ovolo (6 x 6 cm) with a line of dentils (1.5 cm wide each) below it. By the entablature size it might be part of a small niche or window entablature, or presumably part of a Torah Ark. According to the excavators of the synagogue there were some smaller fragments of architecture elements that might have been associated with the Torah Ark (Meyers 1990: 119, Fig. 37:C,D,E), though none of them was part of the cornice. The excavators identified two stages of a *bema*, at the western side of the main entrance, on which they believe stood the Torah Ark.

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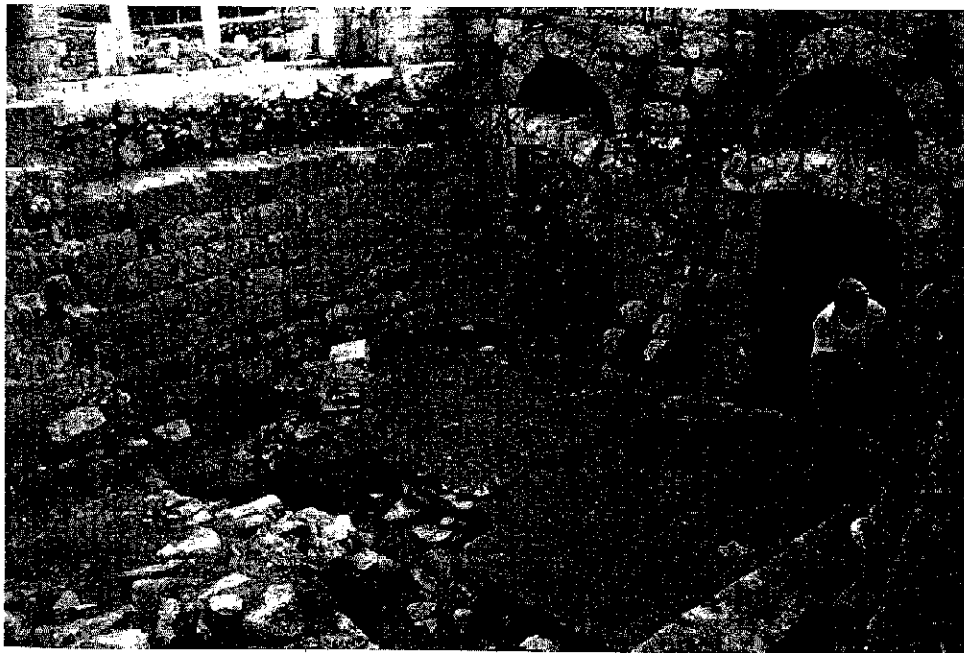


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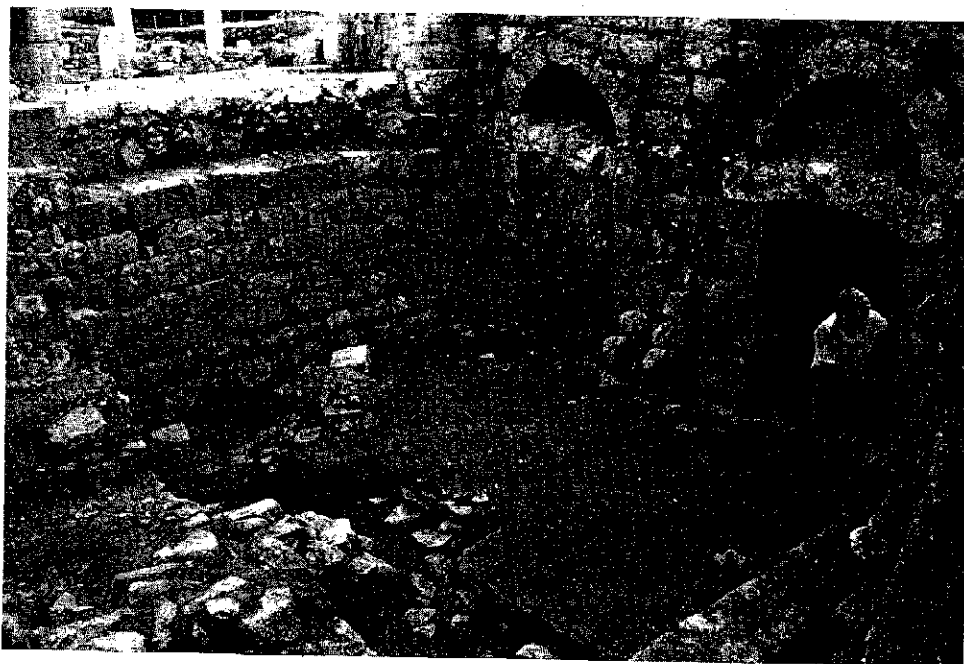


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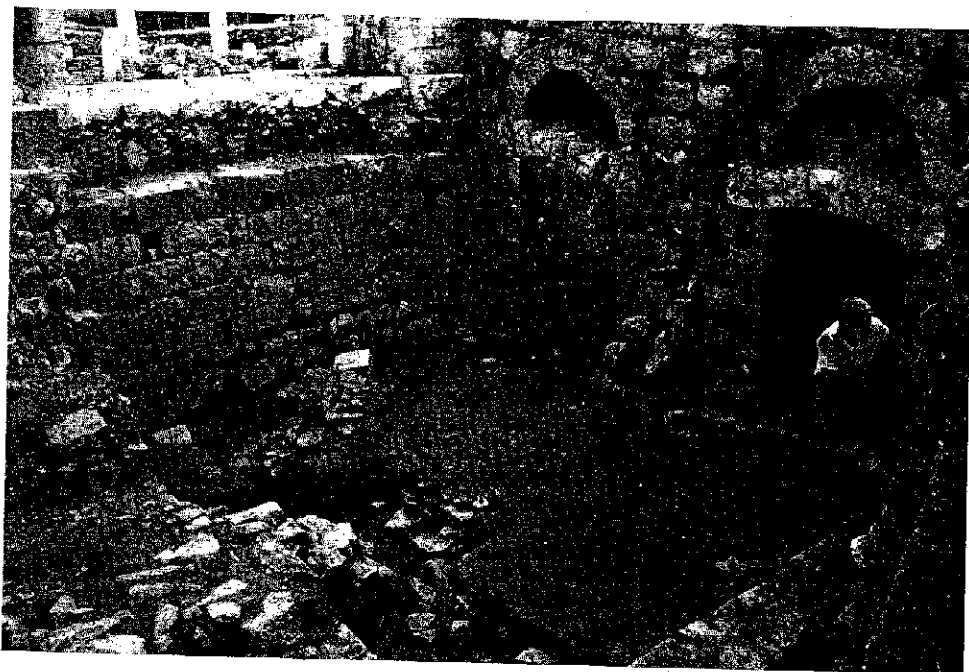


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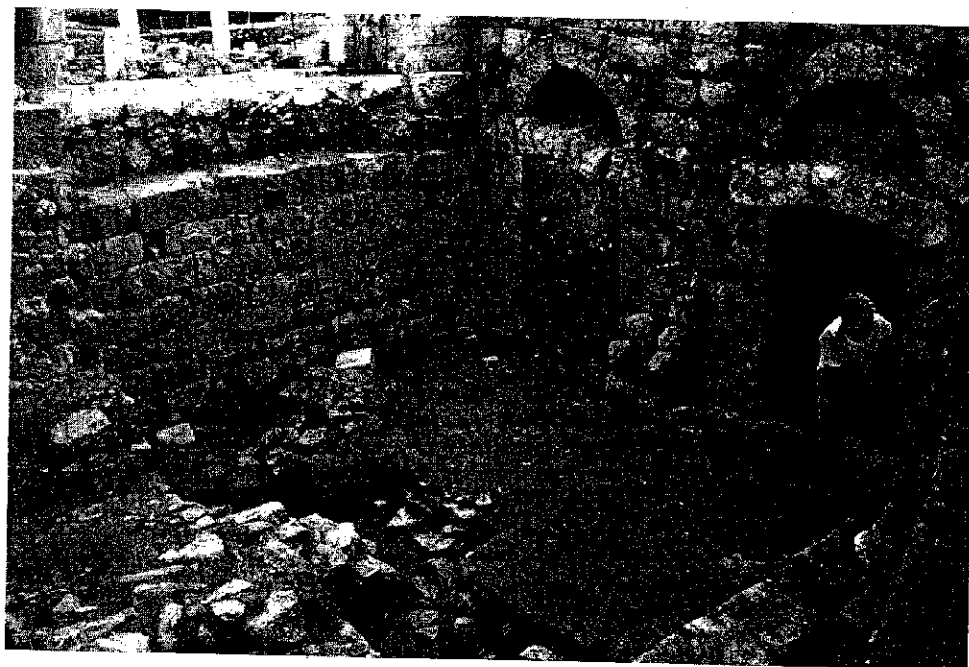


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