

Invention of the First-Century Synagogue



Lidia D. Matassa

INVENTION OF THE FIRST-CENTURY
SYNAGOGUE

SBL Press

ANCIENT NEAR EAST MONOGRAPHS

General Editors

Alan Lenzi

Jeffrey Stackert

Juan Manuel Tebes

Editorial Board

Reinhard Achenbach

Jeffrey L. Cooley

C. L. Crouch

Roxana Flammini

Christopher B. Hays

René Krüger

Graciela Gestoso Singer

Bruce Wells

Number 22

SBL Press



INVENTION OF THE FIRST-CENTURY
SYNAGOGUE

by
Lidia D. Matassa

Edited by
Jason M. Silverman and J. Murray Watson

SBL Press



SBL PRESS

Atlanta

Copyright © 2018 by SBL Press

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by means of any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to the Rights and Permissions Office, SBL Press, 825 Houston Mill Road, Atlanta, GA 30329 USA.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018951474

SBL Press

Printed on acid-free paper.



This book is dedicated to my mother and father, Maria Nardone and Antonio Matassa, whose support has been constant.

SBL Press

SBL Press

Table of Contents

Editors' Foreword	ix
Preface	xi
Acknowledgements	xiii
Abbreviations	xv
List of Illustrations and Tables	xviii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Terminology	7
Literature Review	20
Conclusions	34
2. DELOS	37
Introduction	37
History of Delos	38
History of the Excavations	40
The Ancient Sources	42
The Archaeological Evidence	57
Literature Review	67
Conclusions	76
3. JERICHO	79
Introduction	79
History of Hasmonaean-Herodian Jericho	81
The Ancient Sources	83
The Excavation Reports	86
Literature Review	103
Conclusions	106
4. MASADA	109
Introduction	109
Josephus's Masada Narrative	110
The Masada Acropolis	112
History of the Excavations at Masada	113
The Ancient Sources	121
The Excavation Reports	127
My Analysis of the Excavation Reports and Building Phases	132
Literature Review	142
Conclusions	155

5. HERODIUM	159
Introduction	159
Josephus's Herodium Narrative	160
The Ancient Sources	161
Construction of the Fortress of Herodium	163
History of the Excavations	165
The Excavation Reports	166
Literature Review	177
Conclusions	183
6. GAMLA	187
Introduction	187
Josephus's Gamla Narrative	189
Identification of the Synagogue	191
The Excavation Reports	194
Food for Thought (A Prototype Aedicula?)	206
Conclusions	210
7. CONCLUSIONS	211
BIBLIOGRAPHY	217
ANCIENT SOURCES INDEX	255
MODERN AUTHORS INDEX	261

SBL Press

Editors' Foreword

This monograph is published posthumously. The author, Dr. Lidia Matassa, passed away suddenly in January 2016. She had been working on revising this manuscript for publication, with the goal of adding additional case-studies, after a few years' delay due to a serious injury. She had been looking forward to taking up a fellowship period for this purpose in Jerusalem, originally for the Fall 2015, that she had had to postpone.

Knowing that Lidia had been working on this manuscript (as well as several others) at the time of her untimely death, the editors sought to see what we could do to preserve her work and legacy. We were able to receive copies of the entire manuscript in its original form as well as some other materials from her brother, Rocco. We are grateful to him and Lidia's father, Antonio, for facilitating this posthumous publication. Unfortunately, however, we could not find any of the more updated versions of these chapters in her rescued electronic files beyond a few oral presentations and preparations for several conference volumes. Her more recent files were presumably saved in the cloud, where they are inaccessible to us. Therefore, the version of the work edited here was the version that she had completed in 2010. It is worth noting that the chapter on Gamla was written *prior* to the final publication of that site, though with reference to pre-published materials that had been shared by Danny Syon. The editors are very grateful to Danny Syon for his assistance in updating the references towards the published Gamla excavation reports.

We have taken a conservative approach and restricted our editorial work to formatting and typesetting. On occasion, we have added a clarifying note for the readers in the footnotes. These are in square brackets and marked “-eds.” On occasion, Lidia had cited some web links that are no longer viable; these we deleted and indicated in the notes. Contrary to typical SBL style, we have retained Lidia's original, British orthography. Any remaining errors may be attributed to our neglect.

We are grateful to the editors of the ANEM series for all their cooperation in facilitating the publication of this work, and pleased that their anonymous reviewers concurred with our belief that the material herein remains of relevance to the field, despite the delay in its publication.

Previous versions of several chapters in this book have already appeared in print. An early version of chapter 2 was published as “Unravelling the Myth of the Synagogue on Delos,” *Strata: Bulletin of the Anglo-Israeli Archaeology Society* 25 (2007): 81–115 and reprinted in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Chapter 3 was first published as “Problems with the Identification of a Synagogue in the Hasmonean Estate at Jericho,” 95–132 in *Text, Theology, and Trowel: Recent Research into the Hebrew Bible*, edited by Lidia D. Matassa and

Jason M. Silverman (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011). Chapter 5 was first published as “The Synagogue at Herodium: Problematic Fact or Problematic Fiction?,” 13–40 in *A Land Like Your Own*, edited by Jason M. Silverman with Amy Daughton (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010).

May this work be a service to the guild and an enduring testament to Lidia.

Jason M. Silverman
J. Murray Watson

Helsinki, Finland
Barrie, Ontario
March 2018

SBL Press

Preface

Each of the case study sites has been approached in the same way: by gathering every possible excavation detail, as well as literary, epigraphic, and other sources and material evidence. Each site has been painstakingly and closely examined so as to illustrate the specifics of the excavations, the known history of those sites, and any literary, epigraphic, or other information that might cast light on their function in their ancient context, as well as on specific problems with excavations and subsequent analyses over the years.

I have visited and photographed each site, drawn plans showing the relevant contexts and the relationship between elements of the sites, as well as the locations of artefacts, inscriptions, and architectural and other physical elements, and have analysed the individual elements that led to each identification. This methodology has had a completely unexpected benefit in that it has enabled illustration of the points at which scholarly opinion and interpretation of the archaeology has departed from fact (and sometimes reason!), and where this has been built on, over time, to produce the identification mythologies that we now see in relation to these five sites. As a consequence of this, it also became necessary to separate out some of the more specific claims made in relation to each of the individual sites and to locate them within the case studies. Therefore, in each chapter, there is a recitation of the main scholarly interpretations of the particular site, showing where these have relied on previous scholarship, or on misinterpretation rather than on the reality of the archaeological, epigraphic, or textual evidence.

ANCIENT SOURCES

The sources used in researching this monograph were the New Testament, the Hebrew Bible, the Pseudepigrapha, Josephus, Philo, and other Graeco-Roman writers who make any relevant reference (even if only in passing), including Strabo, Pliny the Elder, Suetonius, Tacitus, Juvenal, and others. I have also consulted, where available, epigraphical material, ancient texts, ostraca and graffiti from sites.

TRANSLATIONS

Throughout this book, quotations from and references to Josephus, Philo, and any other Graeco-Roman writers are taken from the Loeb Classical Library translations (see bibliography for specific details). Where I have quoted Greek inscriptions, I have produced the texts as they are inscribed on stelae, without diacritical marks and accents.

The Bible used throughout this monograph is *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Jewish Publication Society, 2004). I have also used the *BibleWorks 7* programme to search for terms in Hebrew, Greek, and English, which I have then cross-checked against the *Jewish Study Bible*. For New Testament material, I have used *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, New Revised Standard Version, but have then cross-checked via *BibleWorks 7* to search for terms in Hebrew, Greek, and English.

IMAGES AND PLANS

Other than five photographs and one map (figures 4a, 4b, 11, 17, 49 and 50), all illustrations used in this book are my own. For ease of reference I have integrated all illustrations into the body of the text.

SBL Press

Acknowledgements

I owe a monumental debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Catherine Hezser, Professor of Jewish Studies at SOAS in London, without whose support, intellectual openness and great patience this book could never have been written. Her guidance has been an asset to me throughout the research and writing of this work and I am astonished and thankful that she continued to be my supervisor and did not give up on me during the unproductive years in the middle.

I am grateful to the School of Religions and Theology at Trinity for its support over the years. I will be eternally grateful to Dr. Maria Diemling (now at Canterbury University) for her mentorship whilst she was at Trinity.

I am grateful to Prof. John Dillon of the School of Classics and The Dublin Centre for the Study of the Platonic Tradition at Trinity for his support, advice and help with Greek translations of the Delos and other inscriptions.

I thank the École française d'Athènes, which maintains a number of houses on the island of Delos, and am most grateful to their Director of Studies, Michèle Brunet, for arranging to open one of their dig houses for me out of season, so that I might stay on the island alone. I am also grateful to Panayotis Chatzidakis of the 21st Ephoreia of Prehistoric and Classic Antiquities, for giving me permission to stay on the island in October of 2003. This was an unforgettable experience, and one I shall treasure. To have slept on the island of Delos is to have been favoured by the gods.

I thank the Kenyon Research Institute in Jerusalem and its past Directors, Dr. Robert Allen and Dr. Yuri Stoyanov and past Assistant-Director, Tim Moore, for always making me feel welcome and comfortable when I visited, and for enabling me to travel into areas to which I would otherwise not have had access. And I am particularly grateful to the present Director of the Institute, Dr. Jaimie Lovell for driving me to Herodium on 14 February 2009 when all other avenues of travel had failed.

I thank my dear friend, Dr. Orit Peleg-Barkat, of the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, for her friendship and support over the years. I will always be grateful for her good humour and kindness, and for the many discussions we've had about the Herodian period, its architecture and history, as well as for her help in interpreting the decorative material at Gamla, for the many translations she did for me and, of course, for showing me her magnificent collection of Temple Mount marbles and stones from the Western Wall Excavations. I am also very grateful to her for re-photographing the *triclinium* on Herodium for me after conservation work was carried out by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in June/July of 2009, so I could see some of the structures that had not been visible when I visited in 1999,

2004, 2005, 2006, and February 2009, and for allowing me to use her photograph of the basilica lintel from Gamla in this monograph.

I thank my dear friend Tal Vogel for the pleasure of her company, her support and interest in my research and for showing me her work on the Masada textiles at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and explaining the processes involved in their manufacture.

I thank my dear friend Amiram Barkat for his good humour, friendship and kindness and for giving me, a complete stranger at the time, a place to lay my head the first time I visited Jerusalem back in 1999.

I thank the staff of the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for allowing me to use the library and for always being helpful and informative. In particular, I thank Prof. Ehud Netzer, who was generous with his time and advice despite the fact that I disagreed with practically everything he said, and I congratulate him on his discovery of the tomb of Herod the Great in 2009, a magnificent achievement by any measure!

I am grateful to Motti Aviam of the Institute for Galilean Archaeology at the University of Rochester for meeting me in Tiberias and driving me up to Gamla in 2005 and for our long discussion about the archaeology of the site.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Danny Syon of the Israel Antiquities Authority for giving me access to all the maps and plans from the Gamla excavation reports, as well as copies of the as-yet unpublished chapters of the excavation reports, and for his cogent and generous answers to the many vague questions I posed.

I am immensely and eternally grateful to Dr. Shimon Gibson for the opportunity to work with him at the Cave of John the Baptist at Tzuba, and to see for myself his legendary fastidious and methodical approach to archaeology. His knowledge of all things archaeological in Israel and Palestine is staggering, and it is a good thing for the world of archaeology that he publishes as much as he does.

I am very grateful to my landlord, John Dowling, who died on 21 May 2010. I miss our doorstep conversations about the ancient world.

And last, but by no means least, I thank my fellow PhD candidates in the School of Religions at Trinity: Jason Silverman, Amy Daughton, Audrey Barnett, and Murray Watson, Jason McCann, and Claire Carroll for their friendship, for the general environment of supportive fellowship, and for the intellectual and “other” discussions we have shared. Without our regular postgraduate seminars in “Paris,” the last few years at Trinity would have been a lot less fun.

Abbreviations

<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
<i>AJSR</i>	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römische Welt</i>
<i>ASAE</i>	<i>Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte</i>
<i>ASHAD</i>	Urman, Dan, and Paul V. M. Flesher, eds. <i>Ancient Synagogues, Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery</i> . Vol. 1. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BAIAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
<i>BEHJ</i>	<i>Bulletin des Études Historiques Juives</i>
<i>BIOSCS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the International Organisation for Septuagint and Cognate Studies</i>
<i>BJPES</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BMC</i>	British Museum Catalogue
<i>BSKG</i>	<i>Bulletin de la société khédiviale de géographie</i>
<i>BSP</i>	Black Sea Project
<i>BT</i>	<i>Bible Today</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CIJ</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum latinarum</i>
<i>CIRB</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum regni bosporani</i> . Moscow: Institute of History of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, 1965.
<i>CIS</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum</i>
ConBNT	Coniectanea Biblica, New Testament Series
<i>CPJ</i>	<i>Corpus papyrorum judaicarum</i>
<i>DACL</i>	<i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</i>
<i>DJD</i>	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
<i>EI</i>	<i>Eretz Israel</i>
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des alten und neuen Testaments

<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IMJ</i>	<i>Israel Museum Journal</i>
<i>INJ</i>	<i>Israel Numismatic Journal</i>
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JAS</i>	<i>Journal of Archaeological Science</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JJA</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Art</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JPOS</i>	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JSQ</i>	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LA</i>	<i>Liber Annuus</i> . Franciscan Biblical Centre, Jerusalem.
<i>LPGN</i>	<i>Lexicon of Personal Greek Names</i> . 6 vols. Ed. P. M. Fraser and Elaine Matthews. Oxford: Clarendon, 1987–2018.
<i>MGWJ</i>	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
<i>NEAEHL</i>	Stern, Ephraim, Ayelet Lewinson-Gilboa, and Joseph Aviram, eds. <i>New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> . Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993–2008.
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>PAAJR</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
<i>PBSR</i>	<i>Papers of the British School at Rome</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
<i>POC</i>	<i>Proche-Orient Chrétien</i>
<i>POXY</i>	<i>Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i>
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue archéologique</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des Études Grecques</i>

ABBREVIATIONS

xvii

<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des Études Juives</i>
<i>RPh</i>	<i>Revue Philologique</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumrân</i>
<i>SCI</i>	<i>Scripta Classical Israelitica</i>
<i>SEG</i>	Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für den Deutschen Palästina Vereins</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

SBL Press

SBL Press

List of Illustrations and Tables

All images are the author's own, unless otherwise indicated.

DELOS

Fig 1	The Cycladic Islands. Author's own, using Google Earth. © 2010 DigitalGlobe and CNES	37
Fig 2	Delos in context	38
Fig 3	GD 80 ("the synagogue") in context	41
Fig 4	GD 80 (its environs and where the inscriptions were found)	46
Fig 4a	ID 2329 (front and top view of inscription stele). Image reproduced from Waldemar Déonna, <i>Le Mobilier délien, Délos</i> (Paris: De Boccard, 1938). Used by permission.	47
Fig 4b	ID 2331 (front view of inscription stele). Image reproduced from Waldemar Déonna, <i>Le Mobilier délien, Délos</i> (Paris: De Boccard, 1938). Used by permission.	50
Fig 5	Plan of GD 80	57
Fig 6	The benches and marble throne in GD 80	58
Fig 7	GD 91(Sarapeion A)	59
Fig 8	GD 80 (from the stylobate down to the sea)	60
Fig 9	GD 89 (House of the Hermes)	62
Fig 10	Floor plans of GDs 80, 89, 111, and 57	62
Fig11	The lamp from the cistern. Image reprinted from Waldemar D Déonna, <i>Le Mobilier délien, Délos</i> (Paris: De Boccard, 1938). Used by permission.	64
Fig 12	The cistern from room B (looking south to Mount Cynthus)	65
Fig 13	The lime kiln in Room A (looking west)	66
Fig 14	Satellite image of GD 80 and its environs. Courtesy of Google Earth (Matassa accessed this image before 2010. Attribution of the map via Google Earth at the time of editing is © 2018 CNES / Airbus)	72
Fig 15	The niche in GD 80 (and other niches on Delos)	75
JERICHO		
Fig 16	View over Hasmonaean-Herodian Jericho (looking north)	79
Fig 17	Hasmonaean-Herodian Jericho (context and locations)	80
Fig 18	The courtyard house (phase 1)	86
Fig 19	Comparison of courtyard houses	90
Fig 20	The courtyard house (phase 2)	93
Fig 21	The peristyle courtyard (looking east)	96
Fig 22	The niche (looking south)	100

Fig 23	The stepped cistern	102
Fig 24	The courtyard house (phase 3)	103

MASADA

Fig 25	Masada (looking west)	109
Fig 26	Masada (context and locations)	110
Fig 27	Locus 1042 (excavators' phase 1)	128
Fig 28	Locus 1042 (excavators' phases 2/3)	130
Fig 29	Locus 1042 (my phase 2a)	133
Fig 30	Locus 1042 (my phase 2b)	134
Fig 31	Locus 1042 (my phase 3)	135
Fig 32	Locus 1042 (floor level and benches)	137
Fig 33	Locus 1042 (my phase 4)	138
Fig 34	View of Loci 1038, 1039 and 1042 (looking west)	140
Fig 35	Locus 1042 (seating capacity)	141

HERODIUM

Fig 36	Herodium (looking south from Bethlehem)	159
Fig 37	Plan of the upper palace-fortress	164
Fig 38	Plan of the <i>triclinium</i>	167
Fig 39	Location of <i>mikveh</i> , kiln, <i>triclinium</i> and water installation	172
Table 1	Coins from the period of the first rebellion	173
Table 2	Coins from the period of the second rebellion	174
Table 3	Coins from miscellaneous periods	174
Fig 40	Comparison of Locus 1042 on Masada and Herodium <i>triclinium</i>	179

GAMLA

Fig 41	Gamla (looking west across to Galilee)	187
Fig 42	The breach in the fortifications	191
Fig 43	Replica catapult (looking west to the breached wall)	192
Fig 44	The public building (looking southwest)	192
Fig 45	The public building (floor plan)	194
Fig 46	The northern wall (cupboard)	197
Fig 47	The ancillary room	199
Fig 48	The <i>mikveh</i> /cistern	200
Fig 49	The rosette lintel from the second western doorway. Photograph © Danny Syon/Gamla Excavations. Used by permission.	201
Fig 50	The rosette lintel from the basilica. Photograph by O. Peleg-Barkat. Used by permission.	202
Fig 51	The badly carved capitals	203

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

xxi

Fig 52	The swastika/double meander pattern at Bet She'an	204
Fig 53	The unidentified structure behind the central stylobate	207
Fig 54	Another view of the unidentified structure (looking northeast)	208
Fig 55	A prototype aedicula?	209

SBL Press