

THE Umayyad MOSQUE OF TIBERIAS

Tiberias, capital of the Jund al-Urdunn (the military district of the Jordan) in the early Islamic period, grew out of an earlier Roman–Byzantine settlement. Yet despite its historical importance and the many salvage excavations conducted in this city, little is known of its urban layout between the seventh and eleventh centuries.

Among the areas excavated, the ancient city center stands out. It was first uncovered in 1952, with excavations continuing sporadically until March 2008. Over the years, these expeditions uncovered the main north–south city artery (*cardo*), a large bathhouse, a broad pillared building built over what has been identified as an unfinished Roman temple (Hadrianeum), and a basilical building to the east, lying between the *cardo* and the Sea of Galilee.

While reassessing the archaeology of early Islamic Tiberias, the author noted the profound affinity between the pillared building—identified since the 1950s as a Byzantine covered market—and the eighth-century Umayyad Mosque of Damascus. They were similar not only in the planning concept, but also in proportions, building technique, and decoration. In addition, the pillared building's very location in the center of the then recently conquered town seems fitting for a central Friday mosque.

This article presents the major archaeological finds connected to the Umayyad period (661–750) in Tiberias, as well as the main arguments that seem to support the identification of the pillared building as an Umayyad Friday Mosque.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The surrender of the Roman–Byzantine town of Tiberias to the Muslim army in 635 opened a new page in the

history of this settlement on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.¹ The terms of surrender guaranteed a smooth and peaceful change of government, the Arab conquerors taking possession only of those houses and places of worship (*kanā'is*) in Tiberias that had been abandoned, and profiting from the taxation of goods. According to the sources, the commander Shurahbil ibn Hasana, to whom the city surrendered, also allotted the location where a mosque for the faithful was to be erected.²

Tabariyya, as it is called in Arabic, was chosen as the capital of Jund al-Urdunn, ultimately to the detriment of Baysan (Scythopolis), which had been the capital of Palaestina Secunda.³ From a modest town, listed as a bishopric but mainly renowned as the heart of Jewish life and of Talmudic studies,⁴ Tabariyya turned into an administrative center under the authority of the governor of Bilad al-Sham (Greater Syria). When the Umayyads moved the caliphate's capital to Damascus, Tabariyya's importance certainly grew. The routes connecting Fustat and Jerusalem with Damascus converged in the area south of the Sea of Galilee, at a pass near al-Sinnabra, before continuing through a new ascent ('Aqabat Fiḡ), which was leveled by order of the caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) in 692.⁵ To the north and south of Tiberias the Umayyad caliphs built winter palaces on their lands at al-Sinnabra⁶ and Khirbat al-Minya.⁷

By the tenth century, Tabariyya was definitely a flourishing town. In 985, the Jerusalemite geographer al-Muqaddasi (d. ca. 1000) described it as one *farsakh* (around six kilometers!) long,⁸ stretching between the mountains and the sea. He wrote:

Tabariyya is the capital of Jordan and a city of Wādi (the Valley of) Kan'ān.⁹ It is situated between the mountain and the lake, cramped, with suffocating heat in summer, and unhealthy. Its length is about a *farsakh*, but it has virtually no breadth. Its marketplace extends

from one gate to the other,¹⁰ with its cemetery on the hill. There are eight hot baths here needing no fuel, along with numerous basins of hot water. The mosque is large and fine, and stands in the marketplace; its floor is laid in pebbles, and the building rests on pillars of joined stone.¹¹

It is said of the people of Tiberias that for two months they dance, for two more months they glut; for two months they flail about, and for two more months they go naked; for two months they pipe, and for two more months they wallow. The explanation of this is that they dance from the number of fleas, then glut themselves with the lotus fruit; they slap about the hornets with fly-swatters, to drive them from their meat and fruits; then they go naked from the intense heat; they suck the sugarcane; and then they must wade through their muddy streets.¹²

When Nasir-i Khusraw (d. ca. 1075) visited Tiberias in 1047, he mentioned that it was encircled by walls except on its seaward (eastern) side, and that it had a central mosque, as well as another one on the western side of the city. His description is as follows:

The city has a strong wall that, beginning at the borders of the lake, goes all round the town; but on the water side there is no wall. There are numerous buildings erected in the very water, for the bed of the lake in this part is rock; and they have built pleasure-houses that are supported on columns of marble, rising up out of the water. The lake is full of fish.

The Friday Mosque is in the midst of the town. At the gate of the mosque is a spring, over which they have built a hot bath; and the water of this spring is so hot that, until it has been mixed with cold water, you cannot bear to have it poured on you. They say this hot bath was built by Solomon, the son of David—peace be upon them both—and I myself did visit it.¹³ There is, too, on the western side of the town of Tiberias, a mosque known as the Jasmine Mosque (*Masjid al-Yāsmīn*).¹⁴ It is a fine building, and in the middle part rises a great platform (*dukkān*), where they have their prayer-niches (*maḥārīb*). All around those they have set jasmine-shrubs, from which the mosque derives its name. In the colonnade, on the eastern side, is the tomb of Joshua (son of Nun), and underneath the great platform aforesaid are the tombs of the seventy prophets—peace be upon them—whom the children of Israel slew. In the town of Tiberias they make prayer-mats of reeds, which sell in the place itself for five Maghribi dinars apiece. On the west of the city rises a mountain, upon which has been built in hewn

stone a castle [probably referring to the church on Mount Berenice]; and there is here an inscription in Hebrew characters, stating that, at the time it was cut, the Pleiades stood at the head of the zodiacal sign of the Ram. The tomb of Abu Hurayra (the Prophet's Companion)¹⁵ lies outside the city, towards the south; but no one can go and visit it, for the people who live here are of the Shi'a sect, and as soon as anyone comes to make the visitation, the boys begin a tumult, and raise a disturbance about him that ends in stone-throwing, wherefrom injuries are received.¹⁶

UMAYYAD TABARIYYA: ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH (FIG. 1)

In 1992, Timothy P. Harrison published what has remained so far the only conceptual study on early Islamic Tiberias.¹⁷ Based on archaeological studies of other Islamic cities such as Fustat, Istakhr, Susa, and 'Aqaba,¹⁸ Harrison explored the possibility that Umayyad Tiberias was provided with a *miṣr* (fortified city) at the northeastern tip of the Roman-Byzantine walled city, in the area later occupied by the Ottoman city and today's modern Tiberias. Harrison used part of the archaeological data available at the time of his research,¹⁹ which showed that Tiberias had expanded considerably, both to the north and to the south, into areas previously not developed. On Mandatory maps he identified a square area, each side circa 400 meters, within the Ottoman city, which he ascribed to Umayyad activity, concluding that "sometime during the Early Islamic period the town underwent a settlement shift," that, he posited, should probably be identified with the establishment of the Umayyad provincial capital.²⁰

The possibility that an Umayyad *miṣr* was built in Tiberias alongside the pre-Islamic settlement, as was the case in many other early Islamic towns, should not be ruled out completely.²¹ Nevertheless, the reappraisal of some old archaeological evidence, together with new publications, allows us to assume that not only did the "old" town continue to prosper and expand, but its center retained its role as the heart of the capital's activity.

This is verified by the results of Gideon Foerster's excavations of 1973 and 1974 (licenses G-22/1973 and G-37/1974, fig. 2), which were published by David Stacey.²² Stacey focused on five of the seven archaeo-

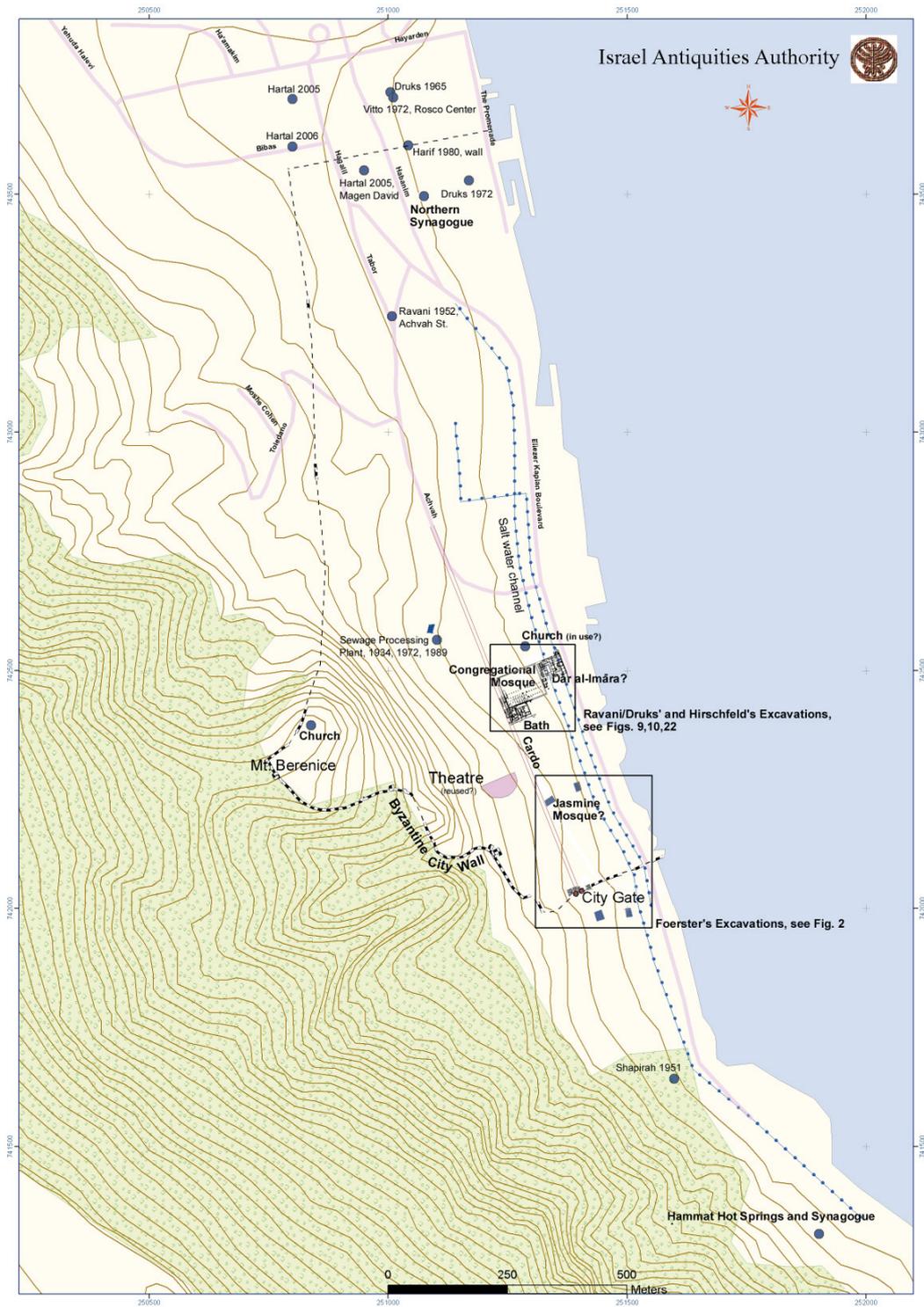


Fig. 1. Map of Tiberias, with sites mentioned in this article. (Map: Leticia Barda, Israel Antiquities Authority [IAA])

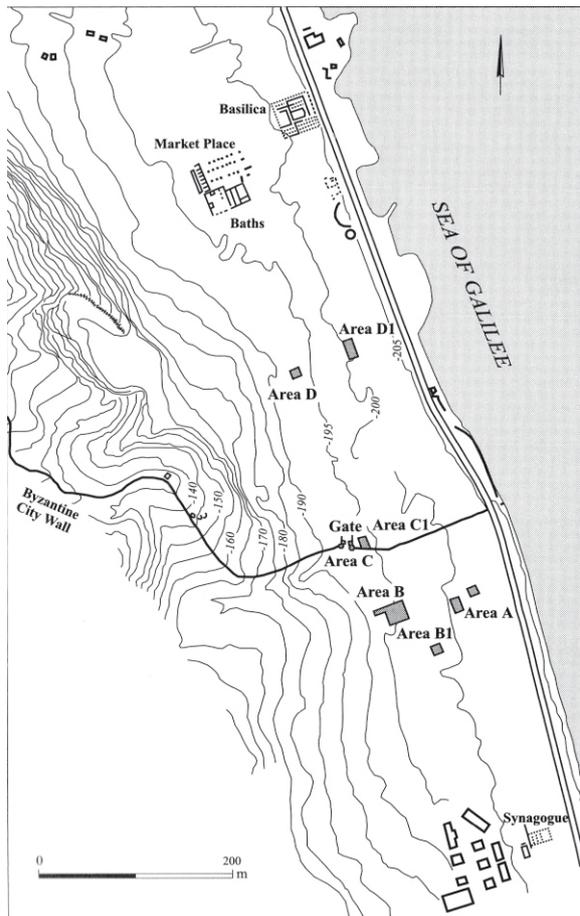


Fig. 2. Gideon Foerster's excavation areas (A–D), 1973–74. (After David Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974: The Early Islamic Periods*, IAA Reports 21 [Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2004], plan 4.1)

logical layers uncovered by Foerster's excavations. These five layers were dated from the Umayyad to the late Fatimid periods and meticulously analyzed, with the aim of understanding both architectural changes and changing patterns in pottery technology and fashion over the centuries.

Stacey's research added much information regarding patterns of urbanization within and to the south of the Byzantine city. Yet the archaeological data going back as early as the excavations of the 1950s, which unfortunately remain mostly unpublished, are vaster and more diverse.

The best summary of all archaeological works completed in the 1970s and 80s—both published and unpublished—is that of Yosef Stepansky from 1985. The high incidence of early Islamic layers in almost every dig mentioned in that report is notable.²³ A more recent summary by Stepansky of all excavations conducted at Tiberias,²⁴ together with research carried out by the present author on the results of those excavations in Tiberias that exposed Islamic strata, both published and in the archives,²⁵ shows that over fifty sites can contribute to our understanding of the urban development of Tiberias from the Umayyad (seventh to eighth centuries) through the Fatimid (tenth to eleventh centuries) period. Nevertheless, the information concerning the Islamic layers is far from consistent among the reports. Stacey's account is the most meticulous, as already noted; the majority of the other reports are brief and mostly only refer to "Early Arab" or "Early Islamic" material. However, post-Fatimid layers, i.e., Crusader, Mamluk, and Ottoman, if present, are often mentioned.

First and foremost, Foerster's excavations, as discussed by Stacey, show that the expansion of the city south of the Byzantine wall, beyond the southern gate, did not start before the mid-ninth century. In area A, the construction overlaid a burial associated with five coins—four Umayyad and one ninth-century²⁶—while in Area B the construction, also overlaying a few graves, was related to the late tenth or even early eleventh century.²⁷ Stacey's interpretation contradicts Foerster's statement that "the area south of the walls enjoyed an era of prosperity in the three centuries between the eighth and the eleventh centuries,"²⁸ but it is strengthened by the evidence, mostly unpublished, of Ya'akov Shapirah's excavation at Shikun Ovdei Hammat Tiberias from October 1951 to January 1952 (Old Israeli grid 20165.24165; licenses 36/1951; 2/1952).²⁹ His dig uncovered burials dating to the end of the Byzantine period—the pottery is transitional Byzantine-Umayyad—topped by Muslim graves, which were themselves eventually overlaid by dwellings built on either side of a narrow alley. According to some of Shapirah's pottery drawings, the late constructions seem datable to the mid-ninth to tenth centuries.

The seemingly ninth-century expansion of Tiberias south of the Byzantine city also explains certain devel-

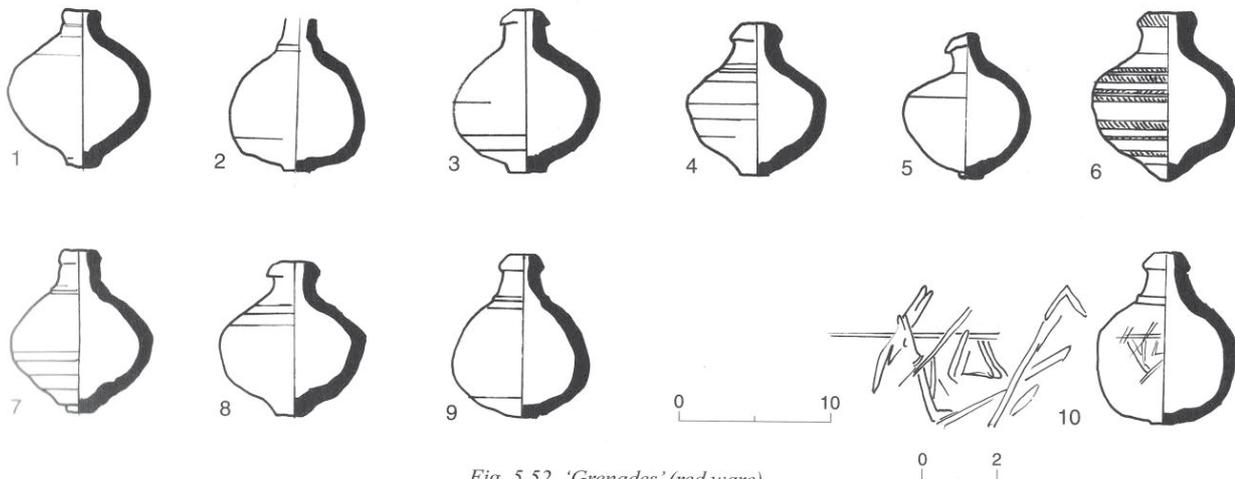


Fig. 5.52. 'Grenades' (red ware).

Fig. 3. Grenade-shaped vessels, from Area C, eastern tower. (After Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974*, fig. 5.52)

opments at the southern gate and its related towers. As early as 1936, E. L. Sukenik reported on a round building, yet to be identified as the eastern Roman tower:

We found evidence that the building was still in use in the Arab period. A thick layer of ashes shows that the building was used as an oven. From the remains of Arabic pottery found inside the building it may perhaps be concluded that it was used as a potter's oven.³⁰

Sukenik's conclusions were based on limited evidence, but added to the findings of the 1973–74 excavations at this same spot—ten grenade-shaped vessels (fig. 3), an iron axe, and early ninth-century coins³¹—it is possible to point to its use by a local industry, though not necessarily as a potter's workshop. No wasters, kiln bars, or related artifacts were found in the vicinity. In any event, it is clear that by the ninth century the city wall had lost most of its function, matching the dating of the first constructions south of it.³²

This also explains the post-ninth-century narrowing of the gate and the introduction of wooden doors, dated by Stacey to the early tenth century. He believed that the narrowing of the gate was a reaction to the Qarmatian raids.³³ However, given the fact that the settlement to the south of the southern city wall was by then a continuation of that within the walls, it seems that the

narrowing of the gate should rather be interpreted as part of Tiberias's urban development.³⁴

Regarding the northern perimeter of the early Islamic city, the archaeological evidence points to a considerable expansion beyond the limits of Byzantine Tiberias.³⁵ In 1972, Fanny Vitto conducted a salvage excavation at the Old Market, towards the site of the Rosco Commercial Center (today west of the main parking lot of the Tiberias tourist center, near the Caesar Hotel). This area had been briefly excavated by Adam Druks in 1964–65, but now, after the deepening of the excavation to some 3 meters, remains of stone paving, apparently of a street, came to light. The finds over this paving were dated to the eighth to ninth centuries, while the fill underneath was apparently sterile. The paving does not align with the *cardo*, the beginning of which was uncovered in Foerster's excavations (see above), its central portion having been mainly uncovered in the 1950s by the archaeologist Bezalel Ravani to the west of a pillared building and a bathhouse (see below). It is not clear, moreover, whether this stone paving was already laid during the Umayyad period, the pottery results unfortunately leaving this question open.³⁶

Less is known about the western perimeter of the Islamic city during the transitional period. Up to 2005,³⁷

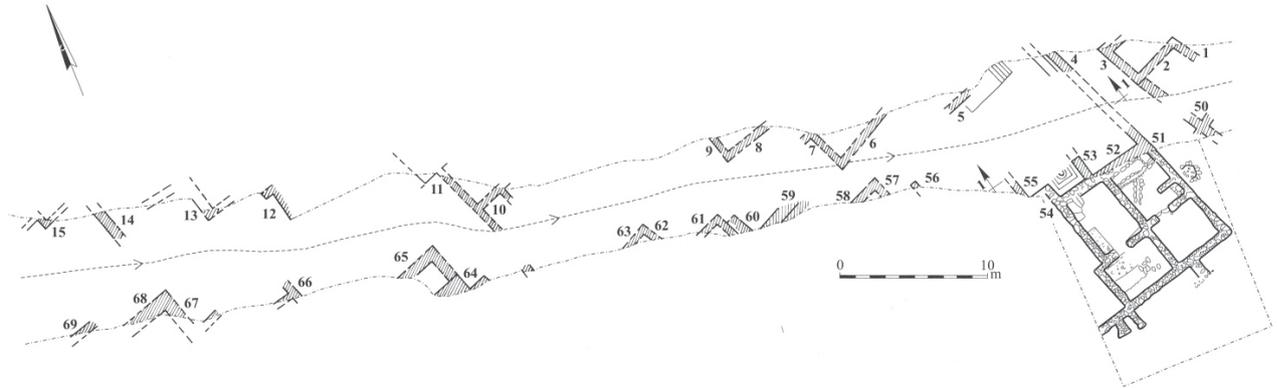


Fig. 4. Hirschfeld's excavations in Area B near the Sewage Processing Plant of Tiberias (license G-104/1989), adjacent to the 1934 excavations. (After Yizhar Hirschfeld, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1989–1994*, IAA Reports 22 [Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2004], plan 1.4)

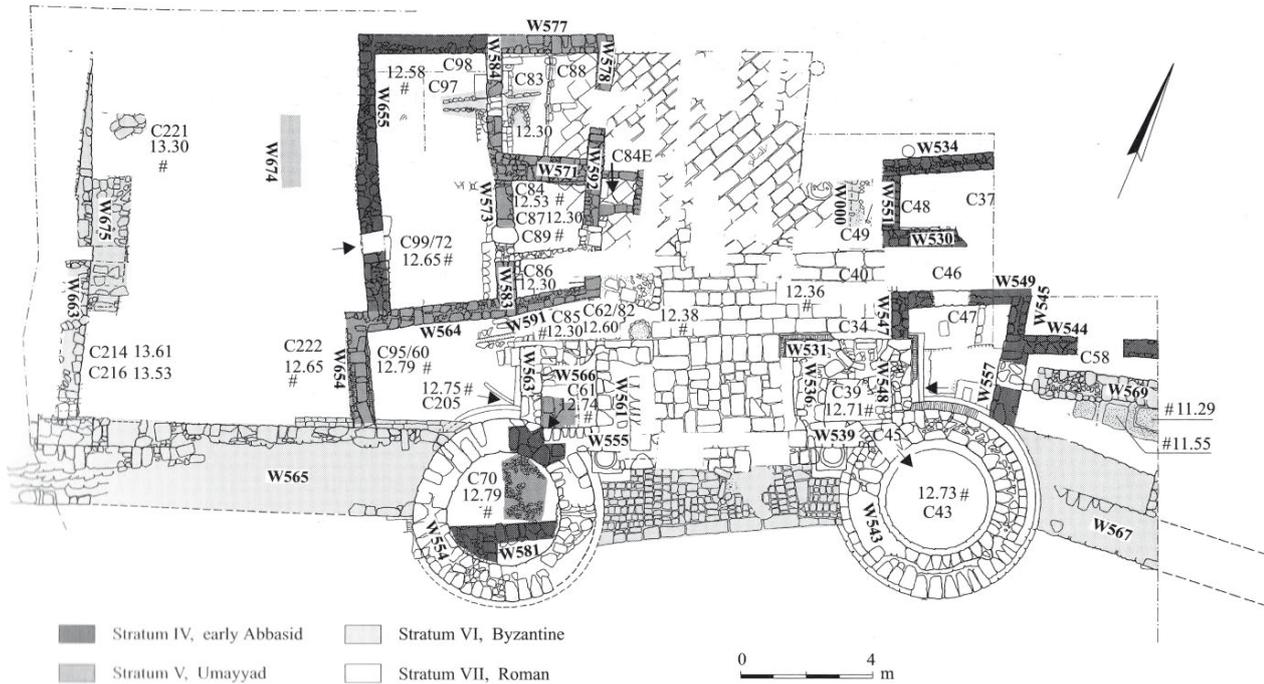
the main piece of relevant information was provided by the excavation of the burial site of a child interred in a small clay vessel at Achvah Street. The neighborhood named after that street was excavated in June and July 1952, and identified by Ravani as “Arab.” However, in contrast to other areas where Muslim burials were found,³⁸ the Achvah Street excavations also uncovered Byzantine layers. We can propose a settlement gap, but not, unfortunately, a chronological frame for it. Future excavations in that area might clarify the issue.

On the other hand, a number of soundings and excavations completed to the south of Shikun Achvah, east of Mt. Berenice, provide evidence for the extensive settlement of its slopes in the early Islamic period. As early as 1934, when a run-off channel was dug in Wadi Ghazal, leading to the Sea of Galilee (license W-30/1934),³⁹ remains of dwellings dating from the Byzantine through the Fatimid period were uncovered. According to Yizhar Hirschfeld, “[t]he buildings were modified, walls were destroyed and new walls built, but the principles of the urban plan established in the Roman–Byzantine periods continued to be observed for the duration of the settlement at the site.”⁴⁰ The excavations in that portion of the city were continued in 1972 by Gershon Edelstein and Fanny Vitto of the Israel Antiquities Authority (license A-348/1972),⁴¹ who uncovered remains of large buildings, which they dated to the eighth century.⁴² From 1989 to 1990, Hirschfeld excavated near the Sewage Processing Plant

of Tiberias (license G-104/1989),⁴³ not far from the 1934 excavations (fig. 4). The archaeological evidence uncovered attests to the continuous settlement of this side of the city. Hirschfeld excavated, among others, a large building from the late Roman period (Area B, stratum IV), which he identified as the Great Academy (*Beth Midrash*) of Tiberias.⁴⁴ Another good-quality construction dating from at least the sixth century and surviving until the mid-eighth-century earthquake was found attached to this large building (stratum III). Later on, during the early Abbasid period (stratum II), a new building was erected in this area, surviving until the late Fatimid period (eleventh century), though with some architectural modifications. The earliest phase of this building included a colorful geometric mosaic, in whose floor a group of Umayyad coins was sealed.⁴⁵

Still, in relation to the western perimeter of the early Islamic city, excavations at Mount Berenice attest to the continuous use of the church, as well as of the Byzantine-period wall, into the Islamic period. During the Crusader period, the church was renovated and reinforced. The site was still inhabited in the Mamluk period, but by then it fulfilled different purposes.⁴⁶

As for the inner layout of the walled city during the Umayyad period, the main feature to have been properly published so far is the southern portion of the city's main artery—the *cardo* stretching southwest to northeast (fig. 5). Foerster's excavations at Area C revealed that in stratum V (dated to the Umayyad period) the



Plan 4.3. Area C. Strata VII-IV.

Fig. 5. Foerster's excavations at the southern gate (Area C). (After Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias*, 1973-1974, plan 4.3)

street was subject to the encroachment of small shops. This phenomenon is well known from other classical cities such as Beth She'an, Jerusalem, and Palmyra, during the transition from the Byzantine to the early Islamic period. Apparently in Tiberias the narrowing of the street was not drastic—from circa 11 meters wide during the Roman-Byzantine periods to circa 9 meters during the Umayyad era. This process, nevertheless, continued into the Abbasid (after 750) and Tulunid (878-905) periods, and eventually the street was reduced to around 2 meters in width.⁴⁷

The other location within the walled city excavated by Foerster and of relevance for this study was a large building (in Area D), apparently erected during the sixth century (fig. 6). It was built over an artificial platform oriented east-west,⁴⁸ apparently rising over the city around 5 meters to the east of the *cardo*, not far from a secondary north-south street reaching what has so far been called "the marketplace."⁴⁹ Stacey regarded this building, some 150 meters southeast of the theater,

as having a public function. According to the archaeological results, by the end of the Umayyad period or beginning of the Abbasid most of the original structure was in decay. Walls had to be reinforced and another one added; a door was blocked, and the rooms were filled up to a depth of over one meter. The main additions during this period were "cylindrical 'concrete' supports," as described by Stacey, that "were built into the fill for columns which replaced the earlier arches."⁵⁰ They were within a long building, around 4 meters wide and 15.5 meters long, oriented east-west. These supports, whose drums have not survived save for one in square D14, were apparently arranged in two rows of four or five columns, circa 2.5 meters apart.

The above characteristics led Stacey to identify the broad building over the platform as the *Masjid al-Yāsmīn* described by Nasir-i Khusraw (see above), which he dated to the post-Umayyad period, in accordance with the ceramic and numismatic finds, probably from soon after the earthquake of 749.⁵¹ If Stacey's

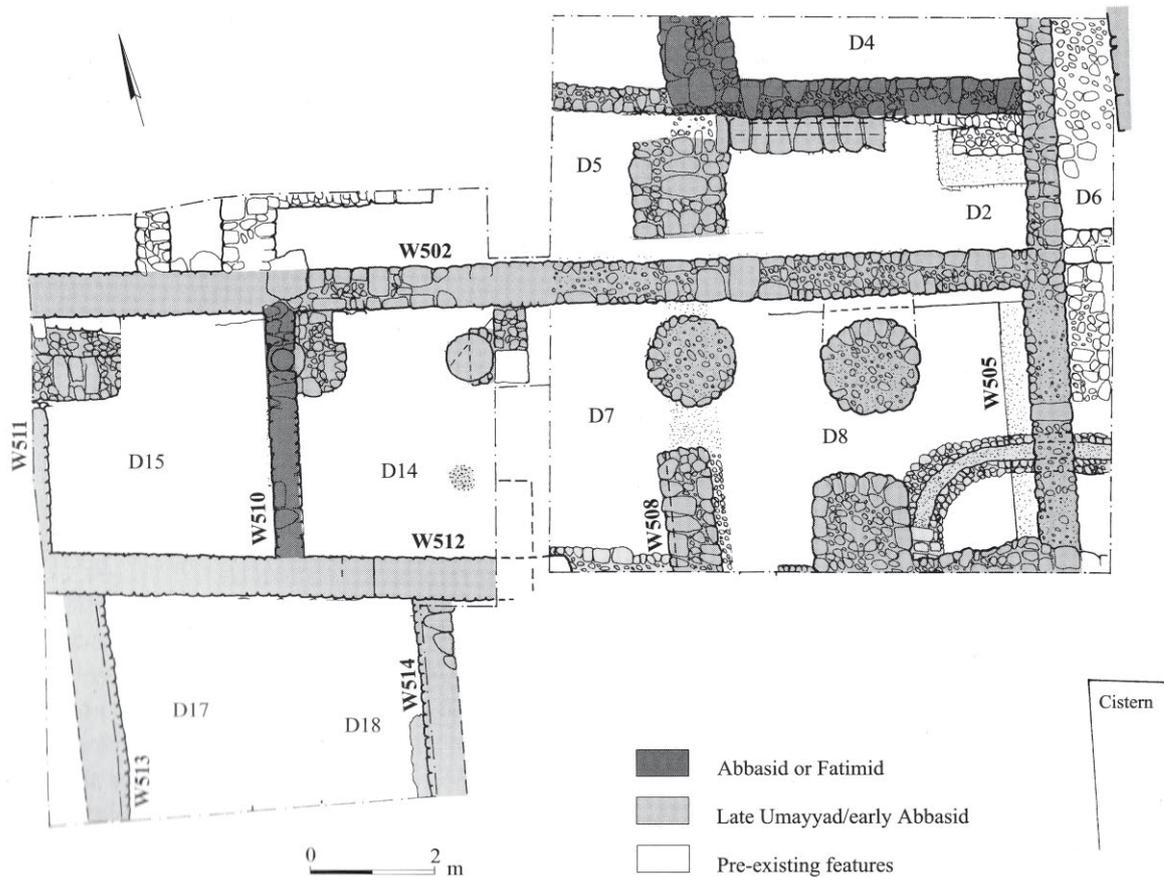


Fig. 6. Foerster's excavations in Area D. Remains of a mosque? (After Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974*, plan 4.16)

suggestion can be confirmed, an important feature of Islamic Tiberias has been located. Unfortunately, the excavations did not reveal the nature of the pre-Islamic building, as that would also have taught us something about the process of Islamization in Tiberias.

Further north is the Roman–Byzantine city center, where excavations spanning from 1952 to 1968 revealed a series of public buildings—a bathhouse, a pillared building, and a basilical building. The excavations also showed that the buildings, although undergoing alterations, survived until the eleventh century, when the whole area was abandoned. The excavations in this area resumed briefly in 1993, and in 2004. The basilical building has been considerably explored, while further urban features—mainly dealing with the early Islamic period—were exposed.

Nevertheless, throughout the years, scholars have failed to address a fundamental question concerning the Islamization and urban development of Tiberias: the location of its Friday Mosque. The following section will reassess previous findings, and suggest new interpretations.

TIBERIAS'S CONGREGATIONAL MOSQUE

Before the proposed expansion of a sports field in Tiberias (Old Israeli grid 2013.2424) in 1952, the then Department of Antiquities of Israel (now the Israel Antiquities Authority) opened seven trenches to the south and west of the field in order to approve the planned works. The trenches were excavated in two

days (January 4–6, 1952) by the district archaeologist, Bezalel Ravani. Of the seven trenches, only three (trenches I, II, and V) yielded significant archaeological evidence—well-built walls, plaster floors, and roof tiles. In the southernmost trench (I), Ravani reported finding a copper chain attached to an elongated ring, directly over the second of the three plaster floors detected one on top of the other (fig. 7).⁵² That was enough to halt the construction and instigate a six-year archaeological project, which eventually uncovered the center of Roman–Byzantine Tiberias. The excavations at the site revealed the remains of the *cardo*, a series of shops that opened onto it, and a large and notable bathhouse, as well as the remains of a broad building oriented east–west, supported by three parallel rows of squared pillars. This building was interpreted by Ravani as the city’s marketplace and that identification has generally been accepted by the archaeological community. The main exception has been Foerster, who has long believed that it served as Tiberias’s early mosque,⁵³ although he has never published this view.

By the end of Ravani’s excavations in 1958, a little more than half of the pillared building had been uncovered (figs. 8 and 9). The building’s western wall abuts some of the small shops, while the enclosing wall to the south partly abuts the bathhouse. The three rows of pillars to the south, which stand atop reused Jewish tombstone doors of the Roman period, face an open area, probably a courtyard. The easternmost architectural remains revealed by Ravani were the square bases, around 2.3 meters a side, of two rows of three massive pillars, on either side of a passage 5.5 meters wide, which traversed the parallel rows of smaller pillars at right angles. Ravani correctly reconstructed a symmetrical plan for this building, thus yielding a rectangle 78 meters wide and 26 meters long, oriented southeast–northwest (i.e., a broad building, in which the main axis is shorter than the breadth). His interpretation of the building as a marketplace further led him to explain the transept as a passage connecting its two entrances, following the finding of a threshold, then *in situ*, on its southern side (today rather to be understood as belonging to a later stage in the pillared building’s development). Below the pillared building, Ravani discerned two further archaeological layers, which he interpreted as the market’s earlier phases.⁵⁴

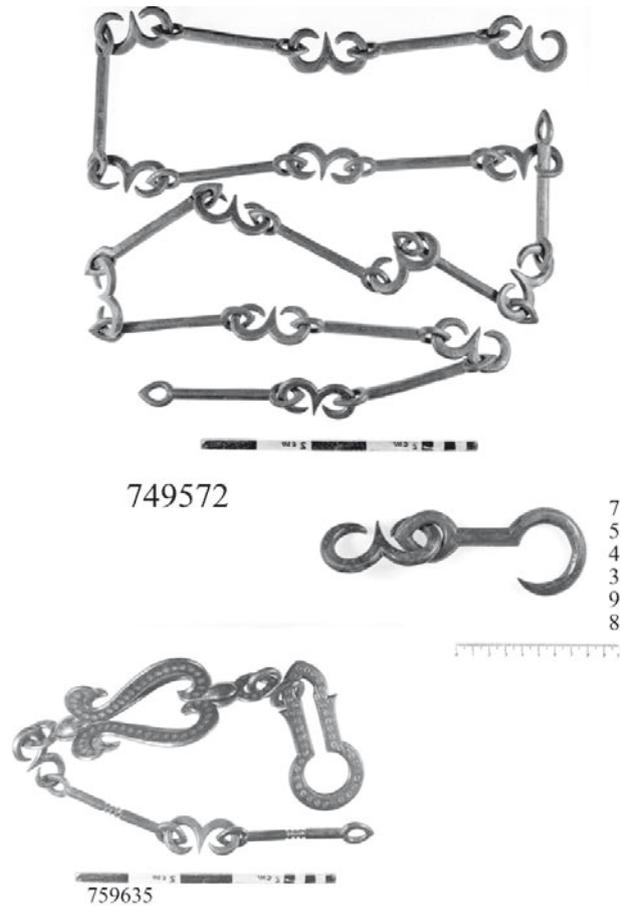


Fig. 7. Sections of bronze chain, uncovered by Ravani in 1952. (Photo: courtesy of IAA)

Five years after Ravani’s excavations, another notable building was uncovered, this time to the northeast of the pillared building. In 1963, during the installation of a salt water conduit from Tabgha to Degania Beth by the Mekorot Water Company, the Department of Antiquities supervised, and reported on, excavation works along this long north–south channel.⁵⁵ Among the many finds exposed along the water line, the remains of a large basilical building stand out. The Department of Antiquities required proper archaeological excavations of this building (old Israeli grid 2013.2424-5), which were carried out under the direction of Adam Druks until 1965 (fig. 9).⁵⁶ The building comprises a central apsidal nave facing northeast with a narrow aisle on each side, a large courtyard, and a series of rooms to the side and behind the main basilical area. According



Fig. 8. Aerial view of Ravani's excavations, looking east. In the foreground are the *cardo* and shops; in the middle is the pillared building. The bathhouse (partly covered) is to the right. (Photo: courtesy of Sonia Haliday Photographs)

to the numismatic finds retrieved by Druks, the building was dated to the fourth century⁵⁷ but additions, including a new apse and colorful mosaics, were made in the fifth and sixth centuries. Druks also revealed pre-Byzantine remains, which he dated to the first to second centuries A.D. No Islamic layer was clearly attributed to the complex, hindering a proper understanding of the continuity of this whole area as an urban center during the early Islamic period.

In July and August 1993, Hirschfeld returned to the areas excavated by Ravani and Druks, while also excavating at Mount Berenice.⁵⁸ Five strata were recorded, dating from the first to second centuries (stratum V) to the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries (stratum I). The basilical building was attributed to stratum IV, which was dated to the mid-fourth century. A section of an Abbasid street was revealed, running north-south, west

of this building. To the latest stratum (V) Hirschfeld attributed temporary structures and industrial installations, apparently connected to the sugar industry, as attested by the pottery recovered.⁵⁹

In 2004, Hirschfeld resumed excavations in these same areas (license G-10/2004), mainly concentrating on the basilical building to the east (Area F), but also undertaking conservation works at the bathhouse (Area A), as well as conducting one sounding at the pillared building (Area C), at the southeast end of the transept.⁶⁰ Until his untimely death in November 2006, Hirschfeld was dedicated to fully exposing the basilical building, which the excavators believed had served a public function—perhaps even as the seat of the Sanhedrin, though this view is much disputed by scholars.

Hirschfeld's works of 1993 and 2004 to 2006 (fig. 10) determined that the basilical building continued to be

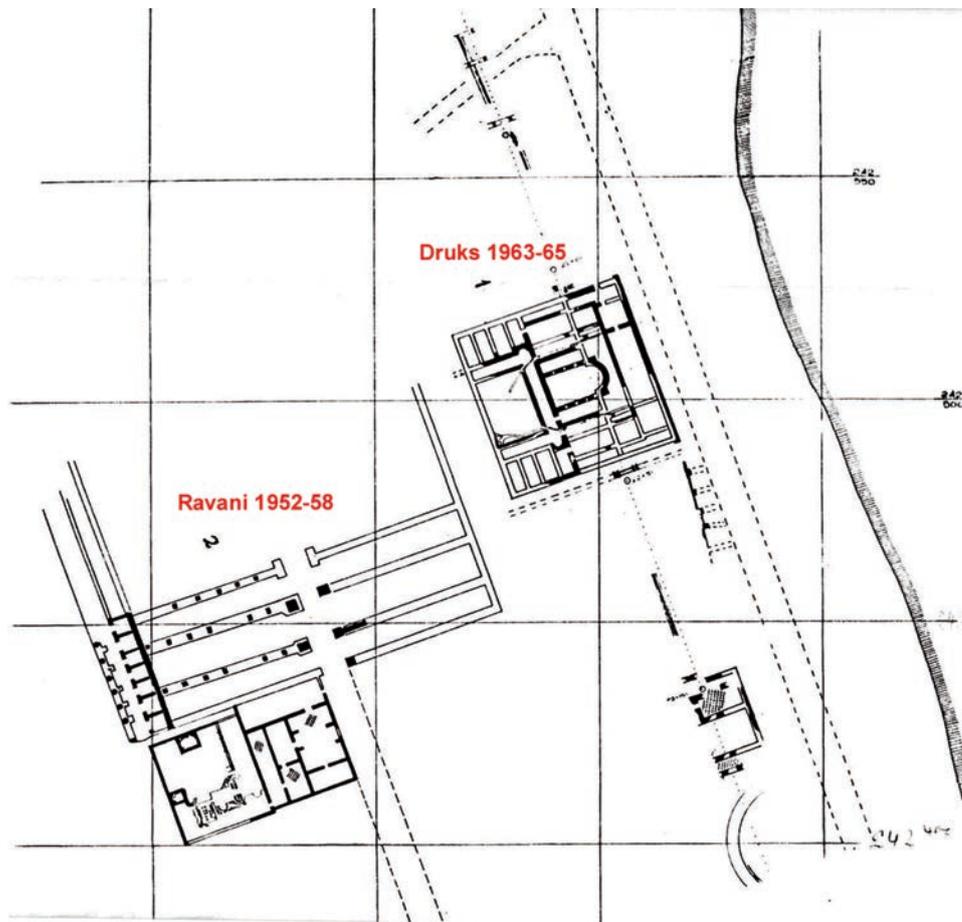


Fig. 9. Excavations by Ravani and Druks at the Roman-Byzantine city center. (Plan: courtesy of the IAA Mandatory Archive, Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem)

used into the early Islamic period, despite the impression given by Druks' brief reports. During the Umayyad period, it kept the layout it had in the sixth century, when the easternmost apse was added. Following the 749 earthquake, it is not clear if the renewed building retained its original plan. To the west, a new wing, partly overlaying the courtyard, was erected, west of a wide wall. The rooms were small, facing a paved street, and usually provided with installations. To the south, more rooms were also built. In one of them, a plaster floor yielded an eighth-century coin. A coin found on top of the floor in another room was dated to the ninth century. This layer also came to an end following an earthquake. The excavators inferred from the rich findings retrieved that this building also fulfilled

a public function. However, the renewed activity during the tenth century seems to have been mostly commercial, and the basilical building apparently ceased to be used. As in the other areas, the settlement in Area F ended sometime during the eleventh century.

The sounding in Area C uncovered a brass chain 4.8 meters long, similar to those found by Ravani in the 1950s. It was found on a plaster floor, underneath a heap of pottery roof tiles that had fallen from the roof (most probably following the earthquake of 1068).⁶¹ In addition, two coins (one Umayyad and the other ninth-century Abbasid), glazed sherds, and fragments of colored windowpanes, as well as other pieces of glass (including ones from lamps of the type found in mosques), were discovered in this area.⁶²

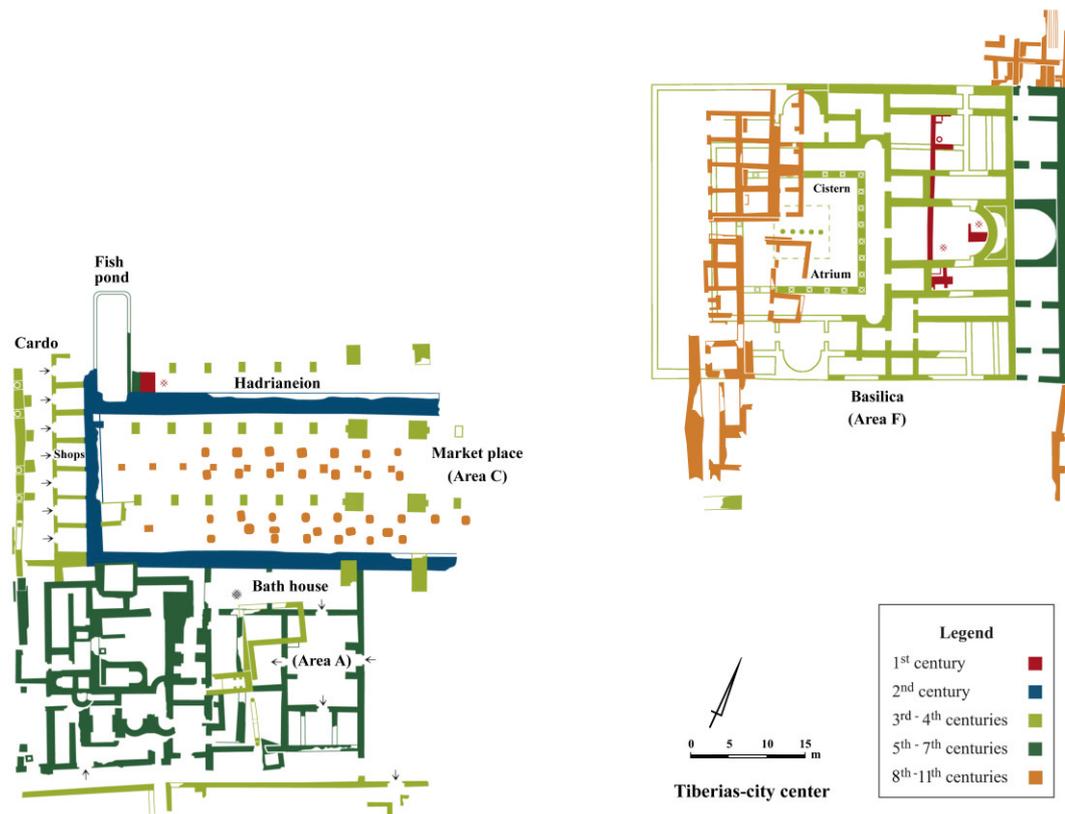


Fig. 10. Hirschfeld's excavations in Tiberias (2005). (Plan: Dov Porotsky, courtesy of the Hirschfeld Expedition team)

In March 2008, Hirschfeld's team returned to the site for a short study season. They uncovered in Area C the stylobate and column bases of what seems to be the eastern colonnade surrounding the pillared building's courtyard. Its northern limit, however, was not revealed.

Hirschfeld's archaeological sequence for the pillared building (fig. 10) supported Ravani's attribution to the Byzantine period. He also supported Ravani's interpretation of the building as a marketplace, describing it as a covered bazaar (*macellum*),⁶³ which remained in use until the Fatimid period. Hirschfeld did not discount a late use of the building as a mosque, following the discovery of the long brass chains and fragments of mosque lamps overlaying its latest floor. But the notion that the pillared building could have been used as a mosque was published with much reservation.⁶⁴

According to Hirschfeld's sequence, the pillared building was built over the remains of a second-century

Hadrianeum, which apparently was never completed. This Roman temple is believed to have been built over a structure dated to the first century A.D. The construction of the pillared building was thus, in Hirschfeld's view, contemporary with that of the basilical building to its east, but pre-dated the expansion of the bathhouse, which also took place during the Byzantine period.

It is notable that in Hirschfeld's proposed architectural sequence of Tiberias's city center there is no representation of one of its most important historical moments: the Umayyad period, when it became the provincial capital. That would have been acceptable, though unusual, if the center had moved elsewhere, as has been suggested by Harrison. However, the ground plan of the three-aisled pillared building intersected by a transept and facing south suggests otherwise. This is a description well known to art historians of the Islamic period, in that it is the basic plan of the Great Mosque

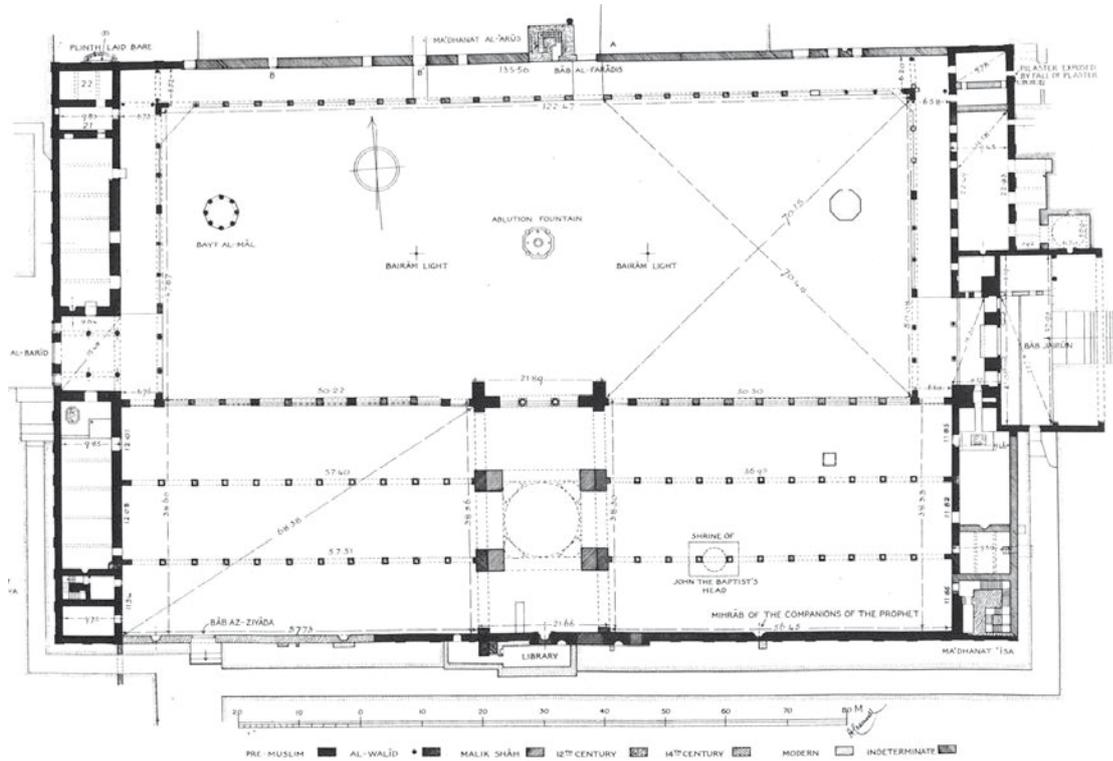


Fig. 11. Plan of the Great Mosque of Damascus. (Plan after K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture* [New York: Hacker Art Books, 1979], vol. 1, pt. I, fig. 90)

of Damascus (fig. 11), capital of the Umayyads, built by the caliph al-Walid b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 705–15) in the second decade of the eighth century (probably commenced in 706 and finished in 714 or 715). This mosque stands *in situ*, having preserved most of the Umayyad layout and some of its original decoration. The building, constructed within the limits of a first-century Roman temenos, which had also served as a church precinct from the fourth century onwards, is rectangular—157.5 meters wide (east–west) and 100 meters long (north–south). It comprises a covered area (136 meters by 37 meters) and a courtyard (122.5 meters by 50 meters) surrounded by a portico.⁶⁵

To this author, it seems no coincidence that the pillared building in Tiberias (around 78 meters by 26 meters) is nearly half the breadth of the Friday Mosque in Damascus (fig. 12), nor that the proportion between these two figures is 3 (fig. 13), a number that frequently appears in Umayyad architecture. First of all, the prayer

halls in both mosques are divided into three parallel aisles, an architectural program widely followed in Umayyad Syria. In addition, in both the Friday Mosque of Damascus and the pillared building in Tiberias, the unit represented by the transept is repeated three times on each side, i.e., seven times in total.⁶⁶

If the relation between the pillared building in Tiberias and the Friday Mosque in Damascus is part of a contemporary planning concept, then other mosques should follow a similar principle. A nearby example is that of the small mosque in the eighth-century palace at Khirbat al-Minya, fourteen kilometers north of Tiberias (fig. 14). While mainly serving the palace, the mosque was also open to the outside through a postern in its eastern wall. The mosque’s width, including its enclosing walls, seems to be a fifth of that of the pillared building in Tiberias, i.e., a tenth of that of the mosque in Damascus. The inner layout is also that of a three-aisled mosque (fig. 14).

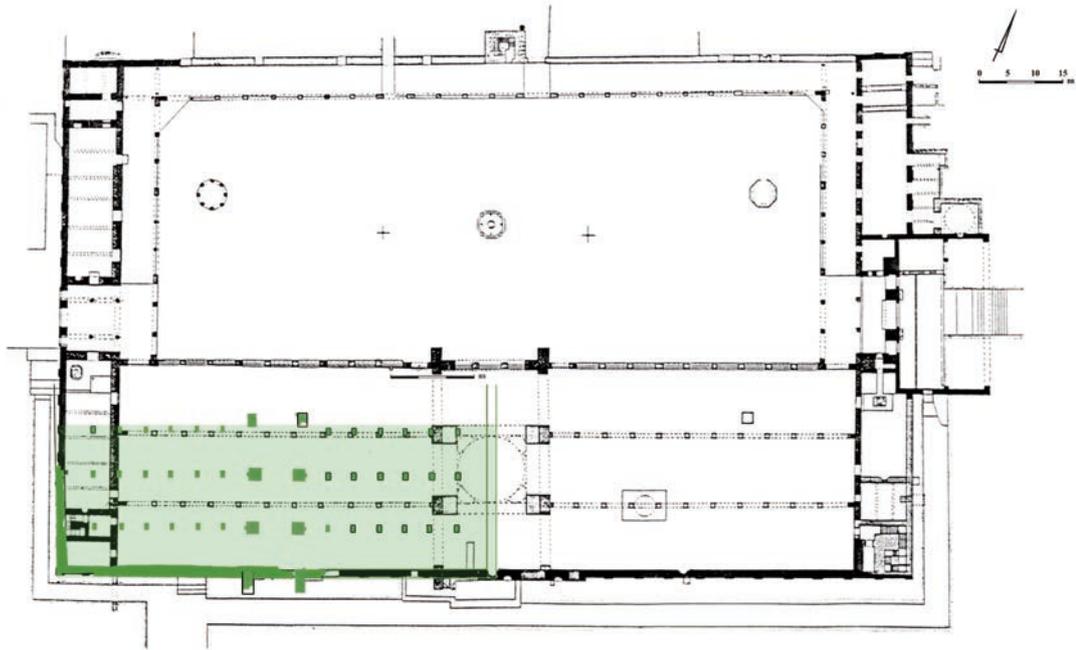


Fig. 12. The Great Mosque of Damascus and the pillared building in Tiberias (in green) compared. (Superimposition of plans: Katia Cytryn-Silverman)

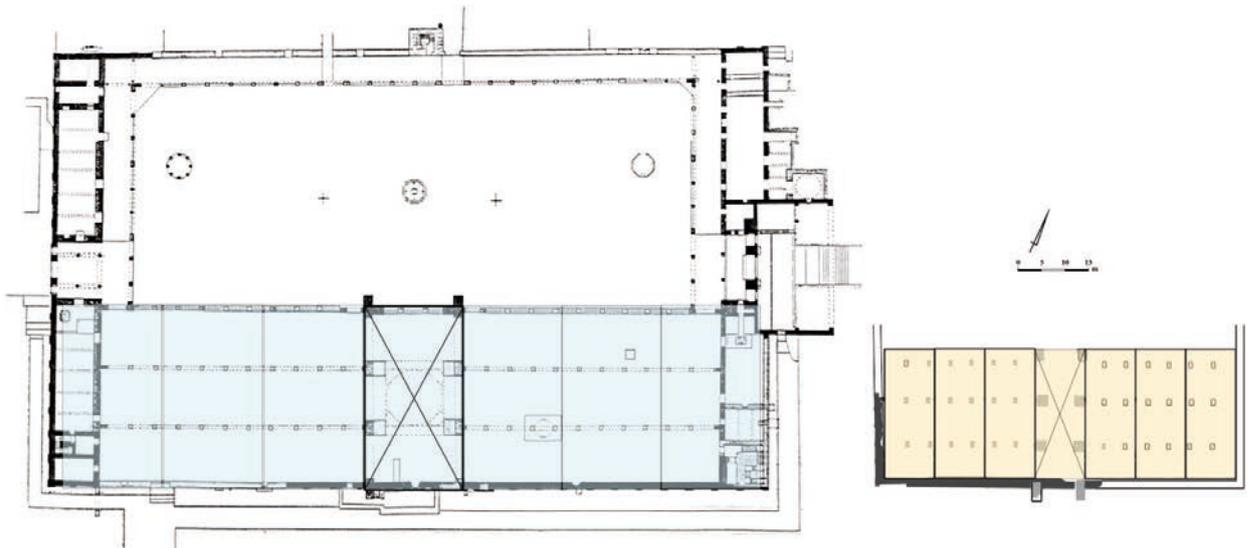


Fig. 13. The repeated transept units of the Great Mosque of Damascus and the pillared building in Tiberias. (Comparison of plans: Katia Cytryn-Silverman)

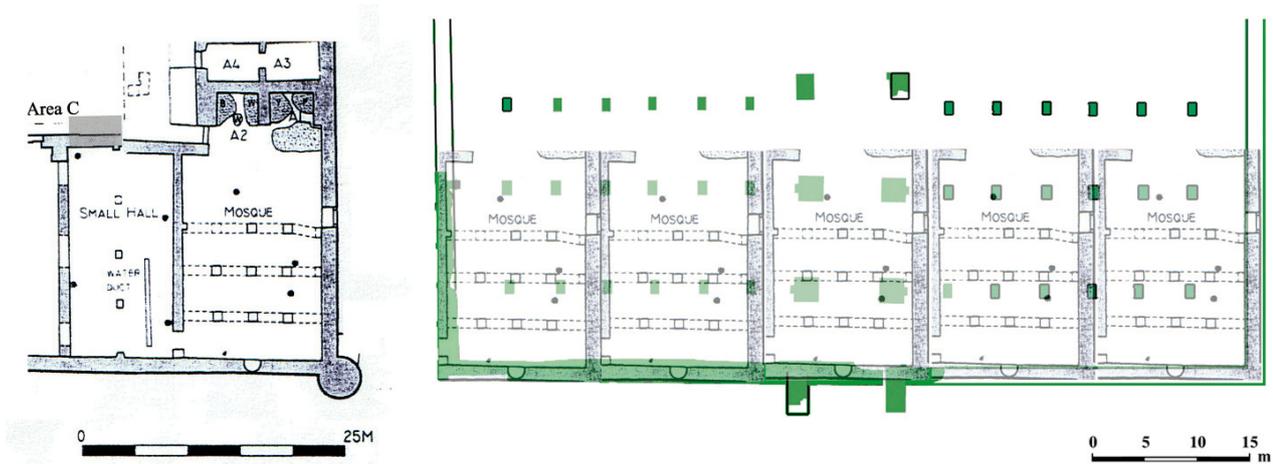


Fig. 14. The mosque of Khirbat al-Minya and the pillared building in Tiberias (in green). (Comparison of plans: Katia Cytryn-Silverman)

The relationship between the mosque of the eighth-century “Greater Enclosure” (as it is called by the expedition team, which has identified it as a *madīna*) at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, ninety-seven kilometers northeast of Palmyra, and the pillared building in Tiberias seems even clearer (fig. 15, a and b). Qasr al-Hayr’s mosque, located in the southeastern corner of the enclosure, consists of a covered hall and a courtyard, the latter accessible from the building’s peristyle to the northwest and from the nearby *bayt* (living unit) to the west, as well as from the outside through a postern in the eastern wall of the enclosure. The covered side of the mosque is composed of three aisles of three arches each, parallel to the qibla wall. They are intersected in the middle by a broad transept. In Qasr al-Hayr’s case, the transept does not function as a repeating unit as in Damascus and Tiberias. Nevertheless, a connection to the latter is still evident: Qasr al-Hayr’s prayer hall (37 meters by 22 meters) is nearly half the width of Tiberias’s (fig. 15a), while the intercolumniations—the widths of the aisles, as well as that of the transept—seem somehow related to those at Tiberias (fig. 15b).⁶⁷

The parallels are many—we could add to the list the covered halls of both Jarash and Amman, the first 38.9 meters wide by 13.8 meters long, the second 39.7 meters wide by 14 meters long.⁶⁸ They can also be considered roughly half the size of Tiberias’s covered hall.

The relationship between the pillared building in Tiberias and the mosque of the other provincial capital

of southern Bilad al-Sham—Ramla—is not as clear (fig. 16). Both the present measurements (93 meters long by 84 meters wide) and the subdivision of the White Mosque’s prayer hall into two aisles seem to set these two congregational mosques apart (fig. 17).⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it could be proposed that the White Mosque was also originally a three-aisled structure, only to be narrowed following the construction of its underground cisterns during the Abbasid period.⁷⁰ Such an arrangement would also explain the positioning of the eastern gate at this mosque: if the quadrangular pillars north of the entrance reflect the original arrangement of the mosque’s northern portico, as proposed by Rosen-Ayalon,⁷¹ the gate would then have been located at the east–west axis of the courtyard.

Turning to Jerusalem’s Aqsa Mosque, the discussion becomes even more conjectural in light of the lack of palpable evidence for comparison. If Rosen-Ayalon and Grafman’s reconstruction of the Umayyad mosque is accepted,⁷² along with their suggestion that Jerusalem was in fact the source of inspiration for the plan of Damascus, then all the links referred to above should also be applied to Jerusalem.⁷³

Taking everything into account, it is difficult to avoid interpreting the pillared building in Tiberias as the city’s Umayyad Friday Mosque. If the building was just a reuse of a Byzantine *macellum*, how could the affinities with the many Umayyad sites be explained? Should the plan of a covered bazaar be seen as inspiration for

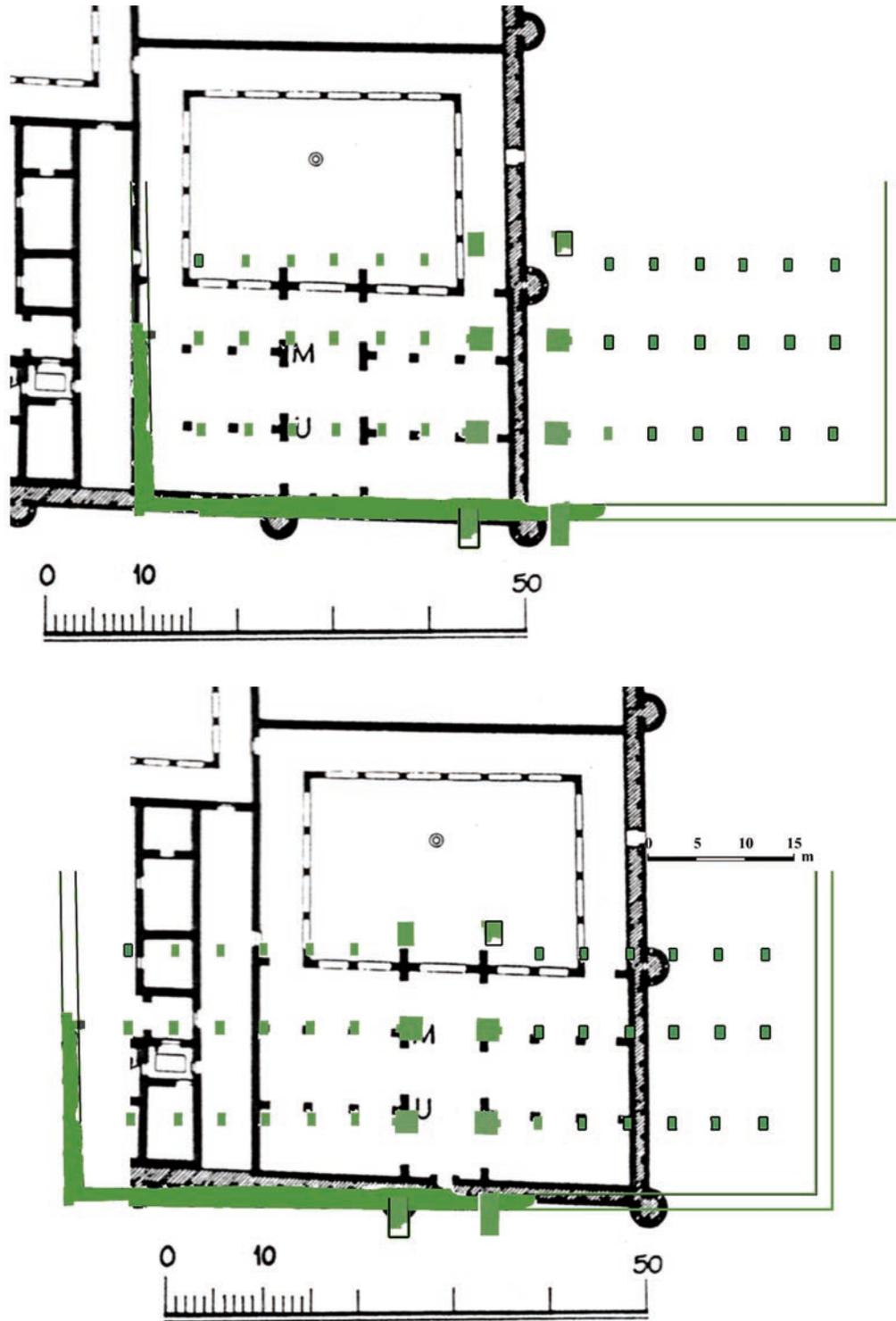


Fig. 15, a and b. The Mosque of Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi and the pillared building in Tiberias (in green): a. comparison of sizes, and b. comparison of intercolumniations. (Superimposition of plans: Katia Cytryn-Silverman)



Fig. 16. The White Mosque of Ramla (after J. Kaplan, "Excavations at the White Mosque in Ramla," *Atiqot* 2 [1959]: fig. 1) and the pillared building in Tiberias (in green) compared. (Superimposition of plans: Katia Cytryn-Silverman)

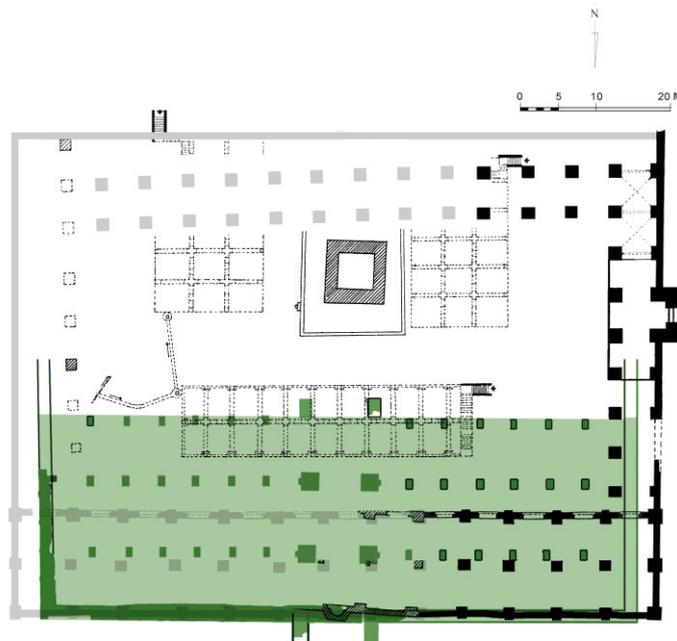


Fig. 17. Reconstruction of the original White Mosque of Ramla (after Rosen-Ayalon, "On the History of the White Mosque," *Qadmoniot* 41, 135 [2008]: 52) with the pillared building in Tiberias (in green) superimposed. The underground cisterns are later, dated to the Abbasid period. (Superimposition of plans: Katia Cytryn-Silverman)

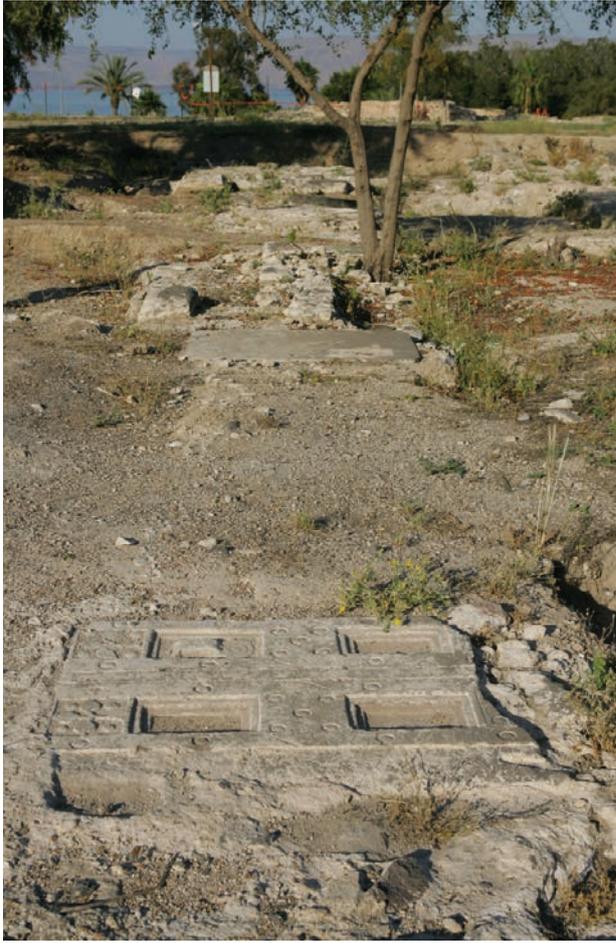


Fig. 18. A Jewish tomb basalt door, in secondary use as a pillar base. (Photo: David Silverman)

them? Indirectly, how might we explain the “coincidentally” close proportions to the mosque in Damascus, where the measurements were basically dictated by a Roman, not Byzantine, *temenos*? Furthermore, if Damascus’ inner layout was inspired by the remains of the Herodian Royal Stoa in Jerusalem, as suggested by Rosen-Ayalon and Grafman, then the layout of Tiberias’s pillared building could at most have reflected a Roman substructure, without the mediation of a Byzantine covered market.

Further archaeological evidence appears to sustain such an interpretation for the pillared building in Tiberias. The use of basalt doors from Jewish tombs of the Roman period as bases for the pillars (fig. 18) would seem a *spolia* (secondary use with ideological motiva-

tion) more appropriate for an eighth-century mosque than for a fourth-century market, which would doubtless have also served the strong Jewish population of the town at the time.

The building technique is also reminiscent of that used nearby at Khirbat al-Minya, where the basalt bases were embedded into a strong multi-layered white mortar (fig. 19). Remains of marble paneling on the northernmost aisle—which originally faced the mosque’s courtyard—also seem reminiscent of decoration in Umayyad buildings, well known from the Dome of the Rock, the Congregational Mosque in Medina (as rebuilt by al-Walid I), the Great Mosque of Damascus, and Khirbat al-Minya, as well as from the bath at Qusayr ‘Amra.⁷⁴ The discovery of many sections of brass chains, as well as of fragments of mosque lamps (see above), strengthens the present interpretation. Their later date (from around the eleventh century) attests to the longevity of this central mosque.

Needless to say, only a dedicated excavation of the rest of the pillared building could supply evidence to fully confirm this argument. What survives in the archives from Ravani’s excavations does not, unfortunately, include proper documentation, while Hirschfeld’s excavations at Area C were too limited.

CONCLUSION

By reassessing archaeological findings from past excavations in Tiberias and integrating them with recent discoveries, it is possible to reinterpret some key urban features of the early Islamic period.

It has been established that the core of the Umayyad city was contained within the Byzantine city wall, thus overruling the possibility of an Umayyad *miṣr* having been built alongside its pre-Islamic settlement. Furthermore, by reevaluating a structure previously regarded as a Byzantine market and reinterpreting it as a Friday Mosque, it is possible to suggest two additional elements of Tiberias’s early Islamic city center—the administrative center and the bathhouse.

The basilical building to the east of the proposed mosque, which still functioned throughout the Umayyad period, might be interpreted as Tiberias’s governor’s house or administrative center (*dār al-imāra*). Despite



Fig. 19. Basalt pillar bases, set in a strong white mortar. (Photo: David Silverman)

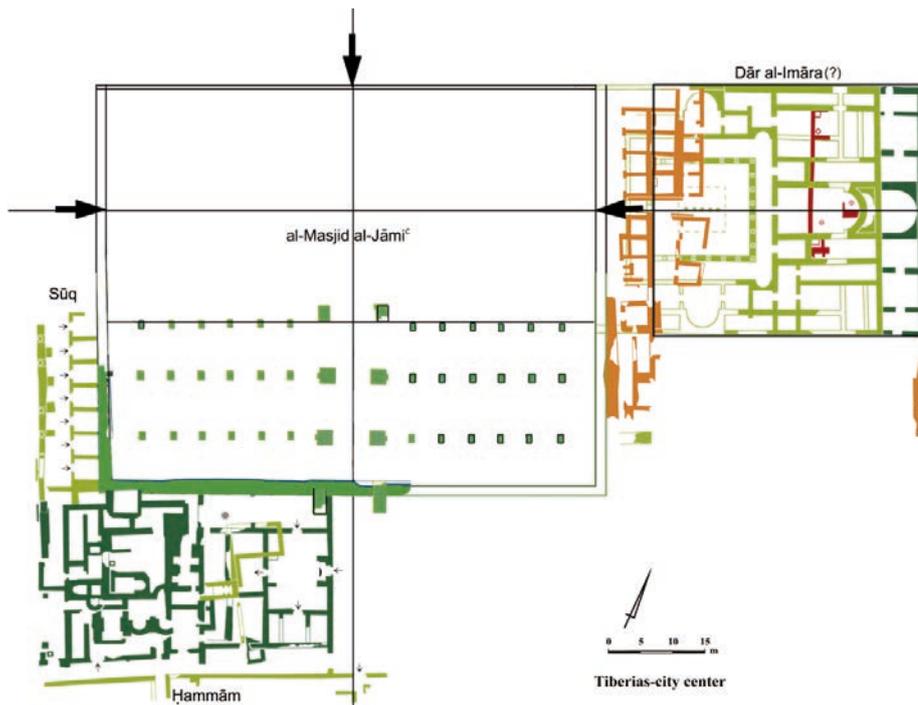


Fig. 20. Proposed city center of early Islamic Tiberias. Remains marked in orange (street and related shops) have been identified as post-Umayyad (post-749). (Plan: Dov Porotsky, courtesy of the Hirschfeld Expedition team [adapted by Katia Cytryn-Silverman])

not being located south of the qibla wall, a pattern more typical of early Islamic cities, its proximity to the mosque might have been perceived as a suitable reason to adapt the pre-Islamic public building.⁷⁵ In fact, such an adoption of a Byzantine public building for administrative use during the Umayyad period could explain later architectural developments, by which the design of some Umayyad palatial halls (in Amman, ʿAnjar, and Mshatta, for example) was based on the classical basilical plan.⁷⁶

The layout of the Umayyad city center is completed by the presence of a bathhouse, onto which the southern wall of the mosque partly abuts. This bath, attributed to the Byzantine period, seems to have been considerably expanded during the early Islamic period.⁷⁷

The proximity of the mosque to the *cardo* and its shops further enhances the centrality of the pillared building (fig. 20). It is consequently probable that the courtyard of the mosque was accessible from the west through the *cardo*, from the north through an opening facing the transept, and from the east through an opening on the axis of the basilical building. Such a consideration even allows a provisory reconstruction of the whole sanctuary as a rectangle circa 64 meters long by 78 meters wide.⁷⁸

All considered, al-Muqaddasi's description of the mosque of Tiberias seems to be validated: the mosque is large and fine, and stands in the marketplace; its floor is laid in pebbles; and the building rests on pillars of joined stone. It is hoped that future archaeological works at Tiberias will further refine our understanding of the city's development and Islamization.⁷⁹

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NOTES

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for their constant support. I also want to express my grateful thanks to Prof. Alan Walmsley of the University of Copenhagen and to Prof. Donald Whitcomb of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, for their contributions and insights during the writing of this paper, as well as to Dr. David Stacey, for helping to edit the text. Unless otherwise noted, photographs by David Silverman; map by Leticia Barda of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA). Plans of past excavations in Tiberias were kindly provided by the IAA archives; plans and photographs of Yizhar Hirschfeld's excavations were provided by him, as well as by his staff, after his premature passing away.

1. Tiberias is believed to have been founded by Herod Antipas as his capital between 18 and 20 A.D. On pre-Islamic Tiberias, see Yizhar Hirschfeld, *A Guide to Antiquity Sites in Tiberias*, trans. Edward Levin and Inna Pommerantz (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1992), 7–9; Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (henceforth *NEAEHL*), ed. Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta, 1993–), s.v. "Tiberias"; Yizhar Hirschfeld and Katharina Galor, "New Excavations in Roman, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Tiberias," in *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee—A Region in Transition*, ed. Jürgen Zangenberg, Harold W. Attridge, and Dale B. Martin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 207–29.
2. Ahmad ibn Yahyā ibn Jābir al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1866), 115–16. According to his account, the people of Tiberias soon failed to abide by the contract with Shurahbil, causing Abu ʿUbayda, the supreme commander of Syria, to send ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs to reconquer the city. It once again capitulated, under the same conditions as before. Baladhuri further mentions that some sources attribute this second conquest to Shurahbil as well. For a summary of the capitulation of Tiberias and a list of the most relevant sources, see Moshe Gil, *A History of Palestine 634–1099*, trans. Ethel Broido (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), §58, n. 46. See also M. Laverigne, *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition* (henceforth *EI2*) (Leiden, 1954–2004), s.v. "Ṭabariyya." Abu'l-Hasan ʿAli b. Abi Bakr al-Harawī (d. 1215) mentioned that the tomb of Abu ʿUbayda (d. in 639, a victim of the plague; see H. A. R. Gibb, *EI2*, s.v. "Abū ʿUbayda al-Djarrāḥ"), together with that of his wife, should be found at Tiberias, even though some placed it in al-Urdunn, and others in Baysan: see Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt ilā maʿrifat al-ziyārāt*, ed. Janine Sourdell-Thomine (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1953), 19; translated into French in A. S. Marmarji, *Textes géographiques arabes sur la Palestine* (Paris: Librairie Lecoivre, 1951), 129. This evidence is late and with no match, as most of the early sources refer to other sites. For an encompassing list of locations identified as Abu ʿUbayda's place of burial, e.g., al-Urdunn in general, Pella (Fihl), Beth She'an, and ʿImwas (Emmaus), see Abū'l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ Madīnat Dimashq*, 80 vols., ed. ʿUmar b. Gharāma al-ʿAmrawī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995–2001), 25:486, 491.

- See also Amikam Elad, "The Description of the Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa in Palestine: Is It Original?" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1987): 263, 270 n. 44. A shrine claiming to house Abu 'Ubayda's tomb is found at Mazar Abu 'Ubayda in Jordan (perhaps 'Amta of the sources), around 4 km north of Dayr Allah. For more on 'Amta as Abu 'Ubayda's place of burial, see Gil, *History of Palestine*, §319–20; J. Drory, "Where Did the Plague Occur? On the Location of 'Imwas in 639," in *Mehḳarim be-ge'ografya hiṣṭorit: Yishuvit shel Erets-Yisra'el = Historical-Geographical Studies on the Settlement of Eretz Israel*, vol. 2, ed. Yossi Katz, Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, and Yehoshua Kaniel (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1991), 223–24 n. 25. On modern claims that he was buried in 'Imwas, see Drory's unequivocal rejection in Drory, "Where Did the Plague Occur?" 224 n. 31. However, in his article on the identification of 'Imwas (partly a reaction to Drory's work), N. Luz cites an early Islamic source, Ibn Sa'd (d. 845), whose *isnād* (chain of transmission) goes back to the first half of the eighth century, in reference to Abu 'Ubayda's burial at 'Imwas: N. Luz, "Emmaos: The First Capital of Jund Filastin," in *Studies in Geography and History in Honour of Yehoshua Ben-Arieh*, ed. Yossi Ben-Artzi, Yisrael Bartal, and Elchanan Reiner (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1999), 174. Luz nevertheless fails to point out that as early as the twelfth century, Ibn 'Asakir had already refuted this evidence as "doubtful": see Ibn 'Asakir, *Ta'riḳh*, 491.
3. It is not clear when exactly this shift of capitals took place. A good possible reference for such a geopolitical change is the leveling of the new road to Damascus via 'Aqabat Fiḳ under the patronage of 'Abd al-Malik. On this pass, see n. 5 below. The sources also inform us that in 636 (or 638) an important meeting between the army commanders and the caliph 'Umar took place in Jabiya in southern Syria. The aim of this meeting was to establish the terms of occupation, divide Syria into *ajnad* (districts), settle the various tribes who took part in the conquests, and fix tax rates and methods of tax collection: see Drory, "Where Did the Plague Occur?" 222. It is not certain, however, that the district capitals were established during that meeting.
 4. On Tiberias as the center of Jewish learning and the seat of the Palestinian Yeshiva (Great Academy), see Gil, *History of Palestine*, §738. According to the sources, the Palestinian Yeshiva remained in Tiberias until it moved to Jerusalem sometime during the mid-tenth century. Tiberias was known as a center for the study of the Massora (which deals with the correct textual reading of the Scriptures) and the Hebrew language, even after the Great Academy moved to Jerusalem: see Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fāṭimid Caliphs*, 2 vols. (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970), 2:43ff. Worth mentioning are the seventy families who moved from Tiberias to reestablish the Jewish community in Jerusalem, soon after the surrender of that town to the Muslims: see Gil, *History of Palestine*, §738.
 5. Moshe Sharon, "'Aqabat Fiḳ," *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae (CIAP)* (Leiden: Brill, 1997–), 1:102–6.
 6. L. A. Mayer, "Aṣ-Ṣinnabra," *Eretz-Israel* 1 (1951): 169–70 (in Hebrew); Donald Whitcomb, "Khirbet al-Karak Identified with Sinnabra," *Al-'Usur al-Wusta: The Bulletin of Middle East Medievalists* 14, 1 (2002): 1–6.
 7. Khirbat al-Minya is located 14 km north of Tiberias, northwest of the Sea of Galilee. See the summary of the excavations from 1932 until 1959 in Oleg Grabar, *NEAEHL*, s.v. "Minnim, Ḥorvat." For the renewed excavations by the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem at Khirbat al-Minya under the direction of Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, Giora Solar, and Katia Cytryn-Silverman, see "Khirbet el-Minya," *Israel Exploration Journal* 55 (2005): 216–19.
 8. W. Hinz, *EI2*, s.v. "Farsakh." This description seems rather exaggerated. Writing in the mid-twelfth century (ca. 1154), al-Idrisi (d. ca. 1166) gave Tiberias's length as 2 *amyāl* (sing. *mīl*), i.e., ca. 4 km: see Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Idrīsī, *Kitāb Nuzhat al-mushtāq fi ikhtirāq al-āfāq (Opus geographicum)*, ed. Enrico Cerulli et al., 9 vols. (Naples and Rome: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1970–84), 4:363; translated into French in Marmarji, *Textes géographiques*, 128, and in P. A. Jaubert, *La Géographie d'Édrisi* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1975), 347. However, it seems doubtful that Idrisi's description reflected the contemporary state of affairs. By the time of his account, the city was in the hands of the Crusaders, who had built a citadel north of the Byzantine wall, at the site of Harrison's proposed *miṣr*: see Timothy P. Harrison, "The Early Umayyad Settlement at Ṭabariyah: A Case of Yet Another *Miṣr*?" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51, 1 (1992): 51–59. There is no doubt that during the Crusader period there was a shift in the city settlement, as is proved by the lack of post-eleventh-century layers in most of the excavations within the perimeter of the Byzantine / early Islamic city. Perhaps al-Idrisi based his figure on pre-Crusader accounts. On the excavations of the Crusader castle (license A-3893/2003), see Yosef Stepansky, "The Crusader Castle of Tiberias," *Crusades* 3 (2004): 179–81.
 9. "*Kin'an*," according to Guy Le Strange, ed. and trans., *Palestine under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500* (London: Alexander P. Watt for the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1890), 334; and Harrison, "Another *Miṣr*?" 53.
 10. The phrase *wa-sūquhā min al-darb ilā'l-darb* could also be read: "its marketplace stands between the two main streets." Thanks to Ofer Efrati of the Department of Arabic Language and Literature of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for this important observation. See also Gil, *History of Palestine*, §285 n. 50, for a similar translation.
 11. According to Efrati, the phrase *'alā asāṭin hijāra mawṣūla* can be also interpreted as "built of ashlar."
 12. Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Bannā' al-Shāmī al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fi ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1906), 161; translated into English by Basil Anthony Collins in *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions* (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Ltd, 1994), 148.

13. It seems that Nasir-i Khusraw transferred the tradition concerning the hammam at Hammat Tiberias to the bathhouse to the south of the mosque, excavated by Ravani in the 1950s. This latter building would be to the right of the mosque's entrance for those coming from the *cardo*, thus matching Nasir-i Khusraw's description. We may yet find a source of hot water for this bathhouse as well.
14. For the proposed identification by David Stacey of a pillared building excavated in 1973–74 (Area D) as the Jasmine Mosque, see below.
15. On the tomb of Abu Hurayra in Tiberias, see Gottlieb Schumacher's remarks from November 1886 on an Arabic inscription in marble referring to the tomb of Abu Hurayra. The inscription was found in the course of excavations at the Tiberias municipality where, according to Schumacher, there was also architectural evidence for the existence of a mosque at the site: see Gottlieb Schumacher, "Tiberias and Its Vicinity," *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* (1887): 89. I would like to thank Paul M. Cobb, of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania, for drawing my attention to this reference.
16. Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Safarnāma*, ed. Yahyā al-Khashshāb (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1983), 52. Translation based on Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, 336–37.
17. Harrison, "Another *Miṣr*?" 51–59.
18. Wladyslaw B. Kubiak, *Al-Fuṣṭāṭ: Its Foundation and Early Urban Development* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1988); Donald Whitcomb, "The City of Istakhr and the Marv Dasht Plain," in *Akten des VII. Internationalen Kongresses für iranische Kunst und Archäologie, München, 7.–10. September 1976*, Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran, Ergänzungsband 6 (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1979), 363–70; Donald Whitcomb, "Islamic Archaeology at Susa," *Paléorient* 11, 2 (1985): 85–90; Donald Whitcomb, "The *Miṣr* of Ayla: Settlement at al-'Aqaba in the Early Islamic Period," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, II: Land Use and Settlement Patterns*, ed. G. R. D. King and Averil Cameron (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1994), 155–70; Donald Whitcomb, "The *Miṣr* of Ayla: New Evidence for the Early Islamic City," in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan V*, ed. Khairieh 'Amr, Fawzi Zayadine, and Muna Zaghoul (Amman: Department of Antiquities, 1995), 277–88; Donald Whitcomb, "Amṣār in Syria? Syrian Cities after the Conquest," *ARAM* 6 (1994): 13–33.
19. Harrison's survey of the archaeological excavations at Tiberias is not exhaustive. First and foremost, he left out Bezalel Ravani's excavations at the center of the pre-Islamic city, which took place in the early 1950s, as well as those by Adam Druks in the early 1960s. On these excavations, see the discussion in the following section.
20. Harrison, "Another *Miṣr*?" 58–59.
21. It has also been considered by Donald Whitcomb in "Amṣār in Syria?" 17–18.
22. David Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974: The Early Islamic Periods*, IAA Reports 21 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2004).
23. Yosef Stepansky, "The Archaeological Research at Tiberias during the Last Decade," *Mi-Tuv Tveriah* 3 (1985): 24–28 (in Hebrew).
24. In his entry for the Supplement to the *NEAEHL*, s.v. "Tiberias" (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2008), Stepansky wrote an updated and more comprehensive article on the archaeological digs in Tiberias (not including the works in Hammat). His article is accompanied by a map that indicates the many surveys, inspections, and excavations conducted over the years. I would like to thank the author for making his draft available for reading before publication, as well as for his willingness in showing the different sites and sharing his wide knowledge.
25. According to the code of the Israel Antiquities Authority, archival material from the various excavations can be accessed providing that the last excavation season occurred more than ten years ago or that the excavator has given his explicit consent to analyze the relevant files.
26. Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974*, 67.
27. *Ibid.*, 56.
28. See G. Foerster, *NEAEHL*, s.v. "Tiberias"; also mentioned by Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974*, ix.
29. Published in *Alon Agaf Ha-Atiqot* 5–6 (Sept. 1957): 28–29 (in Hebrew).
30. E. L. Sukenik, IAA Record Files / Mandate File no. 185 (ATQ/82/6, letter dated 9 January 1936).
31. Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974*, 37–38.
32. Recent excavations (at the end of 2008) by the Israel Antiquities Authority to the south of the gate suggest that building activity outside the city wall might have already started during the Umayyad period, though mostly focused near the lake shore: Edna Amos and Moshe Hartal, personal communication, April 2009.
33. Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974*, 36. On the invasion of the Qarmatis of Tiberias, see Gil, *History of Palestine*, §468.
34. Alan Walmsley has suggested the possibility of interpreting the narrowing of the gate and the insertion of doors into the *cardo* at Tiberias as evidence for an early lockable *sūq*. At Umm Qays in Jordan, a gate was inserted into the main *decumanus* (an east–west road), but the date is unclear. Alan Walmsley, personal communication, November 2007. David Stacey believes that after the southern expansion the city wall might have acted as an inner bastion, thus justifying the narrowing and insertion of doors at this later date. David Stacey, personal communication, September 2008.
35. It should be noted that excavations at the Jordan River Hotel in 1980 (license A-936/1980, A-947/1980) by Amos Harif revealed both a Crusader Church and the remains of a city wall, dated by the excavator to the Byzantine period based on the workmanship. He writes: "An additional and equally interesting discovery is a town wall, 2.5 m wide, which was unearthed only in part (for a length of about 50 m). This wall runs roughly east to west, forming the southern boundary of the excavations. A curve in the wall indicates that it must have been a circular wall without corners. A tower, 5.0 x

- 2.5 m, was uncovered in its northern side (the outer side) where the wall starts to curve. This wall could have been the northern wall of the late Byzantine town of Tiberias. Attached to the eastern side of the tower and the town wall, two Khirbet Mefjer vessels were found, probably indicating a pre-Mefjer date. The well-dressed basalt stones, as well as its construction, suggest Byzantine workmanship." See A. Harif, "A Crusader Church in Tiberias," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 116 (1984): 107–8. Since then this wall has been considered the northern perimeter of the Byzantine city, even though Harif's work did not yield a Byzantine layer. The only finds he refers to, used as a *terminus ante quem*, are of Abbasid date. Also noteworthy are the excavations southeast of Harif's site, undertaken by Adam Druks in 1972 at the Plaza Hotel (license A-383/1972), which revealed five strata, the earliest not earlier than the seventh to eighth centuries. Druks uncovered substantial walls (2 m wide) related to the early Islamic period (with no further detailing), close to the Sea of Galilee, one of them as long as 40 m, running perpendicular to the shore. He suggested that these walls were part of the early Islamic pier. In any event, the absence of Byzantine layers at Druks' excavations should be carefully considered.
36. Dr. Moshe Hartal of the Israel Antiquities Authority, who has excavated a number of sites in Tiberias since 2002, brought to my attention three of his salvage excavations, undertaken to the west of Vitto's site (two digs in 2005 under license A-4445/05, and a third in 2006 under license A-4886/06; see map in fig. 1). According to Hartal's results, the area under discussion was beyond the limits of the Umayyad settlement, and was first settled during the Abbasid period. Hartal believes that this expansion took place following the earthquake of 749, which apparently destroyed part of the city, prompting the population to move beyond the walls. The area remained inhabited until the eleventh century. Hartal's work at the "Red Magen David Precinct" in 2005 further supports Harif's dating of the wall to the Byzantine period, even though no remains of the wall were actually exposed. On the other hand, the excavator was able to discern a Byzantine layer in the area within the proposed city-wall line, while no signs of that layer could be found to the north of it. I am most grateful to Moshe Hartal for this important contribution and for sharing his preliminary results, currently being prepared for publication.
 37. See n. 36 above.
 38. See Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974*, 56, 65, 67.
 39. Published by Yizhar Hirschfeld, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1989–1994*, IAA Reports 22 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2004), 19–21.
 40. *Ibid.*, 19.
 41. *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 43 (1972): 2–3 (in Hebrew).
 42. The excavators specifically referred to the high incidence of "Khirbat al-Mafjar ware," but did not make clear whether it came from the buildings' foundations or from their activity levels.
 43. Hirschfeld, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1989–1994*, 3–26.
 44. *Ibid.*, 12–13.
 45. Hirschfeld, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1989–1994*, 13–18. On the Abbasid geometric mosaic, see Rina Talgam, "Mosaic Floors," in Hirschfeld, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1989–1994*, 28–30.
 46. *Ibid.*, 131–32.
 47. Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974*, 34–36, 42.
 48. *Ibid.*, 75–81.
 49. Note that Stacey also proposed that the *cardo* might have made a detour south of the bathhouse and marketplace, running east of them: Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974*, 8 n. 3. If the *cardo* did indeed make such a turn eastwards, it probably did not happen before the Abbasid period. According to the results of Hirschfeld's excavations (see n. 58 below), a street running between the basilical building and the so-called marketplace was erected during the Abbasid period over the pre-749 remains of the western wing of the former. That might have happened following the partial blocking of the *cardo* by the western expansion of the bathhouse. Unfortunately, the building stages of the bathhouse have yet to be clarified.
 50. Stacey, *Excavations at Tiberias, 1973–1974*, 78–79.
 51. *Ibid.*, 79–80.
 52. Israel Antiquities Authority Archives/ Inspection Files/ Tiberias/ General/ 1/ 8, letter from February 1, 1952.
 53. Gideon Foerster, personal communication, May 2006.
 54. Israel Antiquities Authority Archives/ Inspection Files/ Tiberias/ General/ 1/ 8, "The Public Buildings of Roman Tiberias," plan and summary of excavations by Ravani (1952–58) and Druks (1962?–65).
 55. Shimon Appelbaum inspected the works between September 15 and October 30, 1963 (license A-5/1963). See *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 9 (January 1964): 1–6.
 56. *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 10 (April 1964): 14–16; 12 (October 1964): 16. The license numbers for 1964 are not clear. Another season took place in 1965 (A-54/1965), but apparently no related publication came out in *Hadashot Arkheologiyot*.
 57. According to an unsigned summary attached to the site's plan (see n. 54 above), the basilical building was believed to have served as a church.
 58. Yizhar Hirschfeld, "Tiberias," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel (ESI)* 16 (1997): 35–41. In Area G, the baths and pillared building were cleared and their remains re-exposed. The three rows of pillars were uncovered, even though it is not certain from the preliminary report how much of this clearing, if any, was in fact an addition to Ravani's excavations. The excavations at the basilical building were resumed in Area F.
 59. This is perhaps the only place in which reference is made to a sugar industry in this site. Later reports by Hirschfeld do not mention this important aspect of Ayyubid–Mamluk Tiberias. Worthy of mention are the contemporary and nearby remains of a large sugar factory at Khirbat al-Minya. See n. 7 above.

60. See preliminary results in Yizhar Hirschfeld and Eran Meir, "Tiberias-2004," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot (Excavations and Surveys in Israel)* 118 (April 23, 2006), http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail.asp?id=337&mag_id=111 (accessed on October 13, 2007).
61. Ayala Lester and Yizhar Hirschfeld, "Brass Chains from a Public Building in the Area of the Bathhouse at Tiberias," *Levant* 38 (2006): 145–58.
62. *Ibid.*, 145.
63. Hirschfeld and Meir, "Tiberias-2004"; see also Hirschfeld and Galor, "New Excavations," 216–17, in which they write: "A covered bazaar (*macellum*) is a well known urban element in Roman architecture. Examples of *macella* similar to the one at Tiberias are known from Gadara, Bosra, Jerash and Petra." Hirschfeld and Galor refer to examples given by Arthur Segal in his book *From Function to Monument: Urban Landscapes of Roman Palestine, Syria, and Provincia Arabia* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1997), 61–67. It should be noted, however, that Hirschfeld and Galor dated the pillared building to the fourth century, thus making the aforementioned references—which are, in any case, dissimilar in plan to the building in Tiberias—at least anachronistic. Few *macella* are known to have been constructed at such a "late" date. A *macellum* at Antioch, erected around 363–78 at the site of the temple of Ares close to the forum, could be relevant to this discussion both for its date and location. Unfortunately, nothing is known about its ground plan and all the information is drawn from a literary source. See Claire de Ruyt, *Macellum: Marché alimentaire des romains*, Publications d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie de l'Université catholique de Louvain 35 (Court St. Étienne: Imprimerie É. Oeffe, 1983), 36, 270–71. Thanks to Prof. Zeev Weiss of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for referring me to relevant material on the Roman *macella*.
64. Lester and Hirschfeld write: "While it is possible that part of the building was modified in the Early Islamic period to serve as a mosque, there is no evidence for this, apart from the chain, which was found in the excavation." Lester and Hirschfeld, "Brass Chains," 145.
65. K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 2 vols. (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1979), vol. 1, pt. I, 151–96.
66. Creswell drew attention to this "successive, symmetrical subdivision into three" when discussing the Umayyad buildings at Khirbat al-Minya and Mshatta. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, vol. 1, pt. II, 384, 581–82. The numeral 7 also seems to have been part of the planning concept and will be discussed in depth in a separate article. In Tiberias, there are seven openings to each side of the entrance to the transept. The use of the number 7 in the planning of some early Islamic mosques might also explain the fifteen transversal aisles at al-Aqsa II, and perhaps even clarify the passage referring to this mosque's seven mihrabs and seven domes found in Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān fī tārikh al-a'yān* (Hyderabad, Deccan: Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1951–52). The passage quotes Hisham b. Muhammad al-Kalbi (d. 819) and Muhammad b. 'Umar al-Waqidi (d. 823), the former following the testimony of his father Muhammad b. al-Sa'ib (d. 763). On the seven mihrabs and their respective domes, see Amikam Elad, "Why Did 'Abd al-Malik Build the Dome of the Rock? A Re-examination of the Muslim Sources," in *Bayt al-Maqdis, Part One: 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, ed. Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 9, 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 35, 37. The importance given to the number 7 in Islamic architecture might also explain the replacement of the original mihrab in the mosque at Jarash by a smaller one to its east. Such an arrangement would place the new axis in the middle of a seven-aisled structure, thus also explaining the addition of another mihrab on the western side of the qibla wall. Note that numbers 3 and 7 have great symbolism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. See L. I. Conrad, "Seven and the *Tasbī'*: On the Implications of Numerical Symbolism for the Study of Medieval Islamic History," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31 (1988): 42–73. Thanks to Prof. Elad for pointing out this elucidating study.
67. Note that the prayer hall at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi is accessed from the courtyard through seven openings.
68. Alan Walmsley, *The Islamic Jarash Project, Jordan, Report on the 2002 Season* (Copenhagen, 2003), 8, 13–15; at http://www.staff.hum.ku.dk/walmsley/IJP/IJP_Prelim2_files/IJP2002reportv2.pdf. See also Alan Walmsley and Kristoffer Damgaard, "The Umayyad Congregational Mosque of Jarash in Jordan and Its Relationship to Early Mosques," *Antiquity* 79 (2005): 362–78, which also includes a discussion of the typology of early Islamic mosques, based on their overall area and length-width ratio, as well as the relative area occupied by the prayer hall. On Amman, see Alastair Northedge, *Studies on Roman and Islamic 'Ammān*, vol. 1, *History, Site and Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 65, fig. 25. For a general discussion of early Islamic mosques, see Jeremy Johns, "The 'House of the Prophet' and the Concept of the Mosque," in *Bayt al-Maqdis, Part Two: Jerusalem and Early Islam*, ed. Jeremy Johns, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 9, 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59–112.
69. J. Kaplan, "Excavations at the White Mosque in Ramla," *'Atiqot* 2 (1959): 106–15. The southern wall of the White Mosque of Ramla has a deviation of some 6 degrees to the north, the result of a late reconstruction. Kaplan, "White Mosque in Ramla," 107, dated the reconstruction to the Ayyubid period. For a different interpretation of the standing remains at the prayer hall of the White Mosque, see Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993–2007), s.v. "Ramla." Myriam Rosen-Ayalon has recently reassessed the various stages of the White Mosque in "The White Mosque of Ramla: Retracing Its History," *Israel Exploration Journal* 56, 1 (2006): 67–83.
70. Note how in fig. 17 the northern row of pillars in Tiberias's proposed congregational mosque (in green) overlaps Ramla's southern underground cistern. Rosen-Ayalon has shown that all three cisterns have the same proportions as Birkat

- al-ʿAnaziyya, also in Ramla and dated 172 (789). She concludes that a reconstruction of the White Mosque took place after the earthquake of the mid-eighth century, by which time the enclosure was also expanded northwards, to the present perimeter: see Rosen-Ayalon, "White Mosque of Ramla," 80–82.
71. See Rosen-Ayalon's reconstruction of the first architectural stage of the White Mosque in "White Mosque of Ramla," 68–72, and more recently in Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, "On the History of the White Mosque," *Qadmoniot* 41, 135 (2008): 51–55 (in Hebrew).
 72. Rafi Grafman and Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, "The Two Great Syrian Umayyad Mosques: Jerusalem and Damascus," *Muqarnas* 16 (1999): 1–15.
 73. A comparative study of al-Aqsa and the pillared building in Tiberias is in preparation by the present author. There the author explores some apparent remains of "Umayyad planning concepts" in the reconstructed Abbasid mosque.
 74. For the use of marble paneling during the Umayyad period, see Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, vol. 1/I, 78, 99, 146, 174; vol. 1/II, 385, 395.
 75. Prof. Whitcomb has drawn my attention to the fact that this positioning was not uncommon in early Islam. In Basra, the first *dār al-imāra* was reported to have been located on the northeastern side of the mosque (Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, vol. 1/I, 22, 45), only to be moved to its qibla side by order of the governor Ziyad b. Abihi, when the mosque was rebuilt in 45 (665). Similarly, the house of ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs in Fustat (built in 21 [641–42]) was also reported to have been located to the northeast of the mosque, though separated by a road: *ibid.*, vol. 1/I, 37.
 76. Prof. Whitcomb has also pointed out the presence of a basilical building of similar plan at the *qaṣr* (chateau, palace) at Sinnabra to the south of Tiberias (see n. 6 above). This structure, associated with the caliph Muʿawiya (r. 661–80), might have also functioned as a *dār al-imāra*, or at least as an audience hall, following the example of the pre-Islamic structure by the Ghassanid al-Mundhir (r. 569–82), outside the walls of Rusafa (Sergiopolis) in northern Syria. Despite the dispute over its identification as either a church or a *praetorium* (audience hall), E. K. Fowden has recently argued for a dual function, in line with Arab tribal custom in the region during the fifth and sixth centuries. See E. K. Fowden, "An Arab Building at al-Ruṣāfa-Sergiopolis," *Damascener Mitteilungen* 12 (2008): 303–24, especially 315ff. According to Whitcomb, this pre-Islamic Arab example might be a link to the ready adoption by Muslim Arabs of the basilical plan to serve as their audience hall.
 77. Unfortunately, Ravani's notes on his excavations at the bathhouse are not detailed and a proper chronological sequence cannot be established. A thorough study of this building, based on the architectural remains, is being prepared by Hirschfeld's staff.
 78. Such measurements imply a mosque with a total area of 4,992 square meters, thus including Tiberias in Walmsley and Damgaard's classification of mosques ranging from 1,500 to 5,000 square meters. This category was associated with centers of mere regional significance: see Walmsley and Damgaard, "Umayyad Congregational Mosque of Jarash," 372, fig. 6. Tiberias, together with Sana'a', would be the exceptions in this category, both for their large sizes and for their geopolitical importance. Worth noting is that the proposed length for Tiberias's congregational mosque coincides with that of Ramla's White Mosque, according to Rosen-Ayalon's reconstruction of its first phase. See n. 71 above.
 79. The author recently finished a short excavation season (March 22–April 8, 2009) at the site of the mosque. The project was sponsored by the Max Van Berchem Foundation and included a professional staff from the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University, volunteers from Israel, the United States, New Zealand, and Europe, and local workers. The excavation explored five areas belonging or immediately adjacent to the mosque: the covered hall, a structure to the south of the qibla wall, the enclosing wall to the west of the proposed courtyard, and the wall and stylobate to the north of it. The results will be published in a separate article by the author.

