

Maritime-Related Cults in the Coastal Cities of Philistia during the Roman Period

Legacy and change

Simona Rodan



ARCHAEOPRESS ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY 60

Maritime-Related Cults in the Coastal Cities of Philistia during the Roman Period

Legacy and change

Simona Rodan

ARCHAEOPRESS ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY 60



ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

Summertown Pavilion

18–24 Middle Way

Summertown

Oxford OX2 7LG

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-78969-256-3

ISBN 978-1-78969-257-0 (e-Pdf)

© Simona Rodan and Archaeopress 2019

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owners.

Printed in England by Oxuniprint, Oxford

This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website www.archaeopress.com

To Elia and Itamar

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Jaffa	12
2.1. Introduction.....	12
2.2.a. Gad and Tyche (<i>τύχη</i>): Gods of Fortune and Gods of the City.....	14
2.2.b. The Shrines of Tyche.....	20
2.3. Perseus (<i>Περσέυς</i>).....	21
2.4. Andromeda (<i>Ανδρομέδα</i>).....	24
2.5. Athena (<i>Αθηνά</i>).....	28
2.6. Poseidon (<i>Ποσειδώνας</i>).....	30
2.7. The Bull.....	34
2.8. Cassiopeia (<i>Κασσιόπη</i>).....	35
2.9. The Nereids (<i>Νηρηίδες</i>).....	38
2.10. Aphrodite (<i>Αφροδίτη</i>).....	42
2.11. Cetos (<i>Κήτος</i>).....	44
2.12. The Cult of the Prophet Jonah and the Big Fish.....	48
2.13. The Ship and its Crew in the Story of Jonah: Beliefs and Practices.....	53
2.14. The Cult of Jonah in Christianity.....	57
2.15. ‘The beauty of Japhet in the Tents of Shem’: Dan and the Danites and their Heritage in Jaffa.....	58
Chapter 3: Ashkelon	66
3.1. Introduction.....	66
3.2. Philistine Astarte (<i>Αστάρτη Παλαιστίνη</i>)/Heavenly Aphrodite (<i>Αφροδίτη Ουράνια</i>).....	70
3.3. Derceto (<i>Δερκετω</i>) and Semiramis (<i>Σεμίραμις</i>).....	76
3.4. Dove.....	79
3.5. Tyche/Fortuna/Isis (<i>Ισις</i>).....	80
3.6. Poseidon.....	85
3.7. Heracles (<i>Ήρακλής</i>).....	87
3.8. Hermes (<i>Ερμής</i>).....	89
3.9. The Dioscuri (<i>Διόσκουροι</i>).....	90
3.10. Pan (<i>Παν</i>).....	91
3.11. Phanebalos (<i>Φανηβαλος</i>).....	93
3.12. Apollo (<i>Απόλλων</i>).....	96
3.13. Asclepius (<i>Ασκληπιός</i>).....	97
Chapter 4: Gaza	104
4.1. Introduction.....	104
4.2. Dagon.....	108
4.3. Marnas (<i>Μαρνας</i>)/Zeus Cretagenes (<i>Ζευς Κρηταγενής</i>).....	110
4.3.a. Marnas.....	110
4.3.b. Marnas’s Spheres of Activity and the Nature of his Cult.....	111
4.3.c. The Origins of Marnas.....	114
4.3.d. The Marneion (Temple of Marnas).....	120
4.4. Artemis (<i>Άρτεμις</i>)/Britomartis (<i>Βριτόμαρτις</i>).....	124

4.5. Minos (<i>Μίνως</i>)	125
4.6. Io (<i>Ιώ</i>)	127
4.7. Aphrodite.....	129
4.8. Heracles.....	131
4.9. Apollo.....	134
4.10.a. Tyche/Fortuna	135
4.10.b. The Tychaeion (Temple of Tyche)	139
4.11. The Cults of Gaza and their Maritime Connections.....	139
Chapter 5: Rafiah	141
5.1. Introduction	141
5.2. Dionysus (<i>Διόνυσος</i>)	143
5.3. The Holy Trinity of Rafiah: Apollo, Artemis and Leto (<i>Αητώ</i>)	150
5.4. Tyche/Fortuna	153
5.5. Isis	154
5.6. The Absence of the Sea and sea peoples' Traditions from Rafiah's Coins.....	154
Chapter 6: Summary	157
A. The Sea as a Formative Element in the Cults of Philistia's Coastal Cities in the Roman period....	157
B. Ethno-cultural Influences on the Cults of Philistia's Coastal Cities in the Roman period	165
C. Political Conditions as a Formative Element in the Cults of Philistia's Coastal Cities in the Roman period.....	182
List of Figures	189
Bibliography	192
A. Primary Sources and Commentaries	192
B. Modern Studies	195
Abbreviations	211

Chapter 1

Introduction

Cults are ceremonies and customs which are the expression of myths. The primary meaning of ‘myth’ (μύθος) in Greek is ‘word’, ‘speech’ or ‘saying’ (from the verb μυθέομαι – to speak, say). Its secondary meaning is ‘tale’, ‘story’, ‘narrative’ (from the verb μυθιάζομαι – to relate a fable).¹ In modern times ‘myth’ has been defined as ‘A complex of stories – some no doubt fact, and some fantasy – which, for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of inner meaning of the universe and of human life’.² The creation of myth, like the creation of art, is a response to external reality, and an attempt to reduce it to order: to analyse it, understand it, organize it and express it in human language, and thereby to attain a degree of control over it. This reality includes the geographical environment, social and political conditions, and contemporary events. The myth illuminates it, even though it is not an objective, rational and scientific analysis, but, rather, a subjective and imaginative interpretation created by the human mind. Thus, the study of myths and cults will expand our knowledge of human beings and the communities from within which they have developed, of their physical surroundings, their living conditions and their spiritual world, and will afford us additional insights into their history.

Not every myth is religious, but this study is concerned with cults and myths associated with religious belief. In the ancient world atheism was rare. As a rule every person’s identity was determined by his or her religious belief. In the biblical story of Jonah, the sailors ask him: ‘What is thy country, and of what people art thou?’ and he replies ‘I am a Hebrew, and I fear the God of heaven.’³ Religious belief was, however, not static; it was subject to various influences and modifications. The sailors in Jonah’s ship, who were of foreign origin, came to believe in his God; and Jonah’s own conception of God

¹ Liddell & Scott 1985: 521. Cf. *ἵσπρία* means inquiry, the knowledge so obtained, an account of one’s inquiry, a narrative, history: *ibid*, p. 385.

² Watts 1953: 7.

³ *Jonah*, 1: 8–9.

underwent development and change. This dynamic can also be seen in the Roman period, which is the subject of this study. Ancient myths disappear or take on new forms, and new myths are born. Pagan cults decline, and Christianity, originally a tiny sect, becomes the official religion of the empire.

This study deals with the cults that were practiced in the Roman period by the peoples who dwelt on the Mediterranean coast of southern Levant, mostly concentrated in the coastal cities. Unlike inland cities, coastal towns are not completely surrounded by land. The sea is always in sight and constitutes the background to the city's architecture and way of life. Transport and communication of the coastal cities with their environment were partly conducted by sea. The sea also formed part of their agricultural hinterland, and was one of the bastions of their economy. The harbour is the place where the force of nature — the sea — meets the work of man — the city. It is an indivisible part of the city's way of life, even if it is sometimes located in a special quarter. Within its bounds a variety of activities take place: loading and unloading, fishing, commerce, industry and services. In ancient times, because of their economic and strategic importance harbours were in the vanguard of technological development. Many of them were built in magnificent style, and attained fame as architectural masterpieces that attracted visitors and tourists. Josephus described Sebastos, the splendid harbour of Caesarea Maritima, with deep admiration.⁴ Two of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the Pharos of Alexandria, and the Colossus, the huge statue of Helios at Rhodes, were harbour installations; both of them were lighthouses. A passage in the autobiographical account of Ven-Amon illustrates the extent to which the sea is woven into every aspect of the lives of those who dwell in the coastal cities. Ven-Amon was an Egyptian official who was sent to Gebel/Byblos at about 1100 BCE to buy cedars to build the sacred ship of the god Amon. He was granted an audience in the palace of Zakarba⁵ al the ruler of Gebel. '...(The statue of) the god stayed in the tent where he was, (on) the shore of the sea. And I found him (Zakarba⁵ al) sitting (in) his upper room, with his back turned to a window, so that the waves of the great Syrian sea broke against the back of his head'.⁵ They discussed religious matters, maritime commerce, and the political relationships between Egypt, Gebel, and other cities on the coast of Syria and the Land of Israel.

The peoples of ancient times sometimes saw the sea as a barrier, a distancing and divisive element; and, indeed the Greek word for sea, *πέλαγος* pelagos is close to the Hebrew terms haflaga, peleg, and pilug (setting sail, section, and split). Jonah set sail from Jaffa to Tarshish, and thought that in this way he could even escape from God. But the Phoenicians and the Greeks, who were expert sailors, saw the sea as a means of transport and communication, just like land routes. According to the Odyssey men would sail in 'ships with beautiful prows...to visit the cities of the world, like men who traverse the seas on their lawful occasions' and it was customary for the host to ask his

⁴ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, I, 21: 5–7.

⁵ Pritchard 1954: 26.

guest: ‘On which boat did you come here? For you surely did not come on foot.’⁶ One of the Greek words for the sea is *πόντος* *pontos*, and its changes in meaning reflect the conception that it was a connecting medium that brought people close to each other. The most common type of ship in the Mediterranean in Roman times was called a *ponto*.⁷ *Pons* in Latin means ‘bridge’, as does *ponte* in Italian.⁸ And, in fact, sea transport is easier, more capacious and cheaper than land transport, since it does not require the energy of man or beast, but uses winds and ocean currents. It was also much faster. Cato the Elder persuaded the Romans to destroy Carthage by showing them a date that had been picked there and was still fresh after three days of sea travel: ‘*Tam prope a moeris habemus hostem!*’ (So near is the enemy to our walls).⁹ Ancient thinkers were aware of the difference between the inhabitants of maritime and inland cities, and the fact that because of their numerous contacts with foreign peoples and cultures they were more receptive to new ideas and customs. Plato, Aristotle and Cicero maintained that their acceptance of change destabilized the social and moral life of these cities, weakened their resilience, and endangered their very existence.¹⁰

Since the sea played a central role in the material and cultural life of the coastal cities, it may be assumed that many of their beliefs and cultic customs were linked to the sea, particularly since it was always associated with or likened to the primary instincts and deepest emotions of the human soul: the desire for life and sex, love, the fear of death, the longing for rebirth and spiritual salvation, the desire for enquiry and knowledge, introspection and fear of God. The Hebrew expression *mayim hayim* (living water) expresses the concept of water as the source of life. The sea’s vitality was proved by its dynamism and perpetual motion, in contrast to the stability, the permanence and the confined nature of the land (*terra firma*). The sea was associated with the sexual and procreative urge, and in all Mediterranean cultures the fishes of the sea were a symbol of fertility. Aphrodite, the goddess of sex, fertility, love and beauty, was born from the sea, which was the symbol of love, because of its unending and all-embracing nature. In Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet says: ‘My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep... for both are infinite.’¹¹ The fear of death is likened to the torments of drowning: ‘The sorrows of hell compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid’; ‘He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters’; ‘Save me O God; for the waters are come into my soul’¹² The desire for knowledge and discovery is embodied in Dante’s Ulysses. In the canto twenty-sixth of the *Inferno* he relates: ‘L’ardore ch’i’ ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto... missi per me l’alto mare aperto; ...quando venimmo a quella foce stretta, dov’Ercule segnò li suoi riguardi acciò che

⁶ Homer, *Odyssey*, I, 170–173; XIV, 187–190; XVI, 59.

⁷ Rougé 1996: 185, 187. The *ponto* was portrayed in mosaics from the Roman period: Pomey 1997, see fig. p. 83; Friedman 2003: 208, and p. 222, fig. 3.8.26. The Greek *ποντοπορεύω* means ‘to cross the ocean’: Liddell & Scott 1985: 661

⁸ Mir & Calvano 2000: 490.

⁹ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 15: 20.

¹⁰ Plato, *The Laws*, 704–707; Aristotle, *Politics*, 7.1327a; Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, 2:4–2:10. For the words of Cicero, see: Vishnia 1994: 128–137.

¹¹ Shakespeare, ‘Romeo and Juliet’, Act II, Sc. 2.

¹² *Psalms*, 18: 1, 18: 18, 69: 1

l'uom più oltre non si metta... 'O frati', dissi, '...considerate la vostra semenza: fatti non foste a vivere come bruti, ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza!' ('The desire I had to be experienced of the world, and of the vice and virtue of mankind... I put forth on the high and open sea... When at that narrow passage we arrived where Hercules his landmarks set as signals, that man no further onward should adventure', he persuaded his shipmates to continue: 'consider ye the seed from which ye sprang: Ye were not made to live like unto brutes, But for pursuit of virtue and knowledge!')¹³

But man is compelled to recognize his impotence and his ignorance of the secrets of the universe, whose infinitude is also symbolized by the sea: 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding... Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?'¹⁴ The Greeks, too, condemned man's arrogance (*ύβρις*) and any deviation from his place in the universe whereby he frees from their shackles the forces of nature which were restrained by Providence. These forces are embodied in the sea, with its storms and monstrous creatures, and they rise up to destroy him. Arrogance is both the sin and the punishment, as signified by the Hebrew word for arrogance, *rahav*, which is the name of the Leviathan or primeval monster. When Jonah rebels he falls into the sea and is swallowed up by this creature. Andromeda, whose mother boasted that she was fairer than the sea nymphs, is cast out and given to this creature to devour, and Ulysses' ship sinks to its depths: 'Three times it made it whirl with all the waters, at the fourth time it made the stern uplift, and the prow downward go, as pleased Another, until the sea above us closed again'. 'Tre volte il fé girar con tutte l'acque; a la quarta levar la poppa in suso e la prora ire in giù, com'altrui piacque, infin che 'l mar sovra noi richiuso.'¹⁵ The abysses and turmoils of the sea are also likened to the turmoils of the soul. When Jonah was cast into the deep he attained inner peace: 'When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.'¹⁶ He was born again out of the belly of the monster. The Bible also compares the universal recognition of the greatness, fear and worship of God with the sea: 'For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'¹⁷ The Latin word *pontifex* (high priest, sacred servant) expresses a similar conception: it is composed of the verb *facio* (to make) and the noun *pons* (bridge), which is derived from *pontus*, the sea.

The geographical area with which this study deals is the southern coastal plain of the Land of Israel. This region, between the El¹Arish valley in the south and the Yarkon Valley in the north, was called from the Biblical period onwards Philistia (Hebrew: Peleshet) after the Philistines (Hebrew: Pelishtim). Who were the Philistines and how did they come to inhabit Philistia? During the Late Bronze Age (1550–1100 BCE)

¹³ Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 26: 97–120.

¹⁴ *Job*, 38: 4, 38: 16.

¹⁵ Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 26: 139–142.

¹⁶ *Jonah*, 2: 8.

¹⁷ *Isaiah*, 11: 9.

the southern coastal plane of the Levant was inhabited by the Canaanites who lived under Egyptian control. Already than there were foreigners and traders of diverse origins active in its harbour sites. But in the first decades of the twelfth century BCE the migrant influx increased. At the transition between the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age (c. late thirteenth-late twelfth centuries BCE), numerous states in the Mediterranean coastal regions either disappeared or experienced significant constraction, or transformed into other political entities: the palace centers of Mycenaean Grece, the Hittite Empire, Egypt's empire in the Levant, and city-states in Syria and Canaan. Recent evidences point to social, economic and ecological factors, such a global drought, that caused masses of homeless peoples to move across the Mediterranean Sea and its coastlands, disrupting or destroying, and later settling among, the local populations. Egyptian records regarding the reigh of Ramses III (1186–1155 BCE) are the first to mention the Philistines. The wall reliefs of his temple at Medinet Habu and Papyrus Harris from Ramses IV's time (1155–1149 BCE), relate that a confederation of Peleset (Philistines), Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denyen and Weshesh from 'the islands' or 'the northern countries' attacked and destroyed the Hittite Empire and city-states in Cilicia (Southern Anatolia) and northern Syria and came to attack Egypt from both land and sea. These peoples are called by modern scholars, following E. de Rougé (1855) and G. Maspero (1895) 'Sea peoples'. Ramses III defeated them, acquired their loyalty and settled them in strongholds (Pritchard 1954: 262–263). Peleset and Denyen warriors served in his army in his war against the Lybians. The Onomasticon of Amenope, dating to the twelfth-eleventh centuries BCE, lists the Peleset, Tjeker and Denyen among the peoples who inhabit Canaan.

In the Bible there are contradictory statements about the origins of the Philistines: from Egypt (*Genesis*, 10: 13–14; *1 Chronicles*, 1: 11–12), from Caphtor (Crete) (*Amos*, 7: 9; *Jeremiah*, 47: 4; *Ezekiel*, 25: 16) (see chap. 4, sec. 1, archaeological evidences for the link between Minoan Crete and Philistia). They found in Philistia a political federation of five city-states comprising Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod (by the sea shore) Ekron and Gath (more inland) (*Joshua*, 13: 3 and *1 Samuel*, 6: 17). The Bible describes several features of Philistine culture, among them their worship of Dagon, their skills in metal working, their lack of circumcision. They are portrayd as the main enemy of the children of Israel.

According to historians from the Classic, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods some of the Philistines, led by Mopsus of Phrygia and Askalos of Lydia came through Syria from Anatolia and settled in Ashkelon. (It is accepted in research that Philistine words mentioned in the Bible originated in Luwian language, spoken in Anatolia and Northern Syria during the Second and First Millennium BCE, such as *kupahi* – *kova* כּוּבַע, *tyrannoi* – *seranim* סֵרָנִים). Other Philistines came from Crete, and settled in Gaza and Rafiah. During the Roman period, Cretan gods and heroes were worshiped in Gaza. Another group were the Denyen, or Danaoi/Danaites, who hailed from Mycenaean Argolis or Cilicia and are usually identified by modern scholars with the tribe of Dan, which dwelt in Jaffa and the coastal plain, and also in Dan in Upper Galilee. Following

the decline of the Egyptian rule, the Philistines became the dominant element in the Land of Israel. At the peak of their expansion they reached as far north as Jaffa and Tel Qasile, close by the Yarkon Valley. They bordered to the north with the Kingdom of Israel, while their eastern border was along the foothills of the Judaeen Kingdom, on the line of Beith-shemesh.

Some archaeological evidences suggest a gradual migration and settlement of the Philistines: they initially settled in Amuq plain (in today's southern Turkey) and only later in Philistia. Indeed, the Medinet Habu inscription relates that prior to the Sea Peoples attack on Egypt they had founded a camp within the Amurru kingdom (in today's western Syria and northern Lebanon); the reliefs depict the warriors accompanied by ox-carts laden with women and children. 'Achaean' is the common term for Greeks, together with 'Danaens' and 'Argives' in the Homeric epic. Achaea (in Hittite 'Ahhiyawa') was a kingdom mentioned in Hittite documents, located on the Greek mainland or in the Aegean Sea. In the thirteenth century they invaded cities and vassal states of the Hittites. After the decline of the Hittite Empire, neo-Hittite kingdoms were established in Anatolia and Northern Syria. A bilingual Luwian-Phoenician inscription found in Çineköy (near Adana in Cilicia) mentions Warika king of Dnny/Hiyawa; inscriptions from Tel Tayinat and Aleppo tell about Taita, king of Palastin. The precise period of Taita is not yet clear, in the range between the twelfth and the ninth centuries BCE. According to Harrison (2012) Palastin was a powerful Luwian-Aegean-Syrian kingdom. In modern research the origins of the Philistines is still under debate. The most distinct feature of their early material culture, the Mycenaean style pottery IIC: 1b has not been identified with a specific region in the Greek world that can point to a single origin for it. Recent study demonstrated that it is a typological branch of Cypriot and Cilician pottery while the decorative style corresponds with motifs known from Crete, the Dodecanese and western Anatolia. Apparently the Philistines were comprised of different populations amalgamated along the way. However, part of the Philistines arrived directly from southern Europe and the Aegean world. Recent study (Feldman et al. 2019) of DNA from skeletons excavated in Ashkelon shows that the first immigrants came there across the Mediterranean. Genetically they mixed quickly through intermarriage with the native inhabitants. In the course of time, the Philistines adopted many features of the Canaanite culture, language and religion. Nevertheless, and although their genetic profile changed, archaeological and historical evidences show that many Aegean cultural traditions carried on, and also according their neighbors they remained Philistines. Some scholars maintain that they gradually assimilated into the local population and after 604 BCE, when Nebuchadnezzar II king of Babylon conquered their cities and exiled them to Mesopotamia, they ceased to exist as a separate nation.

The coastal cities of Philistia thrived due to their geographical position. In every period the southern coast of the Land of Israel served as a bridgehead between three continents: Asia, Europe, and Africa. From the Bronze Age onwards the roads that

connected Egypt with Syria, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia passed through the region. The sea route through which wide-ranging and intensive trade was conducted ran parallel to it. Moreover, this coast was the western outlet of the extensive trade routes from China, India, Arabia and Africa over which were carried the most scarce and valuable merchandise in the ancient world: spices, perfumes, silk, and exotic animals. From the cities of the coast of Philistia merchandise was passed on by sea or land to every part of the Mediterranean. Their commerce flourished despite poor conditions of anchorage in their harbours: reefs and storms in the waters of Jaffa, and sandbanks and shallow water on the shores of Ashkelon, Gaza and Rafiah. The cities of Philistia also grew prosperous as a result of their fertile soil, highly developed agriculture and their expertise in maritime industries such as fishing, purple dye, salt and preserves.

In the Roman period, which is the subject of this study, Jaffa, Ashkelon, Gaza, and Rafiah were the biggest and most important cities in Philistia. They had many features in common. From the point of view of their location and surroundings, they were all situated close to the international trade routes. This both ensured their prosperity and exposed them to a great many cultural influences. In all of them the sea was both the source of their livelihood and the means of their communication and contact with other cultures. As to their ethno-cultural character, they were cosmopolitan centres, in which people from many different ethnic, social, cultural, and religious origins interacted on a daily basis. Their population was a mixture of the descendents of Philistines and Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans. They all treasured and nurtured traditions of their ancient Aegean foundation, and prided themselves on their Hellenic culture, but also on their local heritage. In their socio-political structure they had absorbed the values of the Greek and Roman world. Nonetheless, there were many differences between these cities, in the topographical situation of their harbours conditions, in the relationships between the various sectors of their populations, in their foreign relations and in their political fate.

In the First Temple period Philistia was not included in the territory of either Israel or Judah. Gaza, Ashkelon and Rafiah were independent city-states with monarchic regimes. Only Jaffa was conquered by David and annexed to his kingdom, but at the time of Hezekiah it was subject to Ashkelon.¹⁸ The cities of Philistia were, indeed, united in a confederation, but while Gaza was always hostile to Judah, Ashkelon sometimes contracted alliances with it. In the period of Persian dominance Sidon and Tyre were granted the coastal area of the Land of Israel down to Ashkelon¹⁹ in consideration of the services in trade and sea warfare that they rendered to the Persians. The Arabs, who managed the caravan traffic throughout the empire, controlled the region from Gaza to Jenissus (modern El¹ Arish or Khan Yunis) by the dispensation of the Persians.²⁰

¹⁸ From the Annals of Sennacherib, Sancherib Prism in the Oriental Institute in Chicago (689 BCE), Galil 2001: 142.

¹⁹ According to the Eshmunazar II inscription: Slouschz 1942: 25. Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplus*, ll. 2–6.

²⁰ Neither the Eshmunazar sarcophagus inscription nor Pseudo-Scylax includes Gaza in the list of coastal cities of the Land of Israel ruled by Tyre or Sidon. See also: Herodotus, *Histories*, III, 5.

During the Persian period the international maritime trade of the coastal cities of Philistia flourished, and they were subject to the cultural influence of Phoenicia, Greece, the Aegean world, and Egypt. By contrast, the inland regions of the country (Judah, Shomron/Samaria, and Trans-Jordan) were characterized by local eastern culture, and influenced by Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt.

In 332 BCE Alexander the Great conquered the Land of Israel. In 301 it was annexed to the Ptolemaic kingdom, and in 200 BCE it was conquered by the Seleucids. Hellenization was spread by the soldiers who inhabited the settlements founded in cities such as Gaza, Shomron/Samaria, Geresh/Gerasa and Pehel/Pella, and through the agency of the great numbers of immigrants and traders who came from all parts of the Greek world, as well as Ptolemaic and Seleucid administrators and soldiers, many of whom owned businesses and estates in the Land of Israel. The Reiner Papyrus attests to the frequency of mixed marriages.²¹ Syncretism — the amalgamation of gods and cultures — furthered integration between Greeks and local inhabitants. The Greeks knew of the Eastern religions long before they conquered the region, and were accustomed to comparing their gods with eastern deities.²² The immigrants were impressed by the ancient local religions and their colourful ceremonies. The Hellenistic rulers, too, paid them homage, in order to ensure the loyalty of the local inhabitants. Alexander the Great himself married a Bactrian princess, made pilgrimages to local shrines, and encouraged his soldiers to display sympathy with the Eastern way of life.²³ Immigrants and local inhabitants emphasized the common features of their gods, and sometimes combined them. In an inscription dating from the second century BCE the following prayer appears: ‘To Anubis, who is also Amon, to Satet, who is Hera, to Anuket, who is Hestia, to Petepamentes, who is also Dionysus, to Petesentis, who is also Cronus, and to Petesenis, who is also Hermes.’²⁴ The Greeks believed they should pay respect to local gods in the places they acquired, but also in their right to bring their own. Moreover, they legitimized their conquests by claiming that each of the important cities in the East was founded by a Greek god or hero, such as Dionysus, Perseus or Heracles, all of whom made journeys in the east. The indigenous peoples did not oppose this, since by this means their city became a *polis*, self-governing and exempt from tax. Citizens of a *polis* belonged to the social elite of the Hellenistic world, and were integrated into its economic and cultural life. In the Hellenistic period there began the demographic and urban growth in the Land of Israel which continued in the Roman and Byzantine periods. Existing towns grew, and new towns were founded. Many of them, including the cities of Philistia, attained the status of *polis*. For this a number of conditions had to be fulfilled: the area of the *polis* had to be greater than that of a village; there was a minimum number of citizens; independent institutions of management and

²¹ Stern 1990: 49.

²² See, for instance, the attempts of Herodotus to identify Heracles with the ‘Tyrian Heracles’ (apparently Melqart) and the ‘Egyptian Heracles’. Herodotus, *Histories*, II, 43–45.

²³ Plutarch, *The Lives*, ‘Alexander’, 820, 850.

²⁴ OG 130.24 apud: Kershaw, 1986, vol. 2, p. 5/61.

government; ownership of rural territory; a water system (for drinking, baths and sewage), and, usually, also a city wall; social and professional stratification including an aristocracy, land-owners, common people and slaves; and, above all, sufficiently developed industry and commerce for the *polis* to be a commercial centre and the focal point of the local economy. In each *polis* there was a civic cult to one or more god or a goddess; temples were built for them and they were represented on the coins minted in the city. Religion was the core of the Greek and Roman *polis* and its central ideology. It provided the framework and the symbolic focus of the *polis*; the *Polis* provided the fundamental framework in which religion operated.²⁵ The *polis* was first and foremost a Hellenistic settlement in respect of its culture and way of life — at least, of that of some of its citizens, since Jason the High Priest tried to establish a *polis* for the Hellenizers of Jerusalem; in the Roman period *poleis* were also established in Lod, Tzipori, and Tiberias, where most of the inhabitants were Jews, and in Shechem in the region of Shomron/Samaria. In every city there was a *gymnasion* and an *epehebeion*, where young men were educated and engaged in sports. These institutions were a prime method of spreading the culture and values of Greek society. The Greek language became the *koine* — the common language of all parts of the Near East.

However, Hellenization was not an all-inclusive phenomenon. The Jews and Samaritans, who lived mainly in villages in the mountain regions of Judah and Shomron/Samaria, remained faithful to their monotheistic religion. The Jews, led by the Hasmonean family, rebelled against Antiochus Epiphanes' enforcement of idolatry and fought against the Helleno-Phoenician towns of the Land of Israel that supported his regime. In 164 BCE they overcame the Seleucid regime and established a state that, at the height of its power, ruled over the whole of the Land of Israel and Trans-Jordan, Idumaea and the Golan Heights. The Hasmoneans persecuted the pagan population of the Land of Israel. They destroyed some of the cities on the coast (Stratonos Pyrgos and Gaza) and in Trans-Jordan, and exiled their inhabitants. They conquered all the cities of Philistia except Ashkelon. They expelled all the foreigners from Jaffa, and forcibly converted the Edomites and the Itureans. As a result, the Jews became the majority in the Land of Israel.

This began to change after the Roman conquest of 63 BCE. The Romans tended to support the pagan population, which received them enthusiastically, whereas the Hasmoneans supported Rome's enemies, the Parthians. Moreover, the disputes within the Hasmonean dynasty threatened the stability of the region. The Romans liberated the Hellenistic cities from Jewish rule, and assisted in their rehabilitation. Gaza and Rafiah were rebuilt, and, together with Ashkelon, were joined to the province of Syria. In 40 BCE the Romans made Herod king of Judah. He ruled under the tutelage of Rome, and promoted its cultural values throughout his kingdom. After his death in 4 BCE his kingdom was divided among his heirs. The Jews aspired to national and religious

²⁵ Safrai 1980: 6–7; Sourvinou-Inwood 2000: 18–26, 36–37.

independence, and frequently rebelled, but the Hellenistic cities remained faithful to Rome. The Romans put down the rebellions harshly with the help of the pagan population; as a result, the proportion of Jews in the population of the Land of Israel was greatly reduced. After the Great Revolt (66–70 CE) Judah became a Roman province under the name of Judaea, and after the revolt of Bar Kochba (132–135 CE) it was renamed Palaestina, after the Philistines, the ancient Aegean settlers of the country. In the next four centuries, as a result of the destruction of the Second Temple and the old spiritual leadership, Judaism underwent deep changes. Christianity gradually became the dominant religion in the Land of Israel.

During the Roman period the cities of Philistia flourished economically and culturally. They participated in international trade, and exported their agricultural and industrial products to all parts of the Roman Empire. They also became centres of world culture, and were a home for intellectuals in every sphere of art and science. In Ashkelon alone there flourished the philosophers Antiochus and Aristos and the poet Euenus, the philologists Dorotheus and Ptolemy, and the historians Artemidorus and Apollonius. Other famous men of Ashkelon were the actor Apeles, the architect Julianus and the mathematician Euthocius.²⁶ As in the other Hellenistic cities of the Land of Israel, local patriotism thrived in the cities of Philistia: they prided themselves on their status, and competed with each other in the splendour of their buildings and festivals. Games, competitions in the performing arts and spectacles, dedicated to a local deity or in honour of an emperor, were held in buildings for mass entertainment, which were constructed especially in the second and third century CE. They were organized by the cities' authorities and endorsed by the local elites.²⁷

This study covers some five hundred years, from Pompey's conquest of the East in 63 BCE until the official termination of paganism in the cities of Philistia at the beginning of the fifth century CE. Obviously, however, an investigation of the spiritual and religious world of the people of these cities cannot be limited to this period alone. Just as in our personal consciousness we experience the past and the future as well as the present, it is impossible to understand the period under consideration without some knowledge of preceding and succeeding ages. Some of the cults that existed in the cities of Philistia were, in fact, created during this period; but some originated hundreds of years earlier. The people of these cities took pride in their Greek culture, but also, no less, in their ancient origins and Phoenician/Philistine culture. They cultivated the worship of special local gods and heroes such as Andromeda, Derceto, Phanebalos, Marnas and Io. Some of their inhabitants spoke Syriac (Aramaic), and did not speak Greek, even as late as the fifth century CE. The cities of Philistia also displayed stubborn opposition to Christianity, and were among the last bastion of paganism in the Roman Empire.

²⁶ Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnika*, 131; Fuks 1983: 66–67.

²⁷ Geiger 1989: 261–269. See also the speeches of Chorikios of Gaza in honour of his city, in Rabinovich 1949: 173–187; Weiss, E. 2017: 23–24.

This study's basic hypothesis is that the coastal cities possessed unique characteristics. The sea was a major factor in their environment, and a decisive component of the inhabitants' daily life, economic activities, and religion. As a result of frequent conquests and waves of immigration, they were distinguished by their mixed population and cultural pluralism. The study will consider how the sea influenced their religious cults, and their maritime aspects as expressed in art and literature. We shall also discuss the contribution of other elements — the inhabitants' ethnic origins, the different cultural influences which they absorbed, and the political circumstances of the time — to the formation of the cults and their symbols; and also to what extent ancient local elements continued to exist, and what Greek and Roman components were added to them. We shall be using a wide variety of sources: historical and literary texts, and epigraphic sources such as papyri and inscriptions. These will be the background to an analysis of the varied archaeological and artistic discoveries which have emerged from the excavations and surveys that have been conducted in the region since the late nineteenth century: works of architecture, sculpture and relief, paintings and mosaics, gems, *tesserae* (tokens) and jewellers' artefacts. Some of these were produced at the initiative of the authorities, and were designed for use in public and official rites; others were used by individuals and for domestic ceremonies. They will cast light on ritual practices in all sectors of society of the coastal cities of Philistia.

* The book is based on my doctoral research: *Maritime-related cults in the coastal cities of Philistia during the Roman Period: Legacy and change*, 2005 (in Hebrew). It was translated to English by Professor Henry Near. The book includes archaeological updates.

** I use the term Land of Israel for the geographic region in the southern Levant, which extends from the upper Galilee in the north to the Red sea in the south, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Jordan river in the east. It is the traditional Jewish term to this area. Related biblical, historical and religious terms are the Land of Canaan, Palestine, the Promised Land, and the Holy Land. In the Bible there are two versions for its limits: 'from the entrance of Hamath unto the brook of Egypt', and 'from Dan to Beersheba'. Both differ from the borders of the established historical United Kingdom of Israel, the two separated kingdoms of Israel (Shomron/Samaria) and Judah, the Hasmonean Kingdom, and the Herodian Kingdom which at their heights ruled lands with similar but not identical boundaries and included also the Golan and Trans-Jordan.

Chapter 2

Jaffa

2.1. Introduction

Ancient Jaffa was built on a kurkar (eolianite stone) cliff forty metres high jutting out into the sea, with the harbour at its foot. North of the cliff the coast recedes some 400 metres eastwards, creating the bay of Jaffa. The city had many strategic and economic advantages: a protected residential area on the cliff; a natural harbour between the coast and a line of kurkar reefs parallel to it at a distance of about a hundred metres; proximity to the Yarkon and Ayalon valleys, with access to the interior by boat; and its location at the junction of the sea route between Phoenicia and Egypt and the eastward route to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. As a result, it became one of the most important harbours on the coast of the Land of Israel. Archaeological excavations prove that it was inhabited as early as the seventeenth century BCE.²⁸ In an Egyptian document of the sixteenth century BCE Jaffa (ia-pu) is included in the list of cities conquered by Thutmose III.²⁹ In the el-Amarna letters it is described as an important administrative centre with granaries.³⁰ At the beginning of the Iron Age it was occupied by the Philistines. It was conquered by King David, and at the time of Solomon was the principal port of the Kingdom of Israel. From the time of Rehoboam it belonged to the Kingdom of Ashkelon.³¹ In the Persian period it was under the rule of Sidon.³² Excavations in the city have revealed buildings constructed in Phoenician style, and a dedicatory inscription to Eshmun, the principal deity of Sidon, as well as

²⁸ Kaplan 1992: 589.

²⁹ Pritchard 1954: 222.

³⁰ Kaplan 1992: 586.

³¹ Galil 2001: 42; Annals of Sennacherib — From the Sancherib Prism in the Oriental Institute, Chicago (689 BCE).

³² According to the burial inscription of Eshmunazar II, King of Sidon: Slouschz 1942: 25. Scholars differ with regard to the dating of Eshmunazar's reign. Some date it at approximately 525 BCE, at the time of Cambyses king of Persia: Stern 1973: 282. Others believe that Eshmunazar reigned at the time of Xerxes I of Persia (485–456 BCE), between 465 and 451: Fuks 2001: 15–16.

evidence of trade with the Aegean world.³³ After Alexander the Great's conquest of the region Jaffa harbour was used by the fleets of the Ptolemaics and the Antigonids, who contended for control of the Land of Israel. Under Ptolemaic rule the city flourished, and minted a great quantity of coins. In 201 BCE it was conquered by the Seleucids. Simon Maccabeus conquered the city in 143 BCE, and it became an 'entrance to the isles of the sea'; Rabbinical literature and the New Testament mention the use of the route between Jaffa and Jerusalem during the Herodian period.³⁴ At the time of the First Revolt it was a stronghold of Jewish pirates, who were only eliminated by Vespasian in 67 CE. Vespasian refounded Jaffa as a Helleno-Roman city and called it Flavia Ioppe, after his own family, *gens Flavia*. During the reign of Trajan, Jews again settled in the city. In an inscription of 102 CE an *agoranomos* (inspector of the market) by the name of Juda is mentioned.³⁵ From funerary inscriptions of Jews of Jaffa from the second to the sixth century CE, it appears that they were merchants and fishermen. The city became a centre of religious learning, and many sages of the Talmud lived in it.³⁶ Jaffa was sacred to Christians because of Peter's activities in it (the resuscitation of Tabitha and his Vision of the Animals in the Sheet, as a result of which he started to spread Christianity among the Gentiles).³⁷

The port of Jaffa was always notorious for its dangerous reefs and storms. Josephus wrote that during Vespasian's attack on the city the Jews fled to their ships, but they were wrecked by a storm that blew up during the night:

*'Jaffa is not naturally a haven, for it ends in a rough shore, while all the rest of it is straight, but the two ends bend towards each other, and there are deep precipices, and great stones that jut out into the sea... The north wind blows from offshore and beats upon the shore, and dashes mighty waves against the rocks which receive them, and renders the haven more dangerous than the country they had deserted' [where the Roman enemy is to be found, S. R].*³⁸

The traveller Saewulf described how in October 12th, 1102, during a storm in the port 'running mountains high', 23 ships were destroyed and more than a thousand persons perished.³⁹ During the Middle Ages and in modern times Dutch and German sailors used the phrase 'to go to the Jaffa shore' to mean 'to be wrecked'.⁴⁰ In 1992

³³ Ritter Kaplan: 1982: 64–68; Kaplan 1992: 586–591.

³⁴ *Maccabees I*, 14, 6. *Acts*, 9; *Jerusalem Talmud*, 'Yoma', 3, 8; Notley 2011: 102–103.

³⁵ Ze'evi 1985: 30; Eck 2014: 29 and no. 2259.

³⁶ Jaffa-born Amoraim included Rabbi Aha: *Jerusalem Talmud*, 'Moed Katan'; 'Genesis Rabba', 80: 15; Rabbi Pinkhas: 'Pesahim', 1; Rabbi Nahman: 'Leviticus Rabba', 80: 6; Rabbi Yudan ben Tarfon: *Jerusalem Talmud*, 'Shevi' it', 80: 6. See: Tolkowsky 2001: 58, and note 1.

³⁷ *Acts of the Apostles*, 9: 38–43; 10: 9–23.

³⁸ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, III, 9, 3.

³⁹ Saewulf, in Brownlow 2013: 17–18.

⁴⁰ Schiller 1981: 14. On the expression 'no Jaffa Gaan', frequently used by Dutch sailors in the seventeenth century, see Raban 1994: 101–102, 113 note 48. Felix Fabri, who travelled to the Holy Land in 1483, stated: 'it is very difficult and dangerous to make one's way into this port from the sea, and I believe there is hardly such another abominable harbour to be found in the whole circuit of the sea; for no great ship, from whatever quarter it comes, can enter the harbour, but must stay outside and find an anchorage by sounding; for out in the deep sea as far as the flight of an

underwater archaeological surveys were conducted in Jaffa, but no traces of a man-built harbour were found. Only a few remnants of pottery from the Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Mamluk, Crusader and Ottoman periods were discovered.⁴¹ It appears that large vessels anchored about 500 metres from the shore, and goods and passengers were transhipped in tenders. The tenders could only pass through three gaps in the reefs, one each in the north, centre and south.⁴²

2.2.a. *Gad and Tyche (τύχη): Gods of Fortune and Gods of the City (figures 1–2)*

There is archaeological evidence of the worship of a god of fortune during the Persian period. The gods of fortune in the Syro-Phoenician region during the Biblical period were Gad (or Ba'al Gad) and his spouse Meni. The children of Israel also worshipped them. When Jacob's seventh son was born, Leah said 'Gad (fortune) has come' and named him Gad.⁴³ The prophet Isaiah attests to the idolatrous nature of this belief when he speaks of those who 'prepare a table for Gad, and who furnish a drink



Figure 1. Jaffa coin. First century BCE or first century CE. Bust of Tyche, veiled, wearing mural crown. Courtesy of the collections of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Photo by Tal Rogovski.

arrow there are reefs and steep rocks and shoals and stones rising up from the water and standing up above it, among which the sea always roars, even when it is quiet elsewhere, and dashes against the rocks with such force that the broken water flies high up into the air, and makes a loud noise which may be heard at a long distance either on sea or on land. The port is beset by these rocks just as though they had been ranged by human art for its protection; nor can even small boats pass through them save in one place, between two lofty rocks, between which boats are rowed with great care, because the water there washes backwards and forwards with wondrous swiftness, and dashes itself against both sides of the rocks; and unless the pilot or boatman be careful the water gets the mastery over the boat, hurls it against the rocks, and breaks it into a thousand pieces. Wherefore those who are entering this port must row through the swelling waves with the utmost force which they can throw into their oars, lest the boat should be swept out of the middle of the channel to this side or to that, and strike against the rocks. Yet, however active the boatman may be, he can hardly escape being splashed by the fall of the water which is thrown violently up the rocks on either side of the entrance. These are Andromeda's rocks...' Fabri, in Stewart 2013: 238–239.

⁴¹ Sharvit 2002: 61. The dearth of artifacts may be a result of the massive dredging during the British Mandatory period: Burke et al. 2017: 95. See also Burke's suggestion that an inland harbor existed in Jaffa during the Bronze and Iron Ages.

⁴² Avitsur 1989: 11–12.

⁴³ *Genesis*, 30: 11.

offering for Meni'.⁴⁴ After Alexander the Great conquered the region, Gad and Meni were identified with Tyche, the Greek goddess of fortune. The Greeks believed that every individual, every place, every city, and every state had its own Tyche. She was the force that regulated their lives, for better or for worse, and even the gods accepted her command. In the Roman world Fortuna was the equivalent of Tyche. But whereas the Greek Tyche was from the first connected with the sea, since she was one of the daughters of the god Oceanus, Fortuna was originally an agricultural goddess. In the Graeco-Roman world many cities maintained an official cult of the Tyche or Fortuna as the city goddess. She was usually depicted as a benevolent goddess, with attributes intended to arouse feeling of well being, joy and happiness in the spectators. The *cornucopia*, horn of plenty which she carried symbolized wealth; she wore a crown like a *modius*, a cone-shaped vessel which served as a Roman corn-measure; sometimes she wore a mural crown which symbolized security and protection; and the steering-oar in her hand symbolized good leadership. Archaeological evidence shows that Tyche/Fortuna was the most popular deity in the Land of Israel, Syria and Trans-Jordan in the Roman period. She appears in official artistic creations, on coins, *tesserae*, statues and reliefs, as well as on personal objects such as gems, statuettes and tombstones. Since she was the embodiment of the town community, she sometimes appeared together with symbols portraying the special nature of each city, such as topographical characteristics (for instance, a hill or a river), cult shrines, military activity (warships in Phoenician cities) or economic activities (such as a purple snail in Dor/Dora). The figure and symbols of the city goddess were often used by the authorities to convey ideological messages. They also reflect political and military events in the life of the town or the region.⁴⁵

During the Hellenistic and Roman period Tyche appears in the Land of Israel and Trans-Jordan in four main types. The earliest was a bust of Tyche wearing a mural crown. She was portrayed on city states coins to mark their autonomous status. The second was the Tyche of Antiochia type. Tyche of Antiochia was created with the rise of the Seleucid kingdom with Antiochia as its capital; here the city goddess is seen seated on a rock, with her foot resting on the swimming river god Orontes. This became a model for many city goddesses. After the Roman conquest of the East the figure of Tyche/Fortuna was also adopted by many cities. A new type of Tyche appeared during the Great Revolt of the Jews against the Romans: she was portrayed as an Amazon with bared breast armed like a Roman soldier. She first appeared in this type in Caesarea Maritima (see below).

In Jaffa a stone has been discovered inscribed with a prayer to Ba'al Gad. It is a Phoenician building inscription, engraved on limestone offering table.⁴⁶ Conder dated it, by the style of the lettering, to the fourth or third century BCE. It reads: 'A worshipper, son

⁴⁴ *Isaiah*, 65: 11. On the god Gad see: Hartum 1954.

⁴⁵ Rodan 1999: 293–297

⁴⁶ Ze'evi 1985: 19; Tolkowsky 2001: 31.

of a worshipper, has very firmly founded the temple of Joppa, being prospered by Eshmun; (being) there Lord — Ben ‘Abdas. Thou wilt hear with acceptance, and thou wilt save Ben ‘Abdas — a servant forever, ‘Abd-Eshmun. A sinner towards Ba‘al, he returns drawing back. Thou shalt protect the worshipper as a son, O my Ba‘al. Have mercy on me, O Ba‘al Gad, (who am) the son of ‘Abd-Eshmun, a faithful servant, the son of ‘Abd-Abset. The wonderer having rested — the son of ‘Abd-Eshmun — cut a stone. He carved an inscription. Have mercy, O Lord, on a servant, and save the son of ‘Abd-Eshmun... and he erected a high place (as) an obedient worshipper.’ Some scholars claim that the inscription is evidence of the erection of a shrine in honour of Eshmun by the author of the dedication, whose name was ‘Abd‘abdas or ‘Abd ben ‘Abdeshmun. In Konder’s opinion this was after a settlement campaign, or after he had become rich through trade. In Tolkovsky’s view Ben ‘Abdas was the governor of Jaffa at the time when the shrine was built.⁴⁷ Ben ‘Abdas prays to the god of fortune. He confesses his sins, asks for mercy and rescue, and swears that he will build him an altar. It may be that the altar was built on the site of the shrine of Eshmun. Eshmun, the god of healing, was the head of the pantheon of Sidon. He was identified with Asclepius, the Greek god of healing. In Caesarea Maritima there was also a cult of Asclepius/Eshmun which was connected with the cult of the goddess of fortune and the city: he appears next to Tyche in engravings on a Byzantine bronze cup as the patron god (*genius loci* in Latin) of the Sidonian settlement Stratonos Pyrgos.⁴⁸ The cult of Tyche was celebrated in Jaffa at the beginning of the Roman period. Her bust appears on two of the city’s coins, as a symbol of its autonomous status. The coins have been dated to the first century BCE or the first century CE.⁴⁹ After Pompey’s conquest of the Land of Israel the Hellenized coastal cities, including Jaffa, were taken from the Hasmonean kingdom of Judah and attached to the province of Syria, which was governed by the M. Aemilius Scaurus. At the same time the status of these cities as autonomous *poleis* was renewed. Julius Caesar returned Jaffa to the Jews in 47 BCE as a reward for their help in the battle of Pharsalos, and issued a special decree exempting the city from the increase of tax on wheat payable to Rome, and also from the tithe to Hyrcanus II (63–43 BCE).⁵⁰ On the reverse of one of the two coins mentioned above is a bust of Tyche wearing a crown in the shape of a city wall with three towers. Her head is turned to the right, and her hair is gathered on her nape and covered with a scarf. On the obverse of the coin there is depicted an oared ship sailing to the left, with the inscription ‘Holy Jaffa, city of asylum.’ The other coin depicts the bust of Tyche turned to the right, her nape covered with a scarf, and on her head a mural crown with two towers. On the obverse of this coin Andromeda chained to the rock is depicted. It may be that these two coins portray the renewal of the pagan cult in the city. The fact that both the city goddess and Andromeda appear on the same coin indicates a link between their cults. There is a similar link between the cult of Tyche and those of Perseus and Athena. On the coins

⁴⁷ Conder 1892: 19; Tolkovsky 2001: 30.

⁴⁸ Rodan 1999: 143–152.

⁴⁹ Saulcy 1874: 176–177, plate IX, figs. 3–4, in: Tolkovsky 2001: 47, figs. 5–6, and 47, notes 1–2; Kindler 1985–1986: 30, figs. 1–2.

⁵⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIV, 10, 6.

from the Roman period they are depicted together in her shrine.⁵¹ This is because Perseus defeated the sea monster and saved Andromeda and the whole of Jaffa with the help of Athena, the goddess of battle and victory. According to the Greeks, Tyche decides the results of a battle. In the Iliad, Zeus weighs the fates of the Achaeans and the Trojans with golden scales in order to find out who will be victorious and who will be defeated.⁵² The Romans also believed that it was Fortuna who gave them their victories and their dominance of the world.⁵³ Tyche also plays a central role in the Phoenician/Greek myth of Cassiopeia (see below). In artistic representations of the ΚΡΙΣΙΣ ΝΗΡΗΙΔΩΝ (Judgment of the Nereids), the beauty contest between Cassiopeia and the Nereids, Cassiopeia won thanks to the lot of good fortune cast in her favour.

Tyche of Antiochia is not depicted on the coins of Jaffa, in contradiction to 'Akko/Ptolemais (Acre), where there was also a joint cult of Tyche, Perseus and Athena. This may be because 'Akko/Ptolemais, in the north of the Land of Israel, had always been considered to belong to Phoenicia. It was closer to Antiochia, and the Seleucids refounded it as a *polis*. Jaffa was closer to the sphere of influence of Egypt, particularly in the Ptolemaic period. At that time it was very prosperous, and minted a great number of coins. Apparently the Seleucids did not leave their mark on Jaffa during their short period of sovereignty in the region (200–164 BCE). Tyche/Fortuna is also not portrayed on the coins of Jaffa. It seems that the reason for this was also political: her image symbolized the peace and prosperity of the cities under the rule of Rome. Many Hellenistic cities in the Land of Israel with a non-Jewish majority (including Caesarea Maritima, which was founded by Herod, the vassal of Rome) used her image as a symbol of their loyalty to Rome. Jaffa did not do so. From the days of Simon Maccabeus, who built it magnificently and turned it into a centre of international commerce, most of its inhabitants were Jews. Simon rejected the demand of Antiochus VII Sidetes to return the city to the Seleucids, on the grounds that it had always belonged to the Jews. During the reign of Hyrcanus II the Romans accepted this view.⁵⁴ Josephus included Jaffa in the list of Jewish cities, together with Jerusalem, Sebaste, and Stratonos Pyrgos (later to become Caesarea Maritima). Elsewhere, where he listed the cities that were rehabilitated by Pompey and Aulus Gabinius, Jaffa was the only coastal city missing from the list, even though it was taken from the Hasmonaeans and restored to the status of *polis*.⁵⁵ Moreover, Scaurus removed the remains of the cetos (sea monster) of Andromeda, which was worshipped by the townspeople, from Jaffa (see below), and took it to Rome. This offence was even greater than Pompey's intrusion into the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem, since Pompey took nothing from the Temple.

⁵¹ Kindler 1985–1986: 26.

⁵² Homer, *Iliad*, VIII, 68–72.

⁵³ See, for example: Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 781, XII, 725–727; Horace, *The Odes*, I, 9–40; Plutarch, 'The Fortune of Rome', 4.

⁵⁴ *Maccabees* I, 16, 28–32; Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIV, 205.

⁵⁵ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, I, 8, 4; II, 6, 3.

During the imperial period Jaffa minted coins only during the reign of the house of Severus, from the time of Caracalla until that of Severus Alexander (212–235 CE). In them, Tyche is depicted as an Amazon, in a short tunic with her right breast exposed, armed like a Roman soldier with sword and spear, with her foot on the prow of a ship. The date of the appearance of Tyche/Amazon on the coins of the cities of the Land of Israel was always closely connected with the political situation. She appeared first in Caesarea, where she took the place of Fortuna as the city goddess. This was in the winter of 68 CE, at the time of the Great Revolt, when Vespasian was residing in the city. The message of her image is clear: Rome will impose her rule on those who rebel against her by force of arms.⁵⁶ It seems that the fact that Tyche has her foot on the prow of a ship recalls the conquest of Jaffa by Vespasian and the destruction of the rebels' fleet by a storm in the city harbour a few weeks earlier. Vespasian commemorated this event by a coin bearing the inscription *VICTORIA NAVALIS*, with the figure of Nike/Victoria on the deck of a ship; and the rebels' ships were displayed in Titus's and Vespasian's triumphal procession in Rome.⁵⁷ But why did the Romans celebrate a naval victory even though they had waged no naval battle, but simply looked on at the destruction wrought by the storm on the ships of the Jews? Perhaps because survival of a storm at sea was considered more difficult than a victory over an enemy fleet:⁵⁸ it always requires the aid of good fortune. In the course of time the word 'fortuna' in Greek and Italian came to be a synonym for 'storm'. Fortuna and the storm aided the Romans, and the victory therefore belonged to the goddess of fortune, portrayed as a Roman soldier with her foot on the prow of a ship, and to Nike/Victoria. Tyche/Amazon appeared again in Caesarea only fifty years later, in similar circumstances: the revolts of the Jews against Trajan and Hadrian.

In Jaffa, too, the appearance of the city goddess as Tyche/Amazon is connected with the political and military situation in the area in general, and in Jaffa in particular. The city played an active part in all the Jewish revolts against Roman rule from their very beginning. In 40 BCE the Parthians, who were enemies of Rome, invaded Syria and the Land of Israel. They crowned Matityahu Antigonus the Hasmonean king of Judah. Herod fled to Rome and was crowned king of Judah by the Roman senate. In 39 BCE he returned to the Land of Israel and began a campaign for the conquest of Galilee and Judah. On his way to Jerusalem he laid siege to Jaffa which 'stood in his way, and hindered his going thither... it was necessary to take that city first, which was in the enemies' hands, that when he should go to Jerusalem, no fortress might be left in the enemies' power behind him', and conquered it in 37 BCE.⁵⁹ In 22 BCE Jaffa lost its status as the most important port in Judah, when Herod founded Caesarea Maritima and Sebastos, its extensive advanced port. At the time of the Great Revolt Jaffa rebelled,

⁵⁶ It appears that the coins depicted a cult statue of the city goddess. Marble statues and parts of statues of Tyche/Amazon from the second and third centuries CE have been discovered in the excavations at Caesarea: Gersht 1987: 28–30.

⁵⁷ Ringel 1984: 79, fig. 112.

⁵⁸ Vegetius, *Epitome rei Militaris*, IV, 33.

⁵⁹ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, I, 15, 3.

and was destroyed by Cestius Gallus in 66 CE. The rebels returned to it, and built a fleet that attacked ships sailing from Egypt to Italy, endangering the Roman corn supply.⁶⁰ Vespasian conquered the city, destroyed it for the second time, and refounded it. But the Jews again returned to settle in it, and apparently rebelled yet again. In his excavations in Jaffa, J. Kaplan discovered traces of destruction by a fierce conflagration in Layer V. He concluded that the city had taken part in the '*Polemos Kitos*' (the Quietus war, the name in rabbinical sources of the bloody riots in the Land of Israel during the revolt of the Jewish diaspora which began in Cyrenaica and Egypt in 117 CE and spread to the Land of Israel and Mesopotamia. The riots were brutally suppressed by the general Lucius Quietus). Many of the Jews of Jaffa originated in Egypt and Cyrenaica, as can be seen from the tombs in Abu Kabir dating from the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods, and it is reasonable to suppose that they maintained close relationships with their relatives there.⁶¹ It seems that there are similar reasons for the appearance of Tyche/Amazon on the city's coins during the reign of the house of Severus. Jewish, Christian and pagan sources attest to the fact that many cities in the Land of Israel were opposed to Septimius Severus in the early days of his reign, and supported his rival, Pescenius Niger.⁶² There is evidence of hostility between Septimius Severus and the Jews: he forbade conversion to Judaism, and allowed his son Caracalla to conduct a triumphal procession in Rome after his victory over the Jews.⁶³ During the reign of the house of Severus, Tyche/Amazon appears particularly on the coins of the cities which were considered Jewish because they were founded during the reign of a Jewish king, such as Antipatris and Anthedon, or because they had a large Jewish population, like Lod (Lydda)/Diospolis or Tsippori/Diocaesarea. Sometimes the goddess has her foot on a crouching figure, apparently a bound prisoner.⁶⁴ Tyche/Amazon appears on the coins of Jewish and Samaritan cities such as Caesarea Maritima, Tiberias, Shomron/Sebaste, and Jerusalem/Aelia Capitolina wearing a short tunic, with sword, spear and helmet, and with the prow of a ship or a bound prisoner at her feet. It is true that Hellenized cities such as Geva/Gaba, Beith Govrin/Eleutheropolis, Beith She'an/Nysa-Scythopolis, Madaba, Bostra and Rabbat-Ammon/Philadelphia also adopted the image of the Amazon. But there she appears in a different style: she wears a long dress, or holds a horn of plenty, or is accompanied by a river god. The difference is significant, for in this way the goddess of war and victory over the enemies of Rome became a goddess of peace, plenty and agricultural fertility.⁶⁵ Clearly, then, Tyche/Amazon was meant to warn the Jews and the Samaritans against any attempt to rebel.

⁶⁰ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, III, 9, 2; Radan 1990: 130–131.

⁶¹ Kaplan 1981: 412, 415. Radan maintains that at the time of the Great Revolt, too, the Jews of Egypt joined with the rebels from Jaffa in their attempt to disrupt the provision of grain to Rome: Radan 1990: 127–30.

⁶² Levine 1982: 94–98; Avi-Yonah 1970: 48–51, and 246, notes 7–9a.

⁶³ *Historiae Augustae*, 'Septimius', 16.7–17.1. In the course of time there was an improvement in the relationship between the Jews and Septimius Severus: Levine 1982: 35; Meshorer 1978: 194–5.

⁶⁴ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 30, no. 9; Meshorer 1984: 37, fig. 92.

⁶⁵ For a list of coins, see: Rodan 1999: 207, 'Tyche on the Coins of Jaffa', and notes pp. 7–8.

The cult of Tyche in Jaffa was also linked to the cult of the emperor. The coins portray the statue of the goddess holding a bust of the emperor. This bears double significance: that the good fortune and prosperity of the city depend on the Roman emperor, and that the civic tutelary goddess and destiny of the city are also under his protection. In Jaffa there was a long-standing tradition of the cult of the ruler, dating from the Ptolemaic period, as is attested by a Greek inscription in honour of ‘the great king Ptolemy Philopator, son of King Ptolemy and Queen Berenice, the benevolent gods, and grandson of King Ptolemy Philadelphus, dedicated by Anaxicles the king’s priest.’ The king and queen were considered to be *θεοι αγαθοι* (benevolent gods), and the Ptolemaic queen was identified with *αγαθη τυχη*, good fortune. This was a continuation of the heritage of the Pharaohs, who considered themselves to be divine, and thereby ensured their subjects’ loyalty.⁶⁶

2.2.b. *The Shrines of Tyche (figure 2)*

The coins of Jaffa from the period of Caracalla (212–217 CE), Macrinus and Diadumenian (217–218 CE) and Elagabalus (218–222 CE) depict Tyche inside a two-storied building, whose upper story has four pillars, a ‘Syrian’ pediment (characterized by an arch in the middle section of the architrave), and a palmette-like *acroterium*. Tyche/Amazon’s statue is situated in the central arch. In some of the coins, in the side wings there appear smaller statues of Perseus and Athena. In the lower story there is also a central arch, and six pillars. Kindler maintains that the upper building on the coin is the shrine of Tyche, and that the lower is the city gate.⁶⁷ The only parallel to this two-storied building with statues of Tyche, Athena and Perseus inside it is found in the coins of ‘Akko/Ptolemais. The building in ‘Akko/Ptolemais is, in fact, similar to that in the Jaffa



Figure 2. Jaffa coin. Diadumenian (217–218 CE). Tyche/Amazon in a two-storied temple. Courtesy of the collections of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Photo by Tal Rogovski.

⁶⁶ Ze’evi 1985: 23; Smith 1994: 86–105.

⁶⁷ Kindler 1985–1986: 25–27.

coin, except for a row of semi-circles appearing in the ḥAkko/Ptolemais coins below the lower part of the building. Kadman maintains that the building in the ḥAkko/Ptolemais coin is the shrine of Tyche in that city.⁶⁸ Price and Trell claim that it is the *Nymphaeum* of the city and the paved square in front of it.⁶⁹ Avner conjectures that it is the *scena frons* of the theatre, which was ornamented with niches and statues.⁷⁰ In Meshorer's view it is the bath-house of ḥAkko/Ptolemais, mentioned in the Mishnah, where Rabbi Gamliel was accustomed to bathe even though it contained a statue of Aphrodite.⁷¹ Be that as it may, the great similarity between these two buildings makes it clear that they are identical, and this indicates an identical function. ḥAkko/Ptolemais and Jaffa were unique in that they both possessed a similar cult of the triad Tyche, Athena and Perseus, which did not exist in any of the other cities of the region. They also depicted the gods in a similar arrangement: Tyche in the centre, Athena in the right-hand wing wearing a helmet and holding a shield and spear, and Perseus in the left-hand wing, naked, holding a *harpe* (a sword with two blades, one straight and the other curved), and the head of Medusa. The only difference is that in ḥAkko/Ptolemais the goddess is Tyche/Fortuna, whereas in Jaffa she is Tyche/Amazon. ḥAkko/Ptolemais, whose population was mainly non-Jewish and was always loyal to the Roman Empire, never depicted Tyche/Amazon on its coins. It appears, therefore, that political factors were decisive in the way the patron goddesses of the cities of the Land of Israel were depicted. The *harpe*, the symbol of the mints of Jaffa and ḥAkko/Ptolemais, indicates the predominance of the cult of Perseus in these cities. Apparently the two identical shrines to the three saviour gods were built during the same period in Jaffa and ḥAkko/Ptolemais: under the house of Severus rule, who encouraged municipal building and development throughout the Roman Empire.

2.3. *Perseus (Περσέυς) (figure 3)*

Perseus is portrayed in the coins of Jaffa during the reign of Caracalla and Elagabalus. He appears naked, holding out the severed head of the Medusa before him. In his right hand he holds the *harpe*. In Greek mythology Perseus was the son of Zeus and Danaë. His grandfather, Acrisius, king of Argos, shut his daughter Danaë in a bronze room open only at the top, because of a prophecy that she would have a son who would kill him. Zeus came to her in the form of golden rain. After Danaë gave birth to Perseus, Acrisius put her and her son in a chest and cast it onto the sea. They reached the island of Seriphos, where they were rescued by a fisherman, Dictys who had reared Perseus. Polydectes, the king of the island, fell in love with Danaë. In order to dispose of Perseus he tempted him to commit himself to bringing the head of the Medusa, who was so ugly and monstrous that all who saw her turned to stone. Three gods came to the aid of Perseus. Athena gave him a shield of bronze polished like a mirror, so that he could look at her when he came

⁶⁸ Kadman 1961: III, 126, No. 179.

⁶⁹ Price & Trell 1977: 171.

⁷⁰ Avner 1991: 99–100.

⁷¹ Meshorer 1984: 15; *Mishna, 'Avoda Zara'*, 3, 4–5.

to cut off her head. Hermes gave him winged sandals and the *harpe*, and a bag in which to put the Medusa's head. Hades gave him a hat that made him invisible. When he cut off the Medusa's head it dripped blood onto the earth, and two immortal horses sprang forth from it: Pegasus and Chrysaor. Perseus fled from the wrath of the Gorgons, Medusa's companions, on the back of Pegasus. While flying back to Seriphos he passed over the sea-coast of Jaffa, where he saw Andromeda, the daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopeia, chained to a rock and awaiting her sacrifice to the sea monster (κῆτος/cetos in Greek). Perseus asked her parents for her hand as a reward for saving her. He killed the monster, married her, and returned with her to Greece. The oracle proclaimed to Acrisius came true, for Perseus killed him accidentally in a discus-throwing contest. As a result of his feelings of guilt Perseus exchanged the kingship of Argos for the kingship of Tiryns. He was also thought to have been the founder of Mycenae and of Tarsus, in Cilicia. Athena and Hermes aided him in his wars: that is to say, he won by using thought, artifice and cunning. In many respects he is reminiscent of Odysseus, who was also helped by Athena and Hermes to triumph over the obstacles that Poseidon put in his way. In both of these stories the sea, with its storms and monsters, is the instrument of punishment for *hybris*. The human being is punished for abandoning his or her rightful place and presuming to vanquish the elements: Cassiopeia when she claimed that she was more beautiful than the Nereids, the sea nymphs, and Odysseus when he wounded Polyphemus, Poseidon's son. When man confronts the mighty forces of Nature he has to exploit all his physical and mental powers to the full. Despite his victory over her, she reduces him to his true dimensions and teaches him to know his limitations.

Present-day scholars believe that the myth of Perseus reached Greece from the east.⁷² Perseus and Medusa are mentioned in Greek literature at the end of the eighth century BCE.⁷³ As early as the fifth century BCE there was a Greek tradition linking Perseus with Syria.⁷⁴ Herodotus said that many peoples considered themselves to be related to Perseus, 'the Persians claim that Perseus himself was an Assyrian who became Greek', and that the Greeks view him as a Greek because he was the son of Danaë. He was also considered to be the forefather of the Persians, the descendants of Perses, his son by Andromeda. Herodotus himself concludes from Perseus' genealogy that his origins were in Egypt, since Danaus, his great-great-grandfather, was the brother of Aegyptus. The Egyptians also considered this to be true, and practised his cult in Chemis, close to Thebes (No-Amon), where his huge sandal was preserved.⁷⁵ In Greek art Theseus, Andromeda and the sea monster are portrayed in ceramic paintings from the archaic period. They also appear in wall paintings and reliefs from the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The earliest depiction of which we know is a painting on a Corinthian amphora

⁷² Philips 1968: 1.

⁷³ Homer, *Iliad*, XIV, 319–320; Hesiod, *Theogony*, 280–283.

⁷⁴ Cratinus, *Fragment*, 207.

⁷⁵ Herodotus, *Histories*, II, 15, 91; VI, 54, 61; VII, 150



Figure 3. Corinthian amphora from the first half of the sixth century BCE. Perseus and Andromeda throwing stones at Ketos. The inscriptions denoting the depicted persons are written in an archaic form of the Greek alphabet. Altes Museum, Berlin. Drawing: Margalit Levitan.

from the first half of the sixth century BCE, in which they are portrayed and labelled with their names.⁷⁶

As in Jaffa, there was also a cult of Perseus in 'Akko/Ptolemais, and he is depicted on its coins. Here, however, he appears only as the slayer of Medusa, with no hint of the rescue of Andromeda. On the coins of 'Akko/Ptolemais, as on those of Jaffa, Hermes and Athena appear by the side of the city goddess; but in 'Akko/Ptolemais the accent is on Hermes rather than Athena, and his *caduceus* (winged staff) became the symbol of the city on its coins. This was perhaps because Hermes was identified with the Babylonian Nebo, one of the holy triad worshipped in 'Akko/Ptolemais; the others were Hadad and Atargatis.⁷⁷ One of the coins of Jaffa from the time of Elagabalus portrays a hero riding on a horse and killing a dragon with his spear.⁷⁸ It may be that this is Perseus, who was sometimes shown riding on the back of a horse. In Meshorer's opinion, this

⁷⁶ Philips 1968: pl. 1, fig. 1.

⁷⁷ On the dedication inscription in their honour, see: Avi-Yonah 1959: 11.

⁷⁸ Kindler 1985–1986: 28, No. 7.

is an early portrayal of St. George of Lod (Lydda), who was a late development of the story of Perseus.⁷⁹

2.4. *Andromeda (Ανδρομέδα)* (figures 4–6)

Like Perseus, Andromeda was commemorated by the authorities of the city of Jaffa. On the reverse of a coin from the first century BCE or CE she is depicted sitting on a rock, with her arms raised. Kindler and Tolkovsky consider that she is praying for the succour of heaven.⁸⁰ In Greek mythology her mother, Cassiopeia, boasted that she was more beautiful than the Nereids, the sea nymphs. Poseidon punished the whole city by sending a flood and a sea monster which destroyed the townspeople's cattle. King Cepheus consulted the oracle of the god Amon, who declared that only the sacrifice of his daughter Andromeda to the monster would avert disaster. The earliest source known to us connecting Andromeda with Jaffa is pseudo-Scylax, whose periplus date from 361 to 357 BCE. He lists Jaffa after Dora and before Ashkelon: 'Jaffa, a city: it is said that here Andromeda was delivered to the cetos.'⁸¹ Other sources are Josephus, who writes: 'great stones... jut out into the sea, and where the chains wherewith Andromeda was bound have left their footsteps, which attest to the antiquity of that fable',⁸² Conon,⁸³ Pliny the Elder,⁸⁴ and Strabo.⁸⁵ According to Pausanias there is a wellspring near Jaffa, close to the sea-shore, whose water is red, since Perseus washed off the monster's blood from his sword in it.⁸⁶ Blood-red water streams close to Jaffa is



Figure 4. Jaffa coin from the first century BCE or first century CE. Andromeda chained to a rock. Courtesy of the collections of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Photo by Tal Rogovski.

⁷⁹ Meshorer 1984: 24, No. 39.

⁸⁰ Kindler 1985–1986: 30; Tolkovsky 2001: 45.

⁸¹ Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplus*, lines 4–5.

⁸² Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, III, 9, 3.

⁸³ Conon, *Narrationes*, 15.

⁸⁴ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, V, 14, 69.

⁸⁵ Strabo, *Geographicon*, XVI, 2, 28.

⁸⁶ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, IV, 35, 9.

also documented in a modern manuscript, which describes how the sea at Jaffa froze and retreated for several days, as the results of the earthquake which occurred in the Land of Israel on the 14th January 1546.⁸⁷

Other sources locate the story of Andromeda and the monster in Ethiopia.⁸⁸ Euripides included in his tragedy *Andromeda*, written in 412 BCE, a chorus of Ethiopian maidens. Only fragments of this tragedy survive, but it can be reconstructed from Aristophanes' comedy *Thesmophoriazusae*, which includes a parody of the *Andromeda*. Mnesilochos, an old man dressed as a woman, is chained to a rock. Euripides tries to free him, and they parody the dialogue between Andromeda and Perseus.⁸⁹ Pestalozza maintained that the name of the heroine was originally *Etre-meti*, with the addition of a nasal consonant, and deduced from this that she originated in Anatolia. The names of her relatives — Cepheus, Phineus and Cassiopeia — are also of Anatolian origin, in his view.⁹⁰ Kindler considers that the myth of Andromeda originated with the Philistines who settled in the region, at the period of settlement of the Sea Peoples at the end of the second millennium BCE.⁹¹ Other scholars hold that this myth was originally unconnected with that of Cassiopeia.⁹² This seems probable, since pseudo-Scylax does not mention Cassiopeia. Moreover, in the earliest artistic depiction, on the Corinthian amphora, only Andromeda appears by the side of Perseus, without her parents. Further, in contradistinction to later iconography, she is not bound to the rock weeping and hopeless; she is a warlike heroine, valiantly fighting the monster by Perseus' side. Andromeda, Perseus and the sea monster are depicted in twenty-two other ceramic paintings of the archaic and classical periods from Attica and southern Italy (see below).

In the literary and artistic sources there are several versions of the way in which Andromeda was fettered. Some of them, including Josephus, say that she was bound to a reef. Others depict her bound at the entrance to a vaulted cave. It seems that Josephus' account matches the local version, as may be concluded from the coin of Jaffa on which Andromeda is sitting on a rock. Comparison of this coin with other artistic representations shows that her hands are raised not in prayer, but because she was chained in this position. Some scholars interpret the cave as the symbol of a grave, since she was to have been sacrificed, and thereby 'married' to Hades, the god of the underworld.⁹³ Another possible explanation of Andromeda's being at the entrance to the cave is that she was painted by artists living far from the region, in Greece and Italy, and that they relied on the descriptions of sailors and travellers who had visited the place. In fact, reports dating from medieval and modern times mention ancient caves hewn into the rock at the foot of the cliff above the harbour.⁹⁴ In the illustrations

⁸⁷ Braslavski 1955: 330–335.

⁸⁸ Apollodorus, *Library*, II, 3, 4; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IV, 669.

⁸⁹ Aristophanes, 'Thesmophoriazusae', lines 1015–1209.

⁹⁰ Pestalozza 1951: 125.

⁹¹ Kindler 1985–1986: 27.

⁹² Balty 1981: 99, 101; Daszewski 1986: 484.

⁹³ Barringer 1995: 117.

⁹⁴ Fabri, *Book of Wanderings*, 1480–1483: 'Just at the entrance as one comes up from the sea they have left two vaulted buildings



Figure 5. Depiction of Jaffa port with the vaulted caves/nausoikoi, in Zuallaert's Voyage, 1586. Drwaing: Margalit Levitan.

of books of travellers' tales there appear four or five with equally high vaulted halls arranged in a row, and open to the sea. Travellers said that they were used as storage space for merchandise, or as lodging houses. In any case, their size and shape lead to the conclusion that in earlier periods they served as ναύς οἰκοί (*naus oikoi*) – ship sheds – or as storehouses for such equipment as sails or ropes. The traveller Zuallaert reported that the caves were some 20 feet (6.5 metres) broad and high, and more than 50 feet (16.5 metres) long. He added that in the past they had been longer, and came close to the shore. A triere, or trireme, the most common warship of the Greeks, Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Romans, was about 4.5 metres broad and 35 metres long.⁹⁵ It seems,

standing, which are cut out of the hill itself, and are covered above with earth and ruins: wherefore it is always damp in those vaults, and water drips down from above, the walls are wet, the foundation muddy, and all the year round the place is used by the Saracens as a common sewer. Into this sewer they thrust Christian pilgrims, as has been said; but what especially troubles the pilgrims who are confined, there is that as you enter the cave the vault is broken, and great stones hang threatening to fall upon their heads' Fabri p. 238; Rohricht, *Die Jerusalemfahrt*, 1498: 'We alighted on the shore, and during that night slept in a cave with arches of rock on the sea-shore', quoted in Tolkowsky 2001: 108 and note 2; Zuallaert, *Voyage*, 1586: 'On the shore there are several arched caves which serve as cellars; in the past they were used as storehouses for goods unloaded from the ships. There are four caves.... We resided in the fourth, which is twenty feet in height and width, and fifty feet in depth.... And it appears that the caves were once longer and extended further towards the sea than now', quoted in Tolkowsky 2001: 109–10 and note 1; Croke, *Voyage*, circa 1620: 'Under the cliff there are extensive caves open towards the sea hewn into the rock', quoted in Tolkowsky 2001: 110–11 and note 1. See further references in Ze'evi 1985: 49–53.

⁹⁵ On the Greek trireme see: Pomey 1997: 68; on the Punic ship from Marsala, see: Liberati 2003: 120, and fig. 28 on the



Figure 6. Campanian Red-figure Bell-krater. 330–320 BCE. Perseus rescuing Andromeda from the sea monster. Andromeda is tied between two stakes on the shoreline here represented by the wave pattern. Perseus is carrying the harpe. Both Andromeda and Perseus appear in eastern dress. The sea monster resembles a scaly crocodile. University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Drawing: Margalit Levitan.

therefore, that the ‘caves’ were exactly suited to harbouring them. In the harbour of Athens *nausioikoi* 6.5 meters broad and of a similar height, like those in Jaffa, have been discovered.⁹⁶ In about 1642 CE Franciscan monks settled close to the caves, and built a number of rooms round them and in front of them, and in 1654 they built the Latin pilgrims’ hostel. In Le Brun’s painting of 1675 the caves are not visible; instead, the hostel is seen. In Myller’s painting of 1726, the caves are also not seen.⁹⁷ In 1740 a stone

Roman trireme.

⁹⁶ Janni 1996: figs. 43–45.

⁹⁷ Le Brun, *Voyage au Levant*, 1914, Vol. I, 144, in: Tolkowsky 2001: 113, fig. 13 and note 1; Myller, *Peregrinus in Jerusalem*, 1729, Vol. I, 181–182, in: Tolkowsky 2001: 113–114, fig. 14, and notes 1, 2.

promenade along the shore was constructed, and storehouses and stone houses built on it.⁹⁸

This hypothesis is strengthened by the many portrayals of Andromeda standing between two wooden pillars, with her hands fettered to them. It has been conjectured that this way of depicting her was influenced by the method of punishment usual at the time in Athens; but it is more likely that it was a reproduction of the way in which boats were secured in the harbour. Aristophanes also compares Andromeda to a mooring ship: 'But what do I behold? A young maiden, beautiful as the immortals, chained to this rock like a vessel in port'.⁹⁹

Barringer is of the opinion that Andromeda represents two myths of transition and change: the transition from the life of a virgin to married life, and the transition from life to death. On some of the ceramic paintings there are symbols of mourning, such as the *loutrophoros*, a vase used in burial ceremonies. However, Andromeda was saved from Hades at the last moment, and married Perseus.¹⁰⁰ Andromeda also personifies transition and change from the geographical and ethnic point of view. She is one of a number of noble Phoenician heroines who came from the coastal cities of Syria and the Land of Israel and migrated to the central and western Mediterranean region, where they founded cities and royal dynasties. Europa, the daughter of the king of Tyre was captured by Zeus and taken to Crete, where she founded the house of Minos. Dido fled to North Africa at the head of a band of noblemen, and founded Carthage. Andromeda became the queen of Argos, Tiryns and Mycenae, and Heracles was one of her grandsons. The myth of Andromeda is very similar to that of Hesione, who was the daughter of Laomedon king of Troy, for whom Poseidon and Apollo toiled in order to build the walls of his city, but who refused them payment. Apollo inflicted a plague on the people of Troy, and Poseidon a sea monster. Only the sacrifice of Hesione to the monster could save the city. Heracles killed the monster and saved the princess.¹⁰¹ The myths of Perseus and Heracles are also very similar. Heracles was Perseus' grandson and, like him, king of Tiryns. Both of them travelled to the ends of the world and saved mankind from monsters, natural disasters and the thrall of tyrants. In 'Akko/Ptolemais, where Perseus the slayer of the Medusa was worshipped, Heracles was considered to have been the city's founder.

2.5. Athena (Αθηνά) (figure 7)

Athena, the goddess of wisdom and war, appears on the coins of Jaffa between 212 and 235 CE. She stands facing right, wearing a helmet, holding a spear and with her

⁹⁸ Hasselquist, *Voyage*, 51–52, in: Tolkowsky 2001: 115, and note 6.

⁹⁹ Aristophanes, 'Thesmophoriazusae', line 1105.

¹⁰⁰ Barringer 1995: 111–120. Achilles Tatius states that in Pelusion there is a painting in which Andromeda is likened to bride of Hades, and the rock to which she is bound is like a tomb. Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, iii, 7: 5.

¹⁰¹ Apollodorus, *Library*, XVI, 104.



Figure 7. Jaffa coin. Severus Alexander (222–235 CE). Athena stands facing right, holding spear and resting hand on shield; ΦΛ ΙΟΠΠΗC (of Flavia Joppa). Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

left arm resting on a shield.¹⁰² She was a member of the divine triad of Jaffa, together with Tyche and Perseus. The coins of the city depict all three in the shrine of the city goddess. Athena, the patron of Perseus, was his half-sister, but she also came to his aid because of her hatred of Medusa. Medusa had been a beautiful maiden with whom Poseidon fell in love, and came to her in the shrine of Athena. The goddess, angry at this desecration, turned her into a monster: Medusa's hair, which was outstandingly beautiful, turned into a nest of snakes, and all who looked on her turned to stone. According to Apollodorus, it was Athena who instigated Medusa's death at the hand of Perseus, since she had boasted that she was more beautiful than the goddess.¹⁰³ When Perseus came to Jaffa on his homeward journey, he also defeated the sea monster that was about to swallow up Andromeda. He raised an altar to the goddess of war and victory, and sacrificed a heifer to her.¹⁰⁴

Apart from her patronage of Perseus, Athena was worshipped in Jaffa, as in many cities in the Greek and Roman world, because she was the patron of sailors.¹⁰⁵ Together with Poseidon she invented the art of shipbuilding. It was she who helped Danaus, the great-great-grandfather of Perseus, to build the *pentekontoros* (fifty-oared ship) in which he fled from Egypt to Argos with his fifty daughters; and she advised Jason, when he was embarking on his journey in search of the Golden Fleece, to build the *Argo*, which was also a *pentekontoros*.¹⁰⁶ Both the Phoenicians and the Greeks used ships of this type throughout the Iron Age.¹⁰⁷ In Piraeus, the harbour of Athens, there

¹⁰² Hill 1965: xxv; Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 77, No. 9; Meshorer 1984: 24; Kindler 1985–1986: 26–30.

¹⁰³ Apollodorus, *Library*, II, 4, 3–4.

¹⁰⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IV, 753–756.

¹⁰⁵ On the cult of Athena throughout the Mediterranean area, see: Semple 1927: 368, 378; Recio 2000: 118.

¹⁰⁶ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, VII, 56; Apollodorus, *Library*, I, 9: 16.

¹⁰⁷ The *pentekontoros* was used both in naval battles and for the transport of goods and men. The oarsmen sat in a row on each side. Its great length and weight limited its speed and manoeuvrability. The Phoenicians improved it by dividing the rows of oarsmen into two: the lower row was below the level of the deck in order to protect them from injury by the enemy, and the oars were arranged in a zigzag pattern in order to prevent their clashing. This is the bireme, which is depicted as early as 701 BCE in a relief in the palace of Sennacherib in Nineveh. A further improvement was made in the

was a joint cult of Zeus and Athena under the name of ‘the two saviour gods’.¹⁰⁸ Athena was also worshipped in Argos; the *Παλλάδιον palladium*, her wooden cult statue, stood at first in her shrine in Troy, and prevented the fall of the city, until it was stolen by Odysseus and Diomedes, who carried it by ship to Argos. The *Odyssey* tells that when they were preparing to set sail for Ithaca Telemachus and his companions ‘at once they went on board, and sat down upon the benches...(Telemachus) was praying and offering sacrifice to Athena by the stern of the ship.’¹⁰⁹

It may be that the cult of Athena gained cardinal importance in Jaffa when the city was refounded as a colony, with the right to strike coins, by Vespasian. From then on it bore his name, Flavia Ioppe. Athena, who was identified by the Romans with Minerva, was the patron of the Flavian emperors. They built shrines in her honour in Rome, celebrated festivals for her, and portrayed her on their coins.¹¹⁰ Moreover, other *poleis* founded by Vespasian or Titus maintained a cult of Athena/Minerva: Flavia-Neapolis/Shechem, Caesarea Maritima, and Pehel/Pella, which struck such coins for the first time during the reign of Domitian.¹¹¹ Akko/Ptolemais also maintained a cult of Perseus, Athena and Hermes, but emphasized Hermes rather than Athena, who did not appear alone on its coins.

In Jaffa Athena is also connected with the city goddess. The concept of Athena as a defender of the city originated in Greece in the archaic period. The author of the eleventh and twenty-eighth Homeric Hymns ‘To Athena’, attributes to her spheres of activity and appellations characteristic of Tyche: she is the ‘Guardian of the City’, who ‘save the people’ and ‘give good fortune with happiness’.¹¹² They are also linked by the transfer of iconographic components from the representation of Athena to that of Tyche/Amazon. Sometimes the two goddesses were conflated: the city goddess of Bostra was Tyche/Allat, and in the north of Arabia, Trans-Jordan and Syria Allat was the goddess of war and the underworld, and was identified with Athena.¹¹³

2.6. Poseidon (*Ποσειδώνας*)

The figure of Poseidon, god of the sea, appears on a coin of Jaffa.¹¹⁴ Poseidon plays a major role in the central myth of the city. It was he who punished Jaffa for the *hybris* crime of Cassiopeia by flooding it and sending the sea monster. The oracle of Amon proclaimed that only the sacrifice of Andromeda to the monster could appease his wrath. This myth was known to pseudo-Scylax; hence it is clear that the cult of the

fifth century BCE by the Greeks or the Phoenicians, with the invention of the trireme in which the oarsmen were divided into three rows, on three levels. The Romans also used biremes and triremes. Sas 1991: 64–68; Pomey 1997: 66–71.

¹⁰⁸ *JG I*, 2.1234, 2966; Recio 2000: 133.

¹⁰⁹ Homer, *Odyssey*, XV, 221–222.

¹¹⁰ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: ‘Domitianus’*, 4 and 15; Lo Cascio 2001: 294.

¹¹¹ Meshorer 1984: 49, No. 20; *Ibid.* 92, No. 49.

¹¹² *Homeric Hymns*, 28: ‘To Athena’, line 2; *Homeric Hymns*, 11: ‘To Athena’, lines 1, 4–5.

¹¹³ Healey 2000: 108–114; Avner 1991: 51–52.

¹¹⁴ Head 1911: 803.

sea god already existed in Jaffa before the Greek conquest. The main centres of the worship of Poseidon in the Aegean world were the coastal cities of the Peloponnese, such as Corinth and Helike, and also Rhodes.¹¹⁵ Because Poseidon ruled the sea he was conceived of as the protector of seafarers. In the twenty-two Homeric Hymn, 'To Poseidon', the poet prays: 'god of the deep... be kindly in heart and help those who voyage in ships!'¹¹⁶ Sacrifices to Poseidon were made before any ship set sail, and at the beginning of any naval campaign. Poseidon's realm was not confined to the sea. It also extended to the land, in that he was able to cause earthquakes. In the Homeric Hymn twenty-two he is 'mover of the earth and fruitless sea... shaker of the Earth... Holder of the Earth'.¹¹⁷ In the Iliad and in the Odyssey he is called 'the earth-enfolder'.¹¹⁸ Poseidon was specially revered in the north of the Peloponnese, a region particularly subject to earthquakes and tsunamis because of the active tectonic fault in the Gulf of Corinth. Helike suffered an earthquake in 372 BCE, and it was inundated by the sea. Moreover, in certain parts of Greece Poseidon was thought to be the supreme god. In Sparta he was called *genethlios* (the creator).¹¹⁹ He is very similar to his brother Zeus, god of the heavens and the father of the gods. Both of them ruled the phenomena of the climate, and the bull was sacred to them both. They were also similar in appearance, black-haired and bearded. Zeus was also worshipped in harbours in all parts of the Mediterranean, and was called *Soter* (Saviour). Hesiod believed that Zeus and Poseidon decided the fate of sea voyages: 'Then you will not wreck your ship, nor will the sea destroy the sailors, unless Poseidon the Earth-Shaker be set upon it, or Zeus, the king of the deathless gods, wish to slay them; for the issues of good and evil alike are with them.'¹²⁰ In Delos in the Hellenistic period sailors and merchants from Ashkelon prayed to Poseidon and Zeus *Ourius*, the bringer of the good wind, together.¹²¹ Zeus-Amon, bearded and with ram's horns, is portrayed on the coins of Jaffa from the Hellenistic period.¹²² It was the oracle of this god who ordered Cepheus to sacrifice his daughter in order to appease Poseidon and the Nereids.

A similar concept, of the God of Israel as the god of the heavens, the sea and the dry land is to be found in the book of Jonah, which was written early in the Hellenistic period: 'And Jonah said 'I fear the Lord, the god of heaven, who has made the sea and the dry land.' God is the ruler of the winds and the depths of the sea, and he opens and closes the bars of the earth.'¹²³ There are also indications of the concept of Poseidon as supreme god in the Syro-Phoenician region in mosaics of the third and fourth centuries CE from Palmyra, Apamea, and Nea Paphos in Cyprus, which depict the beauty contest between Cassiopeia and the Nereids. In Palmyra Poseidon stands in

¹¹⁵ Recio 2000: 113–118, 140–141.

¹¹⁶ Lines 3, 5, 7.

¹¹⁷ *Homeric Hymns*, 22: 'To Poseidon', lines 2, 4, 6.

¹¹⁸ Homer, *Iliad*, XV, 200; Homer, *Odyssey*, I, 68.

¹¹⁹ Larousse 1971: 133.

¹²⁰ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 666–669.

¹²¹ Di-Segni 1990: 85, No. 34.

¹²² Kindler, 1985–1986: 21.

¹²³ *Jonah*, 1: 10; 2: 7.

the middle of a Zodiac circle as the supreme judge of the competition. He fills the same role in the Apamea mosaic. In the Nea Paphos mosaic, however, the judge is Aion, the god of eternity and the cosmos. In the opinion of Ray-Coquais and Daszewski, this is because on the Syro-Phoenician coast, unlike in Cyprus, Poseidon was considered to be not only the god of the sea: 'Under the Hellenistic cover of Poseidon and Zeus is the great god of the Semitic peoples, the ruler of the elements, the heavens and the stars, the sea, and the winds, storms, and earthquakes.'¹²⁴ Scholars disagree on the question of which Canaanite/Phoenician god was identified with Poseidon, since the Canaanites and Phoenicians had many gods who were patrons of sailors: Ba'al Tsafon, Ba'al Malga, Ba'al Shemam, Ba'al Marqod and Ba'al Hadad.¹²⁵ A bilingual dedicatory inscription from Palmyra, in Greek 'to the God Poseidon' and in Aramaic 'to the god Koneh R'a'a' indicates the identity of the great god.¹²⁶ Koneh R'a'a means 'creator of the earth'. This was the title of El, the head of the Canaanite pantheon in the Bronze Age. He was also known as 'El 'Elyon' (supreme, all-highest god). A bilingual inscription (Luwian-Phoenician) of the ninth-eighth century BCE from Karatepe, near Adana indicates that he was also identified with Ea, the Sumero-Babylonian god of water.¹²⁷ In Ugaritic mythology Yamm (meaning: sea) was the beloved son of Meidad-El, and the servant of El. El supported Yamm in his struggle against Ba'al, but Yamm was defeated in battle.¹²⁸ Ba'al eventually deposed El and replaced him as chief of the gods. Be that as it may, Yahweh God of the Hebrews was known as El, El 'Elyon (Supreme God), and El Koneh Aretz (God Creator of the Earth). The closeness of Yahweh to El was emphasized in ancient times. In the Book of Genesis Malkitsedeq, King of Jerusalem who was the 'priest of El 'Elyon' (El the all-highest) makes a covenant with Abraham, which is inconsistent with the uncompromising conflict between Yahweh and Ba'al. Many Hebrew names contained the component 'el', which was also a synonym of 'Yahu', 'Yahweh'. In their study of the concept of God in Judah and Israel in the Iron Age period Keel and Uehlinger compared the descriptions and images of the divinity in the Bible with those found in archaeological remains. On seals and pottery from Iron Age B found in Jerusalem, Shechem and Yokneam with theophoric names such as šlm'el, Elshama and Yshiyahu, God is depicted as bearded, sitting in a boat with an altar before him.¹²⁹ In Keel's and Uehlinger's view this is an instance of the adoption of the Mesopotamian moon-god Sin, who is depicted as floating in the sky on a sickle moon; but under the influence of Phoenician glyptic styles the moon became a boat.¹³⁰ Shamash, the Mesopotamian sun god, was also depicted sitting in a boat.¹³¹ In Tel Qasile,

¹²⁴ Ray-Coquais 1974: 235, in: Daszewski 1986: 465.

¹²⁵ Fantar 1977: 95–130; Baslez 1986: 296–298; Brody 1998: 23–24. Melqart, the principal divinity of Tyre, was also the protector of sea voyages, but he was identified with Heracles, the patron of sea voyages. Ba'al Tsafon, Ba'al Malge and Ba'al Shemem are mentioned in the treaty between Asarhaddon king of Assyria and Ba'al king of Tyre, which dealt with maritime commerce. Petinatto 1975: 152, line 10.

¹²⁶ Cantineau 1938: 97–98.

¹²⁷ Lipinski 1995: 59.

¹²⁸ Pritchard 1954: 130–131 (2) III AB A.

¹²⁹ Keel & Uehlinger 1998: 298–316, and figs. 305a–307 on p. 308.

¹³⁰ Keel & Uehlinger 1998: 309.

¹³¹ Oates 1986: 171, fig. 133.

the Yarkon river port near Jaffa, a seal was discovered with the inscription ‘Ashanyahu servant of the king’, with a bearded figure holding a bird. Kaplan maintains that this official was involved in bringing the cedars of Lebanon to the port of Jaffa.¹³² These findings are in line with the evidence of the Bible that until the religious reforms of King Josiah the commandment ‘Thou shalt not make to thyself any statue or mask’ was not strictly observed in Judah. Solomon, who built the temple of Yahweh, introduced the cults of Astarte of Sidon, Molech of Ammon and Chemosh of Moav to his kingdom.¹³³ There are many expressions of an anthropomorphic concept of God in the Bible. Genesis 1, 26–7 says of the creation of man: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.’ And the prophet Isaiah says: ‘I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.’¹³⁴ Opposition to human representations of God was only one theological attitude within Judaism. In some periods it was more dominant, in others less. Thus, we know of similar conceptions, images and portrayals of God, the supreme creator, among Greeks, Phoenicians and Hebrews. They were also influenced by the religions of Assyria and Babylonia.

Mutual influence of ideas and beliefs took place especially in places where different peoples lived together and traded with each other, as in the cosmopolitan port of Jaffa, which was ruled by Philistines, Jews and Phoenicians in turn. Both the first and the second Temples were built with the aid of building materials and craftsmen who came from Phoenicia to Jerusalem via Jaffa harbour. Dor, the second largest port in the kingdom, also prospered, and paid the taxes of a whole district to Solomon. His grandson, the king of Judah, was called AviYamm, ‘the father of the sea.’ The kings of Phoenicia, Israel and Judah initiated joint maritime trading expeditions to Ophir and Tarshish to bring perfumes and precious metals, and Ahaziah the son of Ahab king of Israel suggested to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah ‘Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships.’¹³⁵ Maritime activity is also reflected in a Hebrew seal on which is engraved the image of a Phoenician ship and the name Oniyahu (meaning: God is my strength, but also: ship of God) son of Meirav.¹³⁶ Jaffa port was, in the words of the Book of Maccabees, ‘the gateway to all the islands of the sea’, and a vital spot for the connection between east and west: seawards, to all the lands of the central and western Mediterranean; and inland, for those who travelled to the Near and Far East. As early as the Persian period it was the recipient of artistic and cult objects from all parts of the Greek world.¹³⁷ But its harbour was very dangerous, subject to storms and full of reefs. Round it there grew up among Jews, Phoenicians and Greeks similar myths concerning the wrath of God, the supreme ruler of nature on land and sea, and his agents — the sea, the storms, the huge fishes to whom human beings must be

¹³² Kaplan 1959: 75–76.

¹³³ *Kings* I, 10: 1–9.

¹³⁴ *Isaiah*, 6: 1.

¹³⁵ *Kings* I, 22: 50.

¹³⁶ Avigad 1984: 124–126.

¹³⁷ Ritter-Kaplan 1982: 64–68.

thrown as sacrifices to appease his anger, and the sea maidens who save men from the dangers of reefs and waves.

The Book of Jonah tells how a ship with sailors of different peoples and religions sails from Jaffa harbour, and how, when danger threatens, they make sacrifice to the sea, and become believers in the new, foreign god.¹³⁸ In ancient times magic customs were widespread throughout the Mediterranean. In times of distress the sailors called for the help of super-natural forces, ignoring religious or national differences. 'Since the magic of one's neighbour is always stronger, or at least newer and more attractive, one can see (in magical texts) how cultural barriers were broken down again and again. Enlightened Greeks mumble unintelligible phrases in a 'barbaric' tongue, devout Jews make apotropaic idols, or call to Serapis and Dionysus for help, and Egyptians cry to the Jewish god to succour them.'¹³⁹

2.7. The Bull

A bull is depicted on the coins of Jaffa in the Roman period. According to Meshorer, this is the bull which Perseus sacrificed to Zeus after his victory over the sea monster.¹⁴⁰ Ovid relates that the hero raised in Jaffa 'three altars to three Gods he made of turf. To thee, victorious Virgin, did he build an altar on the right, to Mercurius an altar on the left, and unto Jove an altar in the midst. He sacrificed a heifer to Miverva, and a calf to Mercurius, and a bull to thee, O greatest of the deities.'¹⁴¹ Zeus was the father of Perseus, and Athena and Hermes helped him to kill Medusa. But all these three gods were worshipped in Jaffa also because they were the patrons of seafarers. The bull was particularly sacred to Poseidon, who created it in the course of a contest, during which Athena planned a house and Hephaestus constructed a man.¹⁴² Poseidon was also known as *Taurus* (bull) and *taurinus* (bull-like). Hesiod calls Poseidon 'bull-like Earth-Shaker.'¹⁴³ The bull symbolized Poseidon both in virtue of his power of fertility and because of his eruptions of wrath, which were expressed in storms and earthquakes. He sent a wild bull to devastate the land of Crete, and only Heracles succeeded in taming it. Poseidon sent another bull to Minos, the king of Crete. Pasiphae, the queen, fell in love with it, and from their union the Minotaur was born. El, the ruler of the heavens and father of the gods in Canaanite mythology, was also known as Thor (bull), and the bull was sacred to him.¹⁴⁴ The wild bull was also the companion and symbol of the gods of the heavens and of storms, Ba'al Hadad and the Hurrian Teshub. Teshub's son, Sharruma, appeared in the form of a calf, and was also known as 'the calf of Teshub'. Ba'al was also made flesh in the form of a calf. Ba'al and

¹³⁸ *Jonah*, 1: 16.

¹³⁹ Bohak 2004: 98–99.

¹⁴⁰ Meshorer 1984: 24, Nos. 36, 37.

¹⁴¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IV, 753–756.

¹⁴² Lucian, *Hermotimus*, 52.

¹⁴³ Hesiod, *Shield of Heracles*, 104.

¹⁴⁴ Pritchard 1954: 128, b.III ABC.

Yahweh were both gods of the heavens and the storm, and contended for the faith of the Israelites. Much to the displeasure of the prophets, the Israelites also sometimes envisaged Yahweh as a calf. According to the Bible, the sin of worshipping the golden calf was the cause of the Israelites' wandering in the desert for forty years, and the calves which were erected in Beith-El and Dan led to the destruction of the kingdom of Shomron/Samaria (Israel).¹⁴⁵ Greek mythology tells of the sacrifice of bulls to Poseidon. When Telemachus arrived at the port of Pylos, he saw 'the townsfolk on the shore of the sea were offering sacrifice of black bulls to the dark-haired Earth-shaker. Nine companies there were, and five hundred men sat in each, and in each they held nine bulls ready for sacrifice.'¹⁴⁶ Bulls were sacrificed to Poseidon in historical times as well as in mythological accounts. During the celebrations in his honour, which were known as the *Taureia*, black bulls were thrown into the sea.¹⁴⁷ Admirals sacrificed bulls to Poseidon before a naval campaign, in order to ensure a calm sea; Cleomenes the king of Sparta killed a bull before sailing with his fleet,¹⁴⁸ and Arrian relates that Alexander sacrificed a bull before crossing the Hellespont.¹⁴⁹ There is also archaeological evidence of the part played by bulls in sailors' cults. In Ashkelon, by the side of the road from the town to the sea, a shrine was discovered containing a model of a shrine with the figurine of a bull-calf inside it.¹⁵⁰ The excavations in Jaffa also show that it was customary to sacrifice bulls there. On the top of the hill overlooking the sea, over the harbour, in section A of the excavations, two ritual burials of cattle with gravestones above them were discovered. They have been dated to Iron Age B (tenth to seventh century BCE), and it may be assumed that the bulls were sacrificed to a maritime deity. This was a sacred site for hundreds of years, originally as a Canaanite site, in which was found a lion's skull (see below). Philistine pottery from the eleventh century BCE has also been found there.¹⁵¹

2.8. Cassiopeia (Κασσιόπη) (figure 8)

In Greek mythology Cassiopeia was the queen of Jaffa. When she boasted of being more beautiful than the Nereids she was guilty of *hybris*, according to the Greeks the worst sin. She was commanded to sacrifice her daughter to the sea monster in order to atone for it. In Greek and Roman art she is depicted as repenting for her sin, lamenting over her daughter's fate, or observing Perseus' fight with the sea monster from the shore. Another myth of Cassiopeia, hitherto unknown from literary sources, is depicted in three mosaics uncovered in Palmyra and Apamea in Syria, and in Nea Paphos in Cyprus. They have been dated to the third or fourth century CE.¹⁵² They

¹⁴⁵ *Exodus*, 32; *Kings* I, 12: 28–29.

¹⁴⁶ Homer, *Odyssey*, III, 5–8.

¹⁴⁷ Larousse 1971: 133.

¹⁴⁸ Herodotus, *Histories*, VI, 76, 2.

¹⁴⁹ Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri*, I, 11, 6.

¹⁵⁰ Stager 1992: I, 101; Brody 1998: 56.

¹⁵¹ Kaplan 1992: 589–590.

¹⁵² Balty 1981: 95–106; Stern 1977: 26, in: Daszewski 1986: 463.



Figure 8. 'Krisis Nereidon' in the mosaic from Nea Paphos, from the fourth century CE. Drawing: Margalit Levitan.

depict the *κρισις Νερηιδων* (Judgment of the Nereids), the contest between Cassiopeia and the Nereids for the crown of beauty. In the mosaic from Nea Paphos, from the fourth century CE, the judge of the contest is Aion, the god of infinite time. On his right stands Cassiopeia, naked, with the hem of her garment draped round her left arm and thighs. After her victory in the contest Nike crowns her with the wreath of victory. Kairos, the spirit of opportunity, offers her the lot which he has drawn from a large golden jar. Zeus and other gods are shown above Aion and Cassiopeia, watching the scene from the heavens. On Aion's left the defeated Nereids Thetis, Doris and Galatea, who represent all the fifty Nereids, flee on the backs of the Tritons Pontos, representing the sea, and Bythos, representing the depths of the sea. The Palmyra mosaic is composed of two concentric circles, with Poseidon the judge in the centre of the inner circle. On one side of him stands Hermes holding a *caduceus*, and on the other a figure, badly damaged, holding a steering oar. Daszewski considers this to be Thalassa (the sea) or Thetis. But it may be that this is Tyche/Fortuna, the goddess of fortune, of whom the steering oar is often an identifying mark. At their feet is Eros, holding the handle of a large amphora. It seems that, like Kairos in the Nea Paphos mosaic, he is about to give Cassiopeia the lot which he will draw from the amphora.

In the outer circle, exactly under Poseidon, stands the naked Cassiopeia. On both her sides are several Nereids in a circle in various poses: standing or sitting, riding on Tritons or accompanied by *erotes*. In the Apamea mosaic Poseidon is the judge of the contest. Cassiopeia, naked, is crowned by Nike with a wreath of victory, while the Tritons Aphros (foam of the waves) and Pontos carry away the defeated Nereids Thetis, Doris and Galatea. Peitho (temptation), the daughter of Oceanus and Aglaia, the youngest of the Graces, are to be seen at her side; both of them belong to the retinue of Aphrodite.

The significance of the scenes with Cassiopeia in the Syrian mosaics is the opposite of that of her myth in the Greek and Roman world. Cassiopeia does not commit the sin of *hybris*; she is blessed by the gods after her victory over the goddesses of the sea. There is no hint of her punishment, or the sacrifice of Andromeda and Perseus's battle with the sea monster. Moreover, it is Poseidon, who in the Greek myth is furious with her boasting of her beauty, and because of her punishes the whole city of Jaffa, who is the judge in the contest with the Nereids, and gives her the crown of beauty.

In the ancient world the name Cassiopeia became a synonym for 'beauty', as appears from the Lexicon of Suidas.¹⁵³ In the mosaics she is also depicted as the goddess of beauty, in her typical posture as Aphrodite *Anadyomene* (rising from the sea), displaying her beautiful naked body before the judge of the contest and the viewers of the mosaics. In the latter years of the ancient world the neo-Platonic school considered beauty to be the basis of order and harmony in the universe. Some consider that the building in Apamea in which the mosaic was found was the renowned academy of this school.¹⁵⁴ Portrayals of the Contest of the Nereids have only been discovered in the Syro-Phoenician region of the Roman Empire, and neither in central nor western regions. Daszewski demonstrated that the origin of the myth was on the Mediterranean coast, in the Bronze Age, and that Cassiopeia belongs to the group of young gods who defeated their fathers' generation. This generation personified the chaotic elements in nature such as the sea, with its storms and its terrifying monsters. In Mesopotamian mythology Marduk defeated Tiamat. In Canaanite and Hebrew mythology Ba'al defeated Yamm, and Yahveh defeated the whale. In Greek mythology Zeus defeated Kronus, the Titans and the monster Typhon. When they had imposed order on the universe the leaders of the young gods became the rulers of the heavens and the stars, lightning and the winds. Shrines were erected in their honour in harbours and anchorages, on capes high above the sea, and on shores with perilous reefs, currents and storms. Seafarers prayed to them. The most important gods were the Phoenician Ba'al Tsafon and Ba'al Shamin, the Aramaean Hadad, and the Hurrian Teshub. The Greeks identified them with Zeus Kassios (Cassius), whose cult spread throughout the Mediterranean region. Off the coast of Spain an anchor with his name engraved on it has been discovered. His most important shrines were on

¹⁵³ *Suidae Lexicon*, 38, No. 453; Daszewski 1986: 463.

¹⁵⁴ Daszewski 1986: 468.

Mount Cassius in Lebanon, at Pelusium in Egypt, and on the island of Delos. Cassiope in the island of Corcyra (Corfu) was a renowned town due to the existence of the temple of Zeus Cassius, patron of the island. Amongst its visitors were Cicero, Ptolemy, and the Emperor Nero. It was ruined by the early Christians and a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary of Cassiope was built in its place. The Virgin Mary of Cassiope was soon named patron of the seafarers and everyone passing by the Cassiope straits would stop to pay their respects. In Daszewski's view, the name Cassiopeia (Κασσιόπεια) is closely related to the element 'Kassios' (Κασσιος), the name of the god. In fact, there is a tradition that Cassiopeia was the daughter of Erebus and the granddaughter of Zeus Belos, who was Ba'al.¹⁵⁵ During the period when Assyria and Babylonia ruled over Syria and the Land of Israel, the Canaanite/Phoenician gods took on the astral aspects which were dominant in Mesopotamian religions. Cassiopeia, Andromeda, Cepheus and Cetos were elevated to the heavens and became galaxies of stars. In ancient times Cassiopeia was considered to be the protectress of sailors. With the help of the galaxy Cassiopeia, north of Ursa Minor, sailors could fix their bearings in relation to the North Pole. Two sounding leads for measuring the depth of the sea bottom, displayed in the Hecht Museum in Haifa,¹⁵⁶ attest to the degree to which sailors working off the Land of Israel coast had faith in Cassiopeia. The sounding leads were found opposite the Carmel coast south of Haifa, close to the cargo of a wrecked boat. They are of similar shape, and on each of them a cross is engraved. On one (no. SL 7144) there is another engraving, which Galili and Sharvit have identified as being of the galaxy of Cassiopeia.¹⁵⁷ Although the sailors were devout Christians and put their trust in Jesus, they felt the need to ask for the protection of the queen of Jaffa, who had become a goddess of stars. According to traditions current in the ancient world, the name 'Cassiopeia' is connected with Ioppeh, the Greek name of Jaffa;¹⁵⁸ but the similarity is purely phonetic. Perhaps it should be sought in a deeper layer of significance: the meaning of the city's name in Semitic languages was 'the beautiful' (Hebrew: Yoffi) and its queen was also the epitome of beauty.

2.9. *The Nereids (Νηρηίδες) (figure 9)*

The *Nereids* (meaning in Greek: water maidens) whose anger with Cassiopeia brought down disaster on Jaffa were the fifty daughters of Nereus, the son of Pontos. Their mother was Doris, the daughter of Oceanus, and they lived in the depths of the sea. The most important of them were Amphitrite, the wife of Poseidon and mother of Triton, 'who rules the depths of the sea',¹⁵⁹ and Thetis, the mother of Achilles. Unlike the sirens, sea goddesses who were malevolent and harmful to humans, the *Nereids* were good and benevolent. They calmed the raging sea and rescued sailors in distress. Hesiod calls them 'beloved goddesses of great beauty... all of them together calm

¹⁵⁵ Daszewski 1986: 468.

¹⁵⁶ Galili 2000: 143–149.

¹⁵⁷ Galili 2000: 147–149.

¹⁵⁸ Stern 1974–1984: III, 193.

¹⁵⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 930.



Figure 9. Marble sarcophagus from Rome or Ostia decorated with couples of Nereids and Tritons. 200–300 CE. Courtesy Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem; Photo: Moshe Caine.

the fierce winds and sea routes... they are fifty maidens wise and swift of hand.¹⁶⁰ According to Apollonius Rhodius (who wrote in about 250 BCE) ‘...as when in fair weather herds of dolphins come up from the depths and sport in circles round a ship as it speeds along, now seen in front, now behind, now again at the side and delight comes to the sailors; so the Nereids darted upward and circled in their ranks round the ship Argo, while Thetis guided its course. And when they were about to touch the wandering rocks, straightway they raised the edge of their garments over their snow-white knees, and aloft, on the very rocks and where the waves broke, they hurried along on this side and on that apart from one another. And the ship was raised aloft as the current smote her, and all around the furious wave mounting up broke over the rocks, which at one time touched the sky like towering crags, at another, down in the depths, were fixed fast at the bottom of the sea and the fierce waves poured over them in floods. And the Nereids, even as maidens near some sandy beach roll their garments up to their waists out of their way and sport with a shapely-rounded ball; then they catch it one from another and send it high into the air; and it never touches the ground; so they in turn one from another sent the ship through the air over the waves, as it sped on ever away from the rocks; and round them the water spouted and foamed’.¹⁶¹ In Greek and Roman art the Nereids were usually portrayed in a *thiasos* — a band of revellers, playing with sea creatures, and riding on tritons — men from the waist up, fishes in their nether parts — or *hippocampi* — creatures with heads and feet of horses and tails of fish.

The Nereids were active in other fields, too: they gave aid to warriors (for instance, they gave Achilles the weapons which Hephaestus made for him); they granted immortality, for instance to Helle, who fell into the sea, and Ino, who jumped into the sea in her madness; they both became Nereids.¹⁶² The Nereids prepared brides for their wedding, and accompanied the souls of the deceased, since the Greeks believed that the way to the afterlife involved a journey across the sea. In three ceramic paintings of Andromeda the Nereids also appear. The explanation may be that it was her mother’s insult to them that led to her sacrifice to the monster; but some scholars claim that they are accompanying Andromeda on her way to her ‘wedding’ with death and the underworld.¹⁶³

The Nereids were specially worshipped in the coastal cities. There was a shrine to them in Byblos/Gebal and in Cardamyle, the Spartan port.¹⁶⁴ In Xanthos, in Anatolia, a shrine to the Nereids, with statues of them, has been discovered.¹⁶⁵ Prayers for protection were offered to them before dangerous sea voyages. Alexander poured a

¹⁶⁰ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 240–264.

¹⁶¹ Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 932–940, 943–950.

¹⁶² Apollodorus, *Library*, I, 9, 2; III, 4, 3; Barringer 1995: 55.

¹⁶³ Barringer 1995: 117–120.

¹⁶⁴ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II, 26, 7.

¹⁶⁵ Barringer 1995: 135.

libation to them before crossing the Hellespont.¹⁶⁶ Their protection was particularly necessary for sailors approaching the port of Jaffa, which was notorious at all periods for its dangerous reefs and breakers.

Be that as it may, the Jaffa myth reveals a threatening aspect of the Nereids, who demanded a human sacrifice to atone the offence of *hybris*. The Aeneid tells a similar story, about their nephew Triton. Triton created storms or calm on the sea by sounding his conch-horn. When Misenus, Aeneas's friend, imitated the sound of his horn, Triton drowned him in the sea.¹⁶⁷ Bowra explains that by the Greeks 'arrogance was regarded as the worst of evils, because it made chaos of all attempts to achieve balance and harmony in the self, and scorned social obligations on which the city-state depended.'¹⁶⁸ It appears that the myth of the Nereids in Jaffa also goes beyond the bounds of the maritime, and has philosophical, political and social significance. Nereus, the father of the Nereids, is the symbol of the quiet sea, safe to voyage on. But Hesiod gives him additional characteristics: 'And Sea begat Nereus, the eldest of his children, who is true and lies not: and men call him the Old Man because he is trusty and gentle and does not forget the laws of righteousness, but thinks just and kindly thoughts'.¹⁶⁹ Nereus is, therefore, the personification of the civic and social ideal: loyalty to the state, obedience to the laws, truth, integrity and benevolence. He is also famous for his good advice: Pindar calls him 'eubolos', a good adviser. He told Heracles how to find the isles of the Hesperides,¹⁷⁰ and Menelaus king of Sparta how to find his way out of the Libyan Desert.¹⁷¹

The earliest lists of the names of the Nereids are found in Homer, who gives 34 names, and Hesiod, who gives 50. To assess the significance of the names they may be divided into several groups, although these authors confuse them. One group includes names which reflect the nature of the seas, waves, tides and winds: Pluto, who floats or swims, Galene the calm (sea or wind), Glauke, the gleam of the sea, Cymothoe, the billowy and stormy sea, Cymo the wave and Euarne rich in sheep (since the Greeks likened the foamy waves to woolly sheep). Another group of names is connected with horses, apparently because the horse was sacred to Poseidon, who was known as 'the horse-harnessing god':¹⁷² Hippothoe, the swiftness of horses, and Hipponoia, the wisdom of horses. Other names were connected with the state of the sea and the voyage: Pherusa, who carries (the ships), Cymotolige, who calms the waves, and Pontoporea, who travels across the sea. Some names are connected with the characteristics of the sea-shore: Actaea, the coast-dweller, Psamathe, the sand of the shore, Cymodoce who absorbs the waves, Speo the cave-dweller, and Nisaea the island dweller. One group,

¹⁶⁶ Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri*, I, 11, 6.

¹⁶⁷ Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 162–174.

¹⁶⁸ Bowra 1958: 101.

¹⁶⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 234–236.

¹⁷⁰ Pindar, *Odes*, III, 93; Apollodorus, *Library*, II, 5, 11.

¹⁷¹ Homer, *Odyssey*, IV, 434–485.

¹⁷² *Homeric Hymns*, 27: 'To Poseidon', line 3.

which stands out in its apparent irrelevance to the subject of the sea, includes names connected with the nature of the state and the regime, and the economics and way of life of the city: Laomedea, who rules over peoples, Eucrante the good ruler, Protomedea the first to defend, Sao the saviour, Leagore, spoils of the market, Euagore, the choice market, Eulimene, the good harbour, Lysianassa, the maker of profit, Eupompe, the beautiful parade, Doris, who grants gifts, Polynoe, of much thought, Autonoe, who controls herself, Halie, a name for ‘of the sea’, ‘salt’, or ‘fisherwoman’ and also for ‘the gathering of the people’,¹⁷³ Themisto, keeper of the law, and Nemertes, the trustworthy, ‘who has the nature of her deathless father.’¹⁷⁴ Thus, some of Nereus’s daughters are concerned, like him, with the civic and political sphere.¹⁷⁵ For the Greeks, the *polis* was the only political and social framework worthy of mankind; in Aristotle’s words, he who does not live in a *polis* is either a beast or a god. Xenophon relates that to those who enquire the Delphic oracle, how they should act to please the gods, the Pythia replies that they would be acting piously by following the laws of the *polis*.¹⁷⁶ It was every man’s duty to take part in its public life. Cicero pointed out that the most important Greek philosophers concerned themselves with public life, and added that he who defends the state or founds a new one possesses god-like characteristics.¹⁷⁷ The myth of Cassiopeia and the Nereids reflects this belief. Loyalty to the rules of the city is likened to the calm, safe sea. Defiance of these laws is likened to a stormy sea, a flood or a sea monster. When Cassiopeia boasted and insulted the Nereids she was violating the foundations of the regime of the *polis*. The inevitable penalty was the destruction of the whole state, and only Perseus, the ideal hero, was able to re-establish it.

2.10. Aphrodite (Αφροδίτη)

In the Canaanite period ‘Astart (in Greek: *Astarte*) was worshipped in Jaffa, and a figurine of her dating from the late Bronze Age has been discovered there. In the ninth and eighth centuries BCE figurines like this were widespread mainly in the coastal region of Philistia.¹⁷⁸ A shrine dating from the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the eleventh century BCE has also been discovered in Jaffa, with a lion’s skull inside it, and it seems likely that a deity in the shape of a lion was worshipped there.¹⁷⁹ The Phoenicians believed that the lion was sacred to Astarte, and on the coins of Sidon the goddess is portrayed riding on a lion.¹⁸⁰ In Carthage a lion-headed Astarte was worshipped; it may be, therefore, that the Canaanite shrine in Jaffa was devoted to

¹⁷³ Liddell & Scott 1985: Entry ‘Αλλίη’ pp. 25–36.

¹⁷⁴ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 263.

¹⁷⁵ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 240–263. The names are interpreted according to the Lexicon of Liddell and Scott. The names with civil and political significance are mostly to be found in Hesiod. See also Hesiod, *Theogony*, tr. into Hebrew by S. Shpan, 1957, translator’s note, pp. 102–103.

¹⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, I.1235a; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, 3, 1. IV, 3, 16.

¹⁷⁷ Cicero, *Commonwealth*, I, 7.

¹⁷⁸ Keel & Uehlinger 1998: 198–204.

¹⁷⁹ Kaplan 1992: 590.

¹⁸⁰ Hill 1965a: cxiii.

Astarte. It is probable that the cult of Astarte existed in Jaffa during the Persian period, too, since she was the chief deity of Sidon, to which Jaffa was subject at that time. Archaeological and literary evidence shows that Aphrodite, who was identified with Astarte, was worshipped in Jaffa in the Hellenistic period. She was apparently linked with the Andromeda myth. According to Conon, who wrote at the end of the first century BCE and the beginning of the first century CE, Andromeda was the daughter of Cepheus the king of Joppe in Phoenicia. His brother Phineus wanted to marry her, but Cepheus preferred to marry her to Phoenix. Andromeda was accustomed to make sacrifices to Aphrodite on an island opposite the city. Phineus kidnapped her from there, on a ship called 'the sea monster'. Perseus rescued and married her.¹⁸¹ Thus, it was love that saved Andromeda from death. According to Euripides, Perseus made sacrifice to Eros before his battle with Cetos.¹⁸² Ovid relates that at the wedding of Perseus and Andromeda Hymenaeus and Amor carried the nuptial torches.¹⁸³ The island opposite Jaffa no longer exists, but Pliny the Elder also attests to its existence. It was called Paria, and was inhabited. In Sauther's map (1745) the island of Paria, opposite Jaffa, is depicted. From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century travellers such as Zuallaert, Cotovic and Le Brun described reefs off Jaffa with remnants of walls, columns and embankments.¹⁸⁴ Kaplan conjectures that the island was submerged.¹⁸⁵ Hanauer maintains that it was in the area of the sandbanks west of the harbour, and that the Crusader citadel was built on it.¹⁸⁶ Raban believed that during a period when the sea level was lower than it is today the chain of sandbanks formed an island, stretching from north/north-east to south/south-west, 380 metres long and 80–90 metres wide.¹⁸⁷ It is not surprising that the ceremonies of the cult of Aphrodite were carried out in the midst of the sea. The Greeks believed that she was the daughter of Thalassa, the sea. The Phoenician 'Astart was also a distinctly maritime goddess. Her temple in Sidon was built on the peninsula, close to the water. In the words of the Eshmunazar inscription, it was: 'the house of 'Astart in Sidon the land of the sea'.¹⁸⁸ According to Philo of Byblos, Pontos, the sea, gave birth to Sidon and Poseidon.¹⁸⁹ In Ugaritic 'Astart was called 'Asherat of the sea', and also 'lioness'. The coins of Gebal/Byblos portray ships whose prows are shaped like a lion.¹⁹⁰ In Brody's view they represent 'Asherah'.¹⁹¹

¹⁸¹ Conon, *Narrationes*, 15.

¹⁸² Euripides, 'Andromeda', Fragment 136, in: Barringer 1995: 113, 116–117.

¹⁸³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IV, 758–759.

¹⁸⁴ Zuallaert, *Voyage*, III, 3–6, in: Tolkowsky 2001: 110, note 1; Cotovico, *Itinerarium*, II, 133, in: Tolkowsky 2001: 110, note 2; Le Brun, *Voyage*, II, 144, in: Tolkowsky 2001: 111, note 1.

¹⁸⁵ Kaplan 1959: 93–94.

¹⁸⁶ Hanauer 1903: 258–264.

¹⁸⁷ Raban 1994: 101–102.

¹⁸⁸ Slouschz 1942: 23–25.

¹⁸⁹ Philo, *Phoenician History*, 22–3, 809. Philo, who lived at the end of the first and the beginning of the second century CE, claimed to have translated into Greek the book of the Phoenician priest Sanchuniathon, written a thousand years earlier. Philo's work is preserved in the *Preparatio Evangelica* of Eusebius of Caesarea.

¹⁹⁰ Hill 1965a: 95, Nos. 4–6, 10–11.

¹⁹¹ Brody 1998: 69–70.

The cult of Aphrodite reached Jaffa when it was still ruled by Sidon. There is evidence to this in the fragments of four *lekanis* lids, from the second quarter of the fourth century BCE, which were found in a large store-house where a great deal of Attic pottery was found, together with coins of AbdʿAstart (Straton) I, king of Sidon (372–358 BCE).¹⁹² The lids are decorated with pictures of women spinning or coming out of the baths. By comparison with *lekanis* lids from Athens, where these utensils were produced, and from el-Mina in Syria, where a building with a layout similar to that in Jaffa was discovered, it appears that Eros was also present in these scenes. Scholarly opinion is that the woman spinning represents Aphrodite, the goddess of fertility and birth, who is spinning the thread of life. Ritter Kaplan surmises that in Athens and in the eastern regions to which they were imported these utensils were used in fertility ceremonies in honour of Aphrodite.¹⁹³ Further evidence to the cult of Aphrodite in Jaffa is provided by a headless clay statue, from the first half of the second century BCE. The goddess is naked to the waist, and a *himation* wrapped round her left arm covers the lower part of her body.¹⁹⁴ Her posture is identical with that of Cassiopeia in the mosaic of the Judgment of the Nereids. This adds credence to the supposition that in Jaffa the queen of the city, who was the personification of beauty, was identified with Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty.

2.11. *Cetos* (Κήτος) (figures 10–11)

In Greek mythology *Cetos* is the name of a monster that lives in the depths of the sea, the daughter of Pontos, the sea. She herself has given birth to many monsters: the Graeae, old grey women, Echidna, half a woman and half a snake (who in her turn bore Cerberus), the Nemean lion and the Hydra which were both killed by Heracles and the snake which guarded the golden apples.¹⁹⁵ The first literary link between *Cetos* and Jaffa is in pseudo-Scylax. His only reference to Jaffa is: 'Jaffa, city: it is said that Andromeda was given to *Cetos* there.'¹⁹⁶ In the first century CE Pliny the Elder wrote: 'The Phoenician city of Jaffa. It is said that it existed before the Flood. It is situated on a hill, and opposite it is a rock on which the marks of the chains of Andromeda are displayed. Here is the cult of the fabled and wondrous *Ceto*.'¹⁹⁷ In Greek art, too, from the sixth century BCE onwards, and thereafter also in Roman art, *Cetos* is represented as a supernatural creature, with a twisted, ringed tail becoming a fishtail at its extremity. It has the head of a horse or a crocodile, and sometimes belches flames. But, side by side with the imaginary descriptions of *Cetos*, there are hints that she was a real creature. The Greeks and Romans gave the name of *Cetos* to whales, dolphins,

¹⁹² Ritter Kaplan 1982: 66–68.

¹⁹³ Suhr 1960: 63–69; Ritter Kaplan 1982: 68.

¹⁹⁴ Kaplan 1959: 80.

¹⁹⁵ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 239, 270–336.

¹⁹⁶ Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplus*, lines 4–5.

¹⁹⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, IX, 69.



Figure 10. Campanian Hydria (375–325 BCE). Perseus fights the cetos with the spear and harpe. Altes Museum, Berlin. Drawing: Margalit Levitan.

and particularly big tuna fish.¹⁹⁸ On a Campanian vase painting of the fourth century BCE the Cetos of the Andromeda myth is depicted as a huge shark.

Moreover, Pliny himself, in Book Nine of the *Natural History* again writes of the creature from Jaffa. On this occasion, however, it is not ‘fabled and wondrous’, but well-known and common: ‘The skeleton of the wild animal to which Andromeda was sacrificed, according to the fable, was brought by Marcus Scaurus from the city of Jaffa in Judah, and was displayed during his aedileship, together with other marvels. It was 40 feet (about 12 metres) long, the height of its ribs was greater than that of the elephants in India, and the thickness of its backbone a foot and a half (about 46 centimetres).’¹⁹⁹ The literary context of the description of the maritime creature from Jaffa is evidence of its veracity. Book nine is devoted to sea creatures. In the chapter about sea elephants, whales and sharks there is an account of the capture of whales in the harbours of Cadiz, Jaffa and Ostia. A whale entered the harbour of Ostia when it was being built, and sank a boat with a jet of water in the course of a hunt ordered by Claudius. Scaurus was the governor of the province of Syria after Pompey’s conquest of the east in 64 BCE. He served as aedile in Rome in 58 BCE; thus, maybe Pliny, some decades later, could have seen and measure the cetos’ skeleton. Further, in the seventies Pliny

¹⁹⁸ Oppian, *Haliëutica*, lxvii. For a description of a whale hunt, including the towing of the whale to the shore and the amazement of those on the shore at its size, see Oppian, *op. cit.*, v, 311–330. On whale-hunting in the Roman period see Sonin 2000: 24.

¹⁹⁹ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, IX, 5.

became commander of the Misenian fleet (*classis Misensis*), and this afforded him an opportunity to deepen his knowledge of the sea and its creatures. The authenticity of his accounts is confirmed by the manner of his death in the service of science, when he tried to appraise the eruption of Vesuvius from close by in 79 CE.

Whales still live in the Mediterranean today. They are most frequently found off the coasts of Italy and Greece, and occasionally reach the shores of Israel. They include the Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*), Cuvier's Beaked Whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*), the Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), and the Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*). The biggest is the Common Whale, whose length can be as great as 20 metres, and is the second largest creature in the animal kingdom.²⁰⁰ In the Roman period whales were hunted with harpoons.²⁰¹ It seems, therefore, that the skeleton of the Cetos, which was worshipped in Jaffa, was indeed the skeleton of a whale. The imaginary descriptions in literature and art were the result of its great bulk, from the interpretation of the name Cetos as 'monster', and from the fact that the artists worked at a distance, in Greece and Italy. It may be that they were influenced by the coins of Phoenician cities such as Tyre and Arwad/Arados that portrayed a marine creature with the head of a crocodile or horse, or by representations of the *hippocampus*, a sea horse with a twisting tail ending as a fishtail. In addition, the description of the fish as a monster increased Perseus's power and heightened the dramatic impression of their works. This, it seems, is the reason why the Roman poet Ovid (43 BCE–18 CE), who could have seen or heard of the whale of Jaffa, preferred to describe him as a dragon with scales of armour and the tail of a fish. Ovid likens its movement in the water to 'a great ship with steady prow speeds on forced forwards by the sweating arms of youth it plows the deep; so, breasting the great waves the monster moved, until to reach the rock.'²⁰² It seems that the remains of the Cetos were returned to Jaffa, or that another was obtained in its stead, since Pomponius Mela, who wrote in 44 CE, says that the townsfolk display the skeleton of a large marine animal and ancient altars on which are carved the names of king Cepheus and his brother Phineus as proof of the veracity of the story of Andromeda.²⁰³ At the end of the first century CE Josephus said that the people of Jaffa show the rock to which Andromeda was bound, and that the marks of her fetters are still to be seen on it.²⁰⁴

It is strange that this idolatrous cult continued without hindrance under the Hasmonean regime, especially after they had expelled the non-Jews and repopulated the city with Jews. Ancient sources and modern scholars alike present the Hasmoneans, from Judas Maccabeus to Alexander Jannaeus, as fervent believers in the Jewish religion, who stamped out any trace of idolatrous cults in their territory. They forcibly converted

²⁰⁰ Israel Marine Mammal Research & Assistance Centre, *Guide to Dolphins and Whales*.

²⁰¹ Sonin 2000: 48.

²⁰² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IV, 705–708.

²⁰³ Pomponius Mela, *Description of the World*, I, 64.

²⁰⁴ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, III, 9, 3.



Figure 11. Fourteen metres long fin whale calf skeleton exhibited at Haifa University, Multi-purpose building. The whale arrived to Ashkelon shore in February 2008 and died there. Courtesy of Dan Kerem.

the Edomites and the Itureans, burnt the shrines of the Philistines and Samaritans, and even outside their kingdom, in Ashkelon, they destroyed the witches. It is said explicitly of Gezer, which was conquered immediately after the conquest of Jaffa, that it was cleansed of all idolatrous images.²⁰⁵ And, indeed, on the face of things it would seem that the Hasmoneans had every reason to destroy the idolry in Jaffa. At the beginning of the Revolt the non-Jews of the city destroyed their Jewish neighbours by a treacherous ruse: they tempted them to embark on ships which they sank in the sea. Judas reacted by attacking Jaffa harbour and burning the ships in it.²⁰⁶ Kasher surmises that he intended primarily to damage the harbour, which was well known for its idolatrous practices, and that after the city was conquered and Judaized by Simon all the pagan sites were destroyed.²⁰⁷ How, then, did the cult of *Cetos* survive in Jaffa? One possibility is that the non-Jews who were expelled gradually returned and settled in the city, just like the Jews who were later expelled by Vespasian and returned in the time of Trajan. It may also be that the Hasmoneans, who were interested in developing maritime activity and every type of trade, and wanted to attract merchants and visitors to Jaffa, refrained from damaging the main centre of religious and tourist attraction in the town, which had become 'the gateway to all the islands of the sea.' It may also be that the Hasmoneans did not damage the remains of

²⁰⁵ *Macabbees* I, 13, 47–48; Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIII, 215; Rappaport 1990: 216–217.

²⁰⁶ *Macabbees* II, 12, 3–7.

²⁰⁷ Kasher 1985: 64–66.

the cetos because it was also sacred to the Jews. If this is so, its removal by the Romans is more comprehensible. The cetos's relic symbolized the ongoing connection of the city's communities — both the pagan and the Jewish — with the Divine Providence. In the same way, the Παλλάδιον was given to Dardanus, the ancestor of the Troians by his father Zeus as a guarantee to Troy's existence; the city could not be conquered as long as it was kept inside the walls. Its loss brought the end to the divine protection and Troy was ruined.

If the cetos of Jaffa was not simply a legend, but a huge fish, it seems probable that it had some connection with the Jewish myth of the prophet Jonah. In the Book of Jonah, which was written at the end of the fourth or the beginning of the third century BCE, we are told that God ordered Jonah to go to the great city of Nineveh and prophesy that it would be destroyed if it did not cease from sinning. Jonah 'fled from the Lord' and sailed from the port of Jaffa to Tarshish. When the storm arose, the sailors flung him into the sea; but 'the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah' (*Jonah*, 1: 17). In the Septuagint, which was written at the beginning of the third century BCE, shortly after the Book of Jonah was written, the words dag gadol (great fish) are translated κήτος (cetos). It would appear, then, that not by chance the myths of Andromeda and Jonah were both connected with the sea of Jaffa.

2.12. *The Cult of the Prophet Jonah and the Big Fish*

The Book of Jonah relates that God ordered Jonah the son of Amitai to go to Nineveh, the city of evil-doing, and call its citizens to repent lest they be destroyed. Jonah fled from his mission and sailed in a ship from Jaffa to Tarshish. God sent out a great wind onto the sea. While the sailors were crying out every man unto his god Jonah fell asleep in the stern of the ship. The captain woke him, and demanded that he, too, should pray to his god. When the storm grew stronger the sailors cast lots to discover who was the cause of the storm, and the lot fell on Jonah. They asked whence he came and what was his religion, and he replied that he is a Hebrew, and he fears the Lord of Heavens, and the storm is because of him. He told the sailors to cast him into the sea so that it should cease from its rage. The sailors refused, and tried again to row to land, but when the storm grew stronger they despaired and cast Jonah into the sea. The storm died down, and the sailors sacrificed to the Lord, made vows to Him, and had faith in Him. The Lord prepared a great fish that swallowed up Jonah. After Jonah had been in the belly of the fish for three days and prayed to the Lord, God ordered the fish to vomit him up onto the dry land. Then Jonah obeyed the command of the Lord and went to prophesy in Nineveh. Inspired by their king, the citizens of Nineveh repented. Jonah left the city, to see what would come of it and whether his prophecy of destruction would be fulfilled. God made a gourd grow to give him shade, but then sent a worm that gnawed it overnight. He also sent a fierce wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah and he fainted and wished to die. God rebuked him for having pity on

the gourd that he did not plant, but being angry because God had spared the lives of many human beings.

Jonah is exceptional among the prophets of Israel and Judah. His story is told in the third person. Most of the narrative is devoted not to his prophecies, but to his acts, which are clearly imaginary. He is a Hebrew, but he has no contact with his people and his faith. He was sent to prophesy to a foreign people far away in the east, and fled from his God to the end of the west; the sailors in his ship were also non-Jews. From the point of view of its structure the Book of Jonah is divided into two parallel sections. The first part takes place in the sea of Jaffa. All the forces of nature run wild in rage and uproar. The adjectives are big: a great wind, great fear, a great fish. The wind which prevented the sailors from returning to the shore was, apparently, an east wind, which is considered to be particularly strong and dangerous on the shores of the Land of Israel; in the Book of Psalms, too, we find 'Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.'²⁰⁸ The second section takes place in Nineveh. The forces at work here are minor. The east wind is soft. God prepares a worm, not a huge fish, and Jonah is not swallowed up by the sea or a great fish but exposed to the burning sun. But, he does not pray for his life as he did in the belly of the fish: on the contrary, he asks to die.

In the Jewish tradition the idea of repentance was emphasized, and this book is therefore read during the afternoon service of the Day of Repentance (Yom Kippur). Christianity laid stress on the message of salvation that Jonah brought to the non-Jews. Some modern scholars emphasize the motif of mercy and the negation of determinism. Jonah wanted to apply the principle of justice to the sinners in full measure, and was angry because his prophecy was not fulfilled. God taught him that although judgement had been pronounced, there was still an opportunity for the sinner to repent and for God to decide whether to pardon. The principle of mercy was more important than the principle of justice.²⁰⁹

In the story of Jonah we can discern the influences and traces of the myths current in the Middle East and the eastern region of the Mediterranean. Fantar has demonstrated the similarity between Jonah's great fish and fish-shaped god in Phoenician mythology: it was the chief god of Arwad/Arados, and appeared on its coins from the fifth century BCE onwards.²¹⁰ Fantar also compares the name Cetos with the name of Khet, the son of Sidon in the Bible (*Gen.*, 10: 15). And, indeed there are many sources that illustrate the Phoenicians' deep relationship with the sea, which they believed to be the source of their vitality and their power. The origin of the name of the town of Sidon was tsayida, fisherman. According to Philo of Byblos Pontos gave birth to Sidon

²⁰⁸ *Psalms*, 48: 8.

²⁰⁹ Simon 1983: 7–8. See also the analysis of the story structure on pp. 8–15.

²¹⁰ Fantar 1977: 95–96.

and Poseidon.²¹¹ The prophet Isaiah rebukes Sidon: ‘Be thou ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea has spoken, even the strength of the sea’, and Ezekiel condemns the city of Tyre: ‘Tyre, thou hast said “I am of perfect beauty”’, and ‘the prince of Tyre’ whose ‘heart is lifted up in its beauty’ and boasts ‘I am a god [‘a god’ in Hebrew is ‘el’, S. R.], I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God.’²¹² The punishment of Tyre will be when God ‘shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee’. Thus, the king of Tyre sins the sin of *hybris*, just as the queen of Jaffa did, and his punishment, too, comes from the sea. Isaiah predicts also for the kingdom of Shomron: ‘Woe to the crown of pride... Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, [which] as a tempest of hail [and] a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand’ (28: 1–2). Perhaps the prophets were referring to the names of the two Canaanite gods, El and his son Yamm, his emissary and servant. In the Bible the whale is a tool in the hands of God and his obedient emissary. As we have seen, there was an affinity between El and Yahweh, both of them enemies of Ba‘al. El is portrayed sitting on a boat, with an altar before him. It may be that Yamm, his son, had the shape of a fish, like that assumed by the god of Arwad.

The prophet Jonah was also worshipped by Christians and by Muslims. He was connected with certain localities in the Near and Middle East, from Nebi Yunis in ancient Nineveh (today Mosul) where he prophesied, to Khan Nebi Yunis, between Sidon and Beirut, where, according to one tradition, he was born.²¹³ In the Land of Israel the centre of Jonah’s cult for the three monotheistic religions was in a site located about 30 kilometers south of Jaffa, Nebi Yunis (today the light-tower hill in modern Ashdod, formerly a Philistine and then Hellenistic city). The hill rises 53 meters above sea level, on the southern bank of the Lachish river, and 600 metres east of its outlet to the sea. In 2012 a salvage excavation was conducted on its western slope, and massive foundations of a fortress dated to the late eight century BCE were found (http://www.antiquities.org.il/article_heb.aspx?module_id=&sec_id=25&subj_id=240&id=1898#as). The Madaba mosaic, dating from the sixth century CE portrays a magnificent building at this location, with the words ‘of Saint Jonah’ next to it. The part of the mosaic on which the sea opposite this site was shown has been damaged, but part of the body of a sea creature has survived; perhaps this is the fish that swallowed Jonah. The tradition that this was the place where the fish vomited Jonah onto dry land has been preserved until our own day. The Muslims believed that Jonah was buried here, and in 800 CE erected a maqam (sacred site and building) on the spot, which was destroyed in 1961. Remains of it are still to be found there. An archaeological discovery made on the site of Nebi Yunis may cast some light on one of the early stages of the cult of Jonah. In a survey conducted in 1960 an *ostrakon* was found with an Aramaic inscription: ba‘altsad taklan deshana. According to F. Cross, who deciphered the inscription, it refers to a

²¹¹ Philo of Byblos, *Phoenician History*, 811: 9–10.

²¹² *Isaiah*, 23: 4; *Ezekiel*, 26: 19; 27: 3; 28: 1–2.

²¹³ Abel 1922: 175–183.

contribution by a man called Ba'al-Tsad or Ba'alitsad to the temple located at the site.²¹⁴ Be that as it may, it may be that it refers to the god Ba'al-Tsad; Tsad means fish in Aramaic and Phoenician, and from it originated the names of the cities Tsidon (Sidon), and Beit Tsayida. It seems that in the Persian period there was a temple to a fish god here. The *ostrakon* has been dated to the fourth century BCE, close to the date of composition of the Book of Jonah. From another *ostrakon* found in Nebi Yunis, it appears that seafarers apparently from Sidon — whose names include the element Eshmun — used to visit the place and make an offering to the god. This *ostrakon* shows that on this site Eshmun was also worshipped.²¹⁵ (We have seen above that at this period Eshmun and Ba'al-Gad were worshipped at a common cult site in Jaffa). In later periods, too, the inhabitants of the coastal cities of Philistia worshipped gods with the shape of a fish. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods Cetos was venerated in Jaffa, and in Ashkelon Atargatis/Derceto, a goddess with the tail of a fish. In Ashdod, too, a goddess with the tail of a fish was worshipped in the Hellenistic period, and one of her icons, made of lead, was discovered in the excavations.²¹⁶

During the Iron Age the Jews were influenced by the cultural and religious practices of Ashdod. In the time of King Josiah the prophet Zephaniah excoriated 'all those that leap on the threshold' in imitation of the worshippers of Dagon from Ashdod. After the return from the Babylonian exile, in the fifth century BCE, these influences became stronger as a result of mixed marriages between Jews and citizens of Ashdod, so much so that half of their children did not know the language of the Jews correctly, and 'spoke the language of Ashdod.'²¹⁷

The influence of the Assyrian religion can also be found in the story of Jonah. Jonah was swallowed by the fish after he had tried to flee from his mission to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. It is true that contemporary scholars see no point in considering the historical background of the story — certainly not in the Assyrian period, since the Book of Jonah was written in the Hellenistic period, hundreds of years after the destruction of Nineveh. Apparently, Nineveh is — just as in Hellenistic literature — purely a symbol of a great but corrupt city which was punished for its corruption.²¹⁸ Nonetheless, there are traces of Assyrian myths in the story. Judah was ruled by Assyria for a long period, and even tried to integrate into its economy;²¹⁹ it was influenced by its religion, and particularly by its astrological components. The prophet Zephaniah

²¹⁴ Cross 1964: 186; Eck 2014: 197–198, no. 2294.

²¹⁵ Delavault & Lemaire 1976: 575.

²¹⁶ On Derceto in Ashkelon, see the chap. 'Ashkelon', sec. 3. On the fish goddess in Ashdod, see Dotan: 1972: 13.

²¹⁷ *Nehemiah*, 13: 24.

²¹⁸ Bolin 1997: 120–140.

²¹⁹ Finkelstein & Zilberman 2003: 262–267. It may be that the cultural and religious influence of Assyria in Philistia — both in Jaffa and in Ashkelon (see chap. 3, sec. 3) — dates from the expedition to Philistia of Adad-nirari III, the son of Queen Shamuramat (803 BCE). Perhaps it was in this period that the great fortress in Tel Kudadi, on the northern bank of the outlet of the Yarkon river, was built in order to exercise military and economic control over Jaffa and its environs.

rails against 'them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops'.²²⁰ In Assyrian mythology Ea is the god of creation, as well as the god of water and of wisdom. His faithful servants are seven nautical creatures by the name of Apkallu, which were seen as fish-like men. It is their task to supervise the correct functioning of the plans of the heavens and the earth. There are descriptions of cult ceremonies with Apkallu and men covered from head to toe in 'fish-robcs'.²²¹ The proper name of the city, 'Ninve', contains the word Nun, a fish. In the stories of the Mishnah, too, traces of Mesopotamian mythology are preserved in the story of the whale, biggest of the fishes of the sea, which swallows all the waters of the Jordan in its throat. This is, perhaps, because many of the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud lived in Babylon. It is said that Adam and Eve wore clothes of whale-skin, a story reminiscent of the clothing of fish-skin.²²² In the Gemara it is said that God castrated the male whale and killed the female, so that they should not couple and destroy the world.²²³ This is similar to the Babylonian myth of the killing of Tiamat (from whose skin the heavens were made) and the exhaustion of her partner Qingu by Marduk. As in the story of Jonah, the great fish is an androgynous creature. At first it is said that the fish swallowed him, and then that he sat 'in the belly of the she-fish' for three days. There is also an Assyrian motif in the story of the worm which destroyed Jonah's gourd. Ea is thought to have sent afflictions, like the gnawing worm. The Assyrian and Phoenician myth was assimilated and developed, and entered the Bible, Christianity and Islam, in a continuous succession which continues until our own time: on the site of the shrine of Eshmun and Ba'al Tsad a structure in honour of Saint Jonah was erected in Byzantine times; in the year 800 CE the Muslim maqam in honour of Jonah the Prophet was built, and it continued to exist until 1961.

The biblical story of Jonah became also known among the pagan peoples. In the literature of the Roman period it was apparently echoed in the parody of Lucian of Samosata about a huge fish which swallows human beings and ships, and also has forests and lakes and a temple of Poseidon in its belly.²²⁴ In a mosaic on the floor of a Roman villa in Lod/Lydda, which was uncovered in 1996, two merchant ships surrounded by various types of fish are depicted.²²⁵ The dominant figure in the mosaic is a whale, which is bigger than the ships and all the fish together. One of the ships is turned towards it, and the whale opens its mouth wide in order to swallow it.

Jonah thrown to the sea by the sailors, swallowed by the fish, and then vomited onto dry land was depicted in works of art of the Roman and Byzantine periods on *sarcophagi*, ceramic lamps, mosaics and catacomb pictures found in Italy, Turkey,

²²⁰ *Zephaniah*, 1: 5.

²²¹ Godanik & Westenholtz 2004: 58–59.

²²² Ginsburg 1967: I, 16–18, and notes on p. 154.

²²³ *Babylon Talmud*, Baba Bathra, 'Midrash Bereshit', 74.

²²⁴ Lucian, *True History*, 1st book. Lucian, who was born in Syria, was familiar with eastern cults such as that of 'the Syrian goddess' (Atargatis/Derceto), and described them.

²²⁵ Haddad & Avissar 2003: 73–77, and fig. 1.

Egypt, and North Africa.²²⁶ The adventures of Jonah are also portrayed in the sixth century mosaic in the church of Mahatt el-Urdi near Beit Govrin/Eleutheropolis. A panel of the mosaics of Huqoq's synagogue in the Galilee, dated to the fifth century CE, presents the episode in which he is cast into the sea by his shipmates and swallowed by a large fish, which is being swallowed by two successively larger fish.²²⁷ In the first two centuries of the Christian era the fish was depicted as a monster with the body of a snake and the coiled tail of a fish, but in the course of time it also assumed the form of a huge fish, as described in the Bible.²²⁸ There are also many depictions of Jonah sleeping under the gourd. Sometimes he takes the form of the Greek hero Endymion, with whom Selene, the goddess of the moon, fell in love and put him into an eternal sleep. Thus, in Roman/Christian art Jonah continues to be a figure bridging between cultures.

2.13. *The Ship and its Crew in the Story of Jonah: Beliefs and Practices*

In the ancient world sailors were well known for their piety. In the Bible they are described thus: 'Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, they see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. Then they are glad because they are quiet; so he guides them to their desired haven. Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt him also in the assembly of the people, and praise him in the company of the elders' (*Psalms*, 107: 23–32).

In the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods, too, sailors were considered to be particularly god-fearing, since they were in permanent danger of their lives. Tractate 'Kidushin' (82b) says: 'sailors are all pious', and Rashi comments: 'since they sail to dangerous

²²⁶ Lawrence 1962: 289–296; Godanik & Westenholtz 2004: 55–56; Magness 2018: 111–115.

²²⁷ Ovadiah 1974: 214–215, and Table 46; Magness 2018: 111–115. In Huqoq, in the center of the scene a sailing ship, manned by five sailors, is represented. A bearded man, perhaps the captain, is lowering into the water a rope. Below it, Jonah is swallowed by a fish. In the sky, three sirens Σειρήνες *Seirenes* (hybrid creatures with the upper body of a woman and the lower body of a bird) stand on a storm cloud. They are dancing and playing a flute and a lyre, and a sailor points at them from the top of the ship's mast. In classical mythology and literature and also the Septuagint and ecclesiastical texts they are personifications of storm winds. This scene also alludes to Odysseus's encounter with the sirens, which was often depicted in Ancient art. A fifth-century mosaic from the House of Leontis at Beith She'an/Nysa Scythopolis also depict Odysseus and the sirens. The sirens represent looming danger of sea storms, and Σειρήνες in Greek apparently derives from σείρά *seirá*, rope. Just as in Hebrew *rav hovel*, captain, is connected to *hevel*, rope. For the motif of the three fish, which appears also in the *The Midrash of the Repentance of Jonah the Prophet* and in Islamic art, it probably lay in the word דג *daga*, used for the fish who spat Jonah out. It is the feminine singular form of fish but also the collective noun meaning fish in plural (*Gen.*, 1: 26; *Exod.*, 7: 21); see also *The Midrash of the Repentance of Jonah the Prophet* published by Kadari 2002: 73; Kadari 2016.

²²⁸ In the King James translation of the Bible, *dag gadol* in the Book of Jonah is rendered as 'great fish', and the 'fish' in Matthew 12: 40 as 'whale'. See Lawrence 1962: 294.

places and are always tremble with fear'. Tractate 'Brachot' (54b) says: 'Four should give thanks to God: seafarers, travellers in the desert, he who has recovered from an illness, and he who has been released from prison'. All of these belong to the category of 'those saved from death'. The straightforward interpretation of the title *רב החבל* *rav hovel* (captain) is 'he who is in charge of the array of ropes'. But it may also be that it is derived from *tahbula* תַּחבּוּלָה (artifice), since expertise, experience and wisdom are needed to guide the ship and save it from danger. In that case the phrase '*kol hochmatam titbal'a*' (all their wisdom shall be swallowed up) may be interpreted to mean that the ship's sailors will drown and be swallowed up by the sea. This interpretation is supported by Ezekiel 27: 8: 'The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were thy mariners; thy wise men, O Tyre, that were in thee, were thy pilots', where 'thy wise men' are parallel to 'thy pilots' (*hovlayich*). In this chapter, Tyre is compared with a ship 'of perfect beauty'. In the Greek and Roman world, too, the city-state was often compared to a ship. From the Greek word *κυβερνήτης* (*kybernetes* – captain), translated to *gubernator* in Latin the modern terms govern, government, etc. were derived. The *rav hovel* (captain) who aroused Jonah from sleep: 'Arise, call upon thy God, if so be it that God will think upon us, that we perish not' (*Jonah*, 1: 8) did, in fact, save the ship. In the second section of the Book of Jonah the parallel figure to the captain is the king of Nineveh, who aroused his subjects to repent: 'Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?' (3: 9).

In the Greek and Roman world the captain was also in charge of religious ritual in the ship. Prayers, sacrifices or burning of incense were conducted on the deck before the ship left the harbour or arrived at its port of destination, and even when it reached the high sea.²²⁹ The ship itself was conceived of as a divine being. It is described as having thoughts: 'And the ship thought it would be broken' (*Jonah*, 1: 4). It was the place where the divinity or the gods that protected the seafarers dwelt. Seals from the eighth and seventh centuries BCE depict a god sitting in a boat, often by an altar. In the Greek and Roman world ships were named after gods, particularly the patron gods of seafaring. The most sacred parts of the ship were the prow and the stern. When the storm was raging Jonah was deep in sleep in the stern of the ship; this can be interpreted as a trance in which he received guidance from God – and, indeed, when he woke he told the crew of the ship what to do in order to escape from danger.

The sacrifice of a human being to the sea in order to ensure the safety of the voyage, or victory in a naval battle, was known in the Greek, the Phoenician, and the Hebrew worlds. In the temples of Apollo Kourion in Cyprus and at Cape Leukas in Lefkada it was customary to throw traitors or criminals into the sea. The victim was bound to thousands of doves and thrown down from the top of the 70 meters high cliff. In Recio's view, this custom was derived from human sacrifices to ensure a successful

²²⁹ Rougé 1996: 196–202.

voyage.²³⁰ Aeschylus relates that before the Achaeans sailed for Troy they sacrificed Iphigenia, the daughter of their leader, Agamemnon, in order to appease the winds that blew towards the land and stopped the fleet from sailing for many days.²³¹ The Carthaginian king Amilcas sacrificed himself after the defeat of his navy in 480 BCE.²³² In the course of a naval battle during the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE) one of the Carthaginian ships began to sink. Its pilot plunged his sword into his breast and poured his blood between the horns on the head of a bust of Amon in the form of a stag's head that was set on the stern facing the sea.²³³ In Judaism there are five types of sacrifice: Minkha, a sacrifice of thanksgiving; 'Olah, which is completely burnt; Khattat, in which the sacrifice is slain; Asham, in which the sacrifice is slain; and Shlamim, in which the sacrifice is eaten by the sacrificers. The casting of Jonah into the sea was not one of these. It would seem that it was more like the sending of the scapegoat into the desert. In the days of the first and second temple at the Day of Repentance, celebrated ten days after the Rosh Hashana – the beginning of a new year – it was the custom to send a goat off into the desert, where it would find its death: 'And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israe putting them upon the head of the goat... And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.' (*Levit.*, 16: 21–22) Burkert maintains that an act of sacrifice, particularly if the victim is sent away from the community and put to death there in order to atone for the community's sins, arises from a state of existential fear, when the prospect of plague, famine, or some natural disaster threatens. In Greece and Rome the expulsion of the scapegoat was celebrated at the beginning of the new season after the winter period, as a catharsis of the old situation. It was led out of the city in a procession chased over the border. In Greece, *φαρμακός* *pharmakos* was the one who was sacrificed to as anatonement for othersd, also denoted *κάθαρμα* *katharma* (that which is thrown away in cleaning): a human being, usually from the margins of society: criminal, stranger, young, slave – or royal, who offered himself voluntarily. While mythical tales speak of killing, in historical reality he was only expelled.²³⁴ Origen, in *Contra Celcius* I, 31 compared the apostols to 'those who voluntary died for their fatherland, to avert plague, epidemics, famines and shipwrecks'. Jonah and Andromeda are victims of the community, one willing and one by compulsion, but they also bring it redemption: death brought sanctity to its human victims. In Hebrew *korban* (sacrifice) means 'coming close to God', from the root *kof*, *resh*, *beth*. In Latin, too, the word *sacrificio* (*sacrum* + *facere*) means 'to make sacred'. The myth of Palinurus, related in the *Aeneid*, has many parallels with the myth of

²³⁰ Recio 2000: 105.

²³¹ Aeschylus, 'Agamemnon', lines 184–257.

²³² Herodotus, *Histories*, VII, 165–167.

²³³ Silius Italicus, *Punica*, XIV, 458–461; Brody 1998: 83–84. The Jewish religion forbade any religious practice that bore any similarity to idol worship. Thus, for instance, it was forbidden to kill or throw the sacrifice over the side of the ship (or over the side of any vessel). Sacrifice could be made only on the vessel itself. Libation between the horns of an animal was also forbidden. Lieberman 1991: 250, 263.

²³⁴ Burkert 1987: 173–174; Bremmer 2000: 271–293.

Jonah. Palinurus, the helmsman of Aeneas's ship and experienced navigator advised Aeneas to forestall sailing to Italy and to wait out a terrible storm on Sicily. He was the one whom the gods sacrificed to guarantee safe passage to Italy for the Trojans. Neptune, the lord of the deep sea, promised Aeneas's mother Venus: 'One only shall there be whom, lost in the fload, you will seek in vain; one life shall be given for many' (unum pro multis dabitur caput). Drugged by the god of sleep, he fell overboard into the sea: '...favouring breezes bear on the fleet. First before all... was Palinurus; by him the rest are bidden to shape their course. And now dewy Night had reached its mid-goal in heaven; the sailors, stretched in quiet rest; when Sleep, slidin lightly down from the stars of heaven... seeking you, Palinurus, and bringing you baleful dreans, guiltless one! There on the high stern sat the god, in semblance of Phorbas, and pours these accenbts from his lips: 'Palinurus, son of Iasus, the seas themselves bear on the fleet; the breezes breathe steadily; the hour is given to rest. Lay down your head and steal your weary eyes from toil. I myself for a space will take your duty in your stead'. To him, scarce lifting his eyes, speaks Palinurus: 'Me do you bid shut my eyes to the sea's calm face and peaceful waves? Me put faith in this monster? And Aeneas – why, indeed, am I to trust him to the treacherous breezes, I whom a clear sky has so often deceived?' Such words he said and, clinging fast to the tiller, never let loose his hold, and kept his eyes upturned to the stars. But Io! The god, shaking over his temples a bough dripping with Lethe's dew and steeped in the drowsy might of Styx, despite his efforts relaxes his swimming eyes. Hardly had a sudden slumber begun to unbend his limbs when, leaning above, Sleep flung him headlong into the clear waters, tearing away, as he fell, the helm and part of the stern, and calling vainly on his comrades again and again.' Aeneas next encountered Palinurus in the Underworld, where he asked how it came to be that he died despite a prophecy from Apollo, that he would reach Italy unscathed. Palinurus responded that he survived the plunge into the sea and washed ashore after four days near Velia, and was killed there and left unburied. The Cumaean Sibyl, who has guided Aeneas into the Underworld, predicts that locals will build him a mound and the place will be named Cape Palinuro in his honour (*Aeneid*, III, 202, 515, V, 10–25, 840–871, VI, 337–381).

Another custom of sailors in time of danger or after relief from it was to make vows, as did the sailors in Jonah's ship. In the Hellenistic period, when the Book of Jonah was written, those who started on a commercial voyage were accustomed to make sure of the protection of the gods, such as Serapis, by making them partners in the voyage and its profits: they would vow a tithe of the profits to the gods' temples. Often, however, they broke their promise, and only dedicated anchors or models of ships, even though the temples needed money, land or food.²³⁵ Rashi and Rabbi David Kimhi both interpreted the verse 'they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy' (*Jonah*, 2: 9) as referring to the crew of Jonah's ship, who behave in this way.

²³⁵ Fulvi 1957: 525–531.

2.14. *The Cult of Jonah in Christianity*

In the Byzantine period Jonah was worshipped in Nebi Yunis, south of Jaffa, close to the outlet of the Lachish river. In the Madaba mosaic an imposing two-towered building is depicted at Nebi Yunis, with the inscription *τω αγιω ιωνα* – of Saint Jonah. Jonah's standing in Christianity was very high: Jesus himself said that Jonah was a prefiguration of himself.²³⁶ He was cast into the sea, and after three days in the belly of the fish he was vomited out onto the land. Jesus was crucified, spent three days in the kingdom of the dead, and was then resurrected. Jonah's voyage was interpreted as a passage into the world to come. Many ancient religions held that the dead passed in a boat over water (a river or sea), which was conceived of as the border between the living and the dead. That is why the sailors, despite their efforts, were unable 'to bring the ship to land'. The sea had to be calmed by supernatural means, by the sacrifice of Jonah, his death and resurrection. In Christianity the ship has the symbolic significance of a place in which the spirit of God dwells. The central hall of a church, which leads to the altar, is called a nave, from *navis* (ship) in Latin (*ναυς* in Greek); and this word has a similar sound to *ναος*, *naos*, a shrine.²³⁷ The fish has a cultic significance in Christianity. In Greek the word *ιχθύς*, a fish, is composed of the initials of *Ιησούς Χριστός Θεού Υιός Σωτήρ*, Jesus Christ, the son of God, the Saviour. The miracle of the fishes, which multiplied miraculously and were fed by Jesus to his followers, signifies the giving of life. Two of the apostles, Peter and Andrew, were fishermen, and Jesus promised them that if they followed him they would be fishers of souls.²³⁸ As pointed out above, the worship of fish had roots in the pagan cults of the Middle East. There were ponds of fish sacred to Atargatis in Edessa and to Derceto in Ashkelon. Cetos was worshipped in Jaffa, and a goddess with the tail of a fish in Ashdod. The dove (Heb.: *yonah*), whose name Jonah bore, is a Christian symbol of the soul and the Holy Spirit, and was worshipped in exactly the same places.

For Christianity, Jonah also served as proof that the people of Israel alone had ceased to be the chosen people: God works for the salvation of all the peoples and they become faithful to him. And, indeed, it was in Jaffa that the fundamental change in Christianity took place, when Peter began to spread the word of Jesus among the non-Jews. In Jaffa, in the house of Simon the tanner, 'by the sea side', he dreamt of the divine commandment to eat unclean animals. It was there, too, that he was commanded to go to Caesarea to baptize Cornelius, the first pagan convert to Christianity.²³⁹ The importance of the story of Jonah and the fish, particularly in the early years of Christianity, and the way in which it was used by the church to spread Christianity among the pagans, is illustrated in the huge mosaic in the *basilica* of Aquileia, Italy, which covers 700 square metres. This is the biggest mosaic in the Western Empire.

²³⁶ *Matthew*, 12: 39–41

²³⁷ *Thye* 1995: 187–188.

²³⁸ *Matthew*, 4: 18.

²³⁹ *Acts*, 10.

The church was built by Bishop Theodorus after the Edict of Milan, between 313 and 320 CE. Aquileia was considered in those days to be one of the four principal ports of the empire. The mosaic depicts Constantine and his family, twelve fishermen representing the twelve apostles, and Christian symbols in the form of animals and birds (for instance: the fish, and the cock which foretold the coming of Jesus, ‘the light of the world’). The only narrative motif is, however, the story of Jonah: the prophet is flung from the ship and swallowed by the fish, and then vomited out onto the land, and sleeps under the gourd. There was a Jewish community in Aquileia, and it may be that through it the story of Jonah was first spread.²⁴⁰

Pilgrims also came to Jaffa in this period. Saint Jerome, accompanied by the pilgrim Paula, visited Jaffa in 382, in order to ‘see the harbour of fugitive Jonah’,²⁴¹ and he was also shown the rock to which Andromeda had been bound. However, Jerome does not mention sites in Jaffa connected with St. Peter. In fact, in the first centuries of the Christian era Jaffa did not exploit the opportunity to become a centre of Christian worship and pilgrimage. Its cult traditions, whether pagan, Jewish or Christian, were transferred to other locations. Perseus, the princess, and the monster were relocated further east, in Lod/Lyddā, and were associated with St. George, a Christian Roman soldier killed under Diocletian, who was buried there. Jonah was moved south, and was worshipped in his shrine near Ashdod. It may be that this process was initiated by the authorities, since the Jewish community was well established and dominant in the city (not, for instance, as in Jerusalem, where there were no Jews).

2.15. ‘The beauty of Japhet in the Tents of Shem’: Dan and the Danites and their Heritage in Jaffa

Jaffa was considered to become part of the territory of the tribe of Dan. In the Bible, Dan was unlike the other tribes of Israel. Its genealogy was not preserved together with the detailed lists of the tribes in the Book of Chronicles; and when Israel wandered in the desert Dan was always behind the other tribes, in the rearguard.²⁴² This may indicate either that its men were particularly good warriors, or that they joined the other tribes at a later period. Jacob’s blessing (*Gen.*, 49: 16–17) says: ‘Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent (Heb.: shfifon) by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse’s heels so that his rider shall fall backwards’. The ‘shfifon’ is a unique expression in the Bible and is usually interpreted as a snake, serpent.²⁴³ According to Amos, 9: 3 the serpent dwells in the bottom of the sea. The Mishnah emphasizes the similarity between the snake and the whale, the king of the fish who rules all the creatures of the sea. According to the Gemara, the whale is the primeval snake; both the whale and the snake are said to possess wisdom

²⁴⁰ The existence of a Jewish community in Aquileia is attested by a mosaic with the inscription ‘Lord of Hosts’ which was uncovered in the city. Fighelli 2000: 32, fig. 2.

²⁴¹ St. Jerome, *Paula*, 5.

²⁴² *Deuteronomy*, 1: 2–8; *Numbers*, 10: 25.

²⁴³ Cohen, C., in: Galil, 1993, ‘Genesis’, p. 251.

and cunning.²⁴⁴ It may be that the shifon (the adder in Jacob's blessing) is a sea snake, like the coiled snake or the nachash bariach (elusive snake) which are mentioned in the Bible and in Ugaritic myths. If the metaphor in the above passage is derived from a maritime environment, it may be noted that the Greeks likened ships to horses, and called them *ἵπποι* (*hippoi* – horses). The buccaneering activities of the men of Dan, who terrorized travellers by land and sea, are described not only in Jacob's blessing but also in the Book of Judges. The Song of Deborah, which is considered to be one of the earliest texts in the Bible, asks the rhetorical question: 'Why did Dan sojourn in ships?'²⁴⁵ It may be that at that time the tribe of Dan lived in ships and did not take part in the wars of Israel because it had not yet succeeded in conquering a permanent territory. The Danites roam in ships, and groups of them range throughout the land, since 'in those days... the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel'²⁴⁶ Perhaps they had not initially been granted a territory because they belonged to a foreign nation? If so, the first part of Jacob's blessing may be interpreted as a wish that Dan may eventually be considered one of the tribes of Israel and engender judges who will lead the people.

Jaffa, an important port, was in the territory of the Danites, whose nautical activities at the period of Israelite settlement afforded them the title of 'boat dwellers'. According to the Book of Joshua the Danites did not succeed in settling in the city; perhaps they lived in it only for a short period. Eventually the boundary of their territory ran only opposite the city, along the Ayalon valley: 'And Yahud and Bnei-Brak and Gath-Rimmon. And the waters of Yarkon, and Yarkon, with the border before Jaffa. And the coast of the children of Dan went out [too little] for them; therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem [Laish], and took it... and they called Leshem Dan, after the name of Dan their father.'²⁴⁷ Calling a city by the name of a leader, a hero or a god was foreign to the tradition of the Hebrews and the Phoenicians, but widespread in the Greek world. The names of the founders are not preserved in the names of the Hebrew or Phoenician settlements in the Land of Israel or the Phoenician settlement in the Mediterranean region. The Book of Judges says: 'And there went out from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Tzor'ah and Eshtaol six hundred men appointed with weapons of war... and they came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure... and had no business with any man... and they were far from the Sidonians.' The city was conquered, 'and there was no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon.'²⁴⁸ It appears that the town of Laish, in upper Galilee (today Tel Dan), under the influence of Sidon.

²⁴⁴ In: Ginsburg 1967: I, 18–27, and notes 115–127, pp. 154–157; Idel 2004: 160 (quoted from Rabbi Yaakov Ben Sheshet), and 175 (quoted from the Rashba).

²⁴⁵ *Judges*, 5: 17.

²⁴⁶ *Judges*, 18: 1.

²⁴⁷ *Joshua*, 19: 45–47. In Yadin's view, the destruction of Tel Qasile by fire in 1100 BCE (Stratum XII) was connected with the fact that the Danites migrated northwards and other sea peoples settled in this stratum. Yadin 1965: 52–53.

²⁴⁸ *Judges*, 18: 7–8, 28.

In Jaffa the skull of a lion was found in a pre-Philistine shrine. The name Laish means 'lion'. Perhaps this indicates that the Canaanite god of the city had the shape of a lion, as a result of Sidonian influence. The Danites changed the idolatrous name of the city, and called it Dan after their forefather. On their way to Laish they acquired cult objects by force from Micah of Ephraim, 'the ephod and the teraphim and the molten image', and a priest from the tribe of Levi. For hundreds of years the descendants of this priest 'were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.'²⁴⁹ Thus, as a result of their aspiration to integrate into the people of Israel the Danites strove to acquire legitimate territory and rites, with the fanaticism typical of recent converts. The excavations at Tel Dan, (it's name in Arabic, Tel el Kaddi meaning: mound of the Judge, preserves the Hebrew meaning of the name Dan) conducted between 1966–1999 by A. Biran, and now by D. Ilan, show that by the Late Bronze Age Laish had extensive trade connections with the countries and coastal cities throughout the eastern Mediterranean, including Sidon and Tyre, Egypt, Cyprus and Mycenaean Greece. Among the Aegean influences there are *pithoi* (large storage vessels) along with vessels decorated with Aegean-style birds, chalices, offering bowls, figurines and ritual items originating in the Aegean, Syria and Egypt. The finds indicate that the peoples living in Dan were of mixed origins. A cultic building containing a holy-of-holies, common in the Aegean (in Cyprus and Milos) was discovered. Locally, the same type was discovered at the Philistine site of Tel Qasile. Inside the sanctuary a ceramic bowl to which a ceramic bird's head was found. A similar 'bird bowl' was found at Tel Qasile. In a tomb more than 100 ceramic vessels were found that proved, by chemical analysis, to mostly originate in the Argolis in Peloponnese. According to Ilan, these artifacts suggest the presence of worshippers hailing from the Aegean – perhaps the Denyen/Danuna/Danaoi. During the Late Bronze Age Canaan was under Egypt's control, and Laish became part of its administrative system. That can explain the dozens of Egyptian cooking pots, tools, and arrowheads found in the site. But apart of the Egyptians mercenaries from the Aegean, Cyprus, Syria, Anatolia, and other countries also were situated there. They may have been given land grants at the end of their service, and married local Canaanite women, a theory supported by the local (Canaanite) cooking vessels found inside the houses. In the late twelfth century BCE the Egyptians withdrew from Canaan. The mercenaries remained, and the new amalgam society would become the tribe of Dan.²⁵⁰ Samson was the most famous Danite in the Bible; an archetype of a Greek hero with its physical strength, battles and drinking-bouts.²⁵¹ A similar life-style is revealed in the residential palace of Aegean immigrants of the twelfth century BCE in Ashdod.²⁵² Samson was closer to the Philistines in his life style than to the Hebrews and hangs out with Philistine

²⁴⁹ *Joshua*, 29: 45–47.

²⁵⁰ Ilan 1999: 51–60; Alanne 2017: 39–49. In Yadin's view, the destruction of Tel Qasile by fire in 1100 BCE (Stratum XII) was connected with the fact that the Danites migrated northwards and other sea peoples settled in this stratum. Yadin 1965: 52–53.

²⁵¹ *Judges*, 14–16.

²⁵² Bonimovitz 1999: 152–155.

women. Even so, he became a judge (in Hebrew: Dan) and leader in the children of Israel's war against the Philistines.

The Bible emphasizes that the Danites surpassed all the other tribes of Israel in their aptitude for the fine arts, particularly architecture and metal-work. Bezalel ben Uri, the builder of the Temple, was a Danite; and Hiram king of Tyre sent Solomon an architect whose mother was a member of the tribe.²⁵³ In the city of Dan the metalwork industry flourished. The excavators uncovered an industrial area featuring furnaces, crucibles, blowpipe nozzles, scrap metal, and slag from bronze smelting. Objects from the Middle and Late Bronze Ages were melted and recast into new bronze objects, tools and weapons. In the Jaffa excavations the remains of such an industry, which was active from the fifth century BCE until the beginning of the Hellenistic period, have been discovered.²⁵⁴

Kindler surmises that the story of Andromeda in Jaffa originated with the Philistines who ruled in the region at the end of the second millennium BCE.²⁵⁵ Perhaps the myths of the Cetos or the great fish originated at the time of the maritime wanderings of the tribe of Dan. From the Iron Age onwards they achieved artistic and literary expression both in the Greek world and in the literature of Israel. According to Herodotus and Apollodorus, Perses, the son of Perseus and Andromeda, stayed in Jaffa because his grandfather Cepheus was childless. Perses was considered to be the father of the Persian people. Herodotus mentions the Greek claim that the people of the city of Argos took no part in the war against the Persians at Xerxes' request: 'We [the Persians] believe that we are the descendants of Perses the son of Perseus the son of Danaë and of Andromeda the daughter of Cepheus. If this is so, we are your descendants.' Artaxerxes, Xerxes' son, also 'emphasized that the treaty [between Persia and Argos] was valid, and that in his eyes there was no friend as close as Argos.'²⁵⁶ Thus, the people of Argos were apparently closer to the Persians than to the Athenians!

There was another tradition of blood relationship between a Greek city and the Jews. In the first millennium CE there grew up a tradition among Jews and Greeks which was preserved until the Byzantine period: Jews and Spartans were said to have a common origin. In the sixth century CE Stephanus of Byzantium's *Ethnica*, under the heading 'Ioudaea', claimed that the Spartans were descended from Oudaïos, the son of a snake or dragon, from whose name the name Judah was derived. The snake or dragon was the national emblem of Sparta since it symbolized the Spartans' strength and aggressiveness in battle.²⁵⁷ The snake attacking in battle was the totem of the tribe of Dan, which was estranged from all the other children of Israel because of its similarity

²⁵³ *Exodus*, 31: 6; *Deuteronomy*, 2: 13–14.

²⁵⁴ Ilan 2016; Kaplan 1992: 589.

²⁵⁵ Kindler 1985–1986: 26.

²⁵⁶ Herodotus, *Histories*, VII, 150–151.

²⁵⁷ Apollodorus, *Library*, II, 8, 5.

and proximity to the Philistines, and its aspiration to assimilate into the nation of Israel and to settle in the Land of Israel as had the other tribes.

The Denyen were one of the ‘Sea Peoples’ whom, according to the Papyrus Harris, Ramses III permitted to settle on the shores of the Land of Israel.²⁵⁸ It may be that some groups of the tribe of Dan, after failing to acquire a place of settlement, sailed to the Peloponnese. That is why they lived in ships, and did not take part in the wars of the children of Israel against Hatzor at the time of Deborah. Hence, too, the traditions of the Egyptian origin of Perseus, and his close relationship to Jaffa which was in the territory of the tribe of Dan. Perseus was the founder of Tarsus in Cilicia, where the Denyen hailed from. Tarsus, Tarsisi in Assyrian documents, is Tarshish according to Josephus (*Antiquities*, IX, 208) – the destination port of Jonah’s ship. According to Pliny the Elder, it was Danaus who invented the art of shipbuilding. Danaus was the brother of Aegyptus. He sailed from Egypt to the Peloponnese, and founded the city of Argos. Danaë was his granddaughter. Perseus himself sailed to the Peloponnese, his place of origin, together with the wife whom he brought from Jaffa. Hecataeus of Abdera (of the fourth or third century BCE) also states that there was a link between the Danaeans and the children of Israel: the Egyptians expelled foreigners from Egypt; some of them, led by Danaus and Cadmus (Kadmos), sailed to Greece and Argos, while others settled in Judah, which was deserted at the time.²⁵⁹ In the Hellenistic period Sparta was the only Greek city which had a treaty and friendly relationships with the Jews. Arios I, the king of Sparta (309–265 BCE), sent a message of friendship to the High Priest Onias II, in which he wrote:

‘...we have discovered that both the Jews and the Lacedaemonians are of one stock, and are derived from the kindred of Abraham. It is but just therefore that you, who are our brethren, should send to us about any of your concerns as you please. We will also do the same thing, and esteem your concerns as our own, and will look upon our concerns as in common with yours.’²⁶⁰

Among the Jews, both the Hellenizers and the orthodox believed in this blood relationship: Jason the High Priest fled to Sparta and found sanctuary there ‘because of his blood relationship’,²⁶¹ and Jonathan the Hasmonean initiated the renewal of the treaty with Sparta. One of the High Priests was named Menelaus (as the King of Sparta in the Homeric epos), maybe because of the influence of Sparta. Scholars who have attempted to discover the reason for this tradition have concluded that it originated with the Greeks’ belief that the Spartan and Jewish laws were similar, and that Lycurgus was like Moses. There was also a tradition that Heracles married the granddaughter of Abraham and Ketura. Abraham was considered by authors such as Hecataeus of Abdera, Charax of Pergamon, Apollonius Molon and Nicolaus

²⁵⁸ Pritchard 1954: 262.

²⁵⁹ Hecataeus of Abdera, in: Gutman 1958: 50.

²⁶⁰ *Macabbees* I, 12 and 23; Josephus, *Antiquities*, XII, 4, 10.

²⁶¹ *Macabbees* II, 5, 9.

Damascius to have been an exemplary personality. According to Menachem Stern, the Jews created the legend of blood relationship in the early Hellenistic period, in order to glorify Abraham as being the father of other nations.²⁶² It is also possible that the tradition of the blood relationship between Jews and Spartans stemmed from the myth of Perseus and Andromeda in Jaffa. The kings of Sparta considered themselves to be related to Heracles, the grandson of Perseus and Andromeda. This may be connected with Tacitus' statement that the Jews migrated to their country in the days of Cepheus because of the fear and hatred which forced them to migrate there.²⁶³ There are some similarities between Cepheus and Abraham. Both of them made voyages which led them to Canaan, and both of them were commanded by God to sacrifice their children, who were saved by a miracle. Both of them had wives who encountered misfortunes because of their beauty, and the title 'father of many peoples' is appropriate to both of them.

At the end of the ninth century BCE the Assyrians were added to the complex Phoenicians-Danaeans-Jews. In 803 BCE Adad-nirari III (810–783 BCE) waged a military campaign in Philistia. At the time of Sargon II a man of foreign extraction — Ia-ad-na, perhaps a Greek — took control of the kingdom of Ashdod. He made a treaty with Shabaka king of Kush (Nubia), who had conquered Egypt in 712 BCE, and initiated an anti-Assyrian alliance of most of the nations in the region. Sargon conquered Ashdod and its sister cities, Ashdod Yamm and Gath, and made them an Assyrian pahwa (province). He expelled the inhabitants, and repopulated the place with people from the east and Assyrian officials.²⁶⁴ Elements of the Assyrian religion undoubtedly also penetrated the region at this period.

Certain Graeco-Roman traditions describe Jaffa as an Ethiopian city, and Cepheus as the king of Ethiopia.²⁶⁵ It may be that they first arose in the period in which the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, which originated in Nubia, ruled Egypt. At the end of the eighth century BCE its attempts to undermine Assyrian hegemony in the region by encouraging local monarchs to rebel led to the campaigns of Sargon, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon against the Phoenicians, Jews and Philistines, and to the conquest of Egypt by Assyria in 670 BCE. It was at this time that Zephaniah prophesied: 'Ye Ethiopians [Kushim] also, ye shall be slain by my sword. And he will stretch out his sword against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation' (*Zeph.*, 2: 12–13). Assyria was indeed enfeebled, and the Pharaohs Psammetichus I and Necho II, of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, conquered Philistia and Judah, until the whole region was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon, at the end of the seventh century BCE.

²⁶² Gutman 1958: 108–111; Stern 1995: 63–69.

²⁶³ Tacitus, *The History*, V, 2.

²⁶⁴ The Great Inscription of Sargon II at Khorsabad, in: Galil 2001: 95–99.

²⁶⁵ Apollodorus, *Library*, II, 4, 3. Ovid; *Metamorphoses*, IV, 669. On artistic portrayals of Andromeda as an Ethiopian woman, see Snowden 1970: 156–157, and p. 231 fig. 90.

‘Akko/Ptolemais too, like Jaffa, maintained a cult of Perseus, and had a mythological link with Ethiopia and Egypt. Memnon, the legendary king of Ethiopia who fought in the Trojan War, was considered to be the son of Eos/Aurora, the morning star. His tombstone, by the Belos (Na‘aman) river, was displayed in ‘Akko/Ptolemais. In Thebes (No-Amon) in Egypt there stands a colossal so-called statue of Memnon (it was actually of Amenhotep III) and during the Roman and Byzantine periods it attracted pilgrims from all over the world because of the melody which emerged from it at dawn. In ‘Akko/Ptolemais the Egyptian god Amon was also worshipped. It was the oracle of Amon which urged Cepheus king of Jaffa to sacrifice Andromeda to the sea monster.

In the Madaba mosaic map the area labeled ‘the inheritance of the tribe of Dan’ is depicted. Within it, next to the site of Jaffa and close to the temple of Jonah the prophet between Jaffa and Ashdod, is inscribed the verse ‘Why does Dan sojourn in ships?’, as the motto of the tribe. In the Book of Jonah, when the sailors ask Jonah what his nation and religion are, he replies that he is a Hebrew. He is not a Jew, like the other prophets, but a member of a collateral membership group, of a broader ethnic circle. Jaffa was part of the Kingdom of Judah, and served as its chief port, but there were periods during which it was ruled by Ashkelon. Because of its economic and strategic importance it was visited by Phoenician, Philistine, Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek and Roman merchants. From the Bronze Age until the Byzantine period the coastal area of the tribe of Dan from Jaffa to Ashdod was a place of meeting and mingling of cultures, more than Judah, which preserved its ethnic ‘purity’ and succeeded in developing a unique religion, and more than wholly Philistine cities such as Gaza and Ashkelon. In this region Hebrew, Phoenician, Mesopotamian and Greek myths were able to influence each other. After the return from the Babylonian exile, when assimilation threatened the culture and the very existence of the nation, Ezra took the drastic step of proclaiming that the Jews must expel their non-Jewish wives and the children they had born. It may well be that the Book of Jonah, which was written in the same period, presented an opposing policy.²⁶⁶ In many periods, there existed within Judaism an approach which emphasized closeness and openness towards the Greeks. In the Bible it is expressed in the prophecy of Noah to his children. After Noah’s honour was sullied by Ham, the father of Canaan, he proclaimed ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren... Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant’.²⁶⁷ Yavan (Greece) was the son of Japhet. Jaffa, the fair city, was founded by Japhet, and was destined to be the dwelling-place of the offspring of Japhet, the father of the Greeks and Danites, who came to the Land of Israel and dwelt in the tents of Shem.²⁶⁸ Sympathy for the heritage of Greece was also displayed by Rabbi Hiyya, of the fourth century CE: ‘Rabbi Hyya, son of Abba, said ‘This is the

²⁶⁶ For a contrary position, see Simon 1983: 3–4.

²⁶⁷ *Genesis*, 9: 25–29.

²⁶⁸ Jaffa was ‘founded before the Flood’ in Greek and Roman mythology as well. Pomponius Mela, *Description of the World*, I, 64; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, V, 69. See also Slouschz 1938.

proof (of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, who did not allow the Torah scroll to be written in any foreign script except Greek): God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem — let the beauty of Japhet be in the tents of Shem.’ (‘Megillah’, 9). Jaffa, which was to have been the territory of the Danites, eventually became a cosmopolitan economic and cultural centre as a result of the common nautical activity of the peoples of Israel and Judah, Phoenicia and Philistia, Greece and Rome.

Chapter 3

Ashkelon

3.1. Introduction

Ancient Ashkelon was built on a kurkar cliff on the seashore in the southern coastal plain of the Land of Israel, about 60 kilometers south of Jaffa. Archaeological excavations have shown that the site was first settled during the Chalcolithic period.²⁶⁹ Canaanite Ashkelon was mentioned in Egyptian Texts of the nineteenth century BCE.²⁷⁰ In the Late Bronze Age the city was ruled by Egypt, and the Philistines settled there towards the end of the Bronze Age. They were among the 'Sea Peoples' who invaded the coastal areas of Egypt, the Land of Israel and Syria. In Egyptian documents from the time of Merneptah (1224–1210 BCE) and Ramses III the Denyen, Skekelesh, Sherden, Tjeker and Weshesh are also mentioned. According to the Papyrus Harris,²⁷¹ Ramses defeated them in battle, and allowed them to settle in strongholds as his dependants.²⁷² During the excavations of The Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon (1985–2016) the Canaanite city gate, considered to be the oldest arched city gate in the world, was revealed. From 2013 to 2016 also a philistine cemetery – The first Philistine cemetery to be found – with 210 burials was excavated (<http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-israel/first-ever-philistine-cemetery-unearthed-at-ashkelon/>). It is dated from the eleventh to the eighth centuries BCE, and reveals a variability in burial practices, from simple pit interments (the most frequent) to cremation in jars and ashlar-built tombs. It may indicate variety of their ethnic origins. The grave goods were ceramic juglets of Cypro-Phoenician and red-slipped and burnished style, amulets, weapons and jewelry. A DNA analysis extracted from 10 skeletons found in the

²⁶⁹ Stager 1993: 1, 98. The 1920–1922 excavations of the Palestine Exploration Fund revealed mostly finds from the Roman period. The excavations conducted by the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon from 1985–2016 outlined the development of the site from the time of its origins to its final days, when, in 1270 the Mamluk sultan Baybars dismantled its fortifications, built by the crusaders, to deny them foothold in the region.

²⁷⁰ Pritchard 1954: 329.

²⁷¹ Merneptah inscription, in Kurt 1995: 386–387; Rameses III inscription in Medinet Habu, in Pritchard 1954: 261–263.

²⁷² Pritchard 1954: 262.

city, from the twelfth century BCE, shows that their origin was in mainland Greece. A few generations later, they assimilated genetically into the local population. However, many Aegean cultural traditions they brought with them continued (<https://advances.sciencemag.org>, July 3, 2019; Feldman et al. 2019).

According to the Bible, Ashkelon was a Philistine city. Apparently it was also related to other groups of 'Sea peoples'. Greek historians speak of the connection between Ashkelon and the Sea Peoples. Xanthos of Lydia, of the fifth century BCE, maintained that it was founded by Mopsus of Colophon in Ionia, the son of Apollo the sun-god, who was a prophet and a solver of riddles. He wandered throughout Syria and the Land of Israel, conquered existing cities and founded new ones in Pamphilia.²⁷³ And, in fact, 'the house of Mopsus' is mentioned in the Luwian-Phoenician inscriptions from Karatepe and Çineköy. The kings of 'the house of Mopsus' were the sovereigns of the Kingdom of Hiyawa (dannym in Phoenician), and priests of the sun-god. They ruled the Palastin kingdom in Northern Syria. Hiyawa is connected with ancient Ahhiyawa, the Achaeans mentioned in Hittite documents.²⁷⁴ It seems that the Denyen/Danuna, or Danaites, were connected with the biblical tribe of Dan.²⁷⁵ According to Nicolaus Damascius, Ashkelon was founded by the hero Askalos, the emissary of Akaimos, king of Lydia.²⁷⁶ The image of Askalos appears on the city's coins.²⁷⁷ The name 'Askalos' is apparently related to the name of the Skekelesh, one of the 'Sea Peoples' groups who are mentioned in the records of Merneptah and Ramses III. Some scholars identify the Skekelesh with the group known as Shi-ka-la-yu from the city of Shi-ka-la, mentioned in an Ugaritic document from the time of Shuppiluliuma, king of the Hittites (1220–1182 BCE).²⁷⁸ According to this document, the Shikalayu 'sojourn aboard ships' — just like the Danites in the Song of Deborah — and raid the Syrian coast. The connection between the Skekelesh and Ashkelon is confirmed by Justin, a historian of the second or third century CE, who relates that the king of Ashkelon destroyed the city of Sidon a year before the fall of Troy, and that the men of Sidon fled in their ships and re-founded the city of Tyre.²⁷⁹ It may be, therefore, that the Shikalayu/Skekelesh were inhabitants of Ashkelon. The Philistine bichrome 'Warrior Krater' discovered in Ashkelon, dated to the

²⁷³ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, VIII, 3, 346. *The Deipnosophists* ('The Feast of the Wise') of Athenaeus of Naucratis (second century CE) was derived from Xanthos of Lydia.

²⁷⁴ Liverani 2002: 746; Hawkins 2009; Harrison 2012.

²⁷⁵ See also above, in the chap. 2, sec. 13. There are a number of similarities between Mopsus and Moses, who was also the leader of a migratory people, a prophet and an elucidator of riddles. Mopsus died of snakebite, and Moses invented the nahoshtan, a serpent made of bronze, as protection against snakes (*Numbers*, 21: 5–9). The snake was the symbol of the tribe of Dan: 'Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path', *Gen.*, 49: 17. Sun-worship was rife in the region of Philistia and the southern plain, as evidenced by the names of settlements such as Timnat-Heres and Beit-Shemesh, and the name of Samson (Shimshon, from shemesh, the sun) the Danite. See also the chap. 4, sec. 6, 9.

²⁷⁶ Nicolaus Damascius, in Hill 1965: lv, note 1.

²⁷⁷ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 35, Nos. 8–9; 38, Nos. 30–31.

²⁷⁸ RS 34.129. Kurt 1995: 414–415.

²⁷⁹ Justin, *Epitome*, XVIII, 3, 5: 'Many years afterwards they (the Phoenicians who founded Sidon), who were defeated by the king of the Ashkelonians, sailed away in their ships and founded the city of Tyre, a year before the conquest of Troy.' In fact, Sidon's coins boast of its being 'the mother of Tyre'. Hill 1965a: cvii. Justin's work is an epitome of Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus' *Philippic History*. Trogus lived in the first century BCE and Pompeius was his family's patron. Tying Ashkelon to the myths of the Trojan War could also serve to justify the unique status of *civitas libera et immunis* granted to it by Pompeius. The only cities in our area who enjoyed this status in the Roman period were Ashkelon, Sidon and Tyre.

twelfth-eleventh century BCE depicts a nautical scene: an Aegean chariot, a dolphin or a sea monster and two warriors wearing headdresses which resemble those worn by the Sea Peoples in the Medinet Habu reliefs.²⁸⁰ Thus, the men of Ashkelon were seafarers who lived on their ships, like the Danites. Their attack on Sidon is reminiscent of the biblical account of the Danites' attack on Laish, the vassal city of Sidon. Askalos was Tantalos' brother, and thus a leteral ancestor of Menelaus king of Sparta, who after the Trojan War wandered with his fleet and seized cities along the Levantine coast. To conclude, historical and archaeological evidences show that the 'Sea Peoples' who came to inhabit Ashkelon were of multiple origins; they arrived in several waves, by land routs and by sea. Some of the first immigrants came directly from Greece. Other waves advanced gradually, through Anatolia and Syria.

In the Bible Ashkelon is mentioned as one of the chief Philistine city states, and the place of residence of one of the five Philistine seranim/*tyrannoi*.²⁸¹ It was not, however, an outright enemy of Israel and Judah.²⁸² In the year 803 BCE, Adad-nirari III of Assyria embarked on a military campaign in Philistia, and in 732 Ashkelon, which had rebelled against Assyria, was conquered by Tiglath-pileser III. In 701 it again rebelled, in concert with Judah, against Sennacherib king of Assyria (704–861 BCE). Ashkelon and Judah also rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon (604–562 BCE). In 604 BCE Nebuchadnezzar conquered Ashkelon and destroyed it, and Aga, its last Philistine king, was exiled to Babylon. During the Persian period there were also Phoenicians living in the city, and it was apparently under the rule of Tyre.²⁸³ In 332 BCE it came under the rule of Alexander the Great, and from 301 to 200 BCE was ruled by Ptolemaic Egypt. In 199 BCE it was conquered by the Seleucids, who granted it political and economic autonomy. The Hasmoneans did no harm to Ashkelon, despite their policy of conquering and destroying non-Jewish cities in general, and the coastal cities in particular. Ashkelon even welcomed Jonathan Maccabaeus.²⁸⁴ In 63 BCE, after Pompey's conquest of the region, the city was annexed to the Roman province of Syria. The people of Ashkelon welcomed Roman rule. On the wall of the *βουλευτήριον* Bouleuterion (council building) an inscription dating from the second or third century CE has been uncovered which reads *ἀνξι Ἀσκαλων ἀνξίη Ρωμη* (literally, be strong and succesful Ashkelon, be strong and succesful Rome).²⁸⁵ This is a clear reflection of feelings of loyalty to and identification with Rome. The Graeco-Roman way of life of

²⁸⁰ On the origins of the 'Sea Peoples' as marginal groups with maritime skills who provided maritime trade services to Heth, Egypt, and the coastal settlements, while engaging in casual trade, piracy, and attacks on the coast, see Artzy 1997: 1–12. The 'warrior krater' is displayd in Rockefeller Mueum exhibition 'Ashkelon — a Retrospective'. In the Greek world such kraters were used in to mix wine with water.

²⁸¹ *Joshua*, 13: 3.

²⁸² Gaza was the principal enemy of Israel at the time of Samson, and it was there that he was tortured and killed. Ashdod displayed the captured Ark of the Covenant in its temple, and was punished by the shattering of the statue of Dagon. At the time of Saul and David Achish king of Gath fought the children of Israel. Padi the king of Ekron was captured and imprisoned by Hezekiah king of Judah.

²⁸³ According to Pseudo-Scylax, Ashkelon was 'A Tyrian city and a governor's palace.' Be that as it may, it appears that Sidonians were also active in the city: Fuks 2000: 16–18.

²⁸⁴ *Maccabees* I, 74–86.

²⁸⁵ Di-Segni 1990: 68, No. 3.

the people of Ashkelon is evident from the abundant marble statuary in the site. The statues depict Greek and Roman deities and also Roman political personages such as Severan emperor and empress Salonina (253–268 CE). Many of the statues are of very high artistic and technical quality.

From the very beginnings of the settlement of Ashkelon its economy was based both on agriculture and on maritime and commercial activity. The soil of the surrounding area is composed of loess and fertile silt, and it has many underground sources of sweet water. As early as the Early Bronze Age A1 (3,500–3,350 BCE) olive groves were cultivated here and their oil was exported to Egypt.²⁸⁶ In the Iron Age vines, carobs, pomegranates, almonds, figs, wheat, barley and beans were grown, as well as plants which were used for making medicines.²⁸⁷ In the Roman and Byzantine periods the dates, the camphor and the onions of Ashkelon were famous for their high quality. Ashkelon wine was also exported to Egypt, Syria and even Gaul, and was described in the *Description of the World and its Peoples*, of the fourth century CE, as ‘best quality wine’.²⁸⁸ It was also famous for its therapeutic qualities.²⁸⁹ The fishing and fish-preserving industries of Ashkelon were also outstanding.²⁹⁰

The commercial character of Ashkelon is reflected in its name, from the Semitic root *shin, koph, lamed* – to weigh. Commerce flourished there as a result of its location on the ‘sea route’ between Egypt, Syria and Anatolia, and its proximity to the maritime outlet of the exceedingly profitable ‘perfume route’. The ‘streets of Ashkelon’ – its markets and fairs – are mentioned in David’s lament for Saul;²⁹¹ in fact, excavations of the Philistine city have revealed shops which were part of a market or bazaar near the sea-coast.²⁹² There are many inscriptions bearing witness to the fact that during the Roman and Hellenistic periods the people of Ashkelon were active in seafaring, commerce and banking in all the Mediterranean lands.²⁹³ In Ashkelon itself an inscription dating from the second or third century CE in Greek and Latin, dedicated by a *navicularus* (owner of a merchant ship) named Gaius Comisius, has been discovered. Along Ashkelon’s coast miniature votive artifacts were found: anchors made of lead, bronze steering oar and figurines of Heracles and Aphrodite, protectors of sailors, from the Roman and Byzantine periods.

However, so far no remnants of a man-made harbour have been discovered in the surveys of the coast and the sea-bed around Ashkelon. Of recent years a broad area

²⁸⁶ Gophna & Lipshchitz 2001: 57–63.

²⁸⁷ Weiss, E. & Kislev 2001: 75–85.

²⁸⁸ Rougé, J., *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*.

²⁸⁹ Mayerson 1993; On the agricultural products of Ashkelon in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods see Dvorjetzky 2001: 121–128 and Fuks 2001: 84–90.

²⁹⁰ The taxes Ashkelon paid to Assyria are described in detail in Document ND 2672, lines 10–17, from the time of Sargon II: ‘3 vats of fish, 1000 fish, 21 fish preserves’, in Tammuz 1986: 10–17.

²⁹¹ *Samuel II*, 1: 20.

²⁹² Schloen 1998.

²⁹³ Di-Segni 1990: 67–90.

of the seabed opposite the town has been uncovered, from the coast to a distance of 150–200 metres, to a depth of up to six metres. Many remnants of wrecked ships and cargoes, and of buildings of the ancient city which had collapsed and fallen into the sea were discovered, but no remains of breakwaters or piers.²⁹⁴ The coast of Ashkelon is sandy and straight, with no inlets, and the sea is shallow; so there is nothing to protect ships from winds and currents.²⁹⁵ The Jerusalem Talmud mentions *nediraia de'ashkelon*, from the root *nun, daleth, resh* — to roll or slide.²⁹⁶ Sperber and Galili consider that these consisted of apparatus for towing ships from the sea. According to Sperber they were piers built onto or hewn in the rocks; whereas Galili considers that since Ashkelon had no constructed harbour they were mobile wooden appliances.²⁹⁷ It is thought that ships must have moored some distance offshore, and the cargoes were transported back and forth in small boats. Some of the merchandise was marketed at locations on the coast, far from places of settlement, as instanced by the storehouses of Gaza jars which have been discovered close to the shore between the Gaza strip and Yavneh-Yamm.²⁹⁸ It is also possible that they received harbour services from the kingdom of Judah. This may also explain the pattern of political cooperation which took place between Ashkelon and Judah during the hegemonies of Assyria and Babylonia, as well as at the time of the Hasmoneans and Herod (see below). This hypothesis is supported by the researches of E. Weiss and Faust on the economy of southern Land of Israel in the seventh century BCE. They maintain that Judah and Ashkelon functioned as a joint economic unit: in the Judaeian hills and the Negev wheat was grown (and in Ashkelon 'Judaeian' wheat has been discovered), in the coastal plain olives, and in Ashkelon vineyards, and agricultural produce was exported by sea to Egypt and the Greek world by the people of Ashkelon and the Phoenicians.²⁹⁹

3.2. *Philistine Astarte (Ἀστάρτη Παλαιστίνη)/Heavenly Aphrodite (Ἀφροδίτη Οὐρανία) (figures 12-13)*

A Greek inscription dated to 220 CE, on a marble gable which was discovered in Ashkelon and displayed for the first time in 2016 at the Rockefeller Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem, mentions a dedication of a temple to the goddess *Ourania* in Ashkelon. Tombstones and dedicatory inscriptions of seafarers from Ashkelon throughout the Mediterranean region from the Hellenistic and Roman periods show that their patron goddess was the Philistine *Ashtart*, whom they identified with the Greek Aphrodite *Ourania* (the Heavenly Aphrodite). Aphrodite of Ashkelon is first mentioned by Herodotus, at about 450 BCE. He describes the way in which the Scythian mercenaries of the Egyptian king Psammetichus I looted her temple in Ashkelon (between 640 and 630 BCE), and how the goddess took revenge on them by

²⁹⁴ Galili 2000: 11–32.

²⁹⁵ Guérin 1982: 110.

²⁹⁶ *Jerusalem Talmud*, 'Shabbat', 4: 2, 7.

²⁹⁷ Sperber 1986: 78; Galili 2000: 28–32.

²⁹⁸ Galili 2000: 31.

²⁹⁹ See Weiss, E. 2005.



Figure 12. Ashkelon coin. Domitian (81–96 CE). Year 85/6 CE. Fortuna/Astarte standing on prow of galley to left, holding standard and aphlaston; on left, altar and ACKAA (Ascalon); in right field, dove. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

bringing the ‘women’s disease’ – an infirmity from which their descendants suffered until Herodotus’ own days – on them.³⁰⁰ In my view, this tale is very similar to the biblical story of the Philistines who desecrated the Holy Ark, and were punished by God with ‘tekhorim’ and ‘afolim’ – (piles and tumours). ‘Afolim’ apparently means male sexual organs,³⁰¹ and the punishment consists of injury to their masculinity. In order to appease God the Philistines sacrificed golden piles and tumours to him.³⁰² A group of phallic-shaped bronze bottles from Ashkelon, as well as pottery vessels found in a cultic corner at Tel Tzafit (biblical Gath), dated to the ninth century BCE may be depictions of phallic; A. Maeir discusses the importance of the symbolism of the phallus in the Philistine culture and relates the term ‘afolim’ to the male sexual organ. A clearer example of a phallus carved from limestone comes from Tel Miqneh (biblical Ekron)³⁰³ (see also chap. 4, sec. 9). Herodotus adds that the temple of Aphrodite in Ashkelon was her most ancient temple in the world that the Phoenicians of Ashkelon spread her worship westwards, and that similar temples in her honour were built in Cyprus and Cythera.³⁰⁴ According to Pausanias, of the second century CE, the Assyrians founded the cult of Aphrodite *Ourania*; they were followed by the people of Paphos in Cyprus and the Phoenicians of Ashkelon, and the Phoenicians taught the mysteries of her cult to the people of Cythera. In the time of Pausanias there was still a shrine to Aphrodite *Ourania* of Ashkelon in Athens.³⁰⁵

‘Aphrodite *Ourania*’ is the Greek name of the Greek goddess corresponding to Astarte (‘Astart’), the Canaanite-Phoenician goddess of love and fertility. The Philistines adopted the language of their Canaanite neighbours and their gods, such as Astarte,

³⁰⁰ Herodotus, *Histories*, I, 105.

³⁰¹ From the word ‘ofel, a prominent or elevated place.

³⁰² *Samuel* I, 6: 4–18.

³⁰³ Maeir 2005. In his lecture, he also emphasized that phallic figurines are unusual in Semitic iconography; Ben Shlomo 2010: 58–9, and fig. 6190.

³⁰⁴ Herodotus, *Histories*, I, 105.

³⁰⁵ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I, 14, 7.

Ba'al Zevuv and Dagon. In the Tel Miqneh/Ekron excavations an inscription 'I'Asht' (to 'Ashrat') dating from the seventh century BCE has been discovered.³⁰⁶

Egypt also left her mark on the cults of the cities of Philistia which lay on her borders — mainly Rafiah, Gaza and Ashkelon, which were closer to her than Jaffa. During the Second and First millennia BCE she maintained intensive economic and cultural relationships with them, and between the fifteenth and twelfth centuries BCE they were part of her empire. In the third century BCE Philistia, like the rest of the Land of Israel, came under the rule of the Ptolemaic dynasty. From the fourth millennium BCE Egypt also maintained commercial relationships with the Phoenicians, and Ashkelon was involved in them. Phoenician art was influenced by Egyptian art; this influence can be discerned, for instance, in two identical basalt statues dated between the tenth and the seventh centuries BCE in Egyptian/Phoenician style one of which was discovered in the sea at Ashkelon and the other in the harbour of Byblos/Gabal. Phoenician and Egyptian religions influenced each other, and their cosmogonies are similar.

'Ashrat/'Asherah was the consort of El, and along with her daughters 'Ashtart and 'Anath, was one of the three great goddesses of the Canaanite pantheon. Astarte was the spouse of Melqart in Tyre and Eshmun in Sidon. Eshmunazer II of Sidon, who was also a priest of Astarte, states that he built shrines in her honour 'in Sidon the land of the sea, and I brought Astarte of the mighty heavens back to there.'³⁰⁷ The Phoenician coastal cities prospered economically and politically thanks to their sea trade and their expertise in nautical warfare. Ezekiel says that the prince of Tyre boasts 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas'; and Isaiah berates Sidon: 'Be thou ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea has spoken, even the strength of the sea'; 'sea' here is a synonym for Sidon.³⁰⁸ According to Philo of Byblos, Pontus (the sea) was the father of Sidon and Poseidon.³⁰⁹ Since Astarte ruled both the mighty heavens and the sea, she was considered to be the tutelary goddess of sea voyages. She appears on coins of the Phoenician coastal cities together with symbols which attest to her connection with the sea: a ship, a steering oar, the prow of a ship, an *aphlaston* (decoration of a ship's stern), and a murex shell (purple-bearing snail).³¹⁰

In the perception of the Greeks, too, Aphrodite, the goddess of love and fertility, was connected with the sea. The Greek word for sea, *θάλασσα*, is feminine. In the eighth century BCE Hesiod described Aphrodite's birth from the sea: Kronos (Cronus) castrated his father Ouranos (the sky), and cast his genitals into the sea, making it

³⁰⁶ Gitin 1988: 175, fig. 16.

³⁰⁷ Slouschz 1942: 23.

³⁰⁸ *Ezekiel* 28: 2; *Isaiah*, 23: 4.

³⁰⁹ Philo of Byblos, *Phoenician History*, IX, 811.

³¹⁰ Hill 1965a: Byblos (Gabal), Nos. 100–102; Dora, Nos. 113–117; Berytus (Beirut), Nos. 52, 90–92; Sidon, Nos. 163, 168, 170, 174, 184, 192, 194; Tyre, Nos. 254, 261, 273, 275, 279, 282, 286, 291.



Figure 13. Marble statue of ‘the crouching Aphrodite’. Third century CE. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Photographer: Clara Amit.

pregnant, and thus Aphrodite was born from the sea.³¹¹ Nonnus of Panopolis described how Zeus abducted Europa: ‘He cleaves his way between the watery troughs, but even in the deep the fire of his passion is not extinguished. It was the sea which gave birth to Aphrodite by her heavenly mate, and brought her forth from the deep.’³¹² Inscriptions from throughout the Mediterranean region attest to the cult of Aphrodite of Ashkelon. In Piraeus a bilingual inscription has been discovered, dedicated by a man of Ashkelon at the end of the fourth century BCE. His name was Aphrodisios in Greek, and ‘Abd‘Astart in Phoenician.³¹³ In Delos in the second century BCE the banker Philostratos of Ashkelon dedicated an inscription to ‘Philistine Astarte, who is Aphrodite *Ourania*’ in honour of himself, his wife and his children.³¹⁴ In the Hellenistic and Roman periods merchants and ship-owners often took loans from banks to finance commercial

expeditions. The Zenon Papyrus PZ 59010 deals with a commercial expedition sailing to Sidon and to Ashkelon, and to the repayment of an interest-bearing loan taken by the *naukleroi*.³¹⁵ The patronage of Astarte/Aphrodite, the goddess of the heavens and the sea, the mistress of the capricious forces of nature – winds and storms, waves and currents – was essential for Philostratos’s undertakings, as insurance against the loss of his ships, his merchandise and his profits. *Naukleroi* were also active in Ashkelon during the Roman period, and an inscription of the second or third century CE mentions Gaius Comisius, who belonged to the *naukleroi*’s association. We do not know which of the products of Ashkelon Comisius dealt in – wine, wheat, or, perhaps, onions. But it is certain that the *naukleroi* of Ashkelon needed the protection of Aphrodite, and her popularity is attested by the wealth of representations of her on coins, statues and reliefs found in the city (see below). Another inscription from Delos, dating from the beginning of the first century BCE, is engraved on an altar dedicated

³¹¹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 188.

³¹² Nonnus of Panopolis, *Dionysiaca*, I, 86–89.

³¹³ Di-Segni 1990: 83–84, No. 28.

³¹⁴ ID 2305, in: Fuks 1983: 97.

³¹⁵ Cherkover 1961: 71.

by Damon son of Demetrius from Ashkelon, when his life was saved by a miracle: ‘To Zeus *Ouirios*, who causes the favourable winds to blow, and to Astarte *Palaestina*, who is Heavenly Aphrodite, gods who hear our prayers, Damon son of Demetrius from Ashkelon built this altar, in accordance with his vow, since he was saved from pirates. It is forbidden to sacrifice he-goats, pigs or cows here.’³¹⁶ Merchant ships were driven by sails with the help of winds, whereas warships were driven by oars. Pirates usually used oared biremes, which were light and fast.³¹⁷ From the epithet *Ouirios* it appears that Damon escaped his pursuers thanks to a wind which sprang up at the appropriate moment, and was sufficiently strong and in the right direction. The inscription is a spirited description of a scene from the life of those who sailed the Mediterranean, at a time when Cilician pirates operated unhindered and almost paralyzed international trade, until Pompey suppressed them in 67 BCE. These inscriptions supplement the testimony of Herodotus and Pausanias, and show how seafarers from Ashkelon spread the cult of Astarte/Aphrodite throughout the Mediterranean over hundreds of years.

Astarte/Aphrodite also appears on the coins of Ashkelon during the Roman period. Like Astarte on the coins of Phoenician cities she stands facing forward, with her foot on the deck of a ship. In Ashkelon she was apparently identified with Tyche/Fortuna, the city goddess.³¹⁸ In Rome Aphrodite was identified with Venus, the goddess of love, sex and fertility. She was believed to have been the mother of Aeneas, the mythical founder of Rome. The *Gens Julia*, the family of Julius and Augustus Caesar, was said to have been descended from her. Like ‘Astarte in Phoenicia, Venus was also the patron goddess of the life of the state and the army; she, too, was also considered to be a sea goddess, and the patroness of sea voyages.’³¹⁹

The cult of Astarte/Aphrodite was of major importance in Ashkelon. Like her appellations, her artistic representations reflect her dual character as an ancient Philistine-Canaanite-Phoenician goddess who was also a Graeco-Roman divinity. A marble statue of ‘the crouching Aphrodite’ which was found in the council house has been dated by Stager to the beginning of the third century CE.

It is an imitation of the famous statue of Doidalsas (third century BCE) from Rhodes.³²⁰ The goddess is shown naked, coming out of her bath. Praxiteles’s statue of Aphrodite from Cnidus, dated at about 340 BCE, was the first to represent the goddess in this way. Avi-Yonah says that ‘the portrayal of the goddess (Aphrodite) as a naked woman marks the end of the process of the fusion of gods and men’.³²¹ However, a marble relief of Astarte/Aphrodite created in Ashkelon during the same period presents completely

³¹⁶ Di-Segni 1990: 85, No. 34.

³¹⁷ Reddé 1986: 104–105.

³¹⁸ Meshorer 1984: 26.

³¹⁹ Virgil, *Aeneid*, I, 381–401; Horace, *The Odes*, I, 3, 1.

³²⁰ Stager 1991: 45; Stager 1993: 106. On the statue of Doidalsas see Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XXXVI, 35; Stewart 1990: II, plates 717–120.

³²¹ Avi-Yonah 1970: 148.

different artistic and cultural values, and a different artistic style.³²² The goddess stands in a frozen attitude, with her legs together. Her robe clings to her body and reaches her feet, which are turned to the side in an unnatural position. Two ornamental chains are wound round her neck and her waist. Her hands rest on her stomach, emphasizing her pregnancy. This was the image of Astarte in figurines from the Bronze and Iron Ages. There is no lack of skill in this work; it is, rather, conscious archaizing, derived from ancient local sources. Eastern attributes are also emphasized in the portrayal of other gods, particularly from the reign of Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE) onwards (see below). According to Avi-Yonah, the frozen frontal attitude of the gods in their role as saviours is typical of oriental art, in which, by contrast, human beings are depicted in motion. In this relief two naked women are shown, one on each side of the goddess. They are sitting on the ground under two vines, combing their hair and turning their heads to look at the goddess. These may be her priestesses or holy prostitutes. On the evidence of the famous orator Choricus of Gaza, of the sixth century CE,³²³ Astarte was still worshipped in Ashkelon hundreds of years after Christianity had become, under the emperor Theodosius I, the state religion of the Empire.

It is considered likely that holy prostitutes played a part in the cult of Astarte/Aphrodite in Ashkelon.³²⁴ This seems probable, since sexual services were also provided in the goddess's temples in Cyprus, in Corinth (in Greece), and in Eryx (in Sicily).³²⁵ Her temples and her cult in Cyprus and Cythera were based on the pattern of her temple and cult in Ashkelon. The prostitution rife in Ashkelon is mentioned in the Talmud,³²⁶ and there is also archaeological evidence to its existence. In a sewer of a bath-house from the Roman-Byzantine period which also apparently served as a brothel, more than a hundred skeletons of infants, most of them male, have been discovered. It appears that girls born there were allowed to live and brought up to be prostitutes.³²⁷ It may be that prostitution as part of the cult of Aphrodite in Ashkelon originated in Babylon. According to Herodotus, 'every woman in the land (of Babylon) has to sit in the temple of Aphrodite once in her lifetime and lie with a stranger... In some parts of Cyprus there is a similar custom.'³²⁸ The Phoenicians were influenced by the cults of Assyria and Babylon, and it may be that they adopted this custom.

Antoninus of Placentia, who travelled in the Land of Israel in the year 570 CE, wrote of 'the Ashkelonian city of Maiumas.'³²⁹ Dvorjetzki maintains that Maiumas was on the coast north of Ashkelon, where the harbour was situated, and that the people

³²² Dussaud 1912: 68–70; Ephron 1988: 308–310, and fig. p. 309; Fuks 2001: 98; Dvorjetski 2001: 109.

³²³ Rabinovitz 1949: 178, and note 40.

³²⁴ Fuks 2001: 98.

³²⁵ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII, 24, 3; Strabo, *Geographicon*, VI, 2, 26; XII, 3, 36.

³²⁶ *Jerusalem Talmud*, 'Sanhedrin', 6; Midrash Echa Rabba (Lamentations), 1: 39.

³²⁷ Stager 1991: 46–47; Faerman 1998: 861–865. On the connection of Aphrodite to bathhouses, see Friedheim 2000: 43–69; Friedheim 2006: 173–180.

³²⁸ Herodotus, *Histories*, I, 199.

³²⁹ Antoninus of Placentia, in Wilkinson 1977: 85; Hirschfeld 1990: 156.

of Ashkelon celebrated the festival of Maiumas there.³³⁰ These festivals were devoted to Aphrodite and Dionysus, the gods of fertility, and took place near springs, rivers, by the seashore and in pools, or, occasionally, in the orchestra of a theatre. They were characterized by drunkenness and licentiousness. The Maiumas apparently originated in Syria. It was celebrated in Daphne, close to Antiochia, and spread to Ostia and Rome.³³¹ It was also celebrated in The Land of Israel and Trans-Jordan: in Shuni-Maiumas near Caesarea, in 'Ein-Aharon near Sebaste, and in Birketein near Gerasa.³³² In Gaza the coastal district was called Maiumas-Gaza and the townspeople worshipped Aphrodite rising from the sea.³³³ Thus, it may well be that the Maiumas was celebrated both in Gaza and in Ashkelon. From the time of the emperor Constantius the authorities and the Christian church combined to combat it, and it was forbidden time and again. But it was still celebrated in Gerasa in the year 535 CE.³³⁴

3.3. *Derceto (Δερκετω) and Semiramis (Σεμίραμις) (figure 14)*

Ovid recounted the myth of Derceto and Semiramis in his *Metamorphoses*. '...First doubted she whether to tell the tale of Derceto /that Babylonian, who, aver the tribes/ of Palestine, in limpid ponds yet live, /her body changed, and scales upon her limbs; or how her daughter, having taken wings, /passed her declining years in whitened towers'.³³⁵ The myth was widespread as early as the fifth century BCE. According to Ctesias of Cnidus, as quoted by Diodorus of Sicily, the city of Ashkelon is in Syria and near it there is a deep lake teeming with fish. By the lake stands the temple of the famous goddess whom the Syrians call Derceto, who has the head of a woman and the body of a fish. She insulted Aphrodite, who caused her to fall in love with a young man to whom she bore Semiramis. Derceto abandoned her daughter in the desert, and cast herself into the lake, but she survived and was turned into a fish-woman. Therefore the Syrians consider fish to be sacred, and are forbidden to eat them. Semiramis was saved by doves, who nurtured her, and at the end of her life she became a dove.³³⁶ Xanthus of Lydia, of the fifth century BCE, was the source of the story told by Athenaeus of Naucratis, of the second century CE: Mopsus threw Atargatis (Derceto) together with her son Ichthys (meaning 'fish' in Greek) into a lake near Ashkelon, and both of them were eaten by fish.³³⁷ Semiramis and Derceto are both Semitic names. The former means 'lofty skies', and the latter is derived from *drkt*³³⁸, who appears in the Ugaritic writings; this word means 'power' and 'strength'.

³³⁰ Dvorjetski 2001: 99–110.

³³¹ *Leviticus Rabba*, 5: 3, Margoloth edition, p. 108; *Suidae Lexicon* 1967–1971: 308–309, No. 47; Malals, *Chronicles*, 285.

³³² Avi-Yonah 1953: 142; Dan 1986: 198–199; Segal 1999: 27–28; Shenhav 1997: 56–70; Welles 1938: 470–471; Dvorjetski 2001: 102–105.

³³³ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 60–61.

³³⁴ On the evidence of an inscription found in the excavations at Gerasa, see Welles 1938: 470–471.

³³⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IV, 44–48.

³³⁶ *Diodorus of Sicily*, II, 24, 2–2.

³³⁷ Athenaeus of Naucratis, *The Deipnosophists*, VIII, 3, 346.

³³⁸ Lipinski 1992: 95.



Figure 14. Ashkelon coin. Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE). Year 151/152 CE. Semiramis, crescent on her forehead, holding dove and scepter. At her feet Derceto, half woman half fish holding cornucopiae. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

Atargatis, who originated in the north of Syria, was a fertility goddess. In Ashkelon only she was called Derceto. Numismatic evidence from the Roman period confirms the written records. In the coins of Ashkelon a goddess is depicted wearing a long garment, standing with her body to the front and holding a dove in her hand. She stands on a sea monster holding a horn of plenty in its hands; the upper half of its body is human, and the lower half has the shape of a fish's tail. Hill³³⁹ identified this figure as Derceto standing on Triton, and his opinion has been accepted by scholars up to our own times.³⁴⁰ There is, however, a difficulty with this view, since the portrayal of Derceto as a woman on the coins does not match the literary evidence. Another interpretation, more in line with the literary sources, may be suggested: the lower figure, which is half fish and half human, is Derceto, and the upper figure, which holds a dove, is her daughter Semiramis. Support for this version may be found in Lucian of Samosata, who wrote at about 150 CE: according to him, Atargatis appeared in Hierapolis/Mabug in the form of a woman, but in Phoenicia he saw a picture in which she was portrayed as a woman in the upper part of her body and a fish from her waist downwards.³⁴¹ Our contention is further strengthened by a relief portraying a female Triton which was discovered in Edessa, another centre of the cult of Atargatis in Syria.³⁴² Lucian states that in the temple of Atargatis in Hierapolis 'between the statues of Jupiter and Juno stands the statue of a goddess...whom the Syrians call *Semeion* (σημήμιον). There is a golden dove on her head... and, therefore, some believe that she is Semiramis.'³⁴³

³³⁹ Hill 1965: 130–138, Nos. 192–201, 228–230, 238–241.

³⁴⁰ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 58–67, Nos. 175, 177–178, 183, 184, 186, 198, 200, 203, 210, 213–214, 219, 226, 2240; III, 77, No. 30; Meshorer 1984: 27; Fuks 2001: 100–101 (Fuks noted that Atargatis appears in Ashkelon only in relation to Triton); Friedheim 2001: 152.

³⁴¹ Lucian, *The Syrian Goddess*, 14.

³⁴² Drijvers 1980: 27, and plate XXI.

³⁴³ Lucian, *The Syrian Goddess*, 33.

Gods in the form of fish were also worshipped in Jaffa, Ashdod and Gaza. One of the components of the name Derceto is cetos, the name of the fish-like god in Jaffa. In Ashdod, too, in the Hellenistic period a deity whose the lower half of body was fish-shaped was worshipped. Dagon (maybe deriving from Hebrew 'fish') of Gaza apparently originated in the goddess Kubaba, KU meaning fish.³⁴⁴ The concept of the sea as a deity and as a source of life, and the aspiration to be merged into it, to save one's soul and be reborn, is also found in the cults of Jaffa and Ashkelon. Jonah enters the bowels of the fish, which symbolizes the sea, and is reborn from it, his sins forgiven. In the rites of the mysteries of Atargatis/Derceto it was permitted to eat the fish dedicated to the goddess.³⁴⁵

What, then, was the origin of the cult of Derceto and Semiramis in Ashkelon? Both of them were worshipped in both Syria and Phoenicia; but the ancient sources agree that they originated in Babylonia. Herodotus relates that Semiramis was a historical personage, a queen of Assyria and Babylon, who was famous for her building projects; and Diodorus of Sicily says that she was saved from drowning and thereafter became queen of Babylon.³⁴⁶ Lucian of Samosata in Syria participated in the rites of Atargatis in Hierapolis, recounts the belief which was current in his days, that the temple was actually built by Semiramis in honour of her mother Derceto.³⁴⁷ Semiramis was, in fact, Shamuramat, queen of Assyria and Babylonia. She was the wife of Shimshi-Adad V (823–810 BCE), and the mother of Adad-nirari III, who conducted a military expedition to Philistia in 803 BCE. She was exceptional among all the queens of Assyria in that she wielded great influence, and even raised a memorial stone to herself.³⁴⁸ The kings of Assyria set up statues of themselves and founded cults to the Assyrian gods in the cities which they conquered,³⁴⁹ and perhaps it was in this period that the cult of Semiramis originated.

Another possibility is that the people of Ashkelon adopted the cult of Semiramis while they were in exile in Babylon, and brought it back with them to their city. In 604 BCE Nebuchadnezzar II mounted an expedition against the cities of Philistia. He destroyed Ashkelon and Gaza, and exiled some of their inhabitants to Mesopotamia. There is archaeological evidence of the existence of settlements in Nippur by the name of ha-za-tu (Gaza) and is-ka-lu-nu (Ashkelon); it seems, however, that there were only a few exiles from Philistia in Mesopotamia.³⁵⁰ Moreover, it was the policy of the kings of Babylon not to break down the national and social structures of the peoples that

³⁴⁴ Dothan 1972: 13; Singer 1989: 17–41; Ziffer & Kletter 2007: 13–14.

³⁴⁵ Cumont 1959: 120–121; Friedheim 2001: 153.

³⁴⁶ Lucian, *The Syrian Goddess*, 14, and note 337 above.

³⁴⁷ The stele of Adad-nirari III in Saba'a, in Luckenbill 1968: 261, a.734.

³⁴⁸ The obelisk of Shamuramat in Qal'at Sherqat (ancient city of Assur). Luckenbill 1968: 260, b.731.

³⁴⁹ As did Sargon II in Gaza: 'I entered the city of Gaza... I created a statue in the form of the great gods, my masters, and in my royal form, in gold. I erected them in the temple of Gaza, and counted them among the gods of their land.' 'Summary Inscription' ND 400=BM 131982, lines 14–18. Galil 2001: 130–1.

³⁵⁰ The documents are of the years 455–403 BCE. See Eph'al 1978: 80–83.

they exiled, and they were permitted to organize their own affairs.³⁵¹ Cyrus king of the Medes conquered Babylon in 539 BCE. In an inscription found in Babylonia, and known as the Cyrus Cylinder, he declares that he intends to return the exiles to their lands of origin, and to restore ancient temples and cults throughout his empire.³⁵² The Jews returned to Judah, and it is very possible that the exiles from Philistia also returned to their cities. Apparently the Persians were interested in settling faithful and grateful populations close to the borders of their enemy, Egypt.³⁵³ It is also probable that they encouraged the people of Philistia to renew their maritime and commercial activity in order to increase the revenues of the rulers of the empire. In the light of this situation one can understand how ancient Philistine elements (such as Philistine Astarte *Ἀστάρτη Παλαιστίνη*) continued to exist in the religious practices of Ashkelon during the Hellenistic and Roman period, and how cultic influences from Mesopotamia were absorbed there.

In the cult of Atargatis and Semiramis at Hierapolis the Babylonian connection was emphasized. Lucian relates that twice every year the statue of Semiramis was carried in a procession to the sea. In the course of the ceremony 'not only the priests, but people from all over Syria and Arabia and beyond the river Euphrates come to the sea-coast and bring water from there to the temple.'³⁵⁴ It is of great significance that her worshippers were not only Greeks and Romans, but came from all parts of Mesopotamia.

3.4. Dove (figure 15)

Dove worship was particularly important in Ashkelon. The dove was sacred to Aphrodite, and also the companion of Semiramis and Derceto. It appears on the coins of the city from the time they were first struck in the Seleucid period as a symbol of the city's coins and its mint. Doves also accompanied the city goddess, Tyche/Fortuna, who was identified with Aphrodite: she stand next to the goddess, or perch on her arm.³⁵⁵ A dove also appears on a *tessara* which was found in the city.³⁵⁶ In Ashkelon a tomb decorated with wall paintings, known as 'the Nymphs' tomb' because of the two nymphs painted on the wall opposite the entrance, has been uncovered. On its vaulted ceiling are depicted young men or *erotes*³⁵⁷ harvesting grapes, and many doves can be

³⁵¹ Zadok 1978: 61–62.

³⁵² Pritchard 1954: 315–316.

³⁵³ Tadmor and Fuks assume that those exiled from Ashkelon were permitted to rebuild the ruins of their city, as were the Jews. Fuks 2001: 14.

³⁵⁴ Lucian, *The Syrian Goddess*, 13. Millar points out that throughout the Roman period Hierapolis/Mabug retained its Semitic name, unlike the other cities in the north of the province of Syria. In its coins the ancient local character of the cult of Atargatis was emphasised. In the second and third centuries CE the goddess appears on them with the inscription *ΘΕΑΣ ΣΥΡΙΑΣ ΙΕΡΑΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ* ('of the Syrian goddess of the Hierapolitans'): Millar 1993: 236–242.

³⁵⁵ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 35, Nos. 3, 4, 6–8; 38, Nos. 25, 26. Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 58–67, Nos. 75–178, 183–184, 198, 202, 210, 212.

³⁵⁶ Decloedt 1914: 445, plate XI, no. 23.

³⁵⁷ Michaeli 2001: 181–182.



Figure 15. Ashkelon coin (2nd century BCE). Aphrodite head to right wearing stephane and earring, hair in chignon, border of dots. On reverse, ΑΣ (Ascalon) above dove standing to left, border of dots. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

seen between the vine tendrils. Here, in the context of the tomb, the dove apparently symbolizes the immortality of the soul.³⁵⁸

Other cities throughout the Mediterranean region which were centres of the cult of Aphrodite also displayed doves on their coins. A coin of Paphos, in Cyprus, depicts the temple of Aphrodite with doves on its roof.³⁵⁹ On a coin of Eryx, in Sicily, dated 400 BCE Aphrodite/Venus is depicted sitting on a throne and holding a dove.³⁶⁰ In Carthage, as in Ashkelon, Aphrodite was called *Ourania* or *Caelestis* (heavenly), and the doves were sacred to her. Philo of Alexandria says that when he visited Ashkelon ‘I saw a great crowd of doves at the street corners and in every single house. When I asked the reason, I was told that it was forbidden to trap them, for the inhabitants have long been forbidden to consume their flesh.’³⁶¹ Lucian of Samosata tells of a similar phenomenon in Hierapolis/Mabug. There, too, there were great masses of doves both in the open and inside the citizens’ houses. They were considered to be sacred, and it was forbidden to eat them or even to touch them.³⁶²

3.5. *Tyche/Fortuna/Isis (Ισις)* (figures 16–19)

The Greek Tyche, like the Roman Fortuna with whom she was identified, filled the double role of the goddess of luck and chance and the city goddess. She manifested the identity of the citizen body, and the link between the fate or fortune of each individual and that of his city. To the Greek and Roman mind the capriciousness of fortune was linked with the sea, which was equally capricious. The lives and welfare of those who embarked on a dangerous sea voyage depended on the good grace of Tyche; and hence in the Phoenician cities Astarte/Aphrodite, the principal goddess, came to be united with Tyche/Fortuna. On their coins Astarte/Tyche/Fortuna stands

³⁵⁸ Semiramis also turned into a dove after drowning in the lake near Ashkelon.

³⁵⁹ Price & Trell 1977: 266.

³⁶⁰ Jenkins 1966: 19, plate 5.

³⁶¹ Philo of Alexandria, *On Providence*, II, 64.

³⁶² Lucian, *The Syrian Goddess*, 54.



Figure 16. Ashkelon coin. Municipal Coinage (81–96 CE). Turreted and veiled bust of Tyche to right. On reverse, prow of galley to left; above, ΑΣ (Ascalon). Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

on the deck of a ship and holds in her hands parts of a ship such as an *aphlaston* or a steering oar. Meshorer considers that in Ashkelon, too, Tyche was identified with Astarte/Aphrodite.³⁶³ R. Avner and Finkielsztein maintain, on the other hand, that Tyche, who possesses marked maritime characteristics, should not be identified with Astarte/Aphrodite *Ourania*.³⁶⁴ Without this connection, however, it is hard to explain why the dove, a distinctive symbol of Aphrodite, appears as a permanent feature of the city goddess. The Greeks and Romans very frequently connected Aphrodite with Tyche, and Venus with Fortuna. According to Plutarch and Pausanias one needed good fortune to succeed in love; therefore Tyche is often accompanied by *erotes* and altars, statues and temples to both these goddesses were erected in close proximity.³⁶⁵

From 200 BCE onwards the coins of Ashkelon portray a bust of Tyche on their obverse, and a warship, a symbol of nautical power, on their reverse. They reflect the settled consciousness of the community which found expression only after it had been freed from the burden of Ptolemaic rule. In the Seleucid period the city was granted the status of a *polis*, and began to flourish economically and politically. Tyche wore a mural crown with towers. Her head was turned to the right, her nape veiled, and her hair gathered behind her head.³⁶⁶ On a coin dated 168 BCE a spear is depicted behind her shoulder.³⁶⁷ This may be an expression of Ashkelon's support for Antiochus IV Epiphanes's military expedition against Egypt between 170 and 167 BCE. In 104 BCE Ashkelon was freed from its subjection to the Seleucid regime, and numbered the years of its official existence from that time: from then on its coins bore the word 'autonomous'. This was an appropriate description of its status, since it was never conquered by the Hasmoneans. After Pompey's conquest of the Land of Israel in 63 BCE Ashkelon was annexed to the province of Syria, and granted several rights such as exemption from taxes (which was also granted only to Tyre and Sidon) and

³⁶³ Meshorer 1984: 26.

³⁶⁴ Avner 1991: 54; Finkielsztein 1992:

³⁶⁵ Plutarch, 'The Fortune of Rome', 4; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I, 36, 6.

³⁶⁶ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 34, Nos. 1–2; 35, Nos. 3, 4, 10, 11; 36, 12, 13.

³⁶⁷ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 24, No. 2



Figure 17. Ashkelon coin. Domitian (81–96 CE). Year 94/95 CE. Bust of Tyche to right, veiled; AC (Ascalon). On reverse, War-galley. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

the prestigious and rare status of *colonia*. From the time of Augustus, however, the word ‘autonomous’ ceased to appear on its coins. At the same time the bust of Tyche no longer appeared on its coins, and the city goddess was portrayed as the Roman Fortuna, dressed in a long *chiton* and a *peplos*. She had one singular feature: the mural crown on her head, which was an attribute of Tyche rather than Fortuna. It seems that this was a relic of the city’s former autonomy. The goddess, facing left, stands on the deck of an oared warship, grasping an *aphlaston*³⁶⁸ in her left hand and a spear in her right. In the background on her right there is a dove. She was also depicted in this way in the days of Tiberius.³⁶⁹ At the time of Caligula the dove appeared on her right and the altar on her left, between her and the spear.³⁷⁰ During the reigns of Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian and Trajan the altar appeared to the left of the spear.³⁷¹ In



Figure 18. Ashkelon coin. Caracalla (212–217 CE). Year 215–217 CE. Isis bust to right, wearing hemhem crown and holding flail and scepter, upon three lions’ heads. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

³⁶⁸ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 43, No. 74.

³⁶⁹ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 43, No. 74; 45, Nos. 83–86

³⁷⁰ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 45, No. 88; 46, Nos. 89–94; 47, No. 96; 48, Nos. 107–119; 49, Nos. 112–117; 50, Nos. 121, 124; 51, No. 134; 52, No. 138; 53, Nos. 143, 147, 148; 54, Nos. 150, 152; 56, Nos. 163–165.

³⁷¹ Rosenberger 1972–1977: III, 75, Nos. 17–20; 76, Nos. 21–26; 77, No. 27.



Figure 19. Ashkelon. Tyche/ Fortuna/Isis relief from the Roman *basilica*. Second century CE. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Photographer: Simona Rodan.

72 CE the bust of Tyche again appeared, apparently in honour of Ashkelon's support for the Roman regime at the time of the Great Revolt, and its active military support against the Jews.

It is always possible to discern considerable Egyptian influence on the cults of Ashkelon, as a result of its geographical proximity and its economic and political connections with the city, which existed in every period. In Phoenicia Astarte was united with Isis, the principal Egyptian goddess — for instance, in Gabel/Byblos, which maintained close commercial and cultural ties with Egypt as early as the Early Bronze Age.³⁷² The cult of Isis was also practised in Ashkelon. She is portrayed on many of the city's coins, standing on lions' heads or together with her spouse, Osiris. He was the god of vegetation and resurrection and was connected to wine in Egypt. Their cult persisted in Ashkelon since the Iron Age; bronze figurines of the couple and libation vessels dated to the late seventh century BCE, can indicate the existence of a sanctuary dedicated to them.³⁷³

³⁷² On the union of Astarte and Isis see Trell 1982–1983: 132–5. On the commercial links between Gebal and Ashkelon see Stager 1993: 101, and Gufna & Lipschitz 2001: 61–3. Two identical basalt statues in Egyptian/Phoenician style from the tenth to seventh century BCE have been discovered: one in the harbour of Byblos and the other in the sea off Ashkelon. Vargon 1990: 35.

³⁷³ Meshorer 1984: 28, No. 52; the cultic figurines are displayed in Rockefeller Museum exhibition 'Ashkelon: A Retrospective'. July 11, 2016–June 30, 2018.

In the Oxhyrynchus Papyrus no. 1380 one of the appellations of Isis is ‘the mightiest [goddess] of Ashkelon’.³⁷⁴ In the excavations of the city a burial pit was discovered containing dozens of gold-plated bronze figurines from the time of the Thirtieth Dynasty or the beginning of the Ptolemaic period.³⁷⁵ During the Ptolemaic period, in Egypt and the region under its influence Isis, Tyche and Aphrodite were combined and became a single deity which ruled over the whole world. After the construction of Alexandria and its harbour Isis also functioned as the defender of harbours, and was called *Pharia* after the lighthouse located in the harbour, on the island of *Pharos*. She was also called *Pelagia*, from *pelagos*, sea, and was considered to be the patron goddess of seafarers and sea voyages. In Italy Isis was united with Venus and Fortuna from the first century BCE, and became the patron goddess of leaders such as Sulla, Pompey, and Julius Caesar.³⁷⁶

In 1921 Garstang uncovered a basilical building in the city centre of ancient Ashkelon about 110 metres long and 35 metres wide. At its southern end there was an apse with benches and two adjacent rooms, which was identified as the *bouleuterion*, the city’s council house. Within it there were found remains of columns, Corinthian capitals and fragments of statues, and two inscriptions regarding decrees of the *boule* and the *demos* of Ascalon. Garstang dated it to the first century CE, but according to Krug and Fischer it was built in the early third century CE.³⁷⁷ In Rosenfeld’s view the *basilica* was also used for commercial activities.³⁷⁸ Under the Severan dynasty, the apse was enlarged and served also as an *odeon*, for musical shows and poetry competitions. There were discovered four marble pilasters four metres high, with four reliefs of female figures on their fronts. In Stager’s view the *basilica* had a single story and the pilasters were situated at the side of the front doors, whereas Fischer maintained that they were situated on the third floor of the building, which was thirty metres high, surmounted by a pediment, since their great length made a good view from ground level possible.³⁷⁹ Three of the figures are winged, and the edges of their garments are wrapped around them as if they were flying. One of them holds a wreath, and stands on a globe held on the shoulders of a kneeling Atlas. The second figure holds a wreath and a palm branch. Of the third figure, only the part between the waist and the ankles survives. Most scholars hold that each figure represents Nike/Victoria, the goddess of victory.³⁸⁰ Glueck maintains that the goddess standing on the globe is Tyche.³⁸¹ On the fourth pilaster two figures are carved: the principal figure is in the centre, and at her side, behind her right shoulder, there is the figure of a child. Most scholars consider that these figures are Tyche/Isis and Horus/Harpocrates.³⁸² Only the upper

³⁷⁴ Grenfell & Hunt 1915: XI.1380.

³⁷⁵ Illiffe 1933: 61–68.

³⁷⁶ Meyboon 1995: 90.

³⁷⁷ Fischer 1995: 147.

³⁷⁸ Rosenfeld 1990: 108–109.

³⁷⁹ Fischer 1995: 147.

³⁸⁰ Stager 1991: 44; Fischer 1995: 147.

³⁸¹ Glueck 1965: 432.

³⁸² Garstang 1924: 28; Stager 1991: 44; Rosenfeld 1990: 109; Fischer 1995: 141–147; Le Blanc 2010.

part of her body, down to her waist, has survived. Her hair is parted in the middle, and combed back from the forehead and the sides, and it reaches down to her shoulders. She wears a *chiton* with short sleeves and a V-shaped opening at the neck, and over it a robe with 'Isis knot' in the middle of the chest, characteristic of the goddess Isis. Her arms stretch down close to her body, but her hands have not survived. On her head she wears a wreath, and has a round decoration on her forehead. On top of this she wears a high crown with a crescent and ears of corn, the characteristic crown of Isis. There are no indications of a horn of plenty, and it may be that she held a rudder in her right hand.³⁸³

The maritime associations of Tyche/Fortuna/Isis are emphasized on the coins of Ashkelon. Commercial and maritime activities contributed greatly to the city's prosperity, and it was natural that a statue of the goddess was chosen to decorate the building where the merchants and dignitaries of the city met. There was also found in Ashkelon a clay figurine of a bust of Tyche/Isis from the Roman period, 14 centimetres high and 9 centimetres wide.³⁸⁴ It is flat, with holes on the back, and seems to have been designed to hang on a wall. Tyche wears a high crown, and a dress in the style of that of Tyche/Fortuna/Isis in the relief in the council-house. Apparently this figurine was used for apotropaic worship in a private house. It shows that private worship of the goddess of good fortune was widespread, in addition to the official public cult maintained by the city authorities.

3.6. Poseidon (figure 20)

Poseidon, the Greek god of water and the sea, was identified in Phoenicia with El and Ba'al-Tsafon, and in Rome with Neptune. His attributes were a trident, with which he stirred up storms in the sea, and a dolphin, the symbol of a calm sea. The horse



Figure 20. Ashkelon coin. Marcus Aurelius (139–161 CE). Year 158/159 CE. Poseidon standing left, right foot on a rock, holding dolphin and trident. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

³⁸³ On the attributes of Isis, see also Flusser 1972–1975: 8–12.

³⁸⁴ The clay figurine is displayed in the National Maritime Museum in Haifa. See Flusser 1969: 27, and plate IV, No. 7.

was sacred to the sea god, both in Greece and in Phoenicia. The prows of Phoenician ships were shaped like horses' heads, and the Greeks called them *hippoi* (horses).³⁸⁵ In the Isthmus of Corinth the Isthmian games in honour of Poseidon were celebrated every other year. In the fourth century BCE Lysippos created a huge statue of Poseidon there, with his foot on the prow of a ship, holding a trident and a dolphin. Many copies of it in bronze and marble were made, and it appeared on the coins of many cities, including Ashkelon (see below).

Poseidon was of great importance in Syria and Phoenicia. In a bilingual first century CE inscription from Palmyra he was identified with El Koneh Ra'a (the creator of the earth).³⁸⁶ El was the supreme god in the pantheon of Ugarit, and the above mentioned bilingual inscription from Karatepe³⁸⁷ shows that he was identified with Ea, the Sumero-Babylonian god of water.³⁸⁸ In the Roman period Poseidon was the principal god of Berytus (modern Beirut). In Phoenicia Poseidon was also identified with Ba'al-Tsafon (from the root tsadi, feh, heh, to watch, to watch over), the god of storms.³⁸⁹ In a treaty of Ba'al king of Tyre with Esarhaddon those who infringe the treaty are threatened with storms sent by Ba'al-Tsafon to wreck their ships.³⁹⁰ The centre of his cult was in Har Tsafon (Mount Cassius), or Jebel el-Akra, north of Ugarit (today's Ras Shamra), which served as a reference point for sailors by virtue of its height, 1,700 metres. According to the Bible there was also a settlement called Ba'al-Tsafon on the northern coast of Sinai, apparently in honour of the the marine storm god who protected the Canaanite sailors who plied along the coast.³⁹¹ A bronze statuette of a bull-calf with a silver overlay, dated to the sixteenth century BCE was found in Ashkelon at the foot of the Canaanite rampart, just outside the city gate. It was housed in a cylindrical ceramic shrine and has been identified as a representation of Ba'al-Tsafon. Like him Poseidon was known as *Taurus* (bull) and *taurinus* (bull-like).

Sailors and merchants from Ashkelon worshipped the ruler of the sea. On the island of Delos, in a temple of the Ashkelonian gods dating from the end of the second century BCE, there was found a round altar with the inscription 'Dedicated by Philostratos son of Philostratos from Ashkelon in the name of the city of the Ashkelonians and in the name of his wife and children to Poseidon the Ashkelonian.'³⁹² The god of the sea often appears on the coins of the city, and this attests to the crucial importance of maritime activity in the commerce and worship of the city. Sometimes he appears in the likeness of the Corinthian statue.³⁹³ But from the time of Macrinus (217–218 CE) his image became different and distinctive: he stands facing forward, his head turned to

³⁸⁵ Strabo, *Geographicon*, II, 3, 4; Ringel 1984: 50, No. 60.

³⁸⁶ Cantineau 1938: 97–98.

³⁸⁷ Teixidor 1977: 42.

³⁸⁸ Teixidor 1977: 43.

³⁸⁹ Lipinski 1995: 59.

³⁹⁰ Pettinato 1975: 152, line 10.

³⁹¹ *Exodus*, 14: 10.

³⁹² *ID* 1720, 1721.

³⁹³ Meshorer 1984: 27, No. 46.

the left, dressed in a garment which reaches the soles of his feet. In his right hand he holds a dove, and below it is depicted a swimming dolphin. He leans on a trident held in his left hand.³⁹⁴ It may be that the dove, a distinctive symbol of Ashkelon, denotes local traditions and characteristics of his cult. Perhaps his cult was joined to that of Aphrodite, the goddess of the sea, to whom the dove was sacred. It seems, too, that when Philostratos emphasized the word 'Ashkelonian' in his dedication to Poseidon his intention was to pay homage to the special god of his home city.

3.7. *Heracles (Ἡρακλῆς) (figure 21)*

The Greek hero Heracles was worshipped in Ashkelon during the Roman period. He was the son of Zeus by Alcmene, a mortal woman, and granted supernatural strength, aided by which he saved mankind from the depredations of pirates, wild beasts and monsters. After his death he was granted the status of a god. In Roman and Greek art he is depicted as a muscular man, bearded and holding a club. He is usually naked, or wears the skin of the Nemean lion which he slew. Heracles was identified with the Phoenician god Melqart, (Milk-Qart, the King of the City), patron god of the city and harbour of Tyre. Melqart was thought to have invented the extraction of dye from the purple snail, and this legend is portrayed on the coins of Tyre.³⁹⁵ His cult spread with the foundation of Tyrian settlements round the Mediterranean. In his temple in Gades (now Cadiz) in Spain there stood two brass columns 36 metres high,³⁹⁶ which reflected light at a distance and served as a landmark for sailors. Melqart was considered to be the protector of ships and seaways, and dangerous spots, such as headlands, were dedicated to him and named after him.³⁹⁷ He was often portrayed as a bearded man riding on a sea-horse.³⁹⁸ In Mesopotamia Heracles was identified with Nergal, the



Figure 21. Ashkelon coin. Macrinus (217–218 CE). Herakles, naked, standing left, holding Nike/Victoria in right hand, club in left hand. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

³⁹⁴ Ringel 1984: 24, No. 9.

³⁹⁵ Bodenheimer 1947: 305; Ribichini 1997: 128.

³⁹⁶ Strabo, *Geographicon*, III, 5, 5.

³⁹⁷ Brody 1998: 33–37.

³⁹⁸ Ringel 1984: 58, No. 77.

patron god of merchants and markets.³⁹⁹ Heracles, too, was associated with the sea, since he travelled all over the world to fulfill his tasks, and he became the protector of travellers and seafarers. In the course of his travels he fought with sea monsters such as Nereus and Triton.⁴⁰⁰

There is a variety of archaeological evidence for the cult of Heracles in Ashkelon. He appears on a *tessera* from the Roman period which was discovered in the city, standing naked and turned to his left. On the palm of his right hand there is a small Nike/Victoria, and in his left hand he holds a club.⁴⁰¹ The head of a statue of a bearded Heracles has also been found in Ashkelon.⁴⁰² A Greek inscription from Abu-Qir in Egypt dated 228 CE reads: ‘In honour of Zeus Helios Serapis who dwells in Canopus, I, Marcus Aurelius Maximus, a Syrian born in Ashkelon, raised in good fortune the statue of the patron god of my birthplace, Heracles Belos the invincible,⁴⁰³ for the sake of my brother (and my father), Marcus Aurelius Gaius, and for the sake of my wife...’. It may be that the name Belos is connected with the river Belos, the name which the Romans gave to the Na‘aman river, close to ‘Akko/Ptolemais. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods this river was associated with Heracles, since it was on its bank that he found the medicine which healed the wound he received in his battle with the Hydra. Heracles was worshipped in ‘Akko/Ptolemais, and its Greek name *Ake*, is connected with the Greek word *ἀχη*, cure.⁴⁰⁴

Heracles also appears on the coins of Ashkelon, from the year 178/9 CE onwards.⁴⁰⁵ Scholars disagree about the origins and nature of his cult in Ashkelon. Friedheim claims that Heracles/Belos of Ashkelon is an Aramaic-Syrian god, parallel to Malach-Bel, the emissary of the god Bel. In his view, Tyrian influence in Ashkelon during the Persian period explains the similarity between Melqart of Tyre and Heracles of Ashkelon.⁴⁰⁶ Bonnet, too, believes that the cult of Heracles in Ashkelon was based on that of Melqart in Tyre.⁴⁰⁷ Fuks, however, considers that the connection between Heracles and Melqart in Ashkelon is questionable, and asks ‘Where was Melqart/Heracles hiding in Ashkelon in the hundreds of years between the Persian period, when Tyre was influential in Ashkelon, and the end of the second century CE? Why does he not appear on the city’s coins earlier?’⁴⁰⁸

In my view, the reason for Heracles’s appearance in Ashkelon was political. Di-Segni⁴⁰⁹ surmised that the family of Marcus Aurelius Maximus had been granted Roman

³⁹⁹ Lipinski 1992: 242–243.

⁴⁰⁰ Luce 1922: 174–192; Barringer 1995: 155–162.

⁴⁰¹ Decloedt 1914: 444, No. 18.

⁴⁰² Gersht 1982: No. 68.

⁴⁰³ *Θεον πατριδ[ον] μου Ἡρ[ακ]λη Βηλον ανεικτον.*

⁴⁰⁴ Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnika*, 59.10–60.8.

⁴⁰⁵ Hill 1965: 138, No. 244; 139, No. 250; Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 65, No. 227; III, 78, No. 35; Fuks 2001: 104.

⁴⁰⁶ Friedheim 2001: 156–158.

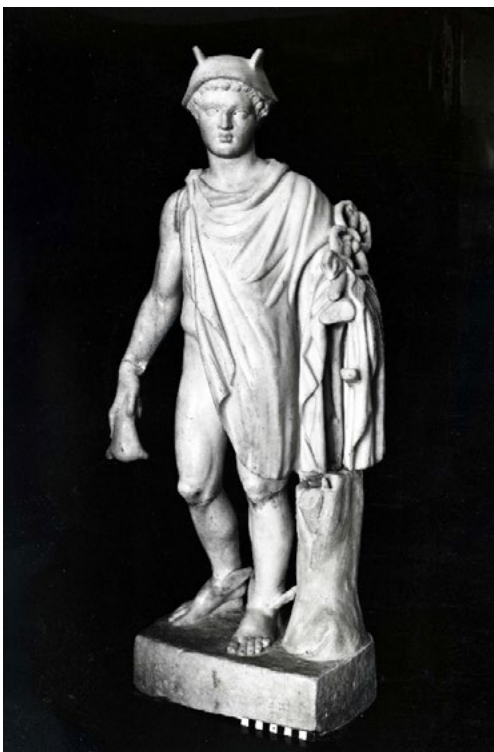
⁴⁰⁷ Bonnet 1988: 130–131.

⁴⁰⁸ Fuks 2001: 104.

⁴⁰⁹ Di-Segni 1990: 87, No. 39.

citizenship, already in the time of the Antonine dynasty (before Caracalla granted it in 212 CE to all the free inhabitants of the empire). That is why he and his father bore the *praenomen* Marcus and the *nomen* Aurelius.⁴¹⁰ Commodus, the son of Marcus Aurelius, was particularly devoted to Heracles. He identified with the god, so much so that he used to fight in the arena dressed in a lion's skin and wielding a club; there are coins and likewise the famous marble statue (now in the Capitoline Museums, Rome) depicting him in this guise.⁴¹¹ It may be that the cult of Heracles was introduced into Ashkelon and appeared on its coins from 178/9 onwards in deference to Commodus. He ruled as co-emperor with his father from 177 until the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 CE. Thus, in the inscription quoted above there is a declaration of loyalty by the family of M. Aurelius Maximus to the deity worshipped by the emperor who granted them citizenship — who became the god of their hometown, in M. Aurelius Maximus own lifetime.

3.8. *Hermes (Ερμής)* (figure 22)



The Greek god Hermes was identified with the Roman Mercurius. He was the messenger of the gods, and the guide and protector of travellers. Thus, for instance, he protected Priam on his journey to recover the body of Hector from Achilles.⁴¹² Hermes was also a trader, and is often portrayed with a bag of money in his hand.⁴¹³ It was, therefore, natural that he should be considered the protector of commercial routes and seaways, and the patron of merchants. In the Roman period many merchant ships bore his name.⁴¹⁴ He was frequently portrayed accompanying Tyche/Fortune; together they assured mortals of wealth.⁴¹⁵ Statues of Hermes have been

Figure 22. Hermes statue from Ashkelon. Roman period. Courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority. Photographer: Clara Amit.

⁴¹⁰ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, LXXVIII, 9.

⁴¹¹ Grant 1967: plate 8, fig. 1.

⁴¹² Homer, *Iliad*, XXIV, 334–468.

⁴¹³ Daremberg-Saglio 1962–1968: III, 1624, fig. 4853.

⁴¹⁴ Casson 1971: 358.

⁴¹⁵ Daremberg-Saglio 1962–1968: III, 1819, fig. 4960.

found in commercial cities close to caravan routes, both inland (in Petra and Nysa-Scythopolis) and in the port city of Dor/Dora.⁴¹⁶ He was apparently also worshipped in Ashkelon, whose prosperity was based on trade. A marble statue of the Roman period, 85 centimetres in height, has been discovered in the city.⁴¹⁷ In his right hand the god holds a bag of money, and in his left a *caduceus*, his winged staff. On his feet he wears winged sandals, and on his head a *petassos*, a winged hat. It may be that this statue was meant to adorn the house of a local merchant,⁴¹⁸ or that it embellished a commercial building, such as one of the *basilicas* in which, according to Rabbi Pinkhas ben Yair, wheat was sold.⁴¹⁹

Hermes also served as *psychopompos*, whose responsibility was to escorted newly deceased souls to the world of the dead. He is depicted on a lead coffin of the early fourth century CE from Ashkelon.⁴²⁰ The length of the coffin is decorated with columns between which are images of Hermes. On its short side Hermes stands beneath an arch in which a Gorgon is depicted.

Hermes/Mercurius does not appear on the coins of Ashkelon, but it seems that he is represented by his characteristic symbol, the *caduceus*, which does appear on the city's coins.⁴²¹ It may be that the *caduceus* also had political significance. These coins were struck in the first half of the first century BCE, when Ashkelon maintained close ties with Antipatros and Herod. Herod built magnificent public buildings in the city.⁴²² It is surmised that it was in the mint of Ashkelon that Herod struck his first coins as king of Judah.⁴²³ The winged *caduceus* often appears on Herod's coins throughout his reign, sometimes alone, and sometimes between two horns of plenty. But whereas in Akko/Ptolemais the *caduceus* was the symbol of the city mint, and appeared frequently on its coins from the first century BCE until the mint was closed, in Ashkelon it does not appear after the reign of Herod. This hypothesis is supported by a lead *tessera* of the Roman period found in Ashkelon, on which is depicted a winged *caduceus* and the name of Herod.⁴²⁴

3.9. The Dioscuri (Διόσκουροι)

The Dioscuri (sons of Zeus), the twins Castor Κάστωρ and Pollux Πολυδεύκης, were worshipped in Ashkelon. They were the children of Zeus by Leda, the wife of Tyndareus king of Sparta, and the brothers of Helen. Castor was a horseman, and Pollux a

⁴¹⁶ Ephroni 1993: 79, Nos. 78, 102, 119–120.

⁴¹⁷ The statue apparently originated in Ashkelon. It was bought from a dealer in antiques and stands in the Israel Museum: Bulletin of the Palestine Museum No. 1, Jerusalem 1924, 61; quoted by Fuks 2001: 115 and note 115.

⁴¹⁸ Vermule & Anderson 1981: 11; Fuks 2001: 115.

⁴¹⁹ *Jerusalem Talmud*, 'Sheviit', 16, 1.

⁴²⁰ Avi-Yonah 1935: 94–95 and plate LVII.

⁴²¹ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 39, Nos. 40–42; 73, No. 5. On Hermes/Mercury as a secondary component of the Syrian divine trinity in Ashkelon, see Friedheim 2001: 154.

⁴²² Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, I, 21, 11.

⁴²³ Rappaport 1978: 85–88.

⁴²⁴ Declodt, 'Seals', 445. Declodt also considers that the *tessera* was from Herod's mint.

wrestler.⁴²⁵ They appear on the coins of Ashkelon from the reign of Antoninus Pius onward (from 150/151 CE). They stand side by side, with their bodies facing forward and their heads turned towards each other. They are depicted as soldiers, dressed in a short chiton, with a *chlamis* (cloak) rolled up on their backs. Each of them leans with one hand on a spear pointed downwards, and with the other holds a *parazonium*, a short sword. Above them, in the centre, is a crescent moon pointing upwards. Sometimes there is a star above both their hats.⁴²⁶ The Dioscuri were the patrons of sea travel, since the heavenly elements were vital for orientation and navigation on the seas. In the 33 Homeric Hymn, 'To the Dioscuri', the poet describes the ceremony conducted by the sailors as they set off on their voyage, when they call upon them and vow to sacrifice white lambs.⁴²⁷ At times of danger, when the strong winds and waves of the sea cast the ship down beneath the waters they suddenly appear, raised in the air on their golden wings, and at once bring to an end the wrath of the winds and storms, and repair the chaos of the waves.⁴²⁸ The poet says that the Dioscuri are a sign of rescue from disaster: navigators have only to see them, and they find rest from their toil and suffering, and rejoice.⁴²⁹

3.10. Pan (*Παν*) (figure 23)

The great number of archaeological findings relating to Pan in Ashkelon testifies to his importance there. On a marble medallion found in Bir a-Sumeil (probably brought there from Ashkelon) there is a relief with a bust of Pan. He has the chest and shoulders of a man, and wears a garment which leaves half of his chest bare. He is bearded, and has the ears of a goat. His mouth is open, which has led to the



Figure 23. Pan relief from Ashkelon. Roman period. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Photographer: Clara Amit.

⁴²⁵ *Homeric Hymn*, 33: 'To the Dioscuri', lines 1–6.

⁴²⁶ Hill 1965: 132, Nos. 206–207; Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 57, No. 171; Meshorer 1984: 28, No. 51.

⁴²⁷ *Homeric Hymns*, 33: 'To the Dioscuri', lines 7–10.

⁴²⁸ *Homeric Hymns*, 33: 'To the Dioscuri', lines 11–15.

⁴²⁹ *Homeric Hymns*, 33: 'To the Dioscuri', lines 16–17.

surmise that the medallion was a decoration of a fountain, and the water issued from Pan's mouth.⁴³⁰ The artistic quality of this piece is high, and it appears that it was imported to Ashkelon from Aphrodisias, in Caria (in today's Turkey). It has been dated to the years 220–225 CE.⁴³¹ A lintel, which is decorated with a relief of grape clusters and vine tendrils, has also been discovered in Ashkelon. On the right side, in an oval frame, Pan is portrayed standing and facing forward. He has the chest, shoulders and arms of a man, the horns of a goat on his head, and the body of a goat from the waist downwards. In the centre of the lintel sits a bearded man, dressed in a long garment, turned to the right and looking at Pan. He may be Dionysus. The lintel was apparently made locally.⁴³² The torso of a marble statue found in Ashkelon may also be of Pan.⁴³³ In a wall painting in the so-called 'Tomb of the Nymphs', on the dome of the ceiling, is a picture of a man, perhaps Pan, playing a *syrinx* (Pan pipe), with naked youths harvesting grapes next to him.⁴³⁴

Fuks doubts whether the cult of Pan, the god of shepherds and flocks, was practised in Ashkelon. In his view, the unusual figure of a god half goat and half man stimulated the imagination of a number of artists.⁴³⁵ Friedheim believes that there was no independent cult of Pan in Ashkelon, but that it was part of the cult of Dionysus, to the existence of which the paintings in the 'Tomb of the Nymphs' attest.⁴³⁶ Be that as it may, it is possible that Pan was worshipped in Ashkelon because of his maritime character. In Greek mythology he was the symbol of sexuality and fertility, like Aphrodite and was therefore also associated with water and the sea. He was also the god of the sea in his capacity as *Pantocrator*, the ruler of all things. In the thenth Orphic hymn Pan is called 'strong... the substance of the whole... marine... from whom the world began... Whose various parts by thee inspired, combine in endless dance and melody divine'. He is 'the world's great ruler., the unwearied waters of the rolling sea, profoundly spreading, yield to thy decree. Old Ocean too reveres thy high command, whose liquid arms begirt the solid land'.⁴³⁷ Pan was considered to be the protector of the shores, and hence was known as Παν ὁ ἄκτιος (Pan of the shores). Fishermen worshipped him as god of the coasts and the reefs of the sea. Aeschylus says that he brings fruitfulness to the sea and shore of Salamis.⁴³⁸ The Greeks thought that the waves of the sea were like leaping goats covered in wool: hence the name of the Aegean Sea (Αἴγαιος πελαγός): the Greek word αἶξ means both 'goat' and 'storm', and αἰγιαλος means 'the sea coast'.⁴³⁹ Longus, in his novel *Daphnis and Chloe*, says that Daphnis was rescued from pirates by playing a

⁴³⁰ Illiffe 1934: 165, and plate LXVI.

⁴³¹ Vermule & Anderson 1981: 11.

⁴³² Illiffe 1934: 165–166, and plate LXVII.

⁴³³ Gersht 1987: 80.

⁴³⁴ Michaeli 2001: 181; Friedheim 2001: 166.

⁴³⁵ Fuks 2001: 117.

⁴³⁶ Friedheim 2001: 166.

⁴³⁷ *Orphic Hymns*, X: 'to Pan'.

⁴³⁸ Aeschylus, *Persians*, 446–448.

⁴³⁹ Liddell & Scott 1985: 19, 21.

syrinx, which made the pirates fall into the sea.⁴⁴⁰ Pan's orgiastic cult took place in the bosom of nature and in caves.⁴⁴¹ Perhaps there is an echo of this in the Mishnaic story of the eighty women of Ashkelon who conducted an orgy in a cave, and attempted to tempt Shimon ben Shetah's companions (see below).⁴⁴²

3.11. *Phanebalos* (Φανηβαλος) (figure 24)

From the year 6/7 CE until 235 CE, after which no more coins were struck, there appeared on the coins of Ashkelon the figure of a god, and next to him the name ΦΑΝΗΒΑΛΟΣ (Phanebalos). No cult of a god with this name is known in any other place. He is a god of war, holds a shield and sword, and wears a helmet. Sometimes he wears a short *chiton*, sometimes a long garment, and sometimes a breastplate.⁴⁴³ He holds a palm branch, the symbol of victory. Sometimes a thunderbolt is depicted next to him. In the days of Julia Domna he is inside a temple (see below). Phanebalos is also depicted on a *tessera* from Ashkelon, with Aesculapius and Hygeia on its other side.⁴⁴⁴ Since the nineteenth century scholars have differed about the identity of Phanebalos. According to de Saulcy he was Mars, the Roman god of war. Dussaud identified him with Heracles/Belos. Ronzevalle pointed out his similarity to Helioseiros, god of the sun and war who appears on the coins of Chalcis in Syria. Seyrig thought that he was one of the war gods who originated in Arabia and were connected with the defence of the caravan trade. Hill maintained that Phanebalos was a Greek transliteration of Pene-Ba'al which meant 'face of Ba'al'. Teixidor and Kasher identify him with Apollo, while Meshorer and Shenkar think that the god was created by the conjunction of Ba'al



Figure 24. Ashkelon coin. Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE). Year 158/159 CE. The war-deity Phanebalos standing left, raising harpe in right hand, holding shield and palm-branch in left. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

⁴⁴⁰ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, I, 30.

⁴⁴¹ On the cult of Pan, see Koumanoudis 2002: 256–265.

⁴⁴² *Mishna*, 'Sanhedrin', 6, 4; *Jerusalem Talmud*, 'Sanhedrin', 6, 8, 23.

⁴⁴³ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 44, No. 80; Hill 1965: 115, No. 75.

⁴⁴⁴ Decloedt 1914: 442, No.16.

and Tanit (since ‘face of Ba‘al’ was appellation of Tanit, Ba‘al’s spouse). Finkielsztejn, on the other hand, considers him to have been Astarte/Aphrodite.⁴⁴⁵

The interpretation of ‘Phanebalos’ as ‘Pene-Ba‘al’ is unlikely. In the first place, the name of the god Ba‘al was transliterated into Greek as *βηλος*, not *βαλος*.⁴⁴⁶ Moreover, had the Greeks translated the name Pene-Baal from Phoenician they would have used the Greek letter Π rather than Φ, just as they wrote Pan, Perseus, Apollo, etc. The name of the god was apparently derived from the Greek words *φανης*, light, and *βαλλω*, to cast. Phanebalos was, therefore, a sun god. Sun worship was widespread in Syria and the Land of Israel, and it was also deeply rooted in Philistia from the time of the Sea Peoples.

Phanebalos is armed with many weapons, and is apparently also a god of war. If we consider the times of his appearances on the coins of Ashkelon it will be seen each of them has its own political and military background. He appeared for the first time in the year 6/7 CE. In the year 6 the kingdom of Judah became the Roman province of Judaea, and Archelaos was dismissed from the post of *ethnarch*. The figure of Phanebalos is a display of strength on the part of the people of Ashkelon towards their strong, domineering neighbour, which had ceased to exist as an independent state. They now felt secure under the tutelage of Rome. For many years their searing resentment of Judah, the result of their weakness and their economic dependence on that state, the cultural and religious differences between them, and its interference in their internal affairs, had been pent up. During the Ptolemaic period Ashkelon’s economic status had declined in comparison with Gaza, which had prospered thanks to its links with the Arabs and the caravans which brought perfumes and spices from Arabia and the Far East. Ashkelon is mentioned in only one of the letters of the Zenon Papyri. Whereas Gaza enjoyed the protection of the Ptolemies, and struck a large number of coins, Ashkelon produced very few coins, and her symbols express subservience and servitude: on the obverse there appear images of the kings of Egypt, and on the converse the Ptolemaic eagle, with no hint of the independence and uniqueness of the city. Ashkelon rebelled against the heavy taxes imposed by the Ptolemies and exacted by the Jewish tax farmer Joseph ben Tuviah. He put down the rebellion with a heavy hand, and executed dozens of the city’s dignitaries.⁴⁴⁷ As against this, in the days of Seleucid rule, when Gaza underwent a decline, Ashkelon flourished politically, economically and culturally. The city was granted autonomy, and began to strike great numbers of coins bearing the symbols of her maritime power and her distinctive cults.

In the days of the Hasmonean kingdom and the house of Herod there once again grew up a form of cooperation between Ashkelon and the Jews, as in the First Temple period, apparently due to Ashkelon’s economic dependence on Judah. During the reign

⁴⁴⁵ Saulcy 1874: 192; No. 2, Vespasian, no. 2; Ronzevalle 1932: 12–14; Hill 1965: lx–lxi, plate XIII 12; plate XIV, 6, 9, 14; Seyrig 1970: 96–98; Teixidor 1977: 96–97; Meshorer 1984: 27; Kasher 1985: 44; Shenkar 2009: 249; Finkielsztejn 1992: 51–58; Friedheim 2001: 154–156; Fuks 2001: 105–110.

⁴⁴⁶ Bonnet 1988: 131–132.

⁴⁴⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, XII, 6, 5.

of Shlomzion (Salome Alexandra) (76–67 BCE) her brother, Shimon ben Shetah, the spiritual leader of Judah, entered the town with a band of men and killed eighty women of Ashkelon, accusing them of prostitution and witchcraft, even though these acts had not been committed in Judah, and despite Ashkelon's autonomy and friendly relations with that power.⁴⁴⁸ Members of the Hasmonean family possessed a great deal of land, as well as palaces and houses, in the city. They felt so safe and well protected that from 55 to 49 BCE Aristoboulus II, who rebelled against Rome kept his wife, his son Antigonus and his daughters there, without their being handed over to the authorities, whereas in Antiochia his son Alexander was captured and executed.⁴⁴⁹ Herod maintained a special close relationship with Ashkelon, and built magnificent public buildings there.⁴⁵⁰ Some scholars believe that the city struck coins in his honour at the beginning of his reign, before his conquest of Jerusalem.⁴⁵¹ In contrast to his generous treatment of Ashkelon he oppressed her economic rival Gaza, which had an economic alliance with his enemies the Nabataeans; it seems that the modern harbour at Anthedon was intended to divert the profits of Gaza's maritime trade to his treasury.

After Herod's death there came about a change in the relationship between Ashkelon and the Jews. Stories told in the Mishnah show that Ashkelon displayed an exceptional hatred towards the Jews, far more than any other city in the region.⁴⁵² Its intensity so astounded Jewish historians that they declared it 'inexplicable'. Philo of Alexandria says that it was Apelles of Ashkelon who 'dropped Ashkelonian poison' in Caligula's ear and persuaded him to erect a statue of himself in the Jewish Temple in 37 CE.⁴⁵³ Phanebalos appears on the coins of Ashkelon in the year 41/42 CE, at the time of Caligula's 'Decree of the Image', in response to which the Jews were threatening to rebel. He appeared again in 67/68 CE, at the time of the Great Revolt, when the men of Ashkelon killed 2,500 Jews living in the city. The rebels responded by attacking Ashkelon, unheeding of their losses.⁴⁵⁴ Phanebalos again appeared on the coins at the time of the Jewish revolts against Trajan and Hadrian, and in the eighties of the first century CE, apparently in the wake of the Nabataean invasions of the south of the Land of Israel after the suppression of the Great Revolt. The men of Gaza and their allies, the Nabataeans, were enemies of Ashkelon no less than of the Jews. Phanebalos appears yet again in 105/106 CE, when Trajan conquered

⁴⁴⁸ *Mishna*, 6, 4; *Jerusalem Talmud*, 'Sanhedrin', 6, 8, 23.

⁴⁴⁹ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, I, 9, 2.

⁴⁵⁰ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, I, 21, 11.

⁴⁵¹ Rappoport 1978: 85–88. Fuks differs from him, and believes that it was Shomron/Samaria which provided Herod with his minting facilities. Fuks 2001: 128–129. Shalit believes that Antipater, Herod's father, had friendly relations with the city: Shalit 1978: 207.

⁴⁵² Insult to a prostitute by a colleague whose appearance was Jewish: 'Midrash Eicha Rabah', i, 39. A plot by Ashkelonians to rob the house of their Jewish neighbours: 'Midrash Shir Hashirim Rabah', vii, 2. Rabbi Joshua had to conceal the fact that he was a Jew when he visited Ashkelon. See 'Avot d'Rabbi Nathan', second version, S.Z. Shechter edition, chapter xix, pp. 41–42.

⁴⁵³ Philo of Alexandria, *Caius*, 41.

⁴⁵⁴ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, III, 2, 2–3.

Nabataea and turned it into the province of Arabia, whose western boundary ran through the Negev.⁴⁵⁵

Helioseiros, the ‘twin’ of Phanebalos, was portrayed on the coins of Chalcis during the reigns of Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and his son Commodus. Perhaps the appearance of this war god is also connected with political and military events: the campaigns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius in the east against the Parthians, whose objective was the conquest of Mesopotamia.

3.12. *Apollo (Ἀπόλλων)*

In Greece and Rome Apollo was the god of light, music and prophecy.⁴⁵⁶ Seafarers considered him to be their patron, since he was the god of sunlight, by which they guided their ships on the sea. He was also thought to be the protector of the coasts, and was known as Ἄκτιος (of the coast). Many ports throughout the Mediterranean maintained a cult to him.⁴⁵⁷ Archaeological evidence from the Hellenistic and Roman periods shows that the people of Ashkelon also worshipped him. The island of Delos, in which Apollo was born, was both the centre of his cult and a centre of international trade, and merchants from Ashkelon plied their trade there. On a wall of the forum a dedicatory inscription is incised: ‘Philostratos son of Philostratos from Ashkelon, a banker at Delos, made this dedication to Apollo and the Italians in his own name and in that of his city’. Di-Segni points out that this was a regular formula for many merchants’ dedications in Delos. They were intended to attract customers from among the many Italian merchants who settled on the island at the end of the second century BCE.⁴⁵⁸ Hirschfeld maintains that the dedication was made to Apollo as patron of the island of Delos, but Friedheim considers that the dedication was to the Ashkelonian Apollo.⁴⁵⁹ It may be that Friedheim is right, since Philostratos made dedicatory inscriptions in Delos to other gods, emphasizing their origin in Ashkelon: ‘Philistine Astarte’, and ‘Ashkelonian Poseidon’.⁴⁶⁰

It may be that the origins of the worship of the sun god in Ashkelon can be found as early as the days of the ‘Sea Peoples’. According to a tradition which was in existence in the fifth century BCE, Mopsus, the son of Apollo, who was also a prophet, was active in Ashkelon.⁴⁶¹ The house of Mopsus originated among the Danuna of Anatolia. Apparently the Danuna were related to the Danaeans and to the biblical tribe of Dan. This tribe, which settled in the coastal plain, practised sun worship. Julius Africanus, who wrote at the end of the second and the beginning of the third century CE, related

⁴⁵⁵ Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 46, No. 95; 47, No. 102; 53, No. 145.

⁴⁵⁶ Homeric Hymn, 1: ‘To Apollo’, lines 131–132, 441–442; Recio 2000: 118, 160–167.

⁴⁵⁷ Recio 2000: 118, 160–167.

⁴⁵⁸ Di-Segni 1990: 85, No. 33.

⁴⁵⁹ Hirschfeld 1990: 85, No. 34; Friedheim 2001: 162.

⁴⁶⁰ Di-Segni 1990: 85, No. 34; *ID*, 1720–1721.

⁴⁶¹ Xanthus of Lydia, in: Athenaeus of Naucratis, *Deipnosophists*, VIII, 3, 346.

that there was a temple to Apollo in Ashkelon, close to the city wall. Eusebius tells of a tradition that Herod's grandfather served in it as a slave.⁴⁶² Fuks doubts whether this story is true, but believes that the temple existed.⁴⁶³

During the excavation of the Ashkelon roman *basilica* a building was discovered close to it which Garstang identified as the temple of Apollo. It is a small building, five metres by seven, and was joined to the west side of the original council house building. His identification rested on the lower part of a statue of Apollo which was found in the building. Alabaster panels and many marble objects found on the spot indicate that it was richly decorated.⁴⁶⁴ Another statue of Apollo was found in Ashkelon in the nineteenth century, but has since been lost.⁴⁶⁵ Apollo does not appear on the coins of the city.

3.13. Asclepius (Ἀσκληπιός)

Asclepius, the son of Apollo, was the god of healing and prophecy. Archaeological and historical sources indicate that he was worshipped in Ashkelon in the Roman period. The principal centres of his cult were Epidaurus in the Peloponnese and the island of Cos, and his priests practised medicine. In 293 BCE the Romans erected a temple to Aesculapius on the island of Tiberina in the river Tiber.⁴⁶⁶ The Greeks identified Asclepius with the healing gods Eshmun and Shedrafa who were worshipped in Sidon,⁴⁶⁷ as well as Horus/Harpocrates, the son of Isis.⁴⁶⁸

A lead *tessera* has been found in Ashkelon which portrays Asclepius together with his daughter Hygeia (Health). The god stands on the right, half naked, with the lower part of his body dressed in a *himation*, leaning on a staff post with a snake coiled round it. Hygeia, on the left, feeds the snake from a libation bowl.⁴⁶⁹ On another *tessera* from Ashkelon only Hygeia appears, feeding a snake from a libation bowl.⁴⁷⁰

Ashkelon was always influenced by the culture of the neighbouring great power, Egypt. A great number of bronze figurines from the end of the Persian and the beginning of the Ptolemaic period depicting Isis and Horus/Harpocrates have been discovered in

⁴⁶² Julius Africanus was a Christian historian and geographer, born in Emmaus, Judaea, who lived in the second and third centuries CE. He wrote a *Chronographia* (History of the World) in five volumes, from the Creation until 221 CE, comparing Greek, Roman and Jewish chronologies. His work has not survived, but is quoted in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* and in the Byzantine *Chronicon Pasquale*. The story of the temple of Apollo and Herod is told in *Ecclesiastical History*, I, 6, 2.

⁴⁶³ Fuks, 2001: 112. The Christian historians' intention to besmirch the name of Herod, who tried to kill Jesus and was responsible for the 'massacre of the innocents' in Beithlehem, is quite clear.

⁴⁶⁴ Garstang 1924: 28–29, and plate II.

⁴⁶⁵ Clermont-Ganneau 1885: 221, No. 80.

⁴⁶⁶ Ovid describes how the cult was transferred to Rome as the result of an outbreak of plague in Latium. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV, 622–744.

⁴⁶⁷ Lipinski 1995: 154–155, 195–197.

⁴⁶⁸ Edelstein 1975: 225, and note 24.

⁴⁶⁹ Decloedt 1914: 442–443, No. 16.

⁴⁷⁰ Decloedt 1914: 445, No. 17.

the city.⁴⁷¹ In the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1380 Isis is described as ‘the ruler of Ashkelon’. The image of Tyche/Isis appears in a relief on a pilaster of the council house from the Roman period. A child stands next to her, dressed in a *himation* with half his chest bare, and a diadem adorned with a star on his forehead. Many scholars maintain that he is Horus/Harpocrates.⁴⁷² Krug surmised, because of the diadem with the star in its centre, which is a distinguishing feature of the priests of Serapis in Egypt, that he was a priest of the god Serapis; he was small and of childish appearance because of the artist’s lack of skill, and the restrictions of composition in the confines of the pilaster, since the figure of Tyche/Isis was apparently carved earlier, and took up most of the space.⁴⁷³ Be that as it may, the artist clearly tried to make this figure’s facial features and the bare part of his body rounded and soft in order to depict him as a child, and it is hard to assume that a child would be a priest of Isis. It may be, then, that the child is Asclepius, who is identified with Horus/Harpocrates. In Epidaurus, too, Asclepius and his father Apollo were called ‘Egyptian’, since they were identified with Horus/Harpocrates and his father Helios/Serapis.⁴⁷⁴ In Greek and Roman literature and art the god was usually described as a bearded male, dressed in a *himation* with half his chest bare, and holding a staff with a snake coiled round it. But he was sometimes described as an infant or child.⁴⁷⁵ According to the Greek myth Asclepius’s mother Coronis died while he was still an infant. His father Apollo killed her because she was unfaithful to him, but saved the child and gave him to Chiron the *Centaur*, who taught him the art of medicine.⁴⁷⁶ The Romans added to the Asclepius myth the further dimension of an infant saviour. The motif of an infant saviour is frequently found in the artistic creations of the time. One of the best known examples is Virgil’s fourth Eclogue, which the Fathers of the Church interpreted as referring to Jesus: ‘...Now the Virgin returns, the reign of Saturn returns; now a new generation descends from heaven on high. Only do you, pure Lucina, smile on the birth of the child, under whom the iron brood shall at last cease and a golden race spring up throughout the world! ...he shall have the gift of divine life, shall see heroes mingled with gods, and shall himself be seen by them...But for you, child, the earth untilled will pour forth its first pretty gifts...’⁴⁷⁷ As well as healing, Asclepius resuscitated the dead: he brought Hippolytus, the son of Theseus, back to life.⁴⁷⁸ His destiny was prophesied at the time of his birth: ‘gazing on Aesculapius, the child of Phoebus and Coronis, while her soul was gifted with prophetic voice she said: ‘O thou who wilt bestow on all the world the blessed woon of health, increase in strength! To thee shall mortals often owe their lives! to thee is given the power to raise the dead’.⁴⁷⁹ In the second century CE the sculptor Boethus created a statue of the young Asclepius which was widely acclaimed. From the third

⁴⁷¹ Illiffe 1933a: 61–68.

⁴⁷² Stager 1993: I, 106–107; Rosenfeld: 1990 108–109; Hirschfeld 1990: 146.

⁴⁷³ Krug 1995: 135–138.

⁴⁷⁴ Edelstein 1975: 225, and note 24.

⁴⁷⁵ Edelstein 1975: 225.

⁴⁷⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, II, 542–633.

⁴⁷⁷ Virgil, *Eclogues* IV, 61–62.

⁴⁷⁸ Virgil, *Aeneid*, VII, 765; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV, 535.

⁴⁷⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, II, 641–643.

century CE it stood in the temple of Aesculapius in Rome, on the Tiber.⁴⁸⁰ Under in the Late Roman Empire belief in Asclepius the saviour spread and intensified. The emperor Julian the *Apostate* (so called because he renounced Christianity) worshipped him, and composed hymns to him. He believed that Asclepius was the supreme god, parallel to the Christian Jesus: 'In his visits he stretches out his beneficent hand over the face of the earth... he is present everywhere on the face of sea and land ... he elevates the souls and bodies of sinners.'⁴⁸¹ In 363 Julian waged a campaign against the Parthians. An inscription on a column, wishing Julian victory, with the date of the same year was found in Ashkelon. The people of city were apparently expressing their support for his campaign.⁴⁸²

The Ashkelonian cult of Asclepius was famous throughout the ancient world. So thoroughly was he identified with the city that he was known as Ἀσκληπιὸς λεοντοῦχος Ἀσκαλωνιτῆς (Asclepius Leontouchos of Ashkelon) — 'he who holds' (or controls) the lion'. He appears with this enigmatic name in the Hymn of Proclus, a Neo-Platonic Athenian philosopher of the sixth century CE. Proclus became an enthusiastic follower of the god when he healed him of his illnesses, and also brought a famine in Attica to an end.⁴⁸³ In Athens the cult of Asclepius persisted even after the Christians abolished the cult of Athena and destroyed the Parthenon. In Ashkenazi's opinion, it was brought to Athens by intellectuals who emigrated from Ashkelon.⁴⁸⁴ Many scholars have attempted to interpret the epithet *leontouchos*. Finkielsztein and Lipinsky maintain that it referred to his ability to control wild animals.⁴⁸⁵ From the time of Antoninus Pius until that of Geta there appears on the coins of Ashkelon a god carrying a staff and whip, standing on three lions.⁴⁸⁶ Cook surmised that this was Asclepius *Leontouchos*, the Ashkelonian Eshmun; Hill also believed that Asclepius *Leontouchos* was identical with the Phoenician Eshmun, who stood on a lion.⁴⁸⁷ Will revealed the ethnographic origins of 'Asclepius holding the lion' in Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia, in figures such as the god holding a lion in harness in Zingirli, the god subduing lions in a relief on the palace gate at Khorsabad, and the god Rav-Ashur holding two lions in a relief at Palmyra.⁴⁸⁸ Eshmun also appears frequently in Phoenicia standing on the back of

⁴⁸⁰ Edelstein 1975: 71, 224.

⁴⁸¹ Julian, 'Against the Galileans', 319–427.

⁴⁸² Julian received a Christian education but rejected Christianity and became a pagan. He tried to revive the worship of the gods throughout the empire. He wrote: 'I worship the gods openly, and the whole mass of the troops who are returning with me worship the gods' ('Letter to Maximus the Philosopher', 20–26). During his lifetime the pagan inhabitants of Gaza and Ashkelon rioted against the Christian community in the city. The emperor forgave them, claiming that Christianity had brought only suffering to the world. In view of this, one may interpret the inscription in a different way, and regard it as an expression of support by the Ashkelonians for the imperial policy towards the Christians. Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, V. 9–11; *Chronicon Paschale*, I. 546; Hirschfeld 1990: 152.

⁴⁸³ *Marini Vita Procli*, 19.30–19.31.

⁴⁸⁴ Ashkenazi 1991: 115.

⁴⁸⁵ Finkielsztein 1986: 422; Lipinski 1995: 197–198.

⁴⁸⁶ Hill 1965: 131, Nos. 202–204; 138, No. 243; Rosenberger 1972–1977: I, 59, No. 182; 63, No. 211; 66, No. 236; Meshorer 1984, 28, No. 52; Fuks 2001: 119, fig. 28. Rosenberger calls it an 'Egyptian divinity'. According to Fuks this is Osiris, and Meshorer thinks that Osiris and Isis are standing on the backs of lions as signifying their links with similar Syrian cults.

⁴⁸⁷ Cook 1930: 180; Hill 1911–1912: 419.

⁴⁸⁸ Will 1987: 248–251, and figs. 1–3 on p. 249.

a lion. In a stella at Amrit the Phoenician god of healing Shedrafa (name meaning: healer god/daimon), who was worshipped in the neighbourhood of Sidon, is portrayed standing on a lion, holding in his hand wild animals, among them a lion who attempts in vain to bite him.⁴⁸⁹ Like Eshmun, Shedrafa was identified with Asclepius; like him he was portrayed holding a staff with a snake curled round it.⁴⁹⁰

Archaeological and epigraphical evidence from the Hellenistic and Roman periods may cast some light on the identity of Ashkelonian Asclepius the lion-holder. In Piraeus a tomb-stone with a bilingual inscription, in Phoenician and Greek, dating from the fourth century BCE, tells of two companions on a sea voyage, Antipatros of Ashkelon, son of Aphrodisios (in Phoenician: ben ‘Abd‘Astart), and Domsalos of Sidon, son of Domanos (in Phoenician: Da‘amtsalakh ben Da‘amhana), who set sail from Phoenicia. Antipatros was attacked by a fierce lion which tried to tear his body apart, but his companions saved him. They also erected the tombstone on his grave. The story is illustrated by a relief of a man lying on a bier with a lion bending over him and another man beating it off with his hands. In the background a ship is portrayed.⁴⁹¹ A Byzantine bronze cup from Caesarea Maritima is decorated with intaglios illustrating the foundation of the city at the beginning of the Hellenistic period. Asclepius is portrayed, with his name written next to him. He is depicted as the *genius loci*, extending his protection to the settlers who embark on the coast and encounter wild beasts, including lions. In Will’s opinion he is healing their wounds, but Finkielsztejn maintains that he is calming the wild beasts.⁴⁹² Finkielsztejn also pointed out the similarity between Asclepius of the cup and ‘Ashkelonian Asclepius the lion-holder’, but was unable to explain the connection between the stories on the cup and Caesarea or Ashkelon.

In my view, the archaeological and literary sources show that the story of the god’s struggle with and victory over the lion should not be interpreted literally. For that we have Heracles, who defeated the Nemean lion and was identified with Melqart in Phoenicia. In relation to Shedrafa/Eshmun/Asclepius, the wild beasts and lions are simply metaphors of illness and death. The god contends with them, subdues and masters them: in other words, he cures and saves.

Asclepius also had a maritime aspect, primarily because of his ability to ‘cure’ ships and keep them whole.⁴⁹³ In the relief on the pilaster the diadem on the head of the child Asclepius is decorated with a star. Astronomical knowledge and navigation with the help of the celestial elements were the only means of orientation on long voyages before the invention of the compass. The stars and their constellations, the sun and the

⁴⁸⁹ Yon 1986: 134, fig. 4.

⁴⁹⁰ Lipinski 1995: 196.

⁴⁹¹ *IG II-III*, 8388 = *IG II*, 2836, *CIS*, I, 115; Bonnet 1990: 39–50; Di-Segni 1990: 83–84; Barbanera 1992: 92–97.

⁴⁹² Finkielsztejn 1986: 422.

⁴⁹³ Casson 1971: 358.

moon frequently appear on ancient coins.⁴⁹⁴ The Dioscuri, the seafarers' guides, also appear on the coins of Ashkelon with stars over their heads (see sect. 12). The celestial elements played an important role in the religious beliefs of the Nabataeans, who also earned their livelihood by trading with the caravans whose western starting-points were the ports of Gaza and Ashkelon. In a relief in Khirbet al-Tannur Tyche appears in the framework of a Zodiac circle. A Nabataean clay figurine of Tyche wearing a crown with a star in its centre has been found in the Reuel wadi.⁴⁹⁵ In Ashkelon Asclepius is accompanied by Tyche, who is connected with stars and planetary houses whose patterns determine the fates of men, as does she. In the Talmud the connection between them is mentioned: 'Gad is nothing other than the worship of the stars.'⁴⁹⁶

In Stager's excavation in Ashkelon 1400 dog burials from the Persian period were discovered. It is the largest dog cemetery known in the ancient world. Stager speculates it was originally much larger, with dog burials probably numbering in the thousands. It may be that they were connected with the cult of the god of medicine. About 60–70% were puppies, and each of them was buried in a shallow grave. There are cultic dogs' burials from the Persian period elsewhere, in Anatolia (Caria and Lydia) and Lebanon coast, but mostly in the Land of Israel: Ashdod, Tel Qasile, Apollonia/Arsuf, Tel Miqneh/Ekron, Tel el-hesi, Tel Dor, Gezer, Jerusalem and Tel Yavne.⁴⁹⁷ Stager mentions the function of dogs in the cult of Assugalatu, the goddess of healing, who was worshipped in Mesopotamia and Phoenicia. In a temple in Kition, a Phoenician settlement in Cyprus, dogs served in the temple, as is attested by the inscription 'klbm.grm' (dogs, puppies), dated at 450 BCE. In Edrey's view, the dogs were sacrificed or ritualistically killed.⁴⁹⁸ It is also possible that the dogs' burials are related to the Philistine heritage. In Mycenaean Greece it was customary to bury dogs. This custom spread to Crete, where it was still continued until the beginning of the Iron Age, though in other places it was no longer observed. But whereas in the Mycenaean period dogs were buried together with human beings, in Crete they were buried separately, in shallow graves.⁴⁹⁹ In the Persian period many mercenaries from Greece and Crete reached our region (see chap. 4, sec. 3). The Greeks believed that dogs had powers of healing and purification, and from the Hellenistic period they played a part in the cult of Asclepius. According to the Greek legend, a dog cared for and fed the god after his birth.⁵⁰⁰ Dogs also served in the temple of the Roman Aesculapius.⁵⁰¹ It may be that a connection grew up between the Greek name of the city, *Askalon*, and the Greek word for a dog, *skilos*, which also forms part of the name of the god, Asclepius. Perhaps the name Assugalatu is also related to the name Asclepius.

⁴⁹⁴ Ringel 1984: 12–16.

⁴⁹⁵ Glueck 1965: 434; Avner 1990: 77; Avner 1991: 86.

⁴⁹⁶ *Babylonian Talmud*, 'Shabbat', 67b.

⁴⁹⁷ Stager 1991a: 30, 39; Edrey 2008: 275–276.

⁴⁹⁸ *CIS* 86; Stager 1991a: 38–42; Stager 1993: I, 104; Edrey 2008.

⁴⁹⁹ On dog burials in the Greek world, see Day 1984: 21–32.

⁵⁰⁰ Festus, *De Verborum Significatu*, 110 M in Edelstein 1975: 227, 361–362 — 'Asclepius'.

⁵⁰¹ Festus, *De Verborum Significatu*, 110 M in Edelstein 1975: 361 — 'Asclepius'.

3.14. 'Tserifa in Ashkelon' (figure 25)

In the Babylonian Talmud an idolatrous temple in Ashkelon is mentioned: 'Rabi Hanan said... There are five permanent idolatrous temples: Beith Bel (the house of Bel) in Babylon, Beith Nevo (the house of Nevo) in Bursi, Tar'ata in Mapug, Tserifa in Ashkelon, and Neshara in Arabia.'⁵⁰² Mapug is Mabug, Syria, the centre of the cult of the goddess Atargatis/Tar'ata/Derceto, and Neshara is apparently Dushara, the Nabataean god. Some scholars think that Tserifa is Serapis, but Ephron⁵⁰³ demonstrated that the authors of the Talmud knew the exact name of Serapis, and even interpreted it: 'Serapis alludes to Joseph who became a prince [sar] and appeased [hefis] the whole world.'⁵⁰⁴ Rabbi Hanan does not mention the names of Greek or Roman gods, and only enumerates temples of Semitic gods in Mesopotamia, Arabia or Canaan.

From the year 150 CE until the end of the striking of coins, in 235 CE, there appears in the coins of Ashkelon a building of an unusual shape, uncharacteristic of Greek or Roman architecture. It is a square, with four openings or gates, one within the other. On each side of each gate stands a column. Scholars agree that it is a temple, but they disagree about the identity of the god to which it was devoted.⁵⁰⁵ Hill, Meshorer and Fuks find in it features characteristic of Egyptian architecture: the pillars of the first gate broaden out in the centre; there are columns in the shape of a sphinx by the second gate; and there are cobra-like decorations on the lintel.⁵⁰⁶ Meshorer and Finkielsztejn maintain that this is the Tserifa mentioned in the Talmud, and that it



Figure 25. Ashkelon coin. Septimius Severus (193–211 CE). Temple with four doorways and 'bottle-shaped' columns. Photographer: Clara Amit.

⁵⁰² *Babylonian Talmud*, 'Avoda Zara', 11b.

⁵⁰³ Ephron 1988: 314.

⁵⁰⁴ 'Avoda Zara', 43a. See also Ephron 1988: 314–315.

⁵⁰⁵ Except for Dvorjetski who thinks that this was not a temple but a monumental structure of the Ashkelon goldsmiths union. See Dvorjetski 1994: 36–40.

⁵⁰⁶ Hill 1914: lxi; Meshorer 1985: 27, No. 50; Fuks 2001: 109.

is a temple of Phanebalos.⁵⁰⁷ They offer as proof the coin from the time of Julia Domna, in which Phanebalos is seen inside a building constructed similarly to the inner part of the square temple. Fuks, on the other hand, asks how an Egyptian building can be dedicated to the Phoenician god Phanebalos, and concludes that this is a temple of the Egyptian goddess Isis.⁵⁰⁸ Belayche maintains that the temple is built in an Egypto-Phoenician style, and that at its front there are two columns with capitals in the shape of a crescent moon. It contains three courtyards which lead to a *naos* situated behind them.⁵⁰⁹ In my view, the influence of Phoenician religious architecture is dominant in this building, and is marked in the columns at the side of the front entrance, which are in the shape of a bethyl (beith-el, a sacred pillar), called by modern scholars ‘bottle-shaped’, with a lintel decorated with palmettes (stylized palm branches). It may be that this was a sacred site containing a number of buildings. Theophanes, an Egyptian official who travelled from Egypt to Antiochia between 317 and 323 CE, relates that in Ashkelon he visited several buildings, including the theatre and the *odeon*, and also ‘in the front, in the temple, a gilded *basilica*’. Schwabe believes that he meant the temple of Aphrodite, in front of which stood golden statues or a gilded *basilica*, and that Theophanes visited the foremost building, which stood in front of the temple itself.⁵¹⁰ No other temples appear on the coins of Ashkelon, and Theophanes apparently described the temple portrayed on the city’s coins. It seems that this was the building to which Rabbi Hanan alluded.

Numismatic and historical evidence shows that this was not a single building, but a complex of buildings dedicated to several gods. Hence the word Tserifa can be interpreted not as the name of a god, but as a noun, tseruf (in Hebrew: combination) — of buildings or of gods. This interpretation is consistent with the language of the Talmud, since the list refers to buildings such as Beith Bel and Beith Nevo (the houses of Bel and Nevo) and also to gods such as Tar‘ata and Neshara. Thus, the coins with four gates depict the buildings one behind the other, just as in the description of Theophanes. The coin from the time of Julia Domna shows only the building dedicated to Phanebalos. The foremost building may have been dedicated to Astarte/Aphrodite. The bethyl-like columns are reminiscent of statues of Aphrodite in the shape of a bethyl, such as those of Aphrodite *Kastianitis* (who originated in Phoenicia) on the coins of Phaselis in Lycia.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁷ Meshorer 1985: 28; Finkielsztein 1992: 59.

⁵⁰⁸ Fuks 2001: 106.

⁵⁰⁹ Belayche 2001: 230–231.

⁵¹⁰ Schwabe 1954: 184–185.

⁵¹¹ *LIMC*, ‘Aphrodite (in the Eastern periphery)’, p. 154, and fig. I on p. 156. Hill regarded the statue of Aphrodite in the Temple of Phaselis as an ‘archaic cult statue’. See Hill 1964: lxvii.

Chapter 4

Gaza

4.1. Introduction

The ancient tel of Gaza (called 'Aza in the Bible, probably after the caananite name) is situated at Tel Haruv, about 5 kilometres from the sea. It is covered by modern buildings, and has been excavated very little.⁵¹² The first mention of Gaza, under the name ga-da-tu, is in Egyptian documents from the time of Thutmose III,⁵¹³ who conquered the city in 1468 BCE, and it remained under Egyptian rule for about 300 years. The Pharaohs built a string of military stations from Egypt to Gaza. In Deir el-Balah, south of Gaza, many remains originating in Egypt (coffins) and the Aegean world have been discovered. At the beginning of the twelfth century BCE groups of the 'Sea Peoples' attacked Egypt and settled on the coast of the Land of Israel.⁵¹⁴ Recent excavations in Gaza confirm the presence of peoples from or influence of the Aegean world during this period.⁵¹⁵

According to the Bible, 'Caphtorims, who came forth out of Caphtor' (Cretans who came from Crete) destroyed the 'Avims which dwelt in Hazerim (Rafiah), even unto 'Azza (Gaza), and dwelt in their stead' (*Deut.*, 2: 23). Gaza was the leader of the confederation of the five most important Philistine cities in the south of the Land of Israel: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and 'Ekron. Between 722 and 720 BCE Hanun king of Gaza led a rebellion against Assyria. He was defeated and exiled by Sargon II. From then on the people of Gaza remained loyal to Assyria until it was conquered by Babylon.

⁵¹² Pythian-Adamas's excavation of the tel in 1922 revealed that Gaza was inhabited from the late Bronze Age. In the seventies the coastline of the industrial centre and fishermen's quarter of Gaza-Maiumas was excavated, and a synagogue with a mosaic floor was uncovered. During the years 1995–2005 a French-Palestinian team conducted excavations in Gaza, in Balakhiya (ancient Anthedon) and in Jebeliya (the site of the Byzantine city); Ovadiah 1993: III, 1161–5; Humbert & Sadeq 2000: 105–107, 116–120; Humbert et al. 2000: 121–126. Haldimann 2007; Chambon 2012.

⁵¹³ Pritchard 1954: 235.

⁵¹⁴ Pritchard 1954: 262–263.

⁵¹⁵ Bourdajewicz 2000: 34.

Herodotus and Pseudo-Scylax tell us that Gaza was autonomous during the Persian period; unlike the other coastal cities it was not subject to Tyre or Sidon. Its economy also prospered, and Herodotus states that it was as big as Sardis in Anatolia.⁵¹⁶ Gaza was the only city in the Land of Israel which did not open its gates to Alexander the Great, who was marching down the Mediterranean coast on his campaign to conquer Egypt in 332 BCE. He destroyed it and massacred its citizens, but rebuilt it immediately afterwards. At the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (284–264 BCE) Gaza became a *polis*. Anthedon (at today's tel Balakhiya, 2 kilometers northwest to Gaza) which was founded by immigrants from Anthedon in Boeotia and granted the status of *polis*, served as a port for Gaza. In 198 BCE Gaza was again conquered, this time by Antiochus III, and was annexed to the kingdom of the Seleucids. Unlike Ashkelon, which fostered good relations with the Hasmoneans, Gaza suffered from their hostility. Jonathan laid siege to the city, but did not succeed in conquering it. Gaza was allied to the Nabataeans, who were enemies of the Hasmonean kingdom. In 96 BCE Gaza asked Aretas II, king of the Nabataeans, for help against Alexander Jannaeus, but in vain; Jannaeus conquered the city after a year's siege, though at last only through treachery. He gave the inhabitants up to the sword, and entirely demolished the city; He took Anthedon as well, and made slaves of their inhabitants.⁵¹⁷ After Pompey's conquest of the region, the Romans annexed Gaza to the province of Syria and restored its autonomy. Gabinius, the proconsul of Syria rebuilt it in 57 BCE. Augustus handed Gaza over to King Herod, together with Anthedon. Herod discriminated against Gaza because of his commercial rivalry with the city and its strong ties to his enemies, the Nabataeans. He appointed Costobar as governor of Gaza and Idumaea, where there were also enemies of his. He renamed Anthedon Agrippias in honour of Agrippa, Augustus' general, and rebuilt its port. After the death of Herod Gaza was again annexed to the province of Syria.⁵¹⁸

The people of Gaza enthusiastically embraced the Graeco-Roman way of life, as we can learn from the numerous stone, marble and bronze statuary which was discovered in Gaza. Most of the statues portray mythological figures, such as Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, Hecate, Pan, Ganymedes and Marsyas. In the third century Gaza was granted the status of *colonia*, and in an inscription from Ostia at the time of Gordianus III (238–244 CE) it is described as 'holy, strong, autonomous, loyal, pious, illustrious and great' (*ἡ πόλις ἡ τῶν Γαζαίων ἱερά και ἀσυλός και αὐτονομός πιστή ἡ εὐσεβῆς λαμπρά και μεγάλη*).⁵¹⁹ It reached its architectural and economic peak in the Byzantine period. The historian Ammianus Marcellinus, of the fourth century CE, includes it in a list of 'outstanding

⁵¹⁶ Herodotus, *Histories*, III, 5. Herodotus calls Gaza *Kadytis*. Gaza is not included in the list of Palestinian coastal cities ruled by Tyre or Sidon in Pseudo-Scylax's *Periplus*.

⁵¹⁷ The city's appellation in the New Testament, *ἐρημος* (desolate) allude to the destruction caused by Jannaeus. *Acts*, 8: 26; Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, I, 4, 2. According to some scholars, the word refer to Gaza as the gateway to the Negev desert: Eck 2014: 414–416.

⁵¹⁸ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, II, 6, 3. Shalit maintains that the people of Gaza (and also those of Gader and Hippos) hated Herod's rule, and that Augustus therefore decided to detach these three cities from the territory of Archelaus. See Shalit 1978: 114, and 413, note 243.

⁵¹⁹ IG XIV, 926.

cities', together with Caesarea, Ashkelon, Eleuthropolis and Neapolis.⁵²⁰ According to Mark the Deacon, of the early fifth century CE, there were eight temples in the city. Remains of a Roman temple of the second to fourth century CE were discovered in excavations on the outskirts of the Shatteh camp.⁵²¹ In the Madaba mosaic it is depicted as a big city, with churches and colonnaded streets extending to its length and breadth. Procopius of Gaza, a scholar and orator of the fifth-sixth century CE and his Pupil Choricus of Gaza, give a detailed description of the city's public buildings, institutions and festivals, and its famous native sons.⁵²² Gaza had a maritime quarter, 4 kilometers towards the sea, named Maiumas.

Gaza was situated near the coast, at the junction of two long overland trade routes which were of major importance in antiquity: the Via Maris, which connected Egypt with Syria, Anatolia and Mesopotamia, and the Perfume Route, which began in China and India, and passed through Southern Arabia, Idumaea and the Negev on the way to its maritime outlet in Gaza. The caravans which carried the most rare and expensive merchandise in the ancient world – perfumes, spices, incense, ivory, silk and exotic animals⁵²³ – came to Gaza. From its harbours they were exported to Egypt and Anatolia, to the Aegean world, and to the central and western Mediterranean. The large quantity of anchors and maritime trade amphorae (and a Hellenistic or Roman ship cooking furnace) which were found in Gaza's sea and along the coast testify to its busy harbours and shipping lanes. The city became very wealthy as a result of transit trade, and maritime activity was always one of its economic mainstays. Under Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian rule dozens of trading posts, customs and service stations functioned in the vicinity of Gaza. In the Persian period it cooperated in economic activities with the Arabs, who, according to Herodotus, controlled the region from Gaza to Jenissus (today's Khan-Yunis); the high taxes paid by the Arabs to the king of Persia – 1,000 talents of frankincense – show the extent of the perfume trade.⁵²⁴ The Ptolemies also extracted considerable profits from the trade of Gaza: Zenon, a Ptolemaic official who travelled to Egypt from the port of Gaza in 259 BCE, states that there was a 'frankincense inspector' in the city. Zenon's agent supervised the export of olive oil from the harbours of Gaza and Jaffa to Egypt. A terracotta statuette (height: 24 cm) from the hellenistic period which was found in Gaza, portrays a priest in a long robe wearing a cylindrical hat, bearing an incense-burner topped by a head of a sphinx wearing the double Egyptian crown. Figurines of priests holding incense-burner can be found later in tombs from the Roman period in Palmyra.⁵²⁵ In every period Gaza

⁵²⁰ Ammianus, *History*, XIV, 8, 11.

⁵²¹ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 64; Humbert & Sadeq 2000: 119–120.

⁵²² Procopius Gazae, *Epistulae et Declamationes*; Choricus, *Logoi*, I, II, VI, VIII; *Dialexis*, XVI, in Rabinowitz 1949: 178–182.

⁵²³ Ciarla 1986: 159–67; De Romanis 1996: 105–8. The fifth to sixth century CE zoologist Timotheus of Gaza mentions in his essay *Περί Ζωων* (*On Animals*) a merchant who transported two giraffes and an elephant from Gaza to Constantinople. Dan 1982: 23, note 22.

⁵²⁴ Herodotus, *Histories*, III, 5, 97.

⁵²⁵ Papyrus PCI 628, in Cherikover 1961: 70; Inv. No. JKC. 426 in: Chambon 2012. Palmyra, through which passed another major incense route towards Damascus and Antioch, grew so wealthy and powerful from trade caravans, that in the 260s AD, at the apex of its power, defeated Persian Emperor Shapur I, rebelled against Rome and established

also traded in slaves, who were to be found in abundance, particularly in the wake of the military expeditions against Israel and Judah. They were sent westwards to the Mediterranean lands by sea, and eastwards to the Arabian Peninsula in caravans. The prophet Joel cries out: 'Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre and Sidon and all the coasts of Philistia?... The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border.' And Amos prophesies: 'For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom. But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof.'⁵²⁶ In Shewah, in the Yemen, an inscription from the Hellenistic period tells of a consignment of twenty white slaves from Gaza.⁵²⁷ Hadrian established a big market in Gaza, and sold Jewish slaves there after the suppression of the revolt of Bar Kochba.⁵²⁸

The caravan trade of the Nabataeans and their Gazan allies began to decline in the first century BCE. Greek sailors discovered the monsoon cycle which enabled them to sail from Egypt to India and back through the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The Romans tried to take over the Nabataean trade by force, from the time of Augustus, who sent an expedition under Gallus to Arabia and Ethiopia, until the time of Trajan, who conquered the Nabataean kingdom and annexed it to the Roman Empire in 106 CE. But Gaza's economic prosperity was not impaired. As in earlier periods, it was based on seafaring and exporting its own agricultural and industrial products, whose high quality was famous throughout the empire. Between the third and the seventh century CE the wine of Gaza gained reputation and was exported widely.⁵²⁹ In the area round Gaza and Ashkelon, between Sheikh Zuweid and Ashdod, wine-amphorae known today in the language of research as 'Gaza jars' were produced. They were discovered all over the Roman and Byzantine empire.⁵³⁰ Wine and oil, preserved fish, honey and cereals were sold; they reached Egypt in the south, and Trier, Germany, in the north, Tarsus in the east and Barcelona in the west.⁵³¹ Fishing, the *garum* manufacture (fermented fish sause used as a condiment, very popular in Greece and in the Roman-Byzantine world) and fish preserving industry, were important sources of income for the people of Gaza. Papyri found in Nitzana show that *garum* and fish from Gaza were imported there.⁵³² On the coast of Gaza the fishermen's quarter has been excavated, and a great many stone anchors and needles for the repair of nets were discovered. A carnelian gem from the Roman period found in Gaza portrays a fisherman with his

the [Palmyrene Empire](#). In 273, Roman emperor [Aurelian](#) destroyed the city.

⁵²⁶ Joel, 4: 4–6; Amos, 1: 6–7.

⁵²⁷ Humbert 2000: 25.

⁵²⁸ *Chronicon Paschale*, 474. The market in Gaza is also mentioned in the *Mishnah*, 'Avoda Zara', 1, 3. See also Safrai 1984: 143, 151–155.

⁵²⁹ St. Jerome. *Vita Hilarionis* 17.5–8; Rougé, J., *Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium*, 62; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XX, 3, 7; see additional sources in Eck et al. 2014: 420–421.

⁵³⁰ Oked 2001: 227–245; Chambon 2012:150–1.

⁵³¹ Oked 2001: 243, Map 3.

⁵³² Majchereck 1995: 163–168.

dog, carrying his catch.⁵³³ The industrial area was also on the coast, and storehouses and implements for dyeing have been found there.

There are many traditions connecting Gaza with Crete, and these are also expressed in the city's cults. Mark the Deacon, a native of Gaza, and other ancient authors attest to this.⁵³⁴ Gaza was exceptionally stubborn in its resistance to Christianity and its loyalty to its ancient beliefs; its Christians always constituted a small, marginal group, persecuted by the authorities and the local inhabitants alike. At the end of the fourth century its Christian population was only 280,⁵³⁵ out of a total of between twenty-five/thirty thousand in Gaza and nine thousand in Maiumas.⁵³⁶ The Christians lived round Maiumas, the harbour area. In order to improve their status the emperor Constantine separated the Maiumas area administratively from the town, and named it Constantia; but under Julian it was reunited with Gaza. At the beginning of the fifth century CE there were eight temples in the city, each sacred to a different god: the *Marneion*, sacred to Marnas; the *Tychaeion*, sacred to Tyche; the *Heroeion*, apparently sacred to Azon, son of Heracles, the founding hero of the city; and temples of Hecate, Aphrodite, Apollo, Helios, and Kore (the virgin; apparently Persephone). It was only in the year 402, as a result of the persistent advocacy of Porphyrius, the bishop of Gaza at the court of the emperor Arcadius that a military force was sent to close and destroy the temples. A very big church, the Eudoxiana, named after the empress Eudoxia, was erected on the ruins of the temple of Marnas, in order to eliminate his cult completely.⁵³⁷

4.2. Dagon

Archaeological and historical sources show that the Philistines adopted the gods of their Canaanite neighbours such as Dagon, Ba'al-Zevuv and 'Ashera.⁵³⁸ In Gaza, as in Ashdod, Dagon was the principal deity during the first millennium BCE, and in both of these cities temples were built to him. In his huge temple in Gaza three thousands people assembled to witness the humiliation of the city's great enemy, Samson, and were killed when the temple collapsed.⁵³⁹ In the Bible the war between Israel and the Philistines is presented as a struggle between the gods of the two peoples, in the course of which the God of Israel defeats the Philistine god in his own temple. The ark of the Lord was brought to the battlefield in Eben-Ezer. When the Israelites were defeated in the battle, the ark was taken into captivity and displayed in the temple of Dagon in Ashdod, by the side of his statue. On the following day the priests of Dagon found that 'Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the

⁵³³ Ringel 1984: 55, No. 70.

⁵³⁴ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 64, 68; Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnika*, 194.1, 454.7; Epiphanius of Salamis, *Ancoratus*, 109, in Hill 1965: lxxvii.

⁵³⁵ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 19.

⁵³⁶ Broshi 1979: 5.

⁵³⁷ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 63–66.

⁵³⁸ Ba'al-Zevuv was worshipped in 'Ekron: *Kings* II, 1: 1–4. In the excavations there an inscription 'to 'Ashrat' has been discovered: Gitin 1988: 175, fig. 16. On the cult of Astarte in Ashkelon, see the chap. 3, sec. 2.

⁵³⁹ *Judges*, 14: 23.

head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold.... Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day'.⁵⁴⁰ The Philistine custom of not setting foot on the thresholds of houses was still observed at the time of the days of King Josiah (end of the late seventh century BCE).⁵⁴¹

The appearance of the god Dagon is not known. Medieval Jewish commentators believed him to be shaped like a fish, because of the Hebrew word *dag*, a fish.⁵⁴² Some modern scholars also consider him to have been a sea god.⁵⁴³ Be that as it may, ancient sources show that he was connected with agriculture, and his name is derived from the root *dgn*: dalet, gimel, nun – grain, just as the name of Ceres, Italic goddess of agriculture, who was connected with cereals (*cerealis* – of Ceres, meaning: of grain). In the temple of Dagon in Ugarit no sacrifice related to the sea has been discovered, whereas in the temple of Ba'al 15 anchors were found.⁵⁴⁴ Philo of Byblos interprets Dagon's name in Greek as *σιτος*, wheat. He identifies him with Zeus *Arotrios*, the patron god of agricultural crops, and ascribes to him the invention of the plough and the cultivation of wheat.⁵⁴⁵ It is probable that the god of grain was worshipped in Gaza, since the cultivation of wheat was the mainstay of its economy in the Early Iron Age. Samson often taunted the men of Gaza, but they declared total war on him when he set their fields of wheat on fire by loosing on them 300 foxes with torches attached to their tails 'and burnt up both the shocks and the standing corn'.⁵⁴⁶

Dagon was worshipped in northern Syria in the third millennium CE, and his cult spread from there to Mesopotamia and Canaan. The name Dugunna means 'overcast, cloudy skies'. In Ugarit Dagon was the father of Ba'al, the god of the heavens and of storms. The Greeks identified him with Kronos (Cronus), the father of Zeus, and with Saturn, the god of agriculture. Some scholars conclude from the sentence 'the mighty fields of corn (*dagan*) which are in the plain of Sharon' in the funerary inscription of Eshmunazar II king of Sidon that Dagon was also the principal god of this region, north of Philistia.⁵⁴⁷ In Singer's view, the Philistine Dagon originated from a female Hittite deity, Kubaba, the goddess of grain, from whom the Phrygian goddess Cybele

⁵⁴⁰ *Samuel* I, 5: 1–5.

⁵⁴¹ *Zephaniah*, 1: 9.

⁵⁴² According to Rashi he had the appearance of a fish. According to Rabbi David Kimhi he was like a fish from the waist down, and a man from the waist up. According to Rabbi Isaac Abarbanel he had the head of a fish. Quoted by Meyer 1966: 116, and notes 13, 17, 20.

⁵⁴³ Hitzig, who pointed out the importance of maritime trade in the life of the city, and suggested identifying Dagon with Marnas. Quoted by Meyer 1966: 116–117 and notes 21–23.

⁵⁴⁴ For a summary of the research literature on the anchors in the temple of Ba'al at Ugarit, see Brody 1998: 46–49, and notes 34–45.

⁵⁴⁵ Philo of Byblos, *Phoenician History*, 809: 23; 811: 4–5.

⁵⁴⁶ *Judges*, 14: 4–5.

⁵⁴⁷ Lipinski 1992: 171. The connection between the god of the clouds and the rain and agriculture and the cultivation of grain and wheat is obvious in the light of the great importance of rain to the cultivation of grain in our region. Hence, too, the Hebrew expressions *hakla'ut ba'al* and *gidulei ba'al* (dry agriculture, and dry crops, grown on soil which is watered only by rain), as opposed to *gidulei shlakhin*, irrigated crops. In our region *gidulei ba'al* are usually winter crops.

was also derived. The Philistines adopted Kubaba in the course of their migrations in Anatolia, and turned her into a male god.⁵⁴⁸ This process is parallel to the route of the hero Mopsus, the founder of Ashkelon, who also originated in Anatolia. In the Hellenistic period the cult of Dagon in Philistia continued to exist. In 147 BCE Jonathan the Hasmonean burnt down his temple in Ashdod, with the soldiers of Apollonius, who took refuge there, inside it.⁵⁴⁹

There are no traces of Dagon as a god of Gaza in archaeological and historical sources from the Roman period, but it seems that his characteristics and functions were embodied in the new gods which appeared at that time in the pantheon of the city: Zeus *Aldimios* (from the verb *αλδαίνω*, to cause to grow, to cultivate), Marnas/Zeus *Cretagenes*.

4.3. Marnas (*Μαρνας*)/Zeus *Cretagenes* (*Ζευς Κρηταγενής*)

4.3.a. Marnas

From historical and archaeological sources it appears that the principal deity of Gaza in the Roman period was Marnas. His cult was deeply rooted there, and people of the city strove to keep it alive as long as two hundred years after Christianity had become the religion of the empire. Marnas also had devotees in Syria, Greece and Italy. The fifth century CE Athenian philosopher Proclus wrote a hymn in honour of ‘Marnas of Gaza’, whose contents have not survived.⁵⁵⁰ Marnas was identified with Zeus and Jupiter. In the Hauran a Greek votive inscription was dedicated by Annalos son of Kamasanos ‘to the Lord Marnas’ (*Δι Μαρνα τω κυριω*).⁵⁵¹ Hence it may be inferred that Marnas and Lord (*Kyrios*) were synonymous titles in the Semitic east. The emperor Severus Alexander was a worshipper of Marnas, as is seen from his cry: ‘O Jupiter, O Marnas, O immortal gods!’⁵⁵² Severus was of Syrian origin, and he addressed his exclamation to a senator by the name of Arabianus, from which it may be inferred that Marnas was also recognized by the Arabs. Marnas was apparently the patron of a community of Gazans in Ostia, and there was even a temple to him in this, the most important port in Italy, as appears from a Greek inscription in Portus Traiani. The Gazans dedicated it to the emperor Gordianus (238–244 CE) ‘by the command of the god of our forefathers’ (*ἐξ ἐγκλυσεως του πατριου θεου*). The installation of the inscription was implemented by Tiberius Claudius Papeirus (*Τιβ. Κλ. Παπειρου*) who was ‘in charge of the temple’ (*ἐαυτης ενεργετην δια επιμελητου του ιερου*).⁵⁵³

⁵⁴⁸ Singer 1989: 17–42. Some scholars suggest that a wall relief from Tiglath-Pileser III South-West palace at Nimrud describes the bearing of statues of gods from conquered Gaza to Assyria: a storm god carrying an axe and a lightning bolt, and three Aegean-type goddesses sitting on chairs with lion paws legs, holding rings. One of them — maybe Kubaba according to Ziffer, Kletter — facing front, to the viwer, holds also sheaves of grain: Uehlinger 2002; Ziffer, Kletter, 2007: 29; Ben Shlomo 2010: 98–99.

⁵⁴⁹ *Maccabees* I, 83–84.

⁵⁵⁰ *Marini Vita Procli*, 19.

⁵⁵¹ Sourdel 1952: 44–45, No. 6.

⁵⁵² *Historiae Augustae*, ‘Severus Alexander’, 17, 3–4; Mussies 1990: 2420–2421.

⁵⁵³ *CIG* III 5892/*IG* XIV 926; Mussies 1990: 2423.

From 130 CE onwards, during Hadrian's reign, Marnas and his name, *MAPHAC*, in Greek lettering, appear on the coins of Gaza. On a coin issued to mark Hadrian's visit to the city in 129/130 the name appears in a different form: *MARNA*. The names of only two other deities of all the pantheon of Gaza, Minos and Io, are written on coins, in Greek; I shall discuss the common characteristics of these three gods below. Marnas is portrayed as a young man, naked and holding a bow or a bolt of lightning. He stands inside his temple, the *Marneion*. On his left stands Artemis/Britomartis dressed in a short chiton, holding a bow and crowning him with a wreath.⁵⁵⁴ From the time of Elagabalus, 219/220 CE, Marnas is portrayed with his hand raised in blessing and holding a thunderbolt in his left hand. By his side stands Nike on a column, crowning him with a wreath.⁵⁵⁵ In the same year another coin was struck, portraying Marnas in the same way, but with Tyche/Fortuna at his right, crowning him, instead of Nike.⁵⁵⁶

The emblem of Marnas — his initial, the Phoenician letter mem — always appears on the coins together with his image. This emblem appears on the coins of Gaza from the time they were first struck, in the fifth century BCE, until coinage ceased in 242 CE. It also appeared together with Tyche, Io, Minos and Heracles.⁵⁵⁷ This was apparently the official emblem of the city, since it also appears on ten lead weights found in Gaza (together with the weight and the name of the inspector of the market, in Greek letters).⁵⁵⁸ The identification of Marnas with Zeus, and his link with the Phoenician letter mem which appears on the coins in the Roman period, is confirmed by the philosopher Damascius (458–533 CE). Discussing the graphic symbols which represent various deities, he states that for the people of Gaza a straight line bisected by a triple line symbolizes Zeus.⁵⁵⁹

4.3.b. Marnas's Spheres of Activity and the Nature of his Cult

The biography of Saint Porphyrius, written by his assistant Mark the Deacon, provides us with a great deal of information about the cult and temple of Marnas in Gaza. Two versions of this work have survived, one in Greek and the other in Georgian; it is believed that they were both translated from the Syriac.⁵⁶⁰ Porphyrius was the bishop of Gaza from 395 to 420 CE. As a result of his constant lobbying at the court of the emperor Arcadius, which was supported by Empress Eudoxia, the idolatrous cults of Gaza were stamped out and their temples destroyed in 402 CE. Arcadius feared that as a result of the destruction of the *Marneion* the idolaters would leave the city and their tax payments be lost, but eventually gave his consent to the operation.

⁵⁵⁴ Meshorer 1984: 29, No. 56.

⁵⁵⁵ Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 75, No. 189.

⁵⁵⁶ Rosenberger 1972–1977: III, 72, No. 171.

⁵⁵⁷ Meshorer 1984: 29–30, Nos. 54–65.

⁵⁵⁸ Lifshiz 1976: 168–187.

⁵⁵⁹ Damascius, *Plato's Parmenides*, 262.

⁵⁶⁰ See the discussion on the subject in Mussies 1990: 2453–2457; Rubin 1998: 31–66. See also the opinion of T. Barnes, 2010, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*, that Mark's *Life* is a forgery from the sixth century.

In Gaza Marnas was considered to be ‘the Lord of the rains’ (*Κυριος των ὀμβρων*), and was identified with Jupiter *Fluvius*. He was the god of the heavens, causing the wind to blow and the rain to fall. In the year 395 no rain fell in the months of November and December. The people of Gaza assembled in the *Marneion* for seven days of prayer and sacrifice to Marnas, sang hymns, and went to a place called ‘place of prayer’ (*προσερχῆς*), outside the city, to pray. When their prayers went unanswered they returned to their normal business. Then the Christians went out of the town praying in a procession to the church of the three martyrs who had been killed during the persecutions of the emperor Diocletian. When they returned in the evening heavy rain began to fall, and the unbelievers took their revenge by barring the gates of the city against them.⁵⁶¹ This story was meant to bring to mind the dispute between Elijah and the prophets of Ba‘al on the Carmel Mount at the time of the drought in the kingdom of Israel during the reign of Ahab. The prophets of Ba‘al prayed in vain, from the morning until after noon; afterwards, Elijah prayed, and ‘the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain’.⁵⁶² Thus, Marnas played a parallel role both to Dagunna and to some of the Ba‘al gods in Canaan: Ba‘al-Carmel and Ba‘al-Shamayim, whom the Greeks identified with Zeus *Keranius* (*Κεράνιος*), god of the heavens and the sun. Ba‘al-Tsafon, too, was also the god of the heavens and of storms. He was the patron of seafarers and anchorage, and a lead anchor engraved with his name has been found in Spain (see chap. 2, sec. 8). The Greeks identified him with Zeus Cassius, who was worshipped in also in Pelusium in the Egyptian Delta in the Roman period; according to Achilles Tatius, his cult statue there represented him so young that he seemed like Apollo. His image on the coins is similar to that of Marnas: young, naked, and holding a bow. Hadrian, while visiting northern Syria, composed a hymn in his honour, and called him ‘the Lord of the dark clouds’.⁵⁶³ Marnas, lord of the winds and storms, was the patron of the community of merchants and sailors from Gaza who plied their trade in the port of Ostia, and there was a temple to him there. Gaza, their mother city, became very prosperous during the Roman period thanks to her international maritime trade. Gazans engaged in brokerage of goods which came to the city on caravans from India, Arabia, China and Africa, as well as marketing the city’s own agricultural and industrial products by sea.

Marnas apparently inherited the functions of Dagon as god of fertility, agriculture and the harvest and the bringer of rain. The *Etymologicum Magnum* (a Greek lexical encyclopedia compiled at Constantinople around 1150 AD and drew on many earlier grammatical, lexical and rhetorical works) refers to the cult of Zeus in Gaza, under his epithet *Aldemios*: Ἀλδήμιος: *Aldemios* (Ἀλδήμιος), or *Aldos* (Ἄλδος) is the Zeus who is worshipped in Gaza and Syria. His name is derived from ἀλδαίνω, to cause to grow, to cultivate. This is the god who protects the growth of fruit.⁵⁶⁴ From the *Life of Porphyrius*

⁵⁶¹ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 19.

⁵⁶² *Kings* I, 18: 45.

⁵⁶³ *Greek Anthology*, 6. 332.

⁵⁶⁴ *Etymologicum Magnum*, “Ἀλδήμιος”. Hill 1965: lxxvii.

we know that close to Gaza there was a hill called *Aldioma* (Ἀλδιωμα),⁵⁶⁵ which may have been connected with the cult of Marnas or Zeus *Aldemios*. The large stones with which the Eudoxiana church was built on the ruins of the *Marneion* were brought from there. It may have been for the same reason that Porphyrius commanded that the forecourt of the church be paved with marble panels taken from the *Marneion*. As a result, those Gazans who remained faithful to Marnas, mainly women, refrained from walking in the forecourt.

Marnas was the patron of the *Consualia* festivities which were celebrated in Gaza during the Roman period. This was an ancient Roman festival in honour of Consus, god of the harvest. In Gaza, as in Rome, it included a chariot race, as attested in St. Jerom's *Life of Saint Hilarion*. Hilarion (291–371 CE) was a monk who was born and engaged in the spread of Christianity in the Gaza region. One of his miracles was in coming to the aid of Italicus, a Christian of the class of the *curiales*, who was required to supply a team to take part in the chariot race. A pagan *duumvir* — either of the *Duumviri*, the Roman highest municipal magistrates — was his rival; a devout disciple of Marnas, who asked a wizard to ensure his victory. Italicus asked Hilarion to protect him, and he poured water from a goblet on Italicus's horses and chariot. The Christian's team won the race, to the cries of the crowd: 'Christ has defeated Marnas.'⁵⁶⁶ Another of Hilarion's miracles was the healing of the son of the pretorian praefect Elpidius from a fever. In consequence, the child's mother prayed 'that Jesus the Messiah be praised in Gaza... and that the god Marnas be brought down to the ground.'⁵⁶⁷ Thus, she attributed the healing of her son to Jesus, and his illness to Marnas (otherwise she would have mentioned some other god).

The physical similarity of Marnas to Apollo and the bow which characterized him indicate his power to inflict diseases. Another characteristic common to both these gods was the power of prophecy. In 395 CE, when Porphyrius arrived in Gaza to serve as its bishop, the pagans claimed that Marnas had prophesied that Porphyrius would bring disaster on the city, and accused him of causing the severe drought of that year. It is not known whether this was an isolated prophecy, or whether there was a permanent oracle of Marnas in the city. In any case, it may be that this characteristic of Marnas stemmed from a Philistine-Canaanite source. The oracles of the Philistines were famous. Ahaziah king of Israel consulted the oracle of Ba'al-Zevuv the god of 'Ekron about the healing of his illness, and Isaiah speaks of 'soothsayers like the Philistines'. ('onenin ka-plishtim', from the word 'anan, cloud — because the Philistines made predictions by watching the clouds).⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁵ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 56.

⁵⁶⁶ St. Jerome, 'The Life of Saint Hilarion', 20.

⁵⁶⁷ St. Jerome, 'The Life of Saint Hilarion', 14.

⁵⁶⁸ *Kings* II, 1: 1–4; *Isaiah*, 2: 7.

According to one of the versions of the *Life of Porphyrius*, human sacrifices took place in the *Marneion*;⁵⁶⁹ but most scholars consider it unlikely that humans were sacrificed in Gaza at this time, particularly since Hadrian forbade this practice.⁵⁷⁰ A different version, in Georgian, speaks only of ‘bloodshed’. Perhaps this is a reference to the ecstatic practice of the worshippers of Ba‘al, who, in their prayers for rain, ‘cut themselves... with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.’⁵⁷¹ In the Roman period the devotees of Kybele and Attis slashed and even castrated themselves.⁵⁷²

4.3.c. The Origins of Marnas (figure 26)

Ancient authors all believed that Marnas originated in Crete. Mark the Deacon relates that the people of Gaza identified Marnas with Zeus *Cretagenes*; that is to say that he was born in Crete.⁵⁷³ In Stephanus of Byzantium’s *Ethnica* (530 CE), the entry *Γαζα* (Gaza) reads: ‘City in Phoenicia, now called Palaestina, adjacent to Egypt... It is also called Aza. Even until the present day the Syrians call it by the name of Azon, son of Heracles. Some say that it was founded by Zeus, who left his treasure (γαζα) there, since the Persians call their treasure-stores by this name. The city is also called *Iona*, after Io, who arrived on a ship and dwelt there. It was also called *Minoa*, since Minos, who came there with his brothers Ajax and Rhadamanthys, gave it his name. There is also a temple of Zeus *Cretagenes* there; he is today also called Marnas, since in the Cretan language maidens are called *marnan* (μαρναν).’⁵⁷⁴ The church father Epiphanius of Salamis also emphasizes Marnas’s Cretan origin. In his *Ancoratus* he enumerates the mortals who were granted the favour of various rulers who honoured them as gods after their death: ‘Thus it was with Antinous, who was buried by Hadrian in Antinoupolis together with his pleasure boat; and, similarly, Timagenes in Asia. Kanobos, Menelaus’s armour-bearer, and his wife Menuthis are buried in Alexandria, and are worshipped on the sea-shore twelve milestones [from the city]. And Marnas, the servant of Asterios the Cretan, among the people of Gaza. And the captain Cassius among the Pelousians.’⁵⁷⁵

Some modern scholars accept the theory of Marnas’s Cretan origin. Thus, for instance, Hill points to the component *mar* in the name of the Cretan-Minoan huntress-goddess Britomaris, who was identified with Artemis. He maintains that she is the goddess who appears on the coins of Gaza next to Marnas in his temple.⁵⁷⁶ Meshorer also believes that Marnas and Britomaris were relics of the heritage of the Sea Peoples who settled

⁵⁶⁹ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 56.

⁵⁷⁰ See the discussion in Mussies 1990: 2450–2452; Belayche 2001: 245–246.

⁵⁷¹ *Kings* II, 18: 28.

⁵⁷² Catulus, *Carmi*, 43.

⁵⁷³ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 64.

⁵⁷⁴ Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnika*, 333.11.

⁵⁷⁵ Epiphanius of Salamis, *Ancoratus*, 109, in Hill 1965: lxxvii.

⁵⁷⁶ Hill 1965: lxxvii.

in the Gaza region, and the city's coins prove that its Cretan affinity was preserved until the Roman period.⁵⁷⁷

Others, however, do not accept the view of the ancient authors, and believe that Marnas was a local deity whose name was derived from *marna* in Aramaic or Southern Arabic which means 'our Lord'.⁵⁷⁸ Kasher, relying on Herodotus, who states that during the Persian period the Arabs controlled the region from Gaza to Jenissus,⁵⁷⁹ maintains that Marnas was an Arabic god.⁵⁸⁰ The title *Marana* was also used by the Christians, who used to proclaim 'Marana ata' (our Lord has come; the Lord has come).⁵⁸¹ The Nabataeans were accustomed to preface the name of their king Hartat or Rabaël with the title *eloha marana* (the god of our lord).⁵⁸² Sometimes the title became the name of the deity, as, for example, in the trinity of Hatra, Maran, Maratan (our Lady), bar-Marān (son of our Lord).⁵⁸³ Further support to the view that Marnas was of semitic origins is afforded by an *ostrakon* of the fourth century BCE found near Rafiah, inscribed with the word 'Abdmaran',⁵⁸⁴ for 'Abd could not be joined to the name of a Greek god — Abdapollon, for instance. Mussies writes of the difficulty involved in the disappearance of the vowel 'a' from the name, which should be *Maranas*.⁵⁸⁵ But a similar elimination of the vowel 'o' and 'e' occurred in the translation of the name of the goddess 'Ashtoret or 'Ashtarh to the Greek Astarte. There has also been an attempt to connect the name Marnas with the Hittite word *marnuawant* (drink) and with the name of the river god Marnas, or god of the river Marnas, who appears on the coins of Ephesus in the Roman period.⁵⁸⁶

Thus, etymological evidence does not help us to settle the origins of Marnas, since it leads to conflicting conclusions. In Mussies's view the tradition of his Cretan origin was a result of the Hellenistic inclination to connect the Philistines with Crete.⁵⁸⁷ Another view is that it sprang from the frequent contacts between Gaza and the harbours of Crete.⁵⁸⁸ But this does not explain why it was the cults of Gaza, of all the Philistine coastal cities, which were singled out for Cretan ingredients. Moreover, it was not only the Cretan Zeus who was worshipped in Gaza; there were other distinctly Cretan gods

⁵⁷⁷ Meshorer 1984: 29. There are archaeological evidences for some aspects of Minoan culture which survived in Philistia. See for example Hitchcock 2018, which includes previous studies, about ritual practices (breakage and deposition as offerings animal head cups; depositions of bronze double-axe; use of tritons and other predatory molluscs as cultic objects). Administration (seals; inscriptions which have parallels with Linear A writing). Architecture (hearths; room plan; features of Minoan palaces such as hypostyle hall, colonnaded central court, and spatial syntax of a court leading to the ante-chamber of a throne room; hydraulic plaster).

⁵⁷⁸ Marna/Maran means 'Lord', and Marana means 'our Lord'.

⁵⁷⁹ Herodotus, *Histories*, III, 5.

⁵⁸⁰ Kasher 1985: 20, note 11, and pp. 44–45.

⁵⁸¹ *Corinthians*, 22: 16.

⁵⁸² Healey 2000: 154.

⁵⁸³ Nave 1985: 273–274.

⁵⁸⁴ Nave 1985: 27; Eck 2014: 586, no. 2567

⁵⁸⁵ Mussies 1990: 2437–2438.

⁵⁸⁶ See the discussion in Mussies 1990: 2437–2443.

⁵⁸⁷ Mussies 1990: 2446.

⁵⁸⁸ Belayche 2001: 238.

and heroes, such as Artemis/Britomartis, king Minos, and Io. It may also be asked why Gaza strove to emphasize its links with Crete.

We shall start our own enquiry with the question: what is the source of the ancient traditions identifying the principal god of Gaza in the Roman period with the Cretan god Zeus *Cretagenes*? In Greek mythology Zeus was born to Rhea and the Titan Cronus in a cave on Mount Dicte in eastern Crete. Cronus devoured his own children at birth, because of a prophecy that one of them would dethrone him. Rhea hid the infant Zeus in a cave on Mount Ida in Crete, which is also known as *Aigaion*, the Mount of Goats. Two mount nymphs, Ida (known also as Io) and Adrasteia (meaning: inevitable, fate) the daughters of Melissa (bee), the queen-bee, looked after the baby, together with the *kouretes curetes* — minor gods, who danced and clashed their spears on their shields about the cave's entrance to hide his cries from Cronus. The name *kouretes* is derived from *kouros*, young man. They attended Zeus at his youth and were portrayed as young men, resemble bands of Cretan youths who performed ritual dances. Zeus grew up, nourished by the milk of the mountain goat Amaltheia and the honey of the bees. When Amaltheia died Zeus fashioned the shield known as the *aigis* (goat-skin) from her skin. When Zeus grew to manhood he waged war on the Titans together with his brothers, and defeated them.⁵⁸⁹

Zeus *Cretagenes* was only one of the appellations of Zeus in Crete during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. He was also known as Zeus *Dictaeus*, after his birthplace; close to it there was a famous temple in the town of Praesus. Herodotus and Strabo call the people of Praesus *eteocretoi*, the most ancient element in the island's population, namely the Minoans;⁵⁹⁰ and, in fact, archaeological remains and inscriptions from the Minoan period have been discovered in Praesus.⁵⁹¹ Nilsson and Willetts have studied the persistence of Minoan elements in the classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods. The Minoan god, whose name is unknown, was inferior to the great goddess. He represented the cycle of birth, growth and decline in nature, and was believed to die and be reborn each year.⁵⁹² This is the cultic pattern which is also known in the eastern Mediterranean: Ishtar and Tammuz, Ba'al and Astarte, Aphrodite and Adonis, Isis and Osiris. The Minoan god is also similar to Ba'al and Adonis in that he is described as a hunter, grasping a spear or a bow. The Achaeans who conquered Crete brought Zeus, their god of the heavens, with them, and combined him with the local god.⁵⁹³

The *Etymologicum Magnum* contains much information about the character and cult of Zeus *Cretagenes*. The entry *Dikte* (*Δίκητη*) states that in the temple of Zeus there stood a statue of a young beardless Zeus.⁵⁹⁴ In a hymn of the third century CE which

⁵⁸⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 453–506.

⁵⁹⁰ Herodotus, *Histories*, VII, 170–171; Strabo, *Geographicon*, X, 4, 12.

⁵⁹¹ Vasilakis 2000: 146–148.

⁵⁹² Willetts 1962: 79–81, 199–223.

⁵⁹³ Willetts 1962: 203.

⁵⁹⁴ *Etymologicum Magnum* in the entry *Δίκητη*. Willetts 1962: 211, note 83.



Figure 26. Statue of Zeus from Tel el-^cAjul. Second century CE, in Istanbul Archaeological Museum. Drawing: Margalit Levitan.

originated in the Hellenistic period and was engraved on a stone in the temple of Zeus *Dictaeus* he is addressed by the title *kouros* (young man) and invited to come every year with his retinue to bring fruitfulness and good fortune.⁵⁹⁵ In addition to the statue of the young Zeus there is another statue in the temple, of Zeus *Cretagenes* as he is portrayed on the coins of Praesus: adult, bearded, seated on a throne and holding a spear, with his body enveloped in a *himation* from the waist down.⁵⁹⁶

In Gaza, too, Marnas/Zeus was worshipped in these two guises. From the time of Hadrian onwards he was portrayed on its coins as a young hunter god. Earlier, in the Seleucid period, he had appeared as a bearded adult. He stands facing forward, with a *himation* wrapped round him from the waist down. In his left hand he grasps the hem of the garment, and with his right he leans on a spear.⁵⁹⁷ The statue of the mature bearded Zeus was discovered in Tel el-^cAjul, close to Gaza, in 1879, and dates from the second century CE. It is the biggest surviving ancient statue of Zeus. Including a square base one metre in height it is 3.28 metres high,⁵⁹⁸ and is made of yellow sandstone from the Halutza region. The god has a beard and long hair and wears a *himation* round his waist, and the upper part of his body is bare. His left arm from the shoulder down is missing, as is his right arm from the elbow down. The back of the statue is not shaped, and it was apparently meant to stand against

a wall. The god seems to have been seated on a throne to which his legs were joined. This part was apparently sawn off so that the statue could be buried and thereby saved from the Christians. The general design of the statue, its stability and its athletic body, accord with Graeco-Roman artistic standards. Not so the face. It is asymmetric, the

⁵⁹⁵ Nilson 1940 apud: Willetts 1962: 246–247.

⁵⁹⁶ Wroth 1963: 70, No. 5; 71, No. 10.

⁵⁹⁷ Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 49–53, Nos. 20–22, 28, 32.

⁵⁹⁸ Guthe 1879: 183–187, and plate VI; Gatt 1884: 1–5.

eyes are wide open, and the brow wrinkled. He looks like the Edomite/Nabataian god Qos from Khirbet al-Tannur.⁵⁹⁹ The influence of Nabataean art which is evident in the statue is understandable in view of the Nabataeans' close trading relationships with Gaza.

What, then, is the origin of the link between Marnas of Gaza and Crete? It may be that it dates from the period of the Sea Peoples who came from Crete and settled in Gaza. In the Bible the Cretans are always mentioned together with the Philistines. David's bodyguard was hired from among 'the Cretans and Philistines'. Throughout the Iron Age the memory of the arrival of the Philistines, or a group from among them, from Caphtor (*Keftiu* in Bronze Age Egyptian), which is Crete, was preserved and emphasized. Thus, in the eighth century BCE Amos said: 'Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor?', and Jeremiah, 'for the Lord will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor'.⁶⁰⁰ In the sixth century BCE Zephaniah prophesied 'Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites [Cretans]; the word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, the land of the Philistines. And Ezekiel forecast: 'Behold, I will stretch out my hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethi'.⁶⁰¹

Most contemporary scholars agree that shortly after their settlement the Philistines adopted the religion and culture of the neighbouring Canaanites. But we have seen above how the cult of the Philistine Dagon was preserved throughout the first millennium BCE, up to the eve of the Roman conquest. In Ashkelon, too, the cult of 'Philistine Astarte' was preserved. It is generally assumed that after the conquests and deportations of the kings of Assyria and Babylon the Philistines were annihilated politically and ethnically, and disappeared from the stage of history.⁶⁰² But the exile of the people of Gaza was never a complete exile. Unlike the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and the other Philistine cities Gaza stayed loyal to the kings of Assyria, and was not harmed by their retributory campaigns. It rebelled only in 722–720 BCE, and its punishment was light: its king, Hanun, was brought in chains to Assyria. True, there is evidence of the exile of some of the people of Gaza and Ashkelon to Mesopotamia by Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon, but Babylonian documents show that they were few. Moreover, the structure of the nation was not impaired.⁶⁰³ It is reasonable to suppose that Cyrus king of Persia, in accordance with his policy of restoring exiled peoples to their own countries and aiding in their material and rehabilitation, also allowed the peoples of Gaza and Ashkelon to return to their homelands. Such an action was consonant with the political and economic interests of the Persian Empire. The Assyrians had already built a complex of trading stations round Gaza in order to reap

⁵⁹⁹ Glueck 1937: 15, figs. 8a, 8c; Belayche 2001: 241.

⁶⁰⁰ Amos, 9: 7; Jeremiah, 7: 4.

⁶⁰¹ Zephaniah, 2: 5; Ezekiel, 25: 16.

⁶⁰² Gitin 1988: 180.

⁶⁰³ In the second half of the fifth century BCE there were settlements in Nippur called ha-za-tu (Gaza) and is-ka-lu-nu (Ashkelon): Eph'al 1978: 80–83; Zadok 1978: 61–62.

the fruits of its varied maritime activity. In Gaza harbour storehouses and fortifications dating from the late eighth century BCE and the Persian period have been discovered.⁶⁰⁴ The Babylonians and Persians continued to develop the infrastructure of trade in the region. They, too, had need of the special skills of the peoples of Phoenicia and Philistia in maritime warfare, industry and trade — skills which had been developed in the course of centuries; so they granted both them and the Arabs who conducted the caravan trade autonomy and freedom of action in commercial matters. Unlike the people of Gaza and Ashkelon, the people of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were primarily farmers. They could be uprooted, exiled to the eastern ends of the empire, and replaced by other peoples, without harm to the profits of the conquering power.

The religious and cultural influence of Crete continued to exist in Gaza during the Persian period. The Cretans maintained their political independence and isolation from the rest of the Greek world. They were preoccupied with the struggles between their own towns, and took no part in the wars between Persia and Greece, between Sparta and Athens, or between Macedon and the other cities of Greece. In matters of religion they zealously preserved elements of Minoan belief and practice until the late Roman period.⁶⁰⁵ In the late seventh century BCE the Cretan economy collapsed, which resulted in waves of emigration, particularly of artists and craftsmen, and Cretan cult objects reached temples in every part of the Aegean world. In Crete itself, from now on there was a marked tendency to conservatism and faithfulness to archaic artistic and religious traditions, which continued until the Hellenistic period.⁶⁰⁶ At the same time Crete became an exporter of religion: The cults of Demeter (*Ida-mater*) and Persephone, with their mystical ceremonies, to Attica and Eleusis.⁶⁰⁷ The cults of Artemis and Apollo, Hera and Heracles (see below) also spread to Greece.

Crete's political and economic crises continued into the Hellenistic period, with incessant wars between her cities. The education of the young Cretans was military, and mercenary service abroad became their prime means of livelihood.⁶⁰⁸ The kings of Persia and Egypt employed thousands of mercenaries from the Aegean world in the wars between them. Between the sixth and third centuries CE the number of mercenaries in the Land of Israel was immense; in Gaza a pair of bronze greaves (circa 500 BCE) and a hoplite helmet has been found. They were paid in coins most of which were struck in Gaza, called by researchers 'Philistine-Arab coins'. Some of them were made according to Attic, rather than Persian, standard, since the Greek mercenaries preferred them as currency. Most of them were decorated with motifs taken from Greek coins, such as an owl or the head of Athene, Nike or Apollo. There is also a group of coins decorated with a mountain goat turned to the left and looking backwards, with

⁶⁰⁴ Bourdajewicz 2000: 34–39; Humbert & Sadeq 2000: 105–106.

⁶⁰⁵ Willetts 1962: 42, 142–144, 146, 169–170, 191–193, 272–274.

⁶⁰⁶ Morris 1995: 169–172.

⁶⁰⁷ Morris 1995: 169–170.

⁶⁰⁸ Willetts 1965: 140–148; Karafiotias 2002: 118–121.

an inscription: אדה (ada or ida in Phoenician letters) or ΑΙΓΙ (aigi, a goat) in Greek.⁶⁰⁹ Babelon considers that the goat is an allusion to the name of the city of Gaza, since the Greeks interpreted it as αἴξ, a goat. Hill disagrees, on the grounds that no goat ever appears on coins on which the name Gaza is inscribed.⁶¹⁰ But the same mountain goat, turned to the left and looking backwards, often appears on the coins of Praesus, the Cretan centre of the cult of Zeus *Cretagenes*, during this period (fifth to third century BCE).⁶¹¹ On the coins of Praesus a cow suckling an infant is also portrayed. This is Io, suckling her son Epaphus whom she bore to Zeus.⁶¹² The name Io appears on a coin of Praesus on whose reverse Zeus *Dictaeus* is portrayed.⁶¹³ In the Greek and Roman period Gaza was known as *Iona*, from the name of Io. She appears in the form of a cow on the coins of Gaza in the Roman period, and also in the form of a woman with the name Io inscribed in Greek by her side (see below). It may be that on the coins of Gaza which depict a goat, the name אדה alludes to Mount Ida in Crete where the goat Amaltheia, which is indicated by the name *AIGI*, suckled Zeus. Also the Hebrew name of Gaza — אֶזָּא Aza — includes the letters עז — meaning goat.

As early as the late fifth century BCE the Phoenician letter mem, which became the symbol of the town's coins in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, appears on two coins.⁶¹⁴ The *ostrakon* with the name 'Abdmaran has been dated to the late fourth century BCE. It seems likely that this was the period when the local god whose title was 'maran' [Lord] began to be identified with the chief god of Crete. In the Hellenistic period there were also many Cretans in the region serving as mercenaries in the Ptolemaic and Seleucid armies.⁶¹⁵ An epigram from Gaza on the tomb of Charmedes, native of Anopolis in Crete, dates from the third century BCE. He and his son-in-law served in the Ptolemaic army, kept in contact with his birthplace, and assisted in its reconstruction when it was damaged in war.⁶¹⁶

4.3.d. The Marneion (Temple of Marnas) (figure 27)

From the time of Hadrian Marnas is depicted on the coins of Gaza inside a temple with two columns and an architrave bearing a triangular pediment. It seems, however, that this was only a view of its forefront, since Mark the Deacon says that it was a round building. Its interior — the *naos* — was also round. It was encircled by two concentric colonnades and roofed with a high dome. In the *naos* were statues of many gods.⁶¹⁷ In

⁶⁰⁹ Babelon 1901–1931: III, 1032–1039, 1076, 1085.

⁶¹⁰ Hill 1965: lxxxv–lxxxvi.

⁶¹¹ Wroth 1963: 70–72, Nos. 6, 7, 10, 12. The mountain goat and a goat suckling an infant appear in Minoan art: Evans, 1964: I, 515, figs. 372–373.

⁶¹² Babelon 1901–1931: 910.

⁶¹³ Le Rider 1966: plate XXVI, No. 21.

⁶¹⁴ Nave 1985: 274.

⁶¹⁵ In the course of one year there were about 5,500 Cretans in the Gaza region. This was in 217 BCE, when the decisive battle between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids over the control of the Land of Israel took place near Rafiah. There were 3,000 Cretan mercenaries in the army of Ptolemy IV, and 2,500 in the army of Antiochus III. Willetts 2013: 146.

⁶¹⁶ Stern 1990: 50.

⁶¹⁷ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 75. Lifshiz maintains that the round engraving on the lead weight from Gaza is the



Figure 27. Gaza coin. Caracalla (212–217 CE). Temple showing two columns and pediment. Within Artemis on left drawing arrow from quiver on her shoulder and holding a bow. Marnas on right holding scepter. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).

398 CE the emperor commanded that all the temples in Gaza should be shut down, but the idolaters paid a huge bribe to the official who was to carry out the command, and the *Marneion* remained open. In 402 the emperor sent a military detachment to the city to destroy all its temples. The priests of Marnas erected a barricade behind the bronze gates of the *Marneion*, hid the statues of the gods in an underground chamber known as the *ἀδύτα adita* and fled through another exit. The Christians poured inflammable material on the gates of the temple, set it on fire and burnt it down completely. We are told that it was intended to build the Eudoxiana church over the *Marneion* in the shape of the *naos*. The plan of the Eudoxiana church is unknown, but the plan of the church of Gaza-Maiumas depicted in the Ma'in mosaic in Trans-Jordan, which is round and domed, is similar to the description of the *Marneion* in the *Life of Porphyry*: a round building with a dome.⁶¹⁸

The architectural design of the *Marneion* was unlike that of other temples in the Land of Israel, and many scholars have discussed its origins and significance. Cook thought it similar to the Cretan *λαβύρινθος labyrinthos*, which is depicted on the coins of Knossos from 500 BCE, in three forms: as a round building with concentric circles; like a square building; and like a swastika, similar to the monogram of Marnas on the coins of Gaza.⁶¹⁹ The monogram appeared on the coins of Gaza from the same period until the closing of the mint in 242 CE. Hill believed that the *Marneion* was inspired by the Roman Pantheon, which was also a round building with an interior colonnade of pillars, built at the time of Hadrian on the site of the Pantheon of Agrippa.⁶²⁰ This, however does not explain why the *Marneion* was not built on the standard plan of an elongated temple but in the unusual form of a circle. Mussies maintains that the

plan of the *Marneion*. Lifshiz 1976: 177, No. 22. Mussies considers that the round engravings on the weights are a rough depiction of the floor plan of the *Marneion*. Mussies 1990: 2424.

⁶¹⁸ De Vaux 1938: 247, and plate XIV, 1; Mussies 1990: 2454–2455.

⁶¹⁹ Cook 1930: I, 476–478.

⁶²⁰ Hill 1965: lxxvi; Belayche 2001: 243. On the plan of the Pantheon see Ruggiero 1997: 78–80.

circular building is reminiscent of Roman places of burial such as the mausoleums of Augustus and Hadrian, and that this accords with the fact that Marnas was a fertility god, who was buried and reborn;⁶²¹ and, indeed, according to Cretan mythology Zeus *Cretagenes* also died and was buried on Mount Juktas in Crete.⁶²² Epiphanius emphasizes that the heroes he enumerates were all mortals whose lords honoured and worshipped them as gods after their death. The Minoan god, too, was originally a priest-king who became a god after his death. This king is portrayed in Minoan art as a hunter holding a bow.⁶²³ The worship of Zeus *Cretagenes* developed from his cult. *Asterius*, the king of Crete in Epiphanius's list, was one of the appellations of Zeus *Cretagenes*. It is also possible that the origins of the building were not in Rome, but in Crete, where the god himself originated. In the Minoan-Mycenaean world the cult of the dead was conducted on the sites of their tombs. Heroes were buried in a round structure, the *tholos*,⁶²⁴ of which there are many in Mycenae, in the Peloponnese.⁶²⁵ Moreover, there is much evidence that in Minoan Crete there were round domed tombs, such as those in Apesokari in the east of the island and Kamilari in the south. They have been dated to the pre-palatial period (2,800–1,900 BCE). A gold ring known as the Ring of Minos, dated at 1450 BCE, was found in the tomb temple at Knossos, and published by Evans.⁶²⁶ Engraved on it are scenes of a ship bearing an altar setting out to sea; a goddess and a young god shaking the branches of a sacred tree; and a sacred building in the shape of a *monopteron* with a dome, similar to the shape of the *naos* in the *Marneion* of Gaza. After the crisis of 600 BCE Cretan sacred architecture was conspicuously faithful to previous traditions of building, and this continued into the Hellenistic period.⁶²⁷ In view of the long-standing connection between Gaza and Crete, it may well be that the temple of Marnas in Gaza was also influenced by these traditions.

All the heroes in Epiphanius's list had in common the fact that their tombs and the centre of their cults were in Egypt or close to its borders, but their supposed origin was from the Aegean world. In point of fact, they were all local heroes. Canobus was originally Osiris/Serapis who was worshipped in the city of Canobus. During the Ptolemaic period he became Canobus, the servant of a king of Sparta who died of snakebite. His wife Menouthis was a mutant form of Isis, to whom there was a temple in the town of Menouthis. Cassius was Zeus Cassius, or Ba'al-Tsafon, the centre of whose cult was on Mount Cassius, on the Bardavil lagoon. Marnas was a combination of a Semitic fertility god with Zeus *Cretagenes*. Each of these heroes had some connection

⁶²¹ Mussies 1990: 2454; Cook 1930: III, 941–943. Cook points out that on the site of Zeus's tomb a church called 'Christus Effendi' was built — a name parallel to 'Christus Adoneinu' (Christ Our Lord) or Marna. Jesus also died, was buried, and rose from the dead.

⁶²² Marinatos 1993: 129, fig. 91a.

⁶²³ Nilson 1940 apud: Willetts 1962: 584–617.

⁶²⁴ As, for example, the tomb of Clytemnestra (1200 BCE) and the tomb of Aegisthus (1500 BCE). See Wace 1979: 2, fig. 1.

⁶²⁵ Marinatos 1993: 12–20, and figs. 14, 19, 20.

⁶²⁶ Evans 1964: IV, 940–965.

⁶²⁷ Morris 1995: 162. The Hellenistic and Roman periods saw the continuation of religious buildings in the shape of a *tholos*, such as the *tholos* of Asclepius in Epidaurus, from the fourth century BCE, or the *tholos* of Heracles in the Forum Boarium in Rome.

with the sea and seafaring. Canobus accompanied Menelaus when he invaded Egypt after the fall of Troy. Cassius was a *naukleros*, captain of a ship. According to Plutarch, Isis founded Pelusion in honour of Pelusius, who was also known as Palaestinus and Maneros. He was a prince of Byblos who accompanied the goddess on her voyage to Egypt. He fell from the deck of the ship and was drowned.⁶²⁸ Antinous also accompanied Hadrian on his voyage to Egypt in 130 CE, and drowned while sailing on the Nile. In the Minoan world the concept of an after-life beyond the sea was widespread. In Egypt, too, it was believed that the dead sailed in a ship to the isles in which the blessed gods dwelt. The voyage constituted the *apotheosis* of the soul of the dead. In the Iliad, too, Rhadamanthys of Crete, the brother of Minos, is a ruler of the Elysian fields.⁶²⁹

The heroes mentioned by Epiphanius are also similar in that the emperor Hadrian played a key role in founding or determining the form of their cults. He made Antinous a god and founded a city, Antinoupolis in Egypt, as well as games and a cult, in his honour. Hadrian worshipped Zeus Cassius, and wrote a hymn to him.⁶³⁰ It seems, too, that he was involved in the cult of Marnas in Gaza, since it was only after his visit there that Marnas and his temple began to appear on the city's coins: that, therefore, is the date of the foundation of his official public cult. It is apparently no coincidence that from then on a pantheon of Cretan gods, such as Artemis/Britomartis, Minos and Io begins to appear next to Marnas. It seems that Hadrian encouraged the people of Gaza to 'return to their roots', and take pride in their ancient Aegean lineage. They, on their part, were grateful to their benefactor, and declared the start of an additional beginning from the date of his visit. It lasted until his death. At the time of his visit he also founded at Gaza a fair called by his name in which prisoners from the Bar Kochba revolt were sold into slavery.⁶³¹ It appears that Hadrian's actions in Egypt and the Land of Israel were motivated by one prime purpose. In addition to his being a convinced philhellene, he believed that the expansion and deepening of Hellenic culture was a method of uniting and consolidating the Roman Empire. He founded a great many cities whose constitutions and institutions educated the citizens to that culture and promoted it, and founded cults of heroes and local gods overlaid with a veneer of Hellenism. As against this, he commanded that the rebellious Jews be forcibly converted, and changed the name of the province from Judaea to Palaestina, a name reminiscent of the early settlers who came there from the Aegean world. In this way the Hellenic-Syrian population was granted superior status in the Land of Israel.

Cretan religion was given official recognition in Gaza from the time of Hadrian. But it did not spring up from nothing, and was not an artificial creation imposed from above by the regime. The people of Gaza devotedly preserved their original traditions, and maintained the cultural connection with their place of origin throughout the thousand

⁶²⁸ Plutarch, 'On Isis', 15–17.

⁶²⁹ Homer, *Odyssey*, IV, 561.

⁶³⁰ *Greek Anthology*, 6. 332.

⁶³¹ *Chronicon Paschale*, 474; Safrai 1984: 143, 151–155.

years before the time of Christ. Therefore they defended their special cults zealously for many decades after Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire.

4.4. *Artemis (Ἄρτεμις)/Britomartis (Βριτόμαρτις)*

On the coins of Gaza a goddess always appears next to Marnas. She is dressed in a short chiton with a belt round her waist, and holds a bow. She is usually identified as Artemis. Hill has pointed out her likeness to Britomartis, the Cretan-Minoan goddess who was identified with Artemis.⁶³² Britomartis was a huntress goddess, and was identified with another Cretan goddess of the hunt, Dictynna. Dictynna appears on the coins of Cydonia (modern Chania) in Crete, armed with a bow and holding a torch.⁶³³ The cult of Britomartis/Dictynna survived throughout the first millennium BCE and into the Roman period. One of her appellations in Crete was *Toxia*, she with the bow.⁶³⁴ In the second century BCE a statue of her was erected in the temple of Zeus *Cretagenes* on Mount Dicte.⁶³⁵ The legend tells that Minos king of Crete fell in love with her, and pursued her for nine months. In order to escape from him she threw herself into the sea from the slopes of Mount Dicte, and was saved by a fisherman's net (*diktyon*).⁶³⁶ As a result, she was also considered to be the patron of fishermen. The cult of Artemis/Britomartis /Dictynna spread from Crete throughout the Greek world. In Ephesus she took the place of her mother Leto, whose cult dated from the Hittite period. In Sparta she was called *Orthia*, and was known in Athens in the fifth century BCE.⁶³⁷

In Gaza Artemis/Britomartis sometimes appears by Marnas's side without a temple, holding a bow. Sometimes she is depicted alone, running and drawing an arrow from its quiver.⁶³⁸ An earlier form of Artemis appears in Gaza in the Seleucid period. At the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 BCE) she was portrayed as a *φωσφορος phosphoros* — a torch — or light-bearer.⁶³⁹ She wears a short chiton fastened round her waist, and high boots. The light is related to the fact that Artemis was a huntress, for the Greeks conceived of light and heat as deadly weapons.⁶⁴⁰ Zeus's prime weapon in all his wars was a thunderbolt (bolt of lightning), by the light of which Semele, his beloved, was burnt to death. Crete was the first place in the Greek world where the figure of a god bearing a thunderbolt appeared, in about 700 BCE.⁶⁴¹ Marnas/Zeus *Cretagenes*, the consort of Artemis/Britomartis, also bore a bolt of lightning. In the eastern Mediterranean, too, the image of a pair of hunter gods — for instance, Ba^cal and ^cAshtart in the Ugaritic pantheon — was common. Crete maintained contacts with

⁶³² Hill 1965: lxxvi–lxxvii.

⁶³³ Willetts 1962: 191.

⁶³⁴ Willetts 1962: 272.

⁶³⁵ Willetts 1962: 211.

⁶³⁶ Strabo, *Geographicon*, X, 4, 12.

⁶³⁷ Willetts 1962: 45–46, 186–190; Aristophanes, 'Frogs', 1359.

⁶³⁸ Meshorer 1984: 30, No. 60.

⁶³⁹ Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 49, No. 19.

⁶⁴⁰ Parisinou 2000: 81–113.

⁶⁴¹ Parisinou 2000: 97.

Mesopotamia and the towns of the Syrian coast during the second millennium BCE, and was influenced by their cults.⁶⁴²

4.5. Minos (Μίνωϛ) (figure 28)

Minos was one of the eponymous heroes of Gaza. According to Stephanus of Byzantium Gaza was called *Minoa*, after Minos, who came there accompanied by his two brothers Ajax and Rhadamanthys.⁶⁴³ From the time of Hadrian Minos appears on the coins of Gaza as a young man dressed in a short chiton or in armour. In his right hand he holds a long laurel branch, and in his left a spear. Next to him is his name, written in Greek: ΜΕΙΝΩϛ. Very few cities represented Minos on their coins, such as Knossos, from the Fourth to the second centuries BCE. Under Roman Empire there is only Gaza.⁶⁴⁴ On the reverse of these coins there appears a tree. In Crete this tree was considered holy: it grows according to Cretan tradition in Gortyna, in the south of the island, and in its shade Zeus raped Europa. She gave birth to Minos, who was crowned as king of Crete. Farhi maintains that the tree is not a cult symbol, but refers to the frankincence and the myrrh tree, since Gaza was its main export station from south Arabia in the Persian and Hellenistic periods.⁶⁴⁵

Mythological and historical elements are combined in the figure of Minos. Homer states that Minos king of Knossos was the son of Zeus and Europa, the daughter of Phoenix king of Tyre.⁶⁴⁶ It is he who had the Knossos labyrinth built, so as to hold Minotaur, his monstrous son. Minos's grandson was Idomeneus, who invaded Egypt from the sea at the head of his men after the Trojan War. He was defeated by the king of Egypt in a battle on the sea-shore.⁶⁴⁷ According to Hesiod Minos was the son of Zeus,



Figure 28. Gaza coin. Autonomous. Hadrian (117–138 CE). Year 131/132 CE. Minos in short chiton holding scepter. In field: ΜΕΙΝΩϛ. On reverse: Holy tree. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).

⁶⁴² Evans 1964: IV, 413–421; Marinatos 1993: 130; Morris 1995: 151–172.

⁶⁴³ Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnika*, 333.11.

⁶⁴⁴ Hill 1965: lxxii; Chambon 2012: 125.

⁶⁴⁵ Meshorer 1984: 27, No. 55; Yashin 2007: 27; Farhi 2013: 284–285.

⁶⁴⁶ Homer, *Odyssey*, XI, 311.

⁶⁴⁷ Homer, *Odyssey*, XIV, 246–286.

and his daughter Ariadne was granted eternal life after her marriage to Dionysus.⁶⁴⁸ Willetts maintains that the figure of the young man in Minoan art represents the divine king Minos, whose youth is renewed each year.⁶⁴⁹ In her discussion of religious and artistic influences of the Levant and Egypt on the Aegean world and Crete during the Bronze Age, Morris compares him to Moses, the leader of the people of Israel.⁶⁵⁰ Moses is thought of as an outsider (a Hebrew to the Egyptians, an Egyptian to the Hebrews), a favourite of God, who gave his people their laws after forty days and night on Mount Sinai. Minos was also an outsider. Strabo describes him as ‘*Xenos* (stranger) of the islands.’⁶⁵¹ He was a judge and a leader, and his people migrated with him, like Moses. Plato says that Minos consulted Zeus every nine years, and received his people’s laws from him.⁶⁵² Aaron, Moses’s brother, assisted him, and his descendants were priests for generations. Rhadamanthys, the brother of Minos, was also a lawgiver, and was known by his appellation ‘the man of justice’.⁶⁵³ He was granted eternal life in the Fields of the Blessed.⁶⁵⁴ According to Herodotus and Thucydides the historical Minos was a powerful ruler with a fleet, who held overseas possessions. Herodotus claims to have questioned the eteocretoi of Praesus, the survivors of the Minoan population, about their most ancient traditions. They claimed that Minos lived three generations before the Trojan War. His ships were built by the Carians, who lived in the Cyclades and were then called Lelegoi. Minos died in Sicily when he was searching for Daedalus. Under his leadership all the people of Crete apart from the inhabitants of Praesus migrated and settled in southern Italy. (Like Gaza, Agrigentum was known as *Minoa*, and claimed to have been founded by Minos). Crete, now unoccupied, was settled by Greeks, who assisted the Achaeans in their war against Troy. On their return, they suffered droughts and plagues and the island was again deserted. New settlers, the Cretans of Herodotus’s time, arrived.⁶⁵⁵ According to Thucydides, Minos was the first ruler to establish a thalassocracy. He drove the Carians from the islands to the mainland and cleansed the sea of pirates.⁶⁵⁶ Modern scholars agree that Minos was not the name of a single king but a dynastic name of a succession of kings.⁶⁵⁷

The myth of the foundation of Gaza by Minos was officially recognized from the time of Hadrian onwards. It probably reflects the memory of Philistine settlement in Gaza in the Early Iron Age. The connection with Crete was preserved during the Persian and Hellenistic periods, as a result of the waves of immigration of Cretans from their motherland from the end of the sixth century BCE and their service as mercenaries in the eastern Mediterranean.

⁶⁴⁸ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 948.

⁶⁴⁹ Willetts 1962: 79.

⁶⁵⁰ Morris 1995: 173–194.

⁶⁵¹ Strabo, *Geographicon*, IV, 8, 477.

⁶⁵² Plato, *The Laws*, 1624 a–d.

⁶⁵³ Plato, ‘Minos’, 318 d.

⁶⁵⁴ Homer, *Odyssey*, XIX, 179; IV, 564.

⁶⁵⁵ Herodotus, *Histories*, VII, 170–171.

⁶⁵⁶ Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, I, 4.

⁶⁵⁷ Willetts 1962: 79.

4.6. Io (Ἴω) (figure 29)

In the Roman era, only the city of Gaza struck coins with Io's figure. She first was represented at the time of Hadrian, from 132 CE, with the Greek inscription EIW. As in the cases of Marnas and Minos, who appear on the coins with their names from 130 CE, it was important to the city authorities to emphasize the Cretan identity of the eponymous heroine of the city. Io always appears with Tyche/Fortuna on her left. She wears a long dress, and holds Tyche's right hand in her own, in the *δεξιῶσις* *dexiosis* (in Greek) or *dextrarum iunctio* (in Latin) gesture which in the Graeco-Roman world symbolized alliance, loyalty and fidelity; from 132 CE she is also depicted as a heifer, by the side of Tyche/Fortuna.⁶⁵⁸ Some scholars hold that she was identified with the city goddess of Gaza.⁶⁵⁹ This seems unlikely, since they are portrayed standing side by side on the coins. The heifer which personifies Io, too, only appears in the company of Tyche/Fortuna, and not when both goddesses are portrayed together.

Stephanus of Byzantium relates that in the course of her wanderings Io passed through Gaza and gave both the city and the sea between Gaza and Egypt her name, *Iona*.⁶⁶⁰ He adds that there was a statue in the shape of a heifer in the city. It is the accepted view that there was a group of statues representing the goddess of the city, including Io as a heifer. It may be that they are depicted on the city's coins.⁶⁶¹

In the Greek myth Io (meaning in Argive dialect: moon) was an Argive priestess of Hera. Zeus fell in love with her, and in order to conceal her from the jealous Hera he



Figure 29. Gaza coin. Hadrian (117–138 CE).
Year 132/133 CE. Io and Tyche standing
facing each other, clasping hands. Courtesy of
Heritage Auctions, Inc.

⁶⁵⁸ Livy 23, 9,3; Hill 1965: Nos. 23–45; Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 57, Nos. 68, 69; 65–66, Nos. 122–124, 126–130; 67, Nos. 150–152; 70, Nos. 178–180; 83, Nos. 179–181; Meshorer 1984: 30; Chambon 2012: 125.

⁶⁵⁹ Meshorer 1984: 30; Avner 1991: 70–72.

⁶⁶⁰ Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnika*, 333.11.

⁶⁶¹ Mussies 1990: 2448; Belayche 2001: 248.

turned her into a cow or a heifer. Hera commanded Argos, a hundred-eyed giant, to watch Io, but Zeus sent Hermes, who put him to sleep with his stories and killed him. In her wrath Hera set the *Erinyes*, the goddesses of vengeance (or, in another version, a gadfly) onto her. Io began to wander from place to place. In her wanderings she passed through Anatolia, Phoenicia and Land of Israel. Her final resting-place was Egypt, on the banks of the Nile, where Zeus returned her to her human shape and she bore her son Epaphus. The *curètes* took Hera's side and stole the child, by her request. Zeus took revenge and killed them. Io went in search for Epaphus and wandered through Syria till she found him in the city of Byblos, and took him back to Egypt. Io was an ancestor of many gods, kings and heroes such as Dionysus, Minos, Cadmus, Perseus and Heracles.

According to Stephanus of Byzantium Io came to Gaza by ship. As we have seen, in the Minoan-Mycenaean world a sea voyage is the equivalent of deification after death. And, indeed, after the birth of Epaphus Io became a goddess and was identified with Isis. Ovid wrote: 'And since that time, the linen wearing throng of Egypt have adored her as a God; for they believe the seed of Jove prevailed; and when her time was due she bore to him a son called Epaphus; who also dwells in temples with his mother in that land.' A fresco in the temple of Isis in Pompeii, dated to the first century BCE, depicts the reception of Io by Isis into Egypt. They are clasping hands, and this may imply that also on Gaza's coins the *dextrarum iunctio* of Tyche and Io represents the same idea.⁶⁶² Io's consort in Egypt was Osiris, who is connected with the cycles of nature and agriculture, and dies and is reborn every year. His throne is set on water, since he also travelled to the Underworld.

The myth of Io is similar to Egyptian, Phoenician, and even biblical myths. According to Herodotus, Epaphus the Greek was a bull, who was called *Apis* in Egypt. He was born of a cow who was made pregnant by a sunbeam.⁶⁶³ Hathor, the cow-goddess of Egypt, was also identified with Isis in the Hellenistic period. In the light of this, the Apollonian characteristics of her consort, Marnas/*Zeus Cretagenes*, can be understood: he was a prophetic god, and hunter who grasped a bow and could inflict illnesses with his arrows. Evans and Marinatos have pointed out the similarity between the cults of Minoan Crete and those of Egypt and the Levant.⁶⁶⁴ In the period of the Hyksos the gods Ba'al and Anath were included in the Egyptian pantheon. Mussies has pointed out that the name of Io's son, Epaphus, may allude to the Pharaoh Apophis, of the Hyksos dynasty.⁶⁶⁵ The myth of Io is also similar to the story of Cadmus, the son of the king of Tyre. He followed a cow to distant places, and founded the Greek city of Thebes in the place where she lay down to rest.

⁶⁶² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I, 747–749; Farhi 2017: 221–223.

⁶⁶³ Herodotus, *Histories*, VII, 27.

⁶⁶⁴ Evans 1964: IV, 413–421; Marinatos 1993: 130.

⁶⁶⁵ Mussies 1990: 2448.

In my view, there are also biblical motifs parallel to that of Io. According to Apollodorus Glaucus, the son of Minos and Pasiphae was drowned in a cask of honey. The *curetes* prophesied that he would be restored to life only by whoever could describe accurately the colours of a heifer from the herd of Minos. Polyidos of Argos described them correctly and succeeded in restoring him to life. They were the colours of the heifer Io.⁶⁶⁶ Some scholars see this legend as an expression of initiation ceremonies in Minoan and Mycenaean society.⁶⁶⁷ But it is also reminiscent of the riddle posed to the men of Gaza by Samson the Danite about the carcass of the lion which he had slain, which was filled with honey. After they had questioned his wife and given the correct solution, Samson said: 'Had you not ploughed with my heifer you would not have solved my riddle'.⁶⁶⁸ A common spiritual world can be perceived here: the heifer helps solve the riddle, and the honey is linked to death. Melissa, the Minoan queen-bee, kills annually her male consorts; Samson was often in danger of death because of his Philistine women. Alao Jonathan, son of King Saul, risked death by tasting honey.⁶⁶⁹ In the Minoan-Mycenaean world the sun was conceived of as a bull, and the moon as a cow, and in Knossos a sacred marriage ceremony between the sun, represented by a man dressed as a bull, and the moon, represented by a woman dressed as a cow, was celebrated. This concept is embodied in the stories of the marriage of Zeus to Hera (who is often described in the Iliad as 'cow-eyed'), to Europa, whom he abducted in the guise of a bull, and to Io.⁶⁷⁰ Perhaps this conception is the source of the figure of Samson, who was also linked to the cult of the sun. In the two previous chapters, about the cults of Jaffa and Ashkelon in the Roman period, I have discussed the connection between the tribe of Dan and the Denyen/Danuna of the Sea Peoples. Samson's activities took place in the coastal plain, in the borderline, but also the point of contact, between Judah and Philistia. This is a clear case of border culture, which adopts cultural elements from both worlds.

4.7. Aphrodite

Aphrodite does not appear on the coins of Gaza in the Hellenistic or Roman period, but there is historical evidence of her cult. Mark the Deacon mentions her temple as one of the eight in the city, and describes how the inhabitants of Gaza worshipped her statue, which stood on a stone altar next to the *tetraporos* (the junction of four roads) near the entrance to the city from the direction of the sea. The statue was made of marble, and portrayed Aphrodite as a naked woman whose private parts were exposed to all eyes. All the inhabitants of the city, and especially the women, came to worship the statue, lighting oil-lamps and burning incense before it. It appeared in dreams to women who aspired to get married. According to Mark the Deacon, the

⁶⁶⁶ Apollodorus, *Library*, III, 3, 1; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 136, in Willetts 1962: 60–65.

⁶⁶⁷ Willetts 1962: 65.

⁶⁶⁸ *Judges*, 14: 10–20.

⁶⁶⁹ *Samuel* I, 14: 24–46.

⁶⁷⁰ Frazer 1963: 326–327; Cook 1964: I, 521–543; Willetts 1962: 110–111.

oracles of the demon which dwelt inside the idol were mendacious and misleading; many women's marriages were unsuccessful, or ended in divorce. When Porphyrius returned from Constantinople he disembarked at Maiumas, the city harbour, and entered Gaza at the head of a Christian procession bearing a cross. When they passed the statue of Aphrodite all the devils who lived inside it crowded together and broke out in confusion, and the statue fell and was shattered into a thousand pieces, injuring many of its devotees.⁶⁷¹

It may be that Aphrodite was not depicted on the coins of Gaza because she was not of Cretan origin: her cult in Crete was founded late, and had very few adherents.⁶⁷² Bauzou believes that Aphrodite of Gaza was related to the Sidonian or Cyprian Aphrodite/Astarte.⁶⁷³ In Ashkelon Astarte was combined with Aphrodite, and in a relief dating from the Roman period she was still portrayed as the ancient Canaanite fertility goddess (see chap. 3, sec. 2). But historical and archaeological evidence shows that in Gaza she was worshipped as the Greek Aphrodite. The description of Mark, who emphasizes the immodesty of the statue, shows that this was Aphrodite *Anadyomene*, emerging naked from the waves.⁶⁷⁴ A bronze statuette of Aphrodite *anadyomene* (height: 19.5 cm) dated to the Roman period was found in Gaza. The goddess is naked squeezing her hair with both hands. Another statuette (height: 17.5 cm) depicts her adorned with a diadem, half draped, her clothing fixed by a knot on a level with her Mount of Venus, leaving her buttocks partially visible. She is tilting her hips and leaning on her left leg. On the bottom of a ceramic plate of the second or third century CE discovered in Gaza there is a relief of a naked woman coming out of the bath. An ivory hair-clip from the Anthedon excavations also has the form of a naked woman or of Aphrodite *Anadyomene*.⁶⁷⁵ The worship of Aphrodite was not erased from the hearts of the people of Gaza even after Porphyrius imposed Christianity by force of arms. A century after the demolition of the statue Procopius of Gaza, in his analogy of painting and poetry, described a painting of Aphrodite, apparently painted on the wall of a bathhouse: 'born from the foam... in the middle of the scene... Aphrodite irresistible just as Aphrodite should be shown',⁶⁷⁶ expressing the classical conception of the erotic influence of the statues of goddesses.⁶⁷⁷

Thus, Aphrodite of Gaza is presented as a living, sensuous woman. It was not only her statue in Gaza which was Greek. The practices of the cult described by Mark the Deacon,

⁶⁷¹ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 39–40, 64–65. Sadeq suggested that the square element occupying the center of the tetrapylon depicted on the Madaba map was the altar near the statue (2015: 48–49).

⁶⁷² Willetts 1962: 284.

⁶⁷³ Bauzou 2000: 57.

⁶⁷⁴ Praxiteles' statue of Aphrodite in Cnidus, 340 BCE, was the first to depict the goddess emerging from the bath. See also our previous chap. 3, sec. 2.

⁶⁷⁵ Chambon 2012: 84–86; Bauzou 2000: 67, No. Bla 8764.

⁶⁷⁶ Procopius Gazae, *Epistulae et Declamations*, III; Kennedy 1983: 171; Dan 1986: 198–199, 203; Ashkenazi 1991: 110–114.

⁶⁷⁷ As, for instance, in Ovid's story of the Cypriot Pygmalion who fell in love with the statue of a woman. Aphrodite turned her into a mortal woman, and the city of Paphos in Cyprus was named after their daughter. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 245–279.

such as the lighting of lamps before the goddess, were also Greek. The lamps were a symbol of love and sexual activity. In Greek literature lamps are frequently mentioned as the companions and sole witnesses of lovers.⁶⁷⁸ This distinguishes them from the torch, the symbol of lawful marriage, which was an attribute of Artemis, the virgin huntress, and accompanied the bride up to the threshold of the bridal chamber.⁶⁷⁹

It has been surmised that the Maiumas festivities, dedicated to Aphrodite and Dionysus, were celebrated in Maiumas, the harbour quarter of Gaza.⁶⁸⁰ In the Greek world Aphrodite was connected with water and the sea, since she was the goddess of sex and the principal source of fertility in nature. She was born of the sea foam, and therefore was thought of as the patroness of sea voyages. Aphrodite *Anadyomene* is portrayed with a dolphin by her side, since she was borne to Paphos on a dolphin after her birth. The Maiumas festivals were conducted near sources of water, close to artificial pools or the sea, and involved drunkenness and licentiousness. In the period of the Roman Empire they spread throughout its dominions. They were celebrated in ports such as Ostia, Carthage, Corinth and Alexandria, but also inland, as in Antiochia, Gerasa or Shuni-Maiumas. Because of their debauchery many emperors and church authorities from the time of Constantine I onwards banned them, but did not succeed in abolishing them completely. On the evidence of the works of Choricus of Gaza who was active between 520 and 540 CE, we know that idolatrous practices and festivals, such as mime performances and the 'Festival of Roses', continued to exist in his time.⁶⁸¹ Choricus states that the people of Ashkelon and the people of Gaza thronged to each other's festivals. It may be that the Maiumas festival was also still celebrated in both these cities.

4.8. Heracles (figure 30)

Heracles appears on the coins of Gaza from the time of Hadrian. He stands facing forward, naked, holding a club and the skin of the Nemean lion. Sometimes his bust is depicted, facing left, with the club below it. He is also apparently portrayed naked, holding a caduceus, on a seal found in Anthedon.⁶⁸² An elaborate water clock, described by Procopius of Gaza in the fifth century, stood in the center of Gaza near the forum, marking the hours both by a bell and by bronze figures representing Helios passing by twelve doors, from each every hour appears Heracles and performs one of his twelve labours. In the center of the clock stood Heracles holding a club and a gong shaped as a lion skin. Every hour he hit the gong with his club and the sound was so loud that

⁶⁷⁸ Aristophanes opens the comedy *Ecclesiazusae* with Praxagora's hymn of praise to the earthenware lamp: 'Oh! Thou shining light of my earthenware lamp, from this high spot shalt thou look abroad. Oh! Lamp!.. In thee alone do we confide, and thou art worthy, for thou art near us when we practise the various postures in which Aphrodite delights upon our couches, and none dreams even in the midst of her sports of seeking to avoid thine eye that watches us. Thou alone shinest into the secret recesses of our thighs... and with thy flame dost light the actions of our loves... thou art our companion, and never dost thou betray or reveal to a neighbor the secrets thou hast learned about us.' *Ecclesiazusae*, 1–18.

⁶⁷⁹ Parisinou 2000: 79–80.

⁶⁸⁰ Dvorjetski 2001: 100–101.

⁶⁸¹ Choricus, *Logoi*, I, II, VI, VIII; *Dialexis*, XVI, apud: Rabinowitz 1949: 178–181.

⁶⁸² Boussac 2000: 118, No. Bla 6115.

it was heard for long distance. Mark the Deacon says that there was a temple known as the *Heroeion* in the city.⁶⁸³ It may be that this was the temple of Heracles or of his son Azon, who was considered to be the founder of the city. One view is that the cult of Heracles in Gaza reflects Phoenician influence, and that beneath his Greek veneer lies Melqart of Tyre, who was worshipped by Phoenician seafarers for more than a thousand years.⁶⁸⁴ Stephanus of Byzantium says that ‘even in our own time the Syrians call the city by the name of Azon son of Heracles’.⁶⁸⁵ In any case, even if it is true that in the sixth century CE the Syrians of Gaza tried to keep the tradition of its Phoenician origin alive, it does not follow that Heracles of Gaza was Melqart and that his cult in the city was founded by the Phoenicians. In the Persian period Gaza was not ruled by Tyre or Sidon; it was independent, and allied with the Arabs who, according to Herodotus, controlled the region between Gaza and Jenissus (El^c-Arish].

It may be that Cretan influence led to the foundation of the cult of Heracles in Gaza. The myth of this Greek hero originated in Minoan Crete, and spread from there to Greece.⁶⁸⁶ In Greece there was a tradition that Heracles *Idaeus* (of Mount Ida) founded the Olympic games on his arrival from Crete.⁶⁸⁷ One of his labours was to catch the raging bull which Poseidon gave to King Minos. He bound it, and brought it by ship to king Euristheus.⁶⁸⁸ This story is reminiscent of the tale of the struggle of Gilgamesh with the heavenly bull in Sumerian and Accadian mythology. The Cretans traded with the Syrian coastal towns, and were influenced by Phoenician and Mesopotamian cults.⁶⁸⁹



Figure 30. Gaza coin. Hadrian (117–138). Heracles stands facing forward, naked, his right hand resting on club and left holding lion skin. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).

⁶⁸³ Mark the Deacon, *Vita di San Porfirio*, 64. Mussies considers that the Heroeion was a temple of Minos or Heracles. Mussies 1990: 2417; Talgam 2009: 106.

⁶⁸⁴ Bauzou 2000: 55.

⁶⁸⁵ Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnika*, 194.1, 454.7.

⁶⁸⁶ Willetts 1962: 51–52.

⁶⁸⁷ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, V, 7, 6–7.

⁶⁸⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IX, 189.

⁶⁸⁹ Morris 1995: 168–170.

Heracles is also connected with Gaza through Io, who was also worshipped there. In the course of her wanderings as a tormented heifer she visited Prometheus, who was fettered to a rock. He told her of her future wanderings, and prophesied that she would become a goddess in Egypt, and that he would be freed from his bonds by her descendant Heracles: 'of her seed... shall be born a man of daring, renowned with the bow, who shall deliver me from these toils'.⁶⁹⁰

Samson, the biblical Israelite hero is the mirror image of Heracles, the founder and patron god of Gaza. Granted by God superhuman physical strength, he was also nazirite and forbidden to drink wine. Heracles was portrayed in Greek and Roman mythology, literature and art as a hero of great appetites and little restraint, often drunk. He even challenged Dionysus to a drinking contest and lost, and had to join his rival's ecstatic retinue of for a while. The contest is portrayed also in a Late Roman period mosaics in Tzipori/Diocaesarea, the capital of Jewish Galilee and the residence of Rabbi Yehudah Nassi, the redactor of the Mishna. Three scenes depict not only drunk Heracles sitting defeated at Dionysus' feet, sprawling helpless on the ground; but even raping Auge, Athene's priestess and daughter of his host. Heracles was a saviour hero, by killing monsters and criminals and restored safety to mankind. Samson saved his people from the oppressing Philistines. He had friendship and even marriage ties with Philistines, and adopted their Aegean life style of banquets and riddles. However it was a deception strategy serving his purpose to overcome and destroy them (*Judges*, 14: 4). Samson especially fought against Gaza and was called by the Gazaeans 'our destructor'. In order to humiliate them he removed the city gates, the symbol of its identity and power and carried them to Hebron (*Judges*, 16: 4). Like Heracles's wife Dianira, Samson's lover Delila caused his death. Eventually the Gazaeans caught and blinded him and tortured him in Gaza's prison. They brought him to the city temple in order to ridicule him. Samson made the temple pillars collapse, and by committing suicide '....in his death he killed more Philistines than in his life' (*Judges*, 16: 30). While the cult of Heracles as national hero persisted in Gaza also after Christianity raised to power, the Jews cherished the memory of Samson, and his exploits are shown in the mosaic floors of two synagogues of the Byzantine period, which were discovered in the Galilee. In Huqoq's synagogue he is depicted in two scenes: carrying the gates of Gaza on his shoulders, and sending foxes with torches attached to their tails to burn the Philistine's fields. The mosaics of the synagogue at Wadi Hamam depict the episode where Samson strikes down the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass (*Judges*, 15: 15–17). At both synagogues, Samson wears Roman military dress and is monumental in size.

The predestinate calling of Samson: '... he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines' (*Judges*, 13: 5) — was completed by King David, who killed the Philistines' champion Goliath and band them from his kingdom. In Judaism, David came to represent the messianic salvation, and his figure as redeemer is depicted in

⁶⁹⁰ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 561–886.

the mosaic floor of a synagogue (dated 508/509 CE), in no other than in Gaza itself: he is sitting on a throne, dressed like a Byzantine emperor, playing his lyre and enchanting wild animals in the guiss of Orpheus, the saviour of souls. Thus, the message is clear to all: Jews, Chrustians and pagans.

4.9. Apollo (figure 31)

There is historical and archaeological evidence for the cult of Apollo in Gaza. In the Hellenistic period there was a sanctuary of the god, apparently near the buleuterion. When Janaeus' army broke inti the city, all the 500 senators fled to it and were massacred there. Mark the Deacon mentions his temple as one of the eight temples in the city which were closed down in 402 CE.⁶⁹¹ Apollo appeared on the city's coins 540 years before this, in 142/1 BCE, in the reign of the Seleucid king Demetrius II Nicator (146–138 BCE). He is naked, and holds a bow and arrow.⁶⁹² In the same year another coin was struck in Gaza, depicting a *tripod* with a snake coiled round it.⁶⁹³ During the reign of Antoninus Pius Apollo was portrayed naked on the coins, holding a long branch and pouring a libation on an altar.⁶⁹⁴ In 2013, an archaic bronze statue of Apollo was found by a fisherman on the coast of Deir al Balah (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/fisherman-nets-centuries-old-statue-of-greek-god-apollo-in-gaza-strip-9120117.html#gallery>). The life-sized statue depicts naked Apollo, standing upright with an outstretched arm, and with his palm held up; he has curly hair and one eye inlaid with a blue stone.

Bauzou asked what the origin of the cult of Apollo in Gaza was. The Seleucids considered him to be their patron, and built a temple to him in Daphne, close to their capital,



Figure 31. Gaza coin. Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus (161–169). Apollo, naked, Chlamys hanging from left arm, standing left. Left resting on a long branch, pouring libation from a patera in right hand over flaming altar. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).

⁶⁹¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIII, 3; Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 64.

⁶⁹² Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 50, 25.

⁶⁹³ Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 50, 24.

⁶⁹⁴ Hill 1965: 156, No. 92; Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 60, No. 90.

Antiochia. It may be that it was they who brought his cult to Gaza. Another possibility is that he stemmed from the Canaanite-Phoenician Reshef. Bauzou pointed out that the Apollo of Gaza and Rafiah did not play a *κιθάρα* like the Apollo of Daphne, but had beside him a tripod with a snake coiled round it. He deduced from this that the Apollo of Gaza was the god of prophecy from Delphi in Greece, which was symbolized by a *tripod* and snake.⁶⁹⁵ According to the first Homeric hymn to Apollo he killed the monstrous snake Python there, and took control of its temple.⁶⁹⁶ In any case, the cult of Apollo at Delphi was also connected with Crete. Ancient myths show that the cult of Apollo spread from Crete to all parts of the Greek world from Crete. The first Homeric hymn to Apollo tells of how Apollo, in the guise of a dolphin, captured a ship full of Cretan merchants sailing to Knossos. He brought them to his temple in Delphi and made them his priests; hence his appellation Apollo *Delphinios* (of the dolphin).⁶⁹⁷

Another appellation of Apollo in Crete, and in the Greek world in general, was *Smyntheus* (of a mouse), given him because of his ability to bring to an end a plague of mice which did damage to fields of wheat.⁶⁹⁸ The Bible tells of epidemics and a plague of mice with which God visited the Philistines. In order to appease him they offered him golden figurines of piles and tumours, as well as golden figurines of mice (see chap. 3, above). A bronze figurine of a mouse holding a bechnut between his paws was discovered in Gaza in 2001, dated to the first or second century CE. A similar figurine from the second to the fourth centuries CE was found at Kedesh temple in the Galilee, dedicated to Ba'al Shamin or Helios.⁶⁹⁹ The Cretan Apollo had another important function, as keeper of the gates — *Agyieus*.⁷⁰⁰ Samson perpetrated an exceptional affront to the men and gods of Gaza when he uprooted their gates in the night and took them to the borders of Hebron.⁷⁰¹

4.10.a. Tyche/Fortuna (figures 32–33)

The most common image on the coins of Gaza was that of Tyche and it seems that she was the most popular deity in the city. When she first appeared, in the reign of Demetrius II Nicator, it was in the form of a bust, with her head turned to the right and her hair gathered behind. On her head was a mural crown with three towers, and her neck was covered with a scarf.⁷⁰² This bust appeared in Gaza for a long time, more than in any other city in the Land of Israel. Nor did it disappear with the advent of the image of Fortuna, in the Roman period, but was relegated to the reverse of the coin. On a coin from the time of Antoninus Pius, dated 140/141 CE, she stands to the left,

⁶⁹⁵ Bauzou 2000: 58.

⁶⁹⁶ Hymn 1: 'To Apollo', 357–374.

⁶⁹⁷ Hymn 1: 'To Apollo', 388–544.

⁶⁹⁸ Willetts 1962: 269–270.

⁶⁹⁹ *Samuel* I, 6: 4–18. Chambon 2012: 92.

⁷⁰⁰ Willetts 1962: 259–260. Some scholars believe that the cult of Apollo reached Crete from Anatolia. Inscriptions in honour of Apulunas, the god who guards the gates, were discovered on four Hittite altars. Willetts 1962: 259, note 35.

⁷⁰¹ *Judges*, 16: 1–4.

⁷⁰² Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 64.

wearing a mural crown with three towers; in the foremost tower the arched gate of the city is depicted.⁷⁰³

Tyche/Fortuna appeared on the coins of Gaza for almost 300 years, from the beginning of the Roman conquest until the closing of the mint in the reign of Gordianus III, in 242 CE. In a coin dated 48 BCE there appeared a female figure with a *kalathos* (basket) on her head. She stands facing left, dressed in a long chiton and holding a libation bowl in her right hand and a *cornucopia* in her left.⁷⁰⁴ It may be that this is an early stage in the crystallization of the image of Tyche/Fortuna, who began to appear continuously only at the beginning of the first century CE, later than in the other coastal cities. Her attributes are varied, but they always give promise of material plenty. At the time of Augustus (5/6 CE) and Vespasian (69/70 CE) she stands facing forward, clothed in a long chiton, holding a palm branch and two ears of corn. On her left, under her upraised arm, there appears the Phoenician letter mem, the symbol of the city's coinage.⁷⁰⁵ During the reign of Caligula she again holds a *cornucopia*, but in her left hand there is a spear or sceptre.⁷⁰⁶ This type reappears in the reigns of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, Septimius Servus, Julia Domna, Geta, Elagabalus, Julia Maesa, and Gordianus III.⁷⁰⁷ At the time of Septimius Severus the arched city gate in her mural crown is emphasized, as is the gate in the crown of the bust at the time of Antoninus Pius. The Bible mentions the 'gates of Gaza', in which the Philistines hid all night in order to capture Samson, who nonetheless succeeded in removing them and taking them to Hebron — a gross indignity to the city.⁷⁰⁸ The gates on the coins signify the city's sovereignty and power, as they had 1,200 years earlier.

Tyche/Fortuna accompanies the other deities which were worshipped in Gaza: she shakes the hand of the nymph Io, who sometimes appears at her side in the form of a heifer. Tyche/Fortuna also stands at the side of Marnas, the principal god of the city, and crowns him with a wreath of victory.

The figure of Tyche of Antiochia, which symbolized the city which the Seleucids founded and made the administrative centre of their regime, did not appear on the coins of Gaza. This was apparently because of Gaza's sympathy for Egypt, the enemy of the Seleucids. The political, economic and cultural links between Gaza and Egypt were forged as early as the Middle Bronze Age. The city tried to resist all conquerors from the north, from the Assyrians and Babylonians, to Alexander the Great and Antigonus Monophthalmos. Its links with Egypt were reinforced at the time of the

⁷⁰³ Hill 1965: 163, No. 130; 164, No. 131; Table VII, Nos. 3, 4.

⁷⁰⁴ Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 53.

⁷⁰⁵ Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 53, No. 44; 54, No. 49.

⁷⁰⁶ Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 53, No. 49.

⁷⁰⁷ Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 55–57, Nos. 59, 60–64, 92–93, 95–96, 100–101, 112, 132–133, 140–148, 153–154, 161, 175–178, 185–187, 191; III, 83, No. 6; 84, Nos. 11–13, 15–16.

⁷⁰⁸ *Judges*, 15: 4–5.



Figure 32. Gaza coin. Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE). Year 148/149 CE. Bust of Tyche to right, with turreted crown, veiled; in right field, ΓΑΖΑ. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.



Figure 33. Gaza coin. Hadrian (117–138 CE). Year 130/131 CE. Tyche/Fortuna wearing kalathos standing looking left, resting her right hand on scepter and in left hand holding cornucopia; beside her, heifer standing to left; in field, on left, ΓΑΖΑ; on right, date: B EPII (Gaza, 2 of the visit). Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

Ptolemaic dynasty, and Gaza also resisted the attempts of Demetrius I and Antiochus III to conquer it.⁷⁰⁹

Neither does Tyche/Amazon armed like a victorious Roman soldier appear on the coins of Gaza. She symbolized the imposition of Roman rule and culture on cities with Jewish or Samaritan populations, as a warning to them not to rebel against Rome. Unlike them, Gaza was a faithful supporter of Roman rule. Its population had always been predominantly non-Jewish, and Josephus includes it among the ‘Greek cities’.⁷¹⁰ It had been extremely hostile to the Jewish people from its earliest days, and Dagon, its god, was conceived of as the enemy of the god of Israel. Samson fought against Gaza, and was captured, tortured and killed there. This hatred continued to exist in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The Hasmoneans were implacable enemies of Gaza, and Alexander Jannaeus destroyed it completely.⁷¹¹ According to Josephus, at

⁷⁰⁹ Diodorus of Sicily, XIX, 59, 2; Kasher 1980: 28.

⁷¹⁰ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, II, 6, 3.

⁷¹¹ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, I, 4, 2.

the time of the First Revolt Gaza and Anthedon were attacked by the Jews and entirely demolished.⁷¹² The synagogue which has been discovered on the sea shore dates from the sixth century CE.⁷¹³ It seems that the Jewish community was established in the city only in the Byzantine period.

A *cornucopia* is an attribute of Tyche of Gaza from her earliest appearance. In the Greek world Tyche most frequently carries a *cornucopia* when she is portrayed as the patron goddess of a city. In Rome Fortuna, and particularly 'Fortuna of the Harvest' carried a *cornucopia*.⁷¹⁴ In Gaza, however, it has a special significance, since the infant Zeus was hidden in a cave on Mount Ida, and nurtured by the goat Amaltheia. It is from this that there developed the literary and artistic representations of a goat's horn overflowing with wheat, fruit and flowers as the symbol of the fertility of nature and agriculture, and of prosperity and abundance in general. From the time of Hadrian the horn of plenty became an inseparable accoutrement of Tyche of Gaza. She holds it even when she clasps the right hand of Io or crowns Marnas. Unlike the *cornucopia*, the palm branch was borrowed from Nike the goddess of victory. Also the ears of corn were not originally attributes of Tyche, but were taken from the agricultural world of Demeter and Persephone/Kore. Perhaps, however, there is some significance in their appearance on the coins of Gaza, since they played an important part in the city's economy. The rural areas of Gaza specialized in the cultivation of dates for export, and the Nitzana papyri prove that Gaza merchants had a monopoly of the date trade by land and sea.⁷¹⁵ Grain was a staple product of Gaza from the early Bronze Age, and Dagon, the god of grain, was the head of the pantheon of the city. In the Roman period his successor, Marnas, was identified with the Roman Consus, god of the harvest. Gaza was the first of the towns of the Land of Israel to strike a coin bearing the figure of Tyche/Fortuna holding ears of corn in the time of Augustus.⁷¹⁶ The Roman regime used these visual symbols of abundance, peace and victory as means of propaganda. Augustus wanted to mark the inception of an age of peace throughout the world as a result of his coming to power. Vespasian, who suppressed the Jewish revolt, was interested in conveying a double message of military victory and the assurance of prosperity and abundance for his subjects. This he did by portraying a distinctive image of Tyche/Fortuna on the city's coins: she is dressed in a short military chiton, holds her arms out to the side, and holds two ears of corn in her right hand and a palm branch in her left.⁷¹⁷ It may be recalled that, unlike Tyche, Fortuna was originally a goddess of agriculture and grain. In Rome there was a special ceremony in honour of 'Fortuna of the Harvest', who was responsible for the crop, and was always portrayed with a *cornucopia*.

⁷¹² Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, II, 18, 1.

⁷¹³ Ovadiah 1969: 124–127.

⁷¹⁴ Patch 1976: 155, note 108.

⁷¹⁵ Nessana Papyrus, III, 267–271, in Glucker 1987: 95.

⁷¹⁶ Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 53, No. 42.

⁷¹⁷ Rosenberger 1972–1977: II, 54, No. 49.

4.10.b. *The Tychaeion (Temple of Tyche)*

Gaza is the only city of the Land of Israel apart from Jerusalem for which there exists both historical and archaeological evidence about the temple of the city goddess. According to Mark the Deacon it was called *Tychaeion*, and was active until 402 CE, when it was closed by command of the emperor Arcadius.⁷¹⁸ From the coins we know what it looked like. In 199/200, during the reign of Caracalla, the coins depict a facade of a building with four columns and with a straight architrave on both sides of the central arch.⁷¹⁹ Inside the arch stands Tyche/Fortuna, holding a cornucopia and a spear, with the heifer Io at her feet. This was apparently the cult statue which stood inside the *naos*.⁷²⁰ It may be that the temple was built during the reign of the Severan dynasty, who encouraged urban building in all parts of the empire. At that time temples to the city goddess were also built in Akko/Ptolemais and Jaffa.

4.11. *The Cults of Gaza and their Maritime Connections*

Maritime activity was the mainstay of the economy of Gaza. It is strange, therefore, that, unlike all the other cities on the Levant's coast, it does not depict on its coins distinctly nautical gods such as Poseidon, sea creatures, or parts of ships. The subject of the sea is only hinted at indirectly, through gods who have a nautical aspect and heroes some of whose adventures were connected with the sea. There are two possible explanations for this. In the first place, it was not a port, but a coastal town. Gaza's harbours, at Anthedon and Gaza-Maiumas, were separate from it and lay some kilometres north and west of it. Anthedon was a *polis* and even struck coins of its own, which depicted very many subjects connected with the sea and ships, including Poseidon and Isis *Pelagia* (of the sea).⁷²¹

Further, Gaza had a marked tendency to preserve its independence and its unique character, which differed from those of all the other cities of the Land of Israel; and this was the mainspring of its policy in every period. As we have seen this inclination was also characteristic of its place of origin, the island of Crete. In the Roman period the coins of Gaza were dedicated to the portrayal of her own unique gods. Among them were 'pure' Cretan gods such as Artemis/Britomartis, Io and Minos; Marnas/Zeus *Cretagenes* (in whom were combined the Cretan Zeus and the local marna); Graeco-Cretan gods such as Heracles, Apollo and Kore (the Virgin, perhaps Persephone, or perhaps the virgin goddess Britomartis/Dictynna); and such Greek gods as Aphrodite. During the reign of Hadrian a temple to the Cretan gods was built and sacred statues erected, in accord with the interest of the Roman regime in promoting Hellenic elements among the population of the Land of Israel.

⁷¹⁸ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 64.

⁷¹⁹ Hill 1965: Table XVII, no. 3; Yashin 2007: 89–90 no. 429, 433.

⁷²⁰ R. Avner believes that its straight stylobate and thick columns indicate that is a true depiction of the unique features of the building shown on the coins. See Avner 1991: 101.

⁷²¹ Meshorer 1984: 21, Nos. 66–67.

These elements in the nature of the people and religion of Gaza also explain why the city was one of the last bastions of paganism in the Roman Empire. At the time of the revolt of Illus (484–488 CE) the idolaters still created disturbances, in the hope that the temples would be reopened.⁷²² In the sixth century CE Christian scholars in Gaza held fast to the heritage of classical culture, including ingredients of idolatry. Procopius furnishes in his *Ekphrasis Eikonos* a detailed description of sculptures and paintings with mythological figures he saw in Gaza. He praised a painting which emphasized the charms of Aphrodite, and was accustomed to begin his speeches by swearing by Zeus; and his pupil Choricus praised idolatrous customs which were still practised in the city, such as the mime plays and the celebration of the ‘Festival of Roses’, associated with Aphrodite.⁷²³

At the same time, local eastern beliefs were still current in the city, though they did not find expression in the coinage. In the rural areas of Gaza, and also within the city, there lived people of Syrian provenance who spoke Aramaic and did not understand Greek.⁷²⁴ The Syrian inhabitants of Gaza claimed that it was founded by Azon the son of Heracles, who was identified with Melqart the Phoenician. The close connections with Egypt are reflected in a coin of the fourth century BCE from Gaza on which there is a likeness of the god Bes.⁷²⁵ A seal of the third century BCE bearing the image of Hor/Harpocrates sitting on a lotus flower has been found in Gaza.⁷²⁶ The great amount of Nabataean pottery dated from the first century BCE to the second century CE is evidence of Gaza’s close ties with the Nabataeans, and their religious and artistic influence can be seen in the statue of Zeus from Tel el-Ajul.

⁷²² According to the evidence of Zachariah, bishop of Mytilene, who was a native of Maiumas-Gaza: Ashkenazi 1991: 113.

⁷²³ Procopius Gazae, *Epistulae et Declamations*, III; Choricus, *Logoi*, I-III; *Dialexis*, XVI, in Rabinowitz 1959: 178–181; Dan 1986: 198–199, 203; Ashkenazi 1991: 110–114.

⁷²⁴ Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 56.

⁷²⁵ Augé 2000: 70, No. 159.

⁷²⁶ Boussac 2000: 70, No. Bla 139. An ostrakon from Gaza from the late seventh century BCE has an engraving of the god Hor in the form of an eagle: Bourdajewitz 2000: No. Bla 6191.

Chapter 5

Rafiah

5.1. Introduction

Ancient Rafiah is situated in the coastal strip in the north of the Sinai desert, about 30 kilometres south of Gaza.⁷²⁷ The city is first mentioned in the year 1303 BCE in the Pharaoh Seti I (1318–1301 BCE) inscription in Karnak.⁷²⁸ It is also referred to in the inscriptions of the Assyrian kings Sargon II and Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE).⁷²⁹ In the Bible the city of Rafiah is called ‘Hazerim’: ‘And the ‘Avims which dwelt in Hazerim, even unto ‘Azza, the Caphtorims, which came forth out of Caphtor, destroyed them, and dwelt in their stead’ (*Deut.*, 2: 23). The Aramaic translations of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel translated Hazerim as Rafiah; and both in the Middle Ages and in modern times the Jews called Rafiah ‘Hazerim’ or ‘Hazor’.⁷³⁰ In 722 BCE the kings of Rafiah and Gaza rebelled against Assyrian rule, and were defeated in battle by Sargon II in 720 BCE. The city flourished in Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine times. Alexander Jannaeus conquered and destroyed it at the beginning of the first century BCE.⁷³¹ After Pompey’s conquest of the Land of Israel in 63 BCE, the city was rebuilt by Gabinius and became part of the province of Syria.⁷³²

Like many settlements positioned along the southern coast of the Land of Israel, Rafiah was laid out in two parts: a central city located a few kilometres from the coast, and a maritime quarter. Inland Rafiah is situated at today Tel A-sheikh Suleiman Raphah.

⁷²⁷ The first surveys of Rafiah and its surroundings were executed by J. Klada between 1910 and 1924. He discovered the mosaic floor in Sheikh Zawid. M. Dotan, Y. Margovsky and A. Berman conducted surveys in Northern Sinai between 1967 and 1971. Between 1972 and 1982 a systematic survey of the coastal strip of Northern Sinai, between Port Said and Gaza, was conducted by a team from Ben Gurion University under the leadership of A. Oren.

⁷²⁸ Pritchard 1954: 254c.

⁷²⁹ Pritchard 1954: 284–285.

⁷³⁰ The name Hazerim or Hazerot (gardens, yards) is translated into Aramaic as Rafiah. It is an expression of the nature of settlement in the region: small settlements surrounded by trees whose function is to halt the movement of the wandering sands, in order to make it possible to fence in and cultivate stretches of land. Yahav 1992: 12, 14.

⁷³¹ Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, I, 4, 2.

⁷³² Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, I, 8, 4.

This is a large mound, covering about 150 dunams, with tamarisks, figs, eucalyptus and prickly pears growing on its summit; thus it is easily discerned from afar. The nautical Rafiah, called Rafiah Maiumas in Hellenistic and Roman times, was situated at Tel Rapha, at about 4 kilometres to the north-west of the inland city; its area is about 70 dunams. Its soil is exceptionally fertile, and until recently the people of Rafiah use the soil of the mound to improve their lands.⁷³³ The ground water is close to the surface, and many wells have been dug within its boundaries. In an inscription from the year 670 BCE Esarhaddon writes: 'I remove my camp...as far as the town Raphihu (in) the region adjacent to the 'brook of Egypt' — and there is no river (all the way)! By means of cords, chains (and) buckets I had to provide water to my army by drawing from wells'. In the Bible, too, the El 'Arish wadi is called the Brook of Egypt.⁷³⁴ In 1225 the Muslim geographer Yakut described the numerous wells and date trees in Rafiah. In 1881 the explorer Archduke Ludwig Salvator of Austria noted 'granite pillars still standing, the remains of an ancient temple... in the eyes of the Arabs they mark the boundary between Egypt and Syria... good water is to be found in in the very middle of the sand'.⁷³⁵ Today, on an elevation of 41 metres above sea level, Bir Rafah, a well 18 metres deep in inland Rafiah, is still the most abundant well in the whole of the south Gaza region.

Over the centuries, Rafiah has always been of prime strategic importance, since it is located on the border of Egypt and Land of Israel. According to Polybius 'Rafiah is the first city of Coele-Syria on the Egyptian side'. Josephus Flavius describes Rafiah as the city where Syria and Egypt meet: 'This city is the beginning of Syria.'⁷³⁶ In its vicinity battles crucial for all of the ancient Near East were fought: in 720 BCE Sargon II was victorious over the kings of Egypt, Gaza and Rafiah. In 217 BCE Ptolemy IV Philopator defeated Antiochus II in one of the biggest battles ever fought in antiquity within the borders of Land of Israel.

Rafiah was a vital commercial road junction. Starting in the Bronze Age it was reached by the 'Philistian land route' connecting Egypt with Canaan and Mesopotamia, passing south of the Bardavil lagoon (which the Egyptians called the 'Ways of Horus'). From the Persian period the *Via Maris* also followed the coast line. From the East long commercial routes connected Rafiah with the Arabian Peninsula. The city is situated halfway between Gaza and El 'Arish, called Rinocorura in ancient times. Like these two Rafiah served as a maritime outlet for the 'perfumes route'. In order to develop commerce and enjoy its profits the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Persians established dozens of trading stations, tax collecting points and maritime services. Nabataean traders brought perfumes, cosmetics and valuable spices to Rafiah, via Petra or Eilat. These Rafiah exported by way of the *Via Maris* to Gaza and Egypt, or through her harbour to the Mediterranean countries. In Rafiah-Maiumas' storerooms, anchorage and fishing equipment dating to the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods has been found.

⁷³³ Margovsky, 1971: 21.

⁷³⁴ Pritchard 1954: 292; *Joshua*, 15: 4.

⁷³⁵ See Yahav 1992: 13; Ludwig Salvator, Archduke of Austria, 1881: 54.

⁷³⁶ Polybius, *The Histories*, V, 80, 3; Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, IV, 11, 5.

From archaeological surveys we learn that in these periods many of the trading stations turned into permanent settlements, increasing the population of the Rafiah area.⁷³⁷

Most of the evidence regarding the cults of Rafiah is archaeological. About 200 metres north-west of inland Rafiah, a cult site has been discovered: a hill at whose top stands a brown brick building. The building has not been excavated. Scattered over the hill there have been collected more than a hundred fragments of clay statuettes, vessels made of alabaster, glass and bronze as well as jewellery made of stone and faience; there are also burnt animal bones. The ceramic finds can be dated from the Late Bronze Age to the Byzantine period. Among others a statuette of Ashtart from the late Bronze or Early Iron Age has been unearthed. In *favissae* from the Persian and Hellenistic periods hollow clay statuettes of Hathor and of Horus the Child and statuettes of a Greek-Cyprian type have been found.⁷³⁸ These finds show the variegated ethnic character of the population during these periods. About the cults prevailing in Rafiah in Roman times we know from its coins. The city minted great numbers of coins, starting in the year 167 CE, in the days of Marcus Aurelius, until the termination of the mintage in 249 CE, at the time of Philippus Arabs. These coins are evidence of the fact that Dionysus was the principal god worshipped in the city. This is corroborated by an account of Stephanus of Byzantium, who maintains that the city's name is derived from the Greek word *ραφή* *raphe* (stitch) because Dionysus was sewn into Zeus's thigh, from which he was born after his mother, Semele, had been killed during her pregnancy.⁷³⁹ From mosaics found in the vicinity of Rafiah we learn about the existence of mysteries in Dionysus's honour (see below). Rafiah was always a pagan city. We know of Jewish settlement there only from the Byzantine period. Christianity penetrated into Rafiah at a late stage, as was the situation in Gaza; by the year 401 CE, however, it was a bishop's seat.⁷⁴⁰

5.2. Dionysus (*Διόνυσος*) (figures 34–35)

Dionysus, or Bacchus, the god of vines and wine, was the principal god in Rafiah's pantheon. His exploits have been described in Greek myths from the eighth century BCE (by Hesiod and Homer) until the fifth century CE (by Nonnus of Panopolis). He was the son of Zeus as the result of a union with a mortal woman, Semele daughter of Cadmus king of Thebes in Boeotia. The jealous Hera persuaded Semele to ask Zeus to reveal himself to her wearing his full military splendor. The fire of his thunderbolt hit and killed her. Zeus extracted the fetus from her womb and sewed it into his thigh. After the baby, Dionysus, was born it was given to the nymphs of Mount Nysa to be reared. When grown up he promulgated the secret of growing vines and making wine to the world, and punished those who objected to his worship. He reached as far as

⁷³⁷ Eitam, between Gaza and Rafiah, was one of the Nabataean trading stations. Its area is 80 dunams, and the only buildings erected there were for storing merchandise and sheltering cattle. Oren 1993: 1008–1012.

⁷³⁸ Margovsky 1971: 21.

⁷³⁹ Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnika*, 443.5.

⁷⁴⁰ Yahav 1992: 13–14.



Figure 34. Rafiah coin. Septimius Severus (193–211 CE). Year 198/199 CE. Dionysus nude apart from chalmys falling from left shoulder, standing left emptying cup and holding thrysus; at his feet panther seated left, raising right forepaw and looking up. Courtesy of Gemini Numismatic Auctions LLC.

India where he subjugated his enemy, king Driades. He returned to Greece by way of Arabia and Phoenicia and was accepted into the Pantheon of the Olympian gods. Consequently he descended into the underworld whence he brought back Semele who became immortal. The nymphs who had reared him were turned into heavenly stars.⁷⁴¹ As early as the Bronze Age Dionysus was highly esteemed in Greece and the Aegean islands; it may well be that his origins were in Anatolia or in Thracia, in Northern Greece.⁷⁴² After Alexander the Great conquered the East, the cult of Dionysus spread throughout the Hellenistic East. It reached Rome, and extended all over the Roman Empire. The popularity and universality of Dionysus was due to his association with fertility and the cycle of birth, growth and death in nature and agriculture. His cult also had deep spiritual significance, since he was born to his mother after her death, and brought her back from the underworld. For these reasons his believers hoped to be granted life after death. *Mysteria* – secret ceremonies including the playing of music, dancing and drinking of wine – were held in Dionysus's honour. Wine was considered to strengthen both the body and the soul; drunkenness was believed to arouse unforeseen powers in the human being, and to install the god into him. The souls of those participating in the *mysteria* – called *bacchantes* after the god – united with Dionysus.⁷⁴³ Unlike the *mysteria* of Demeter, which took place only in Eleusis near Athens, and only once a year in the month Boedromion (end of September and beginning of October), those of Dionysus were held everywhere all the year round, and this helped to promote his cult. In Roman times Dionysus was worshipped in many cities in the Land of Israel and Trans-Jordan.⁷⁴⁴ He was the chief god of Beit She'an/

⁷⁴¹ The principal sources for the Dionysus myth are Hesiod, *Theogony*, 940–943, Euripides, 'Bacchae', 1–3, 88–102, Homer, *Iliad*, VI, 132–133, and Apollodorus, *Library* III, 4, 3, and 5, 3. Nonnus of Panopolis in Egypt, of the fifth century CE, wrote an epic in 48 volumes, the *Dionysiaca*, which is the most comprehensive work about the god's activities.

⁷⁴² Luz 1999: 68; Turcan 1996: 291; Cumont 1959: 45.

⁷⁴³ Cumont 1959: 120.

⁷⁴⁴ According to numismatic evidence there was a cult of Dionysus in the following cities: Caesarea Maritima, Aelia Capitolina, Diospolis/Lydda, Beit-Risha/Capitulia, Kanatha, and Heshbon/Eusebos. Meshorer 1984: 20, 55, 61, 76, 98;

Nysa-Scythopolis and Rafiah. Both of them depicted him on their coins as a young man or an infant. In Beit She'an Dionysus appears as an infant whose head peeps out of Zeus' thigh.⁷⁴⁵ According to a tradition quoted by Pliny, Dionysus buried his foster-mother, Nysa, within the city's boundaries.⁷⁴⁶ Rafiah emphasized its ties with Dionysus by means of the etymology of its Greek name *ραφή* (stitch),⁷⁴⁷ as well as by the way it represented Dionysus on its coins: as a baby sitting in the palm of the city's goddess, holding a bunch of grapes.⁷⁴⁸

These two cities were among many others, all over the Greek world and even in Asia and Africa, which claimed that Mount Nysa was on their territory. This controversy is expressed in the First Homeric Hymn 'to Dionysus', written in the seventh or sixth century BCE:

'... For some say, at Dracanum; and some, on windy Icarus; and some, in Naxos, O Heaven-born, Insewn; and others by the deep-eddying river Alpheus that pregnant Semele bare you to Zeus the thunder-lover. And others yet, lord, say you were born in Thebes; but all these lie. The Father of men and gods gave you birth remote from men and secretly from white-armed Hera. There is a certain Nysa, a mountain most high and richly grown with woods, far off in Phoenice, near the streams of Aegyptus. ...Be favorable, O Insewn, Inspirer of frenzied women!⁷⁴⁹

We can perhaps learn from this hymn about the beginnings of the tradition which connected Dionysus to Rafiah. The islands Naxos and Icaros, the cities Drakanon and Thebes and the river Alpheios are all real well-known places, each of which claims to be the god's birthplace. It stands to reason that the last place mentioned by the poet, Mount Nysa, is not imaginary either. It may well be that Rafiah is alluded to. The location and geographical description in the hymn fit the geographic and topographic features of the city. The tel of Rafiah, soaring high above its surroundings, has been famous throughout the centuries for its lush vegetation thanks to its abundant supply of water. The emphasis on the fact that Mount Nysa is at a distance from Phoenicia but close to Egypt fits in with Polybius' and Josephus Flavius' statements that Rafiah is the place whence 'Syria begins from the direction of Egypt'. The 'Brook of Egypt' was the ancient appellation for the border between Land of Israel and Egypt in the vicinity of Rafiah. A corroboration of this hypothesis is in the often repeated invocation to

Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1999: 12.

⁷⁴⁵ Meshorer 1984: 42, No. 112.

⁷⁴⁶ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, V, 16. Regarding Dionysus's rank within the pantheon of Nysa-Scythopolis, see also Belayche 2017.

⁷⁴⁷ Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnika*, 443.5.

⁷⁴⁸ Rosenberger 1972–1977: III, 48, No. 3; 49, No. 9; 51, Nos. 18, 22; 53, Nos. 32, 36.

⁷⁴⁹ Hymn 1: 'To Dionysus', 1–9, 16–21. According to Herodotus, a cult of Dionysus was practised in Ethiopia, beyond Egypt. Herodotus, *Histories*, II, 97. From the 33rd. hymn and the words of Herodotus, De Romanis concludes that the Greeks located Mount Nysa in Africa, in Ethiopia (1996: 99–104). But Herodotus quotes other traditions, according to which Dionysus was nurtured in various countries, among them Arabia: Herodotus, *Histories*, III, 111. Be that as it may, only Rafiah, close by the Brook of Egypt, is linked to the god's birth by reason of the stitch in Zeus's thigh.

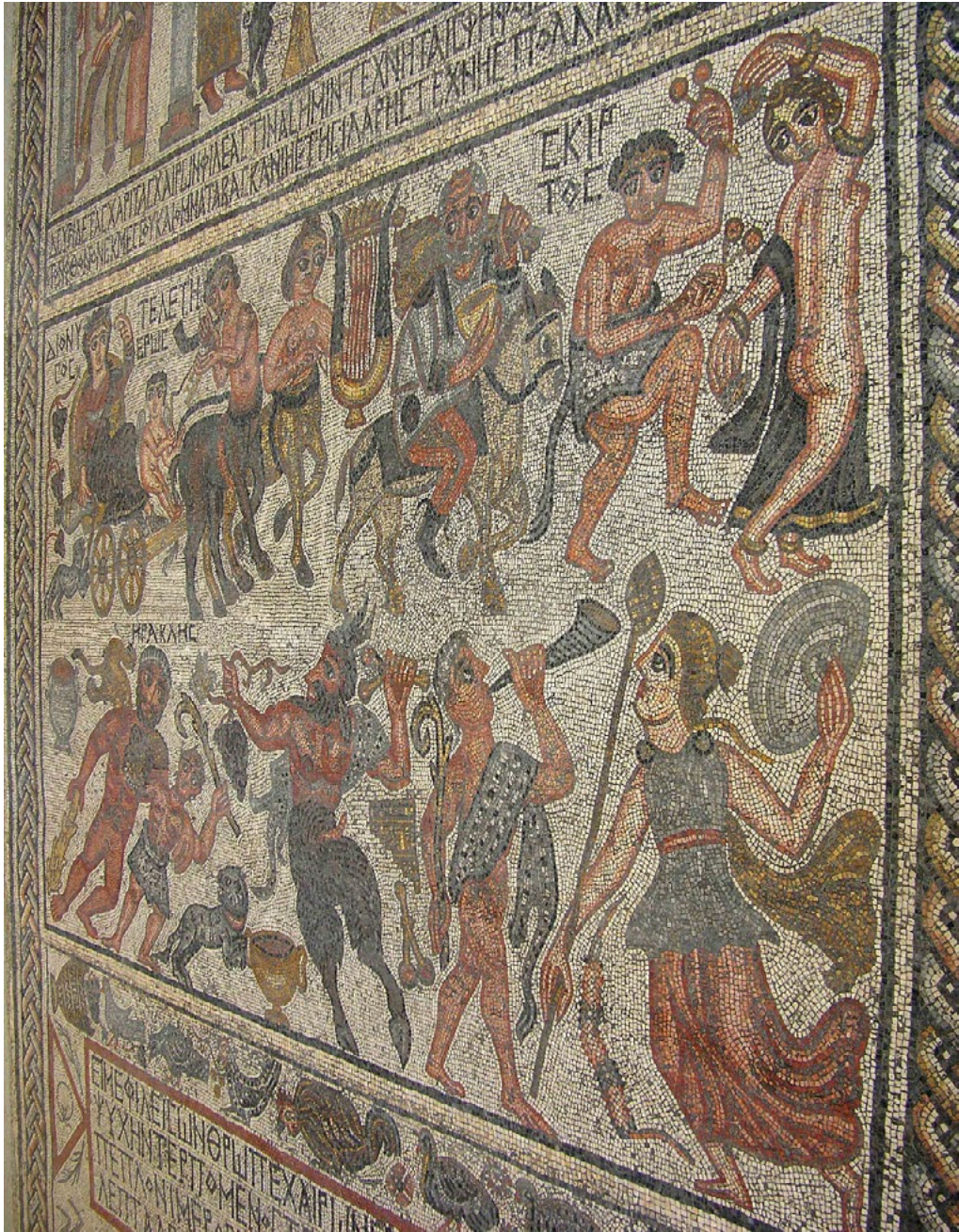


Figure 35. Floor mosaic from Seikh Zuweid, of the third century CE. Dionysus and his retinue from the 'Triumph of Dionysus'. Courtesy of the Ismailia Museum. Foto: project-mim.de@Mathias Salomon - All Rights Reserved 2009–2016.

Dionysus as ‘*eraphiotes*’ (the insewn), which seems to hint at the name of the city.⁷⁵⁰ As opposed to this, in the fifth hymn to the god, relating how the god was kidnapped by sea robbers, he is not referred to by this name. Why then does not the hymn call the city explicitly by its name, as it does with the other places mentioned? An explanation could be that at the time the hymn was written, Rafiah was still desolate, after having been destroyed by Sargon II. Be that as it may, the memory of the city’s ancient name was kept alive, enabling the Greeks to link it with Dionysus.

Dionysus also appears on the city’s coins as a naked young man. He stands facing forward holding a *thyrsos*, a sceptre entwined with vines or ivy, topped by a pine cone.⁷⁵¹ With his right hand he pours wine out of a *kantharos*, a large wine-jar, to a panther at his feet. This animal was consecrated to Dionysus because of its wild untamable nature, dangers also involved in drunkenness. In the *Dionysiaca* we are told that the god’s chariot was drawn by dappled panthers.⁷⁵²

Other coins of Rafiah depict Dionysus with Apollo.⁷⁵³ They are young men of similar appearance, both naked. In Delphi and Athens Apollo and Dionysus were made into one deity. Plutarch relates that Apollo and Dionysus were united after the latter had been accepted into the Pantheon; he adds that Orpheus, on his journey to Egypt, changed the cults of Isis and Osiris, turning them into the worship of Demeter and Dionysus. Dionysus also incorporated Osiris and his solar attributes, thus becoming the sun god, Sol.⁷⁵⁴ According to Herodotus, too, Horus, son of Osiris, is Apollo whereas Osiris in Greek is Dionysus.⁷⁵⁵ In addition to the coins, we also learn about Dionysus’ cult in Rafiah and its surroundings from two mosaic floors which have been excavated in Sheikh Zuweid and Kibbutz Erez.

Sheikh Zuweid is situated 3 kilometres to the south of Rafiah. The mosaic floor depicts two mythological scenes: The upper panel portrays scenes from the tragedy of Phaedra and Hippolytus; the lower panel – a Dionysian *mysteria* cult. The figures in the lower panel are in two rows one above the other. In the left-hand corner of the upper row, Dionysus’ retinue: the god is depicted in a chariot drawn by two *centauri* playing an instrument. Between Dionysus and them the inscription ‘*telete*’, initiation. The charioteer is a winged Eros, the name inscribed over its head. In front of Dionysus’ chariot there are his companions: Silenus, an elderly man on a donkey, carrying a wine bag on his shoulder; at his side a dancing *μαινάδα* (*Maenad*, a woman in a state of frenzy or ecstasy, beside herself in order to become one with the god). In the row below is inebriated Heracles holding a club, tripping and almost falling, leaning on a *satyr* who leads him. Pan carrying a bunch of grapes, and another *Satyr* and *Maenad*.

⁷⁵⁰ Hymn 1: ‘To Dionysus’, 17, 20. From the verb *ἐρραφθαί*, to be sown.

⁷⁵¹ Meshorer 1984: 32, Nos. 71, 74–75.

⁷⁵² Nonnus of Panopolis, *Dionysiaca*, IX, 189–190; Shorrock 2001: 113–205.

⁷⁵³ Rosenberger 1972–1977: III, 50, Nos. 13–14.

⁷⁵⁴ Plutarch, ‘The E at Delphi’, 388F, 389A; Plutarch, ‘On Isis and Osiris’, 12, 13.

⁷⁵⁵ Herodotus, *Histories*, II, 144.

Ovadia dates the mosaic to the fourth or fifth century CE, ascribing it to artists from Gaza. The classical tradition is evident in the mosaic's style, in the arrangement of the composition, its abundance of movement and the detailed anatomy, as well as in the attempt to create dimension and light and shade. According to Sevilla-Sadeh, the mosaic does not portray Heracles drunk after being defeated by Dionysus in a drinking contest; rather he is being sanctified through the Dionysian mystery cult, and his ecstatic loss of control is perceived as positive.⁷⁵⁶

In Kibbutz Erez, near Gaza, a mosaic dated to the sixth century CE has been excavated. It describes the Triumph of Dionysus on his return from India. What has been left of this mosaic is a man in Phrygian dress; behind him are two panthers, male and female, fastened to two reins. The female is suckling a cub. To the right of these figures there is the head of an elephant. To the left of the man we see a goat.⁷⁵⁷

Mosaics from the Byzantine period showing Dionysian scenes have also been found in Gerasa and Madaba in Trans-Jordan. It may be asked whether we can deduce from these finds that the Dionysian cult continued, in certain circles, into the Christian era. According to Talgam, in most Byzantine works of art the figure of Dionysus plays a neutral role. The *Thiasos* (retinue) in honour of Dionysus turned into a symbol of gaiety and pleasure in life. In private banquets the celebrants used to dance and dress up in Dionysian attire, without any religious significance. Neither did the mosaics or works such as the *Dionysiaca* hint at any pagan enclaves in Christian society. They reflect the Hellenistic cultural heritage, which should not be identified with paganism.⁷⁵⁸ Rosenthal-Heginbottom is also of the opinion that the original religious connotations of the Dionysian myth were lost with time. The artistic presentations aimed at creating a joyous atmosphere, relaxation and leisure, accompanied by vines and wine, an allegory of the *vita felix*, the good life.⁷⁵⁹ And indeed, the mosaics do not necessarily bear witness to the existence of any cult; their function is decorative. In this they differ from the coins minted in the various cities, which are evidence of an official cult.

On the other hand, however, Barag believes that pagan cults in Rafiah and its surroundings lasted into the fifth century CE. He deduces this from a Greek burial inscription of Ablabios found close to Rafiah, dated to the year 410 CE. Its last line reads: 'Courage, no one is immortal'. This phrase is common in burial inscriptions.⁷⁶⁰ And indeed, there is historical evidence of the fact that the Philistine cities of Ashkelon, Gaza and Rafiah were exceptionally faithful to pagan cults. These continued to exist hundreds of years after Christianity had become the official religion of the empire,

⁷⁵⁶ Ovadia 1992: 125–126; Sevilla-Sadeh 2011.

⁷⁵⁷ Talgam 1998: 35.

⁷⁵⁸ Talgam 1998: 35.

⁷⁵⁹ Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1999: 21.

⁷⁶⁰ It is true that the formula appears in funeral inscriptions of pagans, Jews and Christians. But Barag maintains there is nothing in the inscription to show whether the deceased was Jewish or Christian: Barag 1974: 128–131.

and in spite of various emperors' edicts to terminate them. These cities supported the religious reforms of the emperor Julian in the years 360–363 CE. At that time pagan inhabitants of Ashkelon and Gaza organized pogroms against the Christians who lived in their midst and set churches on fire.⁷⁶¹ In the year 400 there were still pagan temples in Gaza and Rafiah.⁷⁶²

In the Greek mind Dionysus was associated with the sea as early as the archaic period. The well known image of the sea being the colour of wine appears in the first book of Homer's *Iliad*: 'Sailing on the wine-dark sea to foreign peoples' (*Iliad*, I, 185). Many of Dionysus's deeds took place on the sea. In the *Iliad* we read about Dionysus being pursued by King Lycurgus; he managed to get away and hide in the depths of the sea:

'But Dionysus fled, and plunged beneath the wave of the sea, and Thetis received him in her bosom, filled with dread, for mighty terror gat hold of him at the man's threatenings.'⁷⁶³

The fifth Homeric Hymn tells how when Dionysus was taking a walk along the sea shore he was kidnapped by sea pirates. He grew a vine on the deck of their ship which frightened them; they jumped into the sea and were turned into dolphins.⁷⁶⁴ The famous *cylix* painted by Exekias in the sixth century BCE depicts the god reclining on the deck of a sailing-ship with a vine growing up its mast, holding a drinking horn. Round the ship swim the sailors, turned into dolphins, in a wine red sea. This is the impression we get from the dark red background of the ceramic vessel, left in its original colour. According to the *Dionysiaca* Dionysus defeated his enemy King Driades in India in a sea battle.⁷⁶⁵

In Athens and in other Greek cities each spring the *Anthesteria*, a feast celebrating the flowering of the vines, was held. During these festivities a procession took place in which a statue of Dionysus standing on a ship was drawn by carriage all over the city. The celebrants were dressed up as *satyrs* and *maenads*.⁷⁶⁶ In Roman times ships were called *Liber Pater*; this was an appellation of Dionysus, derived from the feeling of freedom which drinking afforded. The god of wine lent his protection to harbours and anchorages. In Portus, the port of Rome, there stood a statue of Bacchus Liber Pater next to one of Tyche of the harbour, together with a statue of Neptune and one of the *genius* of the port.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶¹ Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 9–11; *Chronicon Paschale*, I, 546.

⁷⁶² Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry*, 64; Geffgken 1978: 174.

⁷⁶³ Homer, *Iliad*, VI, 135–137.

⁷⁶⁴ Homeric Hymn 5: 'To Dionysus'.

⁷⁶⁵ Nonnus of Panopolis, *Dionysiaca*, 39; Shorrok 2001: 113–205.

⁷⁶⁶ Luz 1999: 70–71.

⁷⁶⁷ This is shown by the the Torlonia relief which was discovered in Ostia, and describes the harbour, its apparatus and its statues; Janni 1996: 360–361, fig. 68.

In Greek Dionysus is also called Ἐρίφιός Eriphios.⁷⁶⁸ This epithet had a number of meanings: it meant of a baby or kid as well as a of young he-goat. The constellation of stars, whose rising in October predicts storms is also called ‘Eriphos’ (capricorn).⁷⁶⁹ One of the nymphs who reared Dionysus was called Eriphia.⁷⁷⁰ Braslavi describes the custom of Rafiah’s Arab population, in the 1930s, to gather on the sea-shore and sacrifice a goat on the waves of the sea.⁷⁷¹ He is of the opinion that the origins of the practice are in maritime ceremonies which were customary in Hellenistic Rafiah. Rafiah’s coast was notorious for its storms, devastating to anchored boats. These storms at sea were dangerous for farmers as well, since fields and gardens were close to the coast. Barslavi believes that the Arab ritual was derived from the custom of the ancient people of Rafiah to sacrifice a young he-goat to the sea in order to appease the constellation of stars, Eriphus, which causes storms at sea.

5.3. *The Holy Trinity of Rafiah: Apollo, Artemis and Leto (Ἄητω) (figures 36–39)*

Apollo, the god of light, prophecy and music was worshipped in Rafiah, and his image often appeared on its coins. The god is always presented as a young man, naked, facing forward; but his attributes vary: on the city’s coins from the time of Marcus Aurelius there is a tripod with a snake coiled round it;⁷⁷² on another coin, from the time of Severus Alexander, Apollo holds a laurel branch, and a griffon stands at his feet to the left. In his left hand he holds a lyre which leans against a column.⁷⁷³ In another coin, from the days of Severus Alexander, a raven stands at his feet.⁷⁷⁴

Apollo’s attributes in Rafiah allude to his functions as the god of prophecy and music, but not to his being the god of the sun or of medicine, who can also inflict plagues. He does not hold bow and arrows. Meshorer supposes that there was an oracle in Rafiah, a site where the future was predicted. In the archaeological museum in Berlin, we see on a gem stone the raven on a column, the griffon, and the tripod with the snake coiled around it, just as they are on the Rafiah coins. From this Meshorer concludes that this gem stone depicts Apollo’s oracle in Rafiah.⁷⁷⁵ It may well be due to this oracle that in the days of Severus Alexander Rafiah was given the title “ἱερά”, ‘the holy’, which appears on its coins.

Rafiah is situated on the border of Egypt whose religious and cultural influence on the city were significant. This is evident even in the cult of Apollo, the most Greek of all the

⁷⁶⁸ Apollodorus, *Library*, III, 4, 3.

⁷⁶⁹ Liddell & Scott 1985: 314.

⁷⁷⁰ Cook 1964: I, 111, note 6.

⁷⁷¹ Braslavi 1970: 80.

⁷⁷² Rosenberger 1972–1977: III, 48, No. 1; 49, Nos. 2, 8; 50, No. 16; Meshorer 1984: 32, No. 69.

⁷⁷³ Meshorer 1984: 32, No. 74.

⁷⁷⁴ Rosenberger 1972–1977: III, 52, No.24; Meshorer 1984: 32, No. 70.

⁷⁷⁵ Meshorer 1984: 32.



Figure 36. Rafiah coin. Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE). Year 177/178. Apollo, naked, his left hand on a tripod with a snake wound round it; in his right hand holding a branch. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).



Figure 37. Rafiah coin. Commodus (177–192 CE). Year 182/183 CE. Raven, symbolizing an oracle, standing right, wearing an Egyptian crown. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

gods. On the coins we see the raven, the very symbol of the Apollonian oracle, adorned with the crown of the Egyptian kings.⁷⁷⁶

In Rafiah the cults of Apollo and Dionysus merged, and they appear together on the local coins. Both of them were Delphic gods, represented in the plastic arts as young men, naked, having the same attributes: a lyre and a laurel branch. Similar festivals and games were celebrated in their honour. According to an Egyptian tradition cited by Herodotus, Artemis and Apollo were the children of Dionysus and Isis, and Leto was their nursemaid.⁷⁷⁷ It may be that this tradition found its expression in Rafiah, which was on the border of Egypt and under its cultural and religious influence. During the banquet and the drinking of wine, artistic activities took place, of which Apollo and the muses were the natural patrons: poetry was read, music played and dances performed. In his *Laws* Plato points to the co-operation between these gods when in the

⁷⁷⁶ Meshorer 1984: 32, No. 70.

⁷⁷⁷ Herodotus, *Histories*, II, 156.



Figure 38. Rafiah coin. Severus Alexander (232–235 CE). Year 230/231 CE. Artemis advancing right, holding bow and drawing arrow from quiver at her shoulder; before her, stag running right; IEPA PAPHIA (Rafiah, holy) Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.



Figure 39. Rafiah coin. Philippus II Arabs. (244–247 CE). Leto sitting on a throne to left. Apollo stands in front of her. She stretches out her right hand and put it on Apollo's head. In her left hand she holds a scepter. Artemis in short chiton behind her. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).

education of the state's citizens.⁷⁷⁸ It seems that Apollo, like Dionysus, was venerated in Rafiah also because of his nautical aspect. In many harbour cities all around the Mediterranean, he was worshipped as the protector of harbours and sailing.⁷⁷⁹

The inhabitants of Rafiah also worshipped the huntress Artemis. On a coin from the time of Commodus she is depicted running and holding a bow in her left hand while with her right she extracts an arrow from the quiver on her back. At her feet is a stag.⁷⁸⁰

Leto, the twins' mother, is always portrayed on Rafiah's coins as sitting on a throne, with her body turned to the left. The boy Apollo stands in front of her, and Artemis

⁷⁷⁸ Plato, *The Laws*, 664.

⁷⁷⁹ Recio 2000: 118, 160–167.

⁷⁸⁰ Meshorer 1984: 32, No. 72.

behind her.⁷⁸¹ Tyche/Fortuna of Rafiah is also represented as a mother or nursemaid of the infant Dionysus. According to Meshorer the likeness between Dionysus and Apollo on the city coins points to the fact that Tyche here is identified with Leto, in a cult peculiar to the city.⁷⁸²

5.4. Tyche/Fortuna (figure 40)

The city goddess of Rafiah is represented on the coins only in the figure of the Roman Fortuna. Rafiah is among those cities on the coast of the Land of Israel in which the great majority of the population was of Phoenician and Philistine stock, as well as Greek and Roman, and their religion and culture was pagan. They gratefully accepted Roman rule and adopted its cultural values. They never showed on their coins the figure of Tyche/Amazon armed as a Roman soldier. As opposed to these cities Caesarea, Jaffa and Anthedon were considered Jewish cities, since they had been founded by a Jewish king, or because of their large Jewish population. Their citizens took part in the Jewish rebellions against Rome. Tyche first appeared as an armed Amazon in Caesarea, in the days of the First Revolt. She symbolized the Roman rule, and her aim was to warn against rebellious inclinations.

In Rafiah, Tyche/Fortuna is always represented as the nursemaid of Dionysus, the principal god of the city. On coins from the days of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, Caracalla and Alagabalus, Philippus Arabs (the father) and Philippus the son the goddess stands facing front, wearing a mural crown on her head, which is turned to the left. She wears a long dress, and holds a *cornucopia* in her left hand. Her right hand is stretched forward, and on her palm sits the infant Dionysus. His head and body are turned to the left, and he holds a bunch of grapes.⁷⁸³ The connection between the



Figure 40. Rafiah coin. Commodus (177–192 CE). Year 177/178 CE. The city goddess standing to right. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.

⁷⁸¹ Rosenberger 1972–1977: III, 49, No. 4; 51, No. 19; 53, No. 35; 86, No. 22.

⁷⁸² Meshorer 1984: 32.

⁷⁸³ Meshorer 1976: No. 7.

goddess of fortune and the god of wine exists already in Homer, in whose imagery the frequently changing fate of men is described as if it were poured out of two wine jars standing on the floor of the palace of Zeus, one full of good, and the other holding evils.⁷⁸⁴ Hesiod, too, says that the wine is a gift ‘which Dionysus gave to men — a joy and a sorrow both’⁷⁸⁵ The god of wine possesses the two-fold, contradictory faculties of good and bad, kindness and danger, very much like the goddess Tyche. Nonnus describes the influence of wine as a *pharmakon*, a drug, a medicine but at the same time a poison.⁷⁸⁶ A parallel to the merging of the cult of Tyche with that of Dionysus and their being presented together as nursemaid and baby is to be found in the Nysa-Scythopolis coins, which portray Tyche sitting facing right holding the infant Dionysus in her arms.⁷⁸⁷ In a coin from the days of Gordianus III Tyche faces left, looking at Zeus, from whose thigh peeps Dionysus.⁷⁸⁸

5.5. Isis

The geographical proximity and the cultural influence of Egypt are evident in the cult of Isis in Rafiah. In Ptolemaic Egypt the cult of Isis merged with that of Dionysus, because of the identification between Dionysus and Osiris, Isis’ partner.⁷⁸⁹ In Rafiah the bust of Isis is depicted on coins wearing a crown.⁷⁹⁰ On other coins we see the *Sphinx*, the symbol of Isis.⁷⁹¹

5.6. The Absence of the Sea and sea peoples’ Traditions from Rafiah’s Coins

Seafaring activity played an important part in Rafiah’s economy. Therefore it is surprising that, unlike in other maritime cities in the Hellenistic-Roman world in general and in the Land of Israel in particular, the city never displayed any nautical symbols on its coins: they do not depict ships or parts of ships, or any sea creatures. The connection with the sea is expressed indirectly only, by means of gods such as Tyche and Dionysus, Apollo and Isis, part of whose function was to guard the coasts, the anchorages and sailing. It may well be that the reason for this absence is the bad mooring conditions in Rafiah, whose harbour was unprotected and unsafe. Diodorus of Sicily tells us about the war (312 BCE) between Antigonos Monophthalmos ruler of Anatolia and Syria (382–301 BCE), and Ptolemy I Soter of Egypt (367–283 BCE). During this war the fleet of Antigonos left Gaza with the aim of conquering Egypt. Strong winds drove his ships to the coast of Rafiah, ‘a city which affords no anchorage and is surrounded by shoals’.⁷⁹² It seems that the topographical conditions of the harbour

⁷⁸⁴ Homer, *Iliad*, XXIV, 527–530.

⁷⁸⁵ Hesiod, *Shield of Heracles*, 400.

⁷⁸⁶ Nonnus of Panopolis, *Dionysiaca*, XLVIII, 119.

⁷⁸⁷ Meshorer 1984: 41; 42, Nos. 110, 110a.

⁷⁸⁸ Meshorer 1984: 42, No. 112.

⁷⁸⁹ Turcan 1996: 97, 300.

⁷⁹⁰ Rosenberger 1972–1977: III, 52, No. 30; 53, No. 31.

⁷⁹¹ Rosenberger 1972–1977: III, 52, Nos. 27–28; Meshorer 1984: 32, No. 76.

⁷⁹² *Diodorus of Sicily*, X, 73.

— a sandy coast, shallow waters with sandy reefs — constituted great danger for the ships and prevented the development and expansion of the port. A possible additional reason may be that the main settlement of Rafiah was situated 4 kilometres east of the coast, and its character was not really maritime. As in Rafiah, the main settlement of Gaza was also at a distance of about 5 kilometres from the shore, and all nautical symbols are absent from her coins as well.

A further question to be asked is: why did not Rafiah give any expression to its Cretan origins on its coins? If indeed the 'Sea Peoples' from Crete wiped out the original Canaanite inhabitants and came to settle the city, why then are there no remains of any Cretan cults? In nearby Gaza and Ashkelon, in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods Cretan and Philistine traditions were cherished. The figures of the Cretan gods Marnas, Artemis/Britomaris, Minos, and Io appear on coins in Gaza, and the temple of Zeus/Cretagenes (born in Crete) was still standing at the beginning of the fifth century CE. In Ashkelon, too, the cults of Philistine Astarte and of the founder Askalos, originally from Anatolia, were kept alive.

The most probable solution is that the population of Rafiah underwent a substantial change, and in the Roman period there were no longer any citizens of Cretan origin. But when and why did this change take place? The explanation could be found in the inscription of Saragon II King of Assyria. It describes the punitive expedition which he led against the kings of Egypt, Gaza and Rafiah in the year 720 BCE, and his victory over them in the battle near Rafiah. Gaza's penalty was relatively light: its King, Hanun, was chained and taken to Assyria. The city learned its lesson and stayed loyal to Assyrian rule from then on. Rafiah fared differently; its fate was sealed: 'I destroyed the city of Rafiah, demolished it and razed it with fire. I took 9,033 prisoners with their many possessions.' The great number of people deported proves that they did not come only from the elite of the city, but that the entire population was uprooted and taken into exile. Oded and Ne'eman elucidate the goal of the Assyrian policy of expatriation, which was a cornerstone in the empire's strategy: integrating the exiled peoples, and assimilating them in Assyria.⁷⁹³ In 720 Sargon also conquered the Kingdom of Shomron/Samaria, destroyed it and deported its inhabitants to the east of the Assyrian Empire. The fate of the ten tribes was like that of the citizens of Rafiah: they became part of the population in their place of exile, and were destroyed as a nation, never to return to their country.

Unlike in Rafiah, the Philistine population in Gaza and Ashkelon was not annihilated. Though Nebuchadnezzar II King of Babylonia did conduct an expedition against the Philistine cities to punish them for their mutiny against him and exiled part of the population; yet from archaeological evidence we learn that only a small number of Philistines, originally from Gaza and Ashkelon, lived in Mesopotamia.⁷⁹⁴ Moreover, the

⁷⁹³ Oded 1978: 62–68; Ne'eman 1989: 43–62.

⁷⁹⁴ Zadok 1978: 57–65.

policy of the Babylonian kings was not to destroy the national and social systems of the peoples they expelled and afford them a degree of independence in organizing their communities.⁷⁹⁵ Furthermore, it is probable that in the days of the Persian King Cyrus II and his successors, the Philistines who had been exiled to Babylonia were allowed to return to their lands, as were the Jews and other nations deported by the Babylonians. In the Hellenistic period the cults of the Greek gods Dionysus, Apollo, Artemis, Leto and Tyche took root beside that of the Egyptian-Ptolemaic Isis.

⁷⁹⁵ Eph'al 1978: 80–83.

Chapter 6

Summary

A. The Sea as a Formative Element in the Cults of Philistia's Coastal Cities in the Roman period

Man's physical environment consists of a combination of geographical, topographical, climatic and terrestrial conditions. It is this environment which determines the patterns of social and economic life, and it makes the earliest and deepest impression on the mind of man. The sea is the most important environmental factor in the coastal cities. It is interwoven with their natural and architectural landscape, and is the background to all their daily activities. It plays a double role in their life: it is the source of their livelihood; but its unpredictable storms and floods lay them open to damage, loss, and death. How this reality expresses in their consciousness, their feelings of identity and their spiritual and religious world?

Philistia is a coastal strip. As early as the beginning of the second millennium BCE many cities were founded within it, which grew and prospered thanks to the varied maritime enterprises which they built up. In every period their affluence attracted waves of traders, immigrants, conquerors and settlers from Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, Judah and Egypt and the Greek and Roman world. The cities of Philistia adopted some of the cultural and religious values of their countries of origin. In the cultures and religions of these lands there is a pronounced ambiguity towards the sea. In Mesopotamian literature Tiamat, the goddess of the depths of the waters and mother of sea monsters, is described as the enemy of cosmic order, and was destroyed by the gods. At the same time, Ea, the god of water and of reason, is considered to be a benefactor of mankind. In the Jewish perception, too, the sea is an inimical and frightening power: 'And in that day he shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea'.⁷⁹⁶ The sea battles with God, who defeats it: 'Thou didst divide the sea by Thy

⁷⁹⁶ *Isaiah*, 5: 30; *Jonah*, 1: 13.

strength; Thou breakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. Thou didst break the head of the leviathan in pieces, and give him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.' The rebellious sea becomes a tool in the hands of its creator: 'So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts; there go ships; there is leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season'.⁷⁹⁷ The tribe of Zevulun, which 'shall dwell at the haven of the sea....and his border shall be unto Sidon' was granted the blessing 'they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand'.⁷⁹⁸ The people of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel were partners in the Phoenicians' sea voyages, and the prophets expressed their wonderment at the wealth to be gained from maritime trade: hence the simile 'She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar'.⁷⁹⁹ The Hasmoneans conquered the coastal cities in order to acquire 'an outlet to the islands of the sea', and encouraged maritime commerce. In the Roman period the Jews of the settlements of the Carmel coast and Jaffa derived their livelihood from fishing and the production of purple dye. Herod built at Caesarea Maritima and Anthedon harbours with the most advanced technological equipment. At the time of the Great Revolt the Jewish navy constituted a threat to the supply of grain to Rome by sea.

The sea was the source of the economic and political power of the Phoenicians, who occupied the Lebanese coast; since they had little agricultural land, they engaged in international maritime trade, ship-building, fishing, and the production of purple dye, salt, and glass. With metals and ivory brought from across the sea they produced weapons, furniture and jewelry. Their products were distributed from Mesopotamia to the central and western Mediterranean. The Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Persians hired their services as accomplished sailors and naval warriors. The Phoenicians established trading stations and settlements throughout the Mediterranean, and on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. According to Isaiah, they were so confident of their command of the sea that the prince of Tyre said in his arrogance 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, in the midst of the seas'. According to Philo of Byblos, Pontos, the sea, was the father of Sidon and Poseidon. In the Roman period, too, the coins of Sidon, Tripoli and Dora boasted of the title of *ναύαρχος nauarchos* (ruler of the navy). But even the Phoenicians feared the destructive power of the sea, and assigned many gods, such as Ba'al Shamin, Ba'al Tsafon, Ba'al Rosh, Ba'al Malga, Melqart, 'Astarte and Tanit, to the protection of their voyages.

Greece, with its bays and islands, has the longest coastline of any Mediterranean country. It is a mountainous country, with little agricultural land. In consequence, they also had to seek their livelihood on the sea, and during the first millennium BCE they competed with the Phoenicians for the hegemony of the Mediterranean.

⁷⁹⁷ *Psalms*, 75: 13–14; 104: 25–27.

⁷⁹⁸ *Genesis*, 49: 12; *Deuteronomy*, 33: 19.

⁷⁹⁹ *Kings* I, 9: 12; *Isaiah*, 23: 4; *Ezekiel*, 26–27; *Proverbs*, 31: 14.

It was in Greek historiography that the concept of thalassocracy first appeared. In Athens, Themistocles and Pericles understood that political power was based on naval strength;⁸⁰⁰ and the continental power of Sparta became ruler of the Aegean world only after developing a naval force. The Greeks considered the sea to be their home. Xenophon describes the excitement of the Greeks when they first saw the sea after their long expedition in Asia, and their cries of *θάλασσα! θάλασσα!* ‘The sea! The sea!’⁸⁰¹ But they were also well aware of its dangers. The Odyssey is a voyage of fear and suffering in the midst of monsters and disasters encompassed by the sea.

Unlike the Greeks, the Romans were originally a nation of farmers. But as they expanded, first throughout Italy and thereafter round the whole of the Mediterranean, they were forced to become a maritime power. They defeated Carthage, which had dominated the sea in the central and western Mediterranean. When they also conquered North Africa, all of the countries of the Mediterranean were brought under the control of a single power for the first time. Roman literature reflects the Romans’ ambivalent attitude to the sea. Until the latter days of the Republic Roman law was opposed to maritime trade, and limited the amount which senators were permitted to profit from it. Cicero denounced the corruption of coastal cities, which stemmed from the adoption of foreign customs.⁸⁰² But, in point of fact, Cicero himself engaged in maritime trade, and from the time of Claudius the regime encouraged commercial voyages even during seasons dangerous to shipping. Rome exploited the resources and economic activities of all parts of the empire for its own purposes, but was committed to the security and prosperity of the countries it had conquered. As a result, worldwide peace, the *Pax Romana*, was established,⁸⁰³ and the Mediterranean became an internal sea of the empire, within which there was an exceedingly ramified and busy network of supply and communication. Rome established a complex of navies and fleets to ensure its security.

Philistia’s coastal cities were situated at the junction of two long overland trade routes which were of major importance in antiquity: the Via Maris, which connected Egypt with Syria, Anatolia and Mesopotamia, and the Incense Route, which began in China and India, and passed through Oman, Southern Arabia, Idumaea and the Negev on the way to its maritime outlet in Southern Philistia’s harbours. Over the Incense Route caravans transported the most rare and expensive merchandise in the ancient world — incense, perfumes, spices, ivory, silk and exotic animals.⁸⁰⁴ From Philistia they were exported to Egypt and Anatolia, to the Aegean world, and to the central and western Mediterranean. Philistia’s port cities became very wealthy as a result

⁸⁰⁰ Plutarch, ‘Themistocles’, 4; Pericles, *Orations*, 1, 142.4; 2, 62.1, in De Romilly 1977: 26–27.

⁸⁰¹ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 7.

⁸⁰² Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, 2.5 - 2.9.

⁸⁰³ Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 851–852; Epictetus, *Discourses*, 3.13; Aristides, *Orations*, 97–100.

⁸⁰⁴ Ciarla 1986: 159–167; De Romanis 1996: 105–108. The fifth to sixth century CE zoologist Timotheus of Gaza mentions in his essay *Περί Ζώων* (*On Animals*) a merchant who transported two giraffes and an elephant from Gaza to Constantinople. Dan 1982: 23, note 22.

of transit trade, and maritime activity was always one of their economic mainstays. Under Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian rule dozens of trading posts, customs and service stations functioned in the vicinity of Gaza. From the Persian period onward it cooperated in economic activities with the Arabs, who, according to Herodotus, controlled the region from Gaza to Jenissus (today's Khan-Yunis); the high taxes paid by the Arabs to the king of Persia — 1,000 talents of frankincense — show the extent of the perfume trade.⁸⁰⁵ The Ptolemies also extracted considerable profits from it: Zenon, a Ptolemaic official who travelled to Egypt from the port of Gaza in 259 BCE, relates that there was a 'frankincense inspector' in the city. Zenon's agent supervised the export of olive oil from the harbours of Gaza and Jaffa to Egypt.⁸⁰⁶ In the Roman period the cities of Southern Philistia played an important part in international navigation and maritime trade. They exported from their harbours to all parts of the empire the most prestigious and desired products which were brought by the Arab/Nabatean caravans: perfumes and spices. They became prosperous both from transit trade and from the agricultural and industrial products which they developed: wine, preserved fish, oil and onions. The distinctive *amphorae* which were produced in the region of Gaza and Ashkelon have been discovered in all parts of the Roman Empire. Indeed, the topographical and climatic conditions of the harbours of Philistia were poor, and, even dangerous: a shallow sea, with many sandbars and reefs, sudden storms and strong eastern winds. No archaeological evidence of extensive harbours has been found. There were apparently small anchorages, and ships anchored far out to sea and transported their goods to land on small boats.

In the course of their maritime activities the people of Philistia spread their cults all over the Mediterranean world, where they won esteem and were widely emulated. In Paphos and Cythera temples were built which were identical to the famous temple of Astarte in Ashkelon. In Athens Asclepius of Ashkelon and Marnas of Gaza were worshipped. There was a temple of Marnas in Ostia, the harbour of Rome, and the emperor Severus Alexander worshipped him. The story of Jonah, the sailors, and the great fish in the sea of Jaffa was portrayed in Greek, Italian and Egyptian art during the Roman period, as were the adventures of Andromeda and Perseus. In the Roman period the relationship to the sea was expressed in the cults of the cities of Philistia primarily through deities in the form of fish.

In Jaffa a maritime creature known in Greek and Latin as 'Cetos' — a monster — was worshipped for hundreds of years. It is first mentioned by Pseudo-Scylax in the fourth century BCE. It is frequently portrayed in Greek and Roman art and literature as a supernatural monster. However, from Pliny the Elder's description of the remains of the Cetos which were brought to Rome from Jaffa it appears that it was, in fact, the skeleton of a whale 12 metres long. The cetos also played a part both in the pagan myth of Andromeda and Perseus and in the Jewish myth of Jonah. Andromeda was

⁸⁰⁵ Herodotus, *Histories*, III, 5, 97.

⁸⁰⁶ Papyrus PCI 628, in Cherikover 1961: 70.

in danger of being devoured by the cetos, and Jonah was swallowed by a cetos. As a result of economic and religious motives the Hasmoneans did not put an end to the cult of the great fish even when they drove the pagans out of the city and turned Jaffa into a centre of their maritime activity. Tourists flocked to Jaffa in order to see the skeleton of the whale; and, hundreds of years after Scaurus took it to Rome, they still visited the rock to which Andromeda had been fettered. So did Christian pilgrims like St. Hieronymus and St. Paola. The Christians adopted both the myths connected with the cetos. Perseus, the saviour of Andromeda, became St. George, who saved the princess from a ravenous dragon. Jonah became the archetype of Jesus who died and was resurrected. Moreover, this legend provided legitimacy to the spread of Christianity among pagan nations. Jonah and the cetos are depicted in mosaics from the time of Constantine I in the *basilica* of Aquileia, an important port in northern Italy. The myth of the cetos which swallows and disgorges human beings also spread beyond the borders of Jaffa, Judah and Philistia. It was related by Lucian of Samosata in the second century CE.

In the early days of Christianity the myths of Perseus and Jonah were linked to Jaffa. In the course of time they left the city, apparently because the Jews continued to be a dominant element there. The myth of Perseus/George migrated to Lydda, and the myth of Jonah and the whale was associated with Nebi Yunis, near Ashdod, where, according to tradition, the fish vomited him up onto dry land. In the Madaba mosaic, of the sixth century CE, a sanctuary of 'Saint Jonah' and a maritime creature in the sea opposite it are depicted there. The myth has been preserved continuously until our own time: in 800 CE the Muslims erected a maqam to the prophet Jonah. Moreover, an accurate reading of the *ostraka* found in archaeological surveys of the site casts new light on the Phoenician origin of the story of Jonah. It appears that in the fourth century BCE there was in Nebi Yunis a shrine to the Phoenician deity Ba'al Tsad. Sidonian sailors used to visit the site and make offerings and sacrifices. In Phoenician and Aramaic tsad means 'fish'. Thus, there is unique archaeological evidence of the existence and metamorphosis of almost 2,500 years old Phoenicio-Mesopotamian myth: over a long period of time it was first adopted by the Jews and included in the Bible, and, thereafter, also adopted by Christians and Muslims. The Book of Jonah was written in the fourth century BCE, and reflects open-mindedness and tolerance in relation to non-Jews, who are represented as compassionate and god-fearing, and eventually become followers of the Jewish god. This approach is the opposite of the introversion and seclusion of Ezra and Nehemiah, whose activities in Jerusalem were intended to combat the tendency of the Jews to assimilate to the Philistines. It is typical of the way of life in a cosmopolitan city such as Jaffa, in which the Jews cooperated for hundreds of years in matters of trade and culture with the Phoenicians, who, among other things, helped them build the First and Second Temple.

The people of Jaffa were proud of their city's maritime character. From the Hellenistic period they depicted ships on their coins. They worshipped deities who protected

seafarers, such as Poseidon, the ruler of the waters, whose anger brought about floods and earthquakes. The bull symbolized the destructive force of the waters, and it was customary to sacrifice bulls to the gods of the sea. Perseus did this after his victory over the Cetos, and the bull appears on the city's coins. Archaeological evidence of this custom's existence from the tenth to seventh century BCE has been found in Jaffa. Cassiopeia, the queen of the city, who became an astral constellation, gave assistance in nocturnal navigation. She was also the queen of beauty, and in Jaffa was identified with Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, love and fertility, who was born from the sea foam. Christian sailors continued to rely on her aid, and engraved her constellation symbol on the anchor-weights of their ship, next to the sign of the cross. Athene was worshipped in Jaffa as a shipbuilder and the patron of Perseus. She appears on coins both alone and in the company of Perseus and Tyche/Fortuna, the goddess of good fortune and the city goddess. Andromeda, bound by her arms to a rock, is portrayed on a coin of Jaffa from the first century BCE or CE. The people of Jaffa also believed in the Nereids, the daughters of the sea, who were beneficent goddesses protecting sea routes and saving ships which fell foul of reefs. The Nereids were worshipped mainly in the coastal cities of the Mediterranean. They were portrayed in literature and art in the company of Tritons and Hippocamps.

The crucial role of the sea in the development of Jaffa and the whole region is reflected in the cult of Tyche/Fortuna. In Jaffa the sea was particularly dangerous. It was full of pointed reefs which protruded from the sea close to the shore, and even inside the harbour, and big cargo ships anchored outside the harbour and loaded and unloaded their cargo in small boats. At the time of the Great Revolt in 67 CE the whole of the Jewish fleet based on Jaffa was destroyed overnight in a storm. The Romans celebrated the event for generations thereafter by establishing a new iconographic representation of Tyche in the form of an Amazon armed like a Roman soldier treading on the prow of a ship — a symbol of a naval victory. She also appeared on the coins of Caesarea Maritima, which shortly afterwards became the capital of the province of Judaea, and in Jaffa when it resumed the production of coins in the reign of the house of Severus.

In Ashkelon, as in Jaffa, sacred fish, which symbolized fertility both in eastern religions and in the Bible, were worshipped. Near Ashkelon there was a fishpond dedicated to the cult of Derceto and her daughter Semiramis. Derceto was identified with Athargatis, the fertility goddess who originated in northern Syria. According to Xanthos of Lydia Mopsus, the founder of Ashkelon, threw Derceto and her son Ichthys (in Greek: fish) into a pool near Ashkelon, and they were both devoured by fish. According to Ctesias of Cnidus Derceto abandoned her daughter Semiramis and jumped into the pool. Derceto turned into a sea creature, half woman and half fish, but Semiramis was rescued and nurtured by doves. One of the components of the name Derceto is *cetos*, the name of the nautical deity of Jaffa. It may be that the worship of fish monsters originated at the time of the Assyrian Empire, when Jaffa was included in the region of Ashkelon. Deity whose lower half was fish-like were also worshipped

in Ashdod in the Hellenistic period. The concept of the sea as a deity and the source of life, and the aspiration to merge with it and thereby attain the salvation of the soul can be discerned in the cults of Jaffa and Ashkelon. Jonah entered the belly of the whale (which symbolizes the sea) and was reborn from it. In Ashkelon it was permitted to eat the sacred fish of Derceto during the celebration of her mysteries.

There were also other maritime gods in the pantheon of Ashkelon during the Roman period. Among them were the heavenly Aphrodite (*Ourania*), who was worshipped together with Zeus ‘the generator of favorable winds’ as protectors from pirates, and Poseidon, who appeared on the city’s coins with his foot on a ship and a dolphin in his hand. Heracles, who carried out many sea voyages and defeated sea monsters, was also worshipped in Ashkelon, as was Asclepius, the god of healing, who was thought to be the ‘healer’ of ships and responsible for the safety of sea-going vessels. He appears both on the city’s coins and on a relief on a pilaster in the council house. The people of Ashkelon believed in the Dioscuri, the twin brothers who guided those who lose their way on the sea, who were pictured on their coins with a star on their caps. Apollo, the protector of harbours and anchorages throughout the Mediterranean, was also worshipped in Ashkelon, as was Pan, the god of flocks and herds, who was depicted there in reliefs and wall paintings. The Greeks likened the waves of the sea to flocks of goats and sheep. Pan was also called ‘marine’, since he was a *pantocrator*, who ruled over everything. Like Aphrodite he was linked with water because of his sensuality and fertility. The city goddess of Ashkelon had a conspicuously maritime character. Her bust appears on coins whose reverse depicts a warship. On many coins Tyche/Fortuna is portrayed standing on the deck of a ship, holding an *aphlaston* or a rudder in her hand. The sea was the principal subject of the coins of Ashkelon. While the mint functioned, from 200 BCE to 238 CE, it produced 240 types of coin, on 78 of which appear galleys and ships’ prows, and on 64 an *aphlaston*.

In Gaza gods connected with seafaring were worshipped. Marnas, the principal god of the city, was the patron of trade. The community of Gazan traders in Ostia, the port of Rome, built a temple in his honour. Minos, the king of Crete, who was considered to be the founder of Gaza and appeared on her coins, arrived there after a sea voyage. Io, the beloved of Zeus, also arrived there in a ship. The Minoans, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans believed that the transition to the world of the dead and *apotheosis* involved a sea voyage. Helios and Apollo, the gods of the sun, were believed to be patrons of sea voyages, since sailors navigated their ships with the aid of celestial bodies. There was a temple of Apollo in Gaza in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Heracles also appears on the city’s coins, and one tradition attributes the foundation of Gaza to his son, Azon. Aphrodite, the daughter of Thalassa — the sea — was a central figure in Gaza. Whoever entered the gates of the city from the direction of the harbour saw her marble statue in the main street. Aphrodite in all her tempting beauty still appeared in works of art in the city in the sixth century CE. Apparently the *Maiumas* was celebrated in Gaza and in Ashkelon during the Roman period. This was a water

festival which took place in the spring or summer in many parts of the empire, in harbours or by natural or artificial pools. Water is the foundation of fertility and of the abundance of nature. Aphrodite and Dionysus, who were responsible for procreation in the life of mankind and in agriculture, were patrons of these festivals, which were marked by drunkenness and licentiousness.

In Rafiah the principal god was Dionysus. He is connected with sea voyages, and many ships were named after him. Some believe that the custom of local Arabs at the beginning of the twentieth century of sacrificing young male goat to the sea, originated in the Hellenistic practice of sacrificing to Dionysus (who was called Eripius, Greek for the constellation capricorn whose decline presages a storm) in order to appease the stormy sea. And, in fact, the sea at Rafiah is particularly dangerous to ships; it is shallow and full of sandbanks. The people of the city also worshipped Apollo, the protector of harbours, and Isis, the queen of heaven and the sea, who was known by the appellation *Pelagia*, of the sea.

With regard to the conception and representation of their identity, and their portrayal of their connection with the Sea, the cities of Philistia can be divided into two categories: Jaffa and Ashkelon, on whose coins many maritime symbols such as ships, nautical equipment and creatures of the sea appeared; and Gaza and Rafiah, which did not employ any maritime symbols. Among all the city goddesses of the coastal cities from Philistia to Phoenicia who were portrayed on coins, gems, statues and reliefs, only those of Gaza and Rafiah have no maritime attributes. This is puzzling, since both Gaza and Rafiah engaged in intensive maritime activity for almost all the time they existed. In my view, the reason here, too, lies in their geographical and topographical circumstances. Jaffa and Ashkelon are built on a cliff, right on the sea-shore. The sea and its waves, reefs and sand, shells and fish, form part of the daily life of their inhabitants. The sight and colours of the sea, its sound and its smell, are everywhere, from morning to night. It is mingled in their souls, becomes part of their consciousness, and they express their affinity with it at every opportunity. Gaza and Rafiah were different. In both of them the settlement was divided into two parts: the inland section, about 4–5 kilometres from the sea; and a maritime quarter, which was also the industrial and commercial centre. In Gaza the maritime quarter was called 'Gaza Maiumas' or 'Gaza Yamm' (Gaza of the sea), and in Rafiah 'Rafiah Yamm'. The way of life and character of the citizens in the maritime quarter differed from those in the inland section, and there were even periods in which they were alienated and in conflict. In Gaza some of the inhabitants of the Maiumas became Christians, while the inland section remained pagan; as a result they were granted municipal autonomy, and even a new name — Constantia — by the emperor Constantine I. In Caesarea Maritima the port area was also granted administrative autonomy for a certain period, and even struck its own coins. The municipal authorities in Gaza and Rafiah preferred to emphasize their unique characteristics, such as the ancient noble Cretan origin of the citizens and cults of Gaza, or the Dionysian myth of Rafiah and its Apollonian oracle.

B. Ethno-cultural Influences on the Cults of Philistia's Coastal Cities in the Roman period

Geopolitically and economically, the four coastal cities of Philistia had much in common. None the less, during most of their existence they were distinct political and social entities, with separate histories. Each city was noted for its unique ethnic components and cultural characteristics; and, as a result, their cults also differed. These cults did not originate in the Roman period, with which this study is concerned, and for a full understanding of them one must investigate their origins in earlier periods. As the result of the waves of conquests and migrations that Philistia's coastal cities had undergone over the ages, their population was heterogeneous, of mixed and varied origins. Every new wave of settlers brought with him his own religious traditions, rituals and customs. Many of them persisted and often mingled with local myths and cults. In the Roman period each city kept its particular foundation myth or myths regarding its origins. These myths must preserve historical facts, but have to be also understood in light of the spirit of the times in which they were composed and spread, the interests and the aspirations of the authors. They often serve political assertions, and stories of the Greek migrants from Asia Minor under Askalos and Mopsus can be explained as part of Greeks attempts to justify their gaining control over Philistia's coast. In the Roman period, traditions of Gaza's Cretan origins served to keep it aloof from the Judaeian kingdom and to be annexed to the province of Syria.

In this study we saw how ethnic groups were struggling to preserve their heritage and maintain their unique identity. At the same time ethnic identity is dynamic and unstable over time and also this found expression in their myths and cults. A part of the Hiyawa-Achaeans/Danuna integrating into the tribes of Israel, and Samson embodied features of both sides. Perseus the Danaean brought Andromeda, princess of Canaanite Jaffa to Greece and they established the Heraclide dynasty who ruled Mycenae, Argos and Sparta. Heracles, the ultimate Greek hero, came to the Levant and founded Akko; the city cherish both his and Perseus's memory. Mopsus's exploits were mixed with local myths of Derceto, Semiramis and Ichtyos. Greek Io immigrated through Gaza to Egypt and became Egyptian Goddess; her son Epaphus/Apis symbolized the life-giving fertility of Egypt's soil. The official historiographies of Philistia's coastal cities in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, represented in their myths and cults, didn't reject the local, eastern myths and they were in circulation simultaneously with the Greek ones. Rafiah was the only exception, since no element of its original population remained.

At the beginning of the Iron Age these cities were settled by various groups of the 'Sea Peoples': Peleshet, Shekelesh, presumably settlers of Ashkelon (who were described in an Ugaritic document as 'dwellers of boats'), and Danuna, identified by many scholars with the tribe of Dan. Some of them, identified as originating in Crete, settled the area from Gaza to Rafiah. The migration from southern Europe, mainland Greece and the Aegean world into the Southern Levant was in several waves. Some came directly by sea, across the Mediterranean. Others advanced through Cilicia and

Northern Syria, and apparently adopted some local deities and cults. In Canaan, the Philistines eventually borrowed the language and some of the cults of the Canaanites; the earliest settlers bore Aegean names, but their descendants had Semitic names. Some modern scholars maintain that the Philistines were integrated ethnically and culturally into the neighbouring peoples, and disappeared from the historical scene after they were conquered and deported by Nebuchadnezzar II in 604 BCE. However, recent discoveries and research show that the unique, non-local (Aegean/Anatolian/Cypriot etc.) aspects of the Philistine religious practices and iconography continued through the Iron Age II period. Apparently an 'Aegean Renaissance' took place in Philistia during the seventh century BCE. Achish, king of 'Ekron, built a temple to the goddess PTGY. Achish is probably a derivative of Αχαιός Achaios, the synonym for 'Greek' in the Homeric epic. PTGY may be Pyto-Gaia, the Greek goddess. This can indicate preservation or revival of Aegean culture and cults. From the late seventh century onward, through the Hellenistic period, tens of thousands of Aegean and Cretan mercenaries arrived to the area and were employed by the kings of Egypt, Babylon and Persia. Their presence could have been one of the main causes of such a renaissance.

The Philistine cities, like the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, often rebelled against Assyria and Babylon who ruled the region from the eighth to the sixth centuries BCE. They were conquered and destroyed and part of Gaza's and Ashkelon's population was deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Mesopotamia. However, like the Judeans, they were settled with accordance with their original communities and could preserve the social and cultural frameworks they had brought with them from their homeland. Further, it appears that during the reign of Cyrus the great king of Persia and his successors the Philistines, like the Jews and the other nations who had been exiled by the Babylonians, were allowed to return to their homeland, and that the authorities facilitated their material and cultural rehabilitation. The Persians were interested in the loyalty of the population living close to the border with their enemy, Egypt. This can explain the continuity of Philistine and Cretan ethnic and cultural elements in the cults in Ashkelon and Gaza even in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods. The citizens of Rafiah, on the other hand, were completely uprooted and exiled by the Assyrians, as were the inhabitants of the Samarian kingdom, and like them they never returned to their homeland. Consequently, there are no previous pre-Hellenistic cultic remains in Rafiah of the Roman period. When new settlers were brought from the east of Assyria, as happened in Ashdod, it seems that they adopted the local cults, as did the settlers who were brought to Shomron/Samaria. Thus, Dagon was worshipped in Ashdod in the Hellenistic period as he had been in the days of the Philistines.

The conquering empires encouraged international maritime commerce of the coastal cities of Philistia with the aim of profit. The Assyrians established trade stations near these cities and kept strict supervision over their merchandise. The kings of Persia developed a very profitable transit trade in Philistia. They transferred control over

the coast as far as Ashkelon to Tyre and Sidon as a reward for their aid in maritime commerce and military expeditions against Greece and Egypt. At the same time, Herodotus called the peoples of Philistia 'Syrians known as Philistines'. In the fifth century CE some of the people of Gaza spoke 'Syrian', and did not understand Greek. The influence of Syro-Phoenician religion on the cults of the cities of Philistia in the Roman period was considerable and is evident in the format of divine couples and trinities. The *Maiumas* water festival was also of Syrian origins; it persisted in Ashkelon even in the sixth century CE.

Elements of Mesopotamian religions were also preserved in the cults of Jaffa, Ashkelon and Gaza during the Roman period. King Sargon II of Assyria stated that he instituted the worship of Assyrian gods in Gaza; and after the Babylonian exile, it would appear that those who returned to Philistia brought with them new religious elements and cultic customs which they had adopted in Mesopotamia. Also the Phoenicians were influenced by Mesopotamian religions, particularly by their astral component, and disseminated them throughout their sphere of influence and dominion.

Regarding the relations between the Philistian cities and the kingdom of Judah, their eastern neighbour, there were periods in which the Judaeans were influenced by Philistine culture, in spite of the political, cultural and religious rivalry. Evidence for agricultural and commercial cooperation between Judah and Ashkelon exists as well. Occasionally the Philistines and Judaeans made political alliance, mainly during the rebellions against Assyria and Babylon. According to the Book of Ezra some of the Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile intermarried with the inhabitants of Philistia, and that their children spoke the language of Ashdod rather than that of Judah. In the Hellenistic period there were Jews in Jaffa, and Jewish population grew up in Ashkelon and Gaza during the Roman period.

Egypt also made a strong imprint on the cults of the cities of Philistia which lay on her borders. During the Second and First millennia BCE they maintained intensive economic and cultural relationships, and in the Late Bronze Age they were part of her empire. Egypt also maintained commercial and cultural relationships with the Phoenicians. Their religions influenced each other and their cosmogonies are similar. There are literal and archaeological evidences to Ashkelon's involvement in the Egyptian-Phoenician trade during the Iron Age. In the third century BCE Philistia came under the rule of the Ptolemaic dynasty. In Ashkelon, Gaza and Rafiah Egyptian gods and goddesses like Osiris, Isis and Hor/Harpocrates were worshiped also during the Roman period.

Philistia's coastal cities thrived also thanks to the contribution of the Arabs/Nabateans to the trade between the Far East and the Mediterranean. In the Persian period the southern coast, from Gaza to Khan-Yunis was transferred to their control. They left their impression on Ashkelon's and Gaza's culture and religion and deities of Arab origins were included in their pantheons.

In the Roman and Byzantine periods these towns took pride both in their ancient Semitic-Phoenician origins and in their Greek culture. Many scholars born in Ashkelon attained fame as orators, grammarians, philosophers and historians. Gaza produced philosophers, biologists and orators, and its school of rhetoric was particularly famous. There was also conspicuous Greek influence on the cults of the coastal cities of Philistia in the Roman period. By their trade connections with the Greek world, they were the first cities in the country to be influenced by Greek culture, and many Greek gods were identified with local eastern ones. After the conquests of Alexander the Great the Land of Israel was annexed first to the Ptolemaic and later to the Seleucid kingdom. Many migrants from all parts of the Greek world settled in the region and Hellenization was accelerated. The aim of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid rulers was to integrate the native populations with the Greek immigrants, in order to unify and consolidate their multi-national and multi-cultural empires, and to ensure the loyalty of their citizens. Jaffa, Ashkelon, Gaza and Rafiah attained the status and privileges of a *polis*, and educational and administrative institutions were set up to disseminate Greek social and cultural values as well as the *koine*, the common Greek tongue, and, together with it, the Greek religion and way of life. In order to legitimize their Greek conquest the *Poleis* said to have been founded by a Greek god or hero. Tyche, the Greek goddess of luck and chance, became the principal patron goddess of every *polis*, personifying the fate of the city and the community. Her bust appeared on the coins struck by these cities as a symbol of their autonomous status.

Rome, and after it Byzantium (known as the New Rome) ruled the Middle East for 700 years, until the Arab conquest in 632 CE. Immigrants and soldiers of the Roman legions settled in the Land of Israel, and provincial administrative institutions were established. Rome also aspired to consolidate and unify its expanded empire, which embraced the whole of the Mediterranean region. Roman citizenship was extended widely, until in 212 CE an edict of the emperor Caracalla granted it to all inhabitants of the empire. The process of Romanization was accompanied by an increased urbanization. The cities had mixed populations of Jews and non-Jews. Cities such as Tsippori/Diocaesarea and Tiberias with Jewish majority, while Akko, Ashkelon and Gaza had non-Jewish majority and were considered 'pagan' cities. Nevertheless, they had Jewish communities. From the time of Herod onwards, temples, theatres, stadia, and bathhouses were established in various cities. They were adorned with statues of gods and goddesses and Roman emperors. Jews were surrounded and constantly confronted with Hellenistic and Roman culture and pagan cults and practices. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and the end of priestly leadership, Judaism underwent process of profound change. Rabbis — Torah scholars — emerged as the dominant religious figures. They propagated Torah study as the most important religious practice, and applied its values and ideas to everyday life situations (the *halakhah*). Some rabbis would have tried to reach a compromise which allowed Jews to live their daily life in a pagan environment, conduct business and even share some aspects of its life style without compromising their own religious identity. They put

emphasis on the second frase of the commandment against idolatry: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them' (*Exod.*, 20: 4–5). Thus we can see Rabbi Gamliel going to a bathhouse adorned with Aphrodite's statue, because it was not a sacred domain and worship was not practiced there; Rabbi Hiyya was permitted to use a cup with 'Tyche of Rome' depicted inside, because it was not a cultic object (*Talmud Yerushalmi*, 'Avoda zara' 3, 42. Leiden, Venezia, Epstein ed., 1932). This interpretation allowed Jews to adapt certain pagan artistic images; in private buildings and even synagogue we see figures taken from Greek myth. Certain motifs were part of a common artistic repertoire of images that was shared by Pagans, Jews and Christians in late antiquity; but they were not used for the same purpose, and the meanings given to them would have varied. King David is portrayed playing a lyre in the guise of Orpheus, in Gaza's synagogue; and Heracles is represented as a negative figure in Tsippori's mosaics.

The pagan population of Philistia's coastal cities adopted many elements of Roman social and religious values, and served as loyal supporters of the Roman regime. Jaffa, Ashkelon and Gaza were granted the prestigious status of Roman *colonia*. In Ashkelon, a benedictory inscription was found stating: 'Success to Ashkelon! Success to Rome!' In Gaza during the Third century CE, chariot races were held in honour of Consus, under the supervision of *duumvir*, just as they were done in Rome. Ashkelon and Gaza became the foremost cultural centers in the world in all the spheres of creative endeavors. Their gods and unique cults gained world-wide prestige and found devotees in Greece and Rome. Greek still remained the most widely spoken language in the Levant, but Latin was the language of administration. Rome left a deep mark on the material culture of the region, primarily through her building projects, which changed the landscape unrecognizably. The cities of Philistia were also regenerated in the Roman period. Jaffa was rebuilt by Vespasian after being destroyed twice, and its two-storied *Tycheion* was depicted on its coins. In Ashkelon magnificent buildings were constructed by Herod, such as baths, fountains and colonnades, and the *basilica* during the Severan reign. The public buildings of Gaza were praised by Choricus, the famous Gazan orator. The Madaba map depicts the cities of Philistia, with their city walls, their colonnaded streets, their squares, their theatres and their splendid churches.

In this study we have discussed the ways in which the religion and culture of Rome influenced the life of the spirit, and particularly the cults and rituals, of four cities of Philistia. We have asked how the local cults were adapted to Greek and Roman cultural modes, and whether earlier cults were eradicated or preserved. Literary and epigraphic evidence, architecture, sculpture, mosaics and city coins reflect indigenous cultic traditions and values side by side with the Graeco-Roman ones. In each of the four cities we found loyalty to ancient cults, but also acceptance of change and readiness to adapt. Certain patterns may be discerned: assimilation of the gods

and cults of the new rulers, whether Greek or Roman; maintenance of ancient cults with a Greco-Roman veneer; and preservation or renewal of an ancient local heritage. There were cases of syncretism and also of co-existence of beliefs and practices of different origins. The variety of the Ashkelon foundation myths implies a variety of perspectives about its identity in the Greek and Roman period. It shows that it was neither simply autochthonous nor simply Hellenic. It was both Hellenic and Levantine simultaneously. In Gaza parallel foundation myths (Heracles, Azon, Minos), which were told simultaneously reflects Greek and Cretan identities. It was the polytheistic approach who could tolerate and contain alternative myths without rejection, or denial. Most ethno-religious conflicts took place between devotees of a monotheistic religion (Jews, Samaritans or Christians) and pagans.

Jaffa, unlike other Philistia's Coastal cities, had no foundation myth connecting it to a Greek god or hero. No attempt was made to deny its local-Semitic origin and affiliation and after the Roman conquest it remained under Hasmonaean-Herodian rule. Roman authors relate it was *antiquior terrarum inundatione* – more ancient than the Deluge. Also Jewish traditions relate it was found by Japhet, the son of Noah. According to the Bible, Jaffa was destined to be included in the territory of the tribe of Dan. It did not succeed in settling there, however, and the border was eventually established 'on the Yarkon opposite Jaffa'. The tribe of Dan was different from the other tribes of Israel: it had no dynastic chronicle; when the children of Israel wandered in the desert it was in the rearguard, as if it had joined them at a late stage; and Jacob's blessing 'Dan will judge its people like one of the tribes of Israel' expresses the wish that its status should be equalized to that of the other tribes. In the period of settlement 'the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel'. The Song of Deborah, one of the most ancient texts in the Bible, asks why the tribe of Dan, which did not take part in Israel's war against the Canaanites, 'sojourn in ships'.⁸⁰⁷ The Danites lived in the lowland and the coastal area, which constituted both the borderland and the area of contact between Israel and Philistia. Samson, the Danite judge, fought the Philistines; but he also made friends among them and married one of them. In his physical heroism and adventures he was like a Greek hero. Some scholars identify the tribe of Dan with the Denyen or the Danaeans. In the excavations of Jaffa ceramics of the Philistine period have been found. Philistine settlement in Jaffa was short-lived, and from the time of David and Solomon it was annexed to the kingdom of Judah. The connection with the Danaeans was preserved in the cults of Jaffa in the Roman period. Perseus, the saviour and husband of Andromeda, was descendant of Danaus who was considered to be the founder of the royal houses of Sparta, Mycenae and Tiryns, and was credited with the invention of the oared galley. Thus, maritime activity was a characteristic of the Danites in both the biblical and the Greek traditions. In the Madaba map the tribe of Dan is depicted

⁸⁰⁷ *Joshua*, 19: 46; *Genesis*, 47: 15; *Judges*, 5: 17, 18: 1.

between Jaffa and Ashdod, with the quotation 'Why will Dan sojourn in ships?' as a motto of the tribe. The memory of the Danaeans is preserved in the adventures of Perseus in Jaffa, and in the Spartans' and Jews' belief that they had a common forefather.

In the Biblical period Jaffa was the principal port of the kingdom of Judah, and building materials were brought through it from Phoenicia to Jerusalem. In the Persian period it was ruled by Sidon. The head of Tyche, the city goddess, appeared on the coins of Jaffa in the Hellenistic period as she was commonly portrayed in the cities of Phoenicia, with a scarf round her hair and a mural crown. In the Roman period the Phoenician influence on the cults of Jaffa is expressed in the trinities of Tyche, Athene and Perseus and of Cepheus, Cassiopeia and Andromeda. Cassiopeia, the queen of the city, was originally a Phoenician goddess and a symbol of beauty who was related to Ba'al Tsafon (Zeus Cassios). The myth of the beauty contest between Cassiopeia and the Nereids originated in Syria and Phoenicia. Contrary to the Jewish and Greek views, who regarded the pride of Tyre's king and Jaffa's Queen with their beauty as a *hybris*, and the sea as God's instrument of punishment — it celebrates Cassiopeia's victory at the bidding of the supreme god. In Jaffa Cassiopeia was apparently united with Astarte, the goddess of the city. I believe that in the course of time she was also identified with Aphrodite the goddess of beauty; for in mosaics of the second to fourth centuries CE which have been found in Palmyra, Apamea and Nea Paphos she appears as Aphrodite *Anadyomene*. A clay statue of Aphrodite *Anadyomene* has also been found in Jaffa. The struggle between gods and heroes and the sea, personified in the sea monster, the defeat of the sea and its transformation into the faithful servant of the god, is of ancient Syrian origin. Ugaritic mythology tells of the struggle between Ba'al and Yamm (Hebrew: sea). Sumerian, Assyrian and Babylonian myths also tell of the victory of the gods, led by Marduk, over the sea and its monsters. In the Biblical story of Jonah the great fish is the emissary of God. The proof of the Phoenician origin of the myth is to be found, as we have maintained above, in the cult of Ba'al tsad (meaning: Ba'al fish) at Nebi Yunis. In the Assyrian myth Apkallu, the fish-man, is the assistant of Ea, and responsible for the proper functioning of earth and sky, and in the rites in his honour the celebrants wore cloaks in the shape of fish. In the Greek myth, too, the cetos is the servant of Poseidon, god of the sea. The bull, the symbol of Poseidon, appeared on the city's coins in the Roman period. Poseidon was identified with El, the principal Phoenician god, who was the father of Yamm, and the bull was sacred to Poseidon, as it was to El. Ceremonial graves of bulls from Iron Age II have been discovered in Jaffa.

In Jaffa the myth of Andromeda took on a Greek complexion in the Persian period: Perseus came from Argos in the Peloponnese, and the members of the royal family of Jaffa bore Greek names. Pseudo-Skylax, of the mid-fourth century BCE, mentions Andromeda, whose name was Greek/Anatolian. Cetos is the Greek name for the

sea creature which was worshipped in Jaffa from the Persian period at the latest until the late Roman period. The myth of Cassiopeia and the Nereids underwent a metamorphosis, and in its new form expressed completely different values: whereas the local myth (which was still current in Syria and Phoenicia in the fourth century CE) emphasizes the beauty of the city's patron goddess, and her connection with the Supreme God, the Greek myth highlights the sin of *hybris*, which undermines the regime of the *polis*, and lays it open to disasters. Cassiopeia claimed that she was more beautiful than the Nereids, the fifty daughters of Nereus, the god of the sea. Poseidon avenged the insult by visiting the city with floods and a sea monster. The names and qualities of some of the Nereids can be interpreted as being representative of the regime and way of life of the ideal *polis* in all its aspects. Nereus, their father, is described as a truthful and benevolent being, honest and true to just laws. Thus, loyalty to the customs of the city is likened to a calm, safe sea, and their violation to a destructive monster and floods. The Greek legend of Cassiopeia and the Nereids underlines a political moral: criticism of arbitrary tyranny and the irrationality of monarchic rule, as against an aristocratic regime and the 'hero', defender of the city. Greek Tyche was adopted in the Hellenistic period as the symbol of the *polis'* autonomy which was established at that time. Astarte was depicted in sculpture in the Hellenistic likeness of Aphrodite *Anadyomene*.

The link between the Greek myth and the Jewish myth of the cetos in Jaffa may cast some light on the historical enigma of the tradition preserved by both Jews and Spartans, from the fourth century BCE, if not earlier, that they had a common origin. In the Hellenistic period Sparta was the only Greek city which maintained friendly relationships with the Jews. Areios I of Sparta sent a friendly communication to the High Priest Onias II, which declared that in the writings of Spartans and Jews writings it is stated that they are brothers, of the seed of Abraham.⁸⁰⁸ Among the Jews, both the Hellenizers and the orthodox believed in this relationship: Jason the High Priest took refuge in Sparta 'because of his family ties', and Jonathan the Hasmonean renewed the treaty with them. It may be that this legend was derived from the myth of Perseus and Andromeda, with whom the kings of Sparta claimed a relationship. Hecataeus of Abdera related that the foreigners were driven out of Egypt, and that most of them settled in Judah, which was uninhabited at the time, but Danaus and Cadmus sailed to Greece. Perseus also returned to the Peloponnese after wandering in the east and taking Andromeda from Jaffa for his wife; they founded the Heraclide dynasty. Menelaus, king of Sparta (of the Atreid dynasty, descendants of Pelops who came from Anatolia) related that after the Trojan War he voyaged by sea and carried out assaults on Egypt and Canaan. The Danuna/Danaeans from Cilicia in Anatolia were one of the peoples who made raids on Egypt and settled in Canaan, moved around between Egypt, the Levant coast, and the Peloponnese. It appears that they were connected to the biblical tribe of Dan, which was characterized by its maritime activities. The tradition that

⁸⁰⁸ *Maccabees* I, 12 and 23; Josephus, *Antiquities*, XII, 4, 10.

the Jews were related to the Spartans was preserved as late as the sixth century CE; the entry 'Judah' in the *Ethnica* of Stephanus of Byzantium, quoting Claudius Iolaus, a historian of the first century CE, states that the Spartans were related to Oudaïos, the son of a snake or dragon, from whose name the name of Judah was derived. The Danites lived close to the Philistines, and were estranged from all the other tribes of Israel, but aspired to assimilate into the people of Israel and settle among the other tribes. Some of them settled in the southern plain and in the vicinity of Jaffa, others further north, and it may be that some of them sailed to the Peloponnese. Apparently this is why they lived in ships, and were not included in the coalition of tribes at the time of Deborah. The snake symbolizes the relationship between Jews, Danites and Spartans. In literary and artistic portrayals of the myth of Perseus the cetos has the body of a snake and the tail of a fish, and spits out fire; but it is also a huge fish. In the accounts of Jonah in the first centuries of the Christian era it was portrayed as having the body of a snake and the tail of a fish, but over the centuries it became a huge fish, as in the Biblical description 'a great fish'. The Mishnah emphasizes the similarity between the leviathan (whale in modern Hebrew) and the snake: 'Rabbi Judah said in the name of Rav: 'All that the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world... the leviathan which is a boa constrictor and the leviathan which is a coiled snake, male and female created He them'.⁸⁰⁹ Both of them are represented as symbols of wisdom and cunning. As has been remarked above, the snake was the national emblem of Sparta, since it symbolized the power of aggressiveness in battle. For the same reason, according to the Blessing of Jacob, the snake was the emblem of the tribe of Dan. Jonah, who was sent to prophesy to the non-Jews, and was connected with Jaffa and Nebi Yunis, defined himself as a Hebrew (Ivri), and not as a Jew (*Jonah*, 1: 9). It seems that he belonged to a collateral membership group, a broader ethnic unit. From the Late Bronze Age until the late Roman period the territory of the tribe of Dan was a place where cultures met and mingled; more so than Judah, which preserved its ethnic 'purity', and more than the distinctly Philistine cities like Gaza or Ashkelon. In this area mutual influences between Hebrew, Phoenician, Mesopotamian and Greek myths were possible. After the return from the Babylonian exile, when assimilation increased to the point where it threatened the language, the culture, and, indeed, the very existence of the Jews, Ezra took the drastic step of declaring that the Jews must divorce their non-Jewish wives and disown the children born to them. It may be that the Book of Jonah, which was written during this period, presents a view opposed to this policy. Be that as it may, the trend among the Jews which displayed open-mindedness and a positive approach to the heritage of Greece still existed in Hellenistic and Roman times. Jonah and his adventures were portrayed in the art of the Roman and Byzantine periods in the Land of Israel, Italy, Egypt and North Africa. Sometimes he was shown sleeping under the gourd in the semblance of the Greek Endymion. Thus, in Roman-Christian art, too, Jonah continued to constitute a figure bridging between cultures.

⁸⁰⁹ *Babylonian Talmud*, 'Baba Bathra', 74b - 75a.

Ashkelon, according to traditions from the Hellenistic and Roman period, was founded by the Sea Peoples who came from Anatolia. Mopsus son of Apollo, a prophet and solver of riddles, wandered through Syria and Phoenicia, conquered and founded cities, and eventually died of snakebite. The inscriptions at Çineköy and Karatepe confirms that the house of Mopsus were kings of Danuna and priests of the sun god. According to Nicolaus of Damascus Askalos came to Syria from Lydia at the head of a naval expedition, and founded a city named after him. A head of Askalos appears on the coins of Ashkelon. It appears that his name is a reminiscence of the name Shekelesh, one of the Sea Peoples. It is mentioned in the inscriptions of Merneptah and Ramses III, together with Peleshet, Denyen, Tjeker and Sherden. The Shekelesh are apparently identical with the group called in documents from the time of the Hittite king Shuppiluliuma II Shi-ka-la-yu from the city of Shi-ka-la. According to an Ugaritic document the Shikalayu 'dwell on ships', like the Danites in the Song of Deborah, and invade the Syrian coast. Perhaps these are the inhabitants of Ashkelon. This view is supported by the historian Justin, who claimed that the king of Ashkelon destroyed Sidon a year before the Trojan War. According to Strabo and Herodotus, after the destruction of Troy heterogeneous groups settled in Pamphilia and Lycia, and some of them, led by Mopsus, reached Syria and Phoenicia. Mopsus' exploits were interwoven with the Syro-Mesopotamian myths of Derceto and Semiramis which were venerated in the city. In the excavations at Ashkelon the remains of the Philistine city, with its markets and storehouses — the Biblical Hutzot Ashkelon (bazaars of Ashkelon) — have been uncovered. From 2013 to 2016 a unique Philistine cemetery was excavated, dated from the eleventh to the eighth centuries BCE. It reveals a variability in burial practices — local and Aegean. Recent study (published July 2019) of the DNA extracted from skeletons excavated in the city, show that the first wave of Aegean immigrants who settled Ashkelon a few centuries earlier came directly from mainland Greece, across the Mediterranean. Through marriage into the native population, they lost their European genetic profile. However, their descendants adhered to their Aegean cultural heritage. In the Hellenistic period 'Philistine Astarte', identified with Aphrodite *Ourania*, was worshipped. The inscription 'l'ashera', discovered in 'Ekron, is evidence that the Philistines adopted Astarte from their Canaanite neighbours. Herodotus wrote that Aphrodite *Ourania*'s temple at Ashkelon was the oldest temple of this goddess in the world, and her temples in Paphos in Cyprus and Cythera in Greece were based on its pattern. A Greek inscription on a marble gable from the Roman period (220 CE), mentions a dedication of a temple to the goddess *Ourania* in Ashkelon. The Philistine heritage in Ashkelon can also be discerned in the hundreds of tombs of dogs, dated to the Persian period. Burial of dogs was common in Mycenaean Greece. It also spread to Crete, where it was still practiced in the Early Iron Age, though by then it had been discontinued elsewhere. Dogs were considered to have properties of healing and purification, and from the Hellenistic period they accompanied Asclepius, the god of healing.

Syro-Phoenician cultural and religious heritage persisted in Ashkelon. Tyche, the City Goddess, was identified with Astarte. She was depicted on the coins like her, dressed in a long dress and standing on the deck of a ship. Her bust was also portrayed. A votive inscription on an altar on the island of Delos is evidence of the Phoenician character of Aphrodite's cult. The dedicator, Damon of Ashkelon, informs the idolaters that 'Philistine Astarte' of his city is the Greek Aphrodite *Ourania*. He asks those who come to the altar not to sacrifice pigs (since the sacrifice of pigs is forbidden in the Syro-Phoenician region). A marble relief of the second or third century CE from Ashkelon, which depicts Astarte in her ancient Canaanite form, proves that the people of Ashkelon remained loyal both to their ancient cult and to long-established local artistic and stylistic values. This is a deliberate anachronism, which proudly declares the Phoenician origin of the cult. The people of Ashkelon even continued to worship Astarte in the sixth century CE, two hundred years after Christianity became the religion of the Empire. It seems that sacred prostitution was practiced in Aphrodite's temple in Ashkelon. It was also practiced in her temples in Paphos, Corinth, and Eryx and perhaps derived this practice (which apparently originated in Babylonia) from there. The excavations of the bathhouse/brothel of Ashkelon attest to the practice of prostitution in the city. Derceto and her daughter Semiramis, who originated in Mesopotamia and Syria, were also worshipped in Ashkelon. According to Diodorus, Semiramis's life was saved and she became queen of Babylon, and Herodotus said that Semiramis queen of Babylon built dams on the river Euphrates. Ovid claimed that Derceto was Babylonian. Lucian, who was of Syrian origin, stated that it was generally believed that the temple of Atargatis in Hierapolis/Mabug was, in fact, built by Semiramis the Babylonian in honour of her mother Derceto. Lucian, who participated in the rites of Atargatis, added that the devotees of the goddess were 'people from all parts of Syria and Arabia, and beyond the river Euphrates'. It may be that there is a kernel of historical truth in this myth: Semiramis was actually an Assyrian queen, Shamuramat, who was the most powerful of the queens of Assyria and Babylonia, and even raised a monument to herself. She was particularly powerful at the beginning of the reign of her son, Adad-nirari III who conquered Philistia in 803 BCE. The kings of Assyria set up statues of themselves in the temples of conquered cities, and it may be that this is how her cult originated. In the Assyrian period Jaffa was included in the territory of the kingdom of Ashkelon, and it may be that this is the reason for the similarity of the cults of Cetos and Derceto in the two cities. A goddess holding a dove and standing on a monster which is half human and half fish is portrayed on the coins of Ashkelon. Some scholars maintain that the goddess was Derceto, standing on a Triton. If, however, we identify them as Semiramis standing on the back of her mother Derceto, we have a complete and accurate portrayal of the ancient Ashkelonian myth. This view is corroborated by Lucian of Samosata's comment that Atargatis appeared in Phoenicia as half woman and half fish, and that Semiramis took the form of a woman. A relief of a Triton, half woman and half fish, was also found in Edessa, another Phoenician centre of the cult of Atargatis. Thus, it may be that this is also a portrayal of Atargatis/Derceto.

In Ashkelon, as in Hierapolis/Mabug, there was a pool with fish consecrated to the goddess. And, like Jaffa, Ashkelon was also connected with doves (Hebrew: *yonah*, Jonah), since doves saved Semiramis's life. There was a statue of Semiramis with a golden dove on her head in the temple at Hierapolis. Doves were also part of the cult of Astarte in Ashkelon, as in Paphos and Eryx. The city was full of flocks of doves, and it was forbidden to harm them. In the Roman period the dove became the symbol of the mint of Ashkelon.

Heracles/Belos is mentioned in the votive inscription of an Ashkelonian in Egypt, and is described as 'the god of my homeland'. In Delos there is an altar of the Hellenistic period dedicated by Philostratos of Ashkelon to 'Poseidon of Ashkelon'. The prohibition of the sacrifice of pigs points to the Syro-Phoenician character of the worship of the god in Ashkelon. Eshmun, the principal god of Sidon, was identified with Asclepius, who was worshipped in Ashkelon in the Roman and Byzantine periods. In Phoenicia he was depicted standing on a lion, and Shedrafa (name meaning: healer god, the Sidonian god of medicine who was identified with him) was depicted grasping beasts of prey, among them a lion. Shedrafa was also identified with Asclepius and, like him, held a staff with a snake coiled round it. The coins of Ashkelon, too, portray a god, apparently Asclepius, standing on lions. A fourth century BCE relief and inscription in Phoenician and Greek on the grave of the Ashkelonian Antipatros in Piraeus tells that a lion threatened to devour him; A Byzantine bronze cup from Caesarea Maritima shows Asclepius saving the founders of the city (who were also of Sidonian origin) from lions. Thus, the references to lions should not be interpreted literally, but as a symbol of diseases, epidemics and death, which are defeated by the god. Only in the light of this interpretation can the enigmatic appellation *Asklepios Leontouchos Askalonites* be explained.

The temple depicted on the coins of Ashkelon reflects the heritage of Phoenicia. It is square, and at its front there is a roof with a palmette-shaped *acroteria* and two 'bottle-shaped' betyls on each side. In Phoenicia and Syria these betyls were symbols of Astarte. On a coin from the time of Julia Domna Phanebalos is portrayed in this temple. This is apparently the temple 'Tsripha' mentioned in the Talmud; apparently the name is not of a god, but of a building, and is derived from the fact that it was dedicated to several gods worshipped together (from 'tseruf' — joining together). In fact, its design as seen on the coins indicates that it comprised several buildings each within another or in the courtyards of each other, like the temple of Atargatis at Hierapolis/Mabug. The temple marble gable with the dedication to *Ourania*, of the third century CE, is a 'Syrian gable'. This type of gable, common in the Levant, is a variation of the classical pediment and consists a pediment with its bases curved into an arch.

Egypt's strong religious influence in Ashkelon is reflected in Isis's cult. She was worshipped there as early as the Hellenistic period and in the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus

1380 she is described as ‘the mightiest [goddess] of Ashkelon.’⁸¹⁰ Scores of bronze figurines of Isis and her son Hor/Harpocrates from the early Ptolemaic period have been discovered in a *favissa*. In the Roman period Isis appears on the city’s coins. Moreover, on one of the pillars of a *basilica* from the time of the house of Severus Tyche/Fortuna is portrayed in a relief wearing Isis’s crescent crown and ears of corn, with Asclepius/Hor/Harpocrates by her side.

In the Roman period the Ashkelonians worshipped Phanebalos, a god of war and the sun of Syro-Arabic origin. There has also been discovered in Ashkelon a ceramic figurine of Tyche from the Roman period, of Nabatean style.

Ashkelon adapted many aspects of Greek culture and cults. On its coins there appeared a head of Tyche, the Greek city goddess, who symbolized its autonomy. Poseidon was also depicted on the coins, in the form of the statue created by Lysippus in Corinth. In the second century BCE the Ashkelonian banker Philostratos dedicated an altar in Delos to ‘Poseidon the Ashkelonian’. Apollo was also worshipped in Ashkelon; his temple was situated close to the city wall, and a statue of him has been found in the city. In the forum of Delos an Ashkelonian votive inscription in his honour has been found. Other Greek gods worshipped in the city were Aphrodite, statuettes of whom as ‘crouching Aphrodite’ has been discovered in the city. Asclepius, who was identified with Hor/Harpocrates appears in a relief by the side of Tyche/Fortuna/Isis in the *bouleuterion*, together with three Nikai, inspired by the Hellenistic statue of Nike in Samothrace. The Dioscuri, the sons of Zeus, appear on the city’s coins in the second and third centuries CE. Pan is depicted in a bas-relief, a fresco and a marble statue which were found near the city.

Roman cultic influence are evident in the representations of the city goddess which was portrayed as Roman Fortuna, and of Asclepius as Aesculapius the child.

In the Roman and Byzantine periods the pantheon of Gaza was replete with Cretan gods and heroes, which were depicted on coins and in sculpture. Both pagan and Christian authors wrote of the Cretan origins of the city. It seems probable that this tradition was created as a result of the frequent intercourse between Gaza and Crete, or as a result of the Hellenistic inclination to link the Philistines with Crete. But why was it the cults of Gaza, of all Philistia’s coastal cities, which bore Cretan features? According to the Bible the Philistines, or at least some of them, came from the island of Crete, and Cretan territory extended from Gaza southwards, to Hazerim (Rafiah). David employed ‘Cherethites [Cretans] and Pelethites’ as mercenaries.⁸¹¹ It may well be, therefore, that the Cretan heritage in Gaza originated at the time of the Sea Peoples: the Philistines and Cretans in Gaza may have maintained ethnic and religious continuity from the time of their first settlement, as did the people of the

⁸¹⁰ Grenfell & Hunt 1915: XI.1380.

⁸¹¹ *Amos*, 9: 7; *Deuteronomy*, 2: 23; *Samuel II*, 15: 18; *Jeremiah*, 47: 1, 4; *Ezekiel*, 25: 16.

kingdom of Judah. Gaza rebelled against the Assyrian Empire between 722 and 720 BCE. Sargon II quelled the revolt, but imposed a light punishment, the exile of king Hanun. Thereafter the city remained faithful to Assyria and was spared the fate of Kingdom of Israel and the Philistine cities which rebelled and were destroyed. Gaza also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who destroyed the city and sent some of its inhabitants into exile; but, as was remarked above, the number of exiles from Gaza and Ashkelon was small. Apparently the reason for the clemency of the Assyrians and Babylonians in relation to Gaza and Ashkelon was their need for their unique expertise, developed over hundreds of years, in trade, industry and naval warfare. For this reason, too, they encouraged their economic activities and granted them autonomy, as they did to the Phoenicians and to the Arabs who were engaged in the caravan trade. Unlike them, the people of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were mainly farmers, and they could be uprooted and exiled to the east of the empire and replaced by others without detriment to the profits of the imperial powers. Storehouses and fortifications from the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian periods have been discovered in Gaza, as well as many trading stations in the surrounding area. Only Alexander Jannaeus, the Hasmonaean king destroyed the city, which he viewed as an economic rival, in 96 BCE, and exiled its inhabitants. It remained in ruins until the Roman conquest in 63 BCE; Pompey and Gabinius rebuilt it, and it appears that its native sons returned to settle in the new town, close to the previous site. There was Cretan influence on the culture and religion of Gaza also in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. It may be that it was at this time that the longstanding Cretan tradition strengthened. During these periods Crete stood aloof politically from the rest of the Greek world. The Cretans also preserved elements of the Minoan religion and rites jealously, up to the end of the Roman period. A series of political and economic crises in Crete brought about great waves of emigration, from the late seventh century BCE until the end of the Hellenistic period. Many artists and artisans emigrated, and Cretan cult objects were to be found in temples throughout the Aegean world. Concurrently, Crete became an exporter of religion and ritual. Military education and continuous warfare groomed young Cretan aristocrats for service as mercenaries of Persia and Egypt, which became their principal source of livelihood. Between the sixth and third centuries BCE Greek and Cretan mercenaries were present in the region in large numbers. In Gaza the tomb of Charmedes, from Anopolis in Crete, dating from the third century BCE, has been found. He was a mercenary in the service of the Ptolemies, who was active in the rehabilitation of his city after it had been damaged in war. The mercenaries were mostly paid in coins minted in Gaza. Scholars refer to these coins as 'Philistine-Arabic'. Some of them bear motifs similar to those on Cretan coins of the same period, and particularly to the coins of Praesus, the capital of the *eteocretoi*, the descendants of the Minoans. In the territory of Praesus also was the center of Zeus *Cretagenes* (born in Crete) cult. Marnas, the principal god of Gaza, is depicted on the coins with his name inscribed in Greek letters, Marnas, or Marna. Ancient authors were unanimous in the belief that Marnas was of Cretan origin. Stephanus of Byzantium claims that

Zeus *Cretagenes* was known in Gaza as Marnas. From this evidence, and from the evidence of fifth century BCE coins of Gaza on which the Phoenician letter mem, Marnas's initial, appears, we may deduce that in the Persian period Zeus *Cretagenes* began to be identified with the local god of Gaza, and that at that time he was given the appellation Marna (our Lord), or, in its Greek form, Marnas. There are, in fact, similarities between the cults of Zeus *Cretagenes* in Crete and in Gaza. In the temple of Zeus *Cretagenes* near Praesus there stood two statues of the god. In one of them, which is reproduced on the coins of Praesus, he is a bearded god sitting on a throne and holding a spear, and dressed in a *himation* from the waist down. In the second statue he is a *kouros* whose devotees call on him to bless them with fertility each year. Marnas/Zeus *Cretagenes* appears in Gaza, too, in two guises: in the Seleucid and Roman periods he is a bearded adult, but from the time of Hadrian he is a young man. Gaza's Cretan connection was renewed and encouraged in the Roman period. During Hadrian's reign Minos, Artemis/Britomartis and Io also appeared on the city's coins. Hadrian, who aspired to make Hellenic culture dominant throughout the Roman Empire and to reduce the power and importance of the Jews in the Land of Israel, encouraged the Aegean/Hellenic elements in the culture of its inhabitants. In the disputes between the devotees of the various religions which began in the Hellenistic period the antiquity of origins and faith was considered proof of truth and superiority.

From the time of Hadrian the facade of the *Marneion* appears on the coins of Gaza. Mark the Deacon says that the temple was round, with a domed roof, two concentric circles of interior columns, and an underground story. Marnas was considered to be the god of grain, who died and was reborn every year. Therefore, some scholars believe that this was an imitation of mausoleums such as those of Augustus or Hadrian in Rome. But it may be that the origin of this building is to be found in Crete, whence the god himself originated; for it bears the mark of the Minoan-Mycenaean architectural tradition, whose elements also survived in Crete until the Hellenistic period, as, for instance, in the domed tombs in Apesokari and Kamilari, and the tholos tombs in Mycenae. In addition, in the Ring of Minos, dated at 1450 BCE, which was found near the Temple Tomb at Knossos, a *monopteron* with a domed roof is portrayed. There was also a temple tomb of Zeus in Iuktas in Crete, and of Minos both in Knossos and in Eryx in Sicily. The tomb is below the ground, and the temple was built over it.

The Syro-Phoenician heritage is evident in Dagon's cult. He was the principal god of Gaza and Ashdod during the first millennium BCE, originated in Northern Syria, and spread from there both to Assyria, Babylonia, Phoenicia and Philistia. His name was translated into Greek as *Sitos*, grain. He was identified with Zeus *Arothrios*, the patron god of agriculture. The stories about Samson show that the cultivation of wheat was central to the economy of Gaza. There is no reference to Dagon in Gaza in the Roman and Byzantine periods, and it may be that he was transmuted into Zeus *Aldimios*

(from the verb αλδαίνω, to cultivate) who was worshipped in the city. It may also be that Marnas, who originated in Crete, inherited some of the functions of Dagon. Marnas personified the cycle of growth in nature, and was identified with Consus, the Roman god of the grain. The name Dagon is derived from the Arabic dugunna — threatening, cloudy skies — and Dagon was apparently also the god of rain. Marnas was also thought of in Gaza as the god of the rains, and the citizens prayed to him to put an end to droughts.

Egypt made strong inprint on Gaza's cults. A seal from the Hellenistic period with an image of him sitting on a lotus flower has been found, and also figurines of Serapis and Hor/Harpocrates dated to the Roman period. Io appears on the coins of Gaza because, according to the legend, she stopped at Gaza in the course of her wanderings after she had become pregnant and been turned into a cow by Hera. She is depicted next to Tyche/Fortuna, apparently in imitation of the famous statues which stood in the city. From Gaza she went to Egypt, where she bore her son Epaphus, became a goddess who was identified with Isis, and also with Hathor, which was depicted as a cow with horns in which is set the sun disk. The influence of the cults of Isis/Hathor and her son Hor reached Crete as early as the Minoan period.

For many years Gaza was a partner of the Arabs in the caravan trade. Apparently Zeus *Cretagenes* was identified with the local god during the Persian period, and was called Marna/Marnas (Our Lord). This view is corroborated by the artistic style of the huge statue of Zeus (3.28 metres high) of the second century CE which was found in Tel el-ʿAjul. It is made of local sandstone. The overall style of the statue, its posture and its athletic body accord with Graeco-Roman artistic values. Not so its face, which is asymmetrical, with eyes wide open, and the forehead wrinkled. It is like the face of the god Qos from Hirbet-Tannur. The influence of Nabataean art is clear, and this is comprehensible in view of the close trading relationships between Nabataeans and Gazans. Many Nabataean ceramic vessels were also found in Gaza.

There were several official cults of Greek gods in Gaza. Temples of Aphrodite, Apollo, Helios, and Kore, and the *Marneion*, the *Tycheion*, and the *Heroeion* (temple of the founding hero) were in existence until 402 CE. The *Marneion* and the *Tycheion* are also depicted on the city's coins. According to one tradition Azon, the son of Heracles, was the founder of the city. In the Hellenistic period Zeus *Cretagenes* appears on the coins in the shape of Phidias' famous statue of Olympian Zeus, naked to the waist, seated on a throne. This is also the form of Zeus from Tel el-ʿAjul. There was a temple to Apollo in the city from the Hellenistic period. In the excavations a seal of the first century CE with what is apparently a head of Apollo has been discovered; and an archaic life-size bronze statue of the god was discovered in 2013 in the sea near Gaza's coast, one of the few bronze statues preserved from antiquity. The worship of Aphrodite was also Greek in character. She was the patron of love and marriage. The women of the city worshipped her statue, asked for her help in finding a husband, and lit lamps —

which are connected with love and sex in Greek literature — before her statue. In Gaza several artifacts which depict Aphrodite *Anadyomene* emerging from the water has been found, such as bronze satuettes, hair-clip, and a clay lamp.

Roman influence is evident mainly in the representation of the city goddess as Fortuna, and the worship of Consus, the Roman god of grain. The *consualia*, ancient Roman festival were celebrated in Gaza and, as in Rome, included a chariot race. As protector of grain seeds, his shrine in Rome was underground, covered with earth and uncovered only during the *consualia* day. The Gazan *Marneion*, also, had a sacred underground part.

In Rafiah, as in Gaza, Cretans settled during the period of the peoples of the sea. But, unlike the cults of Gaza and Ashkelon, those of Rafiah display no traces of Cretan or Philistine influence. The reason is, apparently, that the population of the city underwent a fundamental change, and in the periods mentioned it contained no inhabitants of Cretan extraction. When, and why, did this change come about? The answer may be found in the inscription of Sargon II which described his retributory campaign against the kings of Egypt, Gaza and Rafiah in the year 720 BCE, and his victory in the battle near Rafiah. Sargon punished Gaza lightly, and only exiled its king, Hanun; but he sentenced Rafiah to destruction: 'I destroyed, demolished, and burnt up Rafiah. I took captive 9,033 men with much property.' The great number of captives shows that it was not only the elite of the city which was uprooted and exiled to the east of the Assyrian Empire; this was the fate of the whole population. Unlike the peoples who were exiled by the Babylonians and allowed to return by the Persians fifty years later, those exiled by the Assyrians never returned to their homeland.

Most of the cults of Rafiah were Greek. According to Stephanus of Byzantium Dionysus founded the city. It was named after him (*ραφή* means stitch), since he was stitched into Zeus's thigh when still an embryo. Perhaps the creation of the myth can be dated from the thirty-third Homeric hymn, 'To Dionysus', of the seventh or sixth century BCE, which lists the places in Greece and the East which boast vainly that Mount Nysa, where Dionysus grew up, is in their territory. The Hymn claims that it is 'in a flowering mountain far from Phoenicia and close to the river of Egypt'. This description fits the geo-topographical conditions of ancient Rafiah. The 'river of Egypt' was in ancient times an appellation of Wadi el 'Arish, and the Hymn is apparently referring to Rafiah. Moreover, the hymn frequently calls the god *Eraphiotes* (the inswan, stitched) an appellation which is not used in another hymn to the god. Tyche of Rafiah was thought to be the god's nursemaid, and is portrayed on the city's coins carrying him on the palm of her hand. There was also a cult of the trinity of gods, Leto and her twin children, Artemis and Apollo in Rafiah. Apollo sometimes has a *tripod* by him, and this may signify that there was an oracle in the city. It is perhaps in his honour that the title 'the sacred' appears on the city's coins.

Egyptian influence was also evident in the cults of Rafiah. Dionysus was identified with Osiris. On the coins of the city images both of Isis and of the Sphinx, who was her symbol, appear.

C. Political Conditions as a Formative Element in the Cults of Philistia's Coastal Cities in the Roman period

Our study shows that the cults of the coastal cities of Philistia were influenced by political developments in the region during the Roman period. They reflect the relationships between Rome and the population of the region, whether Jews or gentiles, and internal relationships between the various populations. The ways in which the cults changed can also help us to understand historical events better.

In all periods political systems are associated with the formation of ethnic identities; emerging or collapsing empires create new, or bring an end to old ethnic groups. In their attempts to consolidate their regime, homogenize their population and suppress national, cultural and religious identity of rebellious groups, empires and states may cultivate some ethnic groups while marginalizing or destroying other ones. Under the Assyrian and Babylonian rule Israelites, Philistine and Judaeans were exiled and a new ethnoreligious group, the Samaritans, was formed out of exiles who arrived from Mesopotamia. The Hasmonaeans established the kingdom of Judah and took over also the coastal plain. They suppressed the pagan population and religion and removed the gentile inhabitants of Jaffa and Gaza; they conquered and forcibly converted to Judaism their neighbours, the Edomites and Itureans. The cities of the Land of Israel with non-Jewish populations welcomed the Roman conquest in 63 BCE and supported the Roman rule. It rebuilt the cities, including Gaza, which had been destroyed by the Hasmoneans. It revived the constitution of the Hellenistic *poleis* and their autonomous government, and their civil structure remained undisturbed. Their ancient names, two thousand years old, were unchanged, and their idolatrous cults were restored.

The Romans' approach to religious belief and practice was always a function of their political interests. They were generally inclined to tolerance, on the ground that polytheism should be as comprehensive as possible. They themselves adopted many gods and practices from the east, such as Isis, Cybele and Mithras. Severus Alexander also worshipped Jesus, Abraham, and the Gazan god Marnas. On the other hand, the authorities resisted cults which were considered dangerous to the unity and stability of the imperial regime; thus, for instance, the worship of Bacchus was restricted in Rome in the late Republican period as a result of disorders and rebellious activity in the course of his festivities. The Romans considered Christianity to be a 'superfluous and dangerous religion', and attempted to suppress it in certain periods: for instance, during the reigns of Nero, Decius and Diocletian, particularly when they understood that it aspired to be the sole universal religion. The Jews were also thought to be a hostile element because of their monotheism and Claudius expelled them from Rome.

In Judah, a *modus vivendi* between the Jews and the Roman rule was reached, consisting of a compromise whereby the Jews would sacrifice to the health of the Emperor, instead of worshipping him; but this was undermined as a result of Caligula's edict to put a statue of himself in the Holy of Holies. In 6 CE Judah was turned into Roman provincia Judaea. Under the Roman governors the conflict between the Judaeian and pagan population in the Land of Israel increased and exploded into full scale Jewish-Roman wars: the Great Revolt and the Kitos War. Hadrian's restrictions on Jewish religious freedom and observances and his intention to found a Roman colony on the site of Jerusalem, roused the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Hadrian crushed the rebellion, abolished the provincia Judaea and merged it with Roman provincia Syria to form *Syria Palaestina*. He chose a name that revived the ancient name of Philistia, in an attempt to suppress Jewish connection to their historical homeland and cultivate Hellenic traditions and culture of the pagan population.

In a reaction to the new political circumstances, the coastal cities of Philistia reshaped their myths and cults. New gods and heroes appear in their pantheons, without abandoning or marginalizing the old ones. Regarding the traditional local and Greek deities there are some new iconographic variations: instead of the Graeco-Phoenician Tyche/Astarte, the city goddess henceforward usually portrayed as Fortuna, the goddess of good fortune and of the city of Rome; she wears a dress, and holds a rudder, the symbol of good leadership, and a palm-leaf or ears of corn or a *cornucopia*, symbols of the peace and prosperity brought by Roman rule, of which she expresses acceptance and willing espousal of its values. In addition, at the time of the Great Revolt the Romans devised a new type of patron city goddess, which was widespread in the cities of the Land of Israel and Trans-Jordan: the figure of an Amazon armed with spear and sword like a Roman soldier. She treads on the prow of a ship, or a helmet or a bound captive. This was a combination of the iconographic components of the personification of Rome, Dea Roma, the embodiment of the Roman Empire, and of Virtus, the quality of goodness expressed in courage and valour on the battlefield. She holds a bust of the emperor, in accordance with the common Roman practice of carrying busts of the family ancestors in processions. She appears in this form in Jewish cities (or those which were founded by a Jewish king) which rebelled or were suspected of rebellious tendencies, such as Jerusalem/Aelia Capitolina, Tsippori/Diocaesarea, Jaffa, Antipatris, Sebaste, Anthedon and Tiberias. Tyche/Amazon was also adopted by non-Jewish cities, but there she bore no political message warning against rebellion, and was stripped of her warlike characteristics. She became a goddess of fertility and abundance like Fortuna, bearing a *cornucopia* and accompanied by a river-god.

Jaffa was the complete reverse of the other cities of Philistia in her resistance to Roman rule from the very first, and in her changes of fortune. The Jews considered Jaffa to be a Jewish city. From the time of its conquest by David in the tenth century BCE it was the principal port of the kingdom of Judah, and in the Hellenistic and Roman periods the Jews continued to insist on their sovereignty over it. Sometimes the Romans accepted

this claim: Julius Caesar granted it to Johanan Hyrcanus, and Augustus granted it to Herod. At the time of Pompey's conquest its population was almost entirely Jewish, thanks to the expulsion of the non-Jews by Simon the Hasmonean. Immediately after the conquest Scourus removed to Rome the skeleton of the cetos, the sacred relic which was the city's pride. Jaffa became the centre and stronghold of Jewish revolt. In 37 BCE it rebelled against Herod, who had been appointed king of Judah by the Romans. It rebelled three more times, and was destroyed again and again by Cestius Gallus, Vespasian and Trajan. Vespasian refounded it as a Roman *colonia*, and changed its name to the Roman Flavia Ioppe. As a result there were changes in its pantheon: Tyche no longer appeared on its coins in the form of a bust signifying autonomy; nor she was portrayed as the Roman Fortuna bringing peace and prosperity, but as Tyche/Amazon, with her foot on the prow of a ship. This was a reminder of the destruction of the rebel navy which had disrupted the supply of grain to Rome, and a warning against further attempts at rebellion.

In the Roman period Athene/Minerva appears on the coins: also, apparently, as a result of the political circumstances. It is true that the goddess played a part in the Perseus myth, but Akko/Ptolemais, where Perseus was also worshipped, preferred to emphasize Hermes, its other patron. It may be that in Jaffa Athene was chosen because she was the patron of the Flavian clan, after whom the city was named. The cult of Athene/Minerva was practised in three other cities founded by Vespasian: Caesarea Maritima, Shechem/Flavia Neapolis, and Pehel/Pella. In Jaffa and Akko/Ptolemais identical temples to the trinity Tyche, Athene and Perseus were built, apparently during the reign of Severans, who encouraged building and development in the cities of the empire. The temples, with the statues they contained, are portrayed on the coins of the cities. Their political significance is clear: in rebellious Jewish Jaffa the statue of Tyche depicts her as an Amazon; in Hellenistic Akko/Ptolemais, which was hostile to the Jews and faithful to Rome, she is Tyche/Fortuna.

Ashkelon lost its independent status after Pompey's conquest of the region and was annexed to the province of Syria. It seems that the loss of its autonomy led to the disappearance of the bust of Tyche from its coins; but it began to appear again in 73 CE, apparently as a result of its support of Rome against the Jews in the Great Revolt. Ashkelon was always loyal to Rome, and Tyche/Amazon was never depicted on its coins. From the time of Augustus the city goddess of was portrayed on its coins as Fortuna; and she appears in this form on one of the pillars of the *basilica* which was built in the time of the house of Severus and apparently served as the city's council-house. Nike/Victoria is portrayed in reliefs on three pillars in this *basilica*. It may be that they were created to celebrate the victory of Septimius Severus over his rival Pescenius Niger. It appears that the emperor's cult also existed in Ashkelon, as is attested by a statue of a Severan emperor dressed in armour which was discovered near the *basilica*. It appears that the emperor's cult also existed in Ashkelon, as is attested by statues empress Salonina, and of a Severan emperor dressed in armour

which was discovered near the *basilica*. The worship of emperors and their families as divine helped to unify the empire. The emperor was recognized as a deity who can bestow favours upon the community. During the first and second centuries CE, many cities throughout the empire founded cults of emperors, and shrines, priesthoods and festivals were established in their honour.

Asclepius was worshipped in Ashkelon in the Roman period. In Rome he was also conceived of as a child with powers of healing and the revival of the dead; in his temple on an island in the river Tiber, there stood a statue of the child Asclepius. In Ashkelon, too, the child Asclepius is depicted in a relief in the *basilica*. The belief in Asclepius the saviour became widespread particularly in the late Roman Empire. The emperor Julian was especially devoted to him, and composed hymns in his honour. He believed that Asclepius was the supreme deity, parallel to Jesus in the Christian faith. Ashkelonians also expressed their admiration for and identification with Rome in inscriptions, one of them wishing victory to Emperor Julian in his war against the Parthians.

Excavations have revealed no traces of a man-made harbour on the coast of Ashkelon. The coast is straight and sandy, with no inlets, and no protection against tides and winds. Ships apparently anchored in the open sea, and goods and passengers were brought ashore in boats. It may be that the city also received harbour services from the neighbouring kingdom of Judah (and not from Gaza, its economic rival). In the light of this fact it is possible to understand the cooperation between the two which lasted for many years. In the Biblical period Ashkelon took no part in the clashes of the other Philistine cities with Judah, and sometimes concluded a treaty with her: for instance, at the time of the revolt against Sennacherib. Archaeological discoveries have shown that in the Iron Age Ashkelon and Judah possessed a joint complementary commercial and agricultural complex. At the time of the Hasmonean Revolt Ashkelon welcomed Jonathan. It was also the only coastal city which Alexander Jannaeus neither attacked nor conquered. The Hasmoneans and Herod also built palaces for themselves in the city. But at the beginning of the first century BCE Shimon ben Shetah, the spiritual leader of Judah, intervened in local its religious observances, invaded it and hanged eighty witches. The cult of the Phanebalos, unique to Ashkelon, may reflect the relationships with the Jews. In the light of the political circumstances we can resolve the riddle of the nature of this god, which has baffled scholars ever since the nineteenth century. It seems that the god's name is derived from the Greek words Φανης (light) and βαλλω (to throw). Phanebalos bears many weapons, and it appears that he is indeed a god of war. Judging from the dates of his appearance on the coins of Ashkelon, it appears that they all have a political and military background. His first appearance was in 6/7 CE. In the year 6 CE Archelaos was dismissed from the post of ethnarch and Judah became the Roman province of Judaea, The figure of Phanebalos was a demonstration of strength of the Ashkelonians against their strong and domineering neighbour, which had ceased to exist as an independent state. They

now felt secure under the patronage of Rome. For hundreds of years the Ashkelonians had nursed their hatred, which stemmed from their weakness and political and economic dependence on Judah, from their religious and cultural differences from it, and from its interference in their internal affairs. From the year 6 CE they no longer needed its services, which were supplied directly by the Roman administration. Their hatred burst forth to a degree which astounded Jewish historians, who said that it was 'inexplicable'. It was Apelles of Ashkelon who 'dripped Ashkelonian poison' into Caligula's ear, and persuaded him to set up his statue in the Temple of the Jews. At the time of the Great Revolt the Ashkelonians slaughtered 2,500 Jewish inhabitants of their city. And, indeed, in 41/2 CE, at the time of Caligula's 'Decree of the Idol', when the Jews were threatening to revolt as a result of it, Phanebalos appears on the coins of Ashkelon. He is depicted on the coins again at the time of the revolts against Trajan and Hadrian, and also at the time of the raids of the Nabataeans, the enemies of Ashkelon, and of Trajan's conquest of Nabataea. The Ashkelonians' hatred for Judah is also documented in the Mishnah.

In Gaza the city goddess appears as Fortuna, holding ears of corn and palm branches, a *cornucopia* and a scepter. Tyche/Amazon does not appear. Apparently the emperor's cult was established in Gaza following Hadrian's *epidemia* (visit), as indicated by the annual Hadrianic festival and the additional era commencing from 130 CE. Hadrian re-shaped the pantheon of Gaza. Cretan gods — Artemis/Britomartis, Minos and Io were granted cults and a great temple to Marnas/Zeus Cretagenes, the *Marneion*, was built. Hadrian was a convinced philhellene; he also believed that the expansion and deepening of Hellenic culture was a method of uniting and consolidating the Roman empire. He founded a great many cities whose constitutions and institutions educated the citizens to that culture and promoted it, and founded cults of heroes and local gods overlaid with a veneer of Hellenism. Therefore he encouraged the Gazan Cretan/Philistian renaissance. As against this, he commanded that the rebellious Jews be forcibly converted, and changed the name of the province from Judaea to Palaestina, a name reminiscent of the early settlers who came there from the Aegean world. In this way the Helleno-Syrian population was granted superior status in the Land of Israel.

The loyalty of the people of Gaza to Rome, and their identification with her, appear clearly in the identification of Marnas, their principal deity, with Consus. In his honour they celebrated the *Consualia*, which included a chariot race, as in Rome. Under emperor Gordian III Gaza's citizens even constructed a shrine to him in Ostia. One of the fiercest religious disputes between Christians and pagans in the Roman Empire centred on the cult of Marnas. Marnas was considered to be an enemy of Jesus, and the conflict between them continued for decades. Constantine encouraged the Christians in the city by granting the status of a city to the harbour quarter, where they lived. This decision was revoked at the time of the reforms of Julian the Apostate, and the idolaters in Ashkelon and Gaza conducted pogroms against the Christians during his reign; With Julian's death the attempt to restore idolatry in the Roman Empire came

to an end, and the emperors Theodosius I and Arcadius passed stringent laws against idolatry. None the less, the cities of Philistia maintained their cults steadfastly. At the beginning of the fifth century CE there were only 280 Christians in Gaza. For many years the Christian church, supported by imperial edicts, made strenuous efforts to close the eight temples in the city, but in vain. It was only in 402 CE that they were destroyed, with the help of a military force sent by Arcadius. But many Gazans still hoped to re-open them and revive the idolatrous cults even as late as the revolt of Illus (484–488 CE). The devotees of Marnas refrained from stepping on the courtyard of the church which was built on the site of the *Marneion*, since it was paved with stones taken from the temple. Christian scholars in Gaza and Ashkelon openly avowed their sympathy for the heritage of pagan culture. Festivals in honour of Astarte and Aphrodite were still held, and mime performances took place in the theatre.

In Rafiah, which was an ancient center of Dionysus' cult, and in its surroundings, pagan rituals apparently lasted into the fifth century CE and his myths was still represented in mosaics.

The population of the coastal cities of Philistia was mixed. Each community worshipped its own gods, just as in Jonah's ship, when 'each man called on his god'. Pagan, Jewish and Christian communities intermingled without dilution of their religious identities. They were surrounded by Graeco-Roman culture and style of life and even Jews and Christians adopted some of its aspects. In the Roman period the vigor of pagan myths is evident in all spheres of life. In literature, rhetoric and poetry; in material culture and art: sculpture, paintings, mosaics etc. It persisted long after Christianity became the religion of the empire. Indeed, two hundred years later, as a result of the Christian imperial ideology, the legislation and acts against idolatry the pagan communities of Ashkelon, Gaza and Rafiah weakened; but they remained stronghold of pagan religion. Why was it that the ancient cults survived here, of all places? Apparently because of the policy of the authorities, combined with the unique character of the population. The Hellenistic and Roman rule related tolerantly to the local cults. Some of the ancient gods put on a Greek and Roman facade. But the cults of indigenous gods which had no parallel in the Greek and Roman pantheon also survived. Sometimes the regime used these cults for its own purposes, particularly the encouragement of the pagan population which constituted a counter-weight to the rebellious Jews. The unique Tserifa and *Marneion* temples were proudly depicted on the coins of Ashkelon and Gaza, as were the numerous local gods.

The national, cultural and religious identity of Jews, Ashkelonians and Gazans originated in the late Bronze Age. They struggled to preserve it even when they were under Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman rule. Their aim was identical, but they used opposite means: whereas the citizens of the cities of Philistia adopted a pluralistic approach, absorbing and appropriating new elements into their culture and religions, the Jews enclosed themselves in their faith, and generally rejected external

influences. In the light of these circumstances the relationships between these peoples and between them and the foreign states which ruled the country can be understood. It is true that in certain periods there was a tendency to convergence and even mutual assimilation between the peoples of Israel and Judah and those of Philistia (as in the days of Samson or Ezra and Nehemiah). There were also patterns of economic and political cooperation (as between Phoenicians and Jews in Jaffa, or between Ashkelon and Judah in the Assyrian period and in the days of the Hasmoneans and Herod). This convergence was also expressed in terms of myth and ritual: Ba'al Tsad, Jonah and the great fish; divine vengeance through impairment of masculinity (the plague of piles and the 'women's disease'); the coupling of a heifer (symbolizing the moon) and the sun god in the stories of Samson and Io. In the Roman period, however, the religious and cultural differences intensified, as did the political and economic rivalry between the two parties. Regardless of this, both sides rejected Christianity, which for the idolaters meant the end of religious pluralism.

Thus, the pagan cults of the cities of Philistia were particularly hard to eradicate because of their deep roots in the past. In this study we have demonstrated the Cretan, Anatolian, Mesopotamian and Phoenician elements which also persisted in them during the Roman period. Apparently ethnic-cultural factors deriving from the Philistines and Cretans, which did not disappear or become assimilated despite political and religious changes, persisted in the cities of Philistia. Not only did they preserve the traditions of their places of origin: they maintained living contact with them, and were influenced by their culture and religion well into the Hellenistic and Roman periods. In these cities ethnic-cultural and religious continuity persisted over a period of 1,500 years, just as it did among the Jews; and, like them, they were unwilling to give up their identity.

List of Figures

Figure 1. Jaffa coin. First century BCE or first century CE. Bust of Tyche, veiled, wearing mural crown. Courtesy of the collections of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Photo by Tal Rogovski.	14
Figure 2. Jaffa coin. Diadumenian (217–218 CE). Tyche/Amazon in a two-storied temple. Courtesy of the collections of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Photo by Tal Rogovski.	20
Figure 3. Corinthian amphora from the first half of the sixth century BCE. Perseus and Andromeda throwing stones at Ketos. The inscriptions denoting the depicted persons are written in an archaic form of the Greek alphabet. Altes Museum, Berlin. Drawing: Margalit Levitan.	23
Figure 4. Jaffa coin from the first century BCE or first century CE. Andromeda chained to a rock. Courtesy of the collections of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Photo by Tal Rogovski.	24
Figure 5. Depiction of Jaffa port with the vaulted caves/nausoikoi, in Zuallaert’s Voyage, 1586. Drawing: Margalit Levitan.	26
Figure 6. Campanian Red-figure Bell-krater. 330–320 BCE. Perseus rescuing Andromeda from the sea monster. Andromeda is tied between two stakes on the shoreline here represented by the wave pattern. Perseus is carrying the harpe. Both Andromeda and Perseus appear in eastern dress. The sea monster resembles a scaly crocodile. University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Drawing: Margalit Levitan.	27
Figure 7. Jaffa coin. Severus Alexander (222–235 CE). Athena stands facing right, holding spear and resting hand on shield; ΦΛ ΙΟΠΠΗC (of Flavia Joppa). Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.	29
Figure 8. Krisis Nereidon in the mosaic from Nea Paphos, from the fourth century CE. Drawing: Margalit Levitan.	36
Figure 9. Marble sarcophagus from Rome or Ostia decorated with couples of Nereids and Tritons. 200–300 CE. Courtesy Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem; Photo: Moshe Caine.	39
Figure 10. Campanian Hydria (375–325 BCE). Perseus fights the cetos with the spear and harpe. Altes Museum, Berlin. Drawing: Margalit Levitan.	45
Figure 11. Fourteen metres long fin whale calf skeleton exhibited at Haifa University, Multi-purpose building. The whale arrived to Ashkelon shore in February 2008 and died there. Courtesy of Dan Kerem.	47
Figure 12. Ashkelon coin. Domitian (81–96 CE). Year 85/86 CE. Fortuna/Astarte standing on prow of galley to left, holding standard and apllaston; on left, altar and ACKAA (Ascalon); in right field, dove. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.	71
Figure 13. Marble statue of ‘the crouching Aphrodite’. Third century CE. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Photographer: Clara Amit.	73
Figure 14. Ashkelon coin. Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE). Year 151/152 CE. Semiramis, crescent on her forehead, holding dove and scepter. At her feet Derceto, half woman half fish holding cornucopiae. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.	77
Figure 15. Ashkelon coin (second century BCE). Aphrodite head to right wearing stephane and earring, hair in chignon, border of dots. On reverse, ΑΣ above dove standing to left, border of dots. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.	80

Figure 16. Ashkelon coin. Municipal Coinage (81–96 CE). Turreted and veiled bust of Tyche to right. On reverse, prow of galley to left; above, ΑΣ (Ascalon). Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.81

Figure 17. Ashkelon coin. Domitian (81–96 CE). Year 94/95 CE. Bust of Tyche to right, veiled; AC (Ascalon). On reverse, War-galley. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.82

Figure 18. Ashkelon coin. Caracalla (212–217 CE). Year 215–217 CE. Isis bust to right, wearing hemhem crown and holding flail and scepter, upon three lions’ heads. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.82

Figure 19. Ashkelon. Tyche/Fortuna/Isis relief from the Roman Basilica. Second century CE. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Photographer: Simona Rodan.83

Figure 20. Ashkelon coin. Marcus Aurelius (139–161 CE). Year 158/159 CE. Poseidon standing left, right foot on a rock, holding dolphin and trident. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc. ...85

Figure 21. Ashkelon coin. Macrinus (217–218 CE). Herakles, naked, standing left, holding Nike/Victoria in right hand, club in left hand. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.87

Figure 22. Hermes statue from Ashkelon. Roman period. Courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority. Photographer: Clara Amit.89

Figure 23. Pan relief from Ashkelon. Roman period. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Photographer: Clara Amit.....91

Figure 24. Ashkelon coin. Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE). Year 158/159 CE. The war-deity Phanebalos standing left, raising harpe in right hand, holding shield and palm-branch in left. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.93

Figure 25. Ashkelon coin. Septimius Severus (193–211 CE). Temple with four doorways and ‘bottle-shaped’ columns. Photographer: Clara Amit.....102

Figure 26. Statue of Zeus from Tel el-‘Ajul. Second century CE, in Istanbul Archaeological Museum. Drawing: Margalit Levitan.....117

Figure 27. Gaza coin. Caracalla (212–217 CE). Temple showing two columns and pediment. Within Artemis on left drowing arrow from quiver on her shoulder and holding a bow. Marnas on right holding scepter. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).121

Figure 28. Gaza coin. Autonomous. Hadrian (117–138 CE). Year 131/132 CE. Minos in short chiton holding scepter. In field: ΜΕΙΝΩC. On reverse: Holy tree. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).125

Figure 29. Gaza coin. Hadrian (117–138 CE). Year 132/133 CE. Io and Tyche standing facing each other, clasping hands. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.127

Figure 30. Gaza coin. Hadrian (117–138). Herakles stands facing forward, naked, his right hand resting on club and left holding lion skin. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).....132

Figure 31. Gaza coin. Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus (161–169). Apollo, naked, Chlamys hanging from left arm, standing left. Left resting on a long branch, pouring libation from a patera over in right hand over flaming altar. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).134

Figure 32. Gaza coin. Antoninus Pius (138–161 CE). Year 148/149 CE. Bust of Tyche to right, with turreted crown, veiled; in right field, ΓΑΖΑ. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.137

Figure 33. Gaza coin. Hadrian (117–138 CE). Year 130/131 CE. Tyche/Fortuna wearing kalathos standing looking left, resting her right hand on scepter and in left hand holding cornucopia; beside her, heifer standing to left; in field, on left, ΓΑΖΑ; on right, date: Β ΕΠΙ (Gaza, 2 of the visit). Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc. 137

Figure 34. Rafiah coin. Septimius Severus (193–211 CE). Year 198/189 CE. Dionysus nude apart from chlamys falling from left shoulder, standing left emptying cup and holding thrysus; at his

feet panther seated left, raising right forepaw and looking up. Courtesy of Gemini Numismatic Auctions LLC.	144
Figure 35. Floor mosaic from Seikh Zuweid, of the third century CE. Dionysus and his retinue from the ‘Triumph of Dionysus’. Courtesy of the Ismailia Museum. Foto: project-mim.de@Mathias Salomon - All Rights Reserved 2009–2016.	146
Figure 36. Rafiah coin. Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE). Year 177/178. Apollo, naked, his left hand on a tripod with a snake wound round it; in his right hand holding a branch. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).	151
Figure 37. Rafiah coin. Commodus (177–192 CE). Year 182/183 CE. Raven, symbolizing an oracle, standing right, wearing an Egyptian crown. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.	151
Figure 38. Rafiah coin. Severus Alexander (232–235 CE). Year 230/231 CE. Artemis advancing right, holding bow and drawing arrow from quiver at her shoulder; before her, stag running right; IEPA ΠΑΦΙΑ (Rafiah, holy) Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.	152
Figure 39. Rafiah coin. Philippus II Arabs. (244–247 CE). Leto sitting on a throne to left. Apollo stands in front of her. She stretches out her right hand and put it on Apollo’s head. In her left hand she holds a scepter. Artemis in short chiton behind her. Courtesy of Münzen & Medaillen GmbH (DE).	152
Figure 40. Rafiah coin. Commodus (177–192 CE). Year 177/178 CE. The city goddess standing to right. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions, Inc.	153

Bibliography

A. Primary Sources and Commentaries

- Achilles Tatius, *The Adventures of Leucippe and Cleitophon*, tr. S. Gaselee, London, 1961.
- Aeschylus, Agammemnon = Aeschylus, 'Agamemnon', tr. H. W. Smyth. Cambridge, MA, 1926.
- Aeschylus, Persians = Aeschylus, 'Persians', tr. H. W. Smyth. Cambridge, MA, 1926.
- Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound = Aeschylus, 'Prometheus Bound', tr. H. W. Smyth. Cambridge, MA, 1926,
- Antoninus of Placentia, in: J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, Warminster, 1977, p. 85.
- Apollodorus, *The Library*, tr. J. G. Frazer, London, 1963–1967.
- Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, tr. R. C. Seaton, London, 1912.
- Aristides, *Orations*, in: J. H. Oliver, *The Ruling Power: A Study of the Roman Empire in the Second Century after Christ Through the Roman Orations of Aelius Aristides*, Philadelphia, 1953, pp. 945–947.
- Aristophanes, Thesmophoriazusae = Aristophanes. 'Women at the Thesmophoria', *The Complete Greek Drama*, vol. 2, tr. E. O'Neill, Jr. New York, 1938.
- Aristophanes, Ecclesiazusae = Aristophanes, 'Ecclesiazusae', *The Complete Greek Drama*, vol. 2, tr. E. O'Neill, Jr., New York, 1938.
- Aristophanes, the Frogs = Aristophanes, 'the Frogs', *The Complete Greek Drama*, vol. 2, tr. E. O'Neill, Jr., New York, 1938.
- Aristotle, *Politics*, Vol. 21, tr. H. Rackham, London, 1944.
- Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri*, tr. P.A. Brunt, Cambridge, MA, 1983–1989.
- Athenaeus of Naucratis, *The Deipnosophists*, tr. C.B. Gulick, I-VII, London, 1957–1963.
- Cassius Dio, Roman History, Vol. IX, tr. E. Cary, Cambridge, MA, 1927.
- Catulus, *Carmi*, tr. e note di E. Mazza, Parma, 1962.
- Chronicon Paschale*, ed. L. Dindorf, Bonnae, 1832.
- Cicero, *On the Commonwealth*, tr. C. D. Yong, New York, 1877.
- Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, Tomus I, Parisiis, 1881, pp. 139-141.
- Conon, *Narrationes*, in: M. Stern, *Greek and Roman Authors on Jews and Judaism*, Jerusalem, Vol. I, 1974, pp. 352–354.
- Cratinus, F207, in: J. M. Edmunds, *The Fragments of the Attic Comedy*, I, Leiden, 1957, p. 94.
- Damascius, *Problems and Solutions with regard to the First Principles; On Plato's Parmenides*, Ch. 262, in: G. Mussies, 'Marnas, God of Gaza', *ANRW* II, 18, 4 (1990), p. 2424.
- Dante, Inferno, Canto XXVI, 85–142, in: G. Fallani, S. Zennaro (eds.), *Alighieri, D., Divina Commedia: Inferno/Purgatorio/Paradiso*, Milano, 1994.
- The Divine Comedy, Inferno, Canto XXVI: Lines 113–128 of 142, tr. H. W. Longfellow, Boston, 1895.
- Diodorus of Sicily, Vol. X (Books XIX. 66–100 and XX), tr. M. Geer, London, 1960.
- Eck et al. 2014: Eck et al, (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae III: South Coast*, 2161–2648. Berlin, Boston.
- Epictetus, *Discourses*, tr. R. F. Dobbin, Oxford, 1998.

- Epiphanius, *Ancoratus*, 109 C, in: G. F. Hill, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum - Palestine*, Bologna, 1965, p. lxxvii.
- Etymologicum Magnum (Etymologikon ton mega)*, Leipzig, 1916. [Greek].
<http://archive.org/stream/etymologikontome00etymuoft#page/2/mode/2up>.
- Euripides, 'Andromeda', *Fragment 136*, in: J. Barringer, *Divine Escorts*, Ann Arbor, 1995, p. 113.
- Euripides, *Bacchae* = Euripides. *The Tragedies of Euripides*, tr. T. A. Buckley. 'Bacchae'. London, 1850.
- Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine*, tr. H.J. Lawlor and J.E.L. Oulton, Vols. 1-2, London, 1927-1928.
- Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Onomasticon*, tr. G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, Jerusalem, 2003.
- Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium*, tr., ed. J. Rougé, Paris, 1966.
- Fabri = F. Fabri, *The Book of the Wanderings of Brother Felix Fabri*, in: A. Stewart, *The Library of the Palestine Pilgrims Text Society* (Vol. 1), London, 2013 (Original work published 1896).
- Festus, *De Verborum Significatu*, 110 M, in: E. & L. Edelstein, *Asklepios: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*, New York, 1975, pp. 227, 361-362.
- Galil = Galil, G., (ed.), *The World of the Bible*, New York, 1993.
- Grenfell & Hunt = B. P. Grenfell, A. S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. XI, London, 1915.
- The Greek Anthology* = *The Greek Anthology*, Vols. I-VI, tr. W. R. Paton, Harvard University Press, NY, London, 1916-1918.
- Herodotus, *History* = *Herodotus*, tr. A. D. Godley, Cambridge, MA; London, 1957-1971.
- Hesiod, *Shield of Heracles* = Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, tr. H. G. Evelyn-White. 'Shield of Heracles', Cambridge, MA; London, 1914.
- Hesiod, *Theogony*, Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, 'Theogony', tr. H. G. Evelyn-White, Cambridge, MA; London, 1914.
- Hesiod, works and Days = *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, Hesiod, 'works and Days', tr. H. G. Evelyn-White, Cambridge, MA; London, 1914.
- Historia Augusta* = Lampridius, *Scriptores Historiae Augustae: 'The Life of Septimius Severus'*, 16.7 -17.1, ed. D. Magie, London, 1953-1960.
- Homer, *Iliad* = Homer, *The Iliad*, tr. A.T. Murray, Cambridge, MA; London, 1924.
- Homer, *Odissey* = Homer, *The Odyssey*, tr. A.T. Murray, Cambridge, MA; London, 1919.
- Homeric Hymns* = Anonymous, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, tr. H. G. Evelyn-White, Cambridge, MA; London, 1914.
- Horace, *The Odes and the Epodes*, ed. and tr. N. Rudd, Cambridge, MA; London, 2004.
- Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 136, in: R. F. Willetts, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, London, 1962, p. 60.
- Inscriptiones Graecae*, Attica, Part III, 2, Funerary Inscriptions, Berlin, 1940.
- Isidorus of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XX, ed. W. M. Lindsay, Oxford 1911, pp. 3, 7.
- Josephus, *Antiquities* = Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, tr. W. Whiston et al. London, 1895.
- Josephus, *Jewish Wars* = Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, tr. W. Whiston et al., London, 1895.
- Julian = *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, Vol. III: *Against the Galilaeans*, tr. W. C. Wright, London, 1961, pp. 319-427.
- Julian = *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, Vol. III: Letter No. 8, 'To Maximus the Philosopher', tr. W. C. Wright, London, 1961, pp. 20-26.
- Justin, *Epitome* = M. J. Giustinus, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, tr. J. S. Watson, London, 1953, book XVIII, 3, 5.

- LIMC 1981–1986 = *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, H.C. Akerman, J.-R. Gisler et al. (eds.), Zurich-Munich.
- Livy = Titus Livius, *The History of Rome*, tr. C. Roberts, London, 1905.
- Lucian, *Hermotimus* = *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, vol. I, 'Hermotinus', tr. H. W. Fowler, F. G. Oxford, London, 1905.
- Lucian, *The Syrian Goddess* = Lucian of Samosata, *The Syrian Goddess (De Dea Syria)*, tr. H. W. Attridge and R. A. Oden, Missoula, 1976.
- Lucian's True History = Lucian's True History, tr. F. Hickes. Release Date: June 1, 2014 [EBook #45858] (Originally published with the Greek text in 1894.)
- Malals, *Chronicles*, tr. E. Jeffereys et al., Melbourne, 1986.
- Maccabees I; Maccabees I*, in: *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha (Sefarim hizionim), Dead Sea Scrolls (Megillot Genuzot) - Texts and translations, commentaries*, ed. A. Kahana et al., Makor, Jerusalem, 1970.
- Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza*, tr. G. F. Hill, Oxford, 1913.
- Marini vita Procli, ed. J. E. Boissonade, Leipzig, 1814 (rpr. Amsterdam, 1966).
- K. Müller (ed.), *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum (F. H. G.)*, Paris, 1841–1870.
- The Midrash of the Repentance of Jonah the Prophet*, published by T. Kadari in: *Kobez al Yad*, XVI, Jerusalem, 2002, pp. 67–84 [Hebrew].
- Nessana III.261–271, in: C. A. M. Glucker, *The City of Gaza in the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, Oxford, 1987, p. 95.
- Nonnus of Panopolis, *Dionysiaca*, tr. W. H. D. Rouse, London, 1962–1963.
- Oppian, *Haliutica, or Fishing*, books I-IV, in: Oppian, Collutus, Tryphiodorus, tr. A. W. Mair, London, 1963.
- Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, tr. Brookes More, Boston, 1922.
- Orphic Hymn to Pan: The Fumigation of Various Odours*, tr. T. Taylor, <http://moneycentral.groups.msn.com/Book of Shadows by Colleen M Criswell/ faces of the god>.
- Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, tr. W. H. Hanson, Cambridge, MA, 1919.
- Philo, *Phoenician History* [Greek] = A. I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos: A Commentary*, Leiden, 1981, pp. 8–30.
- Philo of Alexandria, 'On Providence' = Philo of Alexandria, 'On Providence', in: *Philo's Chapters*, tr. D. Rokeah, Jerusalem, 1976, pp. 51–74 [Hebrew].
- Philo of Alexandria, Caius = Philo of Alexandria *Embassy to Gaius Caligula*, tr. M. A. Gincburg, Warschaw, 1893 [Hebrew].
- Pindar, *The Odes of Pindar including the Principal Fragments*, tr. J. J. Sandys, Cambridge, MA, 1937.
- Plato, 'Minos', in: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9, tr. W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, 1925.
- Plato, *The Laws*, tr. T. L. Pangle, New York, 1980.
- Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, tr. H. Rackham et al., I-X, London 1938–1963.
- Plutarch, 'The Fortune of Rome', in: *Selected Essays and Dialogs*, Oxford, 1993.
- Plutarch, 'On Isis and Osiris', 15–17, in: F. C. Babbitt (ed.), *Plutarch, Moralia*, tr. F. C. Babbitt. Cambridge, MA. London. 1936. 5.
- Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, tr. J. Dryden, New York, 1932.
- Plutarch, *The E at Delphi*, 388F, 389A, in: L. Kadman, *The Coins of Caesarea Marittima*, Jerusalem, 1957, p. 55.
- Polybius, *Histories*, tr. W. R. Patton, Cambridge, MA, Vol. III, 1922–1927.
- Pomponius Mela, *Description of the World*, tr. F. E. Romer, Ann Arbor, 1998.
- Procopius Gazae, *Epistulae et Declamationes*, A. Garzya, R. J. Loenertz (eds.), Rome, 1963:

- 'Declamatio', III, p. 89.
- Pseudo-Scylax, in: Stern, M., *Greek and Roman Authors on Jews and Judaism*, Jerusalem, 1974–1984, Vol. III, pp. 8–12.
- Rougé J. (ed., tr.), *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, Paris, 1966.
- Saewulf = *An Account of the Pilgrimage of Saewulf to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, in the Years 1102 and 1103 from Our Lord's Incarnation*, in: C. Brownlow, *The Library of the Palestine Pilgrims Text Society*. London, 2013 (Original work published 1892).
- Silius Italicus, *Punica*, tr. J. D. Duff, Vols. I-II, London, 1961.
- Shakespeare, 'Romeo and Juliet', Act II, Scene II, in: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, S. -J. Ervine, H. Irving (eds.), London & Glasgow, N.P.Y.
- Sozomene, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, tr. C. D. Hartranft. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 2. P. Schaff and H. Wace (ed.), Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890. Revised and edited for New Advent by K. Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2602.htm>>.
- St. Jerome, *Hilarion*: 'The Life of S. Hilarion', in: *Early Church Fathers: Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, series II, Vol. VI, ed. P. Schaff, tr. M. A. Freeman, W. H. The Hon, New York, 1982, in: [www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06Toc.htm-4k:Nicene & Post Nicene Fathers, series II, Vol. VI](http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06Toc.htm-4k:Nicene%20&%20Post%20Nicene%20Fathers,%20series%20II,%20Vol.%20VI).
- St. Jerome, *Paula: The Pilgrimage of the Holy Paula*, tr. A. Stewart, New York, 1971.
- Stephanus of Byzantium = Stephan von Byzanz, *Ethnika*, ex recensione Augusti Meineke, Graz, 1958.
- Strabo, *Geographicon*, tr. A. Jones and L. Horace, London, 1959.
- Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, tr. A. Thomson, Philadelphia, 1889.
- Suidae Lexicon*, ed. A. Adler, pars III, Stvtgardiae, 1967–1971.
- Tacitus, *The Histories* = Complete Works of Tacitus, vol. III, tr. A. J. Church. W. J. Brodribb. S. Bryant ed. for Perseus. New York, 1873. reprinted 1942.
- Vegetius, *Epitome rei Militaris*, IV.xxxl-xlvi. M. D. Reeve (ed.), Oxford, 2004.
- Virgil, *Eclagues, Georgics, Aeneid*, tr. H. R. Fairclough, Vols. 63 & 64, Cambridge, MA, 1916.
- Xenophon, *Memorabilia* = Xenophon in Seven Volumes. Vol. 4, tr. E. C. Marchant, Cambridge, MA; London. 1923.
- Zuallaert = *Il Devotissimo viaggio di Gerusalemme fatto e descritto in sei libri dal Signor Giovanni Zuallardo, Cavaliere del Santiss.Sepolcro di N.S. l'Anno MDLXXXVI- Aggiuntivi i disegni in Rame di varii Luoghi di Terra S. ed altri Paesi*, Roma, 1595.

B. Modern Studies

- Abel 1922: F. M. Abel, 'Le culte de Jonas en Palastine', *JPOS*, 2, pp. 175–183.
- Alanne 2017: M. Alane, *Tel Dan — Biblical Dan: An Archaeological and Biblical Study of the City of Dan from the Iron Age II to the Hellenistic Period*, Ph. D. Thesis, Helsinki.
- Amar 2004: Z. Amar, 'Ancient Trade in Incense, Perfume and Spices', in: R. Rosenthal-Heginbottom (ed.), *Nabateans in the Negev*, Haifa, pp. 61–66 [Hebrew].
- Artzy 1997: M. Artzy, 'Nomads of the Sea', in: S. Swiny, et al. (eds.), *Res Maritimae: Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean from Prehistory to Late Antiquity*, *AASOR*, pp. 1–12.
- Ashby 1988: G. Ashby, *Sacrifice: It's Nature and Purpose*, London.
- Ashkelon: A Retrospective. 30 Years of the Leon Levy Expedition*, July 11, 2016 - June 30, 2018. Rockefeller Archaeological Museum, Curators: F. Ibrahim, N. Goshen, D. Master.

- Ashkenazi 1991: J. Ashkenazi, 'Paganism in Gaza in the Fifth-Sixth Centuries CE', *Cathedra*, 60, pp. 106–115 [Hebrew].
- Avi-Yonah 1935: M. Avi-Yonah, 'Lead Coffins from Palestine, I', *QDAP*, 4, pp. 94–95.
- Avi-Yonah 1953: M. Avi-Yonah, 'Ascalon, the Port and its Policy in Ancient Times', *Maarachot Yam*, 13, pp. 22–23 [Hebrew].
- Avi-Yonah 1964: M. Avi-Yonah, 'The Madaba Map — Translation and Interpretation', *Eretz Israel* 2, 1959, pp. 129–156 [Hebrew].
- Avi-Yonah 1964: M. Avi-Yonah, 'Haifa and its Immediate Environs During the Second Temple, Mishnah and Talmud Periods', in: M. Avi-Yonah, *Travels and Research in Land of Israel Studies*, Tel Aviv, pp. 315–344 [Hebrew].
- Avi-Yonah 1959: M. Avi-Yonah, 'Syrian Gods at Ptolemais-Akko', *IEJ*, 9, pp. 1–12.
- Avi-Yonah 1969: M. Avi-Yonah, *A History of Classical Art*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Avi-Yonah 1970: M. Avi-Yonah, *In the Days of Rome and Byzantium*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Avi-Yonah 1975: M. Avi-Yonah, 'Coffins from Ascalon', *Qadmoniot*, 7, pp. 106–110 [Hebrew].
- Avi-Yonah 1993: M. Avi-Yonah, 'Beit Govrin', in: E. Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 4 vols. Jerusalem, Vol. 1, pp. 169–170 [Hebrew].
- Avigad 1983: N. Avigad, 'The Ship of Oniyahu — A Hebrew Seal Depicting a Sailing Vessel'. *Qadmoniot*, 16, pp. 124–126 [Hebrew].
- Avitzur 1989: S. Avitzur, 'Jaffa Port', *Etmol*, 14, pp. 11–13 [Hebrew].
- Avner 1990: R. Avner, 'Nakhal Reuel – Ceramic Relief of Tyche', *Khadashot Archaeologist*, 95, p. 77 [Hebrew].
- Avner 1991: R. Avner, *City-Goddesses in the City-Coins of Eretz-Israel and Transjordan*, MA Thesis, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Augé 2000 : C. Augé, 'Les Monnaies Antiques de Gaza', in: J.-B. Humbert (ed.), *Gaza Méditerranée*, Paris, pp. 70–72.
- Babelon 1901–1931: E. Babelon, 'La Crète', in: *Traité des monnaies grecques et romaines*, Bologna, Tome 3, pp. 906–914.
- Babelon 1901–1932: E. Babelon, 'Gaza', in: *Traité des monnaies grecques et romaines*, Bologna, Tome 2, pp. 637–670.
- Balty 1981: J. Ch. Balty, 'Une version orientale méconnue du mythe de Cassiopée', in: *Coll. Intern. CNRS, 593. Mythologie Greco-romaine. Mythologie périphérique*, 1981, pp. 95–106, apud: Daszewski, W. A., 'Cassiopeia in Paphos: A Levantine Going West', in: *Acts of the International Archaeological Symposium, Cyprus between Orient and Occident*, Nicosia, 1986, pp. 454, note 4.
- Barag 1974: D. Barag, 'An Epitaph of the Early Fifth Century A. D. from Raphia Aerea', *IEJ*, 24, pp. 128–131.
- Barag 1996: D. Barag, 'The Legal and Administrative Status of the Port of Sebastos during the Early Roman Period', in: A. Raban, K. Holum (eds.), *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective After Two Millennia*, Leiden, pp. 609–614.
- Barbanera 1992: M. Barbanera, 'Ancora sulla Stele Funeraria di Antipatro di Ascalon: Una Messa a Punto', *Quaderni tipici di numismatica e antichità classica*, Lugano, Vol. XXI.
- Barringer 1995: J. M. Barringer, *Divine Escorts: Nereids in Archaic and Classical Greek Art*, Ann Arbor.
- Baslez 1986: F. -M. Baslez, 'Cultes et dévotions des phéniciens en Grèce: les divinités Marines', *Studia Phoenicia*, IV, pp. 289–306.

- Baumgarten 1981: A. I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos: A Commentary*, Leiden.
- Bauzou 2000: T. Bazou, 'La Gaza Romaine: 69 avant J.-C. - 403 après J.-C.', in: J.-B. Humbert, (ed.), *Gaza Méditerranée*, Paris, pp. 47–50, 54–69.
- Belayche 2001: N. Belayche, *Iudaea-Palaestina: The Pagan Cults in Roman Palestine (Second to Fourth Century)*, Paris.
- Belayche 2017: N. Belayche, 'Cults in contexts in the Hellenistic and Roman Southern Levant: The Challenge of Cult Places', in: O. Tal, Z. Weiss (eds.), *Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period: Manifestations in Text and Material Culture*, Turnhout, pp. 3–22.
- Ben-Shlomo 2010: D. Ben-Shlomo, *Philistine Iconography*, Fribourg.
- Bodenheimer 1956: F. S. Bodenheimer, *Animal Life in Biblical Lands*, Jerusalem, Vol. 2 [Hebrew].
- Bohak 2004: G. Bohak, 'A Jewish Myth in Pagan Magic in Antiquity', in: M. Idel, I. Gruenwald (eds.), *Myths in Judaism: History, Thought, Literature*. Jerusalem, pp. 97–122 [Hebrew].
- Bohstrom 2016: P. Bohstrom, 'Tribe of Dan: Sons of Israel, or of Greek Mercenaries Hired by Egypt?' <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/archaeology/1.756385>, Dec 04, 2016.
- Bolin 1997: T. M. Bolin, *Freedom beyond Forgiveness: The Book of Jonah Re-Examined*, Sheffield.
- Bonimowitz 1999: S. Bonimowitz, 'Lifestyle and Material Culture: Aspects in the Behavior of Aegean Migrants', in: A. Faust, A. Maeir (eds.), *Material Culture, Society and Ideology: New Trends in the Archaeology of the Land of Israel*, Ramat Gan, pp. 146–160 [Hebrew].
- Bonnet 1988: C. Bonnet, *Melqart: cultes et mythes de l'Hercule tyrien en Méditerranée*, Namur-Louvain.
- Bonnet 1990: C. Bonnet, 'Antipatros l'Askalonite dévoré par un lion: Commentaire de CIS, 115', *Semitica*, 38, pp. 39–50.
- Boroli 1975: A & A. Boroli (eds.), *Storia dell'Arte*, Vol. 2, Novara.
- Bourdajewicz 2000: M. Bourdajewicz, 'Gaza pendant les périodes du Bronze moyen et récent et de l'Âge du Fer', in: J.-B. Humbert (ed.), *Gaza Méditerranée*, Paris, pp. 31–39.
- Boussac 2000: A.-M. Boussac, 'Les sceaux', in: Humbert, J.-B., (ed.), *Gaza Méditerranée*, Paris, pp. 118.
- Bowra 1958: C. M. Bowra, *The Greek Experience*, New York.
- Brand 2001: E. Brand, 'Agricultural Evidence in Ashkelon Coast', in: A. Sasson, Z. Safrai, N. Sagiv (eds.), *Ashkelon, a City on the Seashore*, Tel Aviv, pp. 203–212 [Hebrew].
- Braslavski 1955: Y. Braslavski, 'The Earthquake in the Land of Israel in the year 1546', *Yedi 'ot ha-Hevrah la-hakirat Erets-Yisra'el ve-'atikoteha*, vol. 19, pp. 330–335 [Hebrew].
- Braslavy 1970: Y. Braslavy, 'The Nature of the Gaza Strip', in: *Gaza and its Suburbs: Collected Essays*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Bremmer 2000: J. Bremmer, 'Scapegoat Rituals in Ancient Greece', in: R. Buxton (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion*, Oxford, pp. 271–293.
- Brody 1998: A. Brody, 'Each man cried out to his God': *The Specialized Religion of Canaanite and Phoenician Seafarers*, Atlanta.
- Broshi 1979: M. Broshi, 'The Population of Western Palestine in the Roman-Byzantine Period', *BASOR*, 236, pp. 1–10.

- Broshi 1982: M. Broshi, 'The Population of Eretz-Israel in the Roman-Byzantine Period', in: Z. Baras, S. Safrai, Y. Tsafir, M. Stern (eds.), *Eretz Israel from the Destruction of the Second Temple to the Muslim Conquest I: Political, Social and Cultural History*. Jerusalem, pp. 442-455 [Hebrew].
- Broucke 1994: P. B. Broucke, 'Tyche and the Fortune of Cities in the Greek and Roman World', in: S. Matheson, (ed.): *An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in the Greek and Roman Art*, Yale University Art Gallery, pp. 34-49.
- Burke et al. 2017: A. Burke, S. Wachmann, S. Avnaim-Katav, R. Dunn, K. Kowalski, G. Pierce, M. Peilstöcker, 'Jaffa's Ancient Inland Harbor: Historical, Cartographic, and Geomorphological Data', in: A. Burke, K. S. Burke, M. Peilstöcker (eds.), *History and Archaeology of Jaffa 2*, Los Angeles, pp. 89-110.
- Burkert et al. 1987: W. Burkert, R. Girard, J. Z. Smith (eds.), *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, Stanford.
- Cantineau 1938: J. Cantineau, 'Un Poseidon palmyrénien', *Syria*, 19, pp. 78-79.
- Casson 1971: L. Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World*, Princeton.
- Casson 1975: L. Casson, *Ships and Parts of Ships on Ancient Coins*, Haifa [Hebrew].
- Casson 1994: L. Casson, *Ships and Seafaring in Ancient Times*, London.
- Chini 1990: P. Chini, *Vita e costumi dei Romani Antichi: la Religione*, Roma.
- Chambon 2012: A. Chambon, *Gaza From Sand and Sea*, Jerusalem.
- Ciarla 1986: R. Ciarla, 'Le vie delle spezie', in: A. Liberati (ed.), *Le Vie Mercantili tra Mediterraneo e Orient enl Mondo Aantico, Catalogo della mostra*, Roma, pp. 159-167.
- Clermont-Ganneau 1885: C. Clermont-Ganneau, *Rapports sur une mission en Palastine et en Phenicie enterprise en 1881*, Paris.
- Condor 1882: C. R. Conder, 'The Prayer of Ben Abdas in the Dedication of the Temple of Jappa', *PEFQS*, vol. 24, pp. 171-174, in: S. Tolkovsky, *History of Jaffa*, Jerusalem, 2001, pp. 31-32 [Hebrew].
- Cook 1930: S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology*, London.
- Cook 1964: A. B. Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*, New York, Vols. I-III.
- Cotovico 1619: Joanne Cotovico, *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum et Syriacum*, Aantverpiae MDCXIX, Liber II, cap. I, p. 133, in: S. Tolkovsky, *History of Jaffa*, Jerusalem, 2001, p. 110 [Hebrew].
- Crooke 1637: A. Crooke, *A Relation of a Journey begun Anno Domini 1610*, London, p. 153, in: S. Tolkovsky, *History of Jaffa*, Jerusalem, 2001, p. 111 [Hebrew].
- Cross 1964: F. M. Cross, 'An Ostracon from Nebi-Yunis', *IEJ*, 14, pp. 185-186.
- Cumont 1959: F. Cumont, *After Life in Roman Paganism*, New York.
- Dan 1982: Y. Dan, 'The Foreign Trade of Palestine in the Byzantine Period', *Cathedra*, 23, pp. 17-24 [Hebrew].
- Dan 1986: Y. Dan, 'Eretz Israel in the Fifth-Sixth Centuries CE', in: Z. Baras, S. Safrai, Y. Tsafir, M. Stern (eds.) Jerusalem, vol. 2, pp. 256-299, [Hebrew].
- Daremberg & Saglio 1962-1968: C. Daremberg, E. Saglio, *Dictionnaire Des Antiquites Grecques et Romaines*, Graz.
- Daszewski 1986: W. A. Daszewski, 'Cassiopeia in Paphos: A Levantine Going West', in: *Acts of the International Archaeological Symposium, Cyprus between Orient and Occident*, Nicosia, pp. 454-470.
- Day 1984: L. P. Day, 'Dog Burials in the Greek World', *AJA*, 88, pp. 21-69.
- Declodet 1914: R. P. Declodet, 'Plombs du Musée Biblique se Saint-Anne d Jerusalem', *RN*, pp. 442-445.

- De Romanis 1996: F. de Romanis, F., *Cassia, Cinnamomo, Ossidiana*, Roma.
- De Romilly 1977: J. de Romilly, *The Rise and Falls of States According to Greek Authors*, Ann Arbor.
- De Vaux 1938: R. de Vaux, 'Une mosaïque byzantine à Ma'in (Transjordanie)', *RB*, 47, pp. 227–258.
- Di-Segni 1990: L. Di-Segni, 'Ashkelon Inscriptions', in: N. Arbel (ed.), *Ashkelon: 4000 and 40 More Years*, Vol. 1, pp. 67–90 [Hebrew].
- Dussaud 1912: R. Dussaud, *Les monuments palestiniens et judaïques*, Paris.
- Dvorjetski 1993: E. Dvorjetski, 'Tzrifa in Ascalon' — A Talmudic Reality in the Art of Fine Metal Work in Eretz-Israel in the Roman and Byzantine Periods', *Tarbiz*, LXIII, pp. 27–40 [Hebrew].
- Dvorjetski 2001a: E. Dvorjetski, 'The Maioumas Festivals at Ascalon during the Roman-Byzantine Period: 'What was perpetrated by the coastal cities was not perpetrated by the generation of the Flood', in: A. Sasson, Z. Safrai, N. Sagiv (eds.), *Ashkelon, a City on the Seashore*, Tel Aviv, pp. 99–118 [Hebrew].
- Dvorjetski 2001: E. Dvorjetski, 'The Economy Activity and Special Agricultural Products of Ashkelon from the Hellenistic to the Byzantine Periods', in: A. Sasson, Z. Safrai, N. Sagiv (eds.), *Ashkelon, a City on the Seashore*, Tel Aviv, pp. 119–134 [Hebrew].
- Decloedt 1914: R.P. Decloedt, 'Plombs du Musée Biblique de Saint-Anne de Jerusalem', *RN*, 18, pp. 442–445.
- Delavault & Lemaire 1976: B. Delavault, A. Lemaire, 'Une stèle 'molk' de Palastine dédiée à Eshmun? Res 367 reconsideré', *RB*, 83, pp. 568–583.
- Dothan 1972: M. Dothan, 'Ashdod — Seven Seasons of Excavation', *Qadmoniot*, 5, 2–13 [Hebrew].
- Drijvers 1980: H. J. W. Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, Leiden.
- Ecker 2017: A. Ecker, 'People and Gods in the Cities of Roman Palestine, A Preliminary Inquiry into the Popularity of Civic Cults', in: O. Tal, Z. Weiss (eds.), in: *Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period: Manifestations in Text and Material Culture*, Turnhout, pp. 61–67.
- Edelstein 1975: E & L. Edelstein, *Asklepios: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*, New York.
- Edrey 2008: M. Edrey, 'The dog burials at Achmenid Ashkelon revisited', *Tel Aviv*, 35, pp. 267–282.
- Eph'al 1978: I. Eph'al, 'The Western Minorities in Babylonia in the 6th-5th centuries B.C.: Maintenance and Cohesion', *Orientalia*, 47, pp. 74–90.
- Efron 1988: J. Efron, 'The Deed of of Simon son of Shatakh in Ascalon', in: A. Kasher, *Canaan, Philistia, Greece and Israel: Relations of the Jews in Eretz Israel with the Hellenistic Cities (332 BCE-70 CE)*, Jerusalem, pp. 298–324 [Hebrew].
- Ephroni 1993: H. Ephroni, *The Location of Open Air Urban Landscape Sculpture in the Coastal Cities and Interior Cities of the Land of Israel in Roman Times*, MA Thesis, Haifa [Hebrew].
- Evans 1964: A. Evans, *The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos*. New York.
- Fabri 1893: F. Fabri, *The Book of Wanderings of Brother Felix Fabri* (ca. 1480 – 1483 A.D.), PPTS, London, p. 238, in: S. Tolkovsky, *History of Jaffa*, Jerusalem, 2001, p. 107 [Hebrew].

- Faerman & Bar Gal 1998: M. Faerman, G. Kahila Bar Gal, 'Determining the Sex of Infanticide Victims from the Late Roman Era through Ancient DNA Analysis', *JAS*, 25, pp. 861–865.
- Fantar 1977: M. Fantar, *Le dieu de la mer chez les pheniciens et les puniques*, Roma.
- Farhi 2013: Y. Farhi, *The Coinage of Gaza in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, Ph. D. Thesis, Jerusalem.
- Farhi 2017: Y. Farhi, 'Heroes and Deities on the Coins of Gaza Under Roman Rule', in: O. Tal, Z. Weiss (eds.), *Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period: Manifestations in Text and Material Culture*, Turnhout, pp. 221–229.
- Feldman et al. 2019: M. Feldman et al. 'Ancient DNA sheds light on the genetic origins of early Iron Age Philistines', *Science Advances*, Vol. 5, no. 7, 03 Jul eaax0061 2019.
- Fighelli 2000: N. Fighelli, *Aquileia*, Trieste.
- Finkelstein & Zilberman 2003: Y. Finkelstein, G. A. Zilberman, *The Beginnings of Israel: Archaeology, Bible, and Historical Memory*, Tel Aviv [Hebrew].
- Finkielsztejn 1986: G. Finkielsztejn, G., 'Asklepios Leontouchos et le mythe de la coupe de Césarée Maritime', *RB*, 93, pp. 419–428.
- Finkielsztejn 1992: G. Finkielsztejn, G., 'Phanébal, Déesse d'Ascalon', *Studia Phoenicia*, IX, pp. 51–58.
- Fischer et al. 1995: M. Fischer, A. Krug, Z. Pearl, 'The Basilica of Ascalon: Marble, Imperial Art and Architecture in Roman Palestine', in: *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research (JRA Supplementary Series, 14)* Ann Arbor, pp. 121–149.
- Flusser 1969: D. Flusser, 'Gods, Humans, and Sea Monsters', *Sfunim*, 3, pp. 20–27 [Hebrew].
- Flusser 1972–1975: D. Flusser, 'Isis, Mistress of the Seas', *Sfunim*, 4, pp. 8–12 [Hebrew].
- Frazer 1963: J. F. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, New York.
- Friedheim 1995: E. Friedheim, *The Pagan Cults in Roman Palestine*, MA Thesis, Ramat-Gan [Hebrew].
- Friedheim 2000: E. Friedheim, *Paganism and Pagan Rites in the Talmudic Literature: Historical Aspects*, Ph. D. Thesis, Ramat Gan [Hebrew].
- Friedheim 2001: E. Friedheim, 'The Pagan Cults of Ascalon during the Roman Period', in: A. Sasson, Z. Safrai, N. Sagiv (eds.), *Ashkelon, a City on the Seashore*, Tel Aviv, pp. 147–174 [Hebrew].
- Friedheim 2006: E. Friedheim, 'The Roman Bathhouse in the Land of Israel: Research Dilemmas on its Definition as a Sacred Institution', *Cathedra*, 119, pp. 173–180 [Hebrew].
- Friedman 2003: Z. Friedman, *Ship Iconography in Mosaics: An Aid to Understanding Ancient Ships and their Construction*, Ph. D. Thesis, Haifa.
- Fulvi 1957: M. Fulvi, 'Contratti con la Divinità nella vita dei traffici marittimi nel mondo ellenistico', in: R. Corso, C. Del Prato (eds.), *Etnografia e folklore del mare*, Napoli, pp. 525–531.
- Fuks 2001: G. Fuks, *An Ancient City: Ashkelon in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Galil 2001: G. Galil, *Israel and Assyria*, Haifa, Tel Aviv [Hebrew].
- Galili & Sharvit 2001: E. Galili, Y. Sharvit, 'Symbolic engravings on Byzantine sounding leads from the Carmel coast of Israel', *IJNA*, 29/1, pp. 143–150.

- Galili, Sharvit & Dahari 2001: U. Galili, J. Sharvit, U. Dahari, 'Ashqelon and the Sea in Light of the Underwater and Coastal Archaeology Findings', in: A. Sasson, Z. Safrai, N. Sagiv (eds.), *Ashkelon, a City on the Seashore*, Tel Aviv, pp. 11–38 [Hebrew].
- Garstang 1924: J. Garstang, 'Ascalon, Roman Period', *PFQS* pp. 25–30.
- Gatt 1884: G. Gatt, 'Bemrken uber Gaza und seine Umgebung', *ZDPV*, VII, pp. 1–14.
- Geffgken 1978: J. Geffgken, *The Last Days of Greco-Roman Paganism*, Amsterdam.
- Geiger 1989: Y. Geiger, 'Local Patriotism in the Greek Cities of the Land of Israel', in: A. Kasher, G. Fuks, U. Rappaport (eds.), *Greece and Rome in the Land of Israel: Collected Studies*, Jerusalem, pp. 261–269 [Hebrew].
- Gersht, 1982: R. Gersht, *Roman Sculpture in the Land of Israel*, Ph. D. Thesis, Tel Aviv [Hebrew].
- Gersht 1987: R. Gersht, *Caesarean Sculpture*, MA Thesis, Tel Aviv [Hebrew].
- Ginzberg 1966: L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, Tel Aviv [Hebrew].
- Giroud 2000: P. Giroud, 'Gaza à l'époque Perse', in: J.-B. Humbert (ed.), *Gaza Méditerranée*, Paris, pp. 40–46.
- Gitin 1988: S. Gitin, 'Philistia in Transition: The Tenth Century BCE and Beyond', in: Gitin et al. (eds.), *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries BCE*, Jerusalem, pp. 162–183.
- Glucker 1987: C. A.M. Glucker, *The City of Gaza in the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, Oxford.
- Glueck 1937: N. Glueck, 'The Nabatean Temple of Khirbet et-Tanur', *BASOR*, 67, pp. 6–16.
- Glueck 1965: N. Glueck, *Deities and Dolphins*, New York.
- Gophna & Liphchshitz 2001: R. Gophna, N. Liphchshitz, 'Ashqelon Through the Settlements in the Early Bronze Age 1: New Evidence on Maritime Trade', in: A. Sasson, Z. Safrai, N. Sagiv (eds.), *Ashkelon, a City on the Seashore*, Tel Aviv, pp. 57–68 [Hebrew].
- Goodnik Westenholtz 2004: J. Godnik Westenholtz (ed.), *Dragons, Monsters and Wondrous Creatures*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Grant 1967: M. Grant, *The Roman World*, tr.M. Wieseltir, Tel Aviv [Hebrew].
- Guérin 1882: V. Guérin, *Description géographique, historique et archéologique de la Palestine*, Paris, 1868, tr. C. Ben Amram, Vol. 2 [Hebrew].
- Guthe 1879: H. Guthe, 'Bericht uber die Statue von Gaza', *ZDPV*, II, pp. 183–187, und Tafle VI.
- Gutman 1958: Y. Gutman, *The Jewish Hellenistic Literature*, vol. I
- Haddad & Avissar 2003: E. Haddad, M. Avissar, 'A Suggested Reconstruction of One of the Merchant Ships on the Mosaic floor in Lod (Lydda) Israel', *IJNA*, 32/1, pp. 73–77.
- Haldimann 2007: Haldimann M.-A. et al., *Gaza à la croisée des civilisations, context archéologique et historique: Catalogue of Gaza Archaeological Exhibition*. Musée d'art et d'histoire de Geneve 27/04/07–07/10/07.
- Hanauer 1903: J. E. Hanauer, 'The Traditional 'Harbour of Salomon' and the Crusading Castle of Jaffa', *PEFQst.* 35, pp. 258–264, 355–356.
- Harrison 2012: T. Harrison, 'Crossroads of Civilization; Archaeological Explorations in the Amuq Plain. The Tayinat Archaeological Project: Temples, Palaces and Tablets', in: *The Amuq plain and the 'Land Of Palastine'*, Irene Levi-Sala Annual Research Seminar, 29 March 2012, Ben Gurion University.
- Hartum 1954: A. S. Hartum, 'Gad', in: M. D. Cassuto (ed.), *Biblical Encyclopedia*, Jerusalem, Vol. 2 [Hebrew].
- Hasselquist 1756: F. Hasselquist, *Voyage and Travels in the Levant in the Years 1749, 1750, 51, 52*. London, p. 118, in: S. Tolkovsky, *History of Jaffa*, Jerusalem 2000, p. 115 [Hebrew].

- Hawkins 2009: J. Hawkins, 'Cilicia, Amuq and Aleppo: New Light in a Dark Age', *NEA*, Vol. 72, 4, pp. 164–173.
- Head 1911: B. M. Head, *Historia Numorum: A Manual of Greek Numismatics*, Oxford, in: A. Kasher, *Canaan, Philistia, Greece and Israel*, Jerusalem 1985, p. 41 [Hebrew].
- Healey 2000: J. F. Healey, *The Religion of the Nabateans*, Leiden.
- Hill 1964: G. F. Hill, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum — Lycia, Pamphylia, and Pisidia*, Bologna.
- Hill 1965: G. F. Hill, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum — Palestine*, Bologna.
- Hill 1965 a: G. F. Hill, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum — Phoenicia*, Bologna.
- Hill 1911–1912: G. F. Hill, 'Some Palestinian Cults in the Greco-Roman Age', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. V, pp. 411–427.
- Hirschfeld 1990: Y. Hirschfeld, 'A Bustling Trade City', in: N. Arbel (ed.), *Ashkelon: 4000 and 40 More Years*, Ashkelon, Vol. 1, pp. 138–165 [Hebrew].
- Hitchcock 2018: L. Hitchcock, 'All the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites' (Samuel 2:15–18) — An up-to-date account of the Minoan connection with the Philistines', *Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Cretan Studies*, 21–27 October 2011, Rethymnon, Crete.
- Humbert 2000: J.-B. Humbert, 'Les Activités portuaires de Gaza', in: Humbert, J.-B., (ed.), *Gaza Méditerranée*, Paris, pp. 24–25.
- Humbert et al. 2000: J.-B. Humbert et al., 'Mukheitim à Jabaliyah, un site byzantin', in: J.-B. Humbert (ed.), *Gaza Méditerranée*, Paris, pp. 121–126.
- Humbert & Sadeq 2000: J.-B. Humbert, M. Sadeq, 'Fouilles de Blakhiya - Anthédon', in: J.-B. Humbert (ed.), *Gaza Méditerranée*, Paris, pp. 105–107, 116–120.
- Idel 2004: M. Idel, 'Leviathan and it's Consort: From Talmudic to Kabbalistic Myth', in: M. Idel, I. Gruenwald (eds.), *Myths in Judaism: History, Thought, Literature*. Jerusalem, pp. 145–186 [Hebrew].
- Ilan 1999: D. Ilan, 'Village Archaeology: Tel Dan in the Bronze A Period', in: A. Faust, A. Maeir (eds.), *Material Culture, Society and Ideology: New Trends in the Archaeology of the Land of Israel*, Ramat Gan, pp. 51–60 [Hebrew].
- Ilan 2001: T. Ilan, 'A Witch Hunting in Ashkelon', in: A. Sasson, Z. Safrai, N. Sagiv (eds.), *Ashkelon, a City on the Seashore*, Tel Aviv, pp. 135–146 [Hebrew].
- Ilan 2016: D. Ilan, in: P. Bohstrom, 'Tribe of Dan: Sons of Israel, or of Greek Mercenaries Hired by Egypt?', Dec. 4, 2016. <https://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/MAGAZINE-tribe-of-dan-sons-of-israel-or>
- Illiffe 1933: J.H. Illiffe, 'A Copy of the Couching Aphrodite', *QDAP*, 2, pp. 110–112.
- Illiffe 1933a: J.H. Illiffe, 'A Hoard of Bronzes from Askalon', *QDAP*, 2, pp. 11–14.
- Illiffe 1934: J.H. Illiffe, 'A Bust of Pan', *QDAP*, 3, pp. 165–166.
- Janni 1996: P. Janni, *Il Mare degli Antichi*, Bari.
- Jenkins 1966: K. Jenkins, *Coins of Greek Sicily*, London.
- Jones 1980: A. H. M. Jones, 'The Hellenistic Period', in: B. Bar-Kochva (ed.), *The Seleucid Period in Eretz Israel*, Tel Aviv, pp. 19–36 [Hebrew].
- Kadman 1961: L. Kadman, *Corpus Nummorum Palaestinensium*, Vol. III: *The Coins of Akko Ptolemais*, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv.

- Kadari 2016: T. Kadari, 'Aggadic Motifs in the Story of Jonah: A Study of Interaction between Religions', in: A. Houtman et al. (eds.), *Religious Stories in Transformation: Conflict, Revision and Reception*, Leiden, pp. 107–125.
- Kaplan 1959: J. Kaplan, *The Archaeology and History of Tel Aviv-Jaffa from Ancient Times to the Arab Period*, Tel Aviv [Hebrew].
- Kaplan 1981: J. Kaplan, 'Finds from the Days of Trajan in the Excavations of Jaffa', *Eretz-Israel*, 15, pp. 412–414 [Hebrew].
- Kaplan 1992: J. Kaplan, 'Jaffa', in: E. Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 4 vols. Jerusalem, Vol. I, pp. 586–592 [Hebrew].
- Karafiotias 2002: A. Karafiotias, 'Hellenistic Crete and Mercenaries: The Dynamics of the Island between 225 and 215 B.C.', *Cretan Studies*, 7, pp. 111–124.
- Kasher 1980: A. Kasher, 'Outlines in the History of Hellenistic and Roman Gaza', *Cathedra*, XV, pp. 21–36 [Hebrew].
- Kasher 1988: A. Kasher, *Canaan, Philistia, Greece and Israel: Relations of the Jews in Eretz Israel with the Hellenistic Cities (332 BCE-70 CE)*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Keel & Uehlinger 1998: O. Keel, C. Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God in Ancient Israel*, tr. T. H. Trapp, Edinburgh.
- Kempinski 1987: A. Kempinski, 'Some Philistine Names from the Kingdom of Gaza', *IEJ*, 37, pp. 20–24.
- Kennedy 1983: G. A. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, Princeton.
- Kershaw 1986: S. P. Kershaw, *Personification in the Hellenistic World*, Ph. D. thesis, Bristol.
- Kindler 1985–1986: A. Kindler, 'The coins of Jaffa', *Israel Am Ve'erez*, 2–3, 1985–1986, pp. 22–39 [Hebrew].
- Krug 1995: A. Krug, 'Excursus: A Priest of Serapis at Ascalon?', supplement to M. Fischer, 'The Basilica of Ascalon: Marble, Imperial Art Architecture in Roman Palestine', in: J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research (JRA Supplementary Series, 14)*, Ann Arbor, pp. 135–138.
- Kurt 1995: A. Kurt, *The Ancient Near East*, London, Vols. I-II.
- Larousse 1971: *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, introd. R. Graves, London.
- Lawrence 1962: M. Lawrence, 'Ships, Monsters and Jonah', *AJA*, 66, pp. 289–296.
- Le Blanc 2010: *The Roma Bouleuterion and Odeon at Ashkelon*, MA Thesis, Chapel Hill, NC.
- Le Brun 1714: C. Le Brun, *Voyage au Levant*, Amsterdam, Vol. 1, p. 144, in: S. Tolkovsky, *History of Jaffa*, Jerusalem, 2001, p. 113 [Hebrew].
- Le Rider 1966: G. Le Rider, *Monnaies Crétoises du V-I Siècle av. J.-C.*, Paris.
- Levine 1982: L. I. Levine, 'The Age of Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi', in: Z. Baras, S. Safrai, Y. Tsafir and M. Stern (eds.), *Eretz Israel from the Destruction of the Second Temple to the Muslim Conquest*, Jerusalem, Vol. 1, pp. 94–118 [Hebrew].
- Liberati 1986: Liberati, *Le vie Mercantili tra Mediterraneo e Orient enl Mondo Aantico, Catalogo della mostra*, Roma.
- Liberati 2003: A. Liberati, 'L'ingegneria Navale', *Roma Archaeologica*, 18–19, pp. 112–121.
- Liberman 1991: S. Liberman, *Greek and Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Liddell & Scott 1985: H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, founded upon the seventh edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford.
- Lifshiz 1976: B. Lifshiz, 'Bleigewichte aus Palaistina und Syrien', *ZDPV*, 92, pp. 168–187.
- Lipinski 1992: E. Lipinski (directeur), *Dictionnaire de la civilisation phénicienne et punique*, Brepols.

- Lipinski 1995: E. Lipinski, 'Dieux et déesses de l'univers Phénicien et Punique', *Studia Phoenicia*, XIV.
- Liverani 2002: M. Liverani, *L'antico vicino oriente*, Bari.
- Lo Cascio 2001: E. Lo Cascio, (ed.), *Roma Imperiale*, Roma.
- Luce 1922: S. B. Luce, 'Herakles and the Old Man of the Sea', *AJA*, 26, pp. 174–196.
- Luckenbill 1968: D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, Vol. I, New York.
- Ludwig Salvator, Archduke of Austria 1881: Ludwig Salvator, Archduke of Austria, *The Caravan Route between Egypt and Syria*, London, 1881.
- Luz 1998: M. Luz, 'Dionysos: Myth and Ritual in Sources from the Archaic Period', in: R. Rosenthal-Hegginbottom (ed.), *Dionysos and his Retinue in the Art of Eretz Israel*, Haifa, pp. 52–56.
- Maeir 2005: A. Maeir, 'Philistine Cults: New Aspects and Trends from the Excavations in Tel es-Safi/Gath'. Lecture delivered at the 31st Archaeological Congress in Israel, University of Tel Aviv, April 20–21, 2005. [Hebrew].
- Magness 2018: J. Magness et al., 'The Huqoq Excavation Project: 2014–2017 Interim Report', *BASOR*, 380, pp. 61–131.
- Majcherek 1995: G. Majcherek, 'Gaza Amporae: Typology Reconsidered', in: H. Meyza, J. Mlynarczyk (eds.), *Hellenistic and Roman Pottery in the Eastern Mediterranean: Advances in Scientific Studies*, Warsaw, pp. 163–179.
- Margovsky 1971: Y. Margovsky, 'Three Temples in Northern Sinai', *Qadmoniot*, 4, pp. 18–21 [Hebrew].
- Marinatos 1993: N. Marinatos, *Minoan Religion: Ritual, Image, and Symbol*, Columbia, S.C.
- Mazzarino 2002: S. Mazzarino, *L'Impero romano*, Vols. 1–2. Bari.
- Meshorer 1961: Y. Meshorer, 'Maritime Themes on coins', *Yediot Numismatit LeIsrael*, 1, 6–7, pp. 21–23 [Hebrew].
- Meshorer 1976: Y. Meshorer, 'Monnaies de Raphia', *RN* 18, pp. 57–68.
- Meshorer 1978: Y. Meshorer, 'The coins of Sepphoris as a historical source', *Zion*, 43, pp. 185–200 [Hebrew].
- Meshorer 1984: Y. Meshorer, *The Coins of the Cities in Israel and Transjordan During the Roman Period*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Meyboon 1995: P. G. P. Meyboon, *The Nile Mosaic at Palestrina: Early Evidence of Egyptian Religion in Italy*, Leiden.
- Meyer 1966: M. Meyer, *History of the City of Gaza from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, New York.
- Michaeli 2001: T. Michaeli, 'Painted Tombs in Ascalon,' in: A. Sasson, Z. Safrai, N. Sagiv (eds.), *Ashkelon, a City on the Seashore*, Tel Aviv, pp. 175–202 [Hebrew].
- Millar 1993: F. Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 B.C. - A.D. 337*, Cambridge, MA.
- Mir & Calvano 2000: J.M. Mir, C. Calvano, *Nuovo Vocabolario della Lingua Latina*, Milano.
- Morris 1995: S. P. Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, Princeton.
- Moscatti 1997: S. Moscatti, 'Le Stele', in: S. Moscatti, *I Fenici*, Milano, pp. 364–379.
- Mussies 1990: G. Mussies, 'Marnas, God of Gaza', *ANRW*, II, 18, 4, pp. 2413–2457.
- Myller 1729: P.A. M. Myller, *Peregrinus in Jerusalem, Fremdling in Jerusalem*, Prague, Vol. I, pp. 181–182, in: S. Tolkovsky, *History of Jaffa*, Jerusalem, 2001, pp. 113–114 [Hebrew].
- Nave 1973: J. Nave, 'Pkhlatz' in a New Aramaic Ostrakon', *Leshonenu*, 37.4, pp. 270–274 [Hebrew].
- Nave 1985: J. Nave, 'Writing and Scripts in Seventh-Century BCE Philistia: The New Evidence from Tell Jemmeh', *IEJ*, 35, pp. 11–15, 20–21.

- Ne'eman 1989: N. Ne'eman, 'Demographical Changes in the Land of Israel in the Wake of the Assyrian Expulsions', *Cathedra*, 54, pp. 43–62 [Hebrew].
- New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, intr. R. Graves, London, 1971.
- Nilson 1940: M. P. Nilson, *Greek Popular Religion*, p. 79, apud: Willetts, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, London, 1962, p. 259.
- Nilsson 1971: M. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion*, New York.
- Notley 2011: S. Notley, 'Greco-Roman Jaffa and Its Historical Background', in: M. Peilstöcker and A. Burke (eds.), *The History and Archaeology of Jaffa 1*, Los Angeles, pp. 95–108.
- Oates 1986: J. Oates, *Babylon*, London.
- Oden 1976: R. Oden, 'The Persistence of the Canaanite Religion', *BA*, 39, pp. 31–36.
- Oked 2001: S. Oked, 'Gaza Jar', a Chronicle and Economic Overview', in: A. Sasson. Z. Safrai, N. Sagiv (eds.), *Ashkelon, a City on the Seashore*, Tel Aviv, pp. 227–250 [Hebrew].
- Oren 1992: A. Oren, 'Northern Sinai', in: E. Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 4 vols. Jerusalem, Vol. 3, pp. 1006–1112 [Hebrew].
- Ovadiah 1969: A. Ovadiah, 'The Synagogue at Gaza', *Qadmoniot*, 4, pp. 124–127 [Hebrew].
- Ovadiah 1992: A. Ovadia, 'Gaza', in: E. Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 4 vols. Jerusalem, Vol. 3, pp. 1161–1165 [Hebrew].
- Ovadiah 1992: A. Ovadia, S. Mucznik, C. Gomez-de Silva, 'A New Look at the Mosaic Floor from Sheikh Zuweid in the Ismailiya Museum', *Qadmoniot*, 24, pp. 122–125 [Hebrew].
- Ovadiah 1974: R. Ovadiah, 'Jonah in a Mosaic Pavement at Beth Guvrin', *IEJ*, 24, pp. 214–215.
- Parisinou 2000: E. Parisinou, *The Light of the Gods: The Role of Light in Archaic and Classical Greek Cult*, London.
- Patch 1976: H. Patch, *The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna*, Paris.
- Pestalozza 1951: U. Pestalozza, 'Thetide da pie d'argento', in: *Religione Mediterranea*, Milano, pp. 93–126.
- Petinatto 1975: G. Petinatto, 'I Rapporti politici di Tiro con l'Assiiria alla luce del "Trattato tra Asahaddon e Baal"', *Rivista di Studi Fenici e Punici*, III, pp. 145–160.
- Philips 1968: K. M. Philips, 'Perseus and Andromeda', *AJA*, 72, pp. 1–23.
- Pomey et al. 1997: P. Pomey et al., *La Navigation dans l'Antiquité*, Aix-en-Provence.
- Price & Trell 1977: M. Price and B. Trell, *Coins and their Cities: Architecture on the Ancient Coins of Greece, Rome and Palestine*, London.
- Pritchard 1954: J. B. Pritchard, (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton.
- Ra'anana 1990: B. Ra'anana (ed.), *Ashdod - Geography, History, Nature, Walking Trails: Collected Essays*, Ashdod [Hebrew].
- Rabinowitz 1949: A. Rabinowitz, 'Chorichius of Gaza on Palesine', in: M. Schwabe, J. Guttman (eds.), *Commentationes Iudaico - Hellenisticae: In Memoriam Iohannis Lewy*, pp. 173–178 [Hebrew].
- Raban 1994: A. Raban, 'The Ancient Ports of Jaffa', *Israel Am Ve'erez*, 7–8, pp. 95–114 [Hebrew].
- Radan 1990: G. Radan, 'The Commercial and Strategic Importance of Jaffa, 66–69 CE', *Zmanim*, 33–34, pp. 127–131 [Hebrew].

- Rappaport 1978: U. Rappaport, 'Ascalon and the Coinage of Judaea', in: *Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel*, IV, pp. 78–88 [Hebrew].
- Rappaport 1990: U. Rappaport, 'The Hasmonaean State', in: M. Stern (ed.), *The History of Eretz Israel*, vol. 3, pp. 191–273 [Hebrew].
- Ray-Conquais 1974: J. -P. Ray-Coquais, *Arados et sa parée aux époques grecque, romaine et Byzantine*, Paris, p. 235, apud: W. A. Daszewski, 'Cassiopeia in Paphos: A Levantine Going West', in: *Acts of the International Archaeological Symposium, Cyprus between Orient and Occident*, Nicosia, 1986, p. 465.
- Recio 2000: M. R. Recio, *Cultos Marítimos y Religiosidad de Navigantes en Mundo Griego Antiguo*, Oxford.
- Reddé 1986: M. Reddé, *Mare Nostrum. Les infrastructures, le dispositif et l'histoire de la marine militaire sous l'empire romain*, Rome.
- Reiner 1961: E. Reiner, 'The Etiological Myth of the 'Seven Sages'', *Orientalia*, 30, pp. I-II.
- Ribichini 1997: S. Ribichini, 'Le credenze e la vita religiosa', in: S. Moscati, (ed.), *I Fenici*, Milano, pp. 120–152.
- Ringel 1984: Y. Ringel, *Maritime Themes on Ancient Coins in the National Maritime Museum in Haifa*, Haifa [Hebrew].
- Ritter Kaplan 1982: H. Ritter Kaplan, 'The Ties between Sidonian Jaffa and Greece in the Light of the Excavations', *Qadmoniot*, 15, pp. 64–68 [Hebrew].
- Rodan 1999: S. Rodan, *The Maritime Tyche Fortuna: The Goddess of Fortune and the City in the Coastal Cities of the Land of Israel*, MA Thesis, Haifa [Hebrew].
- Röhricht 1901: R. Von Röhricht, *Die Jerusalemfahrt des Herzogs Heinrich des Frommen von Sachsen (1498)*, ZDPV, 24, pp. 8–9, in: S. Tolkovsky, *History of Jaffa*, Jerusalem, 2001, pp. 107–108 [Hebrew].
- Rolle & Ayalon 1989: Y. Rolle, A. Ayalon, *Apollonia and Southern Sharon*, Tel Aviv [Hebrew].
- Ronzevalle 1932: S. Ronzevalle, 'Notes et études d'archéologie orientale — Helioseiros', *MUSJ*, 16, pp. 3–22.
- Rosenberger 1972–1977: M. Rosenberger, M., *City Coins of Palestine*, Jerusalem, 3 vols.
- Rosenfeld 1990: B. Z. Rosenfeld, 'Ashkelon from Second Temple Times until the Byzantine Period', in: N. Arbel (ed.), *Ashkelon: 4000 and 40 More Years*, Ashkelon, Vol. 1, pp. 91–123 [Hebrew].
- Rougé 1966: J. Rougé, *Recherches sur l'organisation du Commerce maritime en Méditerranée sous l'Empire romain*, Paris.
- Rougé 1981: J. Rougé, *Ships and Fleets of the Ancient Mediterranean*, tr. from the French by S. Frazer, Middletown, CT.
- Rougé 1996: J. Rougé, *La navigazione Antica*, tr. A. Marazzi, Roma.
- Rubin 1982: Z. Rubin, 'The Spread of Christianity in Palestine', in: Z. Baras, S. Safrai, Y. Tsafir, M. Stern (eds.), *Eretz Israel from the Destruction of the Second Temple to the Muslim Conquest*, Jerusalem, Vol. 1, pp. 236–251 [Hebrew].
- Rubin 1998: Z. Rubin, 'Porphyrius of Gaza and the Conflict between Christianity and Paganism in Southern Palestine', in: A. Kofski, G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Sharing the Sacred. Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land*, Jerusalem, pp. 31–66.
- Ruggiero 1997: I. Ruggiero, *Vita e costumi dei romani antichi: luoghi di culto*, Roma.
- Sache 2000: I. Sache, 'La Céramique Fine de Gaza; Une fenêtre Ouverte sur les voies commerciales', in: J.-B. Humbert (ed.), *Gaza Méditerranée*, Paris, pp. 51–53.
- Sadeq 2015: M. Sadeq, 'Christian Topography of Byzantine Gaza', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 5, no. 12, 2015, pp. 47–59.

- Safrai 1980: Z. Safrai, 'The Process of Urbanization in the Land of Israel in the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Periods', *Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel*, pp. 205–129 [Hebrew].
- Safrai 1984: Z. Safrai, 'Fairs in the Land of Israel in the Mishna and Talmud Period', *Zion*, 49, pp. 139–158 [Hebrew].
- Saliou 2000: K. Saliou, 'Gaza de 407 a 637', in: J.-B. Humbert (ed.), *Gaza Méditerranée*, Paris, pp. 72–75, 77.
- Sas 1991: M. Sas, *The Battle over the Seas: History of Sea Power*, Tel Aviv, [Hebrew].
- Saulcy 1874: F. de Saulcy, *Numismatique de la Terre Sainte: Description des monnaies autonomes et imperiales de la Palestine*, Paris, pp. 176–177, Pl. IX, pp. 46–47, in: S. Tolkovsky, *History of Jaffa*, Jerusalem, 2001, p. 47 [Hebrew].
- Schiller 1981: A. Schiller, 'The Port of Jaffa: First Encounter by Pilgrims with the Holy Land', *Kardum*, 15, pp. 14–20 [Hebrew].
- Schloen 1998: D. Schloen, 'Recent Discoveries at Ashkelon', *Oriental Institute News and Notes*, No. 145, 1995. Revised May 1998. <http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/PROJ/ASH/NN> 1996.
- Schussman 1994: A. Schussman, 'Allegorical, theological and controversial features in the commentary on the Book of Jonah of Rabbi Tanchum Yerushalmi', *Peamim*, 59, pp. 85–104 [Hebrew].
- Schwabe 1954: M. Schwabe, 'Documents of a Journey through Palestine in the Years 317–323 C.E.', *Eretz Israel*, 3, pp. 181–185 [Hebrew].
- Segal 1999: A. Segal, *The History and Architecture of the Theaters in Roman Palestine*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Semple 1927: E. Semple, 'The Temple Promontories on the Ancient Mediterranean', *Geographical Review*, XVII/3, pp. 354–380.
- Sevilla-Sadeh 2011: N. N. Sevilla-Sadeh, 'Telete and Eros: Meaning and Sources of the Mythological Scenes in the Mosaics from Sheikh Zouede', in: H. Taragan & N. Gal (eds), *The Beauty of Japhet in the Tents of Shem, Studies in honor of Mordechai Omer, Assaph, Studies in Art History*. Vol. 13–14, pp. 159–172.
- Seyrig 1970: H. Seyrig, 'Les Dieux armés et les arabes en Syrie', *Syria*, 47, pp. 77–112.
- Shalit 1978: A. Shalit, *King Herod: Portrait of a Ruler*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Sharvit 2002: J. Sharvit, 'The Port of Jaffa: Underwater Studies', *Archaeology News*, 114, p. 61 [Hebrew].
- Shenhav 1997: E. Shenhav, 'The Maioumas Cult in Light of the Excavations at Shuni', in: E. Regev (ed.), *New Studies on the Coastal Plain*, Ramat Gan, pp. 56–70 [Hebrew].
- Shenkar 2009: M. Shenkar, 'Phanebalos and the Evidence for the Cult of Goddess Tanit in Eretz-Israel', in: J. Geiger, H. Cotton, G. D. Stiebe (eds.), *Israel's Land: Papers Presented to Israel Shatzman on his Jubilee*. Ra'anana, pp. 229–249 [Hebrew].
- Shorrock 2001: R. Shorrock, *The Challenge of Epic: Allusive Engagement in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus*, Leiden.
- Simon 1983: U. Simon, 'The Book of Jonah: Structure and Meaning,' in: Y. Zakowitz, A. Rofe, *Isaac Seligman Book*, 2, Jerusalem, pp. 291–318 [Hebrew].
- Singer 1989: 'Toward an Image of Dagon, the God of the Philistines', *Cathedra*, Vol. 54, 1989, pp. 17–42 [Hebrew].
- Slouschz 1938: N. Slouschz, 'The Sea of Jaffa', *Davar*, 23/2/1938, [Hebrew].
- Slouschz 1942: N. Slouschz, *Collection of Phoenician Inscriptions*, Tel Aviv [Hebrew].

- Smith 1994: A. C. Smith, 'Queens and Empresses as Goddesses: The Public Role of Personal Tyche in the Graeco-Roman World', in: S. Matheson, (ed.), *An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art*, pp. 86–105.
- Snowden 1970: F. M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience*, Cambridge, Mass.
- Sonin 2000: O. Sonin, *Fishing in the Roman Period and Fishing in Israel Today*, MA Thesis, Haifa [Hebrew].
- Sourdel 1952: D. Sourdel, *Les cultes du Hauran à l'époque romaine*, Paris.
- Sourvinou-inwoos 2000: C. Sourvinou-inwoos, 'What is Polis Religion?', in: R. Buxton (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion*, Oxford, pp. 13–37.
- Sperber 1986: D. Sperber, *Nautica Talmudica*, Ramat-Gan.
- Stager 1990: L. Stager, 'Ashkelon Excavations', in: N. Arbel (ed.), *Ashkelon: 4000 and 40 More Years*, Ashkelon, Vol. 1, pp. 60–66 [Hebrew].
- Stager 1990a: L. Stager, 'In the Wake of the Philistines', in N. Arbel (ed.), *Ashkelon: 4000 and 40 More Years*, Ashkelon, Vol. 1, pp. 47–59 [Hebrew].
- Stager 1991: L. Stager, 'Eroticism And Infanticide at Ashkelon', *BAR*, 17/4, pp. 35–53, 73–72.
- Stager 1991a: L. Stager, 'Why Were Hundreds of Dogs Buried at Ashkelon?', *BAR*, 17/3, pp. 27–42.
- Stager 1992: L. Stager, 'Ashkelon', in: E. Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 4 vols. Jerusalem, Vol. 1, pp. 98–108 [Hebrew].
- Stager et al. 2008: L. Stager, J. D. Schlögl, D. M. Master (eds.), *Ashkelon 1: Introduction and Overview*, Winona lake, 2008.
- Stern 1973: E. Stern, *The Material Culture of the Land of Israel in the Persian Period, 538–333 BCE*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Stern 1977: H. Stern, *Les mosaïques des maisons d'Achille et de Cassiopee a Palmyre*, apud: W. A. Daszewski, 'Cassiopeia in Paphos: A Levantine Going West', in: Acts of the International Archaeological Symposium, *Cyprus between Orient and Occident*, Nicosia, 1986, pp. 454, note 3.
- Stern 1988: E. Stern, 'Relations Between The Sea Peoples and The Phoenicians in the Twelfth and Eleventh Centuries BCE', in: Gitin et al. (eds.), *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Century BCE*, Jerusalem, pp. 345–352.
- Stern 1992: E. Stern, *Dor Rules the Seas*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Stern 1974–1984: M. Stern, *Greek and Roman Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols, Jerusalem.
- Stern 1988: M. Stern, 'The relations between Hasmonean Kingdom and Ptolemaic Egypt in View of the International Situation during the Second and First Centuries B.C.E.', *Zion*, 50, 1985, pp. 81–106 [Hebrew].
- Stern 1990: M. Stern, 'The Land of Israel in Hellenistic Times (332–160 BCE)', in: M. Stern (ed.), *The History of Eretz Israel*, Jerusalem, Vol. 3, pp. 9–190 [Hebrew].
- Stern 1995: M. Stern, *Hasmonean Judaea in the Hellenistic World: chapters in Political History*, Jerusalem, pp. 81–106 [Hebrew].
- Stern & Tadmor 1990: E. Stern, H. Tadmor, 'Persian Rule (538–333 BCE)', in I. Eph'al (ed.), *The History of the Land of Israel*, Jerusalem, Vol. 2, pp. 227–307 [Hebrew].
- Stewart 1990: A. F. Stewart, *Greek Sculpture: An Exploration*. Yale University Press.
- Suhr 1960: E. G. Suhr, 'Spinning Aphrodite in the Minor Arts', *AJA*, 61/1, pp. 63–69.
- Suhr 1963: E. G. Suhr, 'Spinning Aphrodite in Sculpture', *AJA*, 64/3, pp. 253–264.

- Talgam 1998: R. Talgam, 'Dionysus in the Mosaics of Eretz-Israel', in: B. Rosenthal-Heginbottom (ed.), *Dionysus and his Retinue in the Art of Eretz Israel*, Haifa, pp. 28–32.
- Talgam 2009: 'The Ekphrasis of the Water-Clock and Measuring of Time in Sixth Century Gaza', in: L. Di Segni et al. (eds.), *Man Near a Roman Arch, Studies presented to Prof. Yoram Tsafrir*, Jerusalem, pp. 105–120 [Hebrew].
- Tammuz 1986: A. Tammuz, *The Sea as an Economic Factor: Aspects of Sea Links of the Eastern Mediterranean Coastal Dwellers from the Amarna Period until the Decline of the Assyrian Empire*, MA Thesis, Tel Aviv [Hebrew].
- Taylor 1976: I. R. Taylor, *The Cults of Ostia*, Chicago.
- Taylor 1792: 'Hymn to Pan', in: *The Hymns of Orpheus* tr. T. Taylor, https://www.google.co.il/?gws_rd=cr&ei=iZTUqbNYjrswbNt4Ew#q=Taylor+1962:+The+Hymns+of+Orpheus
- Teixidor 1977: J. Teixidor, *The Pagan God*, Princeton.
- Thye 1995: B. M. Thye, *The Ship as a Symbol in Prehistoric and Medieval Scandinavia*, Copenhagen.
- Tolkovsky 2001: S. Tolkovsky, *History of Jaffa*, Jerusalem [Hebrew].
- Trell 1982–1983: B. Trell, 'Phoenician Greek Imperial Coins', *INJ*, 6–7, pp. 128–137.
- Turcan 1996: R. Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*, Oxford.
- Uehlinger 2002: C. Uehlinger, 'Hanun von Gaza und seine Gottheiten auf Orthostatenreliefs Tiglatpilesers III.', in: U. Hübner, E.A. Knauf (Hg.), *Kein Land für sich allein. Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/ Palästina und Ebirnâri für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag* (OBO 186), Freiburg Schweiz & Göttingen, pp. 94–127.
- Ustinova 1998: Y. Ustinova, 'The Dionysiac Mysteries in the Graeco-Roman World', in: R. Rosenthal-Heginbottom (ed.), *Dionysos and His Retinue in the Art of Eretz Israel*, Haifa, pp. 46–51.
- Van Dam 1995: R. Van Dam, 'From Paganism to Christianity at Late Antique Gaza', *Viator*, 16, pp. 1–20.
- Vargon 1990: S. Vargon, 'Ashkelon in Biblical Times', in: N. Arbel (ed.), *Ashkelon: 4000 and 40 More Years*, Ashkelon, Vol. 1, pp. 25–46 [Hebrew].
- Vasilakis 2000: A. Vasilakis, *The 147 Cities of Ancient Crete*, Heraklion.
- Vermule & Anderson 1981: C. Vermule, K. Anderson, 'Greek and Roman Sculpture in the Holy Land', *The Burlington Magazine*, 123, pp. 7–19.
- Vishnia 1994: R. Vishnia, 'Cicero, The Republic, 2.5–9: On the Disadvantages of a Maritime City', *MHR* 9, pp. 128–137.
- Wace et al. 1979: A. J. B. Wace, *Excavations at Mycenae 1939–1955*, Oxford.
- Watts 1953: A. W. Watts, *Myth and Ritual in Christianity*, London.
- Weiss, E. & Kislev 2001: E. Weiss, R. Kislev, 'The Economic Activity of Iron Age Ashkelon – Plant remains as Indicators', in: A. Sasson, Z. Safrai, N. Sagiv (eds.), *Ashkelon, a City on the Seashore*, Ashkelon, pp. 75–88 [Hebrew].
- Weiss, E. 2005: E. Weiss, 'From Grains of Wheat to Macro-Economics: Judaea, Philistia, and the Economic System of the Ancient East in the 6th Century BCE'. Lecture delivered at the 31st Archaeological Congress in Israel, University of Tel Aviv, April 20–21, 2005 [Hebrew].
- Weiss, Z. 2017: Z. Weiss, 'Cult and Culture: Amusing the Crouds under the Auspices of Gods and Caesars', in: O. Tal, Z. Weiss (eds.), *Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period: Manifestations in Text and Material Culture*, Turnhout, pp. 23–36.

- Welles 1938: C. B. Welles, 'The Inscriptions in Gerasa', in: C. H. Kraeling (ed.), *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis*, New Haven, pp. 470–471, no. 279.
- Will 1987: E. Will, 'Le Tour de Straton: Mythes et Realités', *Syria*, LXIV, pp. 245–251.
- Willetts 1962: R. F. Willetts, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, London.
- Willetts 1965: R. F. Willetts, *Ancient Crete: A Social History*, London.
- Willetts 2013: R. F. Willetts, *Ancient Crete: A Social History from Early Times until the Roman Occupation*, London; New York.
- Wroth 1963: W. Wroth, *Greek Coins of Crete and the Aegean Islands*, Bologna, pp. 70–72, Pl. 7–8.
- Yadin 1965: Y. Yadin, 'And Dan, Why Do You Dwell in Ships', in: *Western Galilee and the Coast of Galilee*, pp. 42–55 [Hebrew].
- Yahav 1992: D. Yahav, 'One Settlement or Many? On Rafia, Rafah, Rafiah, Hatzetim, Hatzerot, and Hatzor, Etc.' *Moreshet Derekh*, 41, pp. 12–14 [Hebrew].
- Yashin 2007: C. Yashin, *From Ascalon to Raphia city-coins of the Southern Palestinian coast*, Jerusalem.
- Yon 1986: M. Yon, 'Cultes Phéniciens à Chypre: l'interprétation chypriote', *Studia Phoenicia*, IV, pp. 127–152.
- Zadok 1978: R. Zadok, 'Phoenicians, Philistines, and Moabites in Mesopotamia', *BASOR*, pp. 57–65, 230.
- Ze'evi 1985: R. Ze'evi (ed.), *Jaffa: Tides of Times*, Tel Aviv [Hebrew].
- Ziffer, Kletter 2007: I. Ziffer, R. Kletter, *In the Field of the Philistines*, Tel Aviv, 2007.
- Zingarelli 1973: N. Zingarelli, *Dictionario della Lingua Italiana*, Bologna.
- Zoran 1998: G. Zoran, 'Dionysos and the Dionysian Rite in the Platonic Dialogues', in: R. Rosenthal-Heginbottom (ed.), *Dionysos and His Retinue in the Art of Eretz Isael*, Haifa, pp. 57–65.

Abbreviations

AASOR	Annual of the American School of Oriental Research
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BAR	Biblical Archaeology Review
BASOR	Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research
CIS	Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum
CNRS	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
IG	Inscriptiones Graecae
IJNA	International Journal of Nautical Archaeology
INJ	Israel Numismatic Journal
JAS	Journal of Archaeological Science
JPOS	Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society
JRA	Journal of Roman Archaeology
MUSJ	Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph
NEA	Near Eastern Archaeology
PEFQst	Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement
QDAP	Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine
RB	Revue Biblique
RN	Revue numismatique
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins

Maritime-Related Cults in the Coastal Cities of Philistia during the Roman Period questions the origins and the traditions of the cultic rites practised during Roman times along the southern shores of the Land of Israel. This area was known since biblical times as 'Peleshet' (Philistia), after the name of one of the Sea Peoples that had settled there at the beginning of the Iron Age. Philistia's important cities Jaffa, Ashkelon, Gaza and Rafiah were culturally and religiously integrated into the Graeco-Roman world. At the same time, each city developed its own original and unique group of myths and cults that had their roots in earlier periods. Their emergence and formation were influenced by environmental conditions as well as by ethno-social structures and political circumstances. Philistia's port cities served as crossroads for the routes connecting the main centres of culture and commerce in ancient times. Most of their cults were closely associated with the sea, and reflect the existential dependency of the inhabitants on the sea that supplied them with sustenance and livelihood and was regarded as a divine beneficent power. The myths also echo the lives of the sailors, their beliefs and fears derived from encountering the dangers of the sea: storms, floods, reefs and giant fish portrayed as monsters. The population of the cities was of mixed and varied ethnic and cultural origins. This was the result of the waves of conquests and migrations over the ages, yet each city was noted for its unique ethnic components. The book also deals with the political circumstances, which had a decisive impact on the formation of religious life and cultic rites in all four cities. It sheds new light to the understanding of the events and historical processes in the region.

Simona Rodan is a historian whose field of research are the beliefs, customs and cultic practices in the ancient Mediterranean world, and their reflection in literature and art from the ancient period to the modern times. She holds a PhD in Maritime Civilizations from the University of Haifa. Rodan is the author of *The Goddess of Luck, the City and the Sea: The Cult of Tyche and Fortuna in the Coastal Cities of Eretz Israel* (2014) (in Hebrew) and *Aegean Mercenaries in Light of the Bible: Clash of Cultures in the Story of David and Goliath* (2015).

ARCHAEOPRESS www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-78969-256-3



9 781789 692563 >