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Aspects of Music Culture in the Land of Israel during the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods: Sepphoris as a Case Study[1]

The Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods in the Land of Israel are defined, for the purpose of this study, from the last third of the fourth century BCE to the first half of the seventh century CE. This period is noted by significant historical and cultural changes that brought to the region a thousand years of Hellenistic culture, manifested in language, art, music, cult and thought. Yet, despite and alongside the changes, a continuum is noted, especially pertaining to the earlier Eastern or local traditions.

One of the basic assumptions of this study is that the Land of Israel during this time offers an opportunity to examine the development of music culture in a region that was inhabited by people of various ethnoi. Utilizing an innovative multidisciplinary field involving archaeology, ethnology and musicology, use is made of tools, theories and methodologies from these respective fields in an attempt to gain further information and a better understanding of the music culture in the Land of Israel. Based on the abundance of music-related artifacts found, this paper examines aspects of religious/ethnic identity of the multifaceted population, using Sepphoris — the capital city and cultural center in the Galilee during the Roman and Byzantine periods — as a case study.

Examination of the issue of distinction versus syncretism among the inhabitants of this city, reveals that the music-related material finds and their context demonstrate the existence of some religious distinction, yet they also imply that despite this distinction, the various communities living in Sepphoris during this time, found the syncretic setting of the Hellenistic culture a fertile ground and a catalyst for constructive symbiosis.

Since the basic and most essential aspect of ancient music, namely sound, did not survive, research in the field of music culture tends to concentrate on material finds related to musical instruments, their iconographic descriptions and their context. These are often complemented by historical research that is based on literary sources, and together with the archaeological objects provide a more comprehensive picture of the music culture that existed during the period.

1 This paper is based on a chapter in my Ph.D. dissertation, supervised by Prof. Amos Kloner and assisted by Prof. Joachim Braun. I thank them both for their dedicated assistance.

Since music has always constituted an integral part of culture, an analysis of the finds casts light not only upon the daily use of music, but also on the religious life, norms and values that existed at the time, and hence, on culture as a whole. Therefore, an understanding of the music culture contributes to a more comprehensive reconstruction of the cultural history of the period.

Research in ethnomusicology assumes that in order to examine the music culture of a region, it is necessary to consider the entire range of social groups who inhabit (or inhabited) it, and their interrelations. Material finds, being a primary source for the study of the ethnic affiliation of musical instruments and events, constitute an invaluable tool in this field. In theory, then, by mapping the regional (or ethnic) distribution of music-related finds, it may be possible to discern various aspects of musical styles, based on religious/ethnic variations. Combining methods of ethnomusicology and archaeology, we examine the issue of syncretism versus ethnic/religious distinction among the inhabitants of the Land of Israel during the periods under discussion.

A corpus of some 820 music-related archaeological finds, catalogued according to criteria that best enable to draw information pertaining to music culture is the basis of this research. The finds were then examined for local and foreign elements and for the cultural ideas shaping their design. The assumption was that the polymorphous culture and multiethnic configuration of the local society were absorbed and etched into the musical life of the inhabitants of the land, leaving their mark on its material culture.

All regions of the country are represented in the corpus of finds. It appears that while local elements are characteristic of areas known to have been populated by a specific ethnoi, namely Jewish, Samaritan, Idomean or Nabataean, this was not the case in Greek cities and coastal towns, with their dominant pagan component. Furthermore, it seems that artifacts depicting music ensembles present a varied combination of instruments ranging from foreign or imported to local/Eastern ones, and from instruments reflecting syncretic tendencies to those that are ethnically or religiously distinct.

Roman and Byzantine Sepphoris was at this time a vibrant political, religious and cultural center, which flourished like many other cities of the Eastern Roman Empire (Nagy et al. 1996; Weiss and Netzer 1998; Meyers 1999; Talgam and Weiss 2004; Weiss 2005a). Sepphoris provides us with extensive literary sources, as well as many archaeological remains, including an abundance of music-related finds. Thus, it presents an opportunity to study how people of different religions and cultures coexisted in an urban environment. The challenge then is to offer a different perspective for examining the religion, ethnicity and identity of the city's population. Can we gain insight into the issue of distinction versus syncre-

tism among ethnic/religious groups living in this city by examining their music culture?

At the outset, we must ask who the city's inhabitants were at this time. During the Roman and Byzantine periods, the Galilee was home to Jews, Christians and elements of the Graeco-Roman pagan society of the East, as well as indigenous Near Eastern groups who frequently made their way into the Galilee either as itinerants or as residents (Gafni 1996: 51–57). Like most of the Galilean population, which was predominantly Jewish in the third to fifth century CE, Sepphoris witnessed the gradual growth of Christianity, particularly in the fifth century.[2] Although Josephus [*BJ* 2.510–512, 3.2–934] emphasizes its pro-Roman sentiment, the city appears to have been a center of Jewish cultural activity (Safrai and Stern 1976: 410–412), which despite its Hellenistic appearance was regarded as a Jewish city with Jewish presence that prevailed even after the Gallus Revolt and the 363 CE earthquake (Miller 1996a: 21–24).

An intriguing picture of the culture and population of Sepphoris was revealed in recent years. Inter alia, Jewish ritual baths (Eshel 2002; Meyers 2002; Chancey 2002: 69–83), seven branched candelabras engraved on vessels, various inscriptions and the impressive remains of a synagogue, attest to Sepphoris being a flourishing Jewish city. This is supported by both Jewish and non-Jewish literary sources, according to which the city served as an administrative, religious and cultural center for Jews of both Israel and the Diaspora throughout much of this period (Miller 1996b). At the same time, finds have also shown the Christian tradition to have been most firmly implanted here, while other material culture evidence conveys a picture of a Hellenistic-Roman culture, and seems to point to a city with decidedly pagan characteristics (Weiss and Netzer 1998: 10).

Sepphoris in the Roman and Byzantine periods, aside from its Jewish ritual buildings, did not differ much architecturally from the pagan cities of the region. It does not seem to exhibit any clear division into respective neighborhoods or quarters based on economic and social status or even on religious affiliation (Weiss and Netzer 1998: 10). A varied wealth of mosaics was found here, many of which depict musical instruments and/or musical events. Their importance lies in the fact that they provide a glimpse of this multifaceted world, and present a clearer picture of the nature of Hellenism in one of the most prominent hubs of Jewish settlement at this time (Balty 1981: 347–429; Ovadiah and Ovadiah 1987).

2 Remains of the two churches found at the site, which date to this time, serve as evidence. Jews who lived in the two major cities, Sepphoris and Tiberias, were constantly in contact with the Hellenistic-Roman manifestations of pagan culture and later with Christian practices and beliefs. Hence, the cultural influences that shaped their lives differed from those affecting the population of smaller Galilean villages.

It is reasonable to assume that the music culture of Sepphoris was determined by the lifestyles of its inhabitants. An examination of the archaeological remains pertaining to music may assist in sketching a portrait of the city's music culture, and thereby add to our understanding of the city's ethnicity (Table 1). The following artifacts were recovered in Sepphoris:

1. A small bronze bell (4.3 cm high and 3 cm in diameter) found without its iron clapper (Fig. 1). The shape resembles that of modern church bells, with a flaring and slightly thickened rim. Two groups of lines are incised on the bell, and its top is designed with two round protuberances at the joining point with the perforated handle.
2. A simple bell (4.9 cm high and 3.4 cm in diameter), conical in shape and widening toward the rim (Fig. 2). Its body and handle represent a single-cast unit. The clapper is missing.
3. A small semispherical/copula-shaped bell with a clapper (Fig. 3), in the synagogue mosaic, depicts one of the apotropaic bells that were sewn into the robe of the High Priest, representing one of the golden bells that ornamented Aaron's tunic.[3]
4. Two pairs of forked cymbals decorating the tip of an oil lamp (Fig. 4). They are of the crotale/slap-type cymbals.
5. A large pair of cymbals (Heb. *tsiltsalim*) linked by a chain (Fig. 5) supports a wicker basket filled with fruit; depicted in the synagogue mosaic floor.

6–10. Five double auloi (Figs. 6–10), that are part of the depiction on the Dionysian mosaic floor of a triclinium. The five wind instruments are similar to one another, and are presented as straight double auloi/double tibia with long pipes.

11. A bronze figurine of Pan or of a satyr holding a syrinx (Fig. 11), of which three to five pipes are visible. The seated figure seems to be absorbed in his music.
12. A large syrinx (Fig. 12) depicted in a medallion on a mosaic floor; it has 11 pipes and represents the right-angled form of the syrinx.[4]

3 As described in Exodus 28:31–35: "And you shall make a robe…a golden bell and a pomegranate…upon the hem of the robe round about. Aaron shall wear it when he ministers, and its sound shall be heard, so that he may not die."

4 Haas (1985) refers to this type of syrinx as the "trapezoidal bastard AB form."

Figs. 1–17: Photography by Mira Waner. All artifacts recovered in Sepphoris

Fig. 1: A small bronze bell.

Fig. 2: A simple bell.

Fig. 3: Synagogue floor mosaic depicting a small semispherical/copula-shaped bell.

Fig. 4: Oil lamp.

Fig. 5: Synagogue floor mosaic depicting a large pair of cymbals.

Fig. 6: Triclinium floor mosaic depicting double auloi.

Fig. 7: Triclinium floor mosaic depicting double auloi.

Fig. 8: Triclinium floor mosaic depicting double auloi.

Fig. 9: Triclinium floor mosaic depicting double auloi.

Fig. 10: Triclinium floor mosaic depicting double auloi and tympanum.

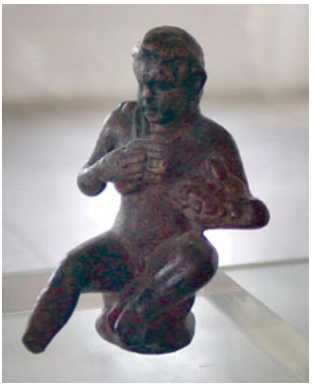

Fig 11: A bronze figurine of Pan or of a satyr holding a syrinx.

Fig 12: A large syrinx depicted in a medallion on a mosaic floor.

Fig 13: Synagogue floor mosaic depicting two slightly curved horns.

Fig 14: Panels depicting shofarot.

Fig 15: Engraving on a copper seal depicting a shofar, menorah, mahta, lulav and an etrog.

Fig 16: A three-stringed lyre depicted on a mosaic.

Fig 17: A seven-stringed, square-shaped lyre depicted on a mosaic.

13. Two slightly curved horns (Fig. 13), accompanied by a Hebrew inscription reading "חצוצרת" (*hatsotsrot*) in the synagogue mosaic floor. They widen gently toward the end and are depicted with rings.
14. Two *shofarot* (ram's horns) (Fig. 14) appearing to the right of two *menorot* 'seven-branched candelabra'; each decorated with three colored rings. In the left panel, the *shofar*'s mouthpiece faces the *menorah*, while in the right panel it faces away from it.
15. A *shofar* (Fig. 15) appearing as part of the engraving on a copper seal, in proximity to a *menorah*, a *mahta* 'incense shovel', a *lulav* 'date palm frond' and an *etrog* 'citron', henceforth referred to as the "symbolic grouping."
16. A *shofar* depicted on a clay oil lamp near a *menorah* and a *lulav*.

17. A tympanum (Fig. 10) appearing in the Dionysian floor, being played by a maenad. It is a single-headed frame, struck drum, hand-beaten with the fingers or knuckles.
18. A three-stringed symmetrical lyre (Fig. 16) with a rounded base.
19. A seven-stringed, square-shaped lyre (Fig. 17) held to the left of a seated player (Orpheus). It has no resonator and resembles a Roman cithara. Wavy lines above the crossbar and beneath the bottom frame indicate the loose ends of the strings. Many organological details are missing.

Among these 19 music-related artifacts there are 11 aerophones (5 auloi, 2 syrinxes and 4 horns), 5 idiophones (3 bells and 2 cymbals), 2 chordophones, and a membranophone. Eight of these items are from the Roman period, nine from the Byzantine period, and one is of uncertain date. Of these artifacts only two (bells) are actual instruments; the rest are depictions — most are on mosaics, but there is also a cymbal inscribed on an oil lamp, a *shofar* on a copper seal and one on an oil lamp, and a syrinx that is part of a bronze figurine.

Aerophones are clearly the most frequently represented instruments (comprising more than half [58%] of the finds), followed by idiophones (26.3%), while chordophones and membranophones are significantly less common. However, it is important to bear in mind that the five auloi, accounting for over a quarter of the finds, are all from a single mosaic. Eight musical instruments are depicted in Greek mythological scenes and seven are placed within a Jewish setting. For the two bells found in the city's water system, and for the cymbals engraved on the oil lamp, we have no direct ethnic or religious association. We also lack information about the provenance of the oil lamp and the copper seal, both bearing Jewish symbols.[5]

Discussion

A brief analysis of the cultural context of these instruments is necessary in order to understand the respective cults and religious beliefs of the inhabitants. As will become apparent, the music-related artifacts discovered in the city indi-

5 The discovery of an item found in the city's decumanus during the excavations of The Hebrew University expedition in the summer of 2005, was reported by Weiss 2005b. A small box (incense burner?) carved in limestone bears decorations of various images, among which is a satyr playing a musical instrument and a dancing maenad. There is no description of the instrument, yet mention is made of a bull/ram depicted on another side of the box in a context indicative of the Christian rendering of the sacrifice of Isaac.

cate first and foremost that they were familiar with both Greek mythology and Jewish ritual. We assume that the relatively large number of musical instruments depicted in the city's mosaics, serves as evidence of their importance in the life and culture of the population. It is notable that instruments of all four basic types are represented in Sepphoris.[6]

The next step is an attempt to relate the instruments to the settings in which they appear:

Bells

Hundreds of bells dating to the Roman and Byzantine periods were discovered in Israel (Waner 2007a: 35). Their large number in tombs demonstrates a cultic connotation and attests to their apotropaic and prophylactic purpose (Avenary 1956: 2, 21–31; Schatkin 1978; Waner 2007b: 436). They were also worn as amulets, and used in connection with the Dionysian cult (Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 4.2.273; Ovadiah et al, 1991). A decorative and communicative secular use is also attested. The bells found in Sepphoris do not enable us to draw any definite conclusions regarding the religious affiliation of the people who used them. They do not seem to be associated with dancing or with the Dionysian cult. On the other hand, an apotropaic bell — depicted on the hem of the High Priest's robe — does have an ethnic connotation, as this tradition is attested in the Bible, and appears also during the Roman period (Seyrig 1939; Braun 2002: 201).[7]

Cymbals

Bronze or copper cymbals appear frequently during the Roman period in Israel as instruments associated either with cult or with artistic musical performances of the established religions (Waner 2007a: 40–43). In the Graeco-Roman culture they were associated with orgiastic religious rites in the worship of Dionysos and of Cybele (Blades and Holland 2011), where they were often beaten to induce ecstasy together with the tympanum and the aulos. In addition to their use in religious and secular life, cymbals have been accredited with remarkable powers. Their appearance in Sepphoris, both as decorations engraved on a clay lamp and as "wheels" on the basket of first fruits, is of course not within their usual musical

6 This refers to von Hornbostel and Sachs's (1961) classification system.

7 In a Jerusalem grave, small bells were found with scraps of material still attached to them, which could be remnants of a hem (IAA34.3137).

context and thus limits our comments regarding the ethnic or religious affiliation of these particular instruments.

Double Aulos (Gk)/Tibia (Lt)

The aulos occupied an important place in Greek civilization. Its use is documented over some ten centuries and its existence is attested in much earlier iconographic records (Bélis 2011: vol. 2: 178–184). Auloi of different quality and workmanship were found in a variety of settings, including private homes and graves (Waner 2007b: 437–439). The musicians who played them were as varied as the instruments — some were high ranking professional virtuosos, while others were semi-professional folk musicians (Braun 2002: 226–227). The aulos was a common instrument in ancient Israel, together with its derivative type, the Phrygian aulos. Female musicians (*aulterides/tibicinae*) — sometimes excellent players and commonly known as "women of easy virtue" — were hired to enliven banquets and all-male parties.

Very popular in scenes from the life and cult of Dionysos, the auloi appear in Sepphoris precisely in this setting. They are depicted in a drinking contest, a triumphal procession (Πομπη), a presentation of gifts (Δωροφοροι), a procession following a symposium (Κώμος), known as a festivity in honor of Dionysos (Talgam and Weiss 2004: 69), accompanied by the Dionysian entourage, instrumental music, song and assorted dancing (DeMarini 1961: 382–384), and in a scene which is probably an offering procession, though with no identifiable mythological precedent.

Dionysian mysteries are known to have been conducted or performed in the private residences of affluent people in big cities. It is difficult to determine the ethnic background of the initial owner of the house in which the mosaic was found (Weiss 2001: 15–26), but an important observation made by Braun, is that the Dionysian iconography in both the triumphal procession and the presumed sacrificial procession appears to have acquired discernible Judaeo-Christian elements such as the halo around the head of Dionysos, the ass and rider, and the cock offering (Braun 2002: 267). It was rather common for artists in the Syro-Palestinian borderland to mix pagan, Jewish and Christian elements in their iconography, as for example is seen in the Dura-Europus synagogue with its David-as-Orpheus mural and Dionysian elements (Ovadiah 1968; Narkiss 1987). This supports Goodenough's proposal that although the three main population groups in Roman Palestine all drew from a common inventory of symbols, they interpreted them differently (Goodenough 1964: vol. 10: 207–208). It seems that the city's various population segments lived and worked here side by side. This plu-

ralistic blend was complemented by the various groups of pagans who thrived in Sepphoris throughout late antiquity, though the remains of their material culture are probably the hardest to discern (Meyers 1996: 150).

An interesting comparison can be drawn between this Dionysian mosaic and the one found in Sheikh Zouède probably dating a century and a half later.[8] It is important to note that while the Sheikh Zouède scenes evoke an orgiastic pagan atmosphere (enhanced, for example, by the use of a rich variety of regional instruments including idiophones and a Phrygian aulos), those in Sepphoris are considerably calmer and more pastoral (using the classical double aulos and a very limited range of instruments). Although both mosaics emanate from the Dionysian cult, they present different social, intellectual, spiritual and perhaps even musical worlds. Braun has suggested that they may be used to indicate — or at least to symbolize — the splitting point of the Eastern and Western music, with the Sheikh Zouède mosaic representing the beginning of Eastern music and the Sepphoris mosaic representing the beginning of Western music in this region (Kondoleon 1995; Braun 1999: 186; Freyne 2004).

Syrinx

Known also as a pan pipe, since it is an attribute of the pastoral Graeco-Roman deity Pan, this instrument has a Mediterranean or oriental origin and is attested some five centuries before its first known appearance in ancient Israel. It became an established symbol on city coins, in terracotta figurines and on mosaics. There is no evidence of this instrument here before the middle of the second century CE, when an altar to Dionysos with a syrinx as the deity's symbol was erected in Scythopolis, a center of Dionysian worship in the region (Foerster and Tsafrir 1987–1988).

The syrinx is another aerophone relating to the Dionysian cult, and supports a banqueting context in a private home in Sepphoris. Bronze statuettes depicting divinities or mythological figures were common domestic items throughout the Roman Empire. They represent either cultic objects from a household shrine

8 Although the Sheikh Zouède mosaic has been dated by Ovadiah et al. (1991) to the fourth or fifth century, organologically it is dated to the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century. The Dionysian musical features of this mosaic seem to have no known precursor, and the portrayal of the musical instruments should not be considered as archaic stylization, but rather as an accurate rendering of the musical praxis in Roman Palestine in the first to third century (see Braun 2002: 261–262).

or decorative attachments, often from furniture, and thus devoid of explicit religious significance.

In the Roman period, the individual deity Pan had become conflated with the satyrs constituting the retinue of the wine god Bacchus (the Greek Dionysos). Satyr figures therefore symbolized conviviality and were often featured in banqueting contexts as attachments to banqueting vessels or furniture.

The syrinx depicted on the mosaic floor of a public building in the center of Sepphoris may be understood as being loosely associated with this pagan cult, and probably had the same cultural context as the bronze figurine.

Horns/Hatsotsrot (Hebrew)

Referred to as an "elite" instrument, the trumpet descends from the animal horn and borrows its name for the horn's shape (Braun 1997). It appears rarely, and in ancient Egypt shows clear cultic and/or military affiliation (Hickmann 1961: 74; Rashid 1984: 143). In Israel, despite its significance in the Bible and in the Dead Sea Scrolls [1QM II, 15 and VII, 9] the trumpet appears only in the third–second century BCE on a wall painting in Maresha (Kloner and Braun 2000), possibly associated with hunting, and resembling the Roman tuba.

In Sepphoris, two *hatsotsrot* are depicted in the fifth-century synagogue mosaic and hence, in a specifically Jewish context. Although the archaeologists who first described the mosaic referred to them as trumpets (Weiss and Netzer 1998: 20–21 n. 35),[9] organologically they should not be interpreted as such (Sachs 1940: 120). They were described as "slightly curved tubes that widen gently at one end, decorated with two rings set at regular intervals." Braun claims that trumpets of this period were always straight or — in the case of metal horns — remarkably curved, and that they were clearly wider at the bell, and were never decorated, although metal rings were sometimes used for reinforcement (Braun 2002: 208–209). Therefore, it does not seem plausible that the instruments depicted here are accurate rendering of those described in the Old Testament. A possible explanation is that the artist, who was unfamiliar with those trumpets, simply drew horns and took (or rather mistook) them to be the temple trumpets.

Four points are worth mentioning in this regard: (1) the horns do, in fact, differ significantly from the *shofarot* depicted in band 2 of the mosaic, with regard to their curvature; (2) Braun's argument that trumpets of this period were always either straight or remarkably curved overlooks the fact that the representation

9 In Weiss (2005a: 82) the description is of an elongated, slightly convex shaft, widening at one end, with rings set at fixed intervals.

here was not intended to be true to the period in which the mosaic was made; (3) although we are unacquainted with an animal whose horns resemble those depicted here, it is noteworthy that the depiction is very similar to the one in the "Aaron panel" of the Dura-Europos synagogue (Yarden 1991: 117, Fig. III.31); and (4) it is well known that the term "trumpet" was often confused with a single horn or a single pipe, some ending with a very slightly flared bell (Bélis 2011, §2: Description: M. Sheq. 6: 5).[10]

Shofar/Ram's Horn

A sound tool associated with ritual, the *shofar* is a distinct symbol of Jewish faith and of ethnic identity. From the various artifacts found, it appears that the *shofar* did not symbolize simply the idea of atonement or immortality based on Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, nor did it symbolize merely a certain messianic interpretation (Roth 1955: 151–164). Its eschatological significance has been attested (Goodenough 1954: vol. 4: 170). It was certainly not a mere "decorative convention" (Bayer 1963), but rather a holistic, ethnic and religious symbol that appeared in various artistic forms. Early evidence of the Jewish "symbolic grouping," displayed on the Beth Nattif oil lamps, the Hammat Tiberias mosaic and the Beth Shean engravings appeared contemporaneously with the greatest masterpieces of Late Roman to Early Byzantine art.

In Sepphoris, a *shofar* engraved on the copper seal and one on the oil lamp attest to the presence of Jews in the city. Impressed bullae were used to seal important documents and to mark valuable objects. The traditional Jewish motifs found on seals may bear witness to an official consignment of the Jewish authority in the city. It is commonly accepted that items engraved on small artifacts, such as seals and lamps, bear ethnic or religious connotations (Braun 2002: 316).

Tympanum/Frame Drum

This type of drum was particularly common in the ancient Middle East (Blades et al. 2011: 600–607). Terracotta drum-carrying female figurines from Mesopotamia date to the third millennium BCE and Egyptian frame drums are also well attested, the rectangular-shaped drums being popular at banquets and always

10 Also, M. Sheq. 6: 5 (trumpet shaped, but called horns). Yarden suggests that the confusion may have arisen owing to the increased use of all kinds of horns in Herod's Temple; see Yarden 1991: 102, no. 7.

played by women (DeMarini 1961: 382–384). Archaeological evidence and ethnographic parallels suggest that the *tuppim* (timbrels/tabrets) mentioned in Genesis 31:27 were probably frame drums with no jingles.

The tympanum appearing in Sepphoris as part of the Dionysian scene is associated with Greek culture (McKinnon and Anderson 2011), and its appearance together with an aulos resembles portrayals of the same instruments found in other Graeco-Roman cities (Waner 2010).

Lyre

The symmetric lyre was popular during the Roman period and used at joyful folk feasts such as Dionysian processions. The lyre with a rounded resonator was another popular folk instrument, often shown held by a centaur (as, for example, in the Sheikh Zouède mosaic). It seems reasonable to assume that in the partly preserved panel depicting a triumphal procession (and entitled Πομπη) the centaur depicted next to his aulos playing companion in front of Dionysos's chariot may have held a lyre in his hands.[11]

Symbolic portrayal of musical instruments became established among the various ethnic, religious and social groups in ancient Israel between the second century BCE and the second century CE. It occurred on Ptolemaic coins (125–110 BCE), with the portrayal of two types of lyres — the symmetric and the asymmetric, and continued on the Bar Kokhba coins (132–135 CE), presumably as an anti-Roman symbol incorporating a desire for religious and political freedom (Meshorer 1997: 135). The use of lyres seems to have dwindled during this period, having been replaced by the smaller, portable lutes and harps, which were better suited for professional virtuosos, enabling more sophisticated performances. Lyre depictions subsequently became more abstract, idealized, symbolic representations of the instrument.

It is notable that the lyres found in Sepphoris differ significantly from each other. One is held by Orpheus (and hence, in a Greek mythological setting) and the other is part of the zodiac depicted on the synagogue floor. The lyre held by Orpheus,[12] is a rare depiction of the instrument. This type of lyre is generally associated with the upper strata of the population. The inaccurate rendering of

11 During the Roman period, centaurs became part of the Dionysian *thiasos* and were depicted playing the flute and cithara as contributors to the jubilation; see Smith 1991: 131–132.

12 Orpheus, a Thracian hero, was the son of Oiagros or Apollo and the Muse Kalliope. Known as a gifted singer and cithara player, this divine musician could charm animals, trees and rocks with his music.

the instrument hints at a symbolic meaning rather than defines a time and place for this depiction (Waner 2007a: 84–89). Like the Dionysian mosaic, this floor decorated a private triclinium, and was found in a residential building situated west of the cardo (under the western church), surrounded by panels with scenes from everyday life. Orpheus is depicted sitting and playing (or rather, holding) a chordophone, calming the wild animals and birds with his music. The panels of this mosaic were made according to the emblem tradition: they are stylistically similar to those of the Dionysian floor, and have been tentatively dated to the late third to early fourth century CE — a time when lyres had largely been replaced by the smaller chordophones.

Another remarkable music-related find recovered in Sepphoris is the above-mentioned lyre appearing in the zodiac of the synagogue floor. A large three-stringed symmetric lyre is depicted in the sign of Gemini, held by one of the twins. The lyre, considered the symbol of spiritual and physical harmony in both Jewish and Christian thought (Giesel 1978), was chosen to be placed here with the twins — a symbol of likeness.[13] The zodiac was considered to be the representative par excellence of the cosmos, and the symbol of God, creator of order and the universe (Kühnel 2000).

The lyre in such a representation of the cosmos recalls the concept of "cosmic music," introduced by Boethius (ca. 480–524), that dominated the Western philosophy of music during the entire Middle Ages (Chadwick 1981); it is noteworthy that it became widespread around the time that the Sepphoris synagogue was built. The zodiac lyre may thus be seen as a symbol of this cosmic harmony and order, and the twins with their lyre may have symbolized the order of *musica mundana* 'music of the spheres' and *musica humana* 'music of the human body or spiritual harmony'.[14] As such, the depiction of the synagogue mosaic may be seen as a very significant contribution of Judaism to the understanding of the zodiac.[15]

The lyre depicted in the Sepphoris synagogue is the more popular, folk-type lyre. It is similar to the instrument held by David-as-Orpheus in the Dura-Europos synagogue mural (although the resonator of the former is rounded, whereas here

13 The Hebrew word for twins (*te'omim*) derives from the word *te'um/to'em* meaning similarity, coordination, equalization, synchronization and harmony.

14 In his *De institutione musica*, Boethius explains that the first term refers to the orderly mathematical relations observable in the behavior of the stars and planets, and the second, to the ways in which such harmonious relations are imprinted on and exemplified in the body and soul of humans; see Boethius, and also Grout 1996: 23.

15 Notably, the depiction of Gemini in Sepphoris is based on a Roman model, and is apparently not unique; it appears in a Tunisian mosaic from Bir Chana, and was probably used in Caesarea as well. On this subject see Alexander and Ben Abed-Ben Khader, 1994: 123–127, Pl. LXIX Fig. 430.A and Weiss 2005a: 114.

the base is divided into two semicircles), but differs significantly from the stylized citharas — i.e., the large concert instruments that appear on the Orpheus mosaics of the fourth to sixth century CE in Jerusalem (Ovadiah and Mucznik 1981) and Gaza (Ovadiah 1969), and even from the one found in Sepphoris itself, a mere 400–500 meters away from the synagogue.

Thus, the synagogue mosaic is of special interest for the understanding of the city's cultural and ethnic setting. With the zodiac wheel depicted in its center, it comprises a part of a deeply rooted tradition in ancient synagogues, first attested at Hammat Tiberias in the fourth century CE. Frequently compared in significance to the Dura-Europos wall murals (Kraeling 1979: 60–70), the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic is probably the best evidence of the pagan-Judaeo-Christian syncretistic culture that blossomed in ancient Israel from the Hellenistic-Roman times to the end of the sixth century (Narkiss 1987; Kühnel 2000; Goodenough 1954: vol. 2: 190–205),[16] and produced numerous works of visual arts, among them depictions of musical instruments.

The zodiac wheel at the Sepphoris synagogue has several rare elements hitherto unknown in such settings (Weiss 2005a). A common motif in pagan art, the zodiac became a popular theme in synagogue floor mosaics. Depiction of the four seasons, the twelve signs and the sun-god Helios were common subjects in pagan and Christian art, but the combination of these three elements appears only in synagogues. This mosaic, which differs stylistically from previously known mosaics, demonstrates, on the one hand, the high degree of influence which Hellenistic culture had on the Jewish community, yet, at the same time, reveals significant variations made by the latter. It might also be seen as an artistic reflection of the Judaeo-Christian discourse regarding the identity of the chosen people, rebuilding of the Temple, and Messianic restoration (Weitzmann and Kessler 1990: 178–183; Weiss 2005a: 139–140, 249–256).

To demonstrate the complications in trying to understand the ethnic setup of Sepphoris' inhabitants, we can use the bronze figurine of Pan/satyr playing the syrinx. Ceramic and numismatic evidence suggests that the private dwelling under which this figurine was found was occupied by a high-ranking, wealthy family (Weiss 2001: 15–20). Although the inhabitants' apparent concern for

16 Goodenough refers to the zodiac cycles in synagogues as expressions of Hellenistic mysticism made possible by the collapse of rabbinical control. Narkiss gives a cosmological interpretation. Kühnel concludes that the Zodiac's central location in numerous early Byzantine synagogues must be considered as more than a mere manifestation of Hellenistic beliefs condemned by the sages. According to her, although taken from Roman art, this is one of the most authentic creations of Jewish art, consciously and consistently adapted to fit the beliefs and aspirations of Galilean Jews during the Byzantine period.

matters of ritual purity could indicate that they were pious Jews, the domicile also yielded examples of Roman decorative art (Nagy et al. 1996: 171, 222; Chancey and Meyers 2000: 29). Thus, it may be assumed that the presence of such artifacts is indicative of aesthetic tastes rather than a pagan inclination. Although the find spot indicates a domestic context in a residential area that was probably mostly Jewish, the presence of the artifacts here more likely reflects the influence of pagan decorative culture rather than the adoption of any religious beliefs or practices.

Bohlman maintains that the encounter with forces that challenged Jewish identity and culture by a "cultural and musical Other," led to a creative response and a conscious mustering of musical symbols and styles to articulate Jewish identity (Bohlman 2002). Referring to Jewish music in nineteenth-century Europe, he talks of a new impetus and a linking of music to Jewish history in profound new ways. We may ask if this was also the case in Roman and Byzantine Sepphoris. So far, apparently, we have no signs of new music in the Jewish population of the town during this period. We could thus conclude that "Jewish" musical instruments, or rather sound tools such as horns, were used symbolically, in both a religious context (such as on the synagogue floor) and in an ethnic/social one (such as the copper seal). No other instruments or ensembles have survived to demonstrate otherwise, and based upon the literary sources, we can assume that the Jewish population, rather than stressing its own unique identity, chose the syncretic alternative. When Jews visited the local theatre — thus disregarding warnings and objections raised by the sages — they must have encountered mythological scenes (which included musical instruments) all around them, and might have participated in social events that took place in the town, which were not necessarily Jewish. Having religious autonomy, they were almost certainly powerful and independent enough to make decisions which governed their own lives. This explains, for example, their decision to depict the sun-god in the center of the zodiac mosaic as a mere representation and not in the usual manner.[17] Perhaps because they were not threatened by "the Other," the Jews of Sepphoris did not find it necessary to invent their own music culture but rather chose only to enhance it in its traditional, symbolic aspects.

Bearing in mind that the nature and existence of ethnic groups is assumed to depend upon the ethnic boundaries held by the groups by means of manipulations and symbols, and that these symbols may be material or behavioral ones,

17 Compare the Sepphoris depiction with that of Beth Alpha or the Hammat Tiberias synagogue mosaics. The absence of Helios in the Sepphoris zodiac is a definite and unique statement, hitherto unknown in the synagogue zodiacs. The complete motif as depicted here has no parallels in the region in any other religious structure — pagan or Christian.

it seems that the important factor to note is not the sum of all the characteristics revealed in the archaeological culture (these may be shared with various other groups), but rather those characteristics that the group has chosen as its symbolic identity, or phenomena that are elicited from its "ethnic behavior." The tenacity of the Jews of Sepphoris in upholding their symbolic identity represents, to my mind, their desire to maintain their uniqueness and distinctiveness despite the syncretic tendencies found in other spheres of their daily lives. The musical instruments and sound tools depicted on the "Jewish" mosaic floor found in the town, demonstrate this insistence.

The wealth and variety of mosaics found in Sepphoris place the town among the foremost cities of the Roman and Byzantine East (Balty 1981). Their importance lies not only in the quantity and richness of style and iconography, but also in the fact that they were found in a city that was mainly populated by Jews. The level of Hellenistic influence on this Jewish society is an issue that many scholars have pondered upon, especially considering that this was a period when paganism was declining and Christianity was on the rise. The musical instruments depicted in these mosaics further confirm this influence, allowing us to take a closer glimpse at the daily life of the city during the time when they were made.

Conclusions

In the first centuries of the Common Era Sepphoris started to change its ethnic-religious image. Having been a predominantly Jewish city well into the third century, the town seems to have become more Hellenized (Chancey and Meyers 2000; Braun 2002: 269). Daily contact with a pagan and later a Christian society that was gaining power presented the Jews with many challenges (Weiss 2005a: 249–256). As a result, the city exhibits strong syncretic tendencies, also reflected in the music culture of the city.

Along with the Dionysian mosaic and its numerous auloi and a tympanum, other music artifacts confirming the popularity of the Dionysian cult were discovered. Yet in the fifth century, a synagogue was built in the town, demonstrating the persistent presence of a strong Jewish community with religious aspirations and symbolically-used musical instruments and sound tools were decipted in its mosaic floor.

The music-related items, along with other material finds recovered in Sepphoris, demonstrate the flourishing of Judaism in an urban environment during the Roman and Byzantine periods. When Christianity began to develop in new and important ways, both the Jewish and the Christian communities apparently

found the syncretistic setting of the Hellenistic music culture a fertile ground and a vibrant catalyst for constructive symbiosis. It should therefore not astonish us to find Dionysian themes on the mosaic floor of a private dwelling, a syrinx — a well-known attribute of Pan — in a mosaic floor of a public building in the city center, another syrinx in the hands of a bronze figurine and a depiction of Orpheus playing his lyre in yet another private domicile in "downtown" Sepphoris.

It seems that although Jews, Christians and pagans had their own particular religious beliefs and tenets, daily life linked all elements of Galilean society, rendering the various lifestyles therein far more similar to one another than the individual groups may have realized (Gafni 1996: 51–57). Under such circumstances, we may assume that music — being part of everyday life — would present a very similar picture.

However, this study indicates that even amid the dynamic cultural syncretism of the period, there probably was a divergence rather than fusion in the music culture of Sepphoris. When the syncretistic inclinations of the local music culture ran counter to Jewish and Christian theocracy, or when these communities felt a growing threat from "the Other," this conflict, perhaps for the first time, assumed an innovative means of expression to serve as a response to the prevalent claims made by "the Other." The form of the lyre held by the twins in the sign of Gemini on the synagogue mosaic floor in Sepphoris and the Dionysian iconography, perhaps subtly insinuate Judaeo-Christian elements amidst a calm, pastoral Hellenistic setting.

Finally, in the music-related finds of Sepphoris we note the development of an organized, controlled and carefully thought out music culture, despite — or maybe resulting from — ethnic conflicts and tension that must have existed in the city.

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Table 1: The corpus of musical instruments found in Sepphoris*:

Ref. No.	Musical** Instrument	Classification of Instrument	Material/Art Form	Context and Location of Find	Ethno-Religious Association	Period
1	Bell	Idiophone	Bronze instrument	City's water system	?	Byzantine (4th–7th C)
2	Bell	Idiophone	Bronze instrument	City's water system	?	Byzantine (4th–5th C)
3	Bells	Idiophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Synagogue floor (band 3: Consecration of Aaron)	Jewish setting	Byzantine (5th C)
4	Cymbals	Idiophone	Oil lamp	?	?	Byzantine
5	Cymbals	Idiophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Synagogue floor (band 4: basket of first fruits)	Jewish setting	Byzantine (5th C)
6	Dbl Aulos	Aerophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Triclinium, private dwelling, acropolis	Gk Mythology	Roman (3rd C)
7	Dbl Aulos	Aerophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Triclinium, private dwelling, acropolis	Gk Mythology	Roman (3rd C)
8	Dbl Aulos	Aerophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Triclinium, private dwelling, acropolis	Gk Mythology	Roman (3rd C)
9	Dbl Aulos	Aerophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Triclinium, private dwelling, acropolis	Gk Mythology	Roman (3rd C)
10	Dbl Aulos	Aerophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Triclinium, private dwelling, acropolis	Gk Mythology	Roman (3rd C)
11	Syrinx	Aerophone	Bronze figurine	Res. Area W: summit of the acropolis	Gk Mythology	Roman (2nd C)
12	Syrinx	Aerophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Medallion, public building in "city center"	Gk Mythology	Byzantine
13	Horns (חצוצרות)	Aerophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Synagogue floor (band 3: Consecration of Aaron)	Jewish setting	Byzantine (5th C)
14	Shofarot	Aerophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Synagogue floor (band 2: architectural façade and Jewish symbols)	Jewish setting	Byzantine (5th C)
15	Shofar	Aerophone	Copper seal	?	Jewish	Byzantine
16	Shofar	Aerophone	Oil lamp	?	Jewish	Late Roman (4th C)
17	Tympanum	Membrano-phone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Triclinium, private dwelling, acropolis	Gk Mythology	Roman (3rd–4th C)
18	Lyre	Chordophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Synagogue floor (band 5: the zodiac)	Jewish setting	Byzantine (5th C)
19	Lyre	Chordophone	Stone tesserae of mosaic floor	Orpheus, Triclinium, private dwelling, "city center"	Gk Mythology	Roman (3rd–4th C)

* 1–2: Tsuk 1996 [IAA 96-426-7]; 4: IAA 99-2789, unpublished; 3, 5, 13, 14, 17: Weiss and Netzer 1998: 14 nos.2, 4; 6–10, 16: Talgam and Weiss 2004: Pls. Ib,Va,VIb,VIIa,Xa ; 15: On exhibition at the site; 12: in situ; 18: Weiss and Netzer 1997: 14 no.5; 11, 16: Nagy et al. 1996: 171, 222.
** Only 1 and 2 are actual musical instruments.

Yuval

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