

## DIONYSOS IN BETH SHEAN\*

Y. TURNHEIM AND A. OVADIAH

### *Introduction*

The cult of Dionysos arrived in Eretz Israel with the dramatic changes in government and population, as a result of the conquest of Alexander the Great. The integration of sites and cities into Greek myths was a significant expression of the Hellenization in Eretz Israel.

Various findings discovered during the archaeological excavations in Beth Shean confirm a direct connection to Dionysos and his cult. In Jerusalem, Caesarea and other places, the cult of Dionysos was, according to numismatic evidence, one of many Greek cults. In the city of Beth Shean, or by its Greek name — Scythopolis, the cult of Dionysos was the most important city cult (*cf.* Avi Yonah 1962; Ovadiah 1975; Fuchs 1983).

Historical evidence<sup>1</sup> and archaeological discoveries<sup>2</sup> in Beth Shean corroborate the relation between Dionysos and this city during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Thus, as may be deduced, Dionysos becomes the patron of Beth Shean.

The other name for Beth Shean during the Hellenistic and Roman periods was Nysa, a name whose identification has caused disputes both among earlier writers and modern scholars. Some identified Beth Shean as Nysa, Dionysos' birthplace<sup>3</sup>, while the legend also circulated that Dionysos himself founded the city in the place where he buried his nurse Nysa<sup>4</sup> on his way back from India. Pliny also refers to this tradition: "... Scythopolis (formerly Nysa, after Father Liber's nurse, whom he buried there) where a colony of Scythians are settled" (Pliny, *NH*, V, 74 [Loeb Classical Library, II, Cambridge Mass., 1989, transl. H. Rackham]).

### *Archaeological and Artistic Evidence*

The archeological and artistic evidence of the cult of Dionysos in Scythopolis is scarce. In the 1986-1987 excavations, the eastern side of a

monumental structure was exposed. In the debris alongside, two gigantic columns, broken during their fall, were found along with a Corinthian capital of good workmanship. The following year when the structure was uncovered, it proved to be a Roman temple with façade, gable and circular hall (Foerster and Tsafirir 1988: 16-17). An impressive system of basalt vaults was discovered under the temple (Tsafirir and Foerster 1990: 34, ill. 44; Foerster and Tsafirir 1992: 8, ill. 12)<sup>5</sup>. It is impossible to know to whom the temple was dedicated, as no inscriptions were found. In the excavators' opinion, it is possible to connect it to the cult of Dionysos, since an altar in his honor was discovered in an adjacent basilica (Foerster and Tsafirir 1988: 21, Pls. 5-6). But on the other hand, it might be a commemorative temple (*heroon*) in honor of Nysa, an argument supported by the *tholos* shape and the relatively small proportions of the hall.

Four marble statues of Dionysos were discovered in the archaeological excavations which took place during this century<sup>6</sup>.

A life-size statue depicting the god as a nude youth, was discovered in February 1990 (Figs. 1-2; Foerster and Tsafirir 1990: 52). The height of the preserved section is 1.24m. and it is assumed that the original height was over 1.80m. The statue was badly damaged, and there are signs of deliberate smashing or destruction on the chin, and of mutilating the nose, mouth and eyes. According to the excavators, the mutilation was caused by Christians who sought to abase the god's statue. The face is young and full with small and almond-shaped eyes, the pupils uncarved, emphasizing the dreamy, unfocused and distant look. Despite the damage, there is a distinct beauty in the facial features. The posterior part of the statue is well-carved, but certain sections remained unpolished; a protrusion on the back of the neck formed a support. These details indicate that the statue was located near a

wall, or against it. Dionysos is depicted frontally, standing in a relaxed posture, supported on his left side by a broken tree trunk. The body has not survived in its entirety: the legs are broken off above the knees, while the arms are preserved just slightly beyond the shoulders, so that it is impossible to discern their position. The body is delicately shaped, soft and feminine, similar in type to the statues found in Woburn Abbey (Fig. 9) and Basel (Fig. 10; Schefold 1952: 94, Fig. 36; Pochmarski 1972: Figs. 18-20). Despite the fact that the *contrapposto* of the Beth Shean statue is reversed, it is possible to classify it as belonging to this type.

The discoverers of this statue, assumed that he held a *thyrsos* in his left hand and a vessel for pouring wine in his right hand (Foerster and Tsafir 1990: 54). The *contrapposto* stance and the comparison with the depictions of Dionysos on the city coins (Figs. 13-14)<sup>7</sup>, apparently support this hypothesis. However, according to the comparable data at our disposal (*LIMC* III: no. 120), as well as a careful examination of the statue itself (which has no sign of clothing, as shown on the coins) and the remainder of the tree trunk adjacent to the statue's left leg, it is more probable to consider that the statue of Dionysos held his left hand extended downward, parallel to his body, possibly holding an object (wine vessel). In contrast, his right hand was apparently bent or raised to chest level, and held a cluster of grapes (*cf.* *LIMC* III: no. 123b)<sup>8</sup>. The arm stumps placed close to the body without leaving space between them and the body, support the position we suggest. The same body posture, the pose of the arms, the *contrapposto* pose and the tree trunk adjacent to the extended left leg, can be observed in the statue of Dionysos from Ephesos (Fig. 11; Aurenhammer 1990: no. 41)<sup>9</sup>. The upper section of the head of the Ephesos Dionysos is broken and he is in a posture different from that of the Beth Shean Dionysos. Furthermore, the face of the Beth Shean Dionysos is elongated, while the chin is round and fuller in the statues from Basel or Ephesos, though it appears that the hair and hairstyle are of a similar design<sup>10</sup>. The hair is parted in the center of the head, softly gathered in the back, covering the ears, so that tresses of hair extend from the back of the head and fall onto the chest. The forehead

is decorated by a *taenia*<sup>11</sup> and a wreath of grape leaves and ivy, from which grow large clusters of grapes, is placed on his head.

The statue was dated by the excavators, according to its style, to the second century C.E. This dating is reasonable<sup>12</sup>, yet it is difficult to accept the excavators' opinion that this was a Roman copy of a Hellenistic original. Rather, this statue may be considered as a copy of an original Roman statue, which combines elements of both the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Works of this sort exist in Roman art and point to an artistic revival, using elements which originated in Greek art<sup>13</sup>.

The torso of a marble statue which, without head or limbs, is 0.84 m. high, was found in the theater area (Fig. 3; today in the Beth Shean Museum, inv. no. 3835). The statue is broken and its right side is damaged. An animal hide which is engraved on the left shoulder, covers his body diagonally, and ends on the left with the head of a goat or kid. A curly tress of hair is preserved on the left shoulder. Even though the form of the missing head is unknown, it is probable that it resembles the head of the statue found in the *stoa*, as well as the heads of other statues found in places other than Eretz Israel (Reinach 1924: 44, fig. 8; 45, fig. 3; 46, fig. 6; 51, figs. 6-7; *LIMC* III: 304, no. 102; IV: 617, no. 83). All the features indicate that the statue is that of the god Dionysos (*cf.* Gersht 1982: 18, no. 63).

A torso of Dionysos of similar proportions was found at Ephesos<sup>14</sup>, now in the British Museum, also wears an animal skin which covers the body diagonally, ending in the head of a goat or kid. The garment is fastened on the left shoulder by a goat's hoof; ends of tresses of Dionysos' hair are preserved on the shoulders (Aurenhammer 1990: no. 42). This statue is dated to the end of the Antonine period. Similar features may be observed on the Beth Shean statue and the torso of Dionysos from Samaria-Sebaste (*Samaria-Sebaste III*: Pl. IX [2-3]; Gersht 1982: 17-18, no. 61), which has on the chest some remnants of animal skin and grape clusters. However, the statue from Samaria is less static because the body bends to the left, while the right hand was probably raised and the head turned to the left.

During the excavations of the American

expedition, a double herm bust of the Janus type was found in secondary use (Fig. 4; cf. Wrede 1985: 52-54). One side was so damaged that it cannot be described; yet the *taenia* on the forehead and the ivy wreath with grape clusters, prove that the image belongs to Dionysos' entourage. The nose, mouth and chin are missing on the other side; the wavy hair is gathered back and a *taenia* is carved on the forehead. The statue was indentified by Fitzgerald as the Roman god Janus (Fitzgerald 1932: 141), but Gersht identifies one side as Dionysos, and the other with feminine features, as Ariadne or Nysa (Gersht 1982: 18, no. 62).

Double herms depicting a bearded Dionysos on one side and Ariadne or a *maenad* on the other side, were found in Toulouse (*LIMC*: IV: no. 252), as well as in several other sites in southern France (*ibid.*: 920). Two double herms with a bearded Dionysos appearing on one side, and a young beardless Dionysos on the other, can be found in the Museum of Aquileia (Scrinari 1972: nos. 273-274). Since herms were used among other purposes, as cult statues (Wrede 1985: *passim*), it may be assumed that this was the aim of the herm found at Beth Shean (see n. 6)<sup>15</sup>.

A relief portrait of Dionysos appears on one of the sides of an hexagonal limestone altar of 141-142 C.E., which was discovered in the recent excavations at the site (Figs. 5-6; Foerster and Tsafirir 1988: 21; 1992: 7)<sup>16</sup>. Beneath the portrait is a commemorative Greek dedicatory inscription mentioning the god. Pan's head is depicted on the second side of the altar, a pair of crossed *thyrsos* on the third, and Pan's flute and a shepherd's staff (*syrinx* and *pedum*, Pan's attributes) are represented on the fourth side.

Dionysos is depicted here as a beardless youth with a long full face, rounded chin and a small mouth with fleshy lips. The neck and shoulders are not shown. The nose is broken and the cheekbones, as well as the lower portion of the right eye are damaged. The almond-shaped eyes are slightly slanted, the pupils are engraved with an indentation in the center, similar to Pan's eyes carved on the adjoining side. Despite the damage, the stylization of the face can be discerned, especially in the areas of the eyes and the eyebrows. This fact probably led the excavators to identify this head as a mask (Foerster and

Tsafirir 1988: 21). Long locks of hair adorn the head and fall along its sides above the ears, forming a kind of braids. The remnants of a wreath of leaves (?) are seen on the top of the head. Pan's well preserved head shows high quality carving, the expertise and ability of the artist.

The connection with Dionysos' cult is further emphasized by the epigraphic evidence provided by the Greek inscription within the *tabula ansata* which is placed below the portrait of the god, and where it is written "in good luck (fortune), Seleucus son of Ariston (dedicated), as an offering of gratitude to the lord god Dionysos, the founder, in the year 205 (141-142 C.E.)". Although the inscription refers to the local tradition of Dionysos, as founder of the city, who buried his nursemaid Nysa there, it provides direct evidence for the worship of Dionysos, which was predominated in Beth Shean at that time<sup>17</sup>. Certainly, this inscription provides unequivocal epigraphic evidence from the Roman period at Beth Shean, which refers to the worship and the cult of Dionysos<sup>18</sup>.

It is also relevant in this context to mention the *protome* of Dionysos which is engraved on the *abacus* of a Corinthian capital found in Beth Shean in secondary use (Fig. 7; Mazor 1988: ills. 12-13). Dionysos is depicted in this *protome* as young and beardless, with a full, massive face and heavy, rounded chin. His small mouth has full lips, his eyes are narrow and elongated, and he has a wide nose and low forehead. His head is modeled in high-relief, surrounded by flowing, curly hair which is parted in the middle and ornamented with grape clusters; he has a short neck and rounded shoulders. Some sort of strip can be observed on his right shoulder, maybe a lock of hair or the edge of a garment. Despite the use of marble, the upper surface of the shoulders and chest shows crude workmanship, the proportions are heavy and the work is on the whole of a rough quality lacking refinement. A certain likeness in the physiognomy of the face, especially the hair and its details, may be noted in the statue of Dionysos from the first half of the second century (the Hadrianic period), which was discovered in the theater of Leptis (Leptis) Magna (Caputo and Traversari 1976: 42-43, no. 21, Figs. 18-19).

An additional capital was found together with the capital described above, and which has a theatrical mask with wide-opened mouth and rounded eyes engraved on its *abacus* (Mazor 1988: ill. 12-13). Yet another capital was discovered later on, this one engraved with Pan's head (Foerster and Tsafrir 1990: 32, ill. 40). These capitals, as well as several frieze blocks ornamented with "peopled" scrolls<sup>19</sup>, formed part of the façade ornamentation of the *Propylaeum* connecting the Byzantine Paladius street with the large bathhouse.

Corinthian capitals engraved with *protomai* of humans, gods or animals, are well-known throughout the Roman world. The *protome* combined with the capital is a "baroque" characteristic quite common in the Severan period (Hirschland 1967: 22). In Sardis, in Asia Minor, a group of figural capitals were found in a structure dated to the third century (*ibid.*: 12). Among these capitals one has a *protome* of the young Dionysos, his head ornamented with grape clusters and a *taenia* on his forehead (*ibid.*: Fig. 7b). On the other capitals a faun, two satyrs' heads and possibly an image of a *maenad* were engraved (*ibid.*: nos. 11, 22). Dionysiac imagery appears frequently on capitals (Aphrodisias - *ibid.*: 20), but generally the purpose is decorative and not symbolic (*ibid.*: 22 and n. 18)<sup>20</sup>.

It should be noted that a *protome*, apparently of Dionysos, carved within the "peopled" scrolls which decorated the *scaenae frons* of the theater, was one of the sculptural findings discovered at Beth Shean (Fig. 8; Ovadia and Turnheim 1994: 37-38, Block 7)<sup>21</sup>. Unfortunately the face of the *protome* was destroyed, and only the neck, shoulders and the outline of the head are preserved. According to the outline, the head was apparently decorated with grape clusters and leaves that grew from the wreath that encircled the head. The edge of the skin garment is draped diagonally from the left shoulder to the right underarm; the garment itself is held onto the right shoulder by a strip. The inclination of the neck and the folds engraved on it indicate that the head was probably facing right. The inclination of the head is reminiscent of the *protome* of Dionysos depicted on the relief at Petra (Lyttelton and Blagg 1990: 98, figs. 6, 10). Similarly to the *protomai* engraved on the capitals, this

*protome*, which appears as a figural decoration in the "peopled" scrolls of the theater frieze, does not seem to be necessarily symbolic<sup>22</sup>.

A small head adorned with grape clusters, identified by Fischer and James as Dionysos<sup>23</sup>, is engraved on a fragment of a limestone frieze, perhaps from the temple decoration which was found on the *tel* beneath the round church. Two statuettes of the Roman period, one of bronze and the other of terracotta, found in the vicinity of Beth Shean, were identified as "winged Dionysos" (Jonas 1960).

### Discussion and Analysis

Among the various depictions of Dionysos discovered at Beth Shean, four are only *protomai* and two show the whole body. Of the last, one has only the torso intact. In the examples where Dionysos' head was preserved, the god is shown as young and beardless; his head adorned with a wreath of grape leaves or ivy, and grape clusters; his long hair falls in soft waves onto his shoulders<sup>24</sup>.

An analysis of the depictions of Dionysos at Beth Shean shows that despite the characteristics which they have in common, it is possible to distinguish at least three types<sup>25</sup>:

Type A: The "nude" Dionysos, which includes the statue found in the *stoa* (Figs. 1-2) and the *protome* relief on the Corinthian capital (Fig. 7). This type is characterized by a round face, full chin and small eyes, as well as rich abundant hair, parted at the center and gathered at the nape so that the ends flow onto the shoulders. The head is adorned with grape clusters and leaves, and there is a *taenia* on the forehead. The naked body is in a relaxed *contrapposto* stance with the hands at the sides of the body.

Type B: The "dressed" Dionysos, which includes the torso (Fig. 3) and the *protome* relief from the "peopled" scroll frieze of the theater (Fig. 8). This type is characterized by the engraved animal skin or garment which, placed on the left shoulder, falls diagonally, wrapped around the body. The comparisons show that possibly the head had a similar form to type A.

Type C: The Dionysos "mask" - the relief on the altar (Fig. 5). The characteristics of this type are: a beardless youth whose head is adorned by a wreath with grape clusters, long hair plaited in

two braids, descending on either side of the head, directly over the ears; the hair is not parted and no *taenia* is engraved on the forehead.

This typological grouping allows us to deduce that the sculptured depictions of Dionysos were created according to several models, a fact also confirmed by the depictions on the city-coins (see n. 7, and n. 28). It is possible that these models were cult statues or other known statues from the Roman period. It seems that the statue of Dionysos from Basel (Fig. 10), which Schefold defined as a copy of the statue of Leochares (1952: 99), is in fact a Roman creation blending elements and motifs of Greek Classical and Hellenistic sculpture (see n. 13). However, it should be noted that the marble statue of the "nude" Dionysos from the *stoa* (type A), is classified with the Woburn Abbey statue from an iconographic point of view, and is not identical to the image of the god on the Beth Shean coins (Figs. 13-14)<sup>26</sup>. It is perhaps possible to consider the statue as belonging to the cult complex of the god in the city, even though it was not a cult statue placed within the temple. It may be assumed that the statue was used as decoration placed within a niche in one of the streets of Beth Shean, as was usual in other cities of the Roman world, such as Ephesos, Aphrodisias and elsewhere (cf. Walker 1987: 69). An alternate possibility is that it was placed in one of the public buildings of the city, as suggested by the excavators<sup>27</sup>.

Dionysos' image appears on twenty seven out of the sixty seven known types of coins from Scythopolis (Spijkerman 1978: 188-209)<sup>28</sup>. In nine of these types of coins the young god is depicted in the nude (Figs. 13-14; see n. 7). It is possible that the depiction on the coins is a rendering of an important and well-known statue of Dionysos erected in the city<sup>29</sup>.

During the Roman period in Eretz Israel, marble statues were usually imported in a finished state (Gersht 1982: 45; 1987: 152), while blocks of marble, intended for building or ornamentation, were roughed out at the quarry, with the carving and finish completed on the site (Ovadiah and Turnheim 1994: 105-108).

The sculpture of Beth Shean can be divided into two categories. The first — imported marble statues, as for example, the statue of

Dionysos from the *stoa*, and the second — the reliefs of Dionysos in architectural sculpture, carved on the site on imported marble-blocks. It is likely that the imported statues were used as models and as a source of inspiration for local artists or artisans. This also seems to be the case of the altar from the year 141-142 C.E. with the portrait of Dionysos depicted on one of its sides<sup>30</sup>.

### Summary

The statues and reliefs of Dionysos discovered at Beth Shean were not necessarily associated with the worship of Dionysos or his temple, but rather with the ornamentation and artistic design of elements connected with the god. These include the altar which was dedicated to him, the theater and other public structures (the *stoa* and *nymphaeum*), in the city, which belonged to Dionysos and his nursemaid Nysa. Although Beth Shean became Scythopolis-Nysa during the Hellenistic period (254 B.C.E., Avi Yonah 1962), the findings connected with Dionysos (sculpture, reliefs, inscriptions, temple and coins) are much later, mainly from the Roman period.

Inscriptions pertaining to Dionysos or his cult have not been discovered in Eretz Israel, except for those found at Beth Shean. The three Greek inscriptions found at Beth Shean belong to the Roman period and provide evidence to the fact that worship of Dionysos did occur in this city (Ovadiah 1975; Foerster and Tsafirir 1988: 20). Two inscriptions mention Dionysos and the third mentions Zeus-Bacchus (in this case Dionysos is identified with Zeus). This last inscription emphasizes the merging of the two gods, especially the conceptual synthesis, reflecting Neoplatonic ideas prevailing during this period. This was also expressed by Macrobius, according to whom the world was called Jupiter (or Zeus), while the intelligence of the world was Dionysos (*Dios Nous*; Macrobius *Sat.* I, 18.15).

It can be assumed that the reference is in this case to a city-cult, an assumption reinforced by the quantity of coins which depict the god and scenes from his life. This cult was special to Scythopolis and was probably introduced in Beth Shean during earlier periods through the

influence of foreign elements. Gradually the cult developed within the city itself, till it became an inseparable part of the religious life of Beth Shean.

With the exception of Beth Shean, no evidence of the worship of Dionysos was discovered, even in those places where coins with the figure of the god were found (see n. 28), or mosaics connected with him, such as Sepphoris (Talgam and Weiss 1988: 93-99), Erez (Ovadia 1987: 58, no. 77) and Sheikh Zouède (Ovadia, Gomez de Silva and Mucznik 1991: 181-191). However, the large number of mosaics from the late Roman period, with scenes from the myths of Dionysos, is evidence of the widespread popularity which the god attained. This popularity, which probably derives from the genre and literature, may indicate a unique interpretation of Dionysos and his myth that developed in this area during Late Antiquity, inspired by Orphism (*cf.* Ovadia 1975: 120, n. 52) and Neoplatonic philosophy. This interpretation can explain the identity and iconographic similarity between the image of Dionysos and of Apollo (see n. 9). Neoplatonists believed that Apollo was none other than a manifestation of Dionysos (Bowersock 1990: 51). This analogy between the images of these two gods is also expressed by Macrobius (*Sat.* I, 18. 1-7).

The existence of the cult of Dionysos in Beth Shean during the Roman period, is probably part of the god's cult in other places in the eastern Mediterranean basin which includes the Phoenician coast, Syria and Arabia (*LIMC* III: 529). The temples dedicated to Dionysos at Gerasa and Baalbek prove the existence of the cult in these places. A one-word Greek inscription from Hippos-Susita, dedicated to Dushara, the Nabatean Dionysos (Ovadia 1981), provides an additional perspective to the god's cult in *Palaestina Secunda* and Syria. As in other

places, we may assume that this cult had Neoplatonic characteristics (Bowersock 1990: 41; Daszewski 1985).

The evidence which is now available, does not allow us to perceive either the essence and character of the cult of Dionysos in Beth Shean, or where it took place or what the acts of worship could have been. The only fact is the existence of the cult of Dionysos in the city. However, it is not clear whether private cults, or mysteries in honor of the god existed in addition to a city-cult, or if the cult of Dionysos was related to that of the Emperor<sup>31</sup>.

In spite of the lack of information regarding the ceremonies in the cult of Dionysos in Beth Shean and other places, it may be assumed that in the Roman period they were based on the Greek heritage, which included dramatic performances in the theater, sacrifices, wine-drinking, the use of incense, orgies, processions and games. It is possible that the cult of Dionysos in Beth Shean provides indirect evidence for the existence of Dionysiac festivals, even though we have no substantial evidence on this subject. It should be noted, that the festivals of the *Saturnalia* were celebrated in Beth Shean as mentioned in talmudic sources: "Rabbi Bibi sent Rabbi Zeira to buy him a small bolt of cloth at the Saturnalia fair in Beth Shean (*Palestinian Talmud*, 'Abodah Zarah I 2 39c).

Evidence from various areas, widens our knowledge regarding the status and patronage of Dionysos at Beth Shean, and corroborating the worship and honor of the god in this city. The body of evidence reveals an extent of the material and spiritual life<sup>32</sup> of Beth Shean during the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Department of Art History  
Tel Aviv University

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<sup>1</sup> For further details, see Ovadia 1975: 116, 124. Beth Shean was known as Scythopolis during the period of the rule of the Ptolemies in Eretz Israel. In the light of the connection between the Ptolemaic rulers and Dionysos, one can perceive the special position he held as the city-god, and the development of his cult there (Tcherikover 1979: 102 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> In the last few decades, archaeological discoveries have accumulated in Beth Shean which attest to the patronage of Dionysos and the existence of his cult. These include inscriptions, coins, architectural remains (a temple?), altars, statues and architectural decoration depicting Dionysos. As for Dionysos' companions, only two reliefs depicting Pan's head, discovered at Beth Shean, have been published. Therefore this article focuses only on Dionysos.

<sup>3</sup> The "birth" of Dionysos, his head emerging from Zeus' knee, appears on city-coins since the days of Septimius Severus (Spijckerman 1978: 194-195, no. 23), Elagabalus (*ibid.*: 200-201, nos. 40-41) and Gordianus III (*ibid.*: 1978: 203-205, no. 57; Meshorer 1984: 42, 114, catalogue no. 112).

<sup>4</sup> Nysa-Tyche sitting on a throne and nursing the infant Dionysos, is depicted on coins from the time of Caracalla (Spijckerman 1978: 198-199, no. 32), Elagabalus (*ibid.*: 206-207, nos. 46-48) and Gordianus III (*ibid.*: 206-207, no. 58; Meshorer 1984: 42, 114, catalogue no. 110). Nysa-Tyche's image and different scenes of Dionysos' childhood and adventures appear on various coins from Beth Shean (Spijckerman 1978: 188-209; Meshorer 1984: 41-42, 114, catalogue nos. 107, 110-A).

<sup>5</sup> The system of vaults was intended to support the podium on which the temple was built, as in other temples in Eretz Israel and abroad. For example, the Temple of Augustus and Dea Roma in Caesarea Maritima, the Temple of Augustus in Samaria-Sebaste and the Temple of Trajan in Pergamon. However, the space between the vaults suggests that some mystery cult (Dionysos' perhaps?) took place here.

<sup>6</sup> An additional statue, mistakenly identified by Fisher (1923: 239) as Dionysos, is apparently a depiction of Alexander the Great. At the time this article was completed, a double image of Dionysos, of the Janus type, was discovered in Beth Shean by an expedition of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The head apparently of a herm, is larger than life-size and of marble. Based on pictures published in the daily newspapers (Ma'ariv and Yediot Ahronot), one side of the head shows a beardless youth, with facial features which reflect Classical characteristics (fleshy, sensuous lips, straight nose, stylized treatment of eyes and pupils). Its abundant hair is decorated with grape clusters, a typical feature of Dionysos.

<sup>7</sup> Nine out of twenty seven types of Dionysiac coins that were discovered at Beth Shean/Scythopolis depict the god in the nude, except for a *chamis* thrown over his left shoulder. The figure faces left, holding a *thyrsos* in its left hand, while he pours wine from a *kantharos* with his right hand. A panther kneels at his feet, looking up (Spijckerman 1978: 188-195, 198-199, 208-209, nos. 5-7, 12, 14, 17-19, 38b; Meshorer 1984: 40-42, 114, catalogue nos. 105, 109). On one of the coins Dionysos appears in the nude, except for a light drapery around his hips; he holds a bunch of grapes in his right hand, and a shepherd's crook under his left (Spijckerman 1978: 194-195, no. 20).

<sup>8</sup> The position of the statue is a mirror image of the one at Beth Shean; it naturally follows that the position of the arms and the objects held by the figure are also inverted. Another statue, from Constantine in Algeria (*LIMC* IV: no. 82a) is in a similar posture to that in Beth Shean, though the head faces left and looks in the direction of the raised arm holding a wine vessel in its hand. A similar reconstruction of the Beth Shean statue is not possible, because the head and the direction of his look are in the opposite direction.

<sup>9</sup> The same pose, as well as the tree trunk next to the left leg, can be seen in the headless statue of Apollo from the Ephesos theater, now in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul (Aurenhammer 1990: no. 15, pl. 21). According to Pochmarski it is classified as the Woburn Abbey type of Dionysos sculpture (*ibid.*: 41). There is an iconographic similarity between the statues of Apollo and Dionysos, especially apparent in the hair-style, *contrapposto* posture and the slightly feminine body design. An outstanding example from our region is in the statue of Apollo from Samaria-Sebaste (*Samaria-Sebaste III*: Fig. X [1-4]).

<sup>10</sup> The head of the Basel statue, as the one at Ephesos, is incomplete; the front section of the skull and hair is broken off, and the upper portion of the forehead, especially on the left side, is missing. The right part of the *taenia* which decorates the forehead is preserved.

<sup>11</sup> Regarding the significance of the *taenia*, see Pochmarski 1972: 73 and n. 4.

<sup>12</sup> The Apollo statue from Ephesos (Fig. 12) is dated to the Antonine period and the statue of Dionysos at Ephesos is dated to the end of the same period (Aurenhammer 1990: 41, 62).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ovadia 1983. According to new trends in research, we should not view these statues as replicas, or design 'based on' ('Umbildung') a specific statue from the fourth century B.C.E., but rather as Roman creations that make use of motifs and attributes, and show variations of a 'basic type' ('Grundfigur'). (Cf. Pochmarski 1972: 73; Aurenhammer 1990: 41, no. 15; 62-63, n. 4, no. 41). Statues of Antinous displayed in museums throughout the world are clear evidence of this practice.

<sup>14</sup> According to Aurenhammer (1990: 63), the complete statue was larger than life-size.

<sup>15</sup> Some Roman coins from Beth Shean/Scythopolis represent a nude Dionysos leaning on the head of a small herm-like figure (Spijkerman 1978: 200-201, nos. 42-44; 206-207, no. 59). It seems that the god is depicted leaning on his cult statue.

<sup>16</sup> This altar was originally dated to the year 12 C.E. (Foerster and Tsafirir 1988: 21), but this dating was found to be inaccurate after the altar was cleaned.

<sup>17</sup> During the Greek and Roman periods, the cult of Dionysos was widespread throughout Anatolia, the Near East and Egypt, and had characteristics in common with earlier regional gods. These included Orotal-Dushara-Dusares from the Nabatean pantheon, the Phoenician Adonis-Eshmoun, the Syrian Malakbêl, the Egyptian Osiris and the local Ba'al. Many of the episodes from the myths of Dionysos took place in the Syrian-Phoenician region and this explains the popularity of his cult in this area (*LIMC*: III: 514, 529).

<sup>18</sup> For additional epigraphic evidence on the cult of Dionysos, see Ovadia 1975.

<sup>19</sup> For the Dionysiac context of this ornament, see Ovadia and Turnheim 1994: 96-99 and nn. 19, 25-26, 31-32.

<sup>20</sup> Several figural capitals of marble and limestone were also discovered in Eretz Israel (Fischer 1991), among them a capital with a mask from the Roman Temple at Kedesh (*ibid.*: fig. 6<sub>a,b</sub>), and a *protome* whose face is destroyed, on a capital at Antipatris (*ibid.*: fig. 8<sub>a,b</sub>). The author identifies the figure as female, but according to the outline and the position of the head, it might be a depiction of Dionysos.

<sup>21</sup> A *protome* of the god Serapis is carved on a frieze block from the theater at Caesarea Maritima. Near the *protome* is a carved scroll which has a rosette within it (Ovadia and Turnheim 1994: ill. 269).

<sup>22</sup> Fuchs claims that in spite of the clear connection between Dionysos and the theater, there is no major significance in the sculpture depicting Dionysos or other figures of his followers in theater ornamentation from the Roman period (Fuchs 1987: 186 and nn. 641-642).

<sup>23</sup> For this reason the excavators identified the building as a temple of Dionysos (Fuchs 1983: 80, n. 37; Fitzgerald 1931: Fig. XXV<sub>3</sub>).

<sup>24</sup> This figure is common throughout Syria and Eretz Israel (*LIMC* III: 529).

<sup>25</sup> The herm (Fig. 4) is not included in this typological grouping because its state of preservation does not allow a discussion of its details. The same holds true for the herm recently discovered and not yet published (see n. 6).

<sup>26</sup> The statue depicted on the coins (Meshorer 1984: catalogue nos. 105, 109) appears in a similar pose, that is - left leg outstretched and right leg bent, but his left hand is raised and holds a *thyrsos*, while his right hand is holding a wine vessel.

<sup>27</sup> The statue, discovered in the area of the Monumental *Stoa* was, according to the excavators, part of the *stoa*

ornamentation (Foerster and Tsafirir 1992: 24), along with an armored statue of an emperor found nearby. There is still no decisive evidence connecting the statue of the god with the round temple, in spite of the fact that it was discovered near the temple. It is possible that the statue of the "nude" Dionysos (Figs. 1-2) was a source of inspiration for the artist who carved the *protome* on the *abacus* of the Corinthian capital (Fig. 7). The same phenomenon exists in the case of Tyche's head on the capital at Caesarea Maritima, carved under the influence of the cult statue of Tyche that was placed in that city (see n. 29).

<sup>28</sup> In contrast, in Spijkerman's table (1978: 294) the total number of the types of the coins is sixty, of which twenty-six depict Dionysos. Coins with various depictions of Dionysos have been found so far in four cities in Eretz Israel: Beth Shean, Rafah, Jerusalem and Caesarea Maritima. The fact that coins connected with Dionysos were discovered in places where no other evidence related to Dionysos was found, strengthens the assumption that the cult of Dionysos was very popular in Eretz Israel and existed in various levels of religious involvement.

<sup>29</sup> Meshorer (1984: 41) mentions a similar coin on which a dressed god is depicted. He also describes several other statues of Dionysos that appear on Beth Shean coins. The depiction of statues on city-coins was common practice in the Greek and Roman world. Usually the depictions were of known statues that added to the prestige and fame of the city. On a Samaritan coin there is a depiction of a statue that apparently stood in the temple of Kore in that city; on the coin Kore-Persephone is shown as she holds a torch in her right hand and a bunch of ears of corn in her left (Meshorer 1984: catalogue no. 119). A statue showing the goddess in the same position, with a torch and ears of corn in her hands, was discovered in Samaria-Sebaste near an inscription that mentions her name and cult (*ibid.*: 44). Apparently this very statue is depicted on the coin. A statue of the goddess Tyche of the Amazon type also depicted on city-coins (Gersht 1984: 110; Meshorer 1984: 20, catalogue no. 25), was found during the 1971 excavations of Caesarea Maritima. The carved *protome* on the *abacus* of the Corinthian capital from Caesarea Maritima, reflects perhaps the influence of this statue on the local artisan (Fischer 1991: 129-131, Fig. 4).

<sup>30</sup> Since the altar is of limestone, several possibilities arise as to its origin: (a) it was carved at the site by a local artist or by an artist brought in for that purpose; (b) the altar was imported with the relief already completed and only the inscription was added afterwards; (c) it was imported roughed-out and prepared for carving, and only finished on the site. This last practice is common with architectural ornamentation on marble, but not for limestone.

<sup>31</sup> A cylindrical stone pedestal on which, according to the inscription, there was a statue of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius was placed on the steps of the temple which may have been connected to the cult of Dionysos.



Together with two hexagonal altars placed in the area of the temple in front of the Emperor's statue, they constitute rare archaeological evidence of the Emperor's cult in the city (Tsafrir and Foerster 1992: 10). According to the inscription from Ephesos, the Emperor Hadrian is the "New" Dionysos (Nilsson 1975: 61; see also *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Romanas Pertinentes* I.17). Nilsson points out that in Asia Minor there is a frequent

merging of Emperor's cult with mystery cults. According to Hirschland (1967: 18, n. 10) Hanfmann found a likeness between Dionysos' head on the capital at Sardis and the portrait of the Emperor Caracalla.

<sup>32</sup> Although the evidence available is not enough to prove this, it is probable that men of letters and intellectuals were active in Beth Shean, as in other cities in Eretz Israel, during the Roman period.

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Fig. 1 - The statue of Dionysos as found in the stoa at Beth Shean (Foerster and Tsafirir 1990: 53)

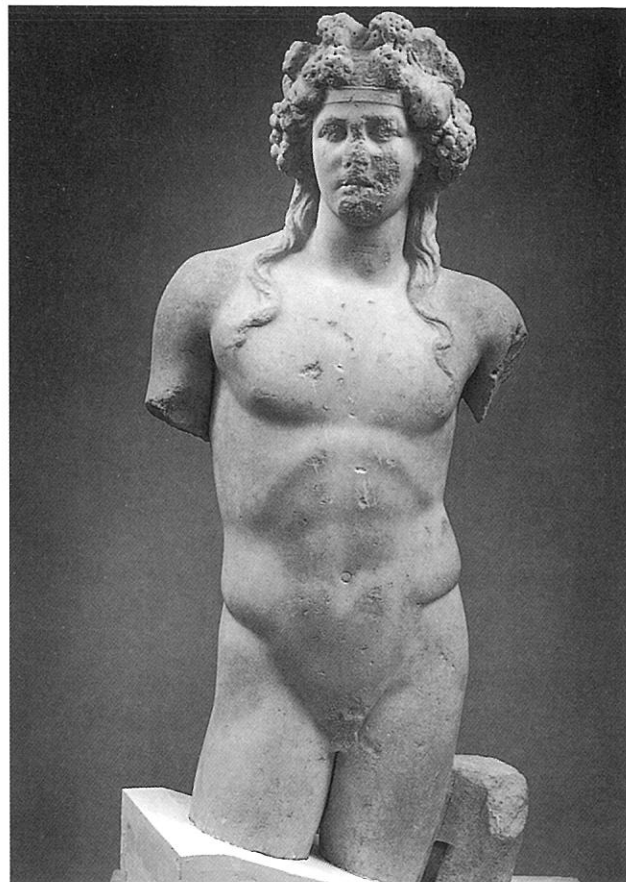


Fig. 2 - The statue of Dionysos from the stoa at Beth Shean (Foerster and Tsafirir 1992: back cover).



Fig. 3 - A torso of Dionysos dressed with an animal skin (courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority, Neg. no. 48835).



Fig. 4 - A double herm bust of Dionysos of the Janus type (courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority, Neg. no. 11460).



Fig. 5 - Hexagonal limestone altar with relief portrait of Dionysos - from Beth Shean excavations (*NEAEHL* 1: *s.v.* 'Beth Shean', 218 [upper photograph]).



Fig. 6 - Hexagonal limestone altar with the head of Pan - from Beth Shean excavations (Foerster and Tsafrir 1988: Ill. 17).



Fig. 7 - A *protome* of Dionysos carved on the *abacus* of a Corinthian capital found in Beth Shean (Mazor 1988: Ill. 12).





Fig. 8 - A *protome* of Dionysos carved between “peopled” scrolls in a frieze of the *scaenae frons* of the Roman theatre at Beth Shean (photograph by the authors).

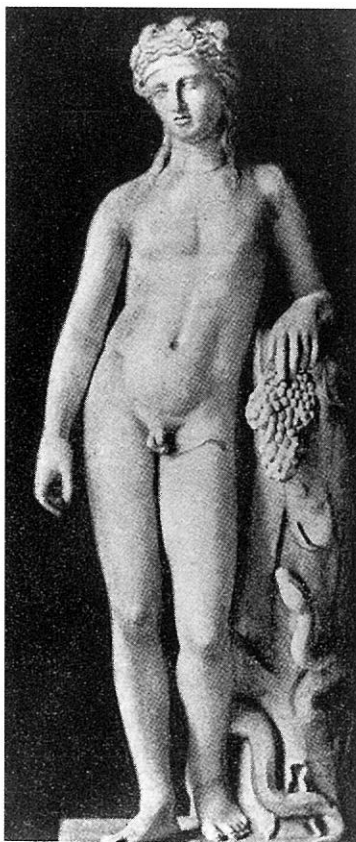


Fig. 9 - A statue of Dionysos from Woburn Abbey (Schefold 1952: Ill. 36).



Fig. 10 - A statue of Dionysos from Basel (Pochmarski 1972: Ills. 18-19).

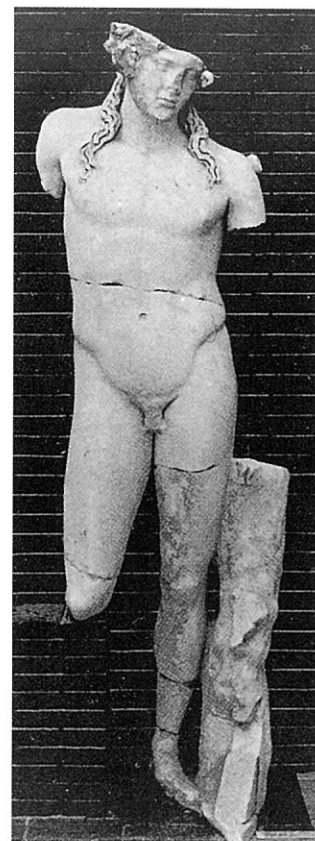


Fig. 11 - A statue of Dionysos from Ephesos, now in the Museum of Ephesos (Aurenhammer 1990: Pl. 28b).

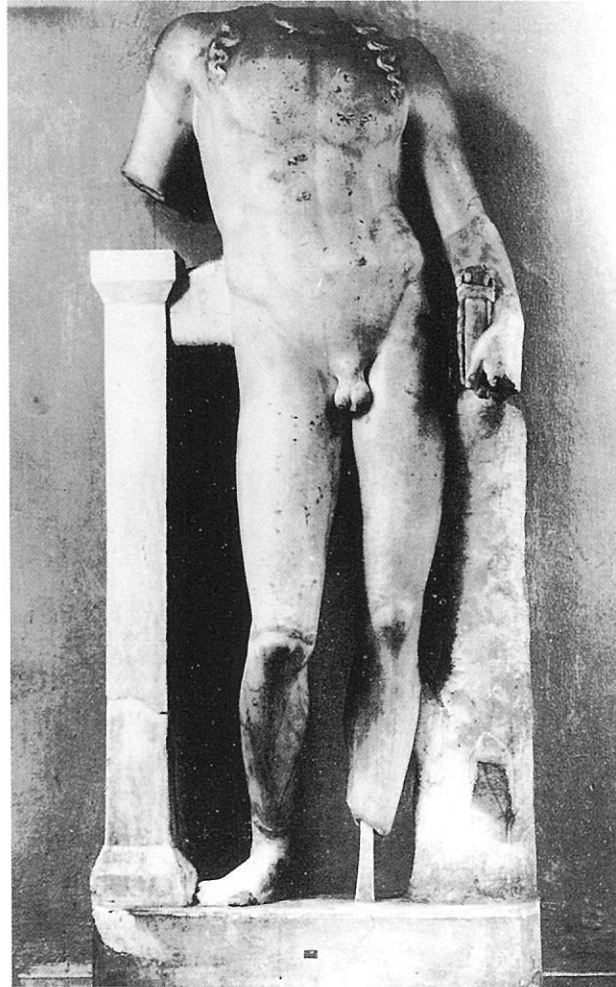


Fig. 12 - A statue of Apollo from Ephesos, now in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul (Aurenhammer 1990: Pl. 15). (See note 12).



Fig. 13 - A coin from the time of Antoninus Pius with the image of Dionysos (Meshorer 1984: catalogue no. 105).



Fig. 14 - A coin from the time of Geta with the image of Dionysos (Meshorer 1984: catalogue no. 109).