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AIEMA - Türkiye is a research center that aims to study, introduce and constitute a data bank of the mosaics from the ancient times to the Byzantine period. The best presentation of the mosaics of Turkey is the ultimate goal of this center functioning depending on AIEMA. A data bank of Turkey mosaics and a corpus including Turkey mosaics are some of the practices of the center. Additionally, this center also equips a periodical including the art of ancient mosaics and original studies namely JMR.

The JMR (Journal of Mosaic Research) is an international journal on mosaics, annually published by the Bursa Uludağ University Mosaic Research Center. The aim of this journal is to serve as a forum for scientific studies with critical analysis, interpretation and synthesis of mosaics and related subjects. The main matter of the journal covers mosaics of Turkey and other mosaics related to Turkey mosaics. Besides, the journal also accommodates creative and original mosaic researches in general. Furthermore, together with articles about mosaics, the journal also includes book presentations and news about mosaics.

JMR is a refereed journal. The manuscripts can be written in English, German, French or Turkish. All authors are responsible for the content of their articles.

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Bu dergideki makalelerde kullanılacak olan kısaltmalar Alman Arkeoloji Enstitüsü yayın kuralları, Bulletin de l'Association internationale pour l'Etude de la Mosaïque antique, AIEMA - AOROC 24.2016, La Mosaïque Gréco Romaine IX ve Der Kleine Pauly dikkate alınarak yapılmıştır.

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José María Blázquez Martínez in memoriam (1926-2016)

José María Blázquez Martínez (Professor of Ancient History and Fellow of the Spanish Royal Academy of History) passed away on March 26, 2016, in the city of Madrid (Spain) after a full life devoted to teaching, scientific research and the spread of antiquity; and leaving all of us -who have had the immense fortune to enjoy his mastership and overwhelming personality-, with an immense sadness.

Prof. Blázquez graduated in Philosophy and Letters from the University of Salamanca in 1951 and defended his PhD in the Complutense University of Madrid in 1956. During the next decade, Prof. Blázquez continued his training under the supervision of Prof. Pallottino at the University of La Sapienza in Rome and, granted by the DAAD, at the University of Marburg, under the supervision of Prof. Matz and Prof. Drerup. Subsequently he made other successful research stays at the University of Tel Aviv, the British Academy of Rome, the University of Catania, and in the German Archaeological Institute branches at Istanbul, Damascus and Riyadh. In this regard, Prof. Blázquez always defended the importance of international networks that, through academic contact with other schools and colleagues, conceived as essential for personal development and the progress of scientific research.



After this intense formative period, José María Blázquez obtained a position as Professor of Ancient History at the University of Salamanca (1966-) and shortly after at the Complutense de Madrid (1969-), where he was designated as Professor Emeritus. At the same time, he was an active member of the former Institute of Archaeology "Rodrigo Caro" (CSIC), that he directed during more than ten years (1973-1985). Finally, in recognition to his academic trajectory, Professor Blázquez was elected as a Fellow of the Spanish Royal Academy of History. In all these institutions Prof. Blázquez developed a brilliant contribution to the promotion of Ancient History in Spain, especially important was his capacity for mentoring (he supervised more than 40 PhDs during his academic life) large teams of teachers and researchers, that obtained several tenured positions in different universities and academic institutions. He was also a prolific author publishing many handbooks and monographs that are authentic milestones in history the Spanish scholarship (i. e. *La Romanización, Historia social y económica. La España Romana. Economía de la Hispania romana*, Bilbao, 1978, *Historia de España Antigua, I. Protohistoria*, Madrid, 1980; *Historia de España Antigua II. Hispania romana*, Madrid, 1978). Largely influential was also his leadership in the direction of the scientific journals as *Archivo Español de Arqueología* (1973-1987) and *Gerión* (1983-2010). In addition, Prof. Blázquez directed numerous archaeological excavations at Caparra (Cáceres), Cástulo (Jaén), La Loba (Fuenteovejuna, Córdoba), and in the Monte Testaccio (Rome).

By virtue of its training and its wide perspective, Prof. Blázquez's research trajectory was the reflection of the scientist dedicated to the study of antiquity, with a masterful management of

diverse written and archaeological sources, always connected with current intellectual debates of all social and human sciences. During his career published more than 37 books, acting of editor in other 9 monographs. He also published 234 articles in the most prestigious, both Spanish and International, scientific journals and several chapters in collective volumes. His research interests covered multiples areas on the study of antiquity: the Phoenician and Greek colonization of the Western Mediterranean, the Late Iron Age communities of the Iberian Peninsula, the study of Pre-Roman religions, the Impact of primitive Christianity in the Late Roman Empire, and, of course, the ancient economy of Roman Spain, with an special focus on the exports of *Baetican* olive oil.

Finally, we would like to highlight his research on Roman mosaics, whose first publication dates from 1975 - "Arte y Sociedad en los mosaicos del Bajo Imperio" [Art and Society in the mosaics of the Late Roman Empire] *Bellas Artes* 75, 1975, pp. 18-25 -soon followed by- "Mosaicos romanos del Bajo Imperio" [Roman mosaics of the Late Empire], *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 50-51, 1977, pp. 269-293., In this regard, Prof. Blázquez continued the a research line previously initiated by his teacher Prof. Antonio García y Bellido. Since 1976 to 1996, Prof. Blázquez promoted and directed the Corpus of Mosaics of Spain, within the framework of the international project sponsored by the AIEMA. Through this monumental labor, Prof. Blázquez contributed to establish the study of Roman mosaics as an authentic sub-discipline in the field of the Spanish Classical archaeology.

The obtention of several I+D Research projects, funded in competitive calls by the Spanish Ministry of Science (acting as Principal Investigator from 1976 to 1997) and an International Project of the Joint Hispanic-American Committee, with the University of West-Lafayette, Purdue (Indiana-USA), allowed Prof. Blázquez to create a permanent research team on the study of Roman mosaics. This team, which I (Prof. Neira Jiménez) am honored of have been part, managed the realization of the above mentioned *Corpus de Mosaicos de España* (CME), a work continued afterwards by its dear colleague, Dr. Guadalupe López Monteagudo (CSIC). In addition to the publication of 12 volumes of the CME, he presented numerous papers on the Hispanic, African and Near Eastern Roman mosaics in the most prestigious conferences on these topics, such as the International Congresses organized by the AIEMA or *L'Africa romana* conference, organized by the Centro di Studi sull'Africa Romana of the Università degli studi di Sassari, as well as in countless courses and seminars in other institutions and universities, such as the Roman Mosaic Seminar of the UC3M, to which he attended every year, without missing any of the 9 editions celebrated.

Prof. Blázquez was a firm believer in the work developed by AIEMA, having been named member of Honor of this scientific association. He also formed part of the editorial board of the Journal of Mosaic Research, where he published various articles, and presented papers in both the 11th International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics, held in Bursa on 2009, and in the 5th Colloquium of AIEMA Turkey, held in Kahramanmaraş on 2011. Prof. Blázquez was a true lover of Turkey.

Prof. Blázquez was an unavoidable reference in the international scholarship on ancient mosaics, many colleagues who share our pain remember his vitality even in the XIII. AIEMA Congress held in Madrid on September 2015, where he gave the inaugural conference. As a testimony of his enthusiasm for the study of ancient mosaics, he was already thinking of traveling to the next AIEMA Congress scheduled for 2018 in Cyprus. Proof of his infinite generosity, he prepared

tirelessly until the end of his days a text on Diana in the mosaics of Roman Spain for X SMR, held in September 2016 at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid.

His decisive contribution to the study of antiquity has earned him numerous recognitions from many international academic institutions and associations: Fellow of German Archaeological Institute (1968), Board member of the L'Association Internationale d'Épigraphie grecque et latine (AIEGL), Member of the Hispanic Society (1974); Fellow of the Academy of Arts and Archaeology of Bologna (1980), Fellow of the Spanish Royal Academy of History (1990), Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences (1993), Fellow of the Academia Nazionale dei Lincei (1994), Fellow of the Fine Arts Academy of Santa Isabel de Hungría (Seville) (1995), Fellow of the Real Academia de Bones Letres de Barcelona (1997), or Fellow of the Académie de Aix-en-Provence (1999), among others. He also received many prizes as the Franz Cumont prize from the Académie Royale de Belgique (1985), the Great Silver medal of Archaeology from l'Académie d'Architecture de Paris (1987), or the Cavalli d'Oro prize from Venice (2003). Prof. Blázquez was named *doctor honoris causa* by the universities of Valladolid (1999), Salamanca (2000), Bologna (2001), León (2005), and Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (2015), and received the *Orden del Mérito Civil*, one of the highest recognitions granted by the Spanish govern.

He was a genius as scholar, but also a genial person. For both reasons, colleagues, students, and friends of many countries, that have the fortune of meet Prof. Blázquez during his life, feel a great emptiness for the loss of our dear teacher.

Prof. Dr. Mustafa Şahin
Bursa Uludağ University

Prof. Maria Luz Neira Jiménez
Universidad Carlos III de Madrid



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Early Byzantine Mosaic Floors of the Church at Ozem, Israel

Ozem Kilisesi'ndeki Erken Bizans Çağı Mozaik Zeminleri, İsrail

Lihi HABAS*

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Abstract

In the church at Ozem three phases of mosaics were identified, placed on different levels. The early group (A) includes: 1. Part of the carpet of the nave, decorated by a frame depicting a cross with the Greek letters ΑΩΙΧ, flanked by two lions, an amphora, stylized plants, birds, a donkey and peacocks, and a frame of alternating lotus flowers. The carpet consists of geometric medallions, floral patterns, birds and dedicatory inscriptions. 2. A narrow geometric panel. 3. Two geometric inter-columnar panels of the north colonnade. 4. Part of the mosaic of the northern aisle, decorated with a geometric pattern, and an inscription in a medallion dated to the year 430/1 CE.

Mosaic group B (the second stage of the church) has been preserved to the west of mosaic group A. The mosaics were laid at a 13° deviation to the north in relation to group A. This group is decorated with geometric designs.

Mosaic group C (the third stage of the church) is preserved on the western side of the excavation area. This group is decorated with geometric designs.

Mosaic group A includes Christian symbols: a pair of lions, symbolizing the faithful, depicted on either side of a cross with the letters ἄ(λφα) (καί) ὦ(μέγα) and Ἰ(ησοῦς) Χ(ριστός) – Jesus Christ - between its arms, and a peacock, which symbolizes the resurrection awaiting the believers. Group A is characterized by a flat and schematic style, and imperfect placement of the designs in the composition. Because of the difference in heights, it is clear that group B is later than group A. The work shows greater care and is of a better quality, evidence of a different group of artists. The mosaics in group C are the latest in the building.

Keywords: Ozem, lions, cross, Greek Letters ΑΩΙΧ, Edict of the Emperor Theodosius II.

Öz

Ozem'deki kilisede farklı seviyelerde yerleştirilmiş olan mozaiklerde üç evre tespit edilmiştir. Erken Grup (A Grubu); 1. Nef döşemesinin bir parçasında çerçeve içinde bir haç ile Grekçe ΑΩΙΧ harfleri ve iki yanında aslan, bir amphora, stilize bitkiler, kuşlar, bir eşek, tavus kuşu ve almasıık düzende lotus çiçeklerinden oluşan bir çerçeve görülmektedir. Zeminde geometrik madalyonlar; çiçekli desenler; kuşlar ve adak yazıtları görülmektedir. 2. Dar bir geometrik panel. 3. Kuzey sütun dizisinde sütunlar arasında iki geometrik panel. 4. Geometrik desenle bezenmiş ve 430/1 yılına tarihlenen bir madalyon içinde yazıt olan kuzey koridorundaki mozaığın bir parçası.

Bu gruptaki mozaikler geometrik desenler içermektedir. C Grubu Mozaikleri (kilisenin üçüncü evresi) kazı alanının batısında korunmuştur. C Grubundaki mozaiklerde de geometrik desenler görülmektedir. A Grubundaki mozaiklerde Hristiyanlıkla ilgili semboller görülmektedir: Sadakati temsilen bir çift aslan ἄ(λφα) (καί) ὦ(μέγα) ve Ἰ(ησοῦς) Χ(ριστός) - İsa Mesih - harfleri ile bir haçın iki yanına yerleştirilmiştir. İsa Mesih'in kollarında inananları bekleyen yeniden dirilmeyi temsil eden tavus kuşu yer almaktadır. A Grubu düz ve şematik

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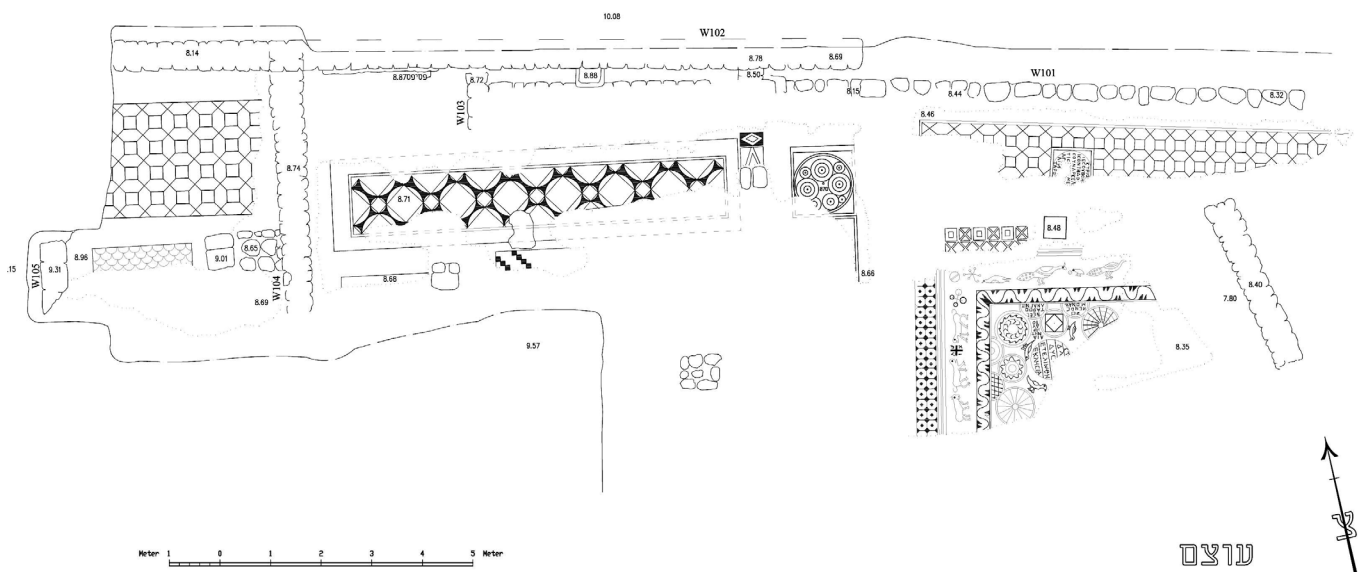
stili, kompozisyondaki desenlerin kusurlu yerleştirilmiş olmasıyla karakterize olmaktadır. Aralarındaki derinlik farkından dolayı B Grubu, A Grubundan daha geç bir döneme aittir. Buradaki işçilik müthiş bir özen ve daha yüksek bir kaliteye sahiptir ve başka bir sanatçı grubuna işaret etmektedir. C Grubu ise yapının en geç tarihli mozaikleridir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Ozem, aslanlar, haç, Grek Harfleri ΑΩΙΧ, İmparator II. Theodosius'un Fermanı.*

The mosaic floors of the basilica at Ozem were uncovered in an unpublished rescue excavation carried out by Ram Gophna on behalf of the Department of Antiquities in the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1956¹. The site lies in the southern coastal plain, some 15 km east of Ascalon. There has recently been renewed study of the findings, ahead of their final publication². The partial stratigraphic discussion by the excavator and the limited excavation area make it difficult to reconstruct the church building and its different parts, but the heights of the excavated floor sections appearing in the excavation log make it possible to identify three groups of mosaic floor, laid at different levels, evidence of three stages in the life of the church (Feig 2012; 2016; Habas 2016) (Fig. 1).

This article will first describe the mosaics, and then make a technical and stylistic analysis of the carpets, the design of the motifs, the composition, and the iconographic meaning.

Figure 1
Mosaic floors of the church at Ozem.



1 Antiquities Department archive file, October 8, 1957, Khirbet Beit Mamin, no. 4002. The church is mentioned briefly in Yeivin 1960: 45; Ovadiah 1970: 151-152 no. 151; Ovadiah - Ovadiah 1987: 117, pls. CXXIX-CXXXI no. 199; Bagatti 2002: 149; Feig 2012: 151; TIR: 198, s.v. 'Ozem. The inscriptions inset in the mosaic floors have been published at length by Leah Di Segni, who gives references to earlier publications (Di Segni 2012: 153-158 no. 1). My grateful thanks for their cooperation to Nurit Feig, Jacques Neguer, Galeb Abu Diab and ArieH Rochman-Halperin of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), and Ayala Oppenheimer, Mishkan Museum of Art, Ein Harod. The illustrations are courtesy of the Antiquities Authority.

2 Nurit Feig of IAA took part in the renewed research and publication, studying the church plans and the stratigraphy (Feig 2012; 2016). Leah Di Segni of the Hebrew University read and interpreted the Greek inscriptions (Di Segni 2012), and Lihi Habas, also of the Hebrew University, studied the mosaic floors and liturgical furniture (Habas 2016).

Mosaics Group A: The First – Ancient – Phase of the Church (Fig. 2)



Figure 2
Ancient phase A – general view to
the east.

The Nave Mosaics

a. The central carpet (Fig. 3) is surrounded by two borders. The wide outer border has survived in part, and all the motifs are depicted on a white background, with small diamonds between them. An amphora is placed diagonally in the north-western corner, its neck towards the centre of the carpet. Nearby, on the northern side, a bird turns towards a schematic branch with red flowers, sucking nectar from one of the flowers. The amphora, the shrub and the bird are viewed from north to south. Close to them is a pair of peacocks, walking one after another towards the east. Between the peacocks, a small bird faces west towards a small basket. The direction from which the peacocks are viewed is from south to north. By the amphora on the western side is a large flowering branch and by it, a Latin cross with a pair of lions in heraldic array on either side (Fig. 4). Above the horizontal arm of the cross are the letters A Ω, and beneath it are the letters I X. Nearby, a donkey is depicted facing the cross. These motifs are all viewed from east to west.

The inner border is narrower (Fig. 5) and is decorated with a pattern of lotus flowers, lying in alternating opposite directions against the usual dark background (Avi-Yonah 1933: B9; Ovadiah - Ovadiah 1987: B9; Décor I: pl. 62a, c)³. This border is common in mosaic floors in the region (Habas 2016: 274 and the reference there).

³ Definitions of the patterns from: Avi-Yonah 1933; Ovadiah 1980; Décor I; Ovadiah - Ovadiah 1987.



Figure 3
Mosaics group A: nave carpet.

Figure 4
Lions flanking a cross and the letters A Ω, I, X, in the border of the nave carpet.



Three corners of the rectangular carpet have survived, enabling its dimensions to be determined. It is decorated with geometric medallions. There is a large medallion in the centre of the carpet, and four medium-sized medallions in the corners (of which three have survived), with smaller medallions between them. Semicircles touch the border, in which there are geometric motifs and inscriptions. All the medallions and the semicircles by the border are designed in a double frame, other than the central medallion. In the background and between the medallions there are birds, and alongside them, inscriptions and diamonds randomly filling the area.

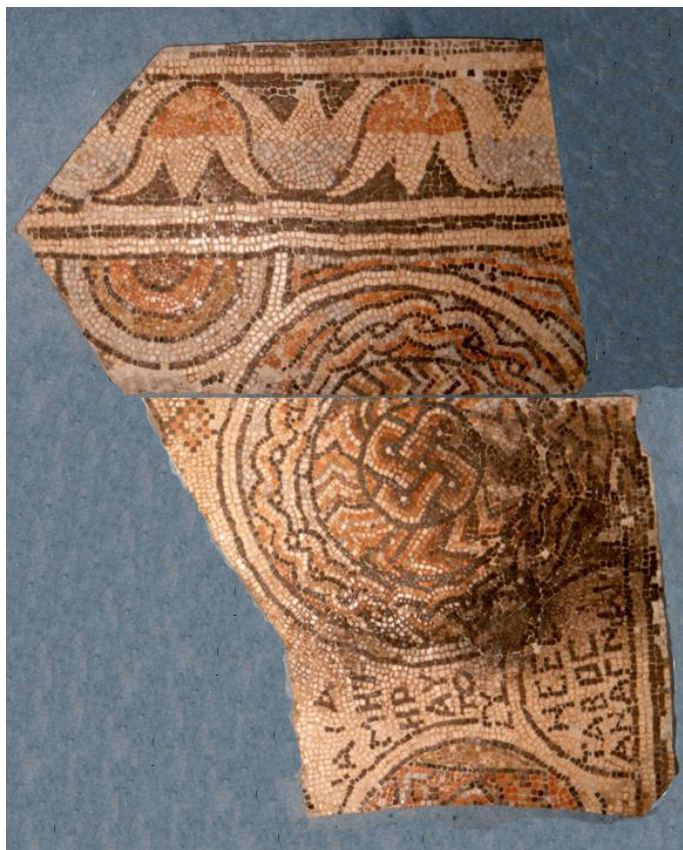


Figure 5
Nave carpet: border, medallions and geometric semicircles, and inscription.



Figure 6
Nave carpet: inscription in the central medallion.

The inscription in the central medallion has been partially preserved (Fig. 6): “In the year [5]34, in the month Dystros, the church was finished”. Year [5]34 of the era of Ascalon corresponds to AD 430/1 (trans. Di Segni 2012: 153).

Set in the south-western medallion is a radial type ‘harmonic shield’ (Ovadia 1980: pl. XXX fig. 80) (Fig. 7). The shield is made up of ribs in white, grey, light and dark orange, red, and black, separated from each other by white rows. In the centre is a small circle, divided by a brown outline into four coloured quarters (brown, orange and beige). In the north-western medallion (Fig. 5) there are concentric circles decorated with a braid and a schematic laurel wreath, whose design recalls a herringbone pattern, and a ‘Solomon’s knot’ in the centre (Décor I: 42). In the north-eastern medallion (Fig. 8) is a ‘harmonic shield’ of the concentric circle type, each circle made up of coloured squares and rectangles (white, brown and orange). The diameter of the concentric circles gradually decreases towards the middle, where there is a central circle divided into quarters, coloured white and purple (Décor I: pl. 335a).

Between the large medallions on the western side is a medallion (Fig. 9) containing concentric geometric/flower patterns: a schematic flower with edges decorated in alternating grey and orange, and petals coloured orange, brown and black. The centre of the flower is decorated with coloured concentric circles surrounded by a rope pattern.

Between the large medallions on the northern side is a medallion (Fig. 3), in which there is a square containing a diamond designed in a rope pattern. Within the diamond is a circle, divided into four. The corners of the square are decorated with a rainbow pattern in black, orange, grey and purple.

In the space formed between the medallions and the border on the western side are two semicircles. The northern one (Fig. 5) contains concentric semicircles

in grey, brown, and orange. The southern one (Fig. 3) has a colourful net pattern, schematically imitating a shell motif. In the space between the medallions and the border on the northern side are two semicircles containing dedicatory inscriptions. The text written in and outside the north-western circle reads: “Nestabos the reader. Iaia his mother”, and in the north-eastern circle: “Zonenos the monk” (trans. Di Segni 2012: 154-157) (Fig. 3).



Figure 7
Nave carpet: radial harmonic shield medallion.



Figure 8
Nave carpet: harmonic shield medallion of the concentric circles type.

The decoration in the corners of the carpet, that is, the space formed between the medallions and the border, is not precise and in some places spills over and fills the space between the medallions. The south-western and north-eastern corners of the carpet are decorated with a rainbow pattern (Fig. 8). The north-western

corner is decorated with lines/waves in grey, orange and black. The north-eastern corner has not survived.

b. A long, narrow panel has survived to the west of the carpet, which is likely to have extended the entire width of the nave. The carpet is geometric, and decorated with a pattern of a grid of squares containing small diamonds (Fig. 10).



Figure 9
Nave carpet: geometric medallion and bird.

Figure 10
Geometric panel to the west of the nave.



The grid and the diamonds are formed with a black outline, and the diamonds are filled in orange. In the centre of each diamond is a single white stone. Scattered around the panel are simple diamonds of different sizes.

c. On either side of the base of the only column that has survived *in situ* out of the northern row of columns of the basilica, two geometric panels have been preserved (Fig. 11). The panel on the eastern side is partly preserved and is decorated with a grid of dark coloured diamonds containing white circles. Around the edges, white triangles are formed. The panel on the west side (Fig. 12) consists of a grid of interlaced squares and diamonds in the centre (Avi-Yonah 1933: H2; Ovadiah - Ovadiah 1987: H2), and a grid of diamonds and triangles at the sides. The grid of squares is populated alternately by small squares and Xs creating four triangles, each decorated in varying colours of red, pale red, beige, grey, light brown, orange, pale yellow, and white. Despite the simple geometric pattern, the use of a variety of colours creates a very rich panel. Nearby, along the western edges are black-outlined lozenge shapes, in which are concentric lozenges in reddish and grey colours.

d. The north aisle is decorated with a geometric mosaic (Fig. 2), of which the north-western corner has survived. The aisle mosaic is surrounded by a simple border of lines, and decorated with a grid of interlaced octagons in which squares are set. The interlacing of the octagons creates hexagons surrounding the squares (Avi-Yonah 1933: H3; Ovadiah - Ovadiah 1987: H3; Décor I: pl. 128a). Small lozenges facing in different directions populate the squares and hexagons, and small triangles decorate the opposing corners of each hexagon, thus forming a dense and crowded grid⁴. Inset in the geometric grid is a large square, in which there is a medallion containing a Greek inscription (Fig. 13). The inscription reads from west to east: “Lord Jesus, help thy handmaid Marcella, for she founded [a holy church (?) of - -] and of Virgin Mary” (trans. Di Segni 2012: 157). The space formed between the medallion and the corners of the square is

Figure 11
Ancient phase A –column base – view to the west.

Figure 12
Western panel between columns.



Figure 13
Greek inscription in the northern aisle.

⁴ The carpet was left in situ and covered. Only black and white photographs remain, and therefore it is not possible to note the colours of the carpet.

decorated with a zigzag pattern in grey, orange, light brown, purple, black, and beige. The borders surrounding the carpet are white, and are decorated with small diamonds, far apart from each other at irregular distances.

Technical and Stylistic Analysis of the Central Carpet

The mosaic is made up of figurative, plant, and geometric motifs, schematically and imprecisely designed, and no care is given to proportional relations between the different motifs. The components are designed with a dark outline and have a generally flat appearance, with no attempt to create any illusion of volume. The elements of the composition are carelessly drawn.

Design of the Inanimate Objects

The amphora (Fig. 14) is made up of a round body, short neck, and two carrying handles on the shoulders. All of the details are outlined in black. The spherical body is divided around its width by two parallel lines, between which there are orange, grey, and yellow squares. The lower part of the amphora is reddish in colour, on which an unclear motif is depicted. The upper part of the vessel is divided into a grey area, an orange/light brown area, and a grey neck. The ornamentation is decorative and flat.

Figure 14
Amphora set in the border of the nave carpet.



The cross (Fig. 4) is outlined in orange and filled with yellow and beige tesserae. Light and dark brown tesserae are distributed at random, and do not create the gemstone motif common in *crux gemmata* type crosses.

Design of the Geometric Motifs

The radial and converging harmonic shields (Figs. 7-8), the shell, and the geometric motifs are designed in a variety of colours. However, all the motifs are very flat, other than the Solomon's knot motif (Fig. 5), whose loops are drawn accurately and given volume by the use of graduated colour, from light to dark, and emphasizing the points where the loops meet with single white stones. The absence of a preliminary scheme before laying the mosaic resulted in the motifs being positioned imprecisely and carelessly. The medallions and semicircles

overlap each other, sometimes cutting through each other, and sometimes becoming smaller or larger in order to fill a space. The sides of the squares that are set inside each other are unequal, and a distorted pattern is formed. Thus the design of the rope and laurel wreath pattern is careless to the point where the latter becomes a geometric pattern rather than a vegetal motif (Avi-Yonah 1933: A18). The little birds and diamonds fill the background in a random manner, without prior planning of the composition, and are inaccurately designed. The rainbow pattern and the wave patterns that decorate the corners of the carpet have also lost their characteristic three-dimensional nature, due to the absence of graduated colours. The rows of colours (pink, black, and grey) do not create the necessary sense of volume.

The lack of sophisticated use of colours in the design of the harmonic shields, and the placing of colours at random, rather than graduated as is usual in this pattern, turn the shields into relatively flat patterns, in which the characteristic illusion of circular movement is limited. This contrasts with the typical harmonic shield design made up of colourful squares laid in diagonal lines, gradually increasing towards the outer edge and thus creating the illusion of circular movement, endlessly converging or opening out, such as those that appear in the Antioch mosaics in the 'House of the Amazonomachy', the Bath of Apolausis, and the mosaic from Daphne, dated to the second half of the 5th century AD (Levi 1947: II: pls. LXVIIIb, CXXIa, CXXIIIa; Cimok 2000: 238, 240 figs. on pp. 238, 240). The pattern is similarly found in the centre of the nave in the churches of Israel, sometimes by dedicatory inscriptions, such as in the Church of Bishop John at Gan Yavneh (AD 511) (Habas 2012a: 131 figs. 1, 4; 2012b: 510-511 fig. 15), and in the church at Khirbet el-Shubeika (AD 785/6), where a Greek cross is set in the centre of the shield (Syon 2003: 79 figs. 3, 7). In Jordan, it appears in the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damianus (AD 623/4) at Khirbat Dariya (Karasneh 1997: 28-30, 33-34 figs. 12, 18; Habas 2012b: 508-599 fig. 12). The colourful, flat depiction of the radial harmonic shield in the church at Ozem has similar parallels, where the ribs of the shield are coloured, and each rib is decorated in a different, uniform colour. In these cases, the illusion of circular movement is obtained by means of the curving ends of the ribs of the shield, reminiscent of a weathervane, as in the upper floor of the synagogue at Horvat Susiya (Peleg 2006: 67-68 fig. 98), and the mosaic of the church in the monastery at Khirbet ed-Deir (Talgam 1999: 111 fig. 13). A perfect illusion of infinite circular movement is achieved in radial harmonic shields in which each rib is designed in a colour laid in a diagonal line, creating the illusion of movement, as in the church of Khaldé-Choueifat, Lebanon (Chéhab 1957: 112; 1959: pl. LXXII.2; Donceel-Voûte 1988: I: fig. 351, II pl. 15).

Design of the Vegetal Motifs

In the lotus flowers of the border (Figs. 3, 5), the lower part of the cup is grey and orange, while the upper part is beige and white. The absence of graduated colours creates flat flowers. A flat design, but one which uses two shades for the lower part of each lotus cup, is found in the burial chapel of the Monastery at Khirbet ed-Deir in the Judean Desert, dated to the last quarter of the 5th century AD (Talgam 1999: 113, 116 fig. 18), in the nave of the synagogue at Ma'on (Nirim) (Avi-Yonah 1960: 86 pl. 92), and in a floor from Daphne-Antioch, dated to the 5th century AD (Cimok 2000: 48 fig. 9).

The Design of the Figurative Components

The design of the little birds, both in the border and in the carpet (Figs. 3, 6, 9), makes use of black lines to depict the outside of the body and the wing. The upper part is dark, while the abdomen is light in colour. The feet are shown in purple, a black dot denotes the eyes, and the triangular beaks are red. The depiction of the bird to the south-west of the central medallion is slightly different: the bird's body is decoratively embellished by lines of stones in different colours.

The peacocks are designed in the same way (Figs. 3, 15): the body is shades of black, while the upper part is designed as a half-ellipse in orange, and beneath it rows of brown stones follow the elliptical outline. The wing is indicated by two rows of light brown stones, separated from each other by a row of black tesserae. A single grey stone marks the eye. While the head, neck and body are depicted from the side, the peacock's long tail is shown from above, revealing

Figure 15
Peacock set in the border of the
nave carpet.



the decorative eyes of the tail feathers. Each eye appears as a light brown circle, within which there is an orange circle, and at the centre, a single black stone. The depiction of the peacocks combining two viewpoints originates in the accepted formula in use in Roman and Byzantine mosaics (Habas 2016: 279-280 and the reference there).

The pair of lions (Fig. 4) is designed very schematically and the proportions of the body parts are distorted. The body is outlined with a brown line, filled in yellow, with scattered brown and beige stones. The mane is denoted by parallel orange diagonal lines. A small black circle surrounding a white stone marks the eyes. The mouth is open, revealing a red tongue. The paws are shown as alternating black and red dots, and the tail curls up in a semicircle. The donkey (Fig. 3) is depicted with a black outline filled with alternating rows of black and orange following the outline of the body. His tail is short, and his hoofs are shown with black, orange and white dots.

The decorative depiction of coloured rows in the little bird and the donkey, the uniform fill of the bodies of the other birds and the lions, and the lack of varied and graduated colours – all these give the animals a flat and schematic design, far from the natural model. The mosaic tesserae in the empty areas between the motifs were laid in different directions, and as a result the motifs are swallowed up in the background. In only a few cases, it can be seen that the rows of tesserae were laid following the outline of the motifs – a method that could have made the components of the composition more prominent.

The size of the stones is not uniform, varying from one motif to another, between 0.5 cm² and 1.8 cm². Even the cutting of the stones into a general shape of a square or rectangle is characterized by a lack of precision. The density of the tesserae per square decimetre is 64 (the lotus border and the lion), 81 (medallions) or 100 (peacocks).

Researchers determine the quality of laying mosaics according to the density of tesserae per square decimetre. According to Avi-Yonah, group A of the mosaics at Ozem are of high quality (a density of 42 – 100 tesserae per square decimetre), while according to Dauphin, they are of medium quality (a density of 60 – 110 tesserae per square decimetre) (Avi-Yonah 1934: 72; Dauphin 1976: 123-125, 133 fig. 6). Tesserae of coloured limestone were used for the mosaic, while the grey tesserae are made of grey veined marble.

The Compositional Array

The iconographic plan whereby the motifs and inscriptions face in different directions forces the worshipper to move in all directions, in and around the panel, in order to see one motif or another. This movement is heightened by the four large medallions, set in the corners of the carpet and decorated with harmonic shields, which are characterized by the illusion of infinite circular movement, causing the worshipper to stop and focus his gaze on the centre of the carpet – on the inscription set in the central medallion, marking completion of construction of the church, and read from west to east. Turning to the north the worshipper will see a pair of peacocks, and the other inscriptions can be read when standing on the northern side of the panel or in the northern aisle and looking towards the south. The depiction of the lions on either side of the cross on the western side of the border can be seen by the worshipper when standing in the nave and looking west – towards the exit.

The choice of a carpet for the nave that is complex and rich in motifs, by comparison with the simple geometric carpet in the northern aisle, expresses the hierarchic approach that exists in the mosaics adorning the churches and synagogues in the Byzantine period. The hierarchy indicates the importance given to the nave of the basilica, and the tendency to decorate secondary spaces, including the aisles, with simple geometric or vegetal nets (Habas 2016: 280 and the reference there).

The Iconographic Meaning

The Lions in Antithetical Array and the Cross

The antithetical array is very common in mosaic floors in the churches of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria (Donceel-Voûte 1988: I: 478-479; Habas 2005: I:

136-139, 154-158, 206-208, 364-378; Hachlili 2009: 199-208). This is a composition that takes the animals out of context, landscape, and movement, and places them facing a central, inanimate motif, dedicatory inscription, vegetal motif, or religious symbol. An antithetical array of lions and lionesses is frequently found in mosaic floors in Israel, such as in the churches at Hazor-Ashdod, Khirbat 'Asida, Horvat Be'er Shem'a, and the burial chapel of Saint Stephen in Mount Zion in Jerusalem, as well as in the synagogues at Hammath Tiberias, Hammath Gader, Na'aran, and Ma'on (Nirim). In Jordan, it can be seen in the Lower Chapel of the Priest John in Khirbat al-Mukhayat, the chapel of Suwayfiyah, the church at Petra, and the Church of the Lions at Umm al-Rasas (Habas 2016: 281 and the reference there).

In the church at Ozem, the pair of lions in antithetical array faces towards a Latin cross. Above the horizontal arm of the cross are the Greek letters *alpha* and *omega*, which are an accepted abbreviation of ἄ(λφα) (καί) ὤ(μέγα), referring to the words of Jesus in Revelation 1:8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come"; and in Revelation 22:13: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end". Below the horizontal arm are the Greek letters *iota-chi*, representing Ἰ (ησοῦς) Χ(ριστός) (Avi-Yonah 1940: 53, 73).

The choice of placing a lion next to a cross and the Greek letters Α, Ω, Ι, Χ is not coincidental. In ancient cultures the lion is described as having divine qualities, and is a symbol of power and strength. Accordingly, gods and heroes adopted the figure of the lion (Charbonneau-Lassay 1974: 35-37; Pollitt 1986: 26, 36-37). In Judaism, the lion appears on King Solomon's throne as a symbol of government (1 Kings 10: 20) and in Jacob's blessing (Genesis 49: 9-10), and was one of the four creatures in the vision of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:10), and in this way passed into Christianity (Revelation 5:8; 6:5-6). The positive qualities of the lion as a symbol of strength and courage in antiquity and its appearance in Jacob's blessing led the Church Fathers to draw an analogy with Jesus Christ, based on John's vision in Revelation 5:5: "Then one of the elders said to me, Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals", and to see it as a symbol of the Resurrection.

Origen, Epiphanius, and the Physiologus quoted a legend from the writings of Aristotle, Pliny and Plutarch, telling of a lioness who gave birth to dead cubs, and for three days the cubs gave no sign of life. On the third day the lion returned and brought them back to life with a roar or exhalation, and the Christian meaning is: "Just so did the Father Omnipotent raise Our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day" (trans. White 1954: 8; French 1994: 279; Kalof 2007: 46; Salisbury 2011: 86). The Church Fathers also drew an analogy with the story of Christ resurrected after three days (Acts of the Apostles 26:23), and according to Paul, Christ will bring his followers back to life (Epistle to the Romans 6). Another legend describes the lion sleeping in the desert with his eyes open, and the Church Fathers interpreted this thus: "In this very way, Our Lord also, while sleeping in the body, was buried after being crucified - yet his Godhead was awake. As it is said in the *Song of Songs*, 'I am asleep and my heart is awake', or in the *Psalms* 'Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep'..." (Etymologies 12, 2: 4-5; trans. White 1954: 8; Barney et al. 2006: 251). Hilarius and Augustine drew a parallel between the unique way in which the lion slept and the ever-watchfulness of the Messiah, who sees all and protects the souls of the faithful from all harm, like the Good Shepherd keeping his flock (in Charbonneau-Lassay 1974: 37-44). The lion symbolizes the Evangelist Mark,

because he dealt a great deal with the resurrection of the Messiah and emphasized the kingdom of Christ (Ferguson 1961: 21-22), as in the words of Jerome: “Mark is depicted as a lion because his gospel tells mainly of the resurrection; and indeed they say that for three days after they are born, lion cubs sleep like the dead, and then they are woken by the roars of the mother lioness...”. These interpretations were adopted in Christian iconography (Testini 1985: 1147-1150; Baudry 2009: 108-109).

The appearance of crosses in mosaic floors in churches in the Holy Land is common, and mosaic floors that have been exposed show that crosses also adorned the inside of both secular and religious buildings. In ecclesiastical buildings, crosses of different types are found in different areas (Hachlili 2009: 224-226 fig. XI: 2 pl. XI:2), visible to all, in passages between one area and another, at the front of the entrances and liturgical areas, and in the liturgical spaces.

There are many examples from Israel, including two crosses which were uncovered in the Monastery at Umm Deimine, one of them at the entrance to the chapel (Amir 2012: 447, 481 fig. 46: 6; Magen - Batz - Sharuk 2012: 455-456 figs. 4 26-27). Other examples include two crosses set into the nave pavement of the East Church at Mamshit (Mampsis). The first, a Maltese cross, is situated in front of the main entrance. The second, a Greek cross, is situated in front of the bema (Negev 1988: 41-42 photos 40-42). In the Church of Saint Bacchus at Horvat Tinshemet, a cross appears at the entrance to the northern aisle (Dahari 2012: 106 figs. 4, 6). Crosses also decorate the centre of the halls, as in the Northern Chapel of the church at ‘Anab el-Kabir (Amir 2012: 452 fig. 10; Magen - Peleg - Sharukh 2012: 349, 361-362 figs. 1, 4, 24, 39); in the Monastery Church at Khirbet Yattir (Eshel - Magness - Shenhav 2000: 158 figs. 7, 10; Bordowicz 2007: 75-77 figs. 31, 71, 94-95); in the northern chapel of the Central Church at Beit ‘Anun (Amir 2012: 457 fig. 48:3; Magen 2012: 153 figs. 34, 63); and in the northern aisle of the church at Shavei Zion (Avi-Yonah 1967: 49 pls. XXVIII-XXIX, XLb plans 2, 7).

Crosses are frequently located at the eastern end of the halls (the nave and the aisles), and at the front of the liturgical spaces (bema and sacristies), thus emphasizing the transition from the open space intended for lay worshippers to the enclosed space in which the ritual was held, intended only for the clergy: crosses appear at the eastern end of the nave of the church at Khirbet Zur (Batz - Sharukh 2012: 16-17 figs. 13, 19), in the church at Khirbet el-Shubeika (AD 785/6) (Syon 2003: 79 fig. 7), and in the southern aisle of the Church of Saint Bacchus at Horvat Tinshemet (Dahari 2012: 106 figs. 4, 7).

In the liturgical spaces crosses sometimes emphasised the apses, as in the church at Khirbet el-Beiyûdât (Hizmi 1990: 252-254 fig. 6 plan on p. 246); in the church at Khirbet Umm er-Rus (Magen - Kagan 2012: 126 figs. 238:1, 238:3); in the Southern Chapel of the monastery at Beth Hashitta (Aharoni 1954: 212 fig. 1 pl. 7:2); in the Western Church at Tel Kerioth (Govrin 2006: 46-47, 115-116 figs. 31-32, 109 pl. 14); and in the Western Church at Horvat Qastra (Finkielsztejn 2005: 442-443 figs. 10-11)⁵. Crosses also mark altar tables or offering tables, as in the church at Shavei Zion (Avi-Yonah 1967: 48 pls. VIIb, X-XI, XXVIIb, XXXVIIIb plans 4, 8). In these depictions in liturgical spaces, the cross emphasizes the Eucharist ritual that takes place in the bema or in the apse, and the sacrifice of Christ.

5 My deepest gratitude for pictures and cooperation to the excavator G erald Finkielsztejn, IAA.

Depictions of crosses accompanied by the Greek letters ΑΩ are also found in Israel, such as in the centre of the southern aisle of the church at Aluma⁶, the church at Tiberias,⁷ the narthex of the church at Nesher,⁸ and the chapel at Horvat Hermeshit (Greenhut 1998: 122 fig. 4). They have been found in Jordan, at the entrance to a private house in Tell Ma'in (Piccirillo - Acconci 1997: 488-489 figs. 1-2), and in the northern apse of the church at Hufa al-Wastiyah (Abu Dalu 1994: 13 figs. 5, 11). A monogrammatic cross appears in the cave/grotto at Nazareth (Bagatti 1967: 99 fig. 55), and in the north-western room of the church at Evron (AD 442/3) (Ovadia - Ovadia 1987: 59-60 pl. XLIX.2 no. 80).

Roussin saw the cross and the Christogram as the most common Christian symbols in the mosaic floors of churches in the Holy Land; however, Talgam drew attention to the fact that despite the discovery of crosses in many churches, they are still few in number by comparison with the hundreds of churches adorned with mosaics that do not contain crosses (Roussin 1985: 59-74; Talgam 2014: 477).

The appearance of crosses in mosaic floors in churches would seem to be surprising, because it contravenes the edict issued in AD 427 by the Emperor Theodosius II prohibiting crosses on floors: "It being our concern to preserve by all means the faith in God Supreme, we hereby decree that no-one shall carve or draw the sign of the Lord our Saviour on the floor or on a slab of marble laid over the ground; those that are found shall be removed, and whoever dares to break this law shall be punished with a heavy fine" (*Cod. Just.* I, viii; trans. Mango 1986: 36). However, this edict had little influence on the mosaics of our region. The lack of compliance with the prohibition of Theodosius is attested to by the archaeological evidence of crosses carved in stone or incorporated in the mosaic floors in churches in Israel and Transjordan (Habas 2005: I: 313-315, 372-373; 2015; in print; Hachlili 2009: 225-226), Syria, and Lebanon (Donceel-Voûte 1988: I: 17-18, 22, 28, 262, 265-266, 428, 436). The survey of crosses in mosaic floors in churches and chapels in the Holy Land, all of which were built and embellished with mosaics after the edict was announced, testifies to the gap between the spirit of the edict and reality on the ground (Habas 2005: I: 370-373, 378-384; 2015, where there is a detailed discussion and references).

Evidence of failure to comply with the edict can also be found in the fact that another edict was published in AD 691, included in the canons of the Ecumenical Council in Trullo. Canon LXXIII renews the edict of Theodosius, and repeats the prohibition against representing and depicting the cross in inappropriate places: "Since the life-giving cross has shown to us Salvation, we should be careful that we render due honour to that by which we were saved from the ancient fall. Wherefore, in mind, in word, in feeling giving veneration to it, we command that the figure of the cross, which some have placed on the floor, be entirely removed there from, lest the trophy of the victory won for us be desecrated by the trampling under foot of those who walk over it. Therefore those who from this present represent on the pavement the sign of the cross, we decree are to be cut off".⁹ This points to the continued existence of crosses in church

6 The church at Aluma has not been published yet. My deepest gratitude for pictures and cooperation to the excavator Daniel Varga, IAA.

7 Not yet published, excavated by M. Hartal, IAA.

8 Not yet published, excavated by S. Kol-Yakov, University of Haifa.

9 H. R. Percival (ed.), *The Seven Ecumenical Councils. The Council in Trullo: Quinisext Council*, Published by P. Schaff, New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886; Trans. <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txud/counci34.htm> ch. Pidalion, *Canons of the Orthodox Church*, Athens, 1957, 283.

floors in practice (Kitzinger 1970: 646-647 note 39; Tzaferis 1971: 61-63). As a symbol of redemption, protection, health and good fortune, the cross has become a powerful divine symbol, and the personal symbol of Christ. These meanings explain why the imperial decree was not upheld, despite the conflict of potential desecration of the sacred symbol because some of the crosses were in places where people would walk and step on them. Hence the opinion of those who consider the date AD 427 as the *terminus post quem* for cross representations must be rejected, since crosses were placed in mosaic floors before, during and after the edicts were issued.

The Peacocks

The cross and the letters ΑΩ and ΙΧ therefore represent Christ. The appearance of the peacocks underlines the salvation and redemption that Jesus brings to his followers, an aspect that stems from the peacock being a symbol of resurrection in pagan cultures. Aristotle and Pliny attributed to the peacock the ability to preserve its body, and not to decay. The peacock loses its beautiful tail feathers before the winter, and grows them again in the spring, and thus became a symbol of resurrection of the dead (Aristot. hist. an. X, 7; Plin.nat. X, XXII, 43-44; Leclercq 1937: 1075-1076; Blanchard-Lemée 1996: 255). In Roman Imperial iconography, peacocks accompany the souls of the Roman Empresses to heaven in scenes of the imperial *apotheosis* (Charbonneau-Lassay 1974: 623; Dunbabin 1978: 166; Testini 1985: 1125). The pagan concept of the indestructible body of the peacock and the fact that it was a symbol of resurrection and eternity were adopted in Christianity, and passed into its iconography. They are manifested, among other things, in the church mosaic floors (Habas 2005: I: 443-447; 2014: 149).

Mosaics Group B (The Second Phase of the Church)

a. In the west of the church at Ozem is a long and narrow carpet (Figs. 1, 16). The carpet is surrounded by a simple double border (Avi-Yonah 1933: A1) in grey and white, and inside it a frame of interlaced circles. The interlaces are made up of two ribbons in graduated colours: one ribbon is grey, white, beige, yellow-light brown, and grey. The other ribbon is grey, beige, pink, orange, and grey. The circles are interlaced in a loop, emphasized in the centre with a single white stone. The carpet is decorated with a rich geometric grid, made up of large and small white circles in a central row, and semicircles touching the border. In the circles of the central row are large and small diamonds, and set in them are various interlaces on a dark background. Set in the semicircles are triangles, and in them are geometric interlaces and patterns.

The geometric grid is complex, and *trompe-l'oeil* illusions are created between its elements, since the space formed between the circles and the semicircles creates a kind of hourglass pattern, emphasized with a dark colour, and the space between the different diamonds and the triangles creates white frameworks in which these hourglasses are set, in alternating yellow and red. The large diamonds are populated by a variety of interlaces: a guilloche made up of three ribbons, a square guilloche with curving ribbons (Fig. 17), and a square guilloche with angular ribbons (Fig. 18). The small diamonds are populated by a Solomon's knot with alternate rounded loops (Fig. 19), and angular loops (Fig. 20) (Avi-Yonah 1933: I11; Ovadiah 1980: I4; Décor I: 42-43 pl. 409e). The triangles next to the border are populated by colourful interlaces and crow-steps (Ovadiah 1980: A5-6). In the surrounding margins are small diamonds.



Figure 16
Mosaics group B: long, narrow geometric
carpet.



Figure 17
Long, narrow geometric carpet: square
guilloche interlace with curling ribbons.



Figure 18
Long, narrow geometric carpet:
square guilloche interlace with
angular ribbons.



Figure 19
Long, narrow geometric carpet:
Solomon's knot with rounded loops.



Figure 20
Long, narrow geometric carpet:
Solomon's knot with angular
loops and graduated triangle.

Technical and Stylistic Analysis

As in the border, the artist has also used graduated colours to design the ribbons that make up the interlace in the carpet. In this way, a three-dimensional illusion has been created in the patterns.

Most of the tesserae are square or rectangular, cut in varying sizes, and some are cut into triangles as necessary. Their size is between 1, 1.2, and 1.5 cm. The tesserae are laid carefully and well, as is the design of the patterns. The density of the tesserae in square decimetres is 42 and 64 in the border, and 72, 81, and 90 in the carpet interlaces. Similar to mosaics group A, mosaics group B is defined as high quality by Avi-Yonah, and medium quality by Dauphin (Avi-Yonah 1934: 72; Dauphin 1976: 123-125, 133 fig. 6). Most of the tesserae are made of

limestone, in red, pink, white, brown, yellow, and beige; the grey tesserae are veined grey marble, and the red tesserae are terracotta. The background stones are laid in accordance with the nearest pattern, thus emphasizing it.

b. To the south of the long carpet, part of a small panel has survived, decorated with rows of squares laid in colours creating multi-coloured diagonal stripes (Fig. 21).

c. To the east of the long carpet, part of a narrow panel has survived, decorated with lozenges laid in different directions - one light on a dark background, and the other light on a light background.

d. In the east a square panel has survived, inset with a circle populated by eight concentric circles of different sizes, around a square guilloche set in the centre. The corners of the square are decorated with a rainbow pattern. The square panel was originally part of a narrow carpet, made up of several squares and spread across the width of the nave, of which only the remains of the border have survived. Small diamonds were set in the surrounding margins (Fig. 22).

Mosaics Group C (The Third - Late – Phase of the Church)¹⁰

a. On the north-western side a carpet was uncovered, decorated with a pattern of interconnected octagons set with small squares (Fig. 1), which is identical to the north aisle floor of the ancient church (Avi-Yonah 1933: H3; Ovadiah 1980: H3).

b. On the south-western side, the remains of a carpet decorated with a scale pattern were found (Fig. 1) (Ovadiah 1980: J3).

The Date of the Mosaics

Mosaics group A is dated to AD 430/1 – the date of completion of construction of the ancient church, which appears in an inscription in the nave carpet. The palaeography – the square letters – is also characteristic of the 5th century AD. Also characteristic of the 5th century AD is the flat style of the mosaics, the geometric trend, and the different viewpoints. The mention of Virgin Mary in the northern aisle without the title Theotokos also, in the opinion of Di Segni, points to a date prior to the first Council of Ephesus (AD 431), at which Mary was proclaimed Mother of God. Following this declaration, many churches were dedicated to Maria Theotokos (Di Segni 2012: 157).

Due to the differences in heights, it is clear that mosaics group B is later than group A, and there is a clear difference in the quality of laying the mosaics, which is careful and good quality in group B. The different hints at a different group of artists. Mosaics group C is the latest in the building. The date at which the church was abandoned is not clear, and it was destroyed due to building in the Middle Ages.

Conclusions

The three stages in the mosaic floors of the church at Ozem add to our understanding of the internal developments in the history of the church, whose construction began in AD 430/1, and which continued to function through the 5th and the beginning of the 6th centuries, with renovations to its structure and

¹⁰ The carpets remain in situ. No details were found in the Antiquities Department archive file on the mosaics group C, other than their mention in the plan of the church.

Figure 21
Panel of squares creating colored
diagonal lines to the south of the long,
narrow geometric carpet.



Figure 22
Panel of circles.



decoration. We also learn about the choice of motifs, and the technical and stylistic changes that took place between the different stages.

The names of the donors appearing in the dedicatory inscriptions, which include women and men from the Christian community alongside the name of a monk, testify to cooperation between the clergy and the lay members of the community in the construction and adornment of the church – a common phenomenon that appears in many inscriptions found on mosaic floors in the churches of the Holy Land.

The cross and the letters A Ω , and I X in a mosaic floor dated to AD 430/1 provide another example contributing to the survey of crosses in mosaic floors in churches and chapels in the Holy Land, all of which were built and embellished with mosaics after the edict issued in AD 427 by the Emperor Theodosius II prohibiting crosses on floors, and testifies to the gap between the spirit of the edict and reality on the ground.

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