

## **The Research base for the museum**

### **Illustrated Atlas of Everyday Life in Mishnaic and Talmudic Times**

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#### **Detailed description of the research program**

**Bar Ilan Uni.**

#### **Illustrated Atlas of Everyday Life in Mishnaic and Talmudic Times**

The study of everyday life is a branch of historical and archaeological research of every period. The study of everyday life in the period of the Mishna and the Talmud is particularly interesting and important because hundreds of utensils and items from everyday life are mentioned in the rabbinical literature, and understanding them is an important part of understanding all the layers and concealed aspects of this literature.

The aim of the proposed research is to prepare an illustrated atlas of everyday life in the Land of Israel during the period of the Mishna and Talmud (c. 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE).

There are a number of immediate sources for this research. The use of these sources is nothing new in itself, but there has yet to be a representation of all the various study methods. The sources and methods of study are as follows:

- a. The literary and historical background from which we can learn how the tool was made and what was its function. And at the same time, the nature of the utensil sometimes teaches us about the halakhic background.
- b. The linguistic background in Hebrew, Aramaic dialects, Arabic and mainly in Greek and Latin.
- c. A systematic examination of contemporary archaeological parallels. Findings that teach us about pottery or stone vessels, depictions of artifacts on oil-lamps, wall paintings, sculptures and reliefs, mosaic floors etc.

- d. The ethno-archaeological sources, and in particular the life of the traditional Arab village, which preserved ancient vessels and work and methods, and in some cases even names of vessels (Safrai 1994a).
- e. The actual conditions, the technical limitations, and modern laws of physics.

The proposed study will provide scholars and students with an extensive and interdisciplinary study, planned to be published as a book. Significant studies have been undertaken in the past, but none was aimed at a systematic overview of the field.

There may be something new in presenting the list of the sources and the study methods in an orderly fashion, but there is nothing new in the use made of them. Various individual scholars made intelligent and brilliant use of some work technique or other - although it is often amusing to see how they ignored clear proof from one of the study methods and sources we have enumerated.

For example, Avitzur and Dalman depended to a great extent on what they experienced and observed in the traditional Arab village (Avitzur 1976; 1976a; Dalman 1928-1942 and many more). Lieberman (1991: 381-383; 383-391; 426-427) made an impressive use of the study of the many layers of the Greek language. Sperber discussed a series of difficult words and terms, displaying expertise both in the Greek language and in the archaeological findings from all over the empire (Sperber 1986; 1994; 2006). In his second book he even has an appendix dealing with the key seen by a traveler in Palestine in the Middle Ages, which is a unique type of ethno-archaeological evidence. Löw and Felix dealt with the identification of ancient plants (a subject that we will not be dealing with at this stage of the proposed project), both of them basing most of the identifications on the botanical and physiological traits of the plants, etc (Löw 1967, Felix 1990, 1994, 1997).

But at the same time, it seems that only few scholars managed to combine all the research methods. We will not bring many examples, because anyone can make mistakes, and those responsible for the proposal cannot boast that they have not made any errors. But who can compare with Lieberman, who made amazing new discoveries, and came to the conclusion that for biological and physical reasons a donkey cannot turn a grinding stone, but whose argument is contradicted by depictions of a grinding stone harnessed to a donkey that appear on gravestones in Rome. The entire article includes important details that he clarified and introduced, and on this detail he missed this evidence at the time (Lieberman 1991: 331-339).

The important studies done in the past are divided into three: one group is the sporadic explanations of isolated terms that presented difficulties and were explained. These include many articles published by leading scholars; Sperber's articles, which we have already mentioned, are an excellent example of that. Another group is the studies that describe a specific branch of work, such as the textile industry (Herszberg 1924; Safrai 1994); the "beauty industry" (Herszberg 1924) the honey industry (Safrai 1994), the stone industry (Safrai and Sasson, 2001); the Balsamon `industry` (Felix 1997) and many others. The third type are orderly catalogues of vessels of a specific nature, such as ceramic vessels (Brand 1953); glass vessels (Brand 1978), as well as incomplete catalogues of exhibits such as Zebulun and Olenik (1978), Dayagi-Mendels (1989) and others.

Recently a number of doctoral dissertations have been written that are based on catalogues of archaeological findings, such as Waner (2007) on musical instruments or Ayalon (2003) on bone tools; Pintsi (1985) on wooden vessels, Cohen (1995) on the leather industry, as well as Sitry (2006) on the wood industry. We are proud of the fact that most of these papers were written under the auspices of the department in which we teach. At present a series of doctoral dissertations are dealing with these subjects, such as the cataloguing of metal vessels (M Levin), food in the rabbinical literature and in ancient times (T. Dikstein) etc.

## **The quality and method of research**

### **Stage 1 – Cataloguing**

The study that we are proposing is a multi-stage study. During the first stage we propose the writing of an atlas of work tools and terminology from everyday life that are mentioned in the rabbinical literature; an examination of the preferred version of the term, and its identification according to existing studies and according to our studies, and based on all the work methods presented above. For example, in the study of ceramic vessels we will not make do with a list and a description of the vessel (excellent work that was done by Brand in 1953, but requires updating), but will attempt to identify the vessels from among all the many vessels that we have. We will do the same with musical instruments. Thanks to Waner's catalogue we are very familiar with the findings, but to each instrument we will add an identification of the existing instrument with the ancient name. If the sources mentioned two "identical" names such as *havit* (barrel) and

*kad* (pitcher), or *halil* (flute) and *abuv* (oboe), we will try to find a representative subgroup for each term.

In this context we will deal with all the tools and everyday terminology (not including geographical names and names of plants), and the vessels will be divided into subgroups such as: Ceramic vessels, glass vessels, bone vessels, wooden vessels, metal vessels, stone vessels, furniture, work terminology, the ceramic industry, the textile industry, lighting implements, clothing, work tools etc.

At the same time we will prepare the list of the vessels and the everyday terminology in the literature (based on existing literature and on a systematic examination of the rabbinical literature). We will prepare a comparative chart of translations into Greek, Aramaic, Syriac and Latin of all of the vessels mentioned in the Bible, etc. Some of the work has already been done. For example in the context of *Mishnat Eretz Israel* all the vessels mentioned in the Mishna and most of those in the Tosefta were presented and discussed (Safrai and Safrai 2008; 2009; and in print, Lapin 2001 etc.).

Up to this point this work is important, but contains no methodological innovation. Such studies have been done by us and by others. The advantage of the proposed study lies in concentrating the data on vessels and the method of presentation, thus enabling scholars and students to benefit from the findings and the explanations. In effect we will create two catalogues: one of vessels mentioned in the literary sources, and primarily in the rabbinical literature, and the second a catalogue of the various findings from archaeological excavations and chance finds.

## **Stage 2 – An analysis of the catalogue**

At this stage, and based on our catalogue, we propose a series of examinations that are innovative both in asking the question and in the method of examination (and of course in the results as well, although at this stage of the research we don't know precisely what they are). The goal is to compare the corpus of literary findings with the corpus of the archaeological findings, and to answer a series of new questions, such as:

- a. Does the literature faithfully represent the archaeological reality, including the quantity of vessels, for example: which vessels are most popular in the literature and which in the archaeological findings; do the findings in the rabbinical sources represent the vessels in

the homes of the wealthy or in the homes of the lower social strata. At first glance, for instance, it seems that the rabbinical literature does not reflect the wealth of bone vessels in the findings. On this matter the literature does not reflect the situation in the `field`. This creates an opening for various theories and interpretative possibilities.

On the other hand, at first glance it seems that the relatively few iron vessels that were found in excavations in the Land of Israel are those described in the rabbinical literature. But the clothing described there is that which appears on the mosaics and represents the culture of the Roman elite, and not the clothing of ordinary people. These three assumptions are working assumptions that stem from studies performed along many years, but not from a systematic examination. Such an examination will confirm or disprove them and will enable us to explain the phenomena and to place the rabbinical literature in its correct place as reflecting the lifestyle.

- b. Regional examinations – Is there a difference between the findings in the Galilee and those in Judea ? Such an examination will be based on a precise analysis of several assemblages (mainly of ceramic vessels) that were discovered in the two regions and were well published, such as the vessels of Kfar Hananya and Gamla in the Golan and Yodfat in the Galilee (e.g. Adan Bayewitz 1985; 1993), as compared to Horbat 'Ethri (B. Zissu and A. Ganor 2009; B. Zissu and A. Ganor in preparation), Horbat Rimon (A. Kloner in preparation) and Kiryat Sefer in Judea (Magen 2004). For example, we can examine the distribution of specific vessels and groups of vessels (serving vessels as opposed to kitchen vessels or storage vessels). And that brings us to the question as to whether there is a difference between regions and periods, and which region (and/or period) is better represented in the rabbinical literature.
- c. Examinations of literary compendia – Were the editors of the Septuagint precise in their translations of vessels and terminology? Is the translation close to the findings in the Land of Israel, or is it based on another material culture (Hellenistic-Egyptian)? Were the Aramaic translations familiar with the various vessels and precise in their translation? etc., etc.
- d. Cultural examinations – Is the material culture in the Land of Israel similar to that of the Western countries (Greece, Rome)? Is there an obvious difference between the type of

consumption by elite Roman society as represented in the literature and the mosaics and that of the masses as represented in the rabbinical literature? In this area our study can deal only with the margins, since the required comparison is broad and requires first of all an evaluation of the entire body of archaeological findings in the various provinces. In this area we cannot at this stage propose a systematic examination, but only our impressions.

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