

## ART AND ARCHITECTURE

In art and architecture we find a high degree of similarity between the Israelites and the "Phoenicians". Scholars point out that the Israelites as well as the Phoenicians, were influenced in their art by the Babylonians and the Egyptians.<sup>1</sup> Perrot and Chipiez say that "Cypriot art and Jewish art are no more than varieties or as a grammarian would say, dialects of the Art of Phoenicia".<sup>2</sup> They also point out the similarity in the style of construction between the walls of Arvad and Jerusalem,<sup>3</sup> from which they concluded that in the realm of art the Israelites borrowed from the "Phoenicians". Albright remarks that "at Ugarit and in Megiddo similar ground plans show corresponding thickness of walls", because of the same masonry characteristics he concludes that "Solomonic masonry shows clear indications of having been borrowed from the Phoenicians".<sup>4</sup> However he notes with astonishment that "at Megiddo were a number of proto – Ionic (better perhaps, proto Aeolic) pilaster capitals...similar ones have been found at a number of other sites in Palestine...Curiously enough, none has yet been reported from Phoenicia itself, ...But the Greeks of Cyprus and Ionia borrowed them from the Phoenicians..."<sup>5</sup> A similar remark is made by Harden.<sup>6</sup>

Avi-Yonah in a treatise which deals with the influence of "Phoenician" art on Jewish art says<sup>7</sup>: "If we compare the ornamentation in the Temple of Baal-Bek with those of the coffin found in the tomb of the Adiabene kings in Jerusalem we will discover an extraordinary similarity. In both we observe the same circles formed by the twisting of plants. In both they completely cover the whole decorated area, and in both the decoration is from the plant world in the form of a continuous band along the edges. Another analogy with Phoenician ornamentation are the wavy curliness in the plant The

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1 Moscati, *The World of The Phoenicians*, pp. 45, 78 ;  
Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, p. 253.

Harden, *The Phoenicians*, p. 105

Dunand, *Byblia Grammata*, p. 14

Conder, *Syrian Stone Lore*, pp. 116, 123.

2 Perrot-Chipiez, *History of Art In Phoenicia etc.* p. 100.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 278

4 Albright, *ibid.* pp. 104, 125.

5 Albright, *ibid.* p. 125 – 126.

6 Harden, *ibid.* p. 196.

7 Avi-Yonah, *Phoenician Art And Jewish Art*, article in book – *Western Galilee and the coast of Galilee*, Jerusalem, 1965, p. 23 (Heb.)

belief that king Solomon and the Jews borrowed their architecture from the Phoenicians is widely prevalent, and is based on the biblical narrative that Hiram from Tyre built the Temple in Jerusalem. Since Tyrians were regarded as non-Israelites, this caused the above mentioned belief. decoration found on coffins from Jewish tombs from the Second Temple period, discovered on the Mount of Olives. Similar curliness may be observed on the door post of the Temple of Kasr Naos". Elsewhere<sup>8</sup> he writes: "One of the most famous mosaics is the one found one hundred years ago in the tomb of Hiram near Tyre, and which today is in the Louvre. The vine coils and comes out of four amphora in the four corners of the floor. It forms circles in which there are a multitude of country life drawings and of flora and fauna. Another drawing of the same model, yet simpler, is found in the Lebanese church in Genah. Such mosaic ornamentation, WHICH IS NEARLY UNIQUE FOR THAT PERIOD TO PHOENICIAN AND THE LAND OF ISRAEL ALONE calls to mind the drawings in the floor of the synagogue in Maon (Nirim) based on the same ornamental principle". (emphasis–N. G.)

Though Avi-Yonah is trying to trace the influence of "Phoenician" art upon the Israelite, he points in fact to the "extraordinary similarity" between the two.

Chehab<sup>9</sup> also stresses the similarity in ornamentation of Sidonian sarcophages to those discovered along the coast of the land of Israel Herodotus (II, 44) tells us that in the temple of Baal Melkart in Tyre there were two pillars, one of pure gold, the other of emerald. Their like can be found in Malta and Carthage in the Temple of Tanit. Perrot<sup>10</sup>, quoting Herodotus, notes that pillars similar to these stood in the Temple of Jerusalem, the pillars Yachin and Boaz<sup>11</sup>. Berard and Moscati also point to this similarity.<sup>12</sup>

In the Arch of Titus in Rome, there is a relief of the Temple's candelabrum, the base of which is square and with the form of a dragon designed on it. In the Talmud (Masekhet Avoda Zara, chap. III) we learn that "any one who finds objects with the form of the sun, the form of the moon, the form of a dragon shall take it (throw it into) to the Dead Sea." It is a strange thing to find the figure of a dragon on the Temple's candelabrum, for it contradicts one of the basic principles of Jewish religion. Scholars have already pointed out this matter. Reinach<sup>13</sup>, tried to explain this by saying that the artist carved

8 *ibid.* pp. 28–29

9 Chehab, *Sarcophages En Plomb, du Musée Nationale Libanais*, SY. XV, 1934, p. 338, note 1.

10 Perrot – Chipiez, *ibid.* pp. 75, 84

11 *ibid.* p. 123. see: 2Chr. 3: 17

12 Berard, *De L'origine De Cultes Arcadiens*, 1894, pp. 74, 75.  
Moscati, *ibid.* p. 45.

13 Reinach, *L'arc De Titus*, REJ, XX, 1890, p. 83.

Strauss, *The Form And Fate of The Hasmonean Candlestick*, article in *Eretz Israel*, pp. 122–129.

the candelabrum without having the original in front of him. He therefore assumed there was no identity between the carved candlestick and the authentic original. His assumption was accepted by most scholars. But this conjecture raises two questions 1) How is it that the artist was extraordinarily precise when carving the branches, as described in the Bible, "a knob and a flower" etc. Whereas when carving the base of the candlestick he did not do it accurately? 2) If the Roman artist carved the base according to his own conception and was not faithful to the original, we may expect a certain similarity between the figured candlestick and other Roman candelabra in general, but is that the case?

Kon<sup>14</sup> who analysed the ornamentation of the candelabrum figured on the Arch of Titus assumes that Josephus' words about the candelabrum having three feet were misunderstood. In fact, its base is made of one piece. In his view the dragon figured on the base of the candelabrum is of a kind whose figuration is permitted by Jewish law, this is taken from the Talmud (Tosephta, Avoda Zara, V, VI): "All kinds of visages could be found (pictured) in Jerusalem except that of man...What kind of dragon was prohibited? Rabbi Simon ben Elazar says: All those with spikes emerging from its neck. If it was smooth, it was permitted". And indeed this is the kind of dragon figured on the base of the candelabrum in the Arch of Titus. Kon rightly asks: "If this were true, why then, did he (the supposed Roman sculptor – N. G.) replace the human torso of the Didymian Temple by a smooth naked dragon – The only dragon permitted by Jewish law?". Moreover, he believes that a thorough analysis of the ornamentation of the candelabrum in Titus' Arch, shows all the signs of being closely related to Phoenician candelabra of the 9<sup>th</sup> century B. C.

This belief of Kon, that the base of the candelabrum in Titus' Arch is authentic, is in accord with the description of the candelabrum in the Bible, namely, that it was formed of one piece and had one leg (Ex. 25: 31–32). Indeed, Rashi explains "... its shaft is the lower leg made like a box and three legs come out of it downward". This explanation is not clear, for if it is the lower leg which is formed as a box, where do the legs come out from? In Yalkut Truma (in the Talmud) the description is simpler "How did Bezalel make the candelabrum? He fashioned it like a beam and made a square at the base." Josephus<sup>15</sup> also remarks that: "It (the candlestick) was made up of globules and lilies along with pomegranates ...of these it was composed from its single base right up to the top". And elsewhere:<sup>16</sup> "A lampstand, likewise

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14 Kon Maximillian, *The Menorah of The Arc of Titus*, PEQ. 1950, pp. 25–30.

15 Josephus, *ANT. Book III*, 145. Translation by Thackeray & Marcus, Heinemann, 1950.

16 Josephus, *Jewish wars*, VII, 5: 5 Translation by Thackeray & Marcus, Heinemann, London, 1950.

made of gold, but constructed on a different pattern from those which we use in ordinary life. Affixed to a pedestal was a central shaft from which there extended slender branches". Whereas in book 7, chapter X section 3 he remarks: "Onias erected a fortress and built his temple (which was not like that in Jerusalem but resembled a tower) of huge stones... The altar, however, he designed on the model of that similar offerings, the fashion of the lampstand excepted; for, instead of making a stand, he had a lamp wrought of gold..."

We learn, therefore, that the Menorah (Candelabrum) in the Temple had a base. This candelabrum was similar in its form and ornamentation to "Phoenician" candelabra from the 9<sup>th</sup> century B. C.

Chester<sup>17</sup> reports about a gem found at Beyrouth that has for its design three stars the upper one being winged. Below these, and divided from them by two lines, is an early Phoenician inscription from right to left – **אשׁא**– (Yesha'a) from the root Yesha. Prof. Sayce consider the characters to be of the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century B. C., and remarks that "The two lines which divide the name from the stars and the winged solar disk (for so he deciphers the winged star) explain the origin of the similar names which divide in half the inscriptions on early Hebrew seals". Chester believes that the seal is Hebrew and the name would be the short form of Yeshaya (Isaia), however he remarks that "The winged star seems however rather to point to a heathen owner". Conder<sup>18</sup> refers also to this gem as well as to two scarabs: one of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B. C. with a Phoenician legend of the "wife of Joshua" and the other shows a sphinx with the Egyptian pschent headdress and the title as "a memorial of Hoshea".

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17 Chester, Notes On Some Phoenician Gems, PEF. 1885, p. 131.

18 Conder, Syrian Stone Lore, p. 75.

See also Perrot–Chipiez, *ibid*, pp. 244, 246.