The Huqoq Elephant Mosaic - an Alternate Analysis

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Abstract:

Excavations at the Huqoq synagogue, an archaeological site just northwest of Tiberias, have revealed a number of spectacular mosaics. Most of the mosaics depict biblical themes, but two major exceptions were the large Greek-style zodiac and the so-called elephant mosaic. The latter has elucidated much speculation, as the events and characters depicted are uncertain and open to interpretation. Possible candidates for the central royal character in the upper panel include Alexander the Great, Antiochus IV or perhaps Antiochus VII. This paper seeks to establish that this scene actually comes from the Talmud, and it depicts a meeting between King Izates-Manu VI of Edessa and High Priest Mattathias ben Theophilus in AD 65. This was a pivotal moment in Judaic history, that precipitated the Jewish Revolt and thence the eventual destruction of the Temple.

Keywords: Huqoq, Alexander, Jewish Revolt, Kamza, Edessa, Adiabene.

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Elephant Mosaic:

While excavations at the Huqoq site have been ongoing since 2011, the elephant mosaic was not discovered by Prof Jodi Magness until 2014. The first details of this intriguing find were released in 2015, but the full extent of the panel was only released to the public in a National Geographic article in 2016. [1] The mosaic remains a mystery because, apart from the zodiac, it is the only secular scene in the synagogue and as such its subject matter is open to interpretation and speculation.

The mosaic measures 196 x 112 cm with three separate horizontal registers. The upper register depicts a king in military uniform, denoted by his diadema headband, presenting a young calf to several characters dressed in white robes. The king is accompanied by eager soldiers and war elephants, while the lower register quite obviously depicts the subsequent defeat of this same army and its elephants. For reasons that will become apparent shortly, it will be assumed here that the robed characters represent priests from the Jerusalem Temple, and the docile looking calf is a potential sacrificial offering.

But who was this king, who met with the high priest of Jerusalem? In the 2016 National Geographic article Prof Magness suggested that the king was Alexander the Great, who did indeed meet with the Jerusalem priesthood on his way to Egypt, in 332 BC. [2] Alternatively, Britt and Boustan suggested the mosaic's king could have been Antiochus IV, who fought a battle with rebel Jewish forces in 168 BC as detailed in the Book of Maccabees. Or perhaps Antiochus VII, who laid siege to Jerusalem in 134 BC. [3] During the latter event, Josephus Flavius records that John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean leader, took 3,000 talents from King David's sepulchre to ransom and spare the city. [4]

These varied suggestions do have some merit. For instance, Josephus does indeed record a meeting between Alexander the Great and the Jerusalem high priest. [5] And the Book of Maccabees does record that the Seleucid kings utilised war-elephants. Apparently Antiochus III had 'hundreds' of elephants commanded by Hermo, while Antiochus IV took a 'multitude' of elephants down into Egypt in 170 BC, and then returned to attack Jerusalem. [6] So this 2nd century BC siege of Jerusalem may well dovetail with some aspects of the mosaic's depiction.



Fig 1. The Huqoq elephant mosaic depicts an unknown king offering a sacrificial calf to the Jerusalem high priest.

However, there are also some problems with these identifications. While all of these kings met with or were involved in a dispute with, the Jerusalem priesthood, the nature of these encounters do not equate well with the depiction of the full panel. For instance, the meeting between Alexander and the Jerusalem priesthood was cordial and relatively deferential, and would not have resulted in the priests drawing their swords. (Note: the white robed characters just out of view to the left have drawn their swords.) However, the greatest problem is that Alexander and Antiochus VII were never defeated by the Jews, which is what the lower register depicts. And while Antiochus IV did suffer some defeats at the hands of Jewish rebels, his 170 BC attack on Jerusalem did not end in a defeat. And there is no record of any of these monarchs ingratiating themselves with the Jerusalem priesthood, by offering them a sacrificial calf.

Another problem with all of these suggestions is that none of these kings were bearded. All of their coinage and busts depict them as clean shaven; while the mosaic's king is most certainly hirsute and bearded, sporting long and distinctly ginger hair. More troublesome still is the fact that the mosaic's king sports a Jewish payot, or side-lock of hair. It is quite certain that none of these Macedonian kings would have worn a religious Jewish hairstyle like the payot, and none of their coinage displays this symbolism. And finally, the differential colour of the king's legs on the mosaic strongly suggests that he is wearing leggings, and this was a Adiabene-Parthian custom, rather than a Greek custom. [7]

But if the Huqoq mosaic does not depict a Macedonian king, then what other monarchs could have met with the Jerusalem priesthood, and been of sufficient interest to the Jews of Galilee that they would commission an expensive mosaic to celebrate this 'momentous' event? One small piece of evidence is that many of the Huqoq mosaics depict heretical images of animals and people, and the central zodiac even displays a decidedly heretical image of Helios the Greek Sun-god. This would connect the Huqoq community with the other zodiac-bearing synagogues at Zippori, Beit Alfa, Hoesefa, Susya, Naaran, and Tiberias (Hamat Teverya), which depict similar Greco-Judaic zodiac imagery.



Fig 2. The zodiac at the Hamat Teverya synagogue, portraying heretical images of animals and Helios the Sun-god.

We can be fairly sure that this type of idolatrous imagery did not accord with 1st century Jerusalem Temple doctrine, because Josephus Flavius was sent by the Jerusalem priesthood in about AD 68 to destroy similar 'figures of living creatures' at a palace in Bethmaous just south of Tiberias. It is possible that this account refers to the Hamat Teverya zodiac, which resides just south of Tiberias and does indeed depict 'figures of living creatures'. But Jesus Sapphias-Gamala destroyed the palace before the images could be discovered. [8] However, the mention of Josephus Flavius and the era of the Jewish Revolt reminds us of another occasion when a king visited the Jerusalem priesthood, and that was the leader of the Jewish Revolt himself. The Talmud says of this meeting:

> The destruction of Jerusalem came through a Kamza and a Bar Kamza in this way … A certain man had a friend called Kamza and an enemy called bar Kamza … (Yohanan) went and said to Emperor (Nero), "the Jews are rebelling against you". (Nero) said, "How can I tell?" (Yohanan) said to him, "Send them an offering and

> see whether they will offer it (on the altar)." So (Nero) sent (bar Kamza) with a fine calf (as an offering). While on the way (bar Kamza) made a blemish on its lip, or as some say on the white of its eye. The Rabbis were inclined to offer it in order not to offend the (Roman) Government. But Rabbi Zechariah Abkulas said to them, "People will say that blemished animals are offered on the altar." They then proposed to kill bar Kamza so that he could not go and inform against them, but Rabbi Zechariah said to them, "Is one who makes a blemish on consecrated animals to be put to death?" Rabbi Yohanan thereupon remarked, "Through the scrupulousness of Rabbi Zechariah our House has been destroyed, our Temple burnt and we ourselves exiled from our land." [9]

This short account appears to describe the scene in the Huqoq elephant mosaic very well. Points of commonality between the mosaic and the Talmud's account include: a king (bar Kamza will be shown to be a king shortly) who has a substantial army and was blamed for the Jewish Revolt and the destruction of Jerusalem. In the account of the Jewish Revolt by Josephus, the 'foreign' leaders who defeated the legion of Cestius Gallus at the start of the Revolt in AD 66, were Monobazus, Kenedeus, Niger, and Silas of the Adiabene monarchy, and they must have commanded substantial military forces to have inflicted the 6,000 Roman casualties that Josephus records (this may be an exaggeration to some degree). [10] Which is exactly what we see in the elephant mosaic.

The Talmud goes on to claim that bar Kamza donated a sacrificial calf to the Jerusalem priesthood, which is again exactly what we see in the elephant mosaic. Britt and Boustan call this animal a bull, but I would contend that it is actually a docile young calf. [11] The animal is demonstrably bovine, but has the plump paedomorphic facial features associated with youth. It is a common assumption, presumably derived from observation, that only adult bulls have horns. However, in the wild bulls, cows, heifers and calves will all grow horns; but nearly all modern domestic cattle are dehorned at a young age to prevent injury. [12]

According to the Book of Numbers, a traditional Jewish Temple offering was an unblemished red heifer (a *para adama* פרה אדומה), to restore ritual purity to those who have become unclean. [13] A heifer is a young female calf that has not borne a calf, and according to Numbers it should never have been yoked. It would appear highly likely that the account in

the Talmud is referring to this verse and custom, which is why bar Kamza deliberately blemished the calf by cutting its lip, to render it unacceptable to the high priest. It is quite possible that we can even see this cut on the mosaic, as there is a prominent black line on its lip.

So does the cloven-hoofed animal in the elephant mosaic represent the custom narrated in the Book of Numbers? Certainly this animal appears cheerfully youthful and has a red-brown hide, and it also has the small horns typical of a young heifer or bullock. However, its undercarriage looks more like an immature testis than an immature udder, which would render this calf a bullock rather than a heifer - a *par adama* פה אדומה rather than a *para adama* פרה אדומה. There are several possibilities for this difference, ranging from artistic error to a covert condemnation of bar Kamza (that he had brought the wrong type of calf to the high priest).

However, it does appear likely that both the Talmud and the mosaic were conforming to the spirit of the Book of Numbers. A sacrificial red heifer or bullock was being donated to the high priest of Jerusalem - an unacceptable Gentile calf with a cut on its lip. So unlike the accounts of the Macedonian kings, here we do see an account of a sacrificial calf being donated to the Jerusalem priesthood. And given the duplicitous nature of bar Kamza's mission, we might well expect the priesthood to be on their guard, and that is exactly what we see on the elephant mosaic. Although not visible on this image of the mosaic (fig 1), the robed characters to the left of the image have either drawn their swords or are in the process of drawing them.

The Talmud goes on to record that bar Kamza fomented and lost the Jewish Revolt, resulting in the destruction of the Temple, and the mosaic does indeed depict the destruction of bar Kamza's army. This is another major difference between the Talmud's account and the history of the Macedonian monarchs, because the Adiabene monarch did indeed eventually lose the battle for Jerusalem and his army was destroyed. Thus the Talmud's chronology of these events would suggest that the elephant mosaic's registers should be read from top to bottom, which is the opposite of Britt and Boustan's analysis. [14] The Adiabene king's army approached and negotiated with the Jerusalem priesthood, before being destroyed by the Romans at a later date.

It is apparent from the Talmud's account, that the goal of this calf offering was politically duplicitous - deliberately creating tensions with Rome by asking Nero to give a Gentile calf-offering to the Jerusalem priesthood. The Talmud's text is convoluted, but it would appear that Yohanan ben Zakkai wanted to prove to Nero that the (messianic) Jews were going rebel against Rome, and he was using the sacrificial calf as evidence. While bar Kamza wanted to deliberately cause offence to Rome and thus precipitate the Jewish Revolt, which is why bar Kamza cut the calf's lip to render it imperfect. In which case, we may date the events in the elephant mosaic to about AD 65.

If this suggestion is correct, the pertinent question then becomes: who were these Talmudic characters? Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai we know, as he was the rabbi who led the remnants of Judaism in Judaea after the Jewish Revolt failed. He became the *de facto* high priest of Judaea in the early AD 70s, ended the tradition of roast sacrifice, established a Sanhedrin and rabbinic scriptorium at Yabne, and made many contributions to the Talmud.

But who was the more enigmatic bar Kamza, the son of Kamza? In the Talmud, bar Kamza is blamed for starting and fomenting the Jewish Revolt. Yet in Josephus Flavius' *Jewish War*, it was King (Izates) Monobazus and Kenadaeus of Adiabene who started the Jewish Revolt, when they defeated the Roman legion(s) commanded by the Syrian governor, Cestius. [15] And it was King Izates (Monobazus) and his brethren who surrendered to Titus at the end of the Revolt.

The outbreak of war:

> The most valiant (in the battle against Cestius) were the kinsmen of Monobazus, king of Adiabene, and their names were Monobazus and Kenedeus. [16]

The surrender to Rome:

> On the same day it was that the sons and brethren of King Izates … besought Caesar to give them his right hand for their security … (Caesar) kept them all in custody, but still bound the king's sons and kinsmen, and led them with him to Rome, in order to make them hostages for their country's fidelity to the Romans. [17]

However, the veracity of Josephus' account of Adiabene has to be questioned, as there is no archaeological evidence for this principality in Parthia. (Adiabene is often equated with Arbela, but there is no archaeological evidence from that region to confirm this.) This historical hurdle can be overcome by the accounts of Syriac historians like Moses of Chorene, who indicate that Queen Helena of Adiabene was actually married to King Abgarus V of Edessa. So one might surmise that either Adiabene and Edessa were closely linked provinces, or that they were actually the same city and principality. [18]



Fig 3. Edessa in northern Syria, modern Sanlurfa in Anatolia, looking towards the 1st century citadel of the Abgrid monarchy.

This was the famous and wealthy Queen Helena of Edessa-Adiabene, who saved Jerusalem from famine in the late AD 40s or early AD 50s. Queen Helena was also highly influential in Judaea, owning the largest palace and tomb in Jerusalem, and furnishing the Temple with its famous solid gold menorah. Her large palace is currently under excavation at the foot of the Temple Mount, a site that is incongruously known as the Givati Parking Lot Excavation. [19]

The Talmud indicates that this same Queen Helena of Edessa became a Nazarite Jew in the AD 40s, following seven years of initiation. [20] That the Edessan monarchy were new converts to Judaism, with a more limited knowledge of these customs, may be another

reason why bar Kamza may have erroneously offered a red bullock rather than a red heifer. Note that Nazarite Jews were not allowed to pol (cut) their hair, resulting in long hair and beards. [21] It is therefore likely that Queen Helena's husband and sons would have worn their hair long hair, and sported a Jewish payot side-lock of the Nazarite-Nazarene - as can be seen in the Huqoq image. The Edessan monarchs grew their hair long, just like Samson the Nazarite, and no doubt professed the strength of Samson. [22]



Fig 4. King bar Kamza, with ginger hair, beard, Jewish payot, and the silk diadema headband of a king.

The colour of bar Kamza's hair is also striking. The other characters in the elephant mosaic have silver or brown hair, while bar Kamza sports distinctly ginger hair and beard. While this pigmentation might initially appear unusual for a Near Eastern monarch, there were a number of prominent individuals from this region who had ginger hair. Yuya, who was the patriarch of the Amarna dynasty in Egypt, was distinctly ginger. As was Rameses the Great, as their mummies demonstrate. This was confirmed to be a true hair colour, rather than resulting from age or mummification resins, when the mummy of Rameses the Great was analysed at the Paris forensic laboratories. Professor Ceccaldi confirmed that Rameses had been a 'ginger haired c*ymnotriche leucoderma'*, a pale-skinned person with wavy ginger hair. [23] It has also been claimed that Cleopatra VII had ginger hair, based upon imagery from Pompeii and Herculaneum. [24] In a similar fashion Muhummad al-Yaqoubi, who is said to be a direct descendant of Muhummad, was also distinctly ginger. [25] Given the number of

ginger-haired individuals from this region, a Near Eastern king with ginger hair is not wholly unexpected.



Fig 5. Prominent ginger complexions from history.
Clockwise from top left,
Yuya, Rameses the Great, Muhummad al Yaqoubi, Cleopatra VII.

This analysis has established that the duplicitous monarch in the elephant mosaic started the Jewish Revolt, and so the date of the events being depicted is likely to be about AD 65. And it has also demonstrated that the historical monarchs who started the Revolt came from Edessa-Adiabene in Mesopotamia. Thus this analysis might further suggest that the otherwise enigmatic and unknown leader of the Revolt called bar Kamza by the Talmud, was actually a son of Queen Helena of Edessa-Adiabene. And in the mid AD 60s, this monarch would have been called either King Izates of Adiabene or King Manu VI of Edessa. Or more likely, he was known by the conflated appellation: King Izas Manu VI of Adiabene-Edessa. (Note: Josephus Flavius often shortens the name Izates to Izas.)

The city of Edessa was the capital of the Osrhoene, a small principality that once resided in northern Syria and is now known as Sanlurfa in modern Anatolia. However, Prince Izas Manu and his mother Helena, had taken up residency in Jerusalem in the AD 40s and 50s; [26] while his father, King Abgarus V, remained in Edessa. [27] Which is why Queen Helena had her palace and tomb in Jerusalem, and why her son became involved in the Jewish Revolt. But King Abgarus died in the AD 50s, to be succeeded by his sons King Izas Manu V and then King Izas Manu VI.

This is an important detail in this analysis because the leader of the Jewish Revolt has never been fully identified previously, but now we know that he is likely to have been King Izas Manu VI of Edessa-Adiabene. Josephus Flavius confirms this when he records that many messianic Jews in Judaea hoped that: *'all of their nation who lived beyond the Euphrates would join in the Revolt'* against Rome. [28] But what did Josephus mean by this? It has often been assumed that he was referring to the many Jews who lived in Babylon, in modern Iraq, and had done so since the Babylonian exile some 600 years previously. But Moses of Chorene strongly suggests that King Izas Manu was looking for support from his newly Jewish native city of Edessa, which did indeed reside 'beyond the Euphrates'.

One possible reason that this important detail has gone unrecognised previously, is that Josephus Flavius has deleted the Edessan monarchy from history, presumably on the orders of Emperor Vespasian. Which is why none of the kings of Edessa, nor the city itself, appear in any of the works of Josephus. Were it not for the Syriac chroniclers, we would have little or no knowledge of this powerful and influential Jewish-Nazarite (Nazarene) monarchy that lay just across the Euphrates. But perhaps we can now declare that the Jewish Revolt was precipitated and prosecuted by the king and princes of Edessa.

If the Huqoq elephant mosaic portrays King Izas Manu VI of Edessa stirring up trouble in Judaea, just prior to the Jewish Revolt, then this would explain why this kingly character wears: Roman armour, a royal diadema headband, long ginger hair and beard, a straight nose, a purple cloak, leggings, and the enigmatic Jewish payot. This was standard Edessan royal attire, as can mostly be seen on the coinage of Edessa. So the two characters depicted in this mosaic are likely to have been King Izas Manu VI of Edessa and High Priest Mattathias ben Theophilus (AD 65-66). And the mosaic depicts a famous scene from

the Talmud, where bar Kamza (King Izas Manu VI) gives a blemished calf from Emperor Nero to the Jerusalem priesthood, hoping it would be rejected in order to provoke Roman outrage and hopefully precipitate the Jewish Revolt.



Fig 6. A later King Abgarus of Edessa, wearing the traditional robes and spiked or thorned crown of the Edessan monarchy.

Although we have no direct evidence for the Edessa-Adiabene army using elephants in the AD 60s, the Edessans did have links to Parthia, with King Abgarus V being related to the Parthian monarchy. [29] They also had links to the Silk Road and therefore to India, from whence Roman war-elephants were derived. The diadema headbands of the Edessan monarchs were made from silk and fabricated by an artisan called Aggai, and presumably that silk came from China. [30] Alternatively, the addition of elephants to the Edessan army may have been anachronistic, based upon the Book of Maccabees' account of Macedonian monarchs using war-elephants.

But this analysis of the elephant mosaic may give us another hidden slice of Jewish history, a possibility that has never been explored previously. The king in this mosaic wears a purple cloak, which was the prerogative of the emperor of Rome, [31] and this strongly suggests that King Izas Manu wanted to become the next emperor. And this suggestion is not as unlikely as it may at first seem. After the Pisonian plot to murder Nero in AD 65, this openly despised emperor was a dead man walking and everyone knew it. And without an obvious dynastic successor to Nero, the Throne of Rome would soon be open to anyone with a large treasury, a loyal army, and sufficient fortitude to march on Rome. Thus there was much political

jostling in AD 68, that ended up with the assisted suicide of Nero and the tumultuous Year of Four Emperors.

However, the evidence from the elephant mosaic suggests that there was a fifth contestant for the Throne of Rome - King Izas Manu VI of Edessa. This provincial king now controlled much of Syria following the defeat of commander Cestius, and he was about to consolidate the whole of the Levant, including Judaea, under his control. However, Rome sent commander Vespasian to the Levant with three or four legions, and so King Izas Manu got ensnared in a three-way dispute with Greek and Jewish forces loyal to Rome, and the Roman legions commanded by Vespasian and Titus. So while the Jewish Revolt is often regarded as a simplistic taxation revolt or oppression revolt, it is likely to have been a bold bid by the Edessan monarchy for the Throne of Rome.

The two eastern contestants for the Throne of Rome were commander Vespasian and King Izas Manu VI of Edessa. And after the dust had settled in Judaea, it was Josephus Flavius who conferred the Jewish Star Prophesy upon commander Vespasian, and it was Vespasian who sailed to Rome to become the next emperor. [32] But had King Izas Manu of Edessa won this Revolt, the next emperor of Rome would have been a Nazarene Jew from Judaea and Syria.

And while this suggestion may be dismissed as improbable, something similar did indeed happen a century and a half later, when Elagabalus became Emperor of Rome. [33] Perhaps a more striking similarity can be seen in Queen Zenobia's bid for the Throne of Rome. From her remote provincial base in Palmyra in the Syrian desert, Zenobia launched a military campaign in 270 AD that took control of all of the Roman east, including most of Anatolia and all of Egypt. [34] Like King Izas Manu of Edessa, Queen Zenobia was using her control of the Roman east as a springboard to take control of Rome and the entire Empire.

It is my estimation that following the failure of the Jewish Revolt and the elevation of Vespasian to the Throne of Rome, the Flavian family deemed this entire history to be politically inconvenient. Vespasian had already seen how the elimination of the Druids in Britannia in AD 61 had sparked the Iceni Revolt that had engulfed and destroyed much of that Roman province, and he did not want the elimination of the Nazarene to prompt yet

another provincial revolt against Rome. Thus Vespasian ordered Josephus Flavius to delete all references to Edessa and its monarchy from history, which is why he never openly mentions them.



Fig 7. Upper: Coin of Emperor Elagabalus showing the sacred elagabal-omphalos stone in a chariot, embossed with the phoenix.
Lower: Coin of 'Emperor' Zenobia, queen of Palmyra and the Roman east.

The Talmud similarly only mentions the Edessan monarchs in code, which is why the hypocorism of 'bar Kamza' has been used in this case. It is likely that this common nickname for the Edessans was derived from Exodus 10:13, which records the account of locusts that came from the east and destroyed Egypt, and forced the Israelites onto an Exodus. Yet the Edessan monarchy had done much the same - they had come from Parthia in the east and destroyed Judaea and forced the Jews onto another Exodus. As far as the Talmudic scribes were concerned, the Edessans were no better than locusts.

Apart from some oblique Roman references, the only other cryptic reference we have to the Edessan monarchy is in Acts of the Apostles, where a 'prophet' called Agabus gives famine relief to Jerusalem in AD 47 [35] - the very same famine relief that Queen Helena of Edessa-Adiabene sent. [36] Ergo, it is highly likely that this biblical Agabus is actually a covert reference to King Abgarus of Edessa, who was married to Queen Helena. Prof Robert Eisenman also notes this possibility. [37] Note that Agabus again means 'locust', and so it would appear that the Gospel apostles were joining in with the same denigration of the Edessan monarchy as the Talmudic rabbis.

Thus the depiction on the elephant mosaic is more complex than previously suggested. Here is a very early depiction of King Izas Manu VI of Edessa, the Nazarite-Nazarene Jew who wanted to take over Judaeo-Israel as a stepping-stone to taking over the entire Roman Empire. But he lost this battle to Vespasian, so he was crucified, reprieved (by Josephus Flavius himself),[38] and then sent into exile. And this traumatic event resulted in the destruction of the Temple, and the exile of the Jewish Diaspora all over the Roman Empire.

Thus it is not so surprising that the 'Bar Kamza' mosaic was depicted in the Huqoq synagogue, alongside many other momentous events from Judaic history, because the event it portrays is central to Jewish history. This was the very religio-political spark which ignited the Jewish Revolt - that resulted in the destruction of the Temple, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the exile of the Jewish Diaspora across the Roman Empire. And so the outcome of the event portrayed in this mosaic was not resolved until 1947, with the establishment of modern Israel.

Tower of Babel:

Having explored the elephant mosaic in some detail, perhaps we should devote a few minutes to an analysis of Huqoq's magnificent Tower of Babel mosaic. Since most of the mosaics at Huqoq are derived from Old Testament themes and stories, the tower mosaic has not unreasonably been interpreted as representing the building of the Magdal Babel or Tower of Babel מגדל בבל. Note that this famous Tower did not originally have a name, and 'Babel' was only ascribed retrospectively because of the claim of a separation of languages. Thus it is often asserted that Babel refers to balal בלל meaning 'confound', but it is more

likely to have been derived from the Egyptian berber or belbel  meaning 'large pyramid'. [39] The Babel Tower may well have been a Belbel Pyramid.

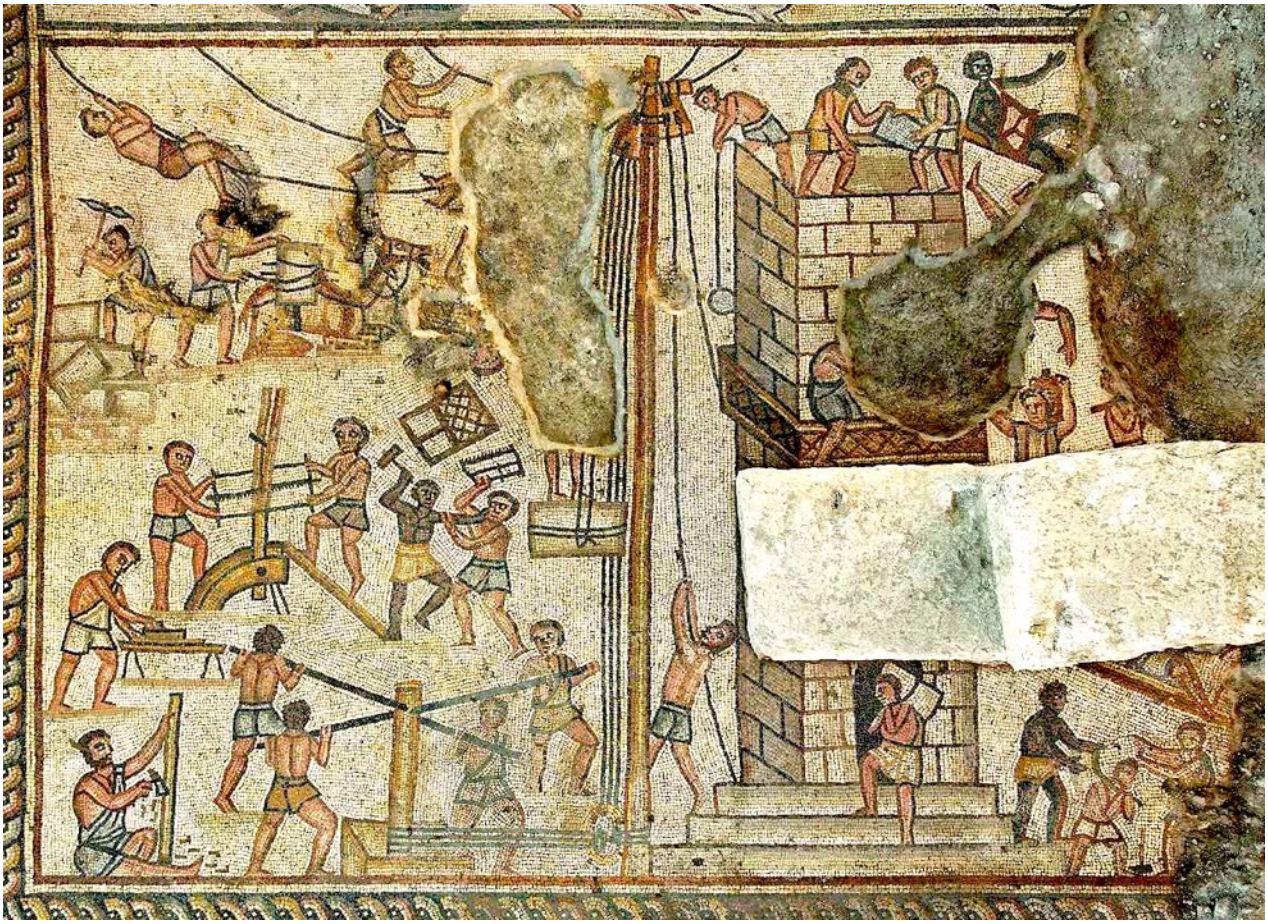


Fig 8. The Huqoq Tower of Babel mosaic.

But even if this mosaic did represent the pyramid-tower known as Babel, what was the contemporary inspiration for its composition? The reason for posing this question, is that the technology being used to construct this tower does not equate well with the Chalcolithic era normally ascribed to the Tower of Babel. The workers, who are of many ethnicities, are using a derrick, capstan, band-saw, pick, adze, plumb-line, plane, a camel, plus some pulleys.

While the technology available to an archaic Chalcolithic construction-team is open to debate, the scene is more reminiscent of Roman-era construction tools and machinery. Thus it is possible that the Huqoq artist took his inspiration from the construction of the 1st to 3rd century square towers at Palmyra and Harran. The Harran tower is thought to be a Sabaean

astronomical observatory, while the Palmyra tower is a funerary tower containing up to 400 mummified burials. Both of these towers look remarkably similar to the tower being constructed in the Huqoq mosaic. It was reported that three of the towers in Palmyra were blown up by ISIS in 2015, including the one pictured in fig 9. [40]



Fig 9. The Palmyra and Harran square towers.

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Notes:

1. National Geographic Sept 2016
   https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/mysterious-mosaic-alexander-the-great-israel
2. Ibid.
3. Karen Britt, Ra'anan Boustan: The Elephant Mosaic Panel at Huqoq. Journal of Roman Archaeology 106.
4. Josephus, War, 1:2:5
5. Josephus Antiquities, 11:8:5
6. Maccabees Maccabees 1:5:1, 2:1:17-21
   Henry Cotton 1832 edition, Oxford University Press.
7. Strabo Geog. 16.1.19. Strabo calls the Adiabene Sakkopodes, or sack-feet.
   The so-called Tomb of Alexander in the Constantinople Museum clearly shows the Persian soldiers fighting Alexander, wearing leggings. Edessan coinage depicts their monarchs with similar leggings.
8. Josephus Life 64
9. Talmud Gittin 55-57.
10. Josephus, Jewish War. 2.19.2 2.19.9
11. The Red Heifer
    https://www.britannica.com/topic/red-heifer
12. The dehorning of dairy calves
    https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022030211006011
13. Numbers 19:2
14. Karen Britt, Ra'anan Boustan: The Elephant Mosaic Panel at Huqoq. Journal of Roman Archaeology 106, p25.
15. Josephus Flavius, Jewish War, 2:19:2.
16. Ibid.
17. Josephus Flavius, Jewish War, War 6:6:4.
18. Moses of Chorene 2:35
19. Michal Marciak, Royal Converts from Adiabene and the Archaeology of Jerusalem. 2018. DOI: 10.14628/GFA_021_2018_A02
    The givati Parking Lot Excavation.
    https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Givati_Parking_Lot_dig

20. Talmud Nazir 19b
21. Judges 13:5 & 16:17.

    Nazarites like Samson had long hair, because they were not allowed to poll (cut) their hair, and Samson claimed he would lose he strength if his hair was cut. The Christian theologian Adam Clarke says the Judaeo-Christian Nazarene sect was derived from the Nazarite sect. Both of these terms mean 'separate', and the Nazarene are called a sect in Acts 24:5.
22. Jud 16:17. Samson's long hair and associated strength was a Nazarite tradition.

    Moses of Chorene records details of a Manue and his son Samson, who was of great stature and strength, a story that could be linked to the Edessan monarchy. Moses of Chorene, History of the Armenians, 2:57.
23. Professor Pierre Ceccaldi, Criminal Identification Laboratory of Paris. Bulletin de l'Academie de médecine - Volume 171, Issue 1. p119-125 Jan 1987.

    Quote: "Hair astonishingly preserved showed some complimentary data - especially about pigmentation. Rameses II was a ginger haired cymnotriche leucoderma." p 125.
24. Dr Joann Fletcher, Cleopatra the Great: the Woman Behind the Legend. Harper, 2008, plates between pp. 246-247.
25. Sheikh Muhammad al-Yaqoubi - biography

    https://damas-original.nur.nu/Texter/bio_yaqoubi_family.html
26. Michal Marciak, Royal Converts from Adiabene and the Archaeology of Jerusalem. 2018. DOI: 10.14628/GFA_021_2018_A02
27. Doctrine of Addai, George Phillips 1876 translation, p3. Although the Doctrine may be concidered apocraphal, it does confidently state that King Abgarus was in Edessa in the AD 50s, and was sending ambassadors to Jerusalem.

    In *Persian Wars* 2:12, Procopius of Caesaria alludes to travel restrictions being placed upon King Abgarus V by Emperor Augustus, restricting him to Edessa and Harran. It is not known if those travel restriction still applied in the AD 50s, but he is notable by his absence from Judaea.
28. Josephus Flavius, Jewish War, preface.
29. The Edessan monarchs utilised Parthian titles, like Izates. And King Abgarus travelled to Parthia to mediate in a dynastic dispute between the sons of King Archavir. From the context this is likely the dynastic dispute between Vardanes I and Gotarzes II, the sons of Artabanus II. History of Armenia, Moses of Chorene 2:28 .

30. The Doctrine of Addai.
31 Meyer Reinhold, History of Purple as a Status Symbol. Bruxelles, Latomus. 1970.
Also, Caligula had Ptolemy, son of Jubba I, executed for wearing a purple cloak.
Quote: "After inviting Ptolemy … to come from his kingdom and receiving him with honour, he suddenly had him executed for no other reason than when giving a gladiatorial show, he noticed that Ptolemy on entering the theatre attracted general attention by the splendour of his purple cloak." Suetonius, Lives of the 12 Caesars, Caligula 35:1.
32. Craig A. Evans, The Star of Balaam and the Prophecy of Josephus concerning Vespasian. Scribal Practice, Text and Canon in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ch16. doi.org/10.1163/9789004410732_018
33. His official title was Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, but his colloquial hypocorism was Elagabalus, after his stone-god. The name for this conical lithic deity comes from the Aramaic Ela Gabal, meaning the Mountain of God.
34. Richard Stoneman, Palmyra and Its Empire: Zenobia's Revolt Against Rome.
35. Acts 11:28.
36. Moses of Chorene, History of the Armenians 2:35. It is claimed that this famine was in AD 47, but AD 52 or 53 may be a more reasonable date. It was said to have been during the reign of Emperor Claudius.
37. Prof Robert Eisenman, The Sociology of MMT and the Conversions of King Abgarus and Queen Helena of Adiabene.
38. Life, Josephus Flavius 75.
39. Wallis Budge, An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary.
The Egyptians did not have an L consonant, so on transliteration to Aramaic the R often became an L. For instance, the Egyptians used the R lion glyph to denote the L in the Greek name Cleopatra. A repetition in Egyptian means 'large'.
40. BBC, The destruction of the Palmyra towers.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-34150905

Josephus references are from the Whiston edition.