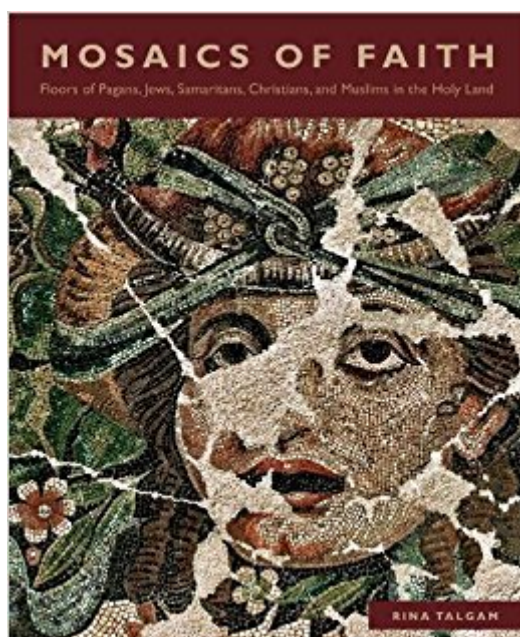


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Mosaics Of Faith: Floors Of Pagans, Jews, Samaritans, Christians, And Muslims In The Holy Land



Synopsis

This monumental work provides a comprehensive analytical history of the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad, and Early Abbasid mosaics in the Holy Land, spanning the second century b.c.e. to the eighth century c.e. Previous general studies of the Holy Land mosaics have focused on specific collections; in *Mosaics of Faith*, Rina Talgam sets out to demonstrate how mosaic art constructed cultural, religious, and ethnic identities in eras that shaped the visual expressions of three monotheistic religions. Her examination of the mosaics in a pivotal area of the eastern Mediterranean sharpens and refines our understanding of the region's societies and their ideologies, institutions, and liturgies. Covering almost one thousand years of mosaic production, *Mosaics of Faith* offers an unprecedented view of the evolution of floor decorations from the Hellenistic to the Roman periods, in the transition from Roman to Early Byzantine art, and in the persistence of Byzantine traditions under Umayyad rule. More than other corpora of ancient mosaics, those from the Holy Land have generated greater awareness of the intricate visual exchanges between paganism, Judaism, Samaritanism, Christianity, and Islam. Talgam examines the mosaics' formal qualities in conjunction with the religious and cultural contexts within which they were produced and with which they had a profound, multidimensional dialogue.

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Customer Reviews

"This outstanding book examines a millennium of mosaic making in the Holy Land, discussing the mosaic art of pagans, Jews, Samaritans, Christians, and Muslims as a reflection of the social, intellectual, and religious world of each society and the interrelationships among them.

Rina Talgam is not only an acknowledged authority on ancient art, and mosaics in particular, but also a highly experienced archaeologist who has participated in the excavation of mosaics. Technique and style play an important role in her study, along with analysis of iconography. This volume is of the utmost importance for the study of art and culture in the ancient Near East.

•Yoram Tsafrir, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
“In *Mosaics of Faith*, Rina Talgam has accomplished the heroic task of providing a chronological and comparative review of the many mosaics of Palestine as they survive in contemporary Israel and Jordan today. These mosaics evoke the cults and tastes of pagans, Jews, Samaritans, Christians, and Muslims from before the Roman Empire to after the Muslim conquests. Her vast perspective is unparalleled and immediately establishes her work as an indispensable guide to the shared imagery of the faiths of the region.

•Glen Bowersock, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton
“In this magisterial study, Rina Talgam gives full justice to all aspects of the floor mosaics of the Holy Land in their multicultural contexts. Comprehensive, detailed, and well balanced in its conclusions, it will become the preeminent work of reference and interpretation in its field.

•Henry Maguire, Johns Hopkins University
“The mosaic floors excavated in Palestine in the last century or so represent a vibrant group of historical documents for understanding the multicultural development of religious identities. Rina Talgam’s new book is comprehensive, detailed in discussion, wide ranging, superbly illustrated and offers a transformative account of this material, by far the best to date.

•Jaś Elsner, University of Oxford
“The mosaic floors excavated in Palestine in the last century or so represent one of the most vibrant groups of historical documents in archaeology for understanding the multicultural development of religious identities (some discrete and separate, some syncretistic, all in different ways in dialogue with one another) in late antiquity. Rina Talgam’s book is comprehensive, detailed in discussion, wide-ranging, superbly illustrated and offers a transformative account of this material, by far the best to date. She takes the reader through a deep and enlightening historical survey of the excavated materials, offering insight and up-to-date information on a vast and wonderful corpus, and not eschewing controversial topics such as iconoclasm and the destruction of figurative images in the eighth century.

•Jaś Elsner, University of Oxford
“One of the great merits of this book lies in its integration of the methods of art historical and historical analyses. We are not just given a survey of mosaics as works of art, nor are the pavements seen only as documents to be mined for historical information, but rather we find a subtle combination of the two approaches.

Talgam asks, for example, why it was that the Jews did not develop a distinctive style of their own. . . . For them, it was not necessary to distinguish themselves with a particular stylistic practice, even while they developed an iconography that differentiated their places of worship from those of the Christians. This is among the many fascinating questions raised by this rich study, which for many years to come will be the standard work of reference on the mosaics of ancient Palestine, in all of their cultural and artistic complexity.

•Henry Maguire, *Biblical Archaeology Review Magazine* “This is a magisterial survey that deserves to take its place as the definitive work on the mosaics of the Holy Land.

•Burlington *Magazine* “The result of immense and ongoing research, this readable book is lavishly illustrated in color. It will appeal to interested general readers and to scholars and students of art, religion, history, and anthropology.

•N. Mactague, *Choice* “All those interested in the cultural life of the Holy Land in the period concerned will learn from this book.

•Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *AIEMA Reports*

Rina Talgam is Associate Professor of Art History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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