FOREWORD

For some time now I have felt that a comprehensive study, which would support my thesis for the existence of an ancient Jewish Art, could be accomplished by a compilation of the material excavated in the past few decades, especially the latest results, together with previous materials and studies. I was, therefore, greatly honoured by the invitation of the late Prof. Dr. J.E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, editor of the “Kunst und Archäologie” Series, to write this book; I regret immensely that she herself did not live to see its publication. I was particularly pleased about the invitation because I had been researching and collecting material on this specific subject for the past ten years and had now reached the stage when I wished to present the fruits of this labour.

As a result of the many excavations in the last decades a large body of new material has come to light which now allows for a comprehensive treatment of ancient Jewish art and archaeology. Although archaeology is dealt with in detail, the emphasis of this book, especially in Part II, is on Jewish art. This, because it has been a particularly neglected aspect of the field and one on which my own studies have centered.

The discussion takes the form of a general comparison, divided according to topics such as Jewish symbols and other specific subjects, which together create what I hope is a conclusive case for the existence of Jewish art during the Second Temple period and Late Antiquity. An understanding of the artistic heritage left us by our ancestors can help to penetrate the mists of time separating us from those periods.

Jewish art and archaeology of the Diaspora, which forms an important and supplementary aspect of the subject, will be covered in a second volume in this series and will follow in the near future: as the amount of material for this study is vast it can only be dealt with as a book unto itself.

I should like to express my gratitude to the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture for providing funds for parts of the research and to the Dorot Foundation for a grant which helped enable this book to be produced.

A number of people also deserve special recognition. My thanks to Prof. M. Rosen-Ayalon for her recommendation. I should like to acknowledge my gratitude to my late teacher, Prof. M. Avi-Yonah, whose assistant I became during the last years of his life, and who constantly encouraged me in my research. His pioneer work in Oriental Art will long remain the basis for all further studies in this field.
I should like to mention my indebtedness to those who have helped me prepare this book: warm thanks are due to my friend Stephanie Rachum for her encouragement, advice and her thorough reading of the manuscript; a special gratitude to Joan Michaeli, my editor, for her thorough and diligent work; to Martha Adato for her conscientious and precise typing of the manuscript; to Malka Hershkovitz for checking parts of the manuscript; to Adi Weichselbaum for his many drawings published in this book; to my friends and colleagues, Z. Maoz and M. Ben-Dov, whose discussions helped me clarify my ideas; and especially to Dr. L.Y. Rahmani, who read the completed manuscript and who gave me many helpful suggestions and criticisms.

I especially want to thank my husband Gad whose help was immeasurable; he also painstakingly prepared the manuscript using word processing facilities. His help has meant that I have been able to finish the manuscript in less time and with fewer complications than usual. Further affectionate thanks to my children for their enormous and unfailing help, patience, understanding and encouragement.

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November 1984