

One of the major surprises from the excavations at Gamla was this building, identified as a synagogue by its excavator. It is splendidly decorated, with geometric motifs on the column capitals and other architectural elements of the buildings. The interior space, measuring about 63 1/2 feet long by 50 1/2 feet wide, is provided with two low benches along three walls and four benches along the back wall. Columns stand in rows parallel to all four outer walls. Two heart-shaped columns can be seen in the rear corners. Three entrances open to the southwest, or the front, and another entrance, located in the right-rear corner of the interior, leads outside and down by steps to the street. The synagogue was built against the city wall and was in use during the reign of Herod the Great; it only went out of use as a synagogue with the siege of Gamla in 67 C.E. in the First Jewish Revolt against Rome.

To compare with the contemporaneous synagogue at Masada, see NT176: Masada, Synagogue.