

# Magdalene

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Israel July 2023

## The Migdal Synagogue

This synagogue is dated to the first century CE, before the destruction of the Second Temple. It is the first synagogue discovered in Galilee and one of seven known from this period in the Land of Israel. The impressive structure was established by a community of Jewish farmers and fishermen.

**The entrance hall:** A rectangular room that apparently served as a study hall (Bet Midrash). A low stone bench ran along the walls of the chamber and in its center was a square-shaped stone of chalk that seems to have served as a table.

**The study hall:** An opening in the eastern entrance hall wall led into the central gathering hall. Three pairs of stone columns supported the hall's roof, which was made of wood and pressed earth. Low stone benches ran along the walls, which were covered with colorful frescos and the mosaic floor was decorated in a rosette design. Positioned in the center of the hall was a particularly grand stone furnishing, fashioned by an artisan, ornamented with a variety of motifs, including a Menorah in relief.

- **The ornamented furnishing:** This rectangular chalk item placed in the center of the synagogue has four legs. All of its five faces are decorated in relief with a variety of patterns that form a model of the Temple and the special utensils that were used in it. This stone is the only known example of its kind; none resemble it. It apparently served in the synagogue as a table, upon which the Torah Scroll was placed when read.

**Seven-branched Menorah:** Outstanding among the ornaments decorating the table is a seven-branched Menorah standing on a three-legged base with a depiction of the sacrificial altar on its facade. This relief joins the small number of Menorah decorations known to scholars, the first to have been discovered in Galilee from this period. To date, this is the earliest example of a Menorah discovered in a Jewish religious building in Galilee.

**Torah-scroll store chamber:** The study hall led to a chamber with a mosaic-paved floor and walls covered with colorful frescos.

Three phases were identified in the structure, which served as a synagogue only in the second and third phases. The synagogue was deserted during preparations for the Great Revolt.



















