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Trade and Commerce at Sepphoris, Israel

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Oral Presentation 2.4

TRADE AND COMMERCE AT SEPPHORIS, ISRAEL

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Conflicting material has been written regarding trade patterns in the Near East. Researchers debate whether Galilean cities utilized trade routes along the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea or were self-sufficient, with little access to trade. An analysis of material culture found at specific sites can most efficiently determine the extent of trade in the region. A significant assemblage of foreign goods will be found if commerce is extensive; an overwhelming majority of provincial artifacts will suggest minimal trade.

This project will explore the trade patterns of one site, Sepphoris, located in the Lower Galilean region of Israel, near present-day Nazareth. The city sits on both the major North/South and East/West trade routes of Galilee. This particularly suits the region for trade and commerce. The following study will focus on the first through fourth centuries CE, a time of prosperity at Sepphoris.

Import routes at Sepphoris have not yet been studied in relation to one another—this report will begin such an examination. Through the analysis of both published and unpublished materials (the latter courtesy of James F. Strange, director of the University of South Florida's Excavations at Sepphoris) this study will assert that import routes to Sepphoris were neither irregular nor random. Rather, they remained relatively constant over time to provide Sepphoris's residents with goods manufactured outside of the city.