

The modern proverb “all roads lead to Rome” (which goes back to the Latin sentence “mille viae dūcunt hominēs per saecula Rōmam”) is known to many people nowadays either through the study of ancient and medieval history or through modern popular culture, as this proverb has been used for the titles of several well-known cinema productions. Given the fact that no similar expression is known from ancient Hebrew or Aramaic, the question arises as to whether this proverb, slightly modified from “all roads lead to Rome” to “all roads lead to Jerusalem,” could be considered a reflection of the road network in Hellenistic and early Roman Palestine: Was most Judean mobility in Palestine indeed directed only towards Jerusalem? Despite the fact that most scholars would intuitively agree on the importance of travel and mobility for many aspects of the political, social, economic, and cultural life in Palestine, the topic of Judean travel and mobility in Hellenistic and early Roman Palestine has not attracted much attention from modern scholars. This project intends to fill that gap. Its aim is to conduct interdisciplinary research on Judean travel and mobility in Hellenistic and early Roman Palestine (332 BCE – 70 CE). The project will examine not only practical aspects of travel and mobility in the context of Greco-Roman civilization, but also their significance for a variety of aspects of ancient culture in Hellenistic and early Roman Palestine, including social, economic, cultural, and religious developments. In this context, we will attempt to answer several questions: What were the main highways of Judean travel in Hellenistic and early Roman Palestine? Who traveled where and how, and for what purpose? What was the human experience of travel? What information and material goods were exchanged as a result of mobility, and how did this exchange matter for the social, economic, cultural, and religious life of ancient Judeans and their interaction with non-Judean neighbors? To achieve its research aim, the study of travel and mobility in the project will employ three distinctive methodologies: a historical-critical analysis relevant to ancient history, use of remote sensing and geographic information systems (GIS), and archaeological survey. As a result, it is hoped that the project will arrive at a better understanding of the material conditions of travel and mobility, as well as their role in shaping social, economic, cultural, and religious aspects of daily life in Hellenistic and early Roman Palestine.