

Images of Cosmology in Jewish and Byzantine Art

God's Blueprint of Creation

Shulamit Laderman

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Images of Cosmology in Jewish
and Byzantine Art

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Images of Cosmology in Jewish and Byzantine Art

God's Blueprint of Creation

By

Shulamit Laderman



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CONTENTS

Preface	ix
List of Illustrations	xiii
List of Abbreviations	xxi
Introduction	1
1. Jewish and Christian Reciprocal Influences	13
The Dura-Europos Synagogue and Baptistery	13
The Earthly and Heavenly Tabernacle/Temple in the Dura-Europos Synagogue	24
2. The Blueprint of Creation in the Bible and Its Allegorical Interpretations	33
The Biblical Link between the Tabernacle and Creation	33
Philo of Alexandria and Josephus Flavius	39
3. Creation in Christian Works	47
Constantine of Antioch's "System of the World"	47
The <i>Christian Topography's</i> Schema of Creation	50
The <i>Apostolic Constitutions: A Link to a Shared Exegetical Method?</i>	54
The Octateuchs and Other Byzantine Artistic Expressions of Creation	61
4. Creation as Interpreted in Jewish Art	73
Visual Models of Creation in Ancient Synagogues	73
Midrashic Literature and the Symbolic Significance of the Tabernacle/Creation Parallelism	88
5. Visualizing Creation in a Fourteenth-Century Jewish Manuscript	99
The Sarajevo Haggadah's Visual Model of the Tabernacle/ Creation	99
The Structural Frame of the Illustrations in the Sarajevo Creation Cycle	102

The Approach to Creation Cosmology in Mid-Thirteenth-Century Spain	104
The Sarajevo Haggadah's Creation Images in Light of Rabbinic Commentaries	110
6. The Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant	121
Christian Cosmological and Theological Concepts	121
Jewish Antecedents of the Ark/Tabernacle/Creation Symbols	137
7. The Temple: History and Ideology	147
The Temple in Early Jewish Thought	147
Halakhic Developments after the Destruction of the Temple	152
8. The Synagogue as a Minor Temple	163
Transferring Temple Symbols to the Synagogue	163
<i>The Consecration of the Tabernacle</i> and Its Significance for Synagogue Liturgy	168
The Role of the Rabbis in the Synagogue	177
The Temple Implements in Samaritan Synagogues	181
9. Schematic Models: Forms of Visual Interpretation	187
Two Ways of Imaging the Tabernacle and the Holy of Holies	187
The Karaite Perception of the Temple and Its Implements	193
10. Perspective Imaging of the Tabernacle	205
Perspective Imaging on the Gold-Glass Base	205
Perspective Imaging in the <i>Christian Topography</i> and the Octateuchs	208
Perspective Imaging in Codex Grandior and Codex Amiatinus	210
Perspective Imaging in Pantokrator 61—the Marginal Psalter from Mount Athos	213
Comparing the Four Conceptual Perspectives	214
11. The Art of Memory: The Sanctuary, Its Sacrifices, and Its Cosmic Import	217

The Tabernacle and Its Vessels on the Frontispieces of Sephardi Bibles	217
The Cosmological Aspect of the Golden Menorah and the Showbread Table	227
The Encampment in the Desert as a Reflection of the Divine Pattern	231
12. Christian Supersession of Jewish Ideas	235
New Testament Cosmology: The Tabernacle and the Kingdom of Heaven	235
The Church as the Successor to the Tabernacle/Temple	241
Creation, the Tabernacle, and Christian Eschatology	245
Epilogue	249
Addendum	257
Glossary	275
Bibliography	281
Index	301
Illustrations	<i>after page</i> 318

PREFACE

As a high school student in Jerusalem, I was privileged to study with Dr. Nechama Leibowitz, an outstanding scholar and teacher of Bible, who raised thought-provoking questions regarding the biblical text. During my years in the Art History Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem I had the very good fortune to work with Prof. Elisheva Revel-Neher, who inspired me to examine some of those questions through Jewish and Christian works of art. In the course of my studies I became acquainted with a sixth-century Byzantine-Christian cosmological work called the *Christian Topography*. Through text and illustrations the author of that work expounded a theory according to which the instructions for building the Tabernacle in the wilderness reveal the blueprint of Creation. This hypothesis is relevant to one of the most thought-provoking questions regarding the biblical text: Why is there such a very lengthy description of the Tabernacle and its implements? It is known that the Pentateuch is very sparing with words and uses an abbreviated language, and yet it devotes many repetitive chapters to the construction of the Tabernacle, which was to serve the Jewish people for only a short time.

Embellished by schematic images, the *Christian Topography* points to the unique significance of the Tabernacle in revealing the mystery of Creation. In studying this work I realized that its exegetical method regarding the Tabernacle and Creation relied heavily on earlier Jewish sources that were utilized by both Jewish and Christians scholars. First in evidence are the first-century writings of Philo of Alexandria whose method was later adopted by various Church Fathers. The schematic images in the *Christian Topography* are similar to earlier pictorial models found on Jewish coins and other Jewish artifacts from the second century on. In the later centuries the idea and its accompanying schematic diagrams were found mostly in Christian works of art, but then reappeared in a fourteenth-century Hebrew illuminated manuscript. Eventually I arrived at a fascinating new way of viewing the biblical text and decided to devote my dissertation to images of the Tabernacle and Creation in Jewish and Christian art.

In 2001, shortly after I received my PhD, I attended a lecture by the renowned scholar Prof. Israel M. Ta-Shma. He talked about the influence of Greek-speaking Byzantine southern Italy on Ashkenazi Jewish culture as seen in the eleventh-century enigmatic writings of Rabbi Moses HaDarshan and that scholar's reliance on apocryphal literature. I was very much

interested in what he had to say, as I had searched for influences and connections between Jewish and Byzantine-Christian interpretations of biblical concepts and ideas when I wrote my dissertation and had included material from works attributed to R. Moses HaDarshan.

In his lecture and subsequently in an article, Prof. Ta-Shma suggested that as R. Moses HaDarshan had lived in the area of Toulouse-Narbonne he might have been exposed to the Apocryphal Literature through a Christian heretical movement known as Catharism, which had spread rapidly in that part of Europe. Subsequently, it became dangerous to use those apocryphal themes owing to the Christian crusade against the Catharist heresy and one no longer dared to reference this material.

Many important Jerusalem scholars attended the lecture and most of them argued vociferously against Prof. Ta-Shma's theory. When it was over I went up to Prof. Ta-Shma and told him about the parallel texts I had discovered when researching the cosmological symbols of Creation and the Tabernacle in midrashim attributed to R. Moshe HaDarshan and that I had compared them to the *Christian Topography* texts.

His immediate reaction was: "Why didn't you say something earlier when my theory was being attacked?" I explained that for a person who has just received her doctorate it is difficult to venture an opinion in front of all the big names in the field. He asked for a copy of my dissertation and the next day phoned me asking that I also send a copy to Prof. Moshe Idel, perhaps the foremost authority on Kabbalah. They both enthusiastically urged me to publish the dissertation as a book and also to write an essay on these parallel texts. I promptly prepared an article in Hebrew, which was published in *Tarbitz*, but writing the book in English took a much longer time, as it had to be translated, altered into a form more suitable for a book, and, of course, as time went on updated to take account of new research in the field.

I tender my most profound gratitude to Prof. Elisheva Revel-Neher, who introduced me to the subject, inspired and guided me throughout my years of study and research for this book, and read it before it was sent to the publisher. I very much value her tremendous knowledge in both Art History and Jewish sources and am fortunate to enjoy her continuing guidance and support. Many thanks are due to Prof. Katrin Kogman-Appel with whom I often consulted along the way. She also read the manuscript, offered excellent suggestions, and gave me much needed advice. I am deeply indebted to Evelyn Grossberg, my English editor, who has a magical way with words and with their power to express ideas. My thanks to the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem for the

award of the Kekst Prize for 2008–2009 and for providing some of the funding for my research.

Last but definitely not least my deepest appreciation to my beloved better half, my dear husband and best friend, Paul, who labored with me throughout and helped me enormously in so many ways and to whom I am dedicating this book.

Shulamit Laderman
Jerusalem 2013

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

All figures are placed in the back of this volume.

- Fig. 1. *Christian Topography*, a drawing of the universe as a rectangle topped by a hemispheric roof that depicts the “short side” of the Cosmos. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 38v.
- Fig. 2. Silver Bar Kochba coin (obverse and reverse) 134–135 CE. The Israel Museum Jerusalem.
- Fig. 3. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, the niche for the Holy Ark in the center of the western wall of the synagogue, 245–256. Images of the Temple, Menorah, Binding of Isaac.
- Fig. 4. *Christian Topography*, Second Parousia. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 89r.
- Fig. 5. Sarajevo Haggadah, Creation from primordial through Days 1–3. Passover Haggadah, fol. 1v.
- Fig. 6. Sarajevo Haggadah, Creation of Days 4–6 and the Sabbath. Passover Haggadah, fol. 2r.
- Fig. 7. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall, second register. Closed Heavenly Temple.
- Fig. 8. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall, second register. Consecration of the Tabernacle.
- Fig. 9. Dura-Europos, Christian prayer hall. The baptismal font, facing west.
- Fig. 10. Dura-Europos, Christian prayer hall, above the baptismal font. Mural of the *Good Shepherd and His Flock*.
- Fig. 11. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall, top register. The Exodus from Egypt.
- Fig. 12. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall, top register. The crossing of the Red Sea.
- Fig. 13. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall, second register. *The Miraculous Well of the Be’er*.
- Fig. 14. Dura-Europos, Christian prayer hall. Fresco of the Samaritan woman leaning over the well.
- Fig. 15. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall. *The Ark of the Covenant in Bet Dagan*.
- Fig. 16. *Sacra Parallela*, the image of Philo of Alexandria. Paris, B. N. gr. 923, *Sacra Parallela*, fol. 310v.

- Fig. 17. *Sacra Parallela*, John of Damascus, Cyril of Alexandria, Philo and Josephus. Paris, B. N. gr. 923, *Sacra Parallela*, fol. 208r.
- Fig. 18. *Sacra Parallela*, bust of Josephus Flavious. Paris, B. N. gr. 923, *Sacra Parallela*, fol. 226v.
- Fig. 19. *Christian Topography*, the “long side” of the universe, shown as a box. On its base a plan of the Earth, with its oceans and mountains, and the course of the sun. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 69r.
- Fig. 20. *Christian Topography*, the arched rectangular pattern separated by a horizontal line; the firmament; water above and below the line. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 65v.
- Fig. 21. *Christian Topography*, schema of the “long side” of the universe; Jesus’ bust in the vaulted upper part. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 39v.
- Fig. 22. *Christian Topography*, schema of the “long side” of the universe; Jesus’ bust in the vaulted upper part. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 43r.
- Fig. 23. *Christian Topography*, the Earth and the Heavens with the firmament. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 65r.
- Fig. 24. *Christian Topography*, Heavens imaged as an immense blue arch over the mountain that represents the Earth; a bar represents the firmament. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 68v.
- Fig. 25. *Christian Topography*, the ocean and the luminaries are joined with the Earth, shaped as a trapezoid, and surrounded by water. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 67r.
- Fig. 26. *Christian Topography*, Earth as a rectangle, framed by water, the four winds blowing horns; inlets and streams on the dry land; Garden of Eden beyond the ocean. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 66v.
- Fig. 27. *Christian Topography’s* Constantine of Antioch’s imaging of the “delineation of the Ark of Propitiation.” Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 48r.
- Fig. 28. Octateuch 747, the image of primordial Creation. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 14v.
- Fig. 29. Octateuch 747, First day of Creation; two zones, one dark and the other light, with the hand of God separating light from darkness. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 15r.
- Fig. 30. Octateuch 746, Second day, Creation of the firmament and the separation of the waters. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 22r.
- Fig. 31. Octateuch 746, Third day of Creation, separation of the seas and the dry land; Creation of the plants. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 23r.
- Fig. 32. Octateuch Serail 8, Fourth day, Creation of the heavenly bodies. Serail, cod. Gr. 8, Octateuch, fol. 31r.

- Fig. 33. Octateuch 747, Fourth day, the Earth as a flat round surface with the two luminaries at the upper edge of the rectangle. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 16v.
- Fig. 34. Octateuch Serail 8, Fifth day, Creation of the birds and marine creatures. Istanbul, Bibl. of Serail, cod. Gr. 8, Octateuch, fol. 32r.
- Fig. 35. Octateuch Serail 8, Sixth day, Creation of the terrestrial animals. Istanbul, Bibl. of Serail, cod. Gr. 8, Octateuch, fol. 32v.
- Fig. 36. Drawing of the Church of SS Cosmos and Damianus in Jerash, Jordan.
- Fig. 37. Jerash, Jordan, Church of SS Cosmos and Damianus. Mosaic floor.
- Fig. 38. Jerash, Jordan, Church of SS Cosmos and Damianus. Mosaic floor, detail.
- Fig. 39. *Christian Topography*, the outward form of the Tabernacle divided (by the veil) into the inner and the outer sanctuaries. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 46v.
- Fig. 40. *Christian Topography*, the outward form of the Tabernacle divided (by the veil) into the inner and the outer sanctuaries; additional symbols in one of the areas. Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana, Plut. IX 28, fol. 107r.
- Fig. 41. Hammat Tiberias, Severos synagogue, fourth century. Top panel of mosaic floor, the Temple and its vessels.
- Fig. 42. Hammat Tiberias, Severos synagogue, fourth century. Overview of the mosaic floor.
- Fig. 43. Sepphoris synagogue, fifth century. Overview drawing of the mosaic floor divided into seven registers, each with two or three separate panels.
- Fig. 44. Sepphoris synagogue, fifth century. Mosaic floor, menorah and other Jewish Symbols.
- Fig. 45. Sepphoris synagogue, fifth century. Mosaic floor, the zodiac.
- Fig. 46. Sepphoris synagogue, fifth century. Mosaic floor, the sacrifices of the bull and lamb.
- Fig. 47. Beit Alpha synagogue, sixth century. Overview of the three bands of the mosaic floor.
- Fig. 48. Beit Alpha synagogue, sixth century. Mosaic floor, uppermost panel, the Temple and its vessels.
- Fig. 49. Beit Alpha synagogue, sixth century. Mosaic floor, the zodiac.
- Fig. 50. Beit Alpha synagogue, sixth century. Mosaic floor, the Binding of Isaac.
- Fig. 51. Na'aran synagogue, near Jericho, sixth century. Mosaic floor, overview. Drawing of the central nave divided into three bands.

- Fig. 52. Na'aran synagogue, near Jericho, sixth century. Mosaic floor, a disfigured image of a personification of a season in one of mosaic's four corners.
- Fig. 53. Sepphoris synagogue, fifth century. Mosaic floor, the zodiac sign of Sagittarius.
- Fig. 54. Sarajevo Haggadah, "messianic Temple." Passover Haggadah, fol. 32r.
- Fig. 55. Sarajevo Haggadah, Jews leaving the synagogue. Passover Haggadah, fol. 34r.
- Fig. 56. Octateuch 746, the Enlivenment of Man (Adam) on the sixth day of Creation. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Cod. Gr. 746, Octateuch, Gr. Fol. 30r.
- Fig. 57. Octateuch 747, the Ark of the Covenant with the cherubim; Moses and Aaron touch the *kapporet*. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 106r.
- Fig. 58. Octateuch 746, the Ark of the Covenant with the cherubim; Moses and Aaron touching the *kapporet*. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 231r.
- Fig. 59. Octateuch Serail 8, the Ark of the Covenant with the cherubim; Moses and Aaron touching the *kapporet*. Istanbul, Bibl. Serail, cod. Gr. 8, Octateuch, fol. 234v.
- Fig. 60. Octateuch 746, Moses and Aaron before the Tabernacle, the cherubim and the ciborium on top. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 325v.
- Fig. 61. Octateuch Serail 8, Moses and Aaron before the Tabernacle, the cherubim and the ciborium on top. Istanbul, Bibl. of Serail, cod. Gr. 8, Octateuch, fol. 333r.
- Fig. 62. Octateuch 747, Moses writes the law; scroll with Moses' law deposited in the Ark. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 210r.
- Fig. 63. Bar Kochba coin, symbolic schema of the Temple. At the base of the coin, two parallel lines that suggest a low fence, the *soreg*.
- Fig. 64. Arch of Titus, Rome, 81 CE. The seven-branch menorah on the Arch of Titus, which commemorated the Roman victory and was at the same time the symbol of the Jewish defeat.
- Fig. 65. The *Judea Capta* series of coins, struck by the Romans as a symbol of victory, 71 CE. Silver denarius. *Obverse*: effigy of Vespasian; *Reverse*: Judea: Captive seated under a palm tree, with a soldier to the left of the tree.
- Fig. 66. Moshe Levine's model of the Ark of Covenant with the cherubim and the staves, according to the Bible.
- Fig. 67. A Bar Kochba coin pierced and converted into a piece of jewelry in 135 CE when the rebellion failed and the coin lost its value.

- Fig. 68. Capernaum synagogue, considered one of the so-called early Galilean synagogues. A stone-carved lintel, shaped as the Ark of the Covenant on wheels.
- Fig. 69. El Khirbe, near Sabastia, Samaritan synagogue, fourth century. Detail of a panel depicting the Tabernacle and its utensils.
- Fig. 70. Khirbet Samara, south of Nablus, Samaritan synagogue. Mosaic image of the Temple/Ark façade.
- Fig. 71. Beit Shean, Synagogue, sixth century. Symbols of the Temple.
- Fig. 72. First Leningrad Bible, Plan of the Tabernacle. State Public Library, illuminated by Shlomo ben Buya in 929 CE, Firk. Hebr. II B 17, fol. 4v.
- Fig. 73. First Leningrad Bible, Plan of Solomon's Temple. State Public Library, illuminated by Shlomo ben Buya in 929 CE, Firk. Hebr. II B 17, fol. 5r.
- Fig. 74. Jewish gold-glass fragment, fourth century. A drawing made shortly after it was discovered. The fragment depicts the Tabernacle, the First and Second Temples images.
- Fig. 75. *Christian Topography*, a tentlike structure framed by a rectangular colonnade viewed from above. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 49r.
- Fig. 76. Octateuch 746, The Brazen Gate in the Tabernacle with fire burning underneath. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 236v.
- Fig. 77. Octateuch 747, The Brazen Gate in the Tabernacle with fire burning underneath. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 108r.
- Fig. 78. Octateuch 746. Moses ordaining Aaron and his sons. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 242v.
- Fig. 79. Codex Amiatinus, the Tabernacle and its courtyard enclosed by rows of pillars and curtains on all four sides. Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana, Cod. Amiatinus I, IIv–IIIr.
- Fig. 80. Moshe Levine's model of the Tabernacle and its courtyard according to the Bible.
- Fig. 81. Pantokrator 61, ninth century marginal Psalter with the Tabernacle's courtyard in a special imaging perspective. Marginal Psalter of Mount Athos, Pantokrator 61, fol. 165r.
- Fig. 82. Parma Bible frontispiece, the seven-branched menorah, tongs, incense shovels, the stepping-stones, the Ark of the Covenant and the showbread table. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, 2668, Bible, fol. 7v.
- Fig. 83. Parma Bible frontispiece, the golden altar with hornlike projections and the altar for burnt offerings. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, 2668, Bible, fol. 8r.
- Fig. 84. Perpignan Bible frontispiece, the golden menorah, tongs, censers, and stepping-stones; the jug of manna and Aaron's rods; the tablets

- of the covenant the showbread table and the frankincense. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Hebr. 7, Bible, fol. 12v.
- Fig. 85. Perpignan Bible frontispiece, the golden incense altar, two silver trumpets, the shofar; the utensils for the sacrifices, the incense shovel; the altar for the burnt offerings, and the laver. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Hebr. 7, Bible, fol. 13r.
- Fig. 86. King's Bible, an image of a small mound or hill topped with a tree and label in Hebrew next to it identifying the hill as the Mount of Olives. London, British Library, King's I, Bible, 3v.
- Fig. 87. Saragosa Bible, a full-page illustration of an olive tree framed by a verse from Zechariah prophesying the coming of the Messiah (Zech. 14:4). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale. Heb. 31, Bible, 4v.
- Fig. 88. *Christian Topography*, the showbread table next to the menorah with inscriptions that identify them as a table and a candelabrum. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 81r.
- Fig. 89. *Christian Topography*, the showbread table next to the menorah with inscriptions that identify them as a table and a candelabrum. Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana, Plut. IX 28, fol. 111v.
- Fig. 90. Octateuch 746, the showbread table's outer frame has four small circles, one in the center of each side representing the loaves of bread. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 232r.
- Fig. 91. Octateuch 746, a menorah, standing between two rectangles (the Tabernacle curtains), decorated with cups, knops, and flowers. The candles on the horizontal bar are black lilies. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 233r.
- Fig. 92. *Christian Topography*, the desert encampment, the priests and the Levites around the Tabernacle surrounded by the twelve tribes. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 52r.
- Fig. 93. *Christian Topography*, encampment in the desert; Moses and Aaron are seen together with the priests and the Levites around the Ark/Tabernacle. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 86v.
- Fig. 94. Octateuch 747, Mount Sinai with beams of light shining from its top as the Israelites depart to start their journey in the desert. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 160v.
- Fig. 95. Octateuch 747, the tribes march and carry the Ark during their journey in the desert. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 162r.
- Fig. 96. Basilewky pyxis, seen from front and back.
- Fig. 97. Basilewky pyxis, Aaron and sacrifice offerers.
- Fig. 98. Basilewky pyxis, The Temple altar.

- Fig. 99. Basilewky pyxis, under the lock of the pyxis, a stream of water coming out of the base of the mountain and flowing toward a tree with two branches.
- Fig. 100. Basilewky pyxis, Moses receiving the Torah.
- Fig. 101. *Christian Topography*, Moses at the burning bush and Moses receiving the Torah. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 61r.
- Fig. 102. *Christian Topography*, Moses at the burning bush and Moses receiving the Torah. Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Plut. IX 28, fol. 137r.
- Fig. 103. Jordan, mosaic floor in the Greek Orthodox Church, Madaba map. Images of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem using the same visual pattern as found in the *Christian Topography*.
- Fig. 104. Mount Nebo, mosaic floor of Cappele Theotokos on Mount Nebo in Jordan, seventh century. Images of an arch-topped rectangular structure with a flaming altar and the remains of a deer and a bull on the sides of the structure.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Biblical

Gen.	Genesis	AZ	Avodah Zarah
Exod.	Exodus	BB	Baba Batra
Lev.	Leviticus	BQ	Baba Qamma
Num.	Numbers	Ber	Berakhot
Deut.	Deuteronomy	BMM	Baraita de-Melekhet
Josh.	Joshua		Ha-Mishkan
Isa.	Isaiah	GenR	Genesis Rabbah
Jer.	Jeremiah	Git	Gittin
Ezek.	Ezekiel	Hagigah	Hagigah
Zech.	Zechariah	Kel	Kelim
Ps.	Psalms	Kil	Kilayim
Prov.	Proverbs	LamR	Lamentation Rabbah
Ecccl.	Ecclesiastes	MSh	Ma'aser Sheni
Dan.	Daniel	Meg	Megillah
Neh.	Nehemiah	Men	Menachot
Chron.	Chronicles	Mid	Middot
Matt.	Gospel of Matthew	Nid	Niddah
Cor.	Corinthians	PRE	Pirke deRebbe Eliezer
Heb.	Epistle to the Hebrews	Pes	Pesachim

Rabbinic Texts

M	Mishnah	RH	Rosh Hashanah
T	Tosephta	Sanh	Sanhedrin
BT	Babylonian Talmud	Shab	Shabbat
PT	Palestinian Talmud	Suk	Sukkah
		Taan	Ta'anit
		Tam	Tamid
		Yad	Yadayim
		MT	Mishne Torah

INTRODUCTION

When Moses ascended Mount Sinai and entered into the cloud, where he stayed for forty days and forty nights (Exod. 24:15–18), he was shown a vision of the divine pattern-*tavnit* for the Tabernacle and its vessels and was told:

And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the *tavnit* of the Tabernacle, and the *tavnit* of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it (Exod. 25:8–9) . . . And look that thou make them after their *tavnit*, which was showed thee on the mount (Exod. 25:40).

What was the *tavnit* that Moses saw on Mount Sinai? The nature and the essence of this vision have fascinated scholars for generations. Post-biblical apocryphal literature, the writings of Philo and Josephus, Heikhalot (heavenly palaces) and Merkavah (based on Ezekiel's vision of God's Chariot) literature, midrashic tradition,¹ the New Testament, and patristic literature all attach cosmic and theological significance to the Tabernacle. Jewish as well as Christian thought has frequently ascribed special meaning to the textual parallel between the description of Creation in Genesis and the instructions for building the Tabernacle in Exodus. Using this exegetical connection, early theologians formulated a cosmological theory to interpret the secrets and significance of Creation. The design of the Tabernacle and its vessels, the order of worship, and the attendant rituals were transfigured beyond their simple meanings and endowed with cosmic significance, and the *tavnit* was thus understood to be the blueprint of Creation.

An outstanding example of this exegesis is the sixth-century Byzantine Christian work *Christian Topography for the Whole Universe*,² apparently written “to denounce the false and heathen doctrine of the rotundity of the

¹ The term “Midrash” or “midrashic works” designates an exegetical method that extends and expands the literal sense of the text and attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures. The midrash (from the Hebrew root *derash*, *li-drosh*) refers to the act of “investigating,” and then “expounding,” on the Divine Word. It examines the text from all sides and derives interpretations that are not immediately obvious. “Midrash Aggadah” embraces an interpretation, illustration, or expansion of portions of the Bible that do not deal with laws.

² McCrindle 1897; Winstedt 1909; Wolska-Conus 1962; 1968–1973.

Earth and to vindicate the scriptural account of the world.”³ The treatise and its illustrations were a polemic against “people from outside” (meaning infidels), who believed that the Earth was spherical and in the center of the celestial sphere.⁴ The *Christian Topography* was written to challenge this cosmological understanding, which was originally developed by the second-century astronomer and geographer Ptolemy.⁵ The arguments used in the treatise were not founded on geographical or cartographical knowledge but rather on religious and theological ideas.⁶

The author, relying on the Holy Scriptures, made use of text, images, and sketches to counter this Greek and Roman cosmology and to ‘prove’ that the Earth is essentially flat,⁷ reflecting the *tavnit* revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, which has major cosmic significance and can explain the mysteries of Creation:⁸

Here Moses, after he had been privileged to witness the terrible scenes on the mount, is commanded by God to make the Tabernacle according to the pattern which he had seen on the mount. This being a pattern of the whole world: “for see, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern which was shown thee on the mount” (Exod. 25:30). Since therefore he had been shown how God made the heavens and the earth, and how on the second day He made the firmament in the middle between them, and thus made the one place into two places, so he, in like manner in accordance with the pattern which he had seen, made the Tabernacle and placed the veil in the middle, and by this division made the one Tabernacle into two, an inner and an outer.

The original sixth-century manuscript of the *Christian Topography* is no longer extant, but ninth- and eleventh-century copies have been preserved. The author, long known only as Cosmas Indicopleustes (“India-voyager”), used the expressions “we have drawn,” and “this is what I drew,” as well as “this is what I wrote,” both to explain the meaning of his illustrations and

³ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edition, Cambridge 1911, VII: 214.

⁴ Dilke 1987, 261.

⁵ Ptolemy divided the world into a network of meridians and parallels and presented several methods of projecting them on a plane so as to explain how the grid, projected on a flat surface, enhanced the viewer’s perception of the spherical world (Rees 1980, 61).

⁶ McCrindle, 1897, Introduction, XIV; Wolska-Conus, 1968–1973, I, 124–127; II, 248; III, 33, 34.

⁷ Woodward 1985, 517, remarks that the idea of the “flat Earth” proposed in the *Christian Topography* as its cosmological biblical interpretation should not be extended to the period as a whole. The Church never officially adopted Cosmas’s cosmology and many early Church leaders held to the classical concept of the spherical Earth and placed it at the center of the universe.

⁸ McCrindle 1897, 149, 150.

to emphasize the fact that he created the drawings himself.⁹ The drawings depict the Cosmos, the Tabernacle, and the Ark of the Covenant using a schema of a rectangular structure crowned with an arch and a line separating the rectangle from the half-circle above it (fig. 1). In other diagrams in the book the seven-branched menorah symbolizes the celestial bodies, the showbread table represents the produce of the Earth, and the Ark of the Covenant with its cherubim in the Holy of Holies symbolizes the upper Heavens.

Surprisingly, a similar schema of the Tabernacle can also be found in Jewish art from earlier periods. We find a visual pictogram of the Tabernacle/Temple running through Jewish artifacts for centuries—from the Bar Kochba coins dated from 132 to 135 CE (fig. 2) to the third-century Dura-Europos synagogue (fig. 3) to third- and fourth-century Jewish funerary art, and to fourth- to seventh-century synagogue art, as well as examples from later periods, such as depictions in a fourteenth-century illustrated Sephardi haggadah.

In the present study I look at various images in Jewish and Christian works of art in order to determine whether their iconographies have comparable significance. The Christian examples I refer to throughout the present book come primarily from Byzantine works created in the Greek-speaking Christian communities along the eastern Mediterranean. These examples all reflect the Byzantines' emphasis on the interface between words and images, thus expressing the Byzantine perception that they are the People of the Book, who take the true meaning of the Bible to be the absolute Word of God.¹⁰ The Jews also see themselves as the People of the Book, wherein they find the ultimate source of truth and wisdom. Both traditions assume the task of transferring and transforming ideas and textual material through images.

The *Christian Topography* in its strong reliance on the biblical text and imaging clearly specifies that its schematic drawing of the Cosmos/Tabernacle/Ark (fig. 1) reflects the *tavnit* revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, as God told him (Exod. 25:9, 40; 26:8; Num. 8:4) to make the Tabernacle and its vessels “according to the *tavnit* that he was shown on the mountain.” The horizontal line separating the rectangular part of the schema from its arched dome clearly has symbolic meaning for both Creation and the Tabernacle. In the former it represents the firmament, created on the second

⁹ Ibid., Introduction, XI; Wolska-Conus (see n. 1), I, 124–127; II, 248; III, 33, 34.

¹⁰ James 2007, 1–2; Brubaker 2007, 58.

day, which divided the Earth from the Heavens above, and in the latter it is the curtain separating the Holy from the Holy of Holies.

Similar ideas expressed visually and verbally concerning the link between the Tabernacle and Creation are also found in such other Byzantine Christian works as the *Octateuchs*, which date from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. The *Octateuchs*, a collection of eight biblical books of the Septuagint, consists of the five books of Moses, the “*Pentateuch*” generally known to both Hellenized Jews and Greek-speaking Christians as the Law (*Torah*), Joshua and Judges, the two books that continue the narrative of Deuteronomy, and the short Book of Ruth, which is set in the period of the Judges (Ruth 1:1).¹¹

Interestingly, the unique exegetical method found in these Byzantine Christian works seems to rely heavily on early Jewish sources, especially in its description of the universe and the way it was formed in the act of Creation. That both traditions used such visual patterns suggests the existence of reciprocity between Christian and Jewish art during the Middle Ages and the use of common images by artists from both traditions. Iconographical research into Jewish and Christian art shows several similarities with respect to the visual model, as well as with regard to midrashic interpretations of the biblical texts. The question is whether the channels of transmission between the two cultures were visual or textual.

Until recently, scholars followed one of two different approaches in discussions of the cultural, functional, and liturgical background of the relationship between the two religious traditions. Some favored the visual transmission channel and suggested that Jewish visual models also served Christian artists. Others interpreted the Jewish elements in Christian iconography as expressions of common textual sources.

In this work I attempt to demonstrate how a large literary corpus of unique works could have provided ideas and visual motifs that connect Jewish and Christian traditions in time—from the first to the fourteenth century—and in space—from Syria and the Land of Israel to southern France and Spain. Material with enormous potential for linking the thoughts and perceptions was uncovered in relatively recent extensive research on the works of Philo and Josephus, apocalyptic writings, the

¹¹ Lowden 2010, 107. The first reference to the existence of the *Octateuchs* appears in the writings of Procopius of Gaza (475–536), a rhetorician, who wrote a Christian commentary on the biblical text.

Dead Sea Scrolls, Rabbinic sources, early liturgy, and Heikhalot literature. All of these allegorical, mystical, and poetic works were written to reveal hidden truths about God, Heaven, and the created world.

The verbal descriptions of the visual imagery in Jewish and Christian art that portray the mystical *tavnit* of the Tabernacle and Creation rely on the biblical description of Ezekiel's visions of God's Glory—His heavenly Chariot-Throne, borne by cherubim. The figurative model that depicts the rectangular structure crowned with an arch formed by the cherubim's wings reflects the influence of these literary works.

The *Christian Topography* is a singularly important link in the Jewish-Christian chain of motifs, for it shows clear Jewish influences in the ideas, prooftexts, and visual symbols found within it. Therein, it reflects both the conceptual and the visual channels of transmission of Jewish literary texts dealing with revelation and mystical tradition that are essential elements in Christian ideas and motifs.¹²

The *Christian Topography*, with its particular cosmological approach, has been the subject of extensive research over the years. The most important analysis of the work is the study by Wanda Wolska-Conus, who translated the book from Greek to French in 1962.¹³ She undertook a methodical survey of the miniatures and the text and developed an "iconographical tree" of the miniatures in general and of the drawings of the Tabernacle and Creation in particular, eventually concluding that the entire work was influenced by various literary sources and the intellectual School of Antioch. She regards the cosmographical scheme of the arched rectangle with the line separating the two spaces as the most important drawing in the book, seeing it as clear evidence of the author's Christian theological approach to the representation of the divine plan in Creation and the Tabernacle in the wilderness. In 1989, she summarized her research and identified the sixth-century notable Constantine of Antioch as the author and illustrator.¹⁴ She also concluded that Constantine's schematic pattern of Creation was influenced by Nestorian cosmology and its theological spin-offs. She insists that in order to understand the uniqueness of the miniatures in the *Christian Topography*, it is essential to keep in mind that

¹² Rowland and Morray-Jones 2009, xviii.

¹³ Wolska-Conus 1962.

¹⁴ Eadem., 1989, 28–30; 1990, 155–191; Kessler 1995, 365, n. 1.

it is a work with this specific theological approach and with a special message, which influenced the illustration of the text.¹⁵

The illustrations in the *Christian Topography* have also been subject to a great deal of attention. In 1970 Doula Mouriki-Charalambous published an extensive stylistic and iconographical study of the miniatures in the *Christian Topography* and the Octateuchs.¹⁶ She regards the similarities between them as proof of the existence of an earlier Octateuch (or Pentateuch) with catenae that, she claims,¹⁷ provided the model for the miniatures in the Octateuchs and through it for the drawings in Constantine's work. Mouriki-Charalambous,¹⁸ in considering the similarities between the miniatures in the two works, contends that Constantine used an earlier Octateuch (or Pentateuch) as his pictorial model.

Leslie Brubaker, writing in 1981, compared the drawings of the Tabernacle and its vessels in the Octateuchs and the *Christian Topography* and maintains that Mouriki-Charalambous's conclusions ignored the fact that there is no evidence of an illustrated Octateuch accompanied by catenae appearing prior to the ninth century.¹⁹ Brubaker contends that the schematic style of the drawings in the *Christian Topography* do not conform to the narrative approach of the Octateuchs and its Septuagint text. Thus, she insists that Constantine's text and drawings were the models for the Octateuchs, in particular for the special details in the depictions of the Tabernacle and its vessels, rather than the other way around.

Kurt Weitzmann, who discussed the Octateuch illustrations in many studies, summed up his research in a book he wrote with Massimo Bernabo in 1999.²⁰ He noted that his primary purpose in these studies was to trace the origin of the archetype of the illustrations of the Octateuchs back to the mid-third-century synagogue of Dura-Europos through various copies of models that had been lost.²¹ He contended that the Octateuchs manuscripts were produced in one of the principal scriptoria, such as the one in Antioch, where Jews and Christians had close personal contact and where

¹⁵ The *Christian Topography's* cosmology of the earthly and the heavenly states of the universe corresponds to the Nestorius (ca. 386–ca. 451) theory of the human and divine aspects of Christ as distinct natures, not unified.

¹⁶ Mouriki-Charalambous 1970.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13. Catena in the contemporary sense of the word means a series of quotations derived from various exegetes who comment on the same book of the Bible.

¹⁸ Mouriki-Charalambous, 186–196.

¹⁹ Brubaker 1981, 73–92.

²⁰ Weitzmann and Bernabo 1999, 299–311.

²¹ Weitzman and Kessler 1990, 17.

there were Jewish texts written in Greek whose miniatures were then used in the illustrated Septuagints, which could have been accessed by both the Christians and the Hellenized Jews of the period. Weitzmann concluded that the close connection between the Dura-Europos synagogue's paintings and the miniatures in the Octateuchs suggests that they share a common archetype. Moreover, he thought it very likely that the elements from Jewish legends found in both the synagogue and the Octateuchs originated in this early illustrated archetype, which became an integral part of later manuscripts.²²

In an article written in 2010, John Lowden criticizes this hypothesis as being pure speculation, declaring that "Weitzmann's arguments are as irrefutable as they are unprovable."²³ Lowden, who views the Octateuchs among the most ambitious achievements of Byzantine illumination, contends that the illustrated Octateuch manuscripts are not a late antique or a pre-Constantinian product, but rather that they date from the middle to late Byzantine period. He insists that the common model for the Octateuchs must have derived from a *Christian Topography* manuscript, which seems to be indicated by the very similar miniatures of the Tabernacle in both works.²⁴

Moreover, Lowden writes, that if the illustrated Byzantine Octateuchs were, as Weitzmann portrayed them, produced in the late-antique, around the sixth century, it would have been reasonable to find some trace of them at a later date in the Latin West or in some other linguistic context. As the iconographic wealth of the Octateuchs was not a pan-Europe, millennium-long phenomenon, he concludes that they were produced in the mid-Byzantine period and that their creators gathered ideas and images from many earlier contexts, combining the older elements with contemporary visual formulas.²⁵

In 2006 Brubaker reevaluated the images and text of the ninth-century Vatican copy of the *Christian Topography* (Vat. Gr. 699, henceforth Vatican 699) and offered new insights into the Church's conflict with Iconoclasm in eight- and ninth-century Byzantium.²⁶ She contends that the Byzantine practice, especially during this period of conflict, was to add and remake past images so as to justify and endorse more contemporary ideas. The images found in Vatican 699 refer back to the texts and illustrations of

²² Weitzmann and Bernabo, 310.

²³ Lowden 2010, 141, 143, 144.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 133–139.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 149–150.

²⁶ Brubaker 2006, 3–24.

the original sixth-century manuscript, but were updated to make them relevant to ninth-century theology. Vatican 699, with its miniatures, was produced as part of the Iconophiles' struggle to contravene the Iconoclasts' ban on visual images. Moreover, she notes that many of the miniatures throughout the text illustrate the thesis that the form of the world that God showed Moses would be reflected in the shape of the Tabernacle that was to be built in the wilderness.

The Iconophiles maintained that the *Christian Topography's* emphasis on God's instructions to Moses for the making of the Tabernacle and its accoutrements, including the Ark and the cherubim, validated their argument that the Second Commandment forbids idols but approves and mandates the production of religious images for worship. As Brubaker noted:²⁷

The significance of the Tabernacle in contemporary Iconophile polemic suggests that the opportunity to depict it, with all of its paraphernalia and accoutrements, overrode the basic incompatibility of the *Topography* text itself with ninth-century orthodox positions. The ideological importance of the *Topography* images superseded the heretical nature of the *Topography* words, being influenced by Nestorius, who was considered heretical in the ninth century.

Elisabeth Revel-Neher has researched the iconographical sources of the *Christian Topography* and the eschatological aspects of the miniatures that depict the Tabernacle and its vessels.²⁸ In an article published in 1990, she wrote that certain iconographical details in the work's miniatures are not visual interpretations of the accompanying text. Rather, she suggested, they indicate the existence of an early Jewish model that incorporated motifs such as the schema of the arch above the rectangle of the Ark. She also listed a series of other Jewish influences including, for example, the doors of the Ark and the phylacteries on the foreheads of the priests. As these motifs are not found in the text of the *Christian Topography*, she argues that Constantine found some of these details in an illustrated Jewish manuscript, which makes his work a very important element in the search for a common source of Jewish and Byzantine biblical iconography.

Also in 1990, Herbert Kessler asked: "Why did the Christians perpetuate the image of the Tabernacle, particularly in the Jewish form, found

²⁷ Ibid., 17.

²⁸ Revel-Neher 1990/1991, 78–97.

in the early monuments?"²⁹ and suggested that Jews and Christians used the same model, but for different purposes. Whereas the Jews used the image to remember the destruction of the Temple and the promise of its restoration in the Messianic Age, for the Christians it was proof that the physical Sanctuary was transmuted into a spiritual covenant. Kessler contends that the figurative model used for the Tabernacle in the later Christian manuscripts was a version of the one copied centuries earlier for the murals in the Dura-Europos synagogue. He notes that in both the *Christian Topography* and the Octateuchs this original Jewish model was enriched by Christian influences, as was demonstrated clearly in another essay he wrote in 1995 about the illustration in Vatican 699 of the Second Coming, the *Parousia* (fig. 4).³⁰

Relating more to the cosmological approach, in 1979 Cynthia Hahn and Jean Lassus both published studies of depictions of Creation in art in which they compared the relevant miniatures in the *Christian Topography* and the Octateuchs.³¹ Hahn maintains that the artisans involved in both works used ancient models, but that the portrayal of the six days of Creation in the Octateuchs indicated a movement away from the ancient Hellenistic approach toward a new model more in accord with medieval concepts. Moreover, she contends that the portrayal of the world at its inception in both works is indicative of a new Christian theological approach.

Lassus regards the images of Creation in the Octateuchs as proof of an abiding interest in cosmology. The differences in the portrayals of Creation among the various Octateuchs, he wrote, reflect the creative ability of the various schools or, alternatively, the preferences of the individual artisans.

In 2006 Champion, who refers to the *Christian Topography's* author as Kosmas Indikopleustes, wrote that the work was an attack on the Greek scientific heresy of the times.³² He contends that Kosmas, who was unusual in this regard, constructed an "independent epistemology governed by the divine plan (*oikonomia*) and supported by a belief that biblical prophecies are being realized in his day." The *oikonomia* of God points to the goal of Creation, namely to the *eschaton*. According to Champion, the *Christian Topography* proposed an idea that was quite different from the dominant perception of the time. It developed a cosmology that was based on the

²⁹ Kessler 1990/1991, 53–77.

³⁰ Idem., 1995, 368–369.

³¹ Hahn 1979, 29–40; Lassus 1979, 85–148.

³² Champion 2006, 383–392.

Tabernacle, where the flat Earth supports the Heavens so as to allow intercourse between God and humans. Kosmas, he says, saw the divine plan as a promise that all Creation would be resurrected and gathered unto Christ like Enoch and Elijah, who ascended to Heaven before their deaths.³³

In view of all of this research concerning the sources and purpose of the *Christian Topography* and the Octateuchs it seems to me that whether the artists copied from one another or used a common model, they all relied on the Old Testament and its commentaries as their primary sources. Constantine as well as other Christian thinkers regarded the Old Testament as their major typological tool for understanding the New Testament. They studied the Bible thoroughly using Hellenistic Jewish commentators such as Josephus and Philo, as well as others whose commentaries were important exegetical sources in the fifth and sixth centuries.³⁴ Constantine's understanding of the Old Testament was filtered through the Epistle to the Hebrews, which sees the Old Testament as an archetype and a "shadow" of the New Testament:³⁵ "The Jewish law is only a shadow of the good things to come. It is not a full and faithful model, and therefore it cannot bring fulfillment." He noted that the initial sketch-drawing of a work of art does not contain all the details that the finished image will have.³⁶ Hence, to complete his work the artist has to add these details as he goes along and finishes his masterpiece.

Thus, using the Tabernacle as a schematic model of Creation established theories that embraced a range of ideas, including the meaning of sanctity, the relationship between God and the children of His covenant, and the role of the biblical sources in the process of developing thought, creating images, and organizing memories, as discussed by Mary Carruthers in her book *The Craft of Thought*.³⁷

Carruthers devotes special attention to the schemes of memory created through "the use of the Tabernacle rendering as a mnemotechnical meditational *pictura*."³⁸ She cites artistic examples that are in keeping with the notion of "the memory of the Temple." Discussing the portrayal of the Tabernacle as "the pattern of Heaven," she refers to various bibli-

³³ Ibid., 386.

³⁴ Runia 1993, 28–29, cites the commentary of Philo's *Questions on the Book of Genesis*, *Questions on the Book of Exodus*, and the *Life of Moses* as part of the catena of the Octateuchs.

³⁵ Heb 10:1.

³⁶ McCrindle, 139–140.

³⁷ Carruthers 2009, 95–96.

³⁸ Eadem 1998, 221–234.

cal sources from the Old and New Testaments, their commentaries, and their visualizations in art. Among her examples (which are taken primarily from Western art), she mentions “the ancient (especially Hellenistic) convention of cosmic geographies, seen, for example, in the divine topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes, who drew the world in the shape of the Jerusalem Temple and in the ‘cartographic’ drawing of the Tabernacle in Greek Octateuch manuscripts.”³⁹

Interestingly, the illustrations used in the only Jewish manuscript with a full cycle of the Genesis story of the Creation, the fourteenth-century Sarajevo Haggadah (figs. 5 and 6), contain motifs similar to those in Byzantine works.⁴⁰ Herbert Broderick, analyzing the Creation illuminations in the Sarajevo Haggadah, assumed that the artist had access either to a copy of Genesis with a picture cycle similar to those in the Octateuchs and the *Christian Topography* or to another model that was influenced by these early manuscripts.⁴¹ He contends that we cannot know whether the model for the Sarajevo Haggadah was originally Jewish or not, but apparently the artist, in using the arched schema as a frame for each of the days of Creation, understood its cosmological significance.

Jewish religious consciousness from late antiquity on regarded the Tabernacle/Temple, its service (*avodah*), and its place vis-à-vis Creation as one of the foundations upon which the world rests. This notion is stated clearly in the second-century mishnaic text *Ethics of the Fathers* 1:2: “The world stands on three things, on Torah, on *avodah*, and on acts of charity.” The *avodah* is understood to be the rituals of the Tabernacle/Temple: “For there is no service dearer to the Holy One, blessed be He, than the service of the Temple.”⁴²

In light of these diverse scholarly opinions, it is important to bear in mind that the primary purpose of the present work is to study the essence of the *tavnit* shown to Moses on the mountain as God’s blueprint of Creation. In order to do so, I explore the relationship between the illustrations of Creation and the Tabernacle, trace their literary sources, probe the meaning of the iconography, and then follow the way that these ideas were conveyed from link to link in the chain of thought and creativity

³⁹ Ibid., 236.

⁴⁰ The Sarajevo Haggadah, now in the Sarajevo National Museum, was written and illustrated in Catalonia, Spain, in the second half of the fourteenth century.

⁴¹ Broderick 1984, 320–332.

⁴² *Avot D’Rabbi Nathan*, A:4.

from late antiquity through the end of the Middle Ages. I compare the Jewish and Byzantine Christian approaches as they are reflected in works of art that depict the Tabernacle and Creation in order to discern where they share an associated symbolism, where they diverge, and how their mutual influences are utilized to express polemical differences.

To comprehend the process of how, where, and when these motifs came together to forge the long chain of Jewish and Christian mutual influences on ideas and thoughts, we first turn to an ancient city in Syria.

CHAPTER ONE

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN RECIPROCAL INFLUENCES

The Dura-Europos Synagogue and Baptistry

Discovered under a mound of earth in 1932, the ruins of two buildings—one Jewish and one Christian—erected adjacent to one another in the city of Dura-Europos in the first half of the third century provide what appears to be an important link in the chain of conveyance of Jewish and Christian reciprocal influences. The close proximity of the two structures both facilitates and highlights the blending and consolidation of visual models, their iconographical sources, their didactic purposes, and their polemical messages.

Both the decorated Christian prayer house with a reconstructed baptismal font (presently at Yale)¹ and the synagogue (now in the Damascus Museum) with walls covered with narrative murals are regarded as the first of their kind. It has been clearly determined that the murals in the synagogue were created in two stages. We do not have an exact date for the first stage, but for the second, a decorated tile on the ceiling of the reconstructed synagogue gives us 244–245.

The surviving images in the two buildings point to possible channels for the transmission of verbal and visual material, so a careful study of the art in the Dura-Europos synagogue and baptistry can help elucidate the patterns of thought and the various iconographies. Such an analysis allows us to follow the paths of transmission of visual images and ideas from the Jewish to the Christian community and focus on the evolved changes in meaning evident in the art of the two religions.²

¹ Yale University sponsored the excavations at Dura-Europos, Syria, from 1928 to 1937. Important finds that resulted from these excavations became part of the University's permanent collection of ancient art. The collection includes images from the gallery's extensive photographic archives, which provide historical documentation of the expeditions as well as the artifacts and structures unearthed during the excavations.

² Schubert 1992, 144, claims that it is possible that the Jewish midrashic material found its way into Christian art either through Jewish pictorial models or through the writings of the Church Fathers, who integrated it into their works.

Much has been written concerning the murals in the baptistery and the synagogue.³ It has been proposed that the synagogue murals were a Jewish response to the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament.⁴ In essence, the Jews were emphasizing the eternal union between God and the Jewish People and countering the Christian theology reflected in the baptistery decorations.⁵

It has also been suggested that in defending the Hebrew Bible against Christian attacks the Jews of the period were answering such questions as: “Did the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem prove that God had abandoned His covenant with the Jews and had instead established its heavenly abode with the Christians?” “Is the Bible to be understood and interpreted typologically?” “Are the prophets anticipating Jesus as the Messiah?”⁶ Such suggestions find support when we consider the selection of the biblical passages that were the sources for the murals, as they were precisely those that were often quoted in the polemical controversies between Jews and Christians in the second and third centuries.⁷ The competition between them for hegemony over the Bible caused both religions to turn to art in order to present their positions more clearly. The two religions—independently or one after the other—adapted the visual pattern of the Roman cult models for worship and used it to create works of art that depicted their own interpretations of the Bible.

The images of the Tabernacle/Temple/Ark of the Covenant in the Dura-Europos synagogue illustrate this point (figs. 3, 8, 15). These murals served as a response to the Christian promise of redemption,⁸ and were designed to counter the Christian claim that the sanctified values that the Jews attributed to the Tabernacle and its service were passed on to the body of Jesus.⁹ In their choice of scenes, the Jewish artisans were denying Christian doctrine, wherein Jesus, who foresaw the destruction of the Temple¹⁰ and the end of the Jewish priesthood and animal sacrifices, became the sole intermediary between God and man.¹¹

³ Goodenough 1953–1968; Gutmann 1987, 61–71; 1983, 91–104; 1973 137–154; 1964, 20–25; Hopkins 1979; Kraeling 1956; 1967; Perkins 1973; Sukenik 1932, 206–212; 1947.

⁴ Simon 1962, 188–208.

⁵ *Idem.*, 1986, 382.

⁶ Weitzmann and Kessler 1990, 178–183.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁸ Pigaris 1994, 103–110.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 107, Matt. 26:61.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Matt. 24:1,2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, John 2:19–22.

The Jews of Dura-Europos might have drawn on the cultural resources of a larger city, perhaps Antioch, as their art reflects the response of the Syrian Jewish community to the rapid development of Christian worship in the Eastern Syrian Church.¹²

In light of all of these considerations, it is important to focus here on the ideas mirrored in the murals of the two Dura-Europos houses of worship, on their sources, and on how they relate to the subject of the Tabernacle/Creation duality. The Christian building (*Domus Ecclesia*), which was originally a private house with an inner courtyard, was converted to a church/baptistery around 232. Nine surviving murals (apparently added ca. 240) led scholars to conclude that the building was a house of worship and a baptistery for the local Christian community. The theme of the paintings decorating the walls of the room that housed the baptismal font clearly revolves around the sacrament of baptism.¹³ Studying the subject of ritual immersion, we realize that it is very relevant to both the issue of the Tabernacle/Creation duality and to the process of transference of ideas between the two religions.

As commanded in the Book of Exodus, priests preparing themselves for worship in the Tabernacle were told that “when they go into the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water, that they die not” (Exod. 30:20). In Jewish worship ritual immersion marked the passage from an impure to a pure state, from secular to sacred, or from one level of sanctity to a higher level, which accounts for its importance for all those who served or worshipped in the Tabernacle/Temple.

The laws of ritual immersion are described in detail in several tractates of the Mishnah.¹⁴ *Mishnah Yoma*, for example, deals with the service of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement and his five immersions during that sacred service as he moved from one stage to another. It has been suggested that the concluding passage of the tractate underscores the spiritual significance of Jewish ritual immersion and the purity that comes from God,¹⁵ Who is referred to as “Israel’s Fountain of Living Waters,”

¹² Weitzmann 1990, 146, cites Kraeling, who discusses the closeness between Jews and Christians in the fourth century.

¹³ Kraeling 1967, 178.

¹⁴ Mishnah (Heb. “oral instruction” from “*shanah*,” meaning repeat.) is the compilation of the Oral Law, which was edited around 200 CE and served as the basis for the Talmud

¹⁵ Daube 1956, 107.

"*mikveh yisrael*."¹⁶ According to Christian doctrine,¹⁷ Jesus replaced the High Priest and the Church was "the new community of the sons of Levi,"¹⁸ so it adopted the Jewish ceremony of ritual immersion as the sacrament for conversion to the Christian faith.¹⁹

The Dura-Europos Christian prayer hall was a small room, with a baptismal font at one end facing west.²⁰ There was a canopy on columns above the font and a dome painted blue and decorated with stars (fig. 9), a structure inspired by the architectural model of the niche for the Holy Ark in the center of the western wall of the adjacent synagogue (fig. 3).²¹ The baptismal font and the Torah niche, respectively, were the buildings' most important features. In the baptistery the blue starry dome was apparently designed to evoke the Heavens and impart cosmic significance to the entire building, as well as to draw a parallel between the waters of the baptismal font and the waters separated by the firmament in the story of Creation. Thus, we have here a Christian practice of baptismal immersion that originated with the Jewish ritual of purity in the Tabernacle/Temple and an artistic structure that symbolizes the Creation.

The *Odes of Solomon*, an early Christian liturgical collection of hymns dated to late first or early second century CE, echoes this possible link between the ritual of immersion and Creation.²² In this collection, baptism, especially the baptismal water, which is called "living water," takes on cosmological significance.²³ It is considered a new creation that brings the baptized to the primal waters of the beginning of the world²⁴ and yields their rebirth to new life—the life of Paradise.²⁵ In Hymn 24, the first baptism is described poetically, the verses inspired by Genesis 1:2, "And

¹⁶ M *Yoma* 8:9: "Said R. Akiva, 'Blessed are Israel! Before whom are you purified? Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven, as it is said, And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean' (Ezek. 36:25) and it says, '... the fountain of living waters ...' (Jer 17:13) As the waters purify the unclean, so the Holy One blessed be He, purifies Israel."

¹⁷ Heb. 4:14, 15.

¹⁸ Barnard 1978, 73.

¹⁹ Danielou 1964, V 1, 316.

²⁰ Hopkins, 1979, 94–123.

²¹ Kraeling 1967, 198.

²² Charlesworth 1985, 725–727, described them as "Christian hymns that are very Jewish in tone and perspective so that scholars from the beginning until the present have been persuaded, incorrectly, that they are essentially Jewish."

²³ Lev. 15:13, "... and he shall bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean." The laws of ritual purification for men and women who have a defiling issue require the immersion in a spring of running water.

²⁴ Finn 1992, 26.

²⁵ Danielou 1960, 25.

the Earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water;" the abyss and the underworld are described as part of the primordial state of the Cosmos:²⁶

But the chasms were submerged in the submersion of the Lord
And they perished in that thought with which they had remained
From the beginning
For they labored from the beginning
And the end of their labor was life. (Odes of Solomon 24:6–8)

The separation of the waters marked the end of the chaos and the parting from the deep that represented the underworld. The dome above the baptismal font, which symbolized the firmament and the separation, was designed to give the individual undergoing the sacrament a sense of taking part in a cosmic act—separating himself from the underworld and from impurity, the place where the dead dwell, and being born again in a new, pure world of life.

The mural of the *Good Shepherd and His Flock* (fig. 10) on the back wall beneath the dome over the baptismal font portrays a large serpent in the foreground of the lower left-hand corner, where Adam and Eve, holding fig leaves or aprons to cover their naked bodies, are picking fruit off a tree. This scene is clearly an allusion to Original Sin and the fall of man,²⁷ for which Jesus had come to atone. The juxtaposition of the Garden of Eden and baptism reflects the pattern of thought in the liturgical literature concerning the sacrament. Hymn 11 in the *Odes of Solomon* compares one who has been baptized to a tree planted in the Garden of Eden, whose waters are the living waters of that eternal land.²⁸

The shepherd, shown in a pastoral setting reminiscent of Eden, has a sheep on his shoulders,²⁹ thereby giving expression to the special meaning of baptism.³⁰ In joining Jesus' flock those newly baptized are promised salvation—protected and saved as the shepherd protects his flock against the wild animals that would attack his sheep.³¹ The scene portrays the

²⁶ Charlesworth 1985, 757.

²⁷ According to Kraeling (1967, 57, 202,) this scene of Adam and Eve is a later addition; the branches of the tree introduced into the scene of the *Good Shepherd* strengthen this hypothesis.

²⁸ Charlesworth 1985, 728.

²⁹ Perkins 1973, 53.

³⁰ Kraeling 1967, 181.

³¹ Quasten 1993, 273–294.

closeness of the baptized individual to Jesus and to the Creator, alluding as well to Adam's intimate relationship with God, Who created him and placed him in the Garden.

The water motifs in the baptistery are characterized as 'archetypes' of baptism.³² Such motifs as the water that covered the world in the early stage of Creation, the Flood, the parting of the Red Sea, and Elijah using water in his struggle against the priests of Ba'al³³ all relate to the Christian typology of baptism.³⁴ The synagogue murals that portray some of these events were apparently designed as counter indications to Christian baptism. They disallowed the Christian theological emphasis and at the same time stressed the Jewish character of the biblical story by adding midrashic details.³⁵

In analyzing the Jewish response to the Christian theology, it has been suggested that the choice and content of the Dura-Europos murals and their representation of the narrative could be viewed as elements of the Jewish-Christian polemics of the times.³⁶ The paintings served as devices to strengthen the Jewish congregation and to provide responses to Christian interpretations of Jewish Scripture. The imagery in the two structures points to channels of transmission of Jewish sources into Christian art and from there back into Jewish art.³⁷ According to this view, the paintings in both houses of worship provide a "laboratory" for the study of Jewish-Christian polemics.³⁸ The early date of the decoration of the two buildings offers a glimpse into the third-century world of Christian theology and a look at the Jewish response.

Some of the synagogue murals reflect motifs in the baptistery and others rebut Christian arguments in the anti-Jewish literature of the period.³⁹

³² Danielou 1964, 4.

³³ Elijah relies on the help of God to pour water (the symbol of baptism) around the altar and to succeed (through the miracle of the water) in bringing fire and thus showing the relationship of water—baptism—and the power of the Divine.

³⁴ The connection between the splitting of the Red Sea and early baptism in Christian thought appears in the Pauline writings in 1 Cor. 10:2–6.

³⁵ It is impossible to know with certainty about all the wall paintings that were in the synagogue since not all the walls survived and those that did are in part only fragmentary.

³⁶ Weitzmann and Kessler 1990, 178–183.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 182–183.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Kessler cites Weitzmann, who sees these images as copies of models that were developed in a great Jewish center, such as Antioch, and were then spread, reaching the Dura-Europos synagogue.

³⁹ Such as the Letter of Barnabas, the Dialogue of Justin Martyr, and the Dialogue with Trypho, among others.

The discussions that took place in the earliest centuries of Christianity left their mark on the Jews of Dura-Europos.⁴⁰ Apparently feeling threatened, perhaps even attacked, by the new theology with its Christian interpretations of biblical verses, they felt compelled to refute the distortion of Jewish sources in the Christian typology and to respond to the arguments and to the accusations that the Christians leveled against them.

The unique feature apparent in the presentation of subjects dealing with biblical stories in the Dura-Europos synagogue is the use of motifs from mishnaic and midrashic literatures that represent the Rabbis' interpretations of the Pentateuch, the Torah or Written Law. The Rabbinic exegesis, considered part of the Oral Law, enriched the text with midrashim and added descriptive details to its literal meaning. Thus, the midrashic allusions in the murals underscored Jewish hegemony over the Torah, which was the text known to the Christians, by conjoining it with the teachings of the Rabbis, which were passed on to the Jewish community orally.⁴¹

The most remarkable mural in the synagogue—portrayals of the Exodus from Egypt (fig. 11) and the crossing of the Red Sea (fig. 12)—extends over the entire right side of the upper register of the western wall and is a prime example of the Jewish-Christian polemics of the period. The story is told through several different narrative scenes, and most scholars contend that the mural is to be 'read' from right to left. In the first scene, the Israelites are seen departing from Egypt. They are armed with weapons, as explicitly stated in the midrash on the verse "and the Children of Israel went up armed, *hamushim* in Hebrew, out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. 13:18).⁴² Moses is shown as an especially large figure, in accord with the midrash on the verse "in those days, when Moses was grown" (Exod. 2:11). The midrash claims that in choosing Moses to lead the Israelites God made him grow exceptionally large and tall.⁴³

⁴⁰ Rokeah 1982, 40–82.

⁴¹ Hirschman 1992, 16; Kogman-Appel 2006, 135–166.

⁴² Sukenik 1947, 81, 179, 180, noted that there are several different interpretations of "*hamushim*." Onkeles translated it as "in a hurry the Children of Israel left the land of Egypt." Rashi (following *ExodR* 20:17) interpreted it as "with weapons," as it says in Josh. 1:14, "... but ye shall pass before your brethren armed. ..." Kraeling 1956, 81, also related to these interpretations.

⁴³ The popular midrash about Moses being exceptionally big is found in four places in the Babylonian Talmud, among them *Bechorot* 44a: "Said Rab (third century): Moses our teacher was ten cubits in height" [one cubit is eighteen inches]; *Tan. Exod. 9* explains the source of this interpretation: "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up..." [What is so special about Moses growing up? Does not everyone grow up? In man, beasts, and birds—they all grow up! The point is to teach that he was great in

The next scene—the Egyptians drowning in the sea—is problematic. Unlike the sequence in the biblical text, where first the Israelites crossed the sea and only then did the Egyptians drown, the artisan did not show the Israelites actually passing through the sea. In place of that crossing (in the space between the drowning Egyptians and the Israelites on the opposite bank) we see twelve stripes, which is a midrashic motif also found in Christian exegesis such as in Origen (185–254), who mentions the twelve paths in his commentary on Psalm 136:13: “To Him Who divided the Red Sea into paths, for His mercy endureth forever.”⁴⁴

Christian sources interpreted the splitting of the Red Sea and the Israelite crossing as symbols of baptism, as we read in the First Letter to the Corinthians 10:2: “In the cloud and in the sea they were all baptized as followers of Moses.” This notion might explain why the mural does not show the Israelites actually crossing the sea, that is to say immersed in the water, baptized, according to Christian typology, but in effect skips over that scene and shows only the twelve stripes with no figures in them.⁴⁵ This omission suggests that the painting tells the biblical story with midrashic emphases and that the artist deliberately avoided the typological-allegorical approach of Christianity that is so central to the subject of baptism.

The fresco called *The Well of Be'er* (fig. 13), the leftmost painting in the central register of the synagogue's western wall, also appears to be a polemical response to the Christian interpretation evident in the baptistery.⁴⁶ The Christian painting of the Samaritan woman leaning over the well (fig. 14) emphasizes the “living waters”⁴⁷ and alludes to Jesus the rock, fol-

an unnatural fashion. Also Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 2, 9, 6, says that when Moses was 3 years old, God made him grow in an exceptional fashion.

⁴⁴ Sukenik 1947, 85, draws our attention to the fact that Origen's time coincides with the period of the paintings in the Dura-Europos synagogue. Nordstrom 1958, 286–297, presents examples of the use of the theme of the twelve stripes in later Byzantine Christian manuscripts, such as the ninth-century Russian Chludov Psalter and some from an even later date. He contended that the stylistic and perspective form of the stripes points to an early Jewish prototype that must have influenced the iconography of both the Dura-Europos painting and the miniatures in the *Christian Topography*. The stripe motif as a convention for paintings of the crossing of the Red Sea is also seen in other manuscripts.

⁴⁵ “And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided” (Exod. 14:21). Targum Yonatan ben Uziel translated the verse into Aramaic: “... and the water was divided into twelve paths corresponding to the twelve tribes of Jacob...”

⁴⁶ Weitzmann and Kessler 1990, 63.

⁴⁷ Kraeling 1967, 188.

lowing 1 Corinthians 10:4: “They drank from the spiritual rock that went with them; and that rock was Christ himself.” The allusion to the verse was apparently influenced by midrash⁴⁸ and by the Aramaic translations of the “Song of the Well” in the Book of Numbers,⁴⁹ which tells of Miriam’s well that traveled with the Israelites from place to place in the desert for 40 years. Wherever they camped, the well stopped and stood in front of the Tabernacle and gave them water. The legend of the well, from which twelve streams flowed, one for each of the twelve tribes, was known as early as the second century BCE. The connection between the verse in First Corinthians and the image of Miriam’s miraculous well was deeply rooted in Christian tradition,⁵⁰ so it is likely that the synagogue painting was chosen to counter the Christian allegorical interpretations.

The visual depiction of the well in the synagogue clearly reflects the midrashic interpretation (fig. 13). Moses is shown standing next to the wondrous well, staff in hand, and the water is flowing from the rock in twelve streams, one toward each of the tribes. The Divine Presence is symbolized by the Tabernacle and the menorah. The painting underscores the narrative aspect of the story of the wandering of the Israelites in the desert as well as its midrashic interpretation. The iconographic implications are clearly a refutation of the Christian “Jesus the rock” typology.⁵¹

Apart from the polemical association, these two murals—*The Well of Be’er* in the synagogue and the Samaritan woman in the baptistery—also carry the suggestion of a poetical liturgical connection. The woman at the well betokens the hidden powers of the living waters, which give eternal life to the baptized.⁵² Hymn 11 in the *Odes of Solomon*,⁵³ which is cited in connection with this image,⁵⁴ evokes a parallel between the living waters and Jesus’ spring, which wards off death:⁵⁵

⁴⁸ T *Suk* 3:11–13.

⁴⁹ Targum Onkeles and Targum Yerushalmi to Num. 21:16; Num. 21:19, 20.

⁵⁰ Murray 1975, 208, ns. 4–6. 209, Murray notes that one can also find reference to this “rock”/“well” in the fourth-century song of Ephrem the Syrian.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 205–212.

⁵² John 4:11, 13, 14, “Said the woman to Him. . . .” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again and again. Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst—not ever. The water that I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life.”

⁵³ Charlesworth 1985, 728, notes in his introduction to the *Odes of Solomon* that these poems are related to the subject of baptism and open a window on the world of prayer and ritual in early Christianity.

⁵⁴ Kraeling 1967, 188.

⁵⁵ Charlesworth 1985, 744–745 ODE. 11, lines 6–9.

And speaking waters touched my lips
 From the Lord's spring (of life) without grudging;
 And I drank, and was intoxicated
 By the living, immortal, waters;
 And my intoxication was not without knowledge,
 But I abandoned vanities,
 And turned towards the Most High, My God,
 And became rich through His gift.

According to some scholars,⁵⁶ the mural in the synagogue is based on a poem (Num. 21:16–20):

Then Israel sang this song,
 Spring up, O well—sing to it
 The well which the chieftains dug,
 Which the nobles of the people started
 With maces with their own staffs.

This poetical passage, echoed in both Christian liturgical poetry and in the Midrash,⁵⁷ is indicative of a relationship between the visual and liturgical expressions in the Dura-Europos art. The notion is corroborated by two passages in the Christian poetry of Ephrem the Syrian (306–373) that point to a Jewish source, which is reflected both visually and liturgically.⁵⁸ In a hymn entitled “The Garden of Eden,” Ephrem wrote, “The rock that along with the nation wandered in the heart of the desert,”⁵⁹ and in another hymn he returned to the image of the well: “The source which was not tasted by man emitted twelve streams and life filled the world.”⁶⁰

It has been suggested that Ephrem might have seen a replica of the painting *The Well of Be'er* and used that imagery in his poetry. This notion is in keeping with the idea that late antiquity was characterized by the mingling of various traditions and by the appearance of new trends in visual and literary art.⁶¹ The poetry of the period, especially in Antioch, was largely ekphrastic,⁶² and it was not uncommon to combine poetry and art to create a dramatization of the literary text and give it a visual

⁵⁶ Weitzmann and Kessler 1990, 64; Kraeling 1956, 123.

⁵⁷ T *Suk* 3:11; Guttman 1983, 98, n. 16.

⁵⁸ Murray 1975, 209.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Roberts 1989, 38.

⁶² Ekphrasis is the use of words to describe visual images.

interpretation with figures and colors.⁶³ Thus, the use of ekphrasis created a meditative mood that often gave the reader/viewer a new direction and a *memoria rerum*, things to remember.⁶⁴

Visual art became a source of inspiration for both poetry and prose, and patrons commissioned murals for which they dictated ideas drawn from literary texts.⁶⁵ The discovery of a parchment found in the rubble next to the Dura-Europos synagogue testifies to the existence of Hebrew liturgical fragments as early as the third century. The examination of the text of that passage indicated that the Dura parchment contains language, form, and content that is similar to a late antique Rabbinic text related to food.⁶⁶ Finding this “Grace after Meals” proved that ancient Jewish liturgical poetry,⁶⁷ used in synagogues in antiquity, subsequently found its way into Christian prayer.⁶⁸

The liturgy and the artistic works in the two houses of worship in Dura-Europos appear to have played a role in the transmission of ideas from one religion to the other. Moreover, the ideas they conveyed reflected theological understandings and deep religious principles that were central to the controversy between Judaism and Christianity. The visual and archaeological findings in connection with the baptistery and the synagogue suggest that it was the Jews who initiated the arguments that were conveyed through the paintings.⁶⁹

What, then, would have been the arguments carried on through the imaging of the Tabernacle/Temple that are of interest for our present concerns?⁷⁰ It is clear that after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE the Jewish people had to be assured of God’s closeness and His continued involvement in maintaining His Creation and this need was expressed in both visual and literary works. Sources including the Mishnah, the Tosephta, the writings of Josephus and Philo, and Heikhalot and Merkah literature, as well as early midrashim, liturgy, and prayers addressed

⁶³ Roberts 1985, 66–67.

⁶⁴ Carruthers 1998, 199–200.

⁶⁵ Holzmann 1997, 34–36.

⁶⁶ Lieberman 1940, 40, 41; Fine 2005, 174–177.

⁶⁷ Schirmann 1953/1954, 133; Mesnil Du Buisson 1939, 23–34; Fine 2005, 172–183.

⁶⁸ Shinan 1996, 146–147.

⁶⁹ The murals in the Dura-Europos synagogue are much more developed than those in the baptistery.

⁷⁰ Levine 2008, 217–254, expresses cautionary words about the process of deciphering meaning in art, especially in Dura-Europos, that is unaccompanied by contemporaneous literary sources that might illuminate the immediate social, communal, and cultural contexts of this art.

the subject. Thus, study of the iconography and the arguments carried on through the imaging of the Tabernacle/Temple requires that we look at the literary sources that predate the Dura-Europos synagogue murals. That is not to say that the artisan/patron/community leaders necessarily sat with these texts in front of them while producing their works of art, but rather that there were both knowledge and awareness of this interplay within the Jewish community.⁷¹

In summing up the discussion concerning the murals of the two Dura-Europos houses of worship and their relation to the Tabernacle/Creation duality, we realize that the art in both structures deals with the same subject, approaching it from different theological points of view. Both sets of murals evidence the transmission of verbal and visual material that reflects mutual influences, supersession, and polemical notions.

*The Earthly and Heavenly Tabernacle/Temple in the
Dura-Europos Synagogue*

The four Temple-related panels on the second register of the Dura-Europos synagogue's western wall (the wall facing Jerusalem) show two separate groupings. The first includes the two images to the right of the niche for the Holy Ark, *The Closed Temple* (fig. 7) and *The Ark of the Covenant in Beit Dagon* (fig. 15), to be discussed here. The second, to the left of the niche, includes *The Consecration of the Tabernacle* (fig. 8) and *The Well of Be'er* (fig. 13) dealt with in Chapter 8. The images of the first grouping reflect two traditions that developed after the destruction of the Second Temple, apparently fostered to preserve the memory of the Temple/Tabernacle ritual and worship.

The first attempt to keep this memory alive was through an ideological transference of the destroyed earthly Temple's sacred service to the super-nal, heavenly Sanctuary described in the Heikhalot and Merkavah literature.⁷² The second effort involved adapting the Temple's rituals to the

⁷¹ Fine 2005, 173, and Wharton 1994, 1–25, contend that the synagogue's murals have to be viewed keeping in mind that the function of the synagogue was to be a religious space where Jewish liturgy was recited and Jewish sources were studied and that it was the didactic method of the midrashim that was used to relate to the messages of the murals.

⁷² Elior 2005, 78, n. 77; Gruenwald 1982, 47. The concept of *merkavah* appears in the liturgical literature of Qumran that deals with angels. It is also found in Rabbinic and Heikhalot literature. *Rayat Yehezkel* is a work that includes kabbalistic midrashim on Ezekiel, Ch. 1. The book discusses the seven Heavens and what they contain. Each Heaven

synagogue, which was called a Minor Temple, *mikdash ma'at* (Ezek. 11:16) and these rituals were preserved along with traditions relating to the sacred language of hymns, songs of praise, blessings, and holy names associated with angels and priests. Both approaches were reminiscent of the Temple and kept its memory alive through prayers for its rebuilding, which were introduced into the sacred service.⁷³

The mural of *The Closed Temple* (fig. 7) is a static image portraying no action.⁷⁴ The composition comprises two basic elements: a series of seven crenellated walls and a temple with a formal triple gateway, with heavy bronze or gilded doors. The prominent image of a Hellenistic-style temple is evident both frontally and in profile. The structure has four frontal columns and six side-view pillars. There is a roof with a triangular pediment on top of the columns and small figures of “victory goddesses” are at its four corners. The seven crenellated walls, one behind the other, each a different color—dark red, black, yellow, white, gray, and pink—form the outer frame of this closed and static structure, which was identified as representing the holy city of Jerusalem:⁷⁵ the city walls built by King David and the Temple built by Solomon.⁷⁶ Some regard the image as a visual expression of several references from various biblical books;⁷⁷ others consider it an image of messianic Jerusalem that parallels the Temple façade in the niche above the Holy Ark.⁷⁸

To understand the prominence of the three closed gates pictured in the mural we might turn to the frequent appearance of the “Gates of Heaven” in textual sources.⁷⁹ This motif appears in the Book of Psalms,⁸⁰ in the

includes a chariot, whereas the seventh Heaven has a great chariot, which is the most important of all. The great chariot in the Heikhalot literature causes fear and trembling.

⁷³ Elijor 2005, 1–28.

⁷⁴ Kraeling 1956, 105–110.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁷⁶ 2 Sam. 5:9; 1 Kings 5.

⁷⁷ Weitzmann and Kessler 1990, 98.

⁷⁸ Kessler, 1990/1991, 67–69: “For Jews, the Tabernacle/Temple embodied God’s presence among his Chosen People. It was the locus of the ancient cult with its priests and blood sacrifices and the site where God’s laws were promulgated. Destroyed, restored, and destroyed again it symbolized the promised restoration during a messianic age, especially after 70 C.E. . . . Even at Dura, the association with the messianic Jerusalem depicted at the right and the conjunction with the Torah shrine evoke the promise of restoration and validate the interim synagogue liturgy.”

⁷⁹ Bar-Ilan 1987, 24–27; Elijor 1982, 36: “. . . He rises from His divine Throne, arranges His Throne . . . opens the gates of salvation and shows *chen v’chessed* to all who approach the Throne.”

⁸⁰ Ps. 78:23 “And He commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of Heaven.”

liturgy of the evening prayer,⁸¹ in the Babylonian Talmud *Brachot* 32b, and in the famous Yom Kippur hymn “Our Father Our King,” “*avinu malkenu*,” which says “Open the heavenly gates to our prayers.⁸² The theme of the opening of the gates is also referred to in another liturgical hymn, *piyyut*, recited on Yom Kippur during the closing service, *ne’ilah*. As the gates of the Palace, *heikhal/sha’arei armon*, are being shut the congregation prays that the gates, although closing now, will be opened again, a striking example of the paradox of prayer:⁸³

Speedily open the Temple gates
 For those who cherish thy Torah.
 Speedily open hidden gates
 For those who cling to Thy law.
 Speedily open the Temple gates
 Priceless to Israel Thy people.
 Speedily open Heaven’s gates
 For those whose eyes are red from tears . . .

In the Second Temple Period the *ne’ilah* prayer with its reference to the closing of the gates was part of the evening prayer service. *Mishnah Ta’anit* mentions the Gates of Heaven in connection with ceremonies around the priestly and levitical divisions that served in the Temple in rotations, the *ma’amadot*,⁸⁴ the ritual of fast days, *ta’aniot*, and the prayers for Yom Kippur.⁸⁵

The Talmud asks,⁸⁶ “When is *ne’ilah*? Rav says *ne’ilah* is the closing of the Gates of Heaven, whereas Rav Yochanan says *ne’ilah* is the closing of the gates of the Temple, the *heikhal*. Third-century Rav and Rav Yochanan were of the first generation of the interpreters of the Mishnah called the Amoraim. The poet, *paytan*, apparently took account of the words of both and the artisan who created the mural might have done the same. If we view the mural of *The Closed Temple* with its unique visual features

⁸¹ “With wisdom He opens the gates.”

⁸² *Avinu malkenu* is a prayer that is mentioned in BT *Ta’an* 25b as R. Akiva’s prayer for a fast day.

⁸³ Goldschmidt 1970, 731, mentions the PT. *Ber* 4:1 as a Talmudic reference to this *piyyut*.

⁸⁴ According to 1 Chron. 24–26 and Rabbinic tradition, the priests and the Levites were organized into courses or divisions, which, as is known from post-biblical evidence, served in rotation in the Temple.

⁸⁵ M *Taan* 4:1.

⁸⁶ PT *Ber* 4:1 (31a): “When is the closing [of the gates]? The Rabbis of Caesarea said that Rav and R. Yochanan disagreed. Rav said, ‘with the closing of the gates of Heaven.’ R. Yochanan said, ‘with the closing of the gates of the *heikhal*.’”

through the lens of these liturgical sources the structure can be thought of as a representation of the mysterious *heikhal*. The architectonic structure seen here with its absence of human figures seems to depict an edifice that exists not on Earth but rather in the Heavens, as described by the anonymous authors of the *Heikhalot* and *Merkavah* mystical literature.⁸⁷ Their writings, influenced by the reality of the ending of the sacred service in Jerusalem, removed the Temple and its priestly rituals beyond the boundaries of time and place to a divine Temple in the Heavens.⁸⁸ The seven crenellated walls and the three closed gates of *The Closed Temple* mural reflect a discussion found in the Babylonian Talmud *Hagigah* 12b. In this text, the third-century Resh Lakish lists the seven Heavens that lead up to the divine *heikhal*.⁸⁹

Rabbinic literature accepted the notion of a heavenly Temple, as can also be seen in a discussion in the Palestinian Talmud⁹⁰ about the obligation to concentrate while engaged in prayer. The relevant Mishnah reads as follows:⁹¹

If a person is riding on a mule, he should descend [in order to recite the *shema*]. If he cannot descend [from the mule], he should turn his face aside [in order to concentrate on his prayer]. If he cannot turn his face aside, he should focus his attention on the House of the Holy of Holies.

The Talmudic discussion of this passage poses the question, “to which House of the Holy of Holies?” R. Hiya Rabba says, “to the supernal Holy of Holies.” R. Simon b. Halafta says, “to the lower [the earthly] Holy of Holies.” R. Phineas says: “There is no disagreement between the two of them, for the lower Holy of Holies is [geographically] positioned opposite the upper Holy of Holies, as it is said, ‘the place, O Lord, which Thou hast

⁸⁷ Elio 2005, 14.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁸⁹ Resh Lakish said, “Seven and these are the names: *vilon*, *rakia*, *shechkim*, *zvl*, *ma'on*, *machon*, *arvut*. *Vilon* [is the place] where the morning comes in and the evening goes out to He who re-creates the *ma'aseh bere'shit* every day . . . *Zvl* is [the place] in which Jerusalem, the Temple and the altar are erected and [the archangel] Michael, the great prince, stands and offers a sacrifice, as it is said, ‘I have surely built a house of habitation, a place for Thee to dwell forever’ (1 Kings 8:13). And from where do we know that it is called [*shamayim*], as it is said, ‘Look down from [*shamayim*] Heaven, and see, even from Thy holy and glorious [*zvl*] habitation’ (Isa. 63:15). *Maon* is [the place] where the hordes of ministering angels sing at night and fly by day from before the Glory of Israel.”

⁹⁰ PT *Ber* 4:5 (35b).

⁹¹ M *Ber* 4:5.

made for Thee to dwell therein.' What place is that? It is the place that is opposite the place where You sit."⁹²

Since the idea of a heavenly Temple above the earthly one is found in many Rabbinic writings,⁹³ chances are that *The Closed Temple* mural was inspired by these same ideas, which were known and accepted at the time. The Hebrew word "*heikhal/heikhalot*" denotes both "palace(s)" and "temple(s);" as such has overtones of both royalty and holiness, and the motif of the seven *heikhalot* is associated specifically with the Merkavah tradition. The center of the heavenly world is the *merkavah*, which stands in the innermost of the seven palaces and carries the Throne of Glory. The Heikhalot and Merkavah hymns describe the spirit of majesty and solemnity that pervades the heavenly realm, the "Palaces of Silence" in which the Divine Presence, the *shekhinah*, dwells.

The *Hebrew Apocalypse of Enoch* (3 Enoch), together with several other Merkavah texts, is attributed to R. Ishmael, a famous Palestinian scholar who died in 132 CE, shortly before the outbreak of the Bar Kokhba revolt.⁹⁴ Although some of the traditions found in 3 Enoch can be traced back to the time of R. Ishmael (and even earlier) the work is pseudepigraphic and he is simply the master whose authority the author of 3 Enoch wished to claim.⁹⁵ The book opens with the following account:

Rabbi Ishmael said: "When I ascended to the height to behold the vision of the Chariot, I entered six palaces, one within the other. When I reached the door of the seventh palace, I paused in prayer before the Holy One, blessed be He. I looked up and said: 'Lord of the universe, grant, I beseech you, that the merit of Aaron, son of Amram, lover of peace and pursuer of peace, who received on Mount Sinai the crown of priesthood in the presence of Your Glory, may avail for me now . . .' Then I entered the seventh palace and He led me to the camp of the *shekhinah* and presented me before the Throne of Glory so that I might behold the Chariot.

[...] But after an hour the Holy One, blessed be He, opened to me the gates of the *shekhinah*, gates of peace, gates of wisdom, gates of strength, gates of might, gates of speech, gates of song, gates of sanctifying praise, gates of chant. He enlightened my eyes and my heart to utter psalms, praise, jubilation, thanksgiving, song, glory, majesty, laud, and strength. And when

⁹² Exod. 15:17

⁹³ Aptowitz 1983, 51–98.

⁹⁴ Alexander 1983, 225–226.

⁹⁵ Elior 2005, 91, writes: "The *Third Book of Enoch*, also known as *Sefer Heikhalot*, was written in Hebrew during the period of the Mishnah and the Talmud. It has survived in its original language in manuscripts of Heikhalot literature. Much of the work is based on earlier Enoch traditions."

I opened my mouth and sang praise before the Throne of Glory, the holy creatures below the Throne of Glory and above the Throne responded after me, saying, Holy holy holy [Isa 6:3] and Blessed be the Glory of the Lord in His dwelling place" (Ezek. 3:12).⁹⁶

We might also find a key to the second image to the right of the Holy Ark in *The Ark of the Covenant in Beit Dagon* in a literary source.⁹⁷ According to the story found in 1 Samuel the captured Ark was set in the pagan temple of Dagon, where it caused the temple's idol to fall to the ground and break. After that happened and further havoc ensued, the Philistines decided to send the Ark back to the Israelites and to see thereby if it was the God of the Hebrews who had brought all the trouble upon them. They put the Ark on a new wagon pulled by two cows and sent them on their way, leaving their young calves behind.

In the mural, the temple of Dagon is depicted as a triangular pediment resting on two pillars. The front of the structure is quite dark, but we see two altars and a table within. Various sacred objects are scattered on the ground, including two statues of Dagon, one that appears to be almost whole and the other decapitated, the head lying separately. The left-hand side of the image shows the Ark, shaped as a rectangular box with a circular top, a decorated façade, and a canopy mounted on a two-wheeled wagon drawn by a pair of cows.

The scene is apparently a rendition of the return of the Ark to Beit Shemesh as described in the biblical text, with the cows miraculously going directly to the Israelites: "And the cows went straight ahead, *va'yisharna*, along the road to Beit Shemesh."⁹⁸ The Hebrew word *va'yisharna* is explained in the Babylonian Talmud as being based on the root "to sing," "*shir*," and not on the root for going straight, "*yashar*."⁹⁹ R. Yochanan and Resh Lakish, in debating the question "What was the song that the cows sang as they returned the Ark of the Lord to the Jewish camp?," thought that the song was the one that Moses and the Israelites sang upon crossing the Red Sea. The third-century sage R. Yitzchak Nafcha, who was known to have been close to the Merkavah circles, ventured that the song that the cows sang was:

⁹⁶ Alexander 1983, 255–257. Here too, as in the *qedushah* prayer, which is part of the daily prayer service—the joint singing of those below and those above—the human and angelic choir join together. This is what Elior 1997, 254–265, calls "shared prayer."

⁹⁷ 1 Sam. 5, 6.

⁹⁸ 1 Sam. 6:12.

⁹⁹ BT AZ 24b.

Rejoice, rejoice acacia—[shrine].
 Stretch forth in the fullness of Thy majesty.
 Girdled in golden embroidery.
 Praised in the recesses of the palace.
 Resplendent in the finest of ornaments.
 That is contained between the two cherubim.¹⁰⁰

These Rabbis understood the miracle on two levels: first, that the cows did not follow their natural instincts and return to their nursing calves but went straight toward Beit Shemesh; second, that the cows sang a hymn of praise to the Ark of the Covenant they were returning to the Israelites.¹⁰¹ In the Talmudic story, R. Yitzchak Nafcha understood the cows to be akin to Ezekiel's holy creatures, *hayot ha'qodesh* (Ezek. 1:19). Gershom Scholem saw here "an imitation of the setting in the Heikhalot hymn. Just as the holy living creatures bearing the Throne sing hymns to the Throne, so do these kine, bearing the Ark sing hymns to the Ark." To lend credence to this notion he pointed to verses in R. Isaac Nafcha's Talmudic poem that are "almost prefigured in two corresponding hymns preserved in the Greater Heikhalot, *Heikhalot Rabati*." The verse "Rejoice, rejoice, supernal dwelling!" which refers to the Seat of the Most High, *moshav ha-elyon*, upon which the *shekhinah*, rests appears in the following hymn:¹⁰²

The beginning of praise and the commencement of song
 The beginning of jubilation and the commencement of exultation
 Are sung by the princes who serve each day
 The Lord God of Israel and the Throne of His Glory.
 They bear up the wheel of the Throne of His Glory, singing:
 "Rejoice, rejoice, supernal dwelling!
 Shout, shout for joy, precious vessel!
 Made marvelously and a marvel.
 Surely thou shalt gladden the King who sitteth upon thee
 [with a joy] as the joy of the bridegroom in his bridechamber.

The lines that appear in these two *piyyutim* clearly reflect the mystic quality of the religious ecstasy characteristic of those who descended from the Chariot, *yordei merkavah*, and of the entire genre of Heikhalot literature.

¹⁰⁰ Scholem 1965, 25.

¹⁰¹ This midrashic tradition appears in *GenR* 54:28.

¹⁰² Scholem, 26, points to the precise parallel between the Throne, the supernal dwelling, and the Ark made of acacia wood upon which the *shekhinah* rests.

The song of R. Yitzchak Nafcha and the *piyyut* of the *moshav ha-elyon* project the sense of glory, splendor, and exaltation that pervades God's Kingdom in Heaven and provides important insights for understanding the iconography of these two murals and their unique visual imaging. The various features in the depictions take on a deeper meaning when viewed through the lens of the poetic Talmudic reference to the miraculous return of the Ark to the Israelites. It is clear that the image of the Ark in the mural is not an exact visual imaging of the biblical verse in 1 Samuel 6:8 or of R. Yitzchak Nafcha's Talmudic poem. Yet, finding similar details in both the visual depictions and the textual sources gives further weight to the role art played in conveying the ideas that were important at the time.

To sum up the discussion of the Dura-Europos murals reviewed here we can say that there is no doubt that the images found in the two houses of worship should be studied with reference to early Jewish and Christian literary sources. Understanding the ideas implicit in the specific selection of the various murals and their iconography leads us to such Christian sources as the *Odes of Solomon* and the hymns of Ephrem the Syrian and to Jewish sources such as the Mishnah and the Tosephta, all of which point to possible channels for transmission of visual ideas from one religion to the other. The murals also suggest that art was used for didactic and polemical purposes in the context of a religious controversy that is evident as early as in the third century and that eventually spread throughout the Byzantine Empire.

Jewish and Byzantine works of art both reflect an interface between text and image. Even for art that can stand alone, appreciation and apprehension of the work are enriched through the study of relevant source material that reveals the ideas that were prevalent at the time it was created. Art and text together clarify the religious and/or cultural worldview of the period, making for a deeper understanding of both.¹⁰³

In the pages that follow I look at visual images with an eye to the literary works that may have been the springboard for their execution. This kind of combined study is designed to elucidate the conceptual system that developed on the basis of the Bible, where the accounts of Creation and of the building of the Tabernacle are described in very similar ways. The close link between the Tabernacle/Temple and its vessels, on the one

¹⁰³ James 2007, 1–12.

hand, and the artistic representation of the Creation, on the other, has its source in the biblical text itself. There are many allusions to such a connection in the Book of Genesis in the description of the Creation and in the Book of Exodus in the Revelation at Mount Sinai and in the instructions for the building of the Tabernacle.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BLUEPRINT OF CREATION IN THE BIBLE AND ITS ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

The Biblical Link between the Tabernacle and Creation

The conceptual basis for the link between the Tabernacle and Creation is inherent in the Bible itself and the notion of equating the structure of the Tabernacle with the plan of the universe clearly developed through interpretations of the biblical text.

The first verse in Genesis, “In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth” (Gen. 1:1), and the command to Moses, “According to all that I show thee, the pattern, *tavnit*, of the Tabernacle and the *tavnit* of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it” (Exod. 25:9), are the bases for voluminous commentary on the subject of the “Blueprint of Creation.” The connection between these two verses rests on the meaning of the word “*tavnit*,” the pattern that God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai.¹

The opening verse in Genesis 1 is unique. The other verses in the chapter relate to the order of Creation describing what was created each day, whereas the first verse does not give a chronological description, but is rather a general introduction that expresses the idea that “in the beginning” God created an entity that encompassed the entire Cosmos—the Heavens and the Earth—that is, He created the blueprint, the *tavnit*, of Creation. Thus, when God revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai and commanded him to build the Tabernacle, “According to all that I show thee, the *tavnit* of the Tabernacle,” what was shown to Moses was the same pattern that God drew for Creation.

¹ Sarna 1991, 159 (in his comments on Exod. 25:9) states: “The Tabernacle and its vessels are either earthly replicas of celestial archetypes or are constructions based upon divinely given blueprints and pictorial representations” (n. 28 in connection with Exod. 25:40; 26:30; 27:8; Num. 8:4). The Hebrew word *tavnit* usually refers to an imitative reproduction of a material entity that exists in reality (cf. Deut. 4:16–18; Josh. 22:28; 2 Kings 16:10; Isa. 44:13; Ezek. 8:3, 10; 10:8; Pss. 106:20; 144:12). But *tavnit* here could be understood as an archetype model. Both notions are found elsewhere in the Bible, e.g., 1 Chron. 28:11–18, where David receives specifications from God; Ezekiel’s vision on a very high mountain, Ezek. 40–42; celestial Temple (cosmic Sanctuary) as described in Isaiah 6:1–8, Micah 1:2, 3, Psalm 11:4.”

In the Creation story we read that God created the Heavens and the Earth in six days. The biblical account of the construction of the Tabernacle emphasizes that God enjoined the Israelites to build the Tabernacle and shape its vessels according to the divine plan that had been created in the beginning. We are told that a cloud covered the mountain for “six days”² and that it was only on “the seventh day” that Moses was called to go into the cloud and to view the *tavnit* of the Tabernacle and its vessels. The verses that describe the manifestation of God’s presence and the Revelation on Mount Sinai seem to be deliberately couched in terms that parallel those in the Creation story. In this light, the words used in the Bible to describe the Revelation reflect a unique relationship between Creation, the Revelation at Mount Sinai, and the construction of the Tabernacle (see Addendum—Table 1).

The cloud that was the manifestation of God’s Glory on Mount Sinai is the same cloud that filled the Tabernacle as well as Solomon’s Temple, as is told in the Book of Kings in the description of its consecration:³ “And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the Glory of the Lord filled the House of the Lord.”

Mark Smith suggests that these verbal correlations between the account of Creation in Genesis and the building of the Tabernacle in Exodus were meant to portray both the created Cosmos and the desert Tabernacle as sacred spaces sanctioned by God for the Divine Presence.⁴ Umberto Cassuto, in his commentary on the Tabernacle,⁵ notes that in the phrase, “And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai,” at the end of the description of the Revelation (Exod. 24:16), Scripture uses the Hebrew word “abode”—“*vayiskhan*,” which is the verb form of the noun for the Tabernacle, the “*mishkhan*,” introduced in Exodus 25. According to Cassuto, using this verb before beginning the instructions for the building of the Tabernacle established both a stylistic and a topical association between the two chapters. The *mishkhan* was to be the physical representation for God’s Presence, the *shekhinah*, that accompanied the Israelites once they left Mount Sinai. The word “*shekhinah*,” which is another

² Exod. 24:16.

³ 1 Kings 8:10, 11.

⁴ Smith 2010, 76.

⁵ Cassuto 1967, 316.

noun form of the same verb, signified the continuity of the bond formed at Mount Sinai between God and the Jewish nation. It was that bond that allowed the Israelites to see the heavenly cloud that rested above the Tabernacle wherever they encamped in the desert, and the *shekhinah* traveled with them as they wandered through the wilderness.

In connection with these verses, Martin Buber remarked that God, Who created the world and placed humans within it, commanded them to build Him a Sanctuary so that He could dwell in their midst:⁶

Just as the Creation of the world is considered a primeval revelation, so does the Creation mystery permeate God's cloud of Revelation. It is here that man is called upon to become "God's partner in the Creation,"⁷ and therefore God Himself appoints the builders of the Tabernacle and designates a spiritual people for the task.

The idea of linking Creation and the Tabernacle in this way is in keeping with the biblical text in the Book of Exodus and its exegetical interpretation in the Talmud. Bezalel, the artisan appointed to oversee the construction of the Tabernacle, was chosen by God, and as explained by the Rabbis' midrashic understanding was endowed with unique faculties that linked him to Creation (see Addendum—Table 2).

The Exodus text describes Bezalel as an extraordinarily skillful artisan able to work in many different materials. Midrash goes a step further and adds a sublime significance to this description. According to the Talmudic sages, Bezalel was chosen because his name means "in the shadow of God," "*bezel el*,"⁸ which suggested that he was inspired by God to possess unique qualities of "wisdom, understanding, and knowledge" (Exod. 35:31). From the Book of Proverbs, we gather that these were the same qualities that God used to create the world (Prov. 3:19, 20).⁹ Based on the words

⁶ Buber, 1978, 56.

⁷ Paraphrasing BT *Shab* 10a, BT *Nid* 31a.

⁸ BT *Ber* 55a "R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Johanan: Bezalel was so called on account of his wisdom. At the time when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses, 'Go and tell Bezalel to make me a tabernacle, an ark and vessels' (Exod. 31:7), Moses reversed the order, saying, 'Make an ark and vessels and a tabernacle.' Bezalel said to him: 'Moses, our teacher, as a rule a man first builds a house and then brings vessels into it; but you say, Make me an ark and vessels and a tabernacle. Where shall I put the vessels that I am to make? Can it be that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to you, Make a tabernacle, an ark and vessels?' Moses replied: 'Perhaps you were in the shadow of God and knew'!"

⁹ Ibid., R. Judah said in the name of Rav: Bezalel knew how to combine the letters by which the Heavens and Earth were created. It is written here (Exod. 35:31): "And He

“wisdom, understanding, and knowledge,” that were used in reference to God in the act of Creation and to Bezalel in connection with the Tabernacle, the Talmudic sages determined that Bezalel knew how to combine the letters with which Heaven and Earth were created (words being the divine tools for Creation, as is written on each day: “And God said: Let there be . . .”)¹⁰ and used that knowledge to build the Tabernacle.

The Hebrew Bible stresses that God gave Moses the pattern of the Tabernacle and its vessels,¹¹ and that Bezalel received the “spirit of God,” which enabled him to design and build the Tabernacle in accordance with that same pattern. Jon Levenson comments that the expression used for the spirit of God, *ruah elohim*, that was granted to Bezalel so that he could build the Tabernacle is the same as the term used in Genesis 1:2 to describe the spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters. Hence the same *ruah elohim* that was there in the very beginning of the Creation story was also present in the making of the Tabernacle.¹²

As Cassuto explains,¹³ Moses saw a prophetic vision of God’s heavenly abode and was enjoined to create a similar dwelling in the midst of the Israelite camp—an earthly Tabernacle to be positioned exactly under the heavenly cosmic one, which according to the midrash God made for Himself in the Heavens as alluded to in Exodus 15:17.¹⁴ In Levenson’s words: “The Temple is not the place in the world but the world in essence. It is the theology of Creation rendered in architecture and glyptic craftsmanship.” Or, “The Temple was conceived as a microcosm, a miniature world.”¹⁵

hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom and in understanding, and in knowledge”; and it is written elsewhere (Prov. 3:19): “The Lord by wisdom founded the Earth; by understanding He established the Heavens”; and it is also written, “By His knowledge the depths were broken up” (Prov. 3:20).

¹⁰ According to the “Book of Creation,” *Sefer Yetzira*, which is one of the earliest kabbalistic texts, written from the middle of the first to the sixth century, the world was created by means of thirty-two paths of wisdom: ten primary *sfirot* and twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, *otiyot yesod*. Thus, with a very small number of signs the entire world with all its complexities and with all its ideas was created.

¹¹ Exod. 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; Num. 8:4.

¹² Levenson 1994, 84.

¹³ Cassuto 1967, 322.

¹⁴ PT *Ber* 4:5 (35b) “R. Phineas said, [. . .], the earthly Holiest of Holies corresponds to the Heavenly Holiest of Holies (Exod. 15:17): ‘the place You made to dwell in, O Lord.’”

¹⁵ Levenson 1985, 139; 1994, 86.

These two ideas—the notion of viewing the plan in a prophetic vision and the concept of the parallelism between the earthly and the heavenly Temple—are neither unique to these passages nor are they original to the sages of the Talmud. They are found elsewhere in the Bible,¹⁶ and there is reference to them in other Near Eastern cultures as well. Levenson,¹⁷ and Smith,¹⁸ among others, note that these were concepts that accorded with the observation that Creation and building a Sanctuary in the Bible and in the ancient Near East were often described in the same cosmic terms. Smith writes of various commentators who view the cosmic Creation rendered in Genesis 1 in terms of temple building.¹⁹ The analysis of the story in Exodus and a comparison between accounts of the Tabernacle and the building of other ancient Near Eastern temples reveal significant similarities despite fundamental conceptual differences regarding divinity and the Divine's relationship with man.²⁰ However, the clear emphasis in the Hebrew Bible is on the idea that the prophetic vision God revealed to Moses on the mountain alluded primarily to the Tabernacle's cosmic symbolism and its basic parallelism with Creation.

Cassuto,²¹ Buber,²² and Nechama Leibowitz²³ all noted the word combinations and parallels between the verses in the books of Genesis and Exodus as evidence of the link between the Tabernacle and Creation. They pointed to the verb “to make” that appears seven times in the Cre-

¹⁶ In the Book of Ezekiel, there is also a parallelism between the episode of the Chariot and the cherubim upon the Ark (10:1–3). Further in the book, there is a vision of the design of the Temple to be built in the future (Chapters 40–48). In 1 Chronicles 28:19, it says about the design of Solomon's Temple: “All this [do I give thee] in writing, as the Lord hath made me wise by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.”

¹⁷ Levenson 1985, 137–145.

¹⁸ Smith 2010, 182–185.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 179, n. 106.

²⁰ Hurowitz, 1992, 26–30, points to many examples such as the building story that was found in Cylinder A of Gudea of Lagash, who was told how to build his temple by the god Ningirsu in a dream. Another example is the story that appears in the annals of Tiglath-Pilester I, king of Assyria. A similar story was found in the Sippar cylinder of Nabonidus concerning the rebuilding of Ehulhul, Sin's temple in Harran, where the king reports that Marduk commanded him in a dream. According to Hurowitz, the closest parallel to the literary structure of the Tabernacle account appears in the bilingual “B” inscription of Samsuiluna, king of Babylon (1749–1712 BCE), where (as in the Book of Exodus) the buildings are described twice—first by the command of Enlil, who initiated the project, and later by the narrator (Samsuiluna) in his account of the fulfillment.

²¹ Cassuto 1967, 221–260.

²² Buber 1978, 52–58.

²³ Leibowitz 1969, 348–352.

ation story and almost 200 times in the passages relating to the building of the Tabernacle. There is a juxtaposition of human and divine “making,” with emphasis on the fact that the Tabernacle is a work of man, albeit not by his own design but according to a divinely inspired vision, and this is stressed repeatedly in the biblical text, from the initial command to construct the Tabernacle until its completion (see Addendum—Table 3).

Aside from the emphasis on the construction of the Tabernacle according to the divinely inspired image, there are other parallels in the descriptions of Creation and the Tabernacle that point to the profound relationship between the two (see Addendum—Table 4). In both sources, the construction was completed in accordance with, in the first, God’s acts and, in the second, His directions. Both were distinguished by being blessed.

Moshe Weinfeld notes that in addition to these verses, the biblical text that summarizes the Creation in the Fourth Commandment also alludes to the connection between Creation and the Tabernacle (Exod. 20:10): “for in six days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.”²⁴ According to Weinfeld, God’s resting on the seventh day parallels the biblical appellation of the Tabernacle as God’s resting place.²⁵ Brevard Childs in commenting on the connection between the Sabbath and the Tabernacle notes that both testify to God’s rule over His Creation.²⁶

Apart from these comparisons, the Tabernacle and the Temple have been the subjects of many allegorical interpretations involving the Cosmos and the Divine based on apocryphal literature, Philo, Josephus, and aggadic midrashim.²⁷ In all of these sources, the Tabernacle and its vessels and the rituals of the Temple service have been understood as cosmic entities or as emblematic allusions associating the upper and lower worlds and the entire Creation with the divine Revelation of the Tabernacle. These allegorical interpretations, some written in Greek, can help us understand visual representations of the Creation and the Tabernacle and the strong link between them.

²⁴ Weinfeld 1981, 501–512, 501–502.

²⁵ Ps. 132:8: “Arise, O Lord, unto Thy resting-place; Thou, and the Ark of Thy strength.”

²⁶ Childs 1974, 541–542.

²⁷ Tishby 1989, 867–940.

Philo of Alexandria and Josephus Flavius

The work of Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE–50 CE)²⁸ typifies the allegorical method of biblical interpretation.²⁹ His original writings in Greek have survived, albeit only in part, because they were important to the early Christians, who accepted his word unconditionally. His works and his ideas influenced many of the Church Fathers, including Clement of Alexandria (Stromata V), Theodoret (Quaest. in Exod.), Jerome (Epist. 64), and many others who accepted Philo's allegorical interpretations and adopted his concepts.³⁰ Naomi Cohen notes that Philo essentially 'translated' by means of midrash the 'truth' of Judaism (as he understood it) into concepts of Greek philosophy and, in particular, into the language of Middle Platonism.³¹

A member of the intellectual community of Alexandria, raised in the tradition of Greek philosophy, Philo considered Plato's theory of ideas and forms to be consistent with Moses' approach and understanding.³² That Philo agreed with Plato is clear from his interpretation of Exodus 25:9 wherein he referred to Moses' vision of the Tabernacle, the *tavnit* as an abstract image from the world of ideas and made a "copy" of concrete substance, which was then perceivable to the senses.³³ Or as Jonathan Klawans expresses it: "Philo may well help us understand better one of the dominant symbolic approaches to these matters in ancient Judaism: the idea that the Temple represents the Cosmos and the priests serve as its angelic caretakers."³⁴

²⁸ Much has been written about Philo of Alexandria, who lived and died before the destruction of the Second Temple, and about the interface between his philosophical and his religious views. Having been born into a family of means, with connections to both the Roman caesar and the Palestinian kings, Philo was in a position to serve the Jewish community of Egypt and to fight for them in times of distress. Being involved in Hellenistic society and having familiarity with general culture and Greek wisdom, he was able to defend the Jews and their faith and also pursue the interpretation of the Pentateuch on the level of its plain meaning, as well as on an exegetical level. Research (D.T. Runia, 1988) suggests that scholars with very diverse opinions, both Jewish and Christian, adopted Philo's interpretations as completely consistent with their own views.

²⁹ Ginzberg 1955, 127–128.

³⁰ Childs 1974, 547–548.

³¹ Cohen 1995, 13–14.

³² Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1, 344, listed the categories of individuals who were expelled from the community and included among them "those who abolish the Forms" and "those who absolutely deny God."

³³ Philo, *Ques. Ex.* 1, 2, 52, 53.

³⁴ Klawans 2006, 123.

In his work on Creation,³⁵ Philo contended that the physical world is based upon the world of ideas. God, the architect of the universe, executed Creation in stages: He conceived the image in His mind, created the image in the world of ideas, then transmitted it to the world of phenomena, and finally showed it to Moses.

In the *Life of Moses*,³⁶ Philo explained that the Tabernacle proves that the image of Creation was impressed upon Moses' mind through the divine Revelation at Mount Sinai and that his understanding of this vision enabled him to construct the Tabernacle on Earth. Moses took the image he gleaned from the world of ideas and passed it on to Bezalel, who constructed the Tabernacle in the material world. Thus, in Philo's view:³⁷

[Moses] entered, we are told, into the darkness where God was, that is, into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things. Thus he beheld what is hidden from the sight of mortal nature, and, in himself and his life displayed for all to see, he has set before us, like some well-wrought picture, a piece of work beautiful and godlike, a model for those who are willing to copy it.

Moses was given detailed instructions concerning all aspects of the structure and its vessels and was then enjoined to prepare them based on incorporeal models that he saw in his mind's eye when, "he drew near unto the thick darkness where God was" (Exod. 20:17). Philo described the Tabernacle, its vessels, and the garments of the High Priest at length with the declared intention of revealing their hidden secrets and what could be learned from them.

In his writings on the Tabernacle and its vessels, Philo stressed the notion that the Tabernacle is a microcosm of the universe and that the entire universe serves as the Temple of the true God.³⁸ The structure of the Tabernacle built by Moses at God's command represents the divine Creation in its entirety. In Philo's *Life of Moses*, we read that for the construction of this important structure, the people were commanded by God to use special materials:³⁹ "For it was necessary that in framing a temple of man's making, dedicated to the Father and Ruler of All, he should take substances like those with which that Ruler made the All." According to Philo, the High Priest's garments also recalled the Creation of the world

³⁵ Philo, *Creation*, 15–16, 26–30, 36, 129–130.

³⁶ Philo, *Moses* 2, 74.

³⁷ Philo, *Moses* 1, 158.

³⁸ Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1, 66.

³⁹ Philo, *Moses* 2, 88.

and represented a model of the universe, as is said in reference to the fabric used for his garments:⁴⁰ “In this it would seem to be a likeness and copy of the universe.” The unique significance of all of the High Priest’s clothing is also underscored in the following quotation:⁴¹

Thus is the High Priest arrayed when he sets forth to his holy duties, in order that when he enters to offer the ancestral prayers and sacrifices, there may enter with him the whole universe, as signified in the types of it which he brings upon his person. The long robe a copy of the air, the pomegranate of water, the flower trimming of Earth, the scarlet of fire, the ephod of heaven, the circular emerald on the shoulder-tops with the six engravings in each of the two hemispheres which they resemble in form, the twelve stones on the breast in four rows of threes of the zodiac, the reason-seat of that Reason which holds together and administers all things.

Josephus Flavius (c. 37 CE–100 CE) in *The Antiquities of the Jews*, which he wrote toward the end of the first century,⁴² reiterates some of Philo’s ideas emphasizing particular points. According to Klawans,⁴³ Josephus provided the clearest Jewish articulation of what the Temple represents.⁴⁴ Cohen believes that the parallels between Josephus and Philo are due to the fact that they both had access to ancient Jewish sources that were influenced by a Hellenistic midrashic tradition.⁴⁵ Moreover, both Philo’s and Josephus’ interpretations are symbolical and allegorical, wherein the Temple/Tabernacle and their ceremonies characterize the cosmic nature of Judaism—the three sections of the Tabernacle represent the Heavens, the Earth, and the sea.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1, 84–87.

⁴¹ Philo, *Moses* 2, 133.

⁴² Josephus Flavius was born into a Jewish priestly family in 37 CE, and as a priest he belonged to the aristocracy. He lived in Rome and received both a Jewish and a Greek education. In the year 64, during the reign of Nero, he was appointed as a diplomatic envoy in Rome. Two years later, after succeeding in his mission, he returned to Jerusalem—on the eve of the Great Rebellion. He was drafted for an administrative position, with responsibility for the Galilee, where he remained under the siege carried out by Vespasian for a lengthy period. When the city he lived in was conquered, he went into hiding, and when he and his men were discovered, he refused to submit to the pressure of his comrades to participate in a mass suicide and surrendered to the Roman army. When he was brought before Vespasian, he stated prophetically that the latter would become emperor. When this came about, Josephus was freed from his imprisonment and remained among the Romans.

⁴³ Klawans 2006, 114.

⁴⁴ On Josephus’ attitude toward the Temple, see also Hayward, 1996, 142–153.

⁴⁵ Cohen 1995, 301.

⁴⁶ Feldman 1998, 53.

In Josephus' view, all of the instructions regarding the Tabernacle, its vessels, and the preparation of the priestly garments attest to their divine origin and everything associated with them was done in imitation of the universe and according to the cosmic plan. For instance, the division of the thirty-cubit structure into three sections—two of them designated as an open area for the use of the priests represented the land and the ocean, which are open to the passage of all beings, and the third section, reserved for God alone, represented the Heavens, which are inaccessible to man. The twelve loaves of showbread stood for the twelve months of the year, and the seven branches of the menorah suggested the seven planets. The coverings that draped the Tabernacle were of four kinds: linen curtains, goats' skin, dyed rams' skins, and a seal-skin cover that symbolized the four elements as explained in the following passage⁴⁷:

For the fine linen was proper to signify the Earth, because the flax grows out of the Earth; the purple signifies the sea, because that color is dyed by the blood of a sea shell-fish; the blue is fit to signify the air; and the scarlet will naturally be an indication of fire. The vestment of the High Priest being made of linen also signifies the Earth; the blue color of his robe denotes the Heavens. The pomegranates on the High Priest's robe signify lightning and the bells affixed to the bottom edge of his robe (chiming when he moved) recalled thunder. This outer garment represents nature in its entirety, created by God out of the four elements.

In Philo's view the Tabernacle's sanctity was centered on the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments that came from God and was thus a "coffer of the Laws."⁴⁸ It was coated with gold both within and without to represent the open, revealed world, which can be perceived by the senses, as well as the hidden, invisible world, perceptible only through the intellect. The Ark cover, *kapporet*, formed the base for the two winged creatures known as cherubim, which faced one another "with their wings inclining toward the Mercy Seat, the *kapporet*" (Exod. 25:20). As Philo noted: "And so, too, the hemispheres are opposite to each other and stretch out to the Earth, the center of all things which actually parts them . . . and it stands that the revolution of each of the hemispheres may circle round one fixed center and thus be wholly harmonious."⁴⁹

This explanation, which is another suggestion of the parallelism between the Temple and the universe, is similar to the discussion about

⁴⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 3, 7, 7.

⁴⁸ Philo, *Moses* 2, 97.

⁴⁹ Philo, *Cherubim*, 25–26.

the two cherubim at the entrance to the Garden of Eden; in Genesis 3:24 we read, “and He placed at the East of the Garden of Eden the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way to the Tree of Life.”

Menachem Kasher explained that Philo’s interpretations, as well as Talmudic midrashim, are based on an ancient tradition passed orally from one generation to the next.⁵⁰ The tradition was transmitted publicly primarily on the Sabbath, when people gathered in the synagogue to hear the Bible reading of the week with its explanations and homilies.⁵¹ At these gatherings in Alexandria, Antioch, and in the Land of Israel, Midrash was used as a popular literary genre to convey philosophical, ethical, and theological messages.⁵²

Menachem Stein also stresses Philo’s influence on Midrash.⁵³ He contends that especially in later midrashim, such as *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*⁵⁴ and *Midrash Tadshe*,⁵⁵ Philo’s commentaries correspond sometimes almost “word for word,” which, Stein says, indicates that the Jews preserved extant aggadic material from Alexandria throughout the early Middle Ages. The many parallels that have been found between Talmudic midrashim and some of the ideas expressed by Philo and Josephus suggest that the midrashic material known to be of later origin is essentially based on ancient Jewish tradition.

Scholars have concluded that Christian exegetes were also very interested in the allegorical method of Philo and Josephus and used it in their own work,⁵⁶ and it is not uncommon to find excerpts from Philo and Josephus in Christian exegetical treatises on the Bible. David Winston notes that the comments are frequently accompanied by annotations, with the name of the author in the genitive case. For citations from Philo, we have

⁵⁰ Kasher 1951, 293.

⁵¹ Ibid. In Kasher’s words: “The midrashim of the Talmudic sages and their tradition can be traced back to the very origins of the nation. Philo, who had no knowledge of the books of our sages (since he predated them), wrote in the same vein . . . For they [the sages] preserved certain things by tradition, passed from one generation to the next.”

⁵² Cohen 15.

⁵³ Stein 1937, 299–300.

⁵⁴ *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, thought to have been written in the Land of Israel in the eighth century, contains legends and ideas that are similar to those in the apocryphal literature. The midrash, which has 64 chapters, is also known as *Baraitha of Rabbi Eliezer* and was superscripted to the second-generation Tanna R. Eliezer b. Horkhanus (second century) so as to give it ancient authority.

⁵⁵ *Midrash Tadshe*, discussed in detail in Chapter 4 highlights this midrash.

⁵⁶ Schreckenberg and Schubert 1992, 13.

his name either without any further modifier or sometimes Philo the Hebrew or Philo the Bishop. (The last is accounted for by the fact that Christian dependence on Philo was so great that an early legend spoke of his baptism by John, his friendship with Peter, and his authorship of the Book of Wisdom.)⁵⁷

An example of the popularity of the works of Philo and Josephus and their allegorical method can be seen in the illuminated manuscript of the *Sacra Parallela*,⁵⁸ dated to the ninth century, a period in which the dispute over the use of religious imagery was an important issue for much of the intellectual and ecclesiastical community of Byzantium. Very few illustrated manuscripts survive from that period, so the Paris *Sacra Parallela*, which is so exceptional in character, is often discussed by Byzantinists, and some aspects of its imagery have been studied.⁵⁹

The *Sacra Parallela* is profusely illustrated with marginal miniatures. The manuscript, known as a "*florilegium*," comprises a series of subjects arranged alphabetically. Relevant selections are gathered under each topic, first from the Old Testament, next from the New Testament, then from the Church Fathers, and finally from Philo Judaeus and Josephus Flavius.⁶⁰ Weitzmann contended that the *Sacra Parallela* was composed by John of Damascus, a monk in Mar Saba, who opposed the Iconoclasts and fought to preserve icons and for the Christian right to use illustrations and icons as part of the Christian rituals.⁶¹ We cannot be certain that this work was indeed the product of John's hand since there is no mention of the name of the author anywhere in the 365 folio pages. The manuscript includes many images of Philo, some depicting him in full view and others showing only his face. He is portrayed in all these images as having black hair and a short, black, round beard that frames his face. On folio 305v he is shown as a Christian bishop with one hand under his robe (as if he were carrying a book inside the garment) and the other hand raised in a gesture of speech. He is similarly depicted on folio 301v, but without the decoration of crosses on his garments, which, according to Erwin Goodenough, is the model that was copied from a Jewish Hellenistic manuscript (fig. 16).⁶²

⁵⁷ Winston 1995, 479.

⁵⁸ Paris bibliothèque Nationale, cod. Gr. 923.

⁵⁹ Evangelatou 2008, 115.

⁶⁰ Martin 1950, 291.

⁶¹ Weitzmann 1979, 10.

⁶² Goodenough 1938, V–VI. The source for the description of Philo's dress is the widespread legend about Philo converting and becoming a Christian.

Josephus is shown on folio 208r, appearing on a medallion with Philo,⁶³ as well as in five portraits and seven other medallions (fig. 17). In all of them he is shown as having long white hair (flowing down to his shoulders) and a white beard. Josephus, who began his life as a Pharisee, the son of a priestly family, and later moved to Rome and became close to the Imperial Roman court, is shown in plain clothes as well as in elegant dress. On folio 226v we see him in military garb with an impressive shield (fig. 18).⁶⁴ It appears that, like Philo, Josephus was also very highly regarded among the Christians,⁶⁵ who preserved his writings and drew upon his ideas.⁶⁶

In view of the significant presence of both Philo and Josephus in the *Sacra Parallela*, I consider next how the *Christian Topography* translated their religious and philosophical notions regarding Creation and the Tabernacle into visual language.

⁶³ Deutsch 1986, 62.

⁶⁴ Weitzmann 1979, 247.

⁶⁵ Shinan 1999, 36.

⁶⁶ Schreckenberg and Schubert, 14.

CHAPTER THREE

CREATION IN CHRISTIAN WORKS

Constantine of Antioch's "System of the World"

According to McCrindle, who translated the *Christian Topography* from Greek to English, "The author was a believing Christian, who was well acquainted with the philosophical and scientific speculations of the Greeks, but chose not to disclose his name and signed his writings simply 'A Christian.'" From the eleventh century on until he was identified as Constantine of Antioch,¹ he was known by the pseudonym Cosmas Indicopleustes.² His unique hypothesis was virtually ignored by medieval commentators, and apparently it was only Photius of Constantinople (ca. 820–ca. 891) who related to it, noting that: "Its style is poor and the arrangement hardly up to the accepted standard." Photius went on to comment that Cosmas Indicopleustes "may fairly be regarded as a fabulist rather than a trustworthy authority."³

In view of the fact that the thrust of the *Christian Topography* was to counter the prevailing Greek and Roman pre-Christian theories,⁴ as well as some Christian opinions concerning the spherical shape of the world,⁵

¹ Wolska-Conus 1989, 28–30; Kessler 1995, 365, n. 1.

² McCrindle 1897, IV–X, wrote in the introduction to the translation of the *Christian Topography* that the little that is known of the life of the author can be found in the single volume that survived from what he wrote. Apparently he was a spice dealer whose business took him to various ports on the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf, and exposed him to many ideas in the course of his travels. Cosmas-Constantine was self-taught, apparently influenced by Mar-Abas, whose theological orientation was Nestorian, who in turn was influenced by Theodore of Mopsuestia.

³ Woodward 1985, 517.

⁴ As McCrindle cites in the Preface, XIV, to the English translation of the *Christian Topography*, the book's: "professed design being to refute, from Scripture and common sense, the impious Pagan cosmography, according to which the earth is a sphere; and the centre around which the heaven, which is also a sphere, revolves with all its luminaries."

⁵ Pognon 1984, 33, cites Augustine (354–430), who had extensive knowledge of Greek science and accepted the theory of the Earth and the Heavens being in the shape of a sphere, but rejected the concept of the antipodes (people standing upside down because of the spherical shape of the world). Augustine wrote in his notebook to the Christians: "Thus, when we are asked our religious beliefs, it is not necessary to examine the nature of things, as did those whom the Greeks called *physici*. . . . It is enough for the Christian to believe that the only cause of all created things, terrestrial or celestial, visible or invisible,

the book's cosmology is based on biblical verses that allude to the pattern of the Tabernacle being the pattern of Creation. According to Constantine, owing to divine Revelation, Moses, the great cosmographer, was the source of all existing historic and scientific knowledge, as all of the secrets of Creation were revealed through God's instructions for the building of the Tabernacle.

In order to present his ideas with maximum clarity Constantine embellished the written text with illustrative miniatures, creating a combination of words and images that illuminated his theology.⁶ The arrangement of illustrations juxtaposed to the text and the text relating to and explaining the illustrations provides an extraordinary tool for understanding the *Christian Topography's* iconographic meaning. It also answers such questions as: "Why were the images drawn the way they were?" "What is their special emblematic meaning?" "How was their unique pattern formed?"

The original sixth-century manuscript of the *Christian Topography* has been lost but extant copies of the work can be found in the Vatican library (Vatican 699),⁷ in the Saint Catherine Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula (Sinai 1186),⁸ and in the Laurentiana Library in Florence (Laurentiana 28).⁹

lies in the goodness of the Creator, the only true God; and that nothing exists, except for Him, which does not draw its existence from Him."

⁶ Wolska-Conus 1968–1973, I, 124–127.

⁷ Vaticana Biblioteca Apostolica, 2nd half 9th century. Wolska-Conus 1968–1973; Stornajolo 1908; Kondakoff 1886–1891; Rjedin 1916, I, 136ff; Lazarev 1967 41, 137, n. 39, 172; Devreesse, 1950, 176ff. Vatican 699, the oldest extant copy of the *Christian Topography*, consists of the first ten books and has 321 pages and fifty-seven miniatures. The impression is that there must have been more illustrations, and it is possible that folio pages were removed at a later date. From a paleographic and stylistic examination it was determined that the date of the manuscript was the first half of the ninth century. The manuscript of Gregory's Homilies of the BN-Paris. Gr. 510, which was written and illustrated in Constantinople for Basil I between 880 and 886, helped to determine the date of Vatican 699. This conclusion was arrived at from the stylistic similarity between the two texts, which was especially reinforced by the text descriptions of the people and the illustrations that showed the folds in their cloaks.

⁸ Mount Sinai, Monastery of St. Catherine, 11th century. Sinai 1186 includes twelve books, 211 folio pages, and fifty-six illustrations. The style of the miniatures in this copy has been identified through a paleographic examination as a work from the eleventh century. This copy is similar in style to that period's artistic language, as is evident from many other illustrated manuscripts. The figures of people in the manuscript are flattened to minimize their physical size. The round faces are unnatural in size and create an impression of shadows and movement. All these signs are suggestive of the styles of certain Eastern centers. Many of the illustrations from this copy were reprinted by Wolska-Conus and Weitzmann.

⁹ Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana IX, 28, late 11th century, consists of twelve books with 279 folios. The original copy of the text was partially destroyed and several pages are missing. From a paleographic and stylistic study this copy was also dated to the

The entire thrust of the ten volumes of the *Christian Topography* is devoted to two subjects:

1. Cosmography: Positing the idea that the Tabernacle was built according to God's blueprint of Creation and thus mirrored the architecture of the universe as described in the first chapter of Genesis.
2. Prophecy: Explaining that the division of the Tabernacle into two areas—the Holy and the Holy of Holies—parallels the division of the world into two states—the present state and the future state.

The visual schema that illustrates Constantine's unique cosmological theory appears in Book IV, where the author inserted a drawing of the universe as a rectangle topped by a hemispheric roof that depicts the "short side" of the Cosmos (fig. 1). The scheme also represents the occidental (west) and oriental (east) sides of the "long side" of the universe, shown as a box divided into two parts topped by what looks like a semicircular lid. Inside the box we see a plan of the Earth, with its oceans and mountains, and a tracing of the course of the sun (fig. 19). The drawing of the arched-top motif on the "short side" of this box serves here as the formal representation of several related symbols: images of the universe, the Tabernacle, and the Ark of the Covenant. Thus, the "System of the World" can best be understood from the depiction of the "short side" of the universe being divided into two parts by the horizontal line drawn between the rectangular section and the arch above it.

The division into two parts is based on both the story of Creation and on the narrative of the construction of the Tabernacle.¹⁰ In Genesis, the firmament, created on the second day, separates the earthly from the heavenly sphere, and in Exodus, the Tabernacle's curtain, the *parochet*, separates the Holy of Holies from the Holy. We know that these ideas did not originate with Constantine. Wolska-Conus suggests that the Church Fathers who preceded him had already considered various versions of these notions.¹¹ She points to Origen's allegorical interpretation of the Book of Exodus and his view of the Tabernacle as a representation of the world. She also cites Theodore of Mopsuestia from Antioch (350–428),

eleventh century. The forms of the delicate figures of the people reveal a certain measure of spirituality and the folds of the cloaks show characteristics similar to those from the end of the eleventh century.

¹⁰ McCrindle, 113.

¹¹ Wolska-Conus 1962, 116–118.

who regarded the Tabernacle as a replica of Creation, in that it separated the Holy from the Holy of Holies, and Clement of Alexandria (150–215) and Pseudo-Chrysostom from Constantinople (347–407), both of whom saw the Tabernacle as a symbol of the two spheres of the Cosmos and understood that the Garden of Eden was part of the heavenly sphere. Constantine took their exegetical method and transformed its allegorical symbolism into something more concrete. His literary and artistic efforts demonstrate clearly the similarities in design and structure between the Tabernacle and the Cosmos, thus supporting the notion that the pattern of the Tabernacle was based on the pattern of Creation.

The Christian Topography's Schema of Creation

The illustrations found in the *Christian Topography* relate principally to the initial verses of the Book of Genesis, the biblical account of the first four days of Creation. The real thrust of the treatise appears to be the acts of “separation” that transpired during the first four days. On the first day: “God separated the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:4); on the second day: “God made the firmament and separated the water which was below the firmament from the water which was above the firmament” (Gen. 1:7); on the third day God gathered the water below the sky into one area and separated the water from the dry land (Gen. 1:8–9); and on the fourth day God created the lights “to dominate the day and the night and to separate light from darkness” (Gen. 1:18). The major focal point in all these acts is the firmament created to separate the upper and the lower waters and the Earth and the Heavens and to have the lights set upon it “to shine upon the Earth” (Gen. 1:17).

Constantine’s cosmology was grounded in the different domains created through these separations. Through the schema shown in Figures 1 and 20, he elucidates his hypothesis by showing the arched rectangular pattern divided into two parts and separated by a horizontal line. The two wavy lines in the base and center of Figure 20 allude to the firmament separating the waters.

Wolska-Conus considers the schematic illustration of the “long side” of the universe the “the cosmography of the *Christian Topography*,”¹² a symbolic diagram of the divine plan for Creation. The illustration found

¹² Ibid., 113; Wolska-Conus 1990, 155–191, esp. 155–157.

in Vatican 699 (fig. 22) lends credence to her contention by presenting the schematic diagram for the east and west sides of the universe. The rectangular lower part of the schema shows an earthly cone-shaped mountain surrounded by the ocean and illuminated by the sun.¹³ In the vaulted upper part (separated from it by the firmament) are the Heavens with a medallion of a bust of Jesus within it (figs. 21, 22) suggesting that Jesus is the Pantokrator—the ruler of the Cosmos—even though He is in the Heavens and cannot be seen from below.¹⁴ One of the miniatures in Sinai 1186 shows the Earth in greater detail with the north-south perspective of the geographical map of the world (fig. 19). The dry land is represented by a mountain with two discs, the sun and the moon, behind it. The ocean is shown subdivided into the four seas.

Sinai 1186 shows the different domains separated by the firmament (fig. 23). An illustration within a rectangular frame depicts the Heavens imaged as an immense blue arch over the mountain that represents the Earth. At the bottom of the frame is a wide band of blue water labeled “ocean,”¹⁵ and there are horizontal wavy blue lines drawn from one side of the arch to the other to represent the firmament at the top. The two comparable illustrations in Vatican 699 visualize the luminaries in the Heavens and the sun rising in the East and moving southward as it lights up the Earth above the mountaintop and then goes into hiding behind the mountain, allowing darkness to descend.¹⁶ This depiction, which is also found in Figure 24, shows the Earth as a mountain whose summit is marked by three red lines. The band at the bottom of the image represents the ocean, and the discs of the two luminaries are to the left and the right of the mountain, illustrating the movement of the sun across the dry land.¹⁷

Constantine believed that the nightly disappearance of the sun could be explained through the words of Ecclesiastes: “The sun rises and the sun sets—and glides back to where it rises. Southward blowing, turning northward, ever turning blows the wind; on its rounds the wind returns” (Eccles. 1:5–6). In an illustration in Sinai 1186 (fig. 25) the ocean and the

¹³ The mountain that represents the dry land in the *Christian Topography* miniatures appears as a cosmic mountain that connects Earth and Heaven, according to Eliade 1961, 38.

¹⁴ Kessler 1995, 367, brings this example of Jesus portrayed in a clypeus to indicate that He is the Pantokrator and that according to an ancient convention used to depict a protagonist not visible within the fictive pictorial space, the circular medallion suggests that Christ is an active agent in the world, even though he is not observed below.

¹⁵ Weitzmann 1990, 53.

¹⁶ McCrindle, 42 (Vatican 699, folio 68v).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 132–133.

luminaries are joined together with the Earth, which is shown in shades of bright brown, shaped as a trapezoid, and surrounded by a wide band of water. The word “ocean” is inscribed on the framing band of the waters and the disc representing the sun is partially concealed.¹⁸

Interestingly, the *Christian Topography* depicts the creation of the trees and the grass on the third day indirectly. In Vatican 699 it is illustrated with a cartographic map of the inhabited Earth surrounded by the ocean, beyond which is a small rectangle rich in shrubs, flowers, and trees, apparently suggesting the Garden of Eden in the East, where the four seas encroach on the regular outline of the inhabited world. The same map of the world and of the Garden of Eden’s emblematic design is found in Sinai 1186 (fig. 26). Here the Earth is shown as a bright golden-brown rectangle, framed by a wide stripe of blue water labeled “ocean” and with allegorical representations of the four winds blowing horns. Inside the area of the Earth we see inlets and streams flowing onto the dry land. On the right, across the ocean, close to the frame are trees and flowers suggesting the Garden of Eden.

These *Christian Topography* illustrations were not designed as visual accounts of the six days of Creation in a narrative or chronological way, but rather as reflections of the epitome of Constantine’s cosmology, which was grounded in a schematic design and pattern suggested by the biblical text. The cartographic illustration (fig. 26) testifies to Constantine’s Classical and Hellenistic knowledge regarding the existence of four seas: the Caspian on the northern side; the Arabian (Red Sea) and Persian Gulf on the southern side, and the Mediterranean (called the Romaic Gulf) on the western side.¹⁹ He utilized this knowledge for his teaching in regard to Creation, in, for example, his description of the four rivers that flow from Paradise into the inhabited world, passing under the ocean. One of them, the Gihon (Nile), flows into the Romaic Gulf; the others, the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Pishon (Indus) flow into the Persian Gulf.

The cosmological theory of the *Christian Topography* is based then on the premise that the Bible reveals God’s absolute truth and that biblical verses are to be regarded as the authoritative divine source for all theological and scientific knowledge.²⁰ In the work’s homiletic approach, the verses cited from Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, and Job provided a firm understanding of the schematic diagram that represents the pattern of

¹⁸ Weitzmann 1990, 54, folio 67r.

¹⁹ Dilke 1987, 261, 262.

²⁰ McCrindle 26–27.

the world. The detailed verbal descriptions seem to parallel his schematic diagram of the universe:²¹

It is written: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). We therefore first depict along with the earth, the heaven which is vaulted and which has its extremities bound together with the extremities of the earth. To the best of our ability we have endeavored to delineate it on its western side and its eastern [side]: for these two sides are walls extending from below to the vault above. There is also the firmament which in the middle is bound together with the first heaven and which, on its upper side has the waters according to divine scripture itself. The position and figure are such as here sketched.²² To the extremities on the four sides of the earth the heaven is fastened at its own four extremities, making the figure of a cube, that is to say, a quadrangular figure, while up above it curves round in the form of an oblong vault and becomes as it were a vast canopy. And in the middle the firmament is made fast to it, and thus two places are formed. From the earth to the firmament is the first place, this world, namely in which are the angels and men and all the present state of existence. From the firmament again to the vault above is the second place—the Kingdom of Heaven, into which Christ, first of all, entered, after his ascension, having prepared for us a new and living way. On the western side and the eastern the outline presented is short, as in the case of an oblong vault, but on its northern and southern sides it shows its length. Its figure is therefore something such as this.

This description is portrayed in Sinai 1186 (fig. 19) and Vatican 699 (fig. 22). Both images represent the "oblong vault," that is, the "long side" of the universe as seen from the north and south. The outline delineating the western and the eastern sides represents the "short side" as we saw earlier (fig. 1). The created universe is thus portrayed in both words and images as a vaulted box that holds both the Heavens and the Earth.

Constantine opened his treatise by quoting the first verse in Genesis: "In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth." His understanding of "Heaven and Earth" includes the totality of Creation,²³ and he constructed the "short side" schema of Heaven and Earth joined together so as to outline the pattern of Creation. The placement of the Earth at the bottom of the schema is predicated on Psalm 104:5: "Who established the Earth upon its foundations, so that it shall never totter," and from Job 26:7: "He stretched out the north over the empty space and suspended the Earth over emptiness."

²¹ *Ibid.*, 129–130.

²² Vatican 699, folio 38v (fig. 1).

²³ McCrindle 27–28; 83; 108; 112; 129; 240–241; 292; 298–299; etc.

Pattern, *tavnit*, is the key word in the cosmography of the *Christian Topography*. According to Constantine, the pattern of the Tabernacle reveals the pattern of the totality of God's Creation. The Tabernacle, the Temple, and the Ark of the Covenant are all depicted in the same schematic pattern, since they were all made using the pattern shown to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Sanctuary and its vessels are symbolic representations of the Creation and shed light on the way the universe was formed.

The pattern, Constantine wrote, was formed "in the beginning," and included both the Heaven and the Earth. As God commanded Moses to make the Tabernacle according to the pattern that was revealed to him on Mount Sinai: "See and make them in the pattern which is being shown you on the mountain" (Exod. 25:40), he concluded that the verses in Exodus that describe the construction of the Tabernacle refer to the same pattern and that the pattern that God showed Moses, whom he considered the divine cosmographer, was the pattern of Creation:²⁴

Then having ended his account of how all things existing within heaven and earth had been successively created from the first day onwards to the sixth, and having then spoken of God as having rested on the seventh day and made nothing more, because the whole Creation had been completed, and nothing been left defective in the harmony of the world to mar its supreme beauty, he again adds: "This is the book of heaven and earth," thinking these words sufficient to indicate collectively all things within heaven and earth. [...] and that he made only two heavens, the first along with the earth, while placing the second in the middle and preparing two states—the present and the future—just as in the Tabernacle he had ordered two places to be formed in imitation of the world, for he says: "According to the pattern shown to thee in the mount."

Constantine referred to an additional proof-text from the Epistle to the Hebrews (8:5), noting: "as Moses was admonished by God when he was about to make the Tabernacle: for, see, says He, that you make all things according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain."

The Apostolic Constitutions: A Link to a Shared Exegetical Method?

The exegetical approach to the Bible in the *Christian Topography* regards biblical verses as points of reference for an entire cosmology. The question

²⁴ Ibid., 112, 113.

arises as to whether Constantine's choice of verses was random and thus unique to the *Christian Topography's* cosmology. It turns out that these same verses are found in several passages of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, an early liturgical collection that was very important in the Syrian Church and generally believed to have been compiled in Antioch in the fourth century,²⁵ which would indicate that Constantine used a corpus of verses that had been selected by others who preceded him.

Kaufmann Kohler,²⁶ Wilhelm Bousset,²⁷ Erwin Goodenough,²⁸ and David Fiensy²⁹ have found references to Jewish sources in the liturgical hymns in Books VII and VIII of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and contend that these prayers are based on the Greek translation of the most important Sabbath prayer, the *amidah*, so named because it is recited while standing,³⁰ which was adapted and integrated into the *Apostolic Constitutions* with Christian interpolations.³¹ Marcel Simon argues that these liturgical prayers were preserved in the Syrian Church precisely because of these additions,³² and Joseph Heinemann,³³ Egon Wellesz,³⁴ Roger Beckwith,³⁵ and Robert Taft³⁶ have suggested that early Christian rites were influenced by Jewish liturgy. Jefim Schirmann contended that this influence was attributable to the Jews who joined the early Church as Jewish-Christians and brought their liturgy with them.³⁷ Menachem Kister argues that Book VII of the *Apostolic Constitutions* offers evidence regarding the history of the Hebrew benedictions in the *amidah* as well as in other Jewish prayers.³⁸ Comparing the prayers in the *Apostolic Constitutions* with early Jewish liturgy, he concluded that parts of the text

²⁵ Van der Horst 1999, 19.

²⁶ Kohler 1924, 387–425.

²⁷ Bousset 1915, 435–485.

²⁸ Goodenough 1969, 306–358.

²⁹ Fiensy 1985, 5–9.

³⁰ *Amidah*—lit. “standing.” One of the two most important Jewish prayers, from the period of the Mishnah (second century CE). The *amidah*, which is recited three times a day, originally included eighteen benedictions but another was added and there are now nineteen. However, on the Sabbath and on most holidays the prayer includes only seven benedictions.

³¹ Fiensy 1985, 193–197.

³² Simon 1986, 53–60.

³³ Heinemann 1977, 63–64, 135, 145–148.

³⁴ Wellesz 1949, 35–39.

³⁵ Beckwith 1978, 39–50.

³⁶ Taft 1986, 3–13.

³⁷ Schirmann 1953/1954, 123–161.

³⁸ Kister 2008, 206–207, 237.

are similar to the Hebrew benedictions, whereas other sections are from Hellenistic Jewish homilies.

Schirmann's theory is a highly probable one, as Antioch, where both the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Christian Topography* were composed, was a largely multi-cultural and bilingual city, where both Syriac-Aramaic and Greek were spoken. The city had a significant Jewish population, which would have made it a natural locale for the continuing influence of Judaism on Christianity.³⁹ Wayne Meeks and Robert Wilken observed that the sermons of John Chrysostom in the fourth century suggest that there was widespread Christian involvement with Judaism.⁴⁰ Chrysostom attacked the Christians who attended synagogues for exposing themselves to Jewish prayers and inevitably integrating those prayers into their own worship.⁴¹ Finding slightly altered synagogal prayers in the *Apostolic Constitutions* supports the conclusion that there was close contact between Christians and Jews and that the Christians praised, thanked, and appealed to God in a manner reminiscent of Hebrew prayers.⁴²

As I noted earlier, the verses quoted in both the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Christian Topography* to describe the structure of the universe were taken from Psalms, Isaiah, and Job rather than from the account of Creation in Genesis so as to stress their homiletic application in articulating and illustrating a specific physical shape of the Cosmos.⁴³ Both the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Christian Topography* refer to the Heavens as a curtain creating a tentlike structure above the Earth and above the firmament, as in Isaiah 40:22: "Who stretched out the Heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in," and in Psalms 104:2. Both describe the Earth as suspended over nothingness and surrounded by oceans, as in Job 26:7. In both, the dust of the Earth is gathered into a square box, as in Job 38:38: "When the dust runs into a mass and the clods cleave fast together?" a verse that relies on the Septuagint translation: "He has inclined Heaven to Earth and it has been poured out as the dust of the Earth. I have welded it as a square block of stone."⁴⁴ The use of the same verses in both works suggests a common homiletic understanding of the biblical text as well as a shared conception of the structure of the

³⁹ Fiensy 1985, 217.

⁴⁰ Meeks and Wilken 1978, 31.

⁴¹ Wilken 1983, 75.

⁴² Brooten 2001, 29–37.

⁴³ Laderman 2009, 121–138.

⁴⁴ McCrindle 30, n. 1.

universe (see Addendum—Table 5) manifested visually in the *Christian Topography's* text and images.

In explaining the biblical basis for the visual schema of the universe (fig. 1) and of the Tabernacle/Ark (fig. 27) Constantine referred to Job 38:38:

Do not the expressions about inclining it to the earth and welding it thereto clearly show that the heaven standing as a vault has its extremities bound together with the extremities of the earth? The fact of its inclination to the earth, and its being welded to it, makes it totally inconceivable that it is a sphere.⁴⁵

Interestingly, the verses in the *Apostolic Constitutions* as well as the ones used in the *Christian Topography* reveal many details regarding the formation of the world. They describe the Heavens bending to form an arch from above and the “dust” forming a cone-shaped “mass” that represents the earthly mountain (figs. 22–25). Obviously visual expressions of these verses rely on an exegetical understanding of the biblical text, so without Jewish homiletic interpretation it would have been difficult for the authors of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Christian Topography* to afford them such cosmological significance. The character and the method of exegesis used in the Greek translations of these passages suggest that the biblical understandings that they transmitted were based on Philo's works and Hellenistic Judaism.⁴⁶

The hypothesis that the *Apostolic Constitutions* was compiled in the Hellenistic environment of Antioch and the fact that Constantine of Antioch is thought to have been the author/illustrator of the *Christian Topography* reinforce this supposition. The verbal imagery in both works shows the round-topped rectangular schema representing the upper Heavens and the firmament above the Earth.⁴⁷ Words such as “tent,” “upper chamber,” “an arch,” “a vault” all bring to mind the arched form of the pattern of the universe and the Tabernacle.⁴⁸ Thus, it is not surprising to find this same schema describing not only the cosmography of the universe but also the present state of the world and the prophecy regarding its future. The miniature from Vatican 699 (fig. 1) illustrates the *Christian Topography's*

⁴⁵ Ibid., 130.

⁴⁶ Runia 1988, suggests that scholars of strongly varying opinions, both Jewish and Christian, adopted Philo's interpretations as completely consistent with their own views.

⁴⁷ McCrindle 31,32; 43; 80; 95; 97; 107; 111; 114; 129; 130; 284, 298, etc.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 32.

divine plan of salvation, *oikonomia*,⁴⁹ namely, the Christian future state of *eschaton* at the time of the *Parousia*, as described in the following text:⁵⁰

Hear then this which is spoken by the Lord: "When the Son of Man cometh he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

[...] as saith the Saviour: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"⁵¹

The above passage is based on Matthew 25:31–34:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, he will sit in state on his throne, with all the nations gathered before him. . . . Then the king will say to those on his right hand, "You have my Father's blessings; come, enter and possess the kingdom that has been ready for you since the world was made."

The full-page Vatican 699 miniature of the *Parousia* (fig. 4) depicts the same visual diagram that characterizes the "short side" of the universe (fig. 1), as well as the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant (fig. 27).⁵² Based on the same schematic shape, it shows a lower compartment that parallels the Earth and the outer precincts of the Tabernacle along with an upper vaulted lid that corresponds to the Heavens and to the Holy of Holies. In this top vaulted space in the miniature of the *Parousia* an impressive figure of Jesus seated on a throne within a dark-blue oval shadow suggests an opening in the upper Heavens above the firmament. The rectangular space below the heavenly domain is divided into three registers. The lowest register shows a row of people whose heads seem to be breaking through the ground—the people being resurrected from the dead; above them are the righteous, who are candidates for ascension to Heaven, and above them are the angels. These figures are set against a white background, in contrast to the richly decorated domelike area behind the image of Jesus.

The representation of Jesus enthroned in the Kingdom of Heaven with those waiting to join Him, their heads raised in prayer, is in accord with the *Christian Topography's* eschatological description of the *Parousia*:

⁴⁹ Champion 2006; 383–392, 383.

⁵⁰ McCrindle 340.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 342.

⁵² Ainalov 1961, 38–40.

He takes with himself into the Kingdom of Heaven the faithful, the righteous, the worthy, both angels and men . . .⁵³

Or as Kessler (based on Wolska-Conus) describes it:

Neither the angels nor men enter heaven. Only the Lord Christ, raised from the dead, has entered it as a precursor for us, as long as the present condition still lasts, giving to you the assurance that, just as he entered heaven, so too all of you will take your place in the ascending hierarchy under his rule.⁵⁴

The eschatological notion of the resurrection of the dead also appears in *Apostolic Constitutions* Book VII:34 and Book VIII:12. Paragraph 8 of Section 34 reads:

And you deprived wayward mankind of the reward of life, not removing it for all time but making (mankind) sleep for a little while; you called (them) into rebirth by an oath, you shattered the bonds of death, O Quickener of the dead through Jesus Christ our hope.

Kohler and Fiensy trace this prayer back to the Jewish benediction about God's might in Creation, *gevuroth*, which is the second blessing in the *amidah*.⁵⁵ Fiensy cites the Babylonian version of the Hebrew text of the seven benedictions of the Sabbath *amidah* that was found in the Cairo Genizah, showing the verbal parallels between these benedictions and the Greek text of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.⁵⁶ It seems that every benediction has at least one verbal parallel. For example in Section 34, as noted above, the expression "O Quickener of the dead" is the translation of the Hebrew expression *mehayyeh hametim*, which opens and closes the "blessing of *gevuroth*." Both prayers speak of God's power and conclude with blessing God, Who revives the dead:

You are mighty forever, O Lord, who quickens the dead [added only in winter: Who causes the wind to blow and sends down the rain], who sustains the living in kindness . . . Who quickens the dead in great compassion, who supports the falling . . . keeps faith with them that sleep in the earth . . . Who is like You, Lord of mighty acts, and who is like you, King, who kills and quickens and causes salvation to spring forth quickly. And You are faithful to quicken the dead. Blessed are You, O Lord, who quickens the dead.⁵⁷

⁵³ McCrindle 237.

⁵⁴ Kessler 1995, 366; Wolska-Conus 1968–1973, V, 358 (ch. 247).

⁵⁵ Kohler 1924, 414, 415; Fiensy 1985, 132, 176.

⁵⁶ Fiensy 1985, 155–159.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 157.

The editor of the *Apostolic Constitutions* added a Christian interpolation to this prayer, inserting the phrase “through Jesus Christ” into the Jewish benediction of *gevuroth*. The Christian version of the prayer addresses God “Blessed are You, O Lord, King of the Ages, who through Jesus Christ made the universe and through him in the beginning brought order to the [world].”⁵⁸ As I noted above, in the *Parousia* miniature Christ is shown in the upper Heavens on his heavenly throne.⁵⁹ The people arising from their graves appear to be awakening from a short sleep (“sleep for a little while”), which was forced upon them because of sin, as in the prayer from the *Apostolic Constitutions*. They are now ready to ascend to Heaven with the help of Jesus, who opened the way for them and invites them to join Him. In the miniature, the angels are lifting up their heads toward Jesus in the Kingdom of Heaven and are praising God together with the people rising from their graves. According to Constantine, the angels represent the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3, who are chanting “holy, holy, holy” in praise of the Trinity that represents the one God, “whose glory fills the Earth.”⁶⁰ The visual description of the *Parousia* seems then to depict as well the theophany of the heavenly realm and the angelic praise known as the sanctification prayer, the *qedushah*,⁶¹ which is thought to have originated with the Merkavah mystics and the Heikhalot literature.⁶²

The notion that the prayers in Book VII:33–38 of the *Apostolic Constitutions* influenced the *Christian Topography* points to an additional source from which Jewish ideas may have been introduced into Byzantine Christian works. Esther Chazon describes three scenarios for the transmission of ancient texts such as the Dead Sea scrolls to the *Apostolic Constitutions*.⁶³ The first scenario claims the possibility of prayers transmitted directly from earlier times starting in the Second Temple Period and continuing up to the fourth-century in Syria. The second suggests that the compiler

⁵⁸ Ibid., 61, sec 1.

⁵⁹ Kessler 1995, 365–366. “In its general format, the Vatican image may have been influenced by a Last Judgment, but the miniature focuses only on the reception of the blessed into heaven at the instance of the Second Coming. The perfect symmetry of the praying figures reinforces this point, as does the duplication of the same inscription at left and right, in place of the traditional counterpart: ‘Depart from me you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

⁶⁰ McCrindle, 236.

⁶¹ *Qedushah* is the third benediction of the *amidah* prayer, so named because it contains the words God the Holy One, *ha’el ha’ qadosh*, and is answered in the recital by the congregants saying the words “Holy Holy Holy,” *qadosh, qadosh, qadosh*.

⁶² Chazon 1999, 7–18. esp. 8 n. 4.

⁶³ Eadem 2004, 261–277.

of the *Apostolic Constitutions* relied on the Antiochean synagogue liturgy of his period and used texts that were translated into Greek. The third, originally proposed by Pieter Van der Horst, posits a source taken from Christian liturgy in Antioch, where the Church incorporated Jewish texts into its liturgy to dissuade Christians from attending the Jewish services on the Sabbath.⁶⁴ Chazon herself leans toward the second scenario on the basis of a comparison with one of the oldest hymns found in the Dead Sea scrolls (first half of the second century BCE), which clearly indicates that the fourth-century contemporary synagogue liturgy upon which the *Apostolic Constitutions'* compiler relied preserved Second Temple norms of the Dead Sea community.⁶⁵

If the prayers in the *Apostolic Constitutions* were in fact compiled in Antioch and the author and illustrator of the *Christian Topography* was indeed Constantine of that city, it is reasonable to assume that Christians in Antioch took prayers from the Jewish congregations and introduced them, with appropriate emendations and interpolations, into the Christian liturgy. It is also plausible to assume that this integration was undertaken by individuals who were familiar with the Jewish liturgy at a time when relations between the two communities were cordial. It was not necessary for them to change the content of the prayers but simply to insert Christian typological additions, such as "by means of Jesus" or "through the Messiah" into the Jewish prayers.⁶⁶

In view of the foregoing, we might well conclude that the liturgy included in the *Apostolic Constitutions* should be considered one of the avenues by which Hellenistic Jewish material found its way to the author and illustrator of the *Christian Topography*. The similarities in the illustrations of the Creation, the Tabernacle, and the Ark in both the *Christian Topography* and the Byzantine Octateuchs also suggest the existence of early literary sources as well as early visual models that might have been created to accompany the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the biblical text.

The Octateuchs and Other Byzantine Artistic Expressions of Creation

The interest in the Octateuchs inspired the production of six illustrated manuscripts, each of which has hundreds of images. The Octateuchs and

⁶⁴ Van der Horst 1999, 35.

⁶⁵ Chazon 2004, 271–272.

⁶⁶ Fiensy 1985, 219–220.

the included illustrations, dating roughly from 1050 to 1300, reflect the Septuagint biblical text and its exegetical interpretation, with the catenae (chains of excerpts from various named and anonymous commentators) laid out in the margins. The 500 or so miniatures that surround the text make up a distinct cycle of illustrations that embellish the biblical writings and add a visual exegesis.⁶⁷ The iconography of these images expresses the ideas of early Christian thinkers as well as those found in Greek Jewish texts, including the *Antiquities* of Josephus and the writings of Philo, which are quoted or referred to in the catenae.⁶⁸

The four extant copies of the Byzantine Octateuchs are the two Vatican manuscripts (Vat. Gr. 747 and 746, henceforth Octateuch 747 and Octateuch 746); the manuscript in the Serail Library in Istanbul (Cod. 8), henceforth Serail 8; and the manuscript housed in the Evangelical School of Smyrna (Cod. A.1). We find the account of Creation and the shape of the world illustrated in all four of these copies. The opening miniature in the Octateuchs, seen here in Figure 28, presents an image of primordial Creation as described in the biblical verse: “And the Earth was unformed and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the spirit of God hovered upon the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2).⁶⁹ The illustration depicts the Cosmos as three horizontal bands, representing the unformed Earth, the water, and the darkness. Above the three bands, descending from the top of the image, we see an inverted arch with the hand of God shown in a gesture of blessing.⁷⁰

Genesis 1:3, the creation of light on the first day, is portrayed in a miniature in Octateuch 747 (fig. 29).⁷¹ The illustration is divided into two zones, one dark and the other light, with the hand of God coming out of the inverted semicircular arch placed at the upper edge of the image. The white zone on the right represents “day” and the black one on the left “night.”⁷² The hand of God is pointing toward the personification of day, a boy wearing a short robe, holding a lighted torch in his right hand,

⁶⁷ Lowden 1992, 6; idem, 2010, 110, explains that the catenae were added to the margins of the Septuagint text and included commentaries from various sources: Church Fathers such as Origen, Chrysostom, and Theodoret together with anonymous explanations from other Christian authors. The comments relate to such matters as the words, specific sentences, and textual deviations.

⁶⁸ Weitzmann and Bernabo 1999, II, 310.

⁶⁹ Octateuch 746 fol. 19v; Octateuch 747 fol. 14v; Istanbul, Bibl. Serail 8, fol. 26v.

⁷⁰ Lassus 1979, 90.

⁷¹ Octateuch 746, fol. 20v presents a very similar illustration

⁷² According to the verse “And God saw the light that it was good” (Gen. 1:4),

a veil fluttering over his head that twists around his arms. The personification of night within the dark area is a woman in a long garment holding a windblown veil over her head.

The second day of Creation, “And God said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the water, that it may separate between the waters” (Gen 1:6), is visualized in Octateuch 746 (fig. 30).⁷³ The miniature depicts the firmament as a separation between the Heavens in the upper section and the Earth in the lower part. Both the Heavens and the firmament in these illustrations are shaped as vaults or domes, closely reflecting Isaiah’s description: “Who stretched out the Heavens like a curtain, and spread them out as a tent to dwell in” (Isa 40:22).⁷⁴

The biblical narrative of the third day, “Let the waters below the sky be gathered unto one place, and let the dry land appear. And God called the dry land Earth and the gathering of waters He called seas” (Gen 1:9–10), is portrayed in Octateuch 746 (fig. 31). The miniature describes the separation between the upper and the lower worlds, with the upper world being shown on the left as a small upside-down arch.⁷⁵ The illustration highlights the gathering of the waters and the separation of the dry land from the seas by showing a stream of water flowing from under the semi-circle of the Heavens, toward the Earth, which is surrounded by water. It appears as if the artist divided his portrayal of the second day (fig. 30) and moved the inverted arch of the Heavens with its upper waters to the left of the miniature and the domain of the Earth with its lower waters to the right (fig. 31). The stream of the upper waters toward the Earth merges with the waters flowing around the Earth, in accord with the biblical expression, “Let the waters be gathered unto one place” (Gen 1:9). The Earth is shown with floral decoration to mark the second act of the third day: “Let the Earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree bearing fruit after its kind” (Gen 1:11).

The account of Creation continues with the lights created on the fourth day: “And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night’ (Gen 1:14). The illustrations in the Octateuchs depict the Earth in the shape of an ellipse (fig. 32). The oceans surround the land, which is rich with trees and foliage. An inverted arch is filled with stars and a disc on either side hangs above the Earth, the red disc on the

⁷³ A similar illustration is seen also in Serail 8, fol. 5r.

⁷⁴ Weitzmann and Bernabo, II, 18.

⁷⁵ Similar illustrations appear also in Serail 8, fol. 29v and in Octateuch 747, fol. 16r.

right representing the sun and the blue one on the left symbolizing the moon. Another miniature of the fourth day is somewhat different (fig. 33). It shows the Earth as a flat round surface near the bottom of a rectangular frame with the two luminaries at the upper edge of the rectangle, a beaming sun on the left and the moon on the right.⁷⁶

Unlike the *Christian Topography*, in the Octateuchs the fifth and sixth days are also portrayed visually. On the fifth day, “God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures and birds that fly above the Earth across the expanse of the sky’ (Gen.1:20). In the Octateuch miniatures,⁷⁷ the Earth is shown in two shapes. In Octateuch 747 it is drawn as a hemisphere that extends beyond the square frame of the illustration. Stars adorn the domain of the Heavens and there is a luminary on either side. In the Serail Octateuch the Earth is portrayed as a rectangular surface divided into two sections, the lower showing the sea with its creatures and the upper displaying birds in and hovering above the trees (fig. 34). Another miniature in this manuscript visualizes the beginning of the sixth day of Creation: “God said, let the Earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind” (Gen 1:24). The illustration shows neither the Heavens nor the firmament, but only the Earth and its creatures (fig. 35). A rectangular image of the dry land is surrounded by a blue ocean populated with fish, with four medallions, one in the center of each side, representing the four winds in the form of busts of naked women blowing long horns. The rectangle is green and populated with very clear and precisely drawn animals, including a fox, a lamb, a cow, an elephant, a bear, and a lion.

Although the Octateuchs and the *Christian Topography* both depict the biblical account of Creation, their approaches differ. The complexity of interpreting Creation is underscored by the sheer volume of exegetical material for each of the verses in Genesis 1. There are many explications regarding the mystery of “In the beginning God created” (Gen 1:1) and such biblical descriptions as “the spirit of God hovering over the water” (Gen 1:2), the perception of the firmament separating the upper and the lower waters, and the heavenly luminaries and their functions. The *Christian*

⁷⁶ Wolska-Conus 1990, 155–191, esp. 164, n. 17, takes exception to the notion that the description of the world in this miniature (fig. 33) is an expression of the cosmological approach of Philoponus, against whom Constantine wrote his essay, insisting that there is no basis for this opinion.

⁷⁷ In Octateuch 747 fol. 17r and in Serail 8 fol. 32r.

Topography's unique hypothesis deals with these ambiguities.⁷⁸ Constantine's cosmological theory was an attempt to give Christians adequate responses to Greek and Roman ideas concerning the Cosmos and its creation and to relate to the various ideas expressed within the Christian community itself.⁷⁹

Constantine was determined to counter the Greek science of his time with new models in cosmology and to create a divine plan consisting of two stages: earthly and heavenly life.⁸⁰ His allegorical treatment of the biblical text depicts the Heavens as an arch placed over a rectangular structure thus creating a figural model of a universe with a dome. His conception was fostered by early biblical exegesis that visualized the Heavens as a semicircle resting on two vertical poles placed on either side of the Earth. In the illustration in the *Christian Topography* the horizontal band separating the vaulted Heavens and the rectangular pattern of the Earth marks the firmament and separates the lower world from the upper one (fig. 20). This model, which links the Heavens and the Earth as one Cosmos, is not found among the Octateuchs' illustrations of the universe. To portray the world in its initial stage schematically, Constantine did not connect the semicircular outline of the upper sphere of the Heavens to the earthly domain (fig. 28). The hand of God, portrayed in a gesture of blessing, points toward the earthly realm, but remains remote in the completely separate image of the heavenly sphere.

In both the *Christian Topography* and the Octateuchs, the separation "between the waters that are underneath the firmament and the waters which are above the firmament" (Gen 1:7) is understood to be the division between the earthly and the heavenly domains. In the former the firmament appears as one or several flat horizontal strips separating the rectangular-shaped Earth from the semicircled domed Heavens (figs. 1, 20). In the latter the firmament is depicted as an arched band above an undefined mountainous Earth, showing, for example, in Octateuch 747, rain clouds in the space above the arched firmament.⁸¹ These clouds

⁷⁸ McCrindle 7–22; Wolska-Conus 1962, 137–144; Hahn 1979, 39.

⁷⁹ Dilke 1987, 261, notes that "the Christian Cassiodorus (ca. 487–583) advised young monks to learn geography and cosmography through Dionysius's map and Ptolemy's *Geography*. In Alexandria another Christian, Johannes Philoponus (ca. 490–570), commented on Aristotle's works and taught that the earth was spherical and lay in the center of the celestial sphere."

⁸⁰ Champion 2006, 383.

⁸¹ Octateuch 747, fol. 15v.

represent the upper waters referred to on the second day and highlight the importance of rain in ensuring the survival of the universe.

Further, in the separation of light from darkness the *Christian Topography* stresses the division by using stark whites and blacks. The Octateuchs, on the other hand, in keeping with the verse “And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night,” added personifications of Day and Night. Moreover, unlike the illustration in the *Christian Topography*, the earthly world in the Octateuchs is circular and in, for example, Octateuch 747, the heavenly lights appear as discs attached to the inverted rainbow of the Heavens and not as bodies that encircle the cone of the Earth (fig. 33).

However, along with these differences, there are also significant similarities. The two works share a schematic cartogram of a rectangular Earth framed on all four sides by a continuous sea and decorated by personifications of the four winds in a surrounding ocean frame. This map appears in the *Christian Topography* in Vatican 699 and Sinai 1186 (figs. 19, 26), and there is a similar map in the Serail Octateuch (fig. 35). These all show a cartographic imaging of the Earth known to late antique, Roman, and early Christian authors.⁸² The *Christian Topography*'s version depicts the domain of the “dry land called Earth” the “gathering of water called seas,” and the numerous inlets of water jutting into the dry land. In Vatican 699 and Sinai 1186 (fig. 26), the map extends beyond the ocean to the right of the illustration, showing a space with trees and bushes that represents the Garden of Eden in the East. This addition of the Garden of Eden does not appear in the other two map-like images we see in Figures 19 and 35.

The map of the Earth used in the *Christian Topography*, as well as by other Christian artists, shows a flat Earth with, as I noted above, the inhabited world drawn as a rectangle surrounded by an ocean with a rectangular frame. The map reflects a strange mixture of Classical and Hellenistic knowledge, which Constantine attributed to the historian Ephorus (ca. 405–330 BCE) and may in fact be an adaptation of Ephorus's work.⁸³ Constantine and other Christians utilized it to teach new ideas and new ways of interpreting the *Hexaemeron*—the six days of Creation.⁸⁴ The cartography images the Earth, the seas, and numerous inlets of water forming

⁸² Maguire 1987, 21; Dilke 1987, 262–263.

⁸³ Dilke 262.

⁸⁴ Maguire 2007, 1–2.

bays within the dry land. In Vatican 699 we can see four large gulfs opening into the inhabited land and an additional band beyond the surrounding ocean, where the earthly Paradise is to be found. This Garden of Eden in the East is recognizable by its trees and by the four rivers that cross it. A similar area filled with trees and bushes is also shown on the map in Sinai 1186 (fig. 26), but the Garden of Eden is not included in the illustration in the Serail Octateuch (fig. 35). In the Serail miniature the Earth is represented as a rectangle with a very schematized sea in its center.⁸⁵

Constantine related to the exegetical aspect of the earthly map and noted that after the second day when the Cosmos was divided into two, the Bible seems to be concerned solely with the earthly world.⁸⁶ From the third day on, the account only relates to the physical entities of the dry land and the seas, the vegetation and the trees, the luminaries that “give light upon the Earth,” the birds and the sea creatures, the animals, and, ultimately, man. Although he recognized the significance of these earthly acts of Creation, their beauty and importance, Constantine dwelled rather on the symbolic and spiritual meaning of the parallelism between the pattern of Creation and the pattern of the Tabernacle. In his visual schematic model he alluded to the strong link between the firmament that separated the created world into the upper and the lower realms and the curtain, *parochet*, that separated the Holy in the Tabernacle from the Holy of Holies.

Reviewing the illustrations that describe the earthly domain in the Octateuchs and in the *Christian Topography*, we can add to our observations concerning the relationship between these two works by showing how the images are of two kinds: The Octateuchs emphasize the narrative aspect of the biblical text, viewing it sequentially verse by verse, whereas the *Christian Topography* treats the biblical text thematically, its purpose being to verify its cosmological and theological theory of Creation through an allegorical exegesis of a corpus of biblical verses taken from different books of the Bible.

To understand the iconographic exegeses of the two groups of miniatures, we have to refer to the text of the *Christian Topography* and to the *Hexaemeron* literature, which was known and accepted in the early centuries of Christianity. These two sources echo the significance attributed to the story of Creation and the various interpretations of the biblical text.

⁸⁵ Weitzmann and Barnabo 1999, II, 22.

⁸⁶ McCrindle 97.

In *Earth and Ocean*, Henry Maguire summarizes the literal and allegorical interpretation of the Creation story in the Bible.⁸⁷ He cites Origen, who understood the story as a complex chain of allegories, whereas the fourth-century Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis, Cyprus, insisted on its literality. Epiphanius wrote:

In the beginning God made heaven and earth, which are not to be taken allegorically, but can actually be seen. And Scripture says [that he made] the firmament, and the sea, plants, trees, pasture, grass animals, fish, birds and all the rest which, as we can see, in actual truth came into being.⁸⁸

Thus Epiphanius rejected the allegorical interpretation and considered the firmament as the actual boundary separating the lower waters, the seas and the rivers, from the upper waters, contending that the waters above the firmament must have existed to enable the Flood.⁸⁹

Ephrem the Syrian was also opposed to allegorizing the Creation story: “Let no man then suppose that there are allegories on the work of the six days.”⁹⁰ A similar approach is found in the writings of the Greek Church Father Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–after 394), who viewed figurative allegory as a distortion of the word from “its own sense.”⁹¹ To illustrate the literal approach to Creation, Maguire refers to the sermon that Gregory delivered in Constantinople in 380, in which he described Creation as a song of praise to nature and to the world that reveals God’s greatness.⁹² Gregory compared the created world to a well-made and well-tuned lute, *kithara*, and noted that a person who listens to the melody of this instrument thinks about the artisan who crafted it and at the same time is inspired by the musician who plays it. One who contemplates the grandeur of Creation delights in all the beauty of Creation and through it understands the greatness of God.⁹³ Gregory, who truly delighted in describing nature, started with living things and discussed the acts of Creation in reverse

⁸⁷ Maguire 1987, 19–24.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 17, n. 1.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 8, n. 6; Epiphanius contradicts Origen’s allegorical method.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18, n. 7.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 18, n. 8.

⁹² *Ibid.*, n. 9.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 18, 19. St. Gregory of Nazianzus explained the act of Creation in a literary fashion that related to each element in Creation, beginning with the animals and ending with the inanimate. He discussed the forces of nature, which he contended show the glory of Creation. In his sermon he asked a rhetorical question: “Are the mountains not the splendid sign of the grandeur of Creation?” In this context it is interesting to relate to the cone-shaped mountain that represents the Earth in the miniatures of the *Christian Topography* as well as in several Octateuch miniatures (see figs. 22–25).

order: from living things he moved to the inanimate world, to the landscapes of the mountains, “the most visible sign of the grandeur of God.” The coned-shaped mountain symbolizing the Earth in many miniatures of the *Christian Topography* as well as in the Octateuchs’ maps of the Earth might well be a visual expression of this phrasing (figs. 22–25).

Maguire marvels at the skill with which sixth-century Byzantine artisans conveyed the literal sense of the biblical account of Creation and portrayed so much in a limited area. He suggests that to accommodate the variety of objects the artisans had to resort to two different approaches. In one, they arranged the relevant elements of Creation cartographically so as to define the entire earthly domain by showing the map of the Earth and the ocean around it. In the second, they divided the motifs into separate categories such as sea creatures, birds, and terrestrial animals that corresponded to the different stages of Creation.⁹⁴

Maguire uses the floor mosaic of the transept in the Church of Dometios in Nikopolis, which dates to that period, to illustrate these sixth-century artistic cosmological concepts.⁹⁵ The mosaic visualizes the Earth filled with trees, flowers and birds; a band of blue that surrounds the floor depicts the ocean, which is filled with water creatures and plants. The Greek inscription reads:

Here you see the famous and boundless ocean
Containing in its midst the Earth
Bearing round about in the skillful images of art everything
that breathes and creeps...⁹⁶

Ernst Kitzinger, relating to the same mosaic, suggests that the floor reflects the period’s cosmological concepts as found in the *Christian Topography* and that there is a strong similarity between the mosaic map of the world and the map in the Sinai 1186 copy (fig. 26).⁹⁷ The mosaic map does not include the image of the “Earth beyond the ocean” that we find in the *Christian Topography*, but we can see the conventions for portrayal of the earthly Paradise in both maps. Fruit trees are used for depictions of the Earth or Paradise and similar motifs can also be found in the Church of SS. Cosmas and Damian, erected in 533 in Gerasa, Jordan (fig. 36).⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 21–24 (Nikopolis, Basilica of Dumetrios, north transept, pavement, figs. 10–12).

⁹⁶ Ibid., n. 29, text and translation in Kitzinger 1951, 100.

⁹⁷ Kitzinger 209–223.

⁹⁸ Piccirillo 1993.

The rectangular mosaic floor of the Church of SS. Cosmas and Damian is divided into thirteen rows, each with three or four connected diagonal squares.⁹⁹ Different species of birds alternating with animals, including a camel, a sheep, a leopard, a lion, and even an elephant are drawn in the squares (figs. 37, 38). Water creatures frame the mosaic pavement. An inscription that appears near the altar of the church includes a decoration of a three-branched vine replete with grapes. According to Maguire:¹⁰⁰

The whole floor appears to be analogous to the *Hexaemeron* sermons of Basil the Great which describe many parts of Creation according to their literal sense but also emphasize the vine as an allegory of Christ . . . It is possible to read the majority of the animals simply as signs that stand for the variety of God's Creation on Earth, but the vine imposes itself as a symbol that refers to such concepts as the True Vine, the Lord's Vineyard.

In light of the foregoing, it is clear that the examples discussed so far, in mosaic floors, particularly the one in Nikopolis, and the miniatures in the Octateuchs and the *Christian Topography* all point to a specific fifth/sixth-century visual model of a world map that portrays a particular literal understanding of the Bible. The unique contribution of Constantine was his reliance on an allegorical exegesis originally expounded by Hellenistic Jewish authors who wanted to link the model of Creation to the model of the Tabernacle and its vessels. Constantine expressed this notion in the following text:¹⁰¹

For since God from the very beginning has knowledge and fore-knowing and is always cognizant, and never receives any accession to His knowledge and whereas He wished to give to others a share in existence, and to fill them with his own goodness and knowledge and wisdom, He made the whole world, comprising it within the compass of heaven and earth but placing the firmament in the midst and binding it to the first heaven; and when He had made the one place into two places, He allotted to the mortal and mutable state, this place, while He prepared beforehand the upper place for future state, according as the delineation of its figure at the end of my work shows, as well as the structure of the Tabernacle, which was itself an image of the whole world.

With these words, Constantine expressed his cosmological theory of the "two phases" of the universe and of the Godly "fore-knowing" wisdom by referring to his own drawings, "the delineation of its figure at the end of

⁹⁹ Maguire 1987, 34–36.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁰¹ McCrindle 292.

my work." Figure 1 from Vatican 699 and Figure 20 from Sinai 1186 provided readers with miniatures that illustrated his ideas and offered visual guidance for understanding the parallelism between Creation and the Tabernacle as described in the Bible and interpreted allegorically in Constantine's writings.

Both, the Tabernacle and Creation reflect the divine plan for the Cosmos that was hinted at in the Old Testament account and exegesis and later brought to fruition in the New Testament.¹⁰² The illustrations of the *Christian Topography* present two different schematic models to visualize this idea. The first shows the Tabernacle as a horizontal rectangle lying flat on the ground and viewed from above, as if from the Heavens (figs. 39, 40) and depicts the Cosmos in a very similar way, as a bird's-eye view of a cartographic map (fig. 26). The other model illustrates the Tabernacle and the universe in en-face, frontal representations as vertical oblong structures topped by domes (figs. 1, 20, 19). Both models are based on the Old Testament descriptions of Creation and the making of the Tabernacle and their division into two parts.

As I noted above, many of the parallel words and expressions found in Old Testament phraseology to describe Creation and the making of the Tabernacle are expressed visually in Jewish art. The mosaic floors in six synagogues (dating from the fourth to the sixth century) found in the Land of Israel reflect a midrashic, emblematic, and allegorical understanding of the subject, whereas the frontispiece of the Sarajevo Haggadah, a fourteenth-century illuminated Jewish manuscript, has a more narrative style that is based on a particular hermeneutical approach.

The upper band in the mosaic floors of these ancient synagogues in the Land of Israel includes symbols associated with the Tabernacle/Temple, and these were placed directly above a central panel portraying the zodiac. This particular arrangement, which does not appear in either of the schematic models used in the *Christian Topography*, is considered to be a third type of emblematic map dating from the Byzantine period. The elements in this mosaic map include the signs of the zodiac arrayed in a circle around the chariot of the sun-god (a Greco-Roman concept). These signs were known from the time of the Roman Empire. A personification of one of the four seasons of the year appears in each corner of the square that frames the zodiac circle.¹⁰³ Finding such a pattern in

¹⁰² Ibid., 146–147.

¹⁰³ Dilke 1987, 266.

the synagogues of Hammat Tiberias, Sepphoris, Beit Alpha, Huseifa, Na'aran, and Horvat Susiya suggests efforts to connect the Temple with the Creation and to emphasize the memory of the Temple, which is also found in such literary sources as apocryphal texts, Heikhalot and Merkavah writings, the works of Philo, Rabbinic literature, *piyyutim*, and liturgy.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Hachlili 2002, 219–258; Foerster 1985, 380–391.

CHAPTER FOUR

CREATION AS INTERPRETED IN JEWISH ART

Visual Models of Creation in Ancient Synagogues

The mosaic floors of ancient synagogues found in Israel have been written about extensively, and much new material has been added since 1993, when Zeev Weiss discovered and began excavating the synagogue in Sephoris. Weiss described and discussed the mosaics in depth, offering a comprehensive study of the various motifs and comparing them to those found in the other synagogues that feature the same design as well as to similar models in Roman and Christian art.¹

All six of the ancient synagogues, of which the fourth-century structure in Hammat Tiberias is the earliest,² have mosaic floors made up of two or more panels. One of the panels is devoted to the Tabernacle and its implements (figs. 41, 48). It includes the Ark flanked by menorahs, shofars (rams' horns), incense shovels, and the four species (palm branch, *lulav*; the citron, *etrog*; the myrtle, *hadass*; and the willow branches, *aravah*) (Lev. 23:40). The second panel, which is in the shape of a square, shows the zodiac wheel generally with Helios (the sun-god) at its center and the four seasons, one in each corner (figs. 42, 45, 49). Several of the six synagogues have a third panel that depicts a biblical scene such as the Binding of Isaac (fig. 50).

The Hammat Tiberias synagogue was named for two adjacent cities, both of which are mentioned in first- and second-century sources.³ Hammat was the home of one of the priestly divisions, *mishmarot*.⁴ Tiberias

¹ Weiss 2005, 55–169, 225–245.

² The synagogue was uncovered by M. Dotan between 1961 and 1963.

³ BT *Meg* 2b “Said R. Yirmiah, and others say R. Hiya b. Abba, “Like the distance from Hammat to Tiberias is a mil, So say ‘mil,’ which comes to teach us that the length of a mil is [the distance from] Hammat to Tiberias.” T *Eruv* 5:2: “Originally the people of Tiberias would go to Hammat, but the people from Hammat would only go to the site of the [now ruined] *kippa* (arch-dome). Now, the people of Tiberias and the people of Hammat have become one city.”

⁴ *Mishmarot*, derived from the Hebrew word “to guard,” and *ma’amadot*, (see Chapter 1) derived from the Hebrew word “posts,” where the priestly and levitical groups organized to serve in the Temple in rotation.

was the more important city,⁵ but it had a cemetery and the rules of priestly purity forbade priests from coming into contact with the dead, so this group lived in Hammat.⁶ The synagogue of Hammat Tiberias was built in four stages. Work began in the third century, but the mosaic floor, which is Greco-Roman in style, dates to the fourth century.

The uppermost of the three panels on the floor of the Hammat Tiberias synagogue shows the Temple and its vessels (fig. 41). Dothan describes the Temple/Ark image as “an *oikos* type of shrine consisting of two slender columns surmounted by a triangular pediment or gabled roof.”⁷ The structure has three schematically drawn steps that lead up to a pair of closed doors. A white curtain, which hangs over the doors with its edges rolled inward and tied in a knot, transforms the image of the Temple into the Ark that houses the Torah scrolls, thus revealing its centrality to Jewish worship in the House of God, even after the Temple’s destruction. The other implements—the menorahs, the *lulav*, and the *etrog*—flanking the Temple/Ark image convey the same idea. The two seven-branched menorahs are positioned on either side of the Ark, with the flame from each of their candles turned inward toward the central branch. The middle panel depicts the zodiac wheel made up of circles and squares. In the center we see Helios, dressed as Caesar, driving his four-horse chariot (fig. 42). A halo of sunrays encircles his head; one hand is raised in blessing and the other holds a globe. Around him, in the inner circle, we see a wheel divided into twelve parts with the twelve signs of the zodiac running counterclockwise. In each of the four corners of the panel is a bust of a woman with the sign of a season, carrying fruits and tools in her hands.

This iconography is also seen in the fifth-century Sepphoris synagogue. Sepphoris was one of the most important cities in the Land of Israel during the time of the Mishnah and the Talmud. It was known particularly for the prominent personalities who lived and worked there, of whom the most famous was Rabbi Judah the Prince, who codified the Mishnah. It remained a principal city in the Galilee until the end of the Byzantine period. When Christianity came to Sepphoris in the fourth century, the pagan temples were destroyed or converted into churches and the

⁵ The Sanhedrin, the assembly of seventy-one ordained scholars who made up both the supreme court and the legislature, moved to Tiberias at the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century, turning the city into an important spiritual center for Jews in both the Land of Israel and the Diaspora.

⁶ Dothan 1993, 573–577.

⁷ Idem, 1983, 34.

struggle against idolatry as well as against the Jews was extremely bitter, but the Jews of Sepphoris continued to live in their own way and built synagogues.⁸ Current archaeological evidence indicates that the construction of Christian churches in Sepphoris dated only to the end of fifth and the beginning of sixth centuries but the Judaeo-Christian controversy intensified all through that period. According to Weiss, the special motifs on the mosaic floor of the synagogue seem to express the Jewish polemical reply to the Christian “claim of ownership over Jerusalem and the Temple Mount re-appropriating the Jewish rightful inheritance at a time when the ‘others’ exploited it for their own purposes.”⁹

The mosaic floor in the Sepphoris synagogue is divided into seven registers, each with two or three separate panels. Most of the panels have been damaged, but we can still identify many of the subjects (fig. 43). The panel of the Temple vessels shows an architectural façade with two decorated doors and three pillars that support a Syrian pediment on either side. Under the façade we see a single incense shovel holding several reddish stones, which suggest burning coals. The panel shows also two menorahs standing on three-legged bases with the four species bound together in a vase at one side of each menorah and a shofar on the other side (fig. 44).¹⁰

The zodiac panel has a circle inside a square with Helios’s chariot drawn by four horses in the center of the wheel surrounded by a dedicatory inscription (fig. 45). There is no image of Helios himself, but the sun and its rays are seen in his place. The segment for each of the twelve signs of the zodiac includes the sign itself, the figure of a young man, and the names of the sign and of the associated month written in Hebrew. Busts of female personifications of the seasons appear in the corners, each with objects that symbolize the agricultural events of that season and a Hebrew inscription that names the season.

As seen in the overview of the entire floor (fig. 43), one of the lower adjoining panels shows the servants waiting behind while Abraham and Isaac go up to the mountain (Gen. 22). The two young men are seen with a donkey against the background of Mount Moriah¹¹ next to the second panel that depicts the Binding of Isaac. The other panels include, in the upper area, a wreath between two lions holding partially preserved bulls’

⁸ Zuk 1995, 11.

⁹ Weiss 2005, 250.

¹⁰ Weiss and Netzer 1996, 14–15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

heads in their claws. In the central section, under the Temple band, is an image of the altar for burnt offerings next to remnants of Aaron's cloak. (A bell at the bottom of the cloak is reminiscent of the golden bells that announced the approach of the High Priest.) To the left of the altar is a bull (perhaps a sacrifice that was offered during Aaron's consecration in the Sanctuary). There are two sheep—one above and one below the bull—and a quotation from Numbers that deals with the daily sacrifices (fig. 46). To the right of the altar we see a jug representing the water basin. An additional panel below the image of the altar has the showbread table, a basket of first fruits, trumpets, the oil, and the flour. In the lower register beneath the Binding of Isaac we can just make out the remains of a depiction of the angels' visit to Abraham and Sarah.

The mosaic floor in the sixth-century Beit Alpha synagogue, which is near the city of Beit Shean, is intact (fig. 47).¹² Two artists, a father and son, whose names are inscribed in the mosaic, apparently worked in the whole area as their names also appear in the mosaic floor in a synagogue in Beit Shean. The Beit Alpha synagogue is unique in that it has a dedicatory inscription to Justin on its narthex mosaic, which dates it to the sixth century CE.¹³ The mosaic floor is divided into three panels. The uppermost panel depicts the Tabernacle and its implements seen through an open curtain tied on both sides (fig. 48). The architectonic structured Ark with a gabled top has an eternal light within it. Two heraldic birds are standing on two hornlike protrusions; there are menorahs on either side of the Ark along with the traditional ritual objects (shofar, *lulav*, *etrog*, and incense shovel), and two lions, one on either side, are standing guard. An additional motif found here depicts Aaron's rod, one configuration of the rod on each side of the mosaic image: the one on the right is flowering and has a bird perched on top of it, whereas the one on the left is wilting and bird-less.

The panel beneath the Tabernacle symbols portrays the zodiac within two concentric circles (fig. 49). The twelve signs are in an outer circle surrounding Helios in an inner circle, with the names in Hebrew inscribed next to the signs. Helios and his four horses are in the sky with the moon and the stars next to his haloed head. In the four corners of the square

¹² Avigad, 1993, 190–192. The remains of the synagogue and its floor were discovered in 1929 by E. Sukenik and N. Avigad.

¹³ The synagogue, which was built in the period of either Justin I (518–527 CE) or Justin II (567–578), is the only one in Israel that has an inscription with a date, other than the inscription in the synagogue of Navoria, whose date is that of the reconstructed building.

that frames these circles are four jeweled and named personifications of the seasons with various attributes of each, including fruits and birds.

The bottom panel relates to the story of the Binding of Isaac (fig. 50). Here we see the altar with ascending tongues of flame. A haloed Abraham has a long knife in his right hand and is holding the bound Isaac, depicted as a young boy, with his left. The names "Isaac" and "Abraham" are inscribed next to the figures. Above them, in the center of the panel, emerging from a cloud, is an image of a hand seen next to the inscription of the words spoken by the angel of God: "Lay not thy hand upon the lad. . . ." The ram caught in the tree (or bush) is seen standing on two legs, as though hanging, with the inscription "Behold the ram." On the left side of the panel are two young boys and a donkey.

The panel closest to the entrance to the synagogue has an inscription in Aramaic that lists the names of the donors who contributed to the creation of the mosaic, the period when the floor was made, and the names of the artists.

Another mosaic floor was discovered in Huseifa, a Jewish town from the Roman–Byzantine period, with the remains of a synagogue that is still partly concealed under a house so that only half of it has been uncovered.¹⁴ The synagogue, whose estimated date is the middle of the fifth century CE, was built with its rear wall facing east toward Jerusalem.

The Temple panel of Huseifa (only about three-quarters of it has been uncovered) is divided into three squares. The central square has a wreath surrounding the inscription "Peace on Israel." The other two squares show seven-branched menorahs next to a *lulav* (only partially preserved), an *etrog*, a shofar, and an incense shovel. The zodiac panel has been almost totally obliterated, and there are only five fragmentary remains of the twelve zodiac signs. The square framing the circle of the zodiac shows a bust of the personification of autumn wearing a necklace and a gold-white headdress with two pomegranates and a harvesting sickle beside her.

The synagogue in Na'aran, just north of Jericho, is dated to the sixth century. Its central nave is made up of a carpet divided into three bands (fig. 51).¹⁵ The top panel shows the Temple vessels: the Ark flanked by the two menorahs with two cruses (of oil?). An outline of two lions with a man raising his hands in prayer between them is seen on the bottom part

¹⁴ Avi-Yonah 1993, vol. 2, 637–638.

¹⁵ Ibid. vol. 3, 1075–1076.

of the panel with the inscription “Daniel,” obviously an allusion to the biblical story of Daniel in the lion’s den.

The central panel shows the zodiac as a circle surrounded by a square with personifications of the seasons in its four corners. Most of the images have been disfigured or completely obliterated but their names remain (fig. 52). Of the seasons we can discern only the figure representing the month that begins the autumn season, *tishre*, holding a staff and a shofar. In the zodiac’s inner circle we see Helios with his four-horse chariot. The bottom panel shows a vine-scroll-ornamented carpet with geometric shapes filled with assorted fruits, birds, and animals. Interestingly, the mosaic floor in the Na’aran synagogue seems to be very like the pavement in the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian in Gerasa (figs. 36–38),¹⁶ where similar images of assorted fruits, birds, and animals allude to God’s Creation on Earth.

In analyzing the composition of the Na’aran synagogue’s floor it has been noted that it represents a new phase in the design of synagogue mosaic pavements, as it is formed as a single unit rather than in a tripartite arrangement.¹⁷ Although the Na’aran artisans used motifs that are also found in church floor mosaics—such as images of animals within geometric patterns to represent the Garden of Eden or Creation—they combined these with images of the Ark, the menorah, and other Jewish cult objects. Thus, when we find a combination of these motifs we know that the mosaic floor was part of a synagogue rather than a church.

The sixth synagogue in this group is Horvat Susiya, situated on the southeastern slope of a hill to the west of the city Susiya.¹⁸ Two raised platforms, *bimot*, were found here. The remains of a mosaic pavement near the main *bima* clearly shows that the floor of the prayer hall was originally paved in white tesserae, which was replaced at a relatively early stage by a three-panel polychrome mosaic that extended over the length of the hall. There was originally a large circle in the middle panel that was divided into segments, probably for the signs of the zodiac. At some point, the zodiac wheel was replaced by a geometric pattern with a rosette at its center and only a small section of the round border of the circle has survived. An additional panel placed in front of the secondary *bima*, has an Ark in its center flanked by two menorahs and enclosed within a

¹⁶ Maguire 1987, 35.

¹⁷ Sed-Rajna 1997, 134–135.

¹⁸ Yevin 1989, 93–98; Gutman, Yevin, and Netzer 1981, 123–128; Yevin, 1993, vol. 4, 1417–1421.

four-column, gabled façade, with a stag on either side. The northwestern corner of the prayer hall has two small panels with geometric designs.

In each of these six synagogues we have the problematic combination of the zodiac, Helios, and the seasons with the symbols of the Temple and its rituals. Jewish art historians were very troubled by the idea of pagan symbols inside a synagogue. Clearly, the image of Helios with a whip in his left hand and a celestial globe in his right raised in triumph toward the observer, seems to contradict the mishnaic prohibition against any image of an idol that represented a Roman emperor or his insignia.¹⁹

A stylistic analysis of the Hammath Tiberias floor and a comparison with mosaics from Antioch indicate that the former dates from the second half of the fourth century,²⁰ a period of intense Jewish-Christian-pagan controversy. We can gain a better understanding of the confluence of the image of the Temple, a pagan symbol, and calendar motifs by contextualizing them in the Julianic period, but it is difficult to accept the notion that a strictly polemical agenda was the only reason for the appearance of all these motifs in the synagogues.

Many scholars have discussed the issue and various explanations have been offered. Some opine that the presence of the zodiac in a synagogue is an affirmation of the belief that the astrological signs have a bearing on the order of the world.²¹ Others insist that the zodiac wheel is simply a representation of the calendar. The zodiac wheel and Helios have also been viewed as symbols of an alternative, mystical, non-Rabbinic community that demonstrated the superiority of the laws of nature and the cosmic order.²²

The obviously pagan elements in these mosaic floors were thought to be proof that Jews were influenced by their surroundings,²³ but a contending opinion insists that the zodiac wheel does not carry a pagan meaning here, but rather simply points to the significance of the Jewish calendar.²⁴ The latter notion might connect with the decision of Hillel II (360 CE), the leader of Palestinian Jewry, to reveal the secret formula for the intercalation of the lunar and the solar year of the Jewish calendar, called "the secret of the intercalation," *sod ha'ibur*. The decision to relinquish the

¹⁹ M AZ 3:1.

²⁰ Talgam 1988, 123–132; Weiss 2005, 184, n. 262; Levine 2005, 22, Magness 2005, 8–13.

²¹ Sukenik 1930, 51.

²² Goodenough 1953–1968, vol. VIII, 189.

²³ Avigad 1962, 68.

²⁴ Schternberg 1972; 72–75, contends that the mosaic was established in the time of Julian the Apostate.

Sanhedrin's monopolistic control over this knowledge was revolutionary, which would have justified its perpetuation on the synagogue floor with the calendric symbols of the days, months, and seasons, which could now be freely determined.

One scholarly summary of the research into the iconographic sources of the zodiac wheel in Roman art notes that these Jewish mosaics combined two known models in Roman art: the zodiac, which represents the cosmic-astronomic world, and the symbols of the labor typical for each month of the year, and that, together, these models represent the liturgical calendar of the Jewish year.²⁵ Still another theory is that the zodiac motif had a unique pattern in the synagogues and that placing Helios and the zodiac wheel inside a square with the four seasons in its corners under the panel representing the Temple and its implements created a unique design.²⁶ The zodiac and the Jewish images combined reflected, on the one hand, the model of the universe as conceived in the late antique and Byzantine worlds and, on the other, the Jewish understanding of the divine order of the Cosmos.²⁷ The design of the mosaic floors was, in effect, a song of praise to the God of Israel and His laws that rule Creation.

It has been suggested that the zodiac panel in the mosaic floor of these ancient synagogues in addition to representing the calendar and the Jewish notion of time is also a projection of the "dome of Heaven," designed to express the closeness of the divine and human realms as is found in Jewish liturgy, where humans reach upward and the angels reach downward.²⁸

Agreeing with this theory but also accepting the view that the synagogues' mosaic floors have magical, cosmic, or astrological significance gives rise to another idea. Helios and the zodiac wheel are viewed within the context of the contemporaneous scene, which included the rise of Christianity and the mystical beliefs and practices described in Heikhalot literature. Thus, Helios and the zodiac cycle were "part of a mosaic program that represented in two dimensions a three-dimensional view of the Cosmos: Helios in the Dome of Heaven above the earthly Temple (represented by the cultic furniture), sometimes accompanied by scenes of sacrifice or prayer."²⁹ The program of the mosaic floor seems to be in

²⁵ Hachlili 1977, 61–77; eadem, 1996, 120.

²⁶ Forester 1985, 380–391.

²⁷ Idem, 1987, 225–234.

²⁸ Fine 2005, 203–204.

²⁹ Magness 2005, 7.

accord with the decorative schemes of the ancient Christian churches, thus reflecting the Jewish-Christian struggle over the claim to the Temple as part of a broader debate over salvation and redemption.³⁰ The reference here is to a link between the solar calendar portrayed in the synagogues' mosaics and the Chariot-Throne of God, the Merkavah tradition, "that unites time and space in a cyclic cosmic order," with the sun and moon representing the twenty-four hours of the day and night and the zodiac and the four seasons standing for the twelve months of the year.³¹

In light of these various scholarly opinions, we must now reexamine the floor of the Hammat Tiberias synagogue because that might offer a clue as to why Jews borrowed these images to create such a special mosaic composition, which was subsequently copied in other ancient synagogues.

As the synagogue is near Tiberias, adjacent to the hot springs of Hammei Tiberias, known as one of the three places on Earth where the waters of the depths were not closed after the Flood,³² the anxiety about these fountains is understandable. The biblical text in describing the Flood (Gen. Chaps. 7, 8) starts by saying that "*all the fountains* of the great deep burst apart, and the flood gates of the sky broke open,"³³ whereas at the end of the story the text reads that "*the fountains*," not "*all the fountains*," were dammed up.³⁴

Since God's promise to Noah and his sons assured humanity that the universe would never be destroyed again, it seems likely that these active hot springs near the synagogue were among "*all the fountains* of the great deep" that burst in the Flood and were not later dammed up. Having an open fountain, that is, a hot spring, nearby seemed to contradict the promise in Genesis 8:22 of a continued order of Creation as: "While the Earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." It appears that in such close proximity to fountains that did not close, the artisans that designed the mosaic floor wanted to give visual expression to the divine promise.

³⁰ Ibid., 18.

³¹ Ibid., 27.

³² BT *Sanh*: 108a: "Said R. Yochanan, 'Three of those [hot springs] were left, the Gulf of Gaddor, the hot-springs [Hammei] of Tiberias, and the great well of Biram.'"

³³ Gen. 7:11: "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day were *all the fountains* of the great deep broken up, and the windows of Heaven were opened."

³⁴ Gen. 8:2: "The fountains also of the deep and the windows of Heaven were stopped, and the rain from Heaven was restrained."

The Rabbis interpreted this biblical text in a way that matched the images in the zodiac mosaic floor, which, as I noted above, made its first appearance in Hammat Tiberias. In their midrashic perception, the Sages enumerated the months of the year in groups of three, according to the seasons mentioned in the biblical verse.³⁵ The mosaic floor relates to all of the elements mentioned in the midrash. It has night and day, the months, and the seasons of the year. The luminaries—the sun, the moon, and the stars—drive the orderly processes of nature. The symbolic images of the months and the seasons together with the Temple and its implements constitute a visualization of the promise of the eternal existence of these forces of Creation, especially in the very spot where the hot springs continued to flow from the depths of the Earth even after the Flood.

The mosaic floor seems to reflect both praise of God's Creation and a plea for the continuation of the cosmic order of the regular seasons, notions that are also found in early liturgical hymns of thanksgiving.³⁶ As early as in the daily prayers recorded in the Dead Sea Scrolls, we find the idea that both the people and the angels should bless the luminaries, the dawn, the sunset, and the orderliness of the totality of Creation every day.³⁷

³⁵ *Midrash Rabbah* 1983, 276: "While the earth remaineth . . .," "R. Huna in the name of R. Acha, 'What do the children of Noah think: that the Covenant made with them will endure to all eternity? [No, for] thus said I to them 'While the earth remaineth . . .' but as long as day and night endure, their covenant will endure." 277 [. . .] R. Shimon b. Gamliel said in R. Meir's name, and R. Dosa too said thus: "[The latter] half of [the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar] *tishre* [the eighth month of the Hebrew calendar], *marheshwan*, and the first half of [the ninth month of the Hebrew calendar] *kislev* are the seedtime; the second half of *kislev* [the tenth month of the Hebrew calendar] *tebeth* and the first half of [the eleventh month of the Hebrew calendar] *shebat* are the winter months; the second half of *shebat* [the twelfth month of the Hebrew calendar] *adar* and half of [the first month of the Hebrew calendar] *nisan* are the cold season; the second half of *nisan* [the second month of the Hebrew calendar] *iyar* and half of [the third month of the Hebrew calendar] *siwan* are harvest time; the second half of *siwan* [the fourth month of the Hebrew calendar] *tammuz*, and the first half of [the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar] *ab* are summer; the second half of *ab* [the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar] *elul* and the first half of *tishri* are the hot season. R. Judah counted [the months] from *marheshwan*. R. Shimon commenced with the beginning of *tishri*. R. Johanan said, "the planets did not function the whole twelve months [of the flood]." Said R. Jonathan to him, "They did function, but their mark was imperceptible." R. Eliezer said, ". . . They shall not cease" implies that "they never ceased." R. Joshua deduced: "They shall not cease"; hence it follows that they had ceased.

³⁶ Eilior 2005, 82.

³⁷ Chazon 1999, 7–17.

To fully understand the iconography of the mosaic floors we have to look at the way early liturgical poetry such as *Chapter of Song* (*Perek Shirah*),³⁸ the *Apostolic Constitutions*,³⁹ the daily prayer “*He Who created the luminaries*” (“*yotser ha'meorot*”), and the poetic benediction (*birkat shir*)⁴⁰ dealt with the same concepts. That is not to say that the artisans (or patrons) of the synagogues who designed these floors transformed the liturgical texts into visual images, but rather to suggest that the desire to comprehend the secrets of Creation and to impart admiration, excitement, praise, and exaltation to the Creator find expression in the visual as well as in the literary arts.

The first and earliest example of poetic works that demonstrate this relationship is *Perek Shirah*, in which all of nature is called upon to praise God. Certain verses in Psalms are keys to understanding both this text and the decorative pattern in these mosaic floors:⁴¹

Hallelujah. Praise ye the Lord from the Heavens, praise ye Him in the heights. . . . Praise ye Him, sun and moon; Praise ye Him all ye stars of light . . . praise the Lord from the Earth, ye sea monsters, and all deeps . . . stormy wind, fulfilling His word. Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle, creeping things and winged fowl. (Ps. 148:1–13)

Perek Shirah is a short anonymous volume of hymnal compilations of praise to the Creator sung by inanimate nature, by the Heavens and its hosts, and the fauna and flora of the Earth. The prayer's midrashic framework and its inclusion of biblical verses confirm its early origins.⁴² For example, the Song of the Trees mentioned in 1 Chronicles 16:33 and in Psalm 96:12, which appears in the third chapter of *Perek Shirah* is also quoted in the apocalyptic vision of God's Throne, *ma'aseh merkavah*, described in both the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmud, which seem to allude to a link between *Perek Shirah* and early mystical apocalyptic literature. In a first-century CE story recounted in both of these Talmudic traditions, R. Johanan b. Zakkai and his student R. Elazar b. Arach are studying

³⁸ Beit-Arie 1967, 72.

³⁹ Van der Horst 1999, 19.

⁴⁰ Davidson 1970, 231–232.

⁴¹ Weiss 1987, 127–228 attempts to explain the many metaphors; Beit-Arie 1967, 72; Foerster, 1987, calls this song an example of the sentiment of praise that the Jews felt about the universe and of the sanctity that they saw in the orderliness of nature and the manner in which they carried out the divine commandments.

⁴² Beit-Arie 1967, vol. 1: 60, 61: More than half of the poems are taken from the Book of Psalms. The remainder from various other books of the Bible, mostly from Isaiah.

ma'aseh merkavah together,⁴³ but there appear to be several different versions of the story.⁴⁴

According to the account in the Palestinian Talmud, when the student wanted to study *ma'aseh merkavah* they sat under a tree and fire came down from the Heavens and surrounded them. Angels jumped out from amid the fire and all the trees began to sing the Song of the Trees: "Then shall the trees of the forest sing [*yeranenu*] for joy before the Lord, for He is come to judge the Earth,"—"az *yeranenu kol atzehi ya'ar*." The text in the Babylonian Talmud does not mention angels, but does talk of a fire coming down from Heaven that "touched all the trees in the field, which burst out singing." What song did they sing? The song was "az *yeranenu kol atzehi ya'ar*." In both versions of the story the cosmic response to man learning the secrets of God's Throne, *ma'aseh merkavah*, and the secrets of the act of Creation, *ma'aseh bere'shit*, is that the trees begin to sing.

In light of this story it is most interesting to find a visual allusion that parallels this understanding in the mosaic floor of the Beit Alpha synagogue. The central panel has the created universe of *ma'aseh bere'shit*; above it the top register has the Temple symbols, which represent *ma'aseh merkavah*; and the band below it shows a row of the trees, which might parallel the trees in the story (fig. 47),⁴⁵ thus giving visual expression to the theosophical midrash that links human life, the cosmic world, and the divine realm.⁴⁶

A second liturgical text in praise of Creation is found in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which some scholars of early liturgy point to as a parallel to *Perek Shirah*.⁴⁷ As I noted above,⁴⁸ chapters from the *Apostolic Constitutions* Book VII were identified as slightly amended Jewish mystical texts that found their way into Church liturgy, a conclusion based primarily on one of the liturgical texts that refers to the act of Creation and the sacred song of the angels ("Holy, Holy, Holy").⁴⁹ The same song is also part of the early Jewish prayer, "He Who Created the Luminaries," *yotser ha'meorot*,

⁴³ BT *Hag* 14b and PT *Hag* 21 (77a).

⁴⁴ Halperin 1988, 13–19, points to the following sources: T *Hag* 21; PT *Hag* 21 (77a); BT *Hag* 14b and a broken text at the beginning of a Genizah fragment of a lost "tannaitic" midrash to Exodus known as the *Mekhilta* of R. Simeon b. Yohai.

⁴⁵ Goldman 1966, 58, 59, sees in the row of palm trees a reference to the ideal reality of Heaven.

⁴⁶ Mottolese 2007, 355–365.

⁴⁷ Heinemann 1977, 231, n. 33 and 240; Goodenough, 1969, 306–310.

⁴⁸ See Chapter 3: The *Apostolic Constitutions*: A Link to a Shared Exegetical Method?

⁴⁹ Van der Horst 1999, 19–46, n. 1.

which dates from before the advent of Christianity and is thought to be the third example of a poetic work in which the created world exalts the Creator. Part of the daily liturgy devoted to the “sanctity of the Creator,” this prayer, which is based on Isaiah 6:3 and Ezekiel 3:12, is said just before the recitation of the prayer “Hear O Israel,” the “*shema*.”⁵⁰ Several scholars have contended that this very early prayer was written in the Land of Israel by the authors of the *Heikhalot* literature in the first centuries CE, who were known as “descenders of [or to] the Chariot,” *yordei ha’merkavah*, and that it was incorporated into the *shema* unit to be recited every morning together with its blessings.⁵¹ The entire section exalts Creation: “He Who makes light and creates darkness . . .” (Isa. 45:7).

A fourth example is the prayer known as *birkat shir*, which is identified in the Mishnah and in the Babylonian Talmud *Tractate Pesachim* as the *piyyut* “The Breath of All Living Things,” “*nishmat kol hai*,”⁵² and tells of the grandeur of Creation in praise of its Creator.⁵³ All of these liturgical hymns reflect a keen awareness of the beauty of the created universe and the wish to exult its Creator for His laws of nature.

Two additional points also allude to the close association between the liturgical *piyyutim* recited in the synagogues and the buildings’ mosaic

⁵⁰ The *shema* is a major prayer in Judaism composed from biblical verses: Deut. 6:4–9, 11, 13–21 and Num. 15, 37–41.

⁵¹ Heinemann 1977, 232–233, and Mirsky 1990, 11–17, find the source for the prayer “He Who creates light” in Psalm 19 that precedes the recitation of the *shema*; *M Ber* 1:4 states: “In the morning service two [blessings are recited] before it [the *shema*] and one [blessing is recited] after it. Before it is the blessings “He Who creates light . . .” and “with an abundant love . . .”; Steinzaltz 1994, 74, explains that the first blessing before the recitation of the *shema* “He Who creates light . . .” includes two ancient *piyyutim*. The *piyyut* “He Who illuminates the Earth . . .” which ends with praise in the order of the Hebrew alphabet focuses on the heavenly hosts that are visible such as the sun, the moon, and the stars. The next *piyyut*, “May You be blessed, our Rock, our King . . .” focuses on the upper heavenly hosts, which are not visible, such as the angels and the seraphim. These two *piyyutim* complement each other in that they speak not only in reference to the blessing of the light that is renewed each day in the Heavens (that is visible and that is not visible), which arouses in the heart of the person praying the yearning to join this heavenly choir of lights and angels in praise of the Creator of the universe.

⁵² Davidson 1970, 231; *M Pes* 10:7: The Mishnah says: [They mixed him] a fourth cup and he concludes the *hallel* and recites over it the “blessing over the song.” *BT Pes* 118a.

⁵³ Kulp and Golinkin 2009, 270, refer to *BT Pes* 118a, where two Amoraim debate the meaning of “the blessing over the song.” R. Johanan explains that the meaning of “*birkat shir*” is the *piyyut nishmat kol hai*, which is recited at the end of the *hallel* prayer in the Haggadah. Both of these songs are sung on other occasions during the year. In Ashkenazi custom *nishmat kol hai* is chanted at the conclusion of the psalms of praise that begins the morning service, *p’sukei d’zimrah*, on Sabbaths and festivals and in early Land of Israel custom, it was recited daily.

floors. First, from the fourth to the sixth century Hebrew was used only for liturgical purposes and for Torah readings. Thus the appearance of Hebrew names of the zodiac signs on the mosaic floors clearly connects the visual arts with the liturgical poetry of the synagogue (fig. 53).⁵⁴ Second, comparing the technique of writing liturgical *piyyutim* with that of making mosaic floors suggests an interesting notion. *Piyyutim* are compositions made up of individual words bearing different literary connotations that together create a meaningful poem that can be understood on different levels. The mosaic floors are made using many small elements, *tesserae* of different colors and sizes, which together create a meaningful composition that can be viewed from various distances and angles. Both employ small individual and very different elements that complement each other to create the total effect of the finished composition.⁵⁵

Before concluding this discussion of the six mosaic floors, I must reiterate that in several of the synagogues there is a panel with the Temple symbols above the zodiac wheel. Maguire's observation that, "often the composition provides a clue that gives a particular emphasis to certain motifs," could apply here.⁵⁶ These mosaics reflect the link between the signs of the zodiac, which symbolize the heavenly dome, the created universe, and the Earth-bound Temple's sacrifices, as noted in the appendix of *Perek Shirah*.⁵⁷ "He who recites this song is regarded as if he had said all of David's psalms. He who extols this *Perek Shirah* daily is seen as if he had brought a sacrifice to the altar. . . ." ⁵⁸

The mosaic floor of Sepphoris clearly reflects this conception. The top panels of the Temple symbols include two additional registers that relate to the consecration of Aaron as the High Priest and to the Tabernacle sacrifices. These motifs and the adjacent inscriptions make it clear

⁵⁴ Yahalom 1986, 311–322; idem 1985, 36.

⁵⁵ Roberts 1989, 21, relates to the mosaics of Antioch, but it is possible to learn from his description about the mosaic in the synagogue. According to his theory, pp. 66–67, the zodiac signs mentioned in the *piyyutim* are, in a sense, the ekphrasis of images that appear in synagogue art.

⁵⁶ Maguire 1987, 82.

⁵⁷ There are additional texts that are said to be tannaic (apparently pseudepigraphical), which apparently were added in an early period. It appears that the small volume of *Perek Shirah* was recited in certain circles as part of the daily prayer and was thought to have magical powers.

⁵⁸ Beit-Arie 1967, 40, ns. 153–162, appendix 2, 108–110; Slifkin 2001, 23, 443–444.

that the artisan (patron) of the synagogue was alluding to the memory of the Temple.⁵⁹

Iconographically, these additional registers above the zodiac wheel were clearly designed to emphasize the links among God, man, and the created universe as seen in *Perek Shirah*, in *piyyutim*, in early prayers,⁶⁰ and in these mosaic pavements. It is thought that the frequent juxtaposition of zodiac and Temple imagery reflects the understanding that the Temple represents the Cosmos, as expressed centuries earlier by Philo and Josephus and is found as well in many other sources.⁶¹ The appearance of similar ideas in many disparate sources suggests that the interpretations of the symbolism of the Tabernacle/Temple and Creation all drew upon a single ancient tradition.

We assume that the comparison between the Tabernacle and the Cosmos was linked not only to Philo's Hellenistic Judaism but also to the Apocrypha,⁶² in particular, to the Book of Jubilees.⁶³ It is interesting to note that ideas found in the apocryphal writings demonstrate the diversity of Judaism in the early centuries and point to the influence of foreign material. As these ideas are also found in early Christian sources, the Rabbis virtually ignored them and they were eventually lost to Judaism.⁶⁴ Later midrashim, such as *Midrash Tadshe* (mentioned in Chapter 2), came out of a Jewish world about which we know next to nothing as it was marginal to the Rabbinic-Pharisaic tradition and closer to 'external' sources that might have been ignored and thus lost to Judaism.

⁵⁹ Fine 2005, 192, contends that the Ark panel of the mosaics was a reflection of the synagogue's Torah shrine and menorahs.

⁶⁰ BT *Ber* 11a.

⁶¹ Klawans 2006, 127.

⁶² Epstein 1957, 130–131.

⁶³ Wintermute 1985, 35–50. The Book of Jubilees is a second-century BCE midrashic commentary on Genesis and on part of Exodus in the form of an apocalypse, containing legends and religious practices. Originally written in Hebrew, it was translated into Greek (in which form it was known to the Church Fathers down to the sixth century) and from Greek into Latin and Ethiopic.

⁶⁴ Charlesworth 1983, xxvi–xxix, writes that the importance of the Apocrypha as an "expansion" of the Old Testament was an impetus for the search for its lost books. For a long time scholars were of the opinion that the Jewish communities of Egypt and Palestine had two canons of the Hebrew Bible, one with the Apocrypha and the other without, which would explain why parts of it are found in Jewish Hellenistic writings. Current thought is that it was the Alexandrian Church Fathers and not the Alexandrian Jews that included the Apocrypha in their Alexandrian canon, so it was ignored in the Jewish exegetical interpretation of the Bible.

*Midrashic Literature and the Symbolic Significance of the
Tabernacle/Creation Parallelism*

For many years the theory that there was an early Hellenistic tradition that both Philo and the Talmudic sages drew upon was not widely accepted in the scholarly community.⁶⁵ However, based on more recent studies most scholars now agree that there was a midrashic tradition that predated Philo.⁶⁶ Research in this area is continuing. Scholars are examining the parallels among midrashic and apocryphal literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, and early Christian works.⁶⁷ One of the new conclusions suggests that all of these various literatures were apparently influenced by a common oral tradition that remained unwritten in antiquity, but that there was no direct link between Philo and the midrashic tradition.⁶⁸ Most modern researchers agree that although the Talmudic sages failed to mention Philo by name, they did relate to his ideas.⁶⁹

We can understand this ambivalent attitude toward Philo when we look at the sixteenth-century evaluation of his work by Azariah de' Rossi, who was responsible for the rediscovery of the forgotten Philo within the Jewish world.⁷⁰ De Rossi, who is regarded as the most influential forerunner of the modern science of Judaism, appreciated Philo's philosophical ability but criticized his ignorance of Hebrew and Aramaic as well as the way he allegorized Scripture. He contended that the Rabbis rejected Philo owing to both the language he wrote in and his method of exegesis. At the same time it is easy to understand Philo's choice of language and his interpretive method. As a Hellenized Jew, Philo chose to write in Greek and to "Platonize his Jewish heritage through the midrashic form of commentary,

⁶⁵ Belkin 1946, 1–20; idem, 1959, 1–33; idem 1960, 1–25; Cohen 1995, 4–7, cites Werblowsky 1959, 25–44, 113–135, Scholem 1965, and others who claimed that the writings of Philo had no direct influence on the midrashim of the Talmudic Rabbis nor on the post-tannaitic Rabbinic literature.

⁶⁶ Cohen 1995, 8–10, 33, making note of Kugel's (1990) conclusions regarding the midrashic tradition of Philo, which also appears later in Rabbinic midrashic literature. The early theory was developed by Belkin and the later one by Borgen 1984, 98–154, and Mack 1984, 227–271.

⁶⁷ Bamberger 1949, 115–123, 122; idem 1977, 153–186, 154; Vermes 1961; idem, 1975, 47–49.

⁶⁸ Cohen 1995, 37.

⁶⁹ Winston 2009, 231.

⁷⁰ An Italian Jewish physician and scholar, who was born in Mantua in 1513 and died in 1578. Known as Azariah min-Ha'adumim (Azaria of the Red family), De' Rossi was proficient in Hebrew, Latin, and Italian and studied literature, medicine, archaeology, history, Greek and Roman antiquities, and Christian ecclesiastical history.

which was the legitimate form through which the truth could be developed." Philo Judaeus thus reconciled his intellectual attraction to Platonic philosophy and his loyalty to his Jewish faith.⁷¹

The ideas projected through the interpretation of the Temple in Philo and his systematic "allegorical method" constituted an important authority for the early Patristic Christian Fathers.⁷² The *Epistle to the Hebrews* is thought to be an example of Hellenistic and Philonic influences on Christian exegesis, in particular on the subject of the Temple.⁷³ The impact of his writings caused some of the Church Fathers to regard Philo of Alexandria as Philo Christianus in the Church tradition, which apparently led to the negative attitude toward Philo Judaeus, who was essentially expelled from the Jewish world.⁷⁴ Philo's enormous influence on the writings of the Church Fathers led to his eviction from the Jewish mainstream, but at the same time brought about a symbiosis between the Christian worldview and Hellenistic conceptuality.

Three principal reasons are given for the Church's acceptance of Philo's writings.⁷⁵ First, Philo's importance as a contemporary of Jesus, as his writings shed light on the trouble within the Jewish community after the Crucifixion. Moreover, he documented important facts concerning the early history of the Jews and demonstrated that the doctrines of Greek philosophy had their origins in Scripture. Second, for many Christians Philo's allegorical interpretation of the Pentateuch was a very valuable repository of Scriptural exegesis. Some Christians adopted his allegorical method without modification. Others, such as those in the School of Antioch, were cognizant of his method but opposed it on the grounds that it lacked Christological awareness. All in all, much of Philo's exegesis was accepted because it offered biblical interpretation with theological and philosophical depth. Third, the early date (second century CE) of the acceptance of Philo's Platonic philosophy and his ideas concerning Creation was thought to be the reason that they became part of the Christian tradition. As Philo was a Jew, after the third century his writings would not have been preserved in the Church because by that time its anti-Jewish and the anti-heretical attitudes had become rampant.

⁷¹ Winston 2009, 236.

⁷² Mottolese 2007, 78–87.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 83–85.

⁷⁴ *Idem*, 2002, 268.

⁷⁵ Runia 2009, 226–230.

It seems, then, that the two reasons for the rejection of Philo's writings by the Rabbis were essentially connected. Both his use of the Greek language and his reliance on the Septuagint made his work accessible and appealing to Christian thinkers and objectionable to the Rabbis, who refused to take any of the Hellenistic Jewish writers, including Josephus, into account.⁷⁶ Yet, in examining the symbolic significance of the Tabernacle/Creation parallelism in later midrashic works—collections such as *Numbers Rabbah*,⁷⁷ *Tanhuma*,⁷⁸ *Exodus Rabbah*,⁷⁹ *Genesis (Bere'shit) Rabbati*,⁸⁰ and *Pesikta Rabbati*⁸¹—we find notions reminiscent of those of Philo and Josephus. What was the nature of these ideas and how did they find their way into these later midrashim?

The scholars who have examined the Greek patterns and ideas that characterize the Philonic approach to the Jewish Scriptures viewed Philo's thesis as an "attempt to re-evaluate the 'literal' basis of the biblical text and

⁷⁶ Winston 2009, 232, n. 3.

⁷⁷ *Numbers Rabbah* is an aggadic midrash in Hebrew to Numbers, called also *Va'Yedaber Rabbah* in medieval literature. It consists of two parts, which are of different origin and extent. The first portion, which elaborates on Numbers 1–8, almost three-quarters of the whole work, contains a late aggadic commentary. The second part elaborates on Numbers 9–36, copying the *Midrash Tanhuma* almost word for word.

⁷⁸ *Midrash Tanhuma Yelammedenu* includes the text edited by S. Buber (Vilna, 1885), who gathered the material from several manuscripts. The collection, consisting of homilies and aggadic interpretations of the weekly Torah portions, is perhaps the oldest compilation of its kind, arranged as a running commentary on the Pentateuch. It is even older than *Genesis Rabbah*, which quotes several of its selections. The *Midrash Tanhuma* was edited in the fifth century, before the completion of the Babylonian Talmud, and thus does not include any references to that work.

⁷⁹ *Exodus (Shemot) Rabbah*, an aggadic midrashic collection of material compiled on the Book of Exodus, mainly in the Land Israel, from the third to tenth century, is largely a record of popular sermons delivered by the Rabbis to comfort, entertain, and instruct the general public. The first scholar known to have been acquainted with the entire work in its present form was Nahmanides, who quoted from it in his commentary on the Pentateuch.

⁸⁰ *Genesis (Bere'shit) Rabbati* is an aggadic midrash on the Book of Genesis usually ascribed to Moshe HaDarshan of Narbonne, published from the only extant manuscript by C. Albeck 1940. S. Buber argued that *Genesis Rabbati* should not be ascribed to Moshe HaDarshan. The unique quality of the work lies in its quotations from the Apocrypha and Pseudoapocrypha. The importance of this midrash lies not only in its quoting of the sources but also in its biblical exegesis and in its exposition of the Ashkenazi *piyyutim*, which came into being about this time.

⁸¹ *Pesikta Rabbati* is a midrash on the festivals. It is a collection of homilies on the Pentateuchal and prophetic lessons, the special Sabbaths, and so on. The word *pesikta* means "section" and this midrash consists of a series of separate sections; it was probably called "*Rabbati*" (the larger) to distinguish it from the earlier *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana*. The work is considered a composite, possibly reflecting several periods of editing. Although the precise date and place of compilation have not yet been fixed with any certainty, modern scholarly opinion tends to view it as a work done in the Land of Israel in the sixth or seventh century.

the ‘experiential’ basis of Jewish law.”⁸² Philo’s aim was to use his exegetical method to reveal the higher, mystical, spiritual meaning of the biblical text and to emphasize the conceptual framework of the universal cosmic, ethical norms and Hellenistic Middle-Platonic ideas that were supported by the Septuagint.⁸³ Thus, Philo’s “hermeneutic pattern opened the way to a translation moving from the letter to the spirit, from the sensible to the supersensible . . . [it] permeates Jewish Alexandrian thought in a way that will re-emerge only in medieval Judaism after the ‘returning’ impact of Greek metaphysics through the mediation of Arab Neo-Platonism.”⁸⁴ This theory might explain the appearance of such motifs in later midrashim, but then we have to ask how midrashic understanding of the Bible developed during the period that produced these later midrashim, which are dated from the eighth to the twelfth century, so that we can account for the integration of such ideas.

The process we have to take into account concerns fundamental changes in Jewish life, namely the gradual move of Jews from East to West and the beginning of Jewish communities in northern and western Europe. There is evidence of the presence of groups of Jews in the German Lands, France, Provence, and northern Spain during the first Christian millennium, but they were few and small in comparison to the communities that eventually developed in those areas. The better-known emerging centers in Western Europe were the Byzantine community in southern Italy and in Islamic Andalusia. In fact, little is known about the community in Provence and it is only from the twelfth century on that we have reliable historical and literary material that gives us a structured picture of Jewish communal and cultural life in that region.

One of the Provençal scholars of the eleventh century about whom we do have some record is Rabbi Moses the Preacher, Moshe HaDarshan, of Narbonne. We have little knowledge of his homilies and unique biblical commentaries dating from the generation just prior to the one that saw the major commentaries of the French and Ashkenazi scholars, such as Rashi (1040–1105), who has had a significant, lasting influence on Jewish thought and culture. R. Moshe HaDarshan’s literary work was apparently

⁸² Mottolèse 2002, 262.

⁸³ Middle-Platonic is the period designated by historians of philosophy as beginning with Antiochus of Ascalon (ca 130–68 BCE) and ending with Plotinus (204–270 CE), who is considered the founder of Neoplatonism. The Middle Platonic philosophers inherited the exegetical and speculative problems of the Old Academy established by Plato and continued by his successors.

⁸⁴ Mottolèse 2002, 264.

known in its time and considered quite important. Rashi, who normally refrained from quoting sources by name, referred to dozens of explanations and exegeses in the name of R. Moshe HaDarshan, and it appears that he very much valued these writings and used them even though he did not agree with the exegetical methodology.⁸⁵ There are very few references to the works of R. Moshe HaDarshan in other medieval commentaries, and where we do find them they are generally quotations from sources that include his words and opinions anonymously.⁸⁶ Some of R. Moshe HaDarshan's texts in anonymous writings are in midrashim such as the *Midrash Rabbah* on Numbers, *Midrash Genesis Rabbati*, and *Midrash Aggadah*, as well as in other works, but he is not mentioned by name. To date, R. Moshe HaDarshan and his literary tradition are very much cloaked in mystery, and many questions about his origins, his family, and his life remain unanswered. Among those who quoted R. Moshe HaDarshan by name, apart from Rashi and Don Isaac Abarvanel (Lisbon, 1437–Venice, 1508), was the Spanish Dominican priest Raymond Martini (Catalonia, 1220–1284), who edited a major polemical text called *Pugio Fidei* (*The Dagger of Faith*), and included dozens of selections from the R. Moshe HaDarshan school, but very little of this Christian text has survived.

Some scholars have concluded that *Genesis Rabbati*, *Midrash Tadshe*, and the first part of *Numbers Rabbah* were all based on R. Moshe HaDarshan's work,⁸⁷ but that in wanting to give *Midrash Tadshe* a more ancient authority, it was ascribed to Rabbi Phineas ben Yair.⁸⁸ We can account for this attribution by noting that using R. ben Yair's name in connection with *Midrash Tadshe* indicated a relationship between this midrash and apocryphal literature in general and the Book of Jubilees in particular. As R. ben Yair was considered a "pious Essene," who was known for his asceticism, and as the author of the Book of Jubilees was also thought to belong to the Essence community, it seemed reasonable to view the ascription of R. ben Yair's name to *Midrash Tadshe* as a sign of an affiliation and close connection to the Essenes.⁸⁹ Whether this theory is valid or not, it stands to reason from the ideas in *Midrash Tadshe* that its author

⁸⁵ Rashi chose an alternative method of interpretation, *Peshat*, which follows the plain and straightforward explanation of the biblical text.

⁸⁶ Mack 2007, 95.

⁸⁷ Albeck 1967, 16–17.

⁸⁸ Pseudepigraphic is a well-known phenomenon in midrashic literature. *Midrash Tadshe* was known during the Middle Ages as the *Baraitha of Rabbi Phineas ben Yair*, and most sections of the midrash are quoted in R. ben Yair's name.

⁸⁹ Epstein 1957, 137, 138; Wintermute 1985, 44, 45.

was familiar with ancient material from an early version of the Book of Jubilees and that he made use of those ideas.⁹⁰

The parallelism between the Creation and the Tabernacle is the most prominent concept in *Midrash Tadshe*, which owes its name to a verse in Genesis (Gen 1:11): “And God said: Let the Earth put forth grass [*tadshe*], herb yielding seed and fruit bearing trees...” *Midrash Tadshe* notes explicitly that the Tabernacle symbolizes Creation and that each of its vessels has cosmic significance. The earliest reference to this midrash is by Rabbi Shemaia HaShoshani,⁹¹ who lived sometime in the period from the mid-eleventh to the mid-twelfth century.⁹² In his midrashic commentary to the pericope *Terumah* in the Book of Exodus, R. HaShoshani noted that the fundamental assumption of *Midrash Tadshe* is that every detail of the Tabernacle’s vessels has a unique emblematic significance. This significance, he wrote, is hidden from the reader but is revealed in work of R. ben Yair’s that is external to the corpus of the Mishnah, a *Baraitha*. This attribution and the similarity between the concepts in R. HaShoshani midrash and those found in *Midrash Tadshe* are indications that eleventh- and twelfth century Ashkenazi scholars were strongly inclined to rely upon ancient secondary literary sources.⁹³

The work known as *Numbers Rabbah* (which is also one of the later midrashim that deals with the Tabernacle and its relationship to Creation) is an extensive collection of homilies derived from various sources, including excerpts from Talmudic literature as well as original works by later authors. The redactor of *Numbers Rabbah* (Part I) wanted to create the impression that it was an ancient midrash, and so used *Midrash Tadshe* as one of its sources.⁹⁴

According to Hananel Mack, it is clear that R. Moshe HaDarshan knew the *Midrash Tadshe*, studied it, and used it as the source for his expositions, thus providing himself with early material from the Book of Jubilees.⁹⁵ All in all it seems that *Midrash Tadshe* was not widely known in the Middle Ages and only scholars who were especially interested in rare midrashim were familiar with it. R. Moshe HaDarshan, R. Shemiaya HaShoshani, and

⁹⁰ Epstein, 135–136.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 141; Bazan 1950, 123–133.

⁹² Grossman 1995, 367–368.

⁹³ Berliner 1949, 195–206.

⁹⁴ Mack 1991, vol. 2, ch. 5; ch. 1, 118–119; ch. 15, 183–184; *idem*, 1996, 78–94; 82, n. 19.

⁹⁵ *Idem*, 2010, 125–126.

the editor of *Numbers Rabbah*, all from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, knew of this midrash and referred to it in their writings.

If indeed *Midrash Tadshe* (or what is more likely, just certain parts of it) should prove to be of genuine early Rabbinic provenance then the symbolism of the Temple as the Cosmos it reflects demonstrates the influence of Josephus and Philo and their ideas concerning early Rabbinic interpretation.⁹⁶ If, on the other hand, *Midrash Tadshe* is proved to be entirely medieval in origin, it would point to a medieval Jewish knowledge of specific textual traditions that can be traced back to Philo and Jubilees.⁹⁷

In the introduction to the Book of Josippon, a brief Israelite history from the time of the Return to Zion from the Babylonian exile, apparently written in Italy in the tenth century,⁹⁸ we read that later midrashim contain much material derived from ancient works.⁹⁹ From the tenth through the twelfth century, there was an upsurge of interest in the vast Jewish literature from the Second Temple Period. Religious literature was transmitted from Syria and the Eastern-Byzantine regions to southern Italy and eventually came to the attention of Ashkenazi scholars:

Aggadic material that was based on Hebraic sources from the Apocrypha and from the pseudepigrapha writings was known among Jewish scholars in the Eastern-Byzantine regions through oral or written sources. It was known also among the various sects of the Christian society that continued to develop this material freely using their religious imagination. This Hebraic material was valued by the Jews living in Byzantine southern Italy as their heritage and they apparently carried it with them to the north and then to Germany as part of their special oral and written treasures. Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan was one of the first—if not the very first—one that composed this Rabbinical material into a midrashic treatise integrating into it some of the legendary material that he had from an unpublished and unedited tradition.¹⁰⁰

In light of this hypothesis it is most interesting to compare some of the midrashim that are associated with R. Moshe HaDarshan with the concepts in the *Christian Topography*, especially regarding the parallel-

⁹⁶ Klawans 2006, 126–127.

⁹⁷ Albeck 1967, 18, n. 1; Himmelfarb 1984, 55–78.

⁹⁸ The Book of Josippon, erroneously thought to be a Latin version of Josephus' *Wars of the Jews*, was very popular during the early Middle Ages. The named author is Joseph Ben-Gorion, and according to Flusser, this book gave the Jews of that period access to the ancient hidden Jewish apocryphal literature.

⁹⁹ Flusser 1978, Introduction, 148–149.

¹⁰⁰ Ta-Shma 2005, 200.

ism between the Tabernacle and Creation.¹⁰¹ A close look at these texts indicates a similar approach to cosmological ideas and the support found in matching biblical verses (see Addendum—Table 6).

The very close textual parallels between these citations raises the question of whether R. Moshe HaDarshan used a source noted in the Addendum (which he as well as the author of the *Christian Topography* may have known about) or whether he relied on early medieval Jewish liturgical poetry (for instance, a seventh-century *piyyut* written in the Land of Israel and attributed to Eliezer HaKallir).¹⁰² Mack points out that he was a great admirer of Eliezer HaKallir's poetry and one of the first interpreters of his *piyyutim* in Europe. Only three of his interpretations have survived.¹⁰³

The references to Second Temple pseudepigraphical texts such as the Book of Jubilees, Enoch, and the Testimony of the Patriarchs in his midrashim are thought to indicate a specific cultural path that developed in the Land of Israel and moved first to southern Italy and from there to northern Italy and then to Ashkenaz.¹⁰⁴ The Hebrew translations of this pseudepigraphical material, which was preserved in Greek and kept exclusively in the Eastern Church, could only have been done by Byzantine scholars whose work must have reached R. Moshe HaDarshan through some Greek channel. The question as to how all these epigraphic sources came into R. Moshe HaDarshan's hands at this particular time can be answered by pointing to his particular period (the first half of the eleventh century) and place (Narbonne–Toulouse). It was during this period that a dualist heresy was revived in Byzantium¹⁰⁵ and spread throughout the European provinces of the Byzantine Empire, reached Western Europe, especially France and Italy, and particularly the area of Provence, where it became known as the Cathar heresy.¹⁰⁶ The fact that such new and heretical ideas traveled from Byzantium to Western Europe at that

¹⁰¹ Laderman 2001, 213–226.

¹⁰² Mintz-Manor 2002, 265–267.

¹⁰³ Mack 2010, 123.

¹⁰⁴ Himmelfarb 1984, 55–78; Stone 1996, 20–36.

¹⁰⁵ The dualist heresy that was revived in Byzantium by Bogomil, a priest (the name is most probably a pseudonym) who organized a religious rebellion in Bulgaria in the tenth century. His teachings were inspired by apocryphal tales derived from Gnosticism and Judaic apocalyptic texts, whose traditions had lingered in Byzantium, and were marked by a profound hostility toward the beliefs and practices of the Byzantine priesthood, liturgy, churches, and the Church Fathers.

¹⁰⁶ Lipton 1999, 89, translates a quotation of Alan of Lille, who said (*Contra Hereticos*, PL 210:366A), “Cathars are called after the cat, because they kiss the posterior of a cat in whose shape, it is said, Lucifer appears to them.”

time might explain the Byzantine influences on R. Moshe HaDarshan's works. The fact that his writings are not mentioned by Rabbinic scholars other than Rashi is thought to be proof of an internal Jewish censorship regarding his questionable sources.¹⁰⁷

Another possible explanation for the disappearance of R. Moshe HaDarshan's works might be the intensification of Jewish-Christian polemics during the twelfth and thirteen centuries.¹⁰⁸ At that time those of his ideas that were influenced by *Midrash Bere'shit Rabbati* and various other works were used to attack the Jews. The point of contention was his stress on the messianic connotations of biblical verses. For instance, his interpretation of Jacob's blessing to Judah (Gen 49:10), "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff [depart] from between his feet, as long as men come to Shiloh; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be," was interpreted as an allusion to the Messiah.¹⁰⁹

Rashi, who lived before the great Jewish-Christian open debates, integrated this exegesis into his own interpretation. In later years, when there was a bitter upsurge of Christian polemics, Martini used this midrash in *Pugio Fidei* to prove that midrashic interpretation of the Old Testament reinforced Christological messianic typology.¹¹⁰ Fear of Christian exploitation of Rabbinic midrashic material concerning the Messiah caused the Rabbis to refrain from using such texts in their own interpretations and to censor R. Moshe HaDarshan's midrashic works so they would not be available to the Christian polemicists.¹¹¹

Returning to the parallels between the *Christian Topography* and R. Moshe HaDarshan's writings I discussed above, I find it interesting that both the works of R. Moshe HaDarshan and the extant copies of the *Christian Topography* are products of the eleventh century. This historical fact might shed light on the way in which the writings of Philo and Josephus, as well as early apocryphal literature known to have been excluded from the traditional Jewish bookshelf and preserved only in Christian works, were again integrated into the midrashim thought to be R. Moshe HaDarshan's sources.

Recent research on lost Ashkenazi midrashim has uncovered a great deal of information about Jewish communities in Byzantium from the

¹⁰⁷ Ta-Shma 2005, 193.

¹⁰⁸ Mack, 2008, 149–176, 156.

¹⁰⁹ Idem, 2010, 116.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 118.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 219.

Second Temple Period on.¹¹² It has been noted that the route taken by scholars from these communities suggests an emigration from southern to northern Italy and from there over the Alps to the Jewish communities along the Rhine River. There are also two sources from Sepharad that refer to ancient homiletic treatises from the “lands of the Greeks,” that is, from Byzantium: R. Abraham ibn Ezra (1093–1167) from Toledo mentioned such midrashim in his introduction to the Torah and R. Moses b. Maimon (known as Maimonides; 1135–1204) from Cordova alluded to “Greek homilies” in Byzantium. In his *responsum* Maimonides expressed his lack of respect for their mystical subjects, which he said should be discarded.¹¹³

From both references we gather that “Greek homilies” from Byzantium were known in Sepharad. Thus, when we examine the Sarajevo Haggadah, produced in the fourteenth century, we are not surprised to find pictorial motifs that are very similar to those found in the Byzantine manuscripts of the *Christian Topography* and the *Octateuchs*. It seems that there might have been points of contact and a conveyance of images and ideas from Judaism to Christianity and then back to Judaism, especially in connection with the Temple and the Cosmos and the relevant midrashic understandings.

¹¹² Geula 2007, 319–320.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 322.

CHAPTER FIVE

VISUALIZING CREATION IN A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY JEWISH MANUSCRIPT

The Sarajevo Haggadah's Visual Model of the Tabernacle/Creation

The Creation cycle shown on the first two pages of the Sarajevo Haggadah,¹ which was written and illustrated in Catalonia in the second half of the fourteenth century, is unique in Jewish art in that it begins with the six days of Creation, the *Hexaemeron*, and centers on the link between the account of Creation and the pattern of the Tabernacle (figs. 5, 6).

The manuscript and its decoration program have attracted a great deal of interest ever since it was first published in book form by Julius von Schlosser and Heinrich Müller in 1898, and many facsimile editions have been published since.² Von Schlosser and Müller distinguished the particular Jewish aspects of the iconography of the period, manifested in midrashic motifs, a feature shared with most other works of Jewish art from late antiquity on.³ In 1962 Roth wrote an introduction to a facsimile edition published in Belgrade in which he suggested that the Sarajevo Haggadah's illuminations indicate that the artistic work was done by Jews.⁴ He contended that the work indicates a precise knowledge of the Hebrew text and familiarity with Midrash and traditional aggadic embellishment as well as legendary interpretations based on lost midrashim. His firm conclusion was that the illuminations in the Sarajevo Haggadah, which was illustrated for the festival known as the holiday of historical recollections, or as we know it today, Passover, reflect an ancient prototype and are faithful to the tradition of the illuminated Jewish Bible codices from

¹ Sarajevo, Bosnian National Museum. For a recent facsimile edition, see Werber 1983. Some of the material in this chapter is based on a previous joint study on the subject that I wrote together with Katrin Kogman-Appel (Kogman-Appel and Laderman 2004, 89–127). I am greatly indebted to Katrin Kogman-Appel for her consent to include her share of our collaboration in this chapter.

² Müller and Schlosser, 1898.

³ On this phenomenon in other Sephardi picture cycles, see Kogman-Appel 1997, 451–481.

⁴ Roth 1962, intro.

antiquity.⁵ Broderick makes a similar assumption noting that the Creation cycle in the Sarajevo Haggadah was clearly influenced by an earlier illustrated biblical model.⁶ He discusses this in detail, linking some elements of Creation imagery to Byzantine pictorial sources and others to Western cycles, concluding that the artist used a variety of models.⁷

The hypothesis that there was an illuminated Bible that served as a Jewish prototype from antiquity to the Middle Ages and influenced both Jewish and Christian works was the basis for a theory propounded by Weitzmann,⁸ Narkiss,⁹ and several other scholars. On the other hand, Katrin Kogman-Appel contradicts this assumption, contending that it misrepresents the various stages of development of biblical iconography in the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities and ignores cultural and social aspects, including the acculturation of Jews during the Middle Ages.¹⁰ She notes that most of the midrashic interpolations in Sephardi haggadot have no parallels in antiquity, as they most likely reflect issues of Rabbinic teaching and ideology related to the cultural struggles and transitions of the times.¹¹ She also views other sources for the haggadot and suggests that the motifs in evidence were Christian and that the models were adapted for use in Hebrew manuscripts using Jewish exegesis and Rabbinic interpolations. In her words, these motifs were “translated” to portray “Jewish imagery.”¹²

The Creation cycle in the Sarajevo Haggadah discloses an association between its visual imagery and a late-thirteenth/fourteenth-century school of Jewish scholarship and biblical exegesis. The subject of Creation, although widespread in Christian narrative cycles, was ignored in Jewish art of late antiquity and the Middle Ages. As it is not found in either the monumental decoration programs of late antique synagogues or in medieval Hebrew illuminated manuscripts,¹³ the appearance of a com-

⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁶ Broderick 1984, 320–332.

⁷ On possible Christian models, see also Kogman-Appel 1996, 111–127.

⁸ Weitzmann 1970.

⁹ Narkiss 1970.

¹⁰ Kogman-Appel 2006, 136–137.

¹¹ Ibid., 188.

¹² Ibid., 8, 123; eadem 1997, 451–481.

¹³ We find depictions of the forming of Adam and Eve in two Sephardi haggadot in London, British Library: (1) MS Or. 2884, fols. iv and 2r, (see: Narkiss, Cohen-Mushlin, and Tcherikover 1982, figs. 155–156); (2) MS Add. 27210 fol. 2v, (see Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah*, The British Library, 1997, fig. 17); see also Schubert 1976, 213–217, and Kogman-Appel 1997, 461–463; eadem 2000, 827–828.

plete Creation cycle in this haggadah is striking. We should also note that although it has certain motifs adapted from Christian parallels, it does not fully follow any pictorial model. Moreover, studying its depictions with an eye toward the exegesis of R. Moses b. Nachman (known as Nachmanides, 1194–1270) discloses that much of the visual detail reflects his concept of Creation.

Among Nachmanides' many followers was R. Bahye b. Asher (1260–1340) from Saragossa, who was a student of R. Solomon b. Adret (1235–1310), Nachmanides' most well-known disciple. R. Bahye wrote a commentary on the Pentateuch that relied heavily on Nachmanides' earlier work. His familiarity with material otherwise unknown in fourteenth-century Sephardi scholarship can be accounted for by the close links between the Crown of Aragon and southern France from the time that Carolingians conquered the northern part of Catalonia in the early ninth century. These links facilitated the cultural exchange that I referred to in an earlier discussion about R. Moshe HaDarshan from Provence, which influenced both Christian and Jewish scholarship.

Nachmanides' concept of Creation was challenged by the cosmological view of a group of Jewish scholars who held with the rationalist philosophy of Maimonides, which embraced all the cultural values associated with the Jewish-Islamic symbiosis. Shortly after Maimonides' death his views became a matter of controversy,¹⁴ as his opponents were convinced that rationalism endangered traditional Jewish values. The commentaries of Nachmanides and R. Bahye, who were considered anti-rationalists, included concepts from early Jewish mystical writings, among them the *Book of Creation*, *Sefer Yetsira*, the *Book of Brightness*, *Sefer Ha'Bahir*, and Heikhalot literature, *Pirkei Heikhalot*. We can clearly discern links between their interpretations of the Bible and the visual language of the illustrations in the Sarajevo Haggadah's Creation cycle.

The ways in which history was recalled in the Sarajevo Haggadah as well as in other haggadot was particularly important within the cultural ambience of fourteenth-century Sephardi Jewry and it reflected the worldview of figures such as Nachmanides and R. Bahye. However, we must remember that what their surviving texts reflect and what the images convey are relevant to the issues of their time. Their writings were used to develop Sabbath sermons and established the essence of the Sephardi

¹⁴ For the Maimonidean controversy see Silver 1965; Shatzmiller 1969, 126–144; Septimus 1982; Kriegl 1979, 145–179; Touati 1977, 173–184.

religious view. R. Bahye was a preacher in early fourteenth-century Saragossa, and his texts reflect what he communicated to his community as well as to his disciples.¹⁵

The story of Creation in the Sarajevo Haggadah is depicted in eight individually outlined compartments (figs. 5, 6), each with a short identifying title (generally a quotation from the Bible) above or below the illustration.¹⁶ Folio 1v of the frontispiece is divided into four unequal vertical rectangles, which tell of the first three days. Folio 2r is divided into four miniatures of the same dimensions and relates to the second set of three days and the Sabbath.¹⁷ The page is read from right to left and from top to bottom.

The Structural Frame of the Illustrations in the Sarajevo Creation Cycle

The most striking motif in the Sarajevo Creation cycle is the rounded-top rectangular-shaped structural frame with spherical white and blue stripes that surrounds each of the depictions of the first six days. Broderick contends that the artist/miniaturist who painted this frame had to have been aware of the Tabernacle-Creation link in Jewish tradition.¹⁸ Actually, there can be no doubt about this since the same round-topped rectangular shape also appears in the two images that conclude the Haggadah's thirty-four folios of illuminations: *The Messianic Temple* on folio 32r (fig. 54) and the *Synagogue* on folio 34r (fig. 55).

The Messianic Temple is a full-page illustration labeled "The Holy Temple which will be rebuilt soon in our day."¹⁹ The Ark of the Covenant, shaped as an arched rectangular frame, is seen through the Temple's entrance, which has the shape of a vaulted rectangle. Two gilded wings of

¹⁵ Recent scholarship in medieval art in general and iconography in particular has stressed the need for a whole range of analytical methods beyond texts, see Cassidy 1993, 3–16, and Hourihane 1999, 3–10. The ideas expressed here do not treat texts in the sense of a translation of any particular writing into an image, but rather as documents representing the particular worldviews that are echoed in the imagery. It becomes evident that the images are deeply imbued with concepts expressed in textual sources of the period. For further recent approaches to text and image, see Maguire 1987 and Lowden 2000.

¹⁶ Zuker 1986, 6, 7.

¹⁷ Werber 1983, 22–24.

¹⁸ Broderick 1984, 331.

¹⁹ Muller and von Schlosser 1898 and Zuker 1986, 12, explain the inscription "the Temple which will be rebuilt soon in our days" as the future Temple. Roth (in the introduction to B. Narkiss' *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts* 1969, 39) finds eschatological meaning in this painting.

the cherubim are seen above the two tablets of the Covenant and above them are the seven arched stripes—four blue and three white—similar to the blue and white semicircles seen above the images of each of the six days. *The Synagogue* is a full-page illustration showing men, women, and children leaving the synagogue after the holiday service. Through the vaulted rectangular entrance we can see the interior of the synagogue and the Holy Ark, known in the Sephardi communities as the *heikhal*, which is a synonym in Hebrew for Temple.

As there are no colophons in the manuscript we have no information about the patron or the artist of the Sarajevo Haggadah, but it is improbable that the designer of its Creation cycle reinvented the round-topped shape; it is rather much more likely that he utilized a well-known Jewish design. The motif used here to symbolize the parallelism between Creation and the Tabernacle is not only well known in Jewish art but is also found in fourteenth-century Sephardi Rabbinic exegesis. In his explication of the verse “and Moses saw all the work” (Exod. 39:43) at the completion of the building of the Tabernacle, R. Bahye noted:²⁰

This is the work of the making of the Tabernacle, and the meaning is: “and he saw in the mountain” as it is written: “exactly according to the design I show you (Exod. 25:9), and it is written: “the design shown to you on the mountain (Exod. 25:40).” Thus they made it in the desert. And in the midrashic interpretation: “And Moses saw all the work,” this is the work of Creation; the verse does not explicitly state “all the work of the Tabernacle” so as to teach you that the work of the Tabernacle is equivalent to the work of Creation.

This parallel between the Tabernacle and Creation also appears in R. Bahye’s commentary on the name Bezalel, referring to the special knowledge Bezalel received from God about Creation so that he was able to build the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant.²¹ This knowledge, R. Bahye wrote, enabled Bezalel to build the Ark with the shadowing wings of the cherubim, an image that was easily adapted to the schema of the arched rectangle. Both Broderick and Revel-Neher have demonstrated that the shape of the arched rectangle seen in the *Messianic Temple*

²⁰ Bahye ben Asher’s *Commentary on the Pentateuch* 1945, on Exod. 39:43. (An annotated English version of this commentary appeared in 1998 (Eliyahu Munk, trans., *Torah Commentary by Rabbi Bachya ben Asher*, Jerusalem 1998). This is not a literal, but rather an interpretative annotated translation and therefore not used here.) The quotations from Bahye’s work here are based on the original Hebrew text.

²¹ See Chapter 2.

(fig. 54) and the *Synagogue* (fig. 55) is the same as the round-topped schema used to frame the Sarajevo Haggadah's Creation cycle, which underscores the link between the Tabernacle and Creation.²²

The Approach to Creation Cosmology in Mid-Thirteenth-Century Spain

To further study the unique iconography of the Sarajevo Haggadah's Creation cycle we have to look at the prevailing cultural milieu in Spain after the Christian reconquest in the middle of the thirteenth century. Sephardi Jewish culture was evolving in the face of the change from Muslim to Christian domination. The Islamic-Jewish cultural symbiosis that existed during the time of the Khalifs and the Taifa kingdoms had produced generations of Jewish scholars whose cultural background differed in many respects from that of the late antique Talmudic sages and differed even more significantly from that of their contemporary Ashkenazi scholars.

A school of rationalist thought influenced by Muslim philosophy and earlier Greek sources had evolved. Whereas the biblical exegesis of late antiquity was dominated by the midrashic method, that of the early medieval Sephardi school was guided primarily by linguistic and philological thinking, as represented, for example, by R. Abraham ibn Ezra. Other scholars interpreted biblical narratives and midrashic narratives of the Talmudic era allegorically or metaphorically.²³ The rationalist philosophers used this approach to explain contradictory passages in the Bible and the Midrash, in instances of illogical narratives, miracles, and the like. Such narratives were not treated as historical fact, but rather as allegories.

A cultural struggle, initiated by R. Solomon of Montpellier and his student R. Jonah of Gerona, developed between the rationalists and their opponents. A bitter controversy ensued that saw mutual Rabbinic excommunications between Maimonidean and anti-Maimonidean authorities and reached a climax in 1232 when Maimonides' writings were burned. The controversy did not come to an end with the excommunications and the book burning, but continued on for several decades and had a major impact on Jewish culture in Spain and southern France, with far-reaching consequences. Rationalist scholarship was challenged by anti-rationalist

²² Broderick 1984, 331–332; Revel-Neher 1998, 103–122.

²³ For brief surveys of Sephardi Bible exegesis, see Simon, 1992, 115–136; Grossman, 1992, 137–146.

movements linked to and influenced by northern French Ashkenazi scholars, known as Tosafists, who stood for traditional Talmudic study, an anti-rationalistic worldview, and an uncritical acceptance of the authority of Talmudic Midrash.

The debate over rationalist philosophy saw arguments develop in connection with Creation, and the specific images of the Sarajevo Haggadah's Creation cycle seem to carry a message in the context of this polemic.²⁴ Under the influence of Greek thought, some Jewish philosophers discussed the possibility of the eternal existence of the world, a view refuted by anti-rationalist scholars, who insisted on "*creatio ex nihilo*."²⁵ The rationalist Shem Tov ibn Falaquera (1225–1291), roughly a contemporary of Nachmanides, explained Creation in a lost Bible commentary that was partly reconstructed through quotations in the work of Samuel Ibn Zarza, a scholar active in Valencia during the second half of the fourteenth century.²⁶ The views of both Ibn Falaquera and Ibn Zarza were criticized and refuted by the anti-rationalists. Although we have no record of a personal, direct reaction on the part of Nachmanides to Ibn Falaquera's work, we know that during the fifteenth century Don Isaac Abarvanel sharply criticized Ibn Falaquera, Ibn Zarza, and others for their views on Creation.²⁷ Ibn Falaquera propounded a Platonic worldview. In his philosophic work *Moreh ha'Moreh, Guide for the Teacher*, he wrote:²⁸

It seems to me that Plato's opinion tends toward the opinion of our Torah . . . proof of this for me is that he said that the world came into being when it changed to being orderly after there had been no order. One can understand the literal meaning of the verses [in Genesis] that at first everything was chaotic and without order, and afterward things were distinguished from each other and became orderly . . . It is known that this opinion of Plato was not [deduced] in respect of investigation, for why should it be eternal in the future and not in the past?

The understanding that Creation was the act of putting order into the eternally existing chaos is also discussed in Ibn Falaquera's lost biblical commentary, quoted by Ibn Zarza:²⁹

²⁴ For more information on Rabbinic concepts of Creation, see Samuelson, 1992.

²⁵ For general background on *creatio ex nihilo* see Samuelson 1992, bibliography, 169–172.

²⁶ Jospe and Schwartz 1993, 167–201.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

Rabbi Shem Tov ibn Falaquera wrote about the verse “the Earth was unformed, *tohu*, and void, *bohu*” (Gen. 1:2) that the Aramaic translation “the Earth was desolate and empty”³⁰ means desolate and empty of created things. The ancient scientists said that prior to this world there was unorderd perpetual motion, which God afterward restored to order, and finally He brought the soul into existence, together with the Heavens. He noted that some of the scientists said that light and darkness were eternal and wrote that some of them declared said that everything subsisted together for an endless time, and afterward began to move, and that the Intelligence began to move them.

In his commentary on Gen. 1:1 Nachmanides left no doubt that he firmly refuted the concept of the eternal existence of the universe as described by Maimonides.³¹ Nachmanides opened his commentary on the Bible with what he defined as an essential principle of the Jewish religion:

One may object that it was indeed very necessary to begin the Torah with the chapter of “In the beginning G-d created . . .” For this is the root of faith, and he who does not believe in this and thinks the world was eternal denies the essential principle of the religion and has no Torah at all.³² [...] the simple correct explanation of the verse is as follows: “In the beginning G-d created the heavens” means He brought forth their matter from nothing.³³

Nachmanides elaborated on this statement further underscoring several points: First, God created the world out of nothing and whoever explains Creation differently is a heretic. Second, the words created, *bara*, chaos, *tohu*, and emptiness, *bohu*, have a special meaning. The verb *bara*, he noted, was used only for the initial act of *creatio ex nihilo*. What followed was produced, formed, or shaped, but not created. He then tried to define *tohu* and *bohu*: *tohu*, he wrote, is the substance created in the initial act of Creation, the very substance out of which everything else was shaped and made. The issue of “form” and “shape” is important here: Nachmanides stressed that after the *tohu* was brought into being, nothing else was created, but only shaped. He continued by noting that Heaven and Earth are each of a different substance, the heavenly substance being *tohu* and the

³⁰ Quoting Targum Onkeles 1, 2; see Aberbach and Grossfeld 1982, 20–21.

³¹ Maimonides discussed the issue of *creatio ex nihilo* at length and struggled with the concept (see *Guide for the Perplexed*, Part I, ch. 74), but he did not refute the belief in the concept. Ibn Falaquera’s and others’ view is thus an extreme one. For a summary of medieval Sephardi views on Creation, see Samuelson, 1994, 136–143.

³² Nachmanides, Gen. 1:1, 17.

³³ *Ibid.*, Gen. 1:3, 25.

earthly substance *bohu*. On this basis he described *tohu* as a shapeless form, whereas *bohu* was the structure to be made.³⁴

After declaring that with one command God created first the Heavens and the Earth and all their hosts, Scripture explains that the Earth after this Creation was matter without substance, that is, *tohu*, and it became *bohu* when He clothed it with form.³⁵ R. Bahye's discussion of the first verses in Genesis follows this train of thought, simplifying the basic lines of the exposition. He was vehement concerning the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*, and it would appear that it is his argument that underlies the imagery in the Sarajevo Haggadah's Creation cycle.

Indeed, unlike Western Christian versions, this cycle begins with an illustration of *tohu* and not with the first day and the creation of darkness and light. Moreover, the first panel on the upper right does not show the round-top shape, but rather depicts two substances. The lower section is made up of matter that is primarily white and is painted in wavy horizontal lines, with some of the lines in light blue; above it and covering about two-thirds of the panel is a black substance painted using vertical brush strokes, with vertical wavy gold lines intertwining with the black. The two substances are cut off by the frame of the picture, which, together with the undulating brush strokes, is a feature that suggests shapelessness. Interestingly, the accompanying caption reads: "And the Earth was *tohu*." The *bohu* is not mentioned, so the panel does not include the round-top shape, its absence emphasizing the material's lack of form. None of the other captions mentions the word *bara*, which, according to Nachmanides, was used exclusively for the initial act of creating the first substance.³⁶ The term "in the beginning," "*bere'shit*," does not appear either. The act of *creatio ex nihilo* seems to be beyond visual expression, and the

³⁴ Nachmanides relied in part on earlier sources, see Kasher's remarks in his *Torah Shlemah* 1949, 62, n. 328; for example, the distinction between the shapeless mass *tohu* and the *bohu* as substance that has received form is found in mystic literature, such as *Sefer Yetsira* and *Sefer Bahir*. This distinction between *tohu* and *bohu* was also known to the southern French kabbalist R. Levi ben Solomon of Lunel, as can be concluded from a later quotation by R. Moses Burtill, see *Torah Shlemah*, 1949, n. 325. Finally, it is also found in the *Book of Zohar* written shortly after Nachmanides' death (*Zohar*, vol. 1, 16a, 66–67.) It is interesting to note, however, that the mystic texts deal with the question of the eternity of the world very differently from Nachmanides' view: "Now the Earth had been void and without form.' The Hebrew word for "had been" is *haitah*, which is understood as "being," a pluperfect, implying that the Earth had existed previously" (*Zohar*, vol. 1, 16a, 66). Nachmanides' opening sentences make it quite clear that he rejects this view as heretical.

³⁵ Nachmanides, Gen. 1:3, 25–26.

³⁶ See Samuelson 1994, 137: "*bara* means "bringing forth matter from absolutely nothing at all by an act of will without the imposition of any intermediary."

cycle begins with an image of the initial, shapeless matter already created. It would appear that this visualization of Genesis 1:2 can only be understood in light of Nachmanides' or R. Bahye's exegesis.

Following the distinction between *tohu* and *bohu*, R. Bahye developed his cosmology still further. He borrowed the Greek notion of four elements: fire, air (which he calls *ruach*, usually understood as "spirit" or "wind"), water, and dust (soil or earth). The ensuing acts of "making," he said, were basically the proper arrangement of these four elements:³⁷

Since he started from the Earth, he arranged the elements in their proper order, namely the fire and the *ruach* and the water. He says "and the darkness" (Gen. 1:2), which is the basic fire, and is dark, before mentioning the *ruach*, since the fire surrounds the *ruach*. And He cites the *ruach* before the water since the *ruach* circles above the waters and the waters surround the Earth . . . And Scripture teaches us here, saying "the Earth was *tohu* and *bohu*" (Gen. 1:2), that the Earth was shaped with form and darkness which is the fire above the water, was mixed together with the dust and the two together were named the deep, *tehom*, like the waters of the ocean where dust is mixed with water . . . and the *ruach* that was blowing entered the darkness and hovered above the water.

What we see then in the upper part of the first panel of the Sarajevo Creation cycle is the black fire (the darkness) and the *ruach* hovering over it. The lower part of the picture shows the dust and the water mixed together to depict the *tehom*.

The writings of Nachmanides and R. Bahye provide the basis for understanding the composition of the first two panels. They both discussed the word darkness, *choshekh*, that appears first in Genesis 1:2 as the darkness that "covered the deep" and again in Genesis 1:4 as the darkness representing night when "God separated the light from the darkness." Both referred to the darkness of the primeval *tohu* as a "supernal darkness" and as "the darkness of fire,"³⁸ in contrast to the darkness of the first day, which is a "lack of light":

This is not "the darkness" (1:2) mentioned in the first verse which, as explained above, refers to the element of fire; rather, the "darkness" (1:4) mentioned here means the absence of light, since God gave a length of time to the light and decreed that it be absent afterward until it returns.³⁹

³⁷ Bahye, Gen. 1:2. The meaning of *ruach* as either spirit or explicitly the spirit of God remains ambiguous in Bahye's text.

³⁸ A similar, but not identical description of the darkness as fire is found in the Zohar, vol. 1 16a, 67.

³⁹ Nachmanides, Gen. 1:4, 31.

The darkness and the wavering flames pictured in the first frame illustrate “the darkness of fire.” The dark color in the second panel, which depicts the first day, is set against the light as if projecting a concept of time that measures day and night. The white surface on the right of the image represents light and the black surface on the left suggests darkness. Nachmanides explained:⁴⁰

And then He divided between it and the darkness by assigning to each a certain period. Light now remained before Him for the length of night, and then in the morning, He caused the light to shine upon the elements. In this way night preceded day. It is further possible that we should say that when the Heavens and the Earth came forth from naught into existence, as mentioned in the first verse, time came into being. For although our time consisting of minutes and hours is measured in light and darkness, yet from the moment some substance came into existence time was already part of it. If so, after the Heavens and the Earth were created they so remained for the length of a night without light. Then He said, “Let there be light” and there was light, and He decreed that it remain the same period as the first and that after that, it be absent from the elements. Thus, “there was evening and there was morning.”

The straight line between the clearly defined black and white areas of the second panel gives one a sense of measurement of day and night: the darkness of night is thus different from the undefined darkness of the primeval *tohu*.⁴¹

Whether the wavy golden lines represent the *ruach* or the fire as darkness, it is clear that the artist did not visualize Genesis 1:1–2 literally. The concepts of *tohu* and *bohu* are extremely ambiguous, as are those first two verses and any attempt to visualize them would have called for further interpretation. Moreover, we have to keep in mind that the initial image of the Creation cycle was not modeled after a Christian pictorial source, but appears to be the original design of the Sarajevo artist, who saw Genesis 1:1–2 through the eyes of Nachmanides and R. Bahye. In this context, the image clearly opposes the rationalist view of the eternal existence of the world.

Further study of the rest of the cycle and its specific details not only reinforces this line of thought but also elucidates several other important elements. In the images of the first six days, we note that three recurring

⁴⁰ Ibid., Gen. 1:5, 31–32.

⁴¹ This imagery recalls the pictorial version of the Octateuchs, for example, Octateuch 747, fol. 15r, and Octateuch 746, fol. 20v (fig. 29), both using personifications of the day and the night, Weitzmann and Bernabo 1999, figs. 17, 21, and 24.

features form a pattern: the arched rectangular frame that outlines each of the days (which does not appear in the first and last compartments); the concentric semicircles that form the alternating four blue and three white arches; and the beam of golden rays emerging from the arched top that touches the specific created object of the day (it is only on the fourth day that the rays move from the bottom upward).

*The Sarajevo Haggadah's Creation Images in Light
of Rabbinic Commentaries*

The recurring pattern I just described takes on special meaning when viewed in the context of Rabbinic commentaries regarding the concept of the blueprint or pattern, *tavnit*, in both the Creation story and the account of the Tabernacle. It appears that after devoting the first of the eight compartments to the initial, shapeless substance that existed after *creatio ex nihilo* the artist decided to use the next six to present a specific pattern that would connect the Heavens and the Earth and Creation and the Tabernacle.

In his interpretation of the verse, "And God called the firmament Heaven" (Gen. 1:8), Nachmanides distinguished between the Heavens (upper Heavens) cited in the first verse and the firmament of the Heavens mentioned on the fourth day.⁴² He commented that the firmament belongs to the lower spheres and is connected to Ezekiel's vision of God's Chariot, the *merkavah*: "Over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of a firmament like the color of transparent ice, stretched forth over their heads above" (Ezek. 1:22). His reasoning was that just as the Torah does not specify when the *merkavah* and the holy creatures, *hayot ha'qodesh*, were created, so it does not specify the Heavens on the first day but mentions only in a general way, that they were created, meaning that they came forth from naught. The Heavens emerged from the water only on the second day so as to separate the lower and the upper waters. Nachmanides noted in connection with the verse "Let there be a firmament" (Gen. 1:6):⁴³ "That the substance which had come into being first, that which He created from nothing, should be a firmament, stretched as a tent in the midst of the waters separating between waters and waters..."

⁴² Nachmanides, Gen. 1:8, 36: 17 (see Addendum—Table 7).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Gen 1:6, 33.

It appears that the blue and white concentric semicircles that outline the panels for all six days reflect Nachmanides' interpretation of the firmament as "these spherical bodies . . . stretched forth over their heads above . . . like the color of transparent ice." This pictorial motif does not contradict Nachmanides' reference to the opinion of "some scholars" who commented on the verse,⁴⁴ "And there was evening and there was morning, one day." Nachmanides considered their interpretation to be an acceptable one, noting that,⁴⁵ "*One day* is a reference to the rotation of the sphere upon the face of the whole Earth in twenty-four hours, as every moment thereof is morning in some different place and night in the opposite place." Thus the blue and white semicircles seem to give visual expression to both the substance and the rotation of the spherical bodies. The references to the *merkavah* and the *hayot ha'qodesh* in Nachmanides' interpretation reaffirms his and R. Bahye's interest in this mythical representation of the sacred act of Creation. In his introduction to the Book of Genesis, Nachmanides wrote:⁴⁶

God informed Moses first of the manner of the creation of Heaven and Earth and all their hosts, that is, the creation of all things, high and low. Likewise [He informed him of] everything that has been said by prophesy concerning *ma'aseh merkavah*—the esoterica of the divine Chariot⁴⁷—and *ma'aseh bere'shit*—the process of Creation—and has been transmitted about them to the sages.

Looking again at the *Messianic Temple* (fig. 54) reinforces this notion. This miniature is not a visual narrative of a particular biblical verse but rather an expression of an eschatological idea and an attempt to symbolize the future Temple as well as its spiritual Divine Presence. The image emphasizes the arched rectangular structure along with the tablets of the Ten Commandments, the wings of the cherubim, and the heavenly abode highlighted by the blue and white arched stripes above the Ark.

It is interesting to note that both Nachmanides and R. Bahye associate the two cherubim in the Tabernacle and in the Temple with Ezekiel's vision of the *merkavah*, in accord with the writings in *Pirke Heikhalot*,⁴⁸ which

⁴⁴ Nachmanides, 33, n. 56. In his annotations Chavel interprets the expression "some scholars" to refer to R. Abraham ibn Ezra.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Gen. 1:5, 33.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁷ Chavel's explanation: vision of Ezekiel (Ezek. 1).

⁴⁸ *Pirke Heikhalot* are texts that were defined by Scholem (1965, 5) as a class of writings about mystical revelations containing a number of complete books as well as several fragments and amorphous material scattered widely throughout Hebrew manuscripts.

is one of the principal mystical texts dealing with *ma'aseh merkavah*.⁴⁹ Nachmanides refers to *ma'aseh merkavah* and *ma'aseh bere'shit* in the same way as did the followers of the Merkavah tradition, (known as “*yordei merkavah*” from the Second Temple Period on),⁵⁰ who suggested an inexplicable link between Creation and the pattern of the *merkavah* symbolizing the Tabernacle. Based on the Book of Chronicles, they referred to the divine prototype (pattern) of the winged cherubim and the Chariot Throne in the Holy of Holies that was first shown to David and then conveyed to Solomon, who was to build the earthly Temple. They associated Ezekiel's account of the sacred winged creatures standing on wheels (Ezek. 10:15–17) with “the pattern of all the works” in 1 Chronicles 28:18–19: “and gold for the pattern [*tavnit*] of the Chariot, the cherubim, those with outspread wings screening the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. All this that the Lord made me understand by His hand on me, I give you in writing—the pattern of all the works.”⁵¹

Nachmanides' commentary to Exodus 40:34, “and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle,” is a further elaboration using Ezekiel's visionary and mystical *merkavah* as the prototype—the pattern of the sacred heavenly arched space seen between the two gold-winged cherubim in the Holy of Holies of the earthly Temple.⁵²

The gold wings in the Sarajevo Haggadah seen under the blue and white concentric semicircles as well as other motifs in the miniatures reflect R. Bahye's commentary on the verse, “And thou shalt make two cherubim of gold; . . . at the two ends of the Ark cover, *kapporet*” (Exod. 25:18). His commentary makes reference to the Heavens, the tablets of the covenant, the Ark, the Temple, and the cherubim that represent the *hayot ha'qodesh*.⁵³

⁴⁹ Nachmanides, Deut. 33:12, “. . . it is true that this suggests that these three [references] to the *shekhinah* relate to the three Temples. About the First Temple [it says] ‘He rests, *yishkon*, securely upon it’ (33:12), as it says ‘for the glory of the Lord filled the House of the Lord’ (2 Chron. 7:1). About the Second Temple it says, ‘Ever does He protect it’ (Deut. 33:12) that the *shekhinah* did not dwell in it, but covered and protected it, or actually overlapped it, as is explained in the *Pirke Heikhalot*, ‘and He rests, *shachen*, between its shoulders’ (33:12) refers to the days of the Messiah, [as it says] (Jer. 3:17). At that time, they shall call Jerusalem ‘Throne of the Lord.’ This is the way it is explained in the *Sifre* [on Deuteronomy].”

⁵⁰ See Chapter 1.

⁵¹ For bibliography related to the pattern [*tavnit*] of God's Chariot, the *merkavah*, and Ezekiel, see Elijor 2005, 64, n. 15.

⁵² Nachmanides, Exod. 25:2, 436 (see Addendum—Table 8).

⁵³ Bahye, Exod. 25:18 (see Addendum—Table 9).

Looking at the picture closely we can see that the wings above the Temple are connected to both the Heavens and the Earth, stretching as they do from the cover of the Ark to the firmament above, and they also seem to be reminiscent of the golden rays of light. The understanding is that these rays image the divine words in the text of each of the days of Creation—"And God said." The artist used them only from the second day, skipping the divine utterance of the first day, "God said, let there be light," which seems to parallel R. Bahye's conception:⁵⁴

According to rational understanding of the verse, "In the beginning God created Heaven and Earth," it is known that all of existence is divided into three parts: the first is the world of the angels, the second is the world of the "wheels," *galgalim*, and the third is the lowest [earthly] section. The hidden mighty Supremacy created all three of them. And the word "*bere'shit*" alludes to this hidden power because it is *reshit* (the beginning) of all. [...] It created first the world of the angels, which is called in the text "*elohim*" and the *Heavens* that are the *galgalim* and the lower world that is called the *Earth*. For this reason the text could not say, "*elohim bara bere'shit*," but had to read, "*bere'shit bara elohim*," in order that the word *bara* (created) would refer back to *bere'shit*. From this it is understood that the hidden mighty Supremacy, which is "*reshit*" created *elohim*, who are the angels, and the Heavens are the *galgalim* and Earth, *ha'aretz*, is the world from below the circle of the moon.

It was only on the second day that the process of Creation reached a point where it affected the earthly sphere. As it is said: "And God *made* the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so" (Gen 1:7). The firmament dividing the upper heavenly waters from the earthly lower waters is considered part of what "God made," "*va'yas*" to benefit the Earth. Hence, the beam of golden rays appears for the first time in the illustration of the second day, the day God performed a deed, an act, which the artist visualized through golden rays of light sent from the Heavens to the Earth.

It is clear that Nachmanides' school of exegesis influenced the iconographic models used in the Sarajevo cycle. We can see this, for example, in the detail that represents the water mentioned in the biblical description of the second day, depicted from the third panel on as wavy blue lines that fill the bottom half of the sphere suspended under the celestial vault. Similar imagery appeared earlier in the Christian Pamplona Bibles,

⁵⁴ Bahye, Gen. 1:2.

commissioned by King Sancho el Fuerte of Navarra (1194–1234),⁵⁵ and it was apparently adopted by the designer of the Sarajevo Haggadah. The round shape divided into two sections horizontally represents the dry land above and the sea below. The cosmological ideas of the time as expressed by Nachmanides' school can be seen in the following:⁵⁶

Or perhaps God's decree was that the Earth be spherical, partly visible and mostly submerged in the waters, as the Greeks imagine in their proofs, apparent or real. Thus there were two decrees, that is, two matters done by the Will of God that are contrary to their natural inclination. For in view of the heaviness of Earth [which would cause it to sink] and the lightness of the waters [which would cause them to rise], it would have been natural that the pillar of the Earth be in the center and that the waters should cover it, thus surrounding it from all sides. Therefore, He said, "Let the waters under the Heavens be gathered together," that is to a lower place, and then He said, and let the dry land appear. He gave them names as they assumed these forms, for at the beginning their collective name was the Deep, *tehom*.

In looking at the panels depicting the third and fourth days, it is apparent that the vegetation in the two miniatures is identical and that the only difference is in the lighting. The image of the fourth day is lighter, with bright white patches among the trees, bushes, and grasses, which on the third day are in dark shadow. The idea seems to be that on the third day Creation was in the dark, which is in accord with Nachmanides' interpretation and repeated in R. Bahye's commentary on the verse, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the Heavens."⁵⁷ Nachmanides wrote:⁵⁸

Now the light was created on the first day, illuminating the elements, but when on the second day the firmament was made, it intercepted the light and prevented it from illuminating the lower elements. Thus, when the

⁵⁵ Bucher 1970 35, 56, 60, discusses the Pamplona Bibles as picture Bibles known as Amiens Manuscript Latin 108 and Harburg Ms. 1, 2, lat. 4, 15. The manuscripts were created in a monastic scriptorium in Pamplona and were kept in Spain, where they were highly valued, to such an extent that a copy was made in that period's style in France at the beginning of the 14th century and is now preserved in New York. These Bibles were considered exceptional works of art. Of its 271 parchment sheets, which include thirty-three of the forty-six books of the Bible, there are 976 scenes presented in the form of framed free-hand vignettes. They are fine pen drawings and water colored in soft shades. Like most of high medieval Spanish miniatures, they reflect multiple influences of several periods and origins, but they also show a very unusual presentation form and handling of the drawing and coloring.

⁵⁶ Nachmanides, Gen. 1:9, 38, 39.

⁵⁷ Bahye, Gen. 1:14.

⁵⁸ Nachmanides, Gen. 1:14, 42.

Earth was created on the third day there was darkness on it and not light. And now on the fourth day the Holy One, blessed be He, desired that there be in the firmament luminaries, the light of which would reach the Earth. This is the meaning of the words “in the firmament of the Heavens to give light upon the Earth,” for there already was light above the firmament, which did not illuminate the Earth. The meaning of the words “Let there be lights” is as follows: He decreed on the first day that from the substance of the Heavens there should come forth a light for the period of the day, and now He decreed that it become corporeal and that a luminous body come forth from it that would give light during the day with a great illumination, and that another body of lesser light [should come into existence] to illumine the night, and He suspended both in the firmament of the Heavens in order that they illumine below as well.

Additional evidence for the link between the Creation cycle and the words of Nachmanides and R. Bahye can be seen in the captions on the panels, which quote fragments of the biblical text, with one exception. The panel of the fourth day, depicting the creation of the luminaries in the firmament, is accompanied by the following words: “Fourth day—let there be lights—sun, moon, and stars.” The text of Genesis 1:14–19 does not explicitly mention the sun and the moon, only “lights on Earth to govern day and night.” Although it is clear that the lights refer to the sun and the moon, it was again R. Bahye who elaborated at some length on the matter in his commentary on the fourth day.⁵⁹

Yet another graphic detail parallels his exegesis. The beam of golden rays portraying the word of God changes direction in this panel. Whereas on the other days the rays shine from Heaven to Earth, in the image of the fourth day the beams are directed from the Earth upward, toward the sun and the moon in the Heavens. Broderick relates this imaging to Genesis 2:5–6, which mentions mist rising from the Earth and wetting its surface.⁶⁰ These verses refer to the Earth prior to the creation of the plants, as stated explicitly in Genesis 2:5, but the Sarajevo image of the fourth day includes the flora created on the third.

R. Bahye wrote: “‘To give light on Earth (Gen. 1:15)’ means that the original light placed above heretofore served the upper spheres and now will shine through the luminaries on the Earth below.”⁶¹ The reversed direction of the golden rays in the illustration of the fourth day highlights the difference between the upper Heavens (and its special light created

⁵⁹ Bahye, Gen. 1:18.

⁶⁰ Broderick 1984, 326.

⁶¹ Bahye, Gen. 1:14.

on the first day) and the luminaries (suspended in the firmament of the Heavens on the fourth day). It also stresses the marking of time (days and years),⁶² the determination of the seasons⁶³ and the holidays⁶⁴ to be celebrated upon the Earth: “And let them serve as signs both for seasons, and for days and years” (Gen. 1:14). Moreover, positioning the luminaries after the vegetation was created reinforced the notion of *creatio ex nihilo*. It becomes obvious that the luminaries played no role in the creation of plant life, which was done by God alone. This was summarized by R. Bahye,⁶⁵ who quoted the blessing to be said at the sight of the sun, the moon, and the stars in their orbits: “Blessed be the Maker of Creation,”⁶⁶ and further elaborated on it in his commentary:⁶⁷

It was necessary to create the lights [the sun, moon and stars] on the fourth day, after the creation of plant life on the third day to teach us the truth of *ex nihilo*. Had it been in reverse order, where the divine utterance “let there be lights” was on the third day and the utterance “let the grass grow” on the fourth day, this would be proof of the eternity of the universe because then the trees and the plant life would not have been the products of the divine utterance, but the result of the lights that had been created previously, because they [the lights] give energy to everything that grows. But now, since the divine utterance of “let the Earth give forth vegetation” preceded the utterance of “let there be lights,” this is absolute proof of Creation. For in the time when there were no lights in the world to affect sprouting and blossoming of vegetation, God decreed “let the Earth sprout forth” and vegetation appeared as a result of the divine utterance, before the power of light could bring them forth in God’s order of things [...] From this order of things and from the order of the lights, man sees and understands the majesty of God and then praises and exalts Him, as it says (Isa. 40:26): “Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these.” This is the good thing, in that man acknowledges this fact that they [the luminaries] were created by God and will not err to consider them as divine beings.

Another detail that seems to parallel Nachmanides’ hermeneutical approach is found in the panel depicting the birds and the fish on the

⁶² Nachmanides, Gen. 1:14, 44: “‘And for days.’ ‘This means the length of day and the length of night.’ ‘And years.’ The luminaries are to complete their orbit and then traverse again the same course they followed, thus making the solar year consist of 365 days and the lunar year consist of [lunar cycles, each approximately] 30 days.”

⁶³ Ibid.: “‘And for seasons.’ This means seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter (Gen. 8:22).”

⁶⁴ Rashi, Gen. 1:14. This text was frequently quoted by Nachmanides.

⁶⁵ Bahye, Gen. 1:14.

⁶⁶ BT *Ber* 59b.

⁶⁷ Bahye, Gen. 1:18.

fifth day. The fish are seen in the water and the birds are in the treetops, but there are also four-legged animals on the ground, and these were created on the sixth day, not on the fifth. The illustration of the fifth day in Christian Creation cycles, such as in the Morgan Picture Bible, produced in France in the mid-thirteenth century during the reign of the Capetian monarch Louis IX, follows the biblical text.⁶⁸ This Bible's fifth day shows fish (including a great fish) in the water and birds flying above the Earth, but no four-legged creatures.⁶⁹ The deviation from the biblical text in the Sarajevo's fifth-day illustration might reflect Nachmanides' comment that as the blessing uttered on the fifth day was not repeated on the sixth day, the four-legged animals must have been included in the fifth-day's blessing:⁷⁰

"And God blessed them saying," He decreed the blessing on them and said of them that they should be fruitful and multiply, meaning that they should bring forth abundantly, that one creature should bring forth many like itself, [...] Nor did He mention a blessing on the sixth day for cattle and beasts because in the decree of abundancy which He decreed for the moving souls in the waters there were included the moving souls on the Earth, as all living souls that do not speak are in the same class of Creation.

The four-legged animals appear in the Sarajevo Haggadah, again as expected, in the portrayal of the sixth day, together with Adam, who is shown seated on the ground surrounded by the animals, the golden rays shining directly on him as he receives "into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7). Adam's posture and the rays shining on him strikingly recall parallels in the Byzantine Octateuchs (fig. 56). Again it is interesting to note Nachmanides' ideas:⁷¹

"And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea," . . . His intent is to say what I have mentioned, that the formation of man as regarding his spirit, namely, the soul which is in the blood, that was done from the Earth, just

⁶⁸ Weiss 2002, 10–35, describes the Morgan Picture Bible as an exceptional object in both its quality and scope. It includes 340 episodes from the Old Testament that are among the most memorable images of medieval art. It is a work quite different from most manuscripts, since the codex originally contained no text. The stories are related entirely in images done in Gothic style. In the seventeenth century the manuscript was in Poland and in 1608 it was given to Shah Abbas the Great, who was tolerant toward the Church in allowing Christian foundations to be established in his kingdom. Presumably, the Persian inscriptions that appear in the margins of the pages next to the Latin ones were added at that time and later Judeo-Persian inscriptions were added as well.

⁶⁹ The Creation. Morgan Bible; Pierpont Morgan Library, M 638. Fol. 1v. New York.

⁷⁰ Nachmanides, Gen. 1:22, 50, 51.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Gen. 1:26, 54.

as in the command of formation of the beasts and cattle. For the souls of all moving things were made at one time, and afterwards He created bodies for them. First He made the bodies of the cattle and the beasts, and then the body of man into whom He imparted this soul [which resides in the blood and is akin to that of the cattle and beasts], and afterwards He breathed into him a higher soul. For it is concerning this separate soul that a special command was devoted by God, Who gave it, as it is written, “And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gen. 2:7).

The Sarajevo artist imaged the portrayal of man on the Sabbath as the crowning glory of the entire Creation. There can be no doubt that the figure is a man, not God, as in Christian parallels.⁷² He is shown in attire similar to that worn by the Jews in *The Synagogue* miniature resting on a bench, gazing toward the images of the previous days of Creation (fig. 55). Both the first and the last illustrations in the cycle are narrower than the other panels. Moreover, neither of them includes the elements of the recurring pattern for the other days of Creation—the round-top rectangular shape, the arched bands of the firmament, and the golden rays. This last image, which is marked by a special architectonic frame, seems to portray man as a “partner” of God in the continuation of Creation.⁷³ This visual expression seems to parallel Nachmanides’ interpretation of the verse: “And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which God in creating had made” (Gen. 2:3).⁷⁴

“Which God in creating had made:” [R. Bahye quotes Nachmanides, who interpreted what was said: that He rested from all his work which He created out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) to *make* from it all the works mentioned on the six days. Thus the verse is stating that God rested from creating and forming, from the Creation He created on the first day, and from the formation He formed on the rest of the days. It is possible to explain that concluding the account of the Creation [with the words] “*bara elohim*” (Gen. 2:3) was to match the same words used in the opening of it “in the beginning *bara elohim*” (Gen. 1:1), the idea being to connect everything that had been created to the one Creator so as to teach that He, may He be blessed, is Who started it and Who concluded it. And in adding the word to make, *la’asot*, it tells us that since He, may He be blessed, Who created and brought forth everything that exists out of nothing is now instructing those existing *la’asot*—to perform—from now on, all their creative acts, to make “some-

⁷² As to this assertion as opposed to earlier hypotheses that it was God Who is represented, see the summary by Saltman, “Forbidden Image.”

⁷³ Greenstein 2001, 1–22.

⁷⁴ Bahye, Gen. 2:3.

thing from something” “*yesh me-yesh*,” namely from the created materials that exist already. According to the Kabbalah the significance of the word *la’asot* alludes to other ideas as well, as was said by King David (Ps. 92:1) “A psalm. A song for the Sabbath day.”

Thus, it is understood that the unique pattern of the Sabbath is different from the pattern of the other days. Nothing was created on the Sabbath so there was no reason for the golden rays to focus on the image. Moreover, as the rays symbolize the connection between Heaven and Earth, they are not needed here because on the Sabbath man is directly involved with God’s Creation. As the Rabbis noted in the Talmud,⁷⁵ reciting the biblical verses in the Sabbath liturgy is a proclamation of partnership with God in the process of Creation.⁷⁶ On the Sabbath man becomes an extension or agent of the Deity,⁷⁷ instructed to rest as God did and start each week by continuing to make, *la’asot*, “something from something” and maintain God’s Creation on Earth.

The white and blue stripes representing the Heavens are not included in this image as the Sabbath celebration is within man’s domain on Earth. Further, the arched rectangular schema representing the Tabernacle was replaced with a domestic trefoil arch, as if to indicate that the image needed no exterior frame since the sanctity of the Sabbath is equal to the sanctity of the Tabernacle. Where it says in the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:10), “But the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord thy God; on it thou shalt not do any manner of work,” the Rabbis understood that any “manner of work” refers to the thirty-nine categories of work enumerated in the story of the building of the Tabernacle (*M Shab* 7:2). In Exodus 35:2, we read: “Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord”; and the verses

⁷⁵ BT *Shab* 119b: “Said Rava, and others say R. Joshua b. Levi, ‘Even if one prays alone on Friday evening, he should recite the verses Genesis 2:1–3’... because R. Hamnuna said, ‘Every person who prays on Friday evening and recites this selection... the verse says about him, as if, he becomes a partner with the Holy One blessed be He in the act of Creation, as it says,.... And Heaven and Earth were finished...’ Do not say ‘they were finished’ but ‘they finished.’”

⁷⁶ Gen. 2:1–3, “Thus the Heaven and the Earth were finished and all their legion... And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because on it He had abstained from all His work which God created to make.” Tweig 1973, 288–296, quotes *Midrash Vayechulu* (*Ozar HaMidrashim*, 1915, vol. 1, 156): “Said Rav, ‘Three times a person is required to recite *vayechulu*’ [And the Heaven and the Earth were completed (Gen 2:1–3)] twice during the Friday evening service, and once in the *Qiddush* [the blessing over the wine in the home]. In *Mishne Torah* Maimonides also makes reference to the custom of reciting *vayechulu* before the blessing over the wine in the *Qiddush* (*Hilchot Shabbat* 29:7).

⁷⁷ Greenstein 2001, 5.

that follow (35:4–18) relate to the instructions for building the Tabernacle. The Talmudic Sages understood that this juxtaposition of the Sabbath and the Tabernacle defined the work that is prohibited on the Sabbath.⁷⁸

In summing up the study of the Sarajevo Haggadah's Creation cycle and before returning to the discussion of the Tabernacle/Creation parallel in Byzantine Christian art it is important to recall Broderick's conclusion regarding the use of the arched rectangular schema in both Jewish and Christian works of art.⁷⁹ This schema, he notes, is based on an early Jewish motif that influenced both the Byzantine Christian and later Jewish works of art. His hypothesis is strengthened by the parallels noted above between the *Christian Topography's* texts and R. Moshe HaDarshan's interpretations, both of which reflect Hellenistic Jewish sources known from ancient writings such as those of Philo and Josephus.⁸⁰

Studying the commentaries of Nachmanides and R. Bahye regarding the Ark of the Covenant, we realize that it is not only the Ashkenazi midrashim of R. Moshe HaDarshan and others that point to the possibility of influences of early Jewish sources in descriptions of the Ark, but we can also discern the impact of the Heikhalot and Merkavah literatures on its interpretation, since both Nachmanides and R. Bahye associate the two cherubim in the Tabernacle and in the Temple with Ezekiel's vision of the *merkavah*.

As expounded in their writings, verbal imaging of the Ark of the Covenant was crystallized by the Heikhalot and Merkavah literatures. The gold cherubim in the Holy of Holies that formed the schematic arch above the Ark are reflections of the mystical speculations in connection with the divine Chariot of Ezekiel's vision as well as of the esoteric nature of the Divine Presence in the account of Creation, *ma'aseh bere'shit*, and in the story of the building of the Tabernacle, *ma'aseh ha'mishkan*.

⁷⁸ BT *Shab* 49b. The thirty nine categories of prohibited work are the itemized list of work done in building the Tabernacle.

⁷⁹ Broderick 1984, 320–322.

⁸⁰ See Chapter 4.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TABERNACLE AND THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

Christian Cosmological and Theological Concepts

Looking once again at the *Christian Topography* and the correspondence it suggests between the accounts of Creation and the building of the Tabernacle,¹ we realize the similarity between the arched semicircle seen there and its depiction in the Sarajevo Haggadah Creation cycle. In both manuscripts the notion of the parallelism between Creation and the Tabernacle is based on the perception of God's act of separation into "two spaces" or "two planes." This separation in both the universe and the Tabernacle is understood through historical, cosmological, and theological concepts, all of which are discussed in the *Christian Topography*.

Historically, during the wandering of the Israelites in the desert, the Tabernacle's sacred area, the Holy, represented the "first state," the earthly domain, where the priests conducted the divine service in the center of the encampment, bringing sacrifices and performing the prescribed ritual functions. The Tabernacle's most sacred area, the Holy of Holies, which housed the Ark of the Covenant, represented the "second state"—the heavenly domain, where only the High Priest was permitted to enter, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement, so as to seek absolution for himself and for all of Israel.² Cosmologically, the created earthly realm

¹ McCrindle 1897, 129–130.

² Ibid., 110–111: "Then again on the seventh day, after he had revealed to Moses how the whole world had been made, and had honoured him with such mystic visions, he then held converse with him, and having given him the law written with the finger of God on tables of stone, and instructed him in the knowledge of letters and made his countenance shine with glory, he let him descend from the mountain. Here men, having first received the Law from God in writing, were taught letters and communicated them to all the nations. He then afterwards directed him to construct the Tabernacle according to the pattern which he had seen in the mountain—being a pattern, so to say, of the whole world. He therefore made the Tabernacle, designing that as far as possible it should be a copy of the figure of the world, and thus he gave it a length of thirty cubits and a breadth of ten. Then, by interposing inside a veil in the middle of the Tabernacle, he divided it into two compartments, of which the first was called the Holy Place, and the second behind the veil the Holy of Holies." Ibid., 268: "And into the first Tabernacle the priests always enter, accomplishing the services, but into the second, the high priest alone, and but once a year enters."

is the “first state,” where the created creatures exist and remain until they die, and the heavenly domain is the “second state,” to which one has a chance to ascend after death and achieve eternal life.³ Theologically, the Tabernacle built by Bezalel, under the guidance of Moses according to divine instructions, is considered the “first state,” and the “second state” is the heavenly Sanctuary created by God (and not by man) for Jesus to enter after his death.⁴ The last notion comes from the Epistle to the Hebrews (8:1–5):⁵

[...] we have such a High Priest, one who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven; a minister in the Sanctuary and the true Tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up; for every High Priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. So this one too had to have something to offer. Now if He were on Earth, He would not be a priest, since there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law; the place where they serve is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly Sanctuary.

In all three senses, historical, cosmological, and theological, the arched area at the top of the Ark of the Covenant is understood to represent the heavenly abode, which is the divine Throne in the Heavens as described in Isaiah 66:1: “Thus said the Lord, the Heaven is My Throne, and the Earth is My footstool.” It has been argued that Constantine’s conception of both

³ Ibid., 114: “Since therefore according to the great cosmographer Moses, and according to Paul, that most divine teacher of the Church, in whom the Lord Christ speaks, two heavens, and two only were created by God [...] the righteous will enter into the upper heaven beyond this the visible heaven, where is the kingdom of the heavens—the second tabernacle called the Holy of Holies, of which the inner place in the tabernacle was a pattern, into which also the Lord Christ entered, having been taken up into the heaven above the firmament, having become the forerunner on our behalf, and having prepared for us a new and living way.”

⁴ Ibid., 145: “Now the blessed Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews has declared that the first tabernacle was a pattern of this world, for he says: ‘For the first had also ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary; for there was a tabernacle made; the first wherein was the candlestick, and the table and the shew-bread, which is called the sanctuary.’ Afterwards he speaks of the second in these terms: ‘[...] But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us [...]’ In this last passage he says that heaven is the true tabernacle, while the things which were prepared by Moses are antitypes. He therefore calls the things of Moses things *made by hands*, but the real things *not made with hands*. Having then been commanded to make the tabernacle he made it according to the pattern which had been shown to him, and also its appurtenances according to their pattern.”

⁵ Runia 1993, 74–78, n. 58, sees Jewish Hellenistic influence including Philo in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

the world and the Tabernacle as a rectangular house with a tunnel vault came from sources such as Patricius (Mar Abas), who was a Nestorian,⁶ and Theodorus of Mopsuestia, the theologian from Antioch who held many of the same views and was a teacher of Nestorius; the latter's teachings influenced the Nestorian heresy.⁷

According to Constantine, the word "Heaven" is sometimes in the singular, "The Heaven is my throne" (Isa. 66:1), and sometimes in the plural, "The Heavens declare the glory of God; the sky proclaims His handiwork" (Ps. 19:2).⁸ These verses demonstrate the perceptible and imperceptible in the two types of Heavens as alluded to in the schema of the Ark/Tabernacle/Cosmos. It is clear from the writings of fourth-, fifth- and sixth-century Christian thinkers in the Syrian Church that the Christian cosmological significance of the vaulted Heavens was influenced by the Old Testament as filtered through the Septuagint.⁹ Diodorus of Tarsus (d. 392), one of the most influential religious teachers in Antioch, referred to the two Heavens as the visible one and the invisible one, the one placed below and the other placed above, one being spherical serving as a roof of the universe and the other covering the Earth.¹⁰ His ideas influenced Severianus of Gabala (d. after 408), who treated the existence of the two Heavens, one above the other, as being part of a two-story house, an idea that was adopted by Constantine.¹¹ In Book X of the *Christian Topography*, Constantine added his comments to Severianus' *Book of the Hexaemeron*, noting:¹²

What will those lovers of strife say to this, when they hear that there is such harmony between this author and myself, both as regards the figure of the first heaven and of the second, and as regards the two places made by the interposition of the firmament—that the first heaven according to divine Scripture is not a sphere but a vaulted chamber—that this second heaven which is invisible, was consolidated from the waters, and carries the waters.

⁶ McCrindle, 24.

⁷ Smith 1971, 87.

⁸ McCrindle, 32.

⁹ In the Hebrew Bible the word Heaven is *shamayim*, always in plural. In the Septuagint at times it is plural, such as in Gen. 1:1. In the translation of Psalm 115:16, a verse that mentions the Heavens twice, the first Heaven is translated in the Septuagint as singular, whereas the second is in plural.

¹⁰ Smith 1971, 88, and n. 133.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 89; Severus of Gabala, *Oration on Creation*, No. 3.

¹² McCrindle, 335–344 (especially 342).

The visual schema of the *Christian Topography* fits both Severianus' and Constantine's descriptions. Both emphasize the mystical approach of the cosmic two-story domical structure. The ceiling (the firmament) of the first floor (the Earth) conceals the second floor (the Kingdom of Heaven). The entire structure becomes a symbolic and a mystical image that embraces the cosmological complexities of the two Heavens above the Earth, as can be found in Psalm 116:15: "The Heaven, even the Heavens, are the Lord's, but the Earth He gave to the children of men."

The Octateuchs' and the *Christian Topography's* visual description of the Ark of the Covenant with its rectangular form, arched top, and two doors does not match the biblical description (Exod. 25:10–21; 37:1–9), but as Mouriki-Charlambous notes: "This type of ark closely resemble[s] the scroll chests and Torah shrines of Jewish art." She adds that, "It has been noted several times that this type of ark is of Jewish origin. This feature is therefore another example of Jewish influence in the Cosmas illustrations derived from the Octateuchs."¹³ Let us first consider its appearance in miniatures in copies of the *Christian Topography* [Vatican 699 (fig. 27) and Laurentiana 28] and in some of the Octateuchs [Octateuch 747 (fig. 57), Octateuch 746 (fig. 58), and Serail 8 (fig. 59)]. The Ark in all of these representations is a rectangle topped with a gold semicircle identified with "the Mercy Seat." Two cherubim, each with four wings, are over the arch, two facing up and two down. The space between the upper and the lower wings has a human head in the center, a calf's head on the left, and a lion's head on the right. The model used for the Ark in all these miniatures is in accord with the following note in the *Christian Topography*:¹⁴

Having then been commanded to make the Tabernacle he made it according to the pattern which had been shown to him, and also its appurtenances according to their pattern, the Ark of Testimony and the Mercy Seat above, and the two cherubim stretching out their wings and overshadowing the Mercy Seat above.

The text that appears next to the miniature of the Ark in Vatican 699 (fig. 27) adds:¹⁵

In the inner place was set the Ark of the Propitiation, which was concealed behind the veil, and was not seen by anyone. The Propitiatory was a type of the Lord Christ according to the flesh, as saith the Apostle: "Whom God set

¹³ Mouriki-Charlambous 1970, 98.

¹⁴ McCrindle, 146.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

forth to be a propitiation by his blood" (Rom. 3:25) and again the high priest was himself a type of the Lord Christ, according to the Apostle: "For, saith he, just as the high priest once a year entereth into the inner Tabernacle, so Christ, having become a high priest of the good thing to come through his own blood entered in once for all into the Holy place, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11–12)," as me thinks I have frequently mentioned. Here is a delineation of the Ark of Propitiation [or the Mercy Seat].

The image of the Ark shown in Figure 27 is the one referred to as the "delineation of the Ark of Propitiation." According to this text we can accept the two High Priests standing and pointing at the Ark as an essential detail in visualizing the relationship between the Jewish High Priest entering the Holy of Holies once a year and Jesus replacing him to bring eternal redemption. Thus, it seems clear that the various pictorial motifs used to describe the Ark and its cherubim gave visual expression to Constantine's cosmic epistemology and its antecedents. The first motif depicts the façade of the Ark with the tetramorphic (four-winged) cherubim above its arched top, highlighting the Ark's cosmic significance. The illustration matches the *Christian Topography's* schema of a rectangular lower section symbolizing the Earth in the Cosmos and the Holy in the Tabernacle and the arched upper part representing both the Heavens and the Holy of Holies. The verse, "The cherubim with their wings shall have their wings spread out above, shielding the Ark cover with their wings" (Exod. 25:20), is clearly reflected in the miniature, which shows a pair of cherubim. We have the spread wings of the cherubim forming the arched upper part of the rectangular shape and on top of the arch, specifically identified by the title "Cherubim," are the two tetramorphs. Here again the miniature deviates from the description of the cherubim having only two wings each, as we read in 1 Kings 6:27–28: "He placed the cherubim inside the inner chamber: since the wings of the cherubim were extended, a wing of the one touched one wall and a wing of the other touched the other, while in the center of the chamber they touched each other."

According to Revel-Neher, Constantine might have used the ancient Jewish image of the Ark, but did not understand its schematic rendering and added the two tetramorphic creatures above it to form a second semi-circular frame.¹⁶ To understand the discrepancy between the image, which depicts tetramorphic creatures, and the title "Cherubim" written above it, we must reexamine the liturgical text of the fourth-century *Apostolic*

¹⁶ Revel-Neher 2010, 200.

Constitutions. I discussed this work earlier (see Chapter 3) in connection with its unique corpus of biblical verses, which were also used in the *Christian Topography* to describe Creation. The imaging of the cherubim in the miniatures of the Ark supports the notion that Constantine was influenced by this liturgical source, not only in his choice of biblical verses but also in how he visualized the cherubim. The following text from the *Apostolic Constitutions* alludes to both:¹⁷

Great art Thou, O Lord (Almighty) and great is Thy power, and of Thy understanding there is no counting. The Heavens proclaim Thy dominion (Ps. 19:1) and the Earth, which, hanging upon nothing (Job 22:7), trembles and shakes, tells of Thy unshaken steadfastness. The sea with its tossing waves and feeding a flock of myriads of creatures is bounded by the sand, held in awe at Thy command, and compels all to cry out: “How great are Thy works, O Lord, in wisdom hast Thou made them all; full is the Earth of Thy creation” (Ps. 104:24). The angels join this great song of praise to the Cosmos and say to one another that there is only one Lord governing the entire Creation: And the shining host of angels and the intellectual spirits¹⁸ say to Palomi (one to the other),¹⁹ “There is but one Holy” and the holy seraphim, together with the six-winged cherubim, who sing to Thee their triumphal song, cry out with never-ceasing voices, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Zebaoth! full is the Heaven and the Earth of Thy glory” (Isa. 6:3);²⁰ and the other multitudes of the orders, the angels, the archangels, the thrones, the dominions, the principalities, the authorities, the powers cry aloud, and say, “Blessed be thy glory of the Lord out of the very place” (Ezek. 3:12).

From Isaiah, the angels exclaiming “Holy Holy Holy” are described as “the holy seraphim, together with the six-winged cherubim,” whereas the liturgical response to their praise is found in Ezekiel. “Blessed be thy glory of the Lord out of the very place.” Carruthers sums up the liturgical significance of this conflation by associating the cherubim singing in the Book of Isaiah with the cherubim in the Book of Revelation:²¹

The Medieval Cherub figure conflates commentary on the four-winged *animalia* of Ezekiel 1 (called cherubim in Ezekiel 10:5–22) with the seraphim of Isaiah; with descriptions of the two-winged angels, also called cherubim, that guard the Ark in Exodus (Exod. 25) and in the Temple of Solomon

¹⁷ *Apostolic Constitutions* VII, 35, translated by Kohler in 1924.

¹⁸ Here the four *hayot ha'qodesh* of Ezekiel 1 seem to be called the intellectual spirits.

¹⁹ Kohler 1924, 415, n. 37, suggests that the word *palmoni* has its source in Daniel 8:13. He contended that by the time of the Septuagint this word was no longer understood so it could not be translated.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 39.

²¹ Carruthers 2009, 104.

(1 Kings 6); and with the *animalia* that attend the Divine Throne in Revelation 4, which are adopted from Ezekiel. The cherubim-*animalia* conflation was already made in Ezekiel; Revelation 4 conflates these further with Isaiah, as the *animalia* cherubim sing a doxology, as do the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3.

Examining the prayer from the *Apostolic Constitutions* Book VII, Chapter 35, I realized that in the process of paraphrasing and conflating the biblical references from Isaiah and Ezekiel the images were confused. The six-winged seraphim described in Isaiah 6:2: "Above Him stood the seraphim; each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly," were apparently interchanged with Ezekiel's four-winged cherubim about which Ezekiel (10:20–21) said: "They were the same creatures that I had seen below the God of Israel at the Chebar River, so now I knew that they were cherubim. Each one had four faces and each had four wings, with the form of human hands under the wings." Kohler notes that the author of this *Apostolic Constitutions* prayer erroneously ascribed the seraphim of Isaiah to the four-winged cherubim of Ezekiel 1.²²

Interestingly, Constantine, who, as I noted earlier, might have relied on a common source such as can be found in the *Apostolic Constitutions'* cosmic descriptions of the universe, also adopted the four-winged cherubim as the holy creatures, *hayot ha'qodesh*, who carry the divine Throne, the *merkavah*. The depictions of the Ark in the Octateuchs' miniatures show the same type of four-winged cherubim (figs. 57–59). The cherubim shown on top of the Ark were definitely regarded as the *hayot ha'qodesh* described in the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah, which likened the appearance of the Ark to that of the *merkavah*. I discuss this in more detail when I consider the Jewish antecedents of the cherubim image in these miniatures.

The second motif in the depiction of the Ark is the presence of the human figures on either side.²³ These same two figures appear in all three copies of the *Christian Topography* as well as in the parallel miniatures of the Octateuchs. Judging by their garments and by their proximity to the Ark it is clear that they are important priests. In the *Christian Topography* miniatures (fig. 27), both figures are pictured with phylacteries, *tefillin*, on their foreheads or with the "plate of pure gold" (Exod. 28:36) that was

²² Kohler, 415, n. 38.

²³ McCrindle 153.

on the High Priest's miter: "And thou shalt put it on a thread of blue, and it shall be upon the miter; upon the forefront of the miter it shall be" (Exod. 28:37).²⁴ The figure on the left, shown with gray hair and a beard, is wearing a dark blue tunic with a vest, a gold *ephod*, an additional green garment, and a red robe; the figure on the right has brown hair and is wearing a long red tunic, a gold *ephod*, and a light blue garment. Each priest touches the Mercy Seat with one hand and holds a golden scepter in the other. Both of them have haloes.

An inscription identifying these figures is found in Sinai 1186 from the eleventh century.²⁵ The legend next to the figure on the left identifies it as the priest Zechariah and the one next to the figure on the right as the priest Abiah. Although the text that accompanies this illustration notes that the Ark and the Mercy Seat are concealed behind the curtain, in these miniatures both the Ark and the cherubim are fully exposed. Revel-Neher notes that the priests in the ninth-century Vatican 699 are not identified by a written legend, so she believes that the legends were added only when the miniatures were copied in the eleventh century.²⁶ Her explanation, based on the work of Wolska-Conus,²⁷ is that the copyists added the names Zechariah and Abiah on the basis of the story of John the Baptist, which follows immediately after the drawings of the Ark and that the two figures were originally meant to be Moses, who is always imaged with dark hair, on the right, and Aaron, who is shown usually with white hair and a beard, on the left.

Commenting on this same scene in the Octateuchs, Weitzmann and Bernabo and Lowden note that this illustration placed beneath Exodus 25:20 does not at all conform to the Septuagint text (figs. 57–59).²⁸ Details such as the double-paneled doors, the rounded lid, and the two priests standing next to the Ark are not mentioned in the biblical text, but are almost exact replicas of depictions in the *Christian Topography*. According to Lowden, these close visual parallels between the Octateuchs and the *Christian Topography* argue against Weitzmann's theory that the similarity is due to the existence of a very early hypothetical Octateuch or Pentateuch that influenced both the sixth-century *Christian Topography* and the eleventh- and twelve-century Octateuchs. Lowden views this

²⁴ The *Christian Topography*, Laurenziana 28, fol. 127v.

²⁵ Revel-Neher 1998, 22; Dufrenne 1965, 83–95.

²⁶ Revel-Neher 1990/1991, 89.

²⁷ Wolska-Conus 1968–1973, II, 67, n. 371.

²⁸ Weitzmann and Bernabo 1999, 174; Lowden 2010, 137, 139.

hypothesis as highly speculative and notes that since the illustrations in the *Christian Topography* are an integral part of the treatise's arguments and discourse it should be accepted as the visual source that influenced the Octateuchs, starting from the eleventh-century Vatican 747. Lowden considers the inexplicable image (in terms of the Septuagint text and its catena) of the two priests next to the semicircular Ark with its double doors a clear example of the influence of the *Christian Topography* on the Octateuchs and not the other way around.²⁹

Viewing this image and trying to understand its departure from the biblical text requires that we read the relevant biblical verses in light of the ideas developed throughout the *Christian Topography*. Exodus 25: 20, associated with the miniature, reads "And the cherubim shall spread out their wings on high, screening the Ark cover with their wings, with their faces one to another; toward the Ark cover shall the faces of the cherubim be." The two verses that follow add a very significant note: "And thou shalt put the Ark cover above upon the Ark; and in the Ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will speak with thee from above the Ark cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the Children of Israel" (Exod. 25:21–22).

Apparently the intention of the artists of the Octateuchs and the *Christian Topography* was not merely to depict the Ark of the Covenant according to the biblical text, but also to focus on its unique sacred significance. As I indicated above, Revel-Neher determined that the two priests imaged next to the Ark of the Covenant can be identified as Aaron and Moses.³⁰ Portraying their figures on either side of the Ark suggests a bond with the Divine Presence, as it was from between the outstretched wings of the cherubim on top of the Ark that Moses heard God's voice. Furthermore, it was from the Holy of Holies, the place of the Ark, that Aaron asked forgiveness for the people on Yom Kippur. The pictorial composition of this image of the Ark showing Moses and Aaron pointing to its arched top with one hand and holding a scepter in the other alludes to the very special sanctity of the Ark.

Moreover, the two scepters reflect a rich tradition referenced in Pseudo-Philo's first-century *Biblical Antiquities*. About Moses and his staff, *Biblical Antiquities* says: "And now your staff with which these signs were

²⁹ Lowden 2010, 141–145.

³⁰ Revel-Neher 1990/1991, 89.

performed will be a witness between me and my people. And when they sin, I will be angry with them but I will recall your staff and spare them in accord with my mercy. And your staff will be before me as a reminder all the days.”³¹ About the rod in Aaron’s hand, it says: “The rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and put forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and bore ripe almonds” (Num 17:23). This blossoming established Aaron’s priesthood and his ability to bring forgiveness to the Jewish people.³² Thus, Moses and Aaron touching the Mercy Seat, the *kapporet* (related to the word *kippur*-atonement), suggests atonement and forgiveness.

The motifs of the Ark, the cherubim, Moses and Aaron, and other visual elements that are connected to atonement and expiation are seen in another type of illustration found in Octateuch 746 (fig. 60) and Serail 8 (fig. 61). These miniatures include a scene that combines the Ark and the menorah, the sacrificial animals, and Moses and Aaron standing at the far left. The principal element in the illustration is in the upper section, where the two cherubim are shown at the top of the Ark but instead of touching each other they are separated by a three-columned ciborium-like structure (a type of altar-canopy, a *baldachinum*).

Scholars contend that even though these images were placed next to Numbers 8:2, where Moses commands Aaron to light the menorah, they really illustrate the last verse of the previous chapter in which Moses goes into the Tabernacle and hears the voice of God.³³ The verse describing this scene is found in Numbers 7:89: “And when Moses went into the Tent of Meeting that He might speak with him, then he heard the Voice speaking unto him from above the Ark cover that was upon the Ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; and He spoke unto him.”

Jewish exegesis of this verse points to a contradiction as to the actual place where Moses heard the voice of God.³⁴ In Exodus 25:22 it says that

³¹ *Pseudo-Philo*, 19:10, 11.

³² *Ibid.*, 17:1,4.

³³ Weitzmann and Bernabo 1999, 194.

³⁴ *Sifre on Parshat Naso*, ch. 10, sign 58, “above the *kapporet*”: “Why does it say, ‘When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting’ *Ohel Mo’ed* (Num. 7:89) as it already said, ‘The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the *Ohel Mo’ed*, saying’ (Lev. 1:1) ‘from which I hear [know] from the Tent of Meeting.’ It teaches us ‘There will I meet with you, and I will impart to you—from above the cover, from between the two cherubim that are on the top of the Ark of the Covenant’ (Exod. 25:22). It cannot say ‘from the Tent of Meeting’ because it already said ‘from above the cover.’ And it cannot say ‘from above the cover’ because it already said ‘from the Tent of Meeting.’ How do you explain these two verses [this contradiction]? This is the method of the Torah: two verses that contradict each other. They remain in their place until another verse comes to resolve the contradiction. And what is

God spoke to Moses “from above the Ark cover, from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony,” whereas in Leviticus 1:1 it says, “The Lord called unto Moses, and spoke unto him out of the Tent of Meeting,” and in Numbers 7:89 we read that Moses, upon entering the Tent of Meeting heard the voice of God speaking to him from between the two cherubim. Thus, it is not clear if God spoke in the Tent of Meeting or from inside the Holy of Holies.

The miniatures in these three Octateuchs express the Christian reading and understanding of the biblical text. They show Moses and Aaron standing beside the Ark, whose semicircular top suggests the Mercy Seat. The golden cherubim on the top of each side of the Mercy Seat are leaning away from one another, and there is a ciborium-like structure in the gap between them. On the ground next to the Ark are a goat and a lamb, two of the sacrificial animals. Octateuch 746 (fig. 60) adds a hand of God coming out of an inverted rainbow in the Heavens, which points toward Aaron and Moses.

Moses, who is shown listening to God’s voice, symbolized by the hand directed toward him, is about to enter the Tent of Meeting, shown as a Christian ciborium.³⁵ He leaves the sacrificial animal outside the Tabernacle to underscore the abolishment of ritual sacrifice. The representation of the ciborium as a symbol of the Church conveys the Christian typological replacement of the Tabernacle’s sacrificial rituals by Jesus’ eternal redemption of mankind. The image is a deliberate Christianization of the Tabernacle/Temple and its rituals, a clear sign of Christian assumption of supersession of the earthly Temple by the Church and the heavenly Sanctuary, as expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews.³⁶

The Tabernacle depicted as an arched ciborium, that is, as a Christian structure, is also seen in other works of art, such as the sixth-century Basilevsky pyxis (figs. 96–100).³⁷ The reliefs on the pyxis were interpreted as biblical scenes designed to portray the narrative order of the story, but they were selected and juxtaposed in a new order that reflected Christian dogma. The illustrations carved on the pyxis can be divided into two

it? (Num. 7:89) The verse explains that when Moses entered the Tent of Meeting and the Voice descended from the upper Heavens and passed between the two cherubim, he heard the Voice speaking to him within the Tent of Meeting.”

³⁵ Weitzmann 1990, 62.

³⁶ Revel-Neher 1998, 32.

³⁷ A pyxis is a small vessel that is used to store sacred objects.

different compositional sections that are separated by the hinged area and its lock-space, which connect the two parts of the vessel.³⁸

The scene on the left shows Aaron, dressed in a robe with a staff in his hand (fig. 97). In the adjacent image we see him pointing toward the Tabernacle (fig. 98). Within the Sanctuary is an altar that looks like a table. An open codex is lying on the altar and two shofars are tied to its pillars. The central figure on the right side of the pyxis opposite Aaron is Moses, shown climbing Mount Sinai with his covered hands extended in front of him in order to receive the scroll of the Law marked by a cross given to him by the “Hand of God” (fig. 99). Moses’ face is turned aside so that he will not actually see God. Under the lock of the pyxis, there is a stream of water coming out of the base of the mountain and flowing toward a tree with two branches (fig. 100).

According to Archer St. Clair, the ideas in these Exodus scenes were based on the understanding of the Epistle to the Hebrews in regard to the Old Testament stories foreshadowing events related to Jesus. She explains the pyxis’ messianic message by pointing out the double appearance of Aaron and his rod as a representation of both the priesthood in the Old Testament and the prefigured priesthood of Jesus in the New Testament. This dual connotation is also apparent in the scene where Moses is receiving the Torah, which is depicted as a closed codex with a cross on top, in contrast to the open codex on the altar inside the aedicule (fig. 99). It can also be discerned in the scene where Aaron the High Priest is standing next to the aedicule and receiving an offering of leavened bread (associated with Jesus’ sacrifice) from a man with covered hands (fig. 97). The second man, partially hidden behind him, has a goat on his shoulders, as a representation of the Old Testament blood sacrifices to be replaced by the bloodless worship of the New Testament. Two shofars hanging on the pillars of the aedicule symbolize the kingship and the priesthood being united in the person of Jesus, the anointed one (fig. 98).³⁹ St. Clair contends that these details reflect the idea expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews about the Old Law being a “shadow of heavenly things” to be replaced by Jesus, who is considered the new Moses.⁴⁰

The Basilevsky pyxis dating to the sixth century, its Eastern provenance, its Syro-Palestinian iconography,⁴¹ and its Christian typological

³⁸ St. Clair 1984, 15–30.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

understanding of the Old Testament all suggest the existence of a common source that influenced both the reliefs on the pyxis and the miniatures in the *Christian Topography*. Both the reliefs and the miniatures highlight the same motifs: Moses ascending Mount Sinai, the shape of the Tabernacle, the sacrifices, and Moses and Aaron standing next to the Tabernacle. Analyzing the motif of the tree and the stream at the foot of Mount Sinai might help us trace this early source.

In her interpretation of the tree and the stream motif, St. Clair juxtaposes the story of the burning bush and the Revelation on Mount Sinai.⁴² We find the same juxtaposition in the *Christian Topography's* scene of the receiving of the Torah presented jointly with that of Moses and the burning bush (figs. 101, 102). She refers to the story of Egeria, who went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land around 381–384 and wrote an account of her journey. Egeria reported visiting Mount Sinai and finding the site of the burning bush.⁴³ In regard to the water imaged next to it, St. Clair quotes Philo,⁴⁴ who says that the place of the burning bush was a place of choice pasture land with much water and grass.⁴⁵ That the text in Exodus does not mention any water and that the image on the pyxis is a tree with two branches rather than a bush suggest that we should consider that this imagery parallels a different biblical source where water and trees are found together, and that would be the text that describes the Garden of Eden. According to Genesis, God placed two trees in the Garden of Eden together with a source of water (Gen. 2:9, 10):

And the Lord God caused to grow from the ground every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the Tree of Life in the middle of the garden, and the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. A river issues from Eden to water the garden and then it divides and becomes four streams.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 19–21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 19, n. 41.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 20, n. 49.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 26. St. Clair quotes St. Gregory of Nyssa on the descriptions of the pilgrims and other examples that show the bush with a source of water. In her article she summarizes other opinions that were expressed regarding the content of the pyxis pictures, according to which the tree and the source of water are connected to a group of figures to Moses' right as he ascends Mount Sinai. According to this view the bearded man accompanied by angry people is the figure of Moses, the water and the tree are related to the water of Rephidim. She finds this explanation unacceptable as there is no need for the two figures to appear side by side, one with a beard and the other without.

In the Basilewsky pyxis two branches emerge from the trunk of the tree and water streams from its base. The image is marked by lines that suggest that the water is dividing into different streams. The two branches may allude to the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge and the divided stream may represent the four rivers that flowed from the Garden of Eden.

Thus, the appearance of the tree and the streams of water in the center of the pyxis between Moses going up to Mount Sinai on the right and the Tabernacle on the left (fig. 100) connects the two parts of the pyxis (which according to St. Clair are two separate compositions). If we assume that we have here an allusion to the Garden of Eden, then both the pyxis and the *Christian Topography's* miniatures of the Tabernacle might serve to associate Creation with the Tabernacle (figs. 39, 40). The reference to the Garden of Eden in the East is likely to have its origins in apocryphal literature, for example, in 2 Baruch 4:3–4, whose author's name appears in the *Christian Topography* as "Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah the prophet."⁴⁶ Constantine quotes the 2 Baruch text, known as the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch* (early second century CE) when he discusses the building of the Temple that God planned when He created Paradise (4:3–6):

It is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with Me, that was already prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise. And I showed it to Adam before he sinned. But when he transgressed the commandment, it was taken away from him as also Paradise. After these things I showed it to my servant Abraham . . . and again I showed it also to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed him the likeness of the Tabernacle and all its vessels. Behold, now it is preserved with Me—as also Paradise.

A similar reference to the motifs of the Revelation at Sinai, the Tabernacle, and the Tree of Life is found also in Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* 11:15.

The arrangement of the Basilewsky pyxis reliefs seems to convey a meaningful flow of typological ideas linking Moses ascending Mount Sinai with the mystery of Creation as it was revealed to him and with the Tabernacle and the rituals that he was commanded to teach the Israelites. The theological meaning of these motifs centers on the differences between the Old and the New Testament, showing Aaron accepting a bread offering in place of the animal sacrifice (which belongs to the past) and the altar within the aedicule, which points to the new order of service. Moses

⁴⁶ McCrindle 47.

is pictured going up the mountain to receive the New Law marked by the cross against a background of the Israelites dancing, as described in the story of the Golden Calf (Exod. 32:19), which, according to Christianity, marked the end of the old covenant.

The scene showing Aaron and the two men beside him (to the left of the Sanctuary) portrays the reasons for the new covenant in which Jesus was the sacrifice for all His believers and is the High Priest in the heavenly Temple. The scene alludes to the Hebrew Bible's stress on sacrifices in connection with Aaron's priesthood. According to Christian understanding the Israelites had to sacrifice animals because they lacked faith in God, as shown in their demand to make a golden calf immediately after the Revelation on Mount Sinai. Animal sacrifice was a tangible means by which the Israelites could express what the Christians considered a feeble devotion to God.

The basket holding the bread of the sacrament and the codex of the New Testament on the altar within the aedicule both suggest Christian supersession of the Hebrew Bible expressed in the New Testament. Clearly, then, both the Basilewsky pyxis and the *Christian Topography* used Old Testament biblical scenes to convey New Testament's Christian messianic beliefs, particularly in regard to the Temple and its sacrificial service.

This analysis of the sacrifice and the Temple clarifies the iconography of the illustrations in Octateuchs 746 (fig. 60) and Serail 8 (fig. 61). Aaron and Moses shown next to the Tabernacle/Ark/ciborium with sacrificial animals images the Tabernacle as a symbol of the Cosmos and the animal sacrifices are there to call upon the Divine Presence within the earthly Temple to maintain the Cosmos and its needs.⁴⁷ The Octateuchs' images also include a ciborium on top—above the Tabernacle—as a symbol of the heavenly Temple and the understanding that the earthly sacrifices were replaced by worship in the heavenly Temple. As told in the biblical text both Moses and Aaron witnessed God's presence, Moses at the Revelation on Mount Sinai and then in the Tabernacle and Aaron when he entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. It was important for the Christian artist, to stress Moses and Aaron's divine worship through sacrifices, as in the Christian understanding Jesus replaced them and their worship. According to the Epistle to the Hebrews and the *Christian Topography*, Jesus brought Aaron's high priesthood to an end, ascended to the heavenly Temple, and from there will bring expiation to all mankind.

⁴⁷ Klawans 2006, 112–113.

The doors seen on the façade of the Ark are the third motif in the visual description of this chestlike structure with the arched top, identified by an inscription as the Ark of the Testimony. The double-paneled doors are shown in all of the images of the Ark within a red frame adorned with a rinceau decoration in gold and black. This appearance is not in accord with the text in Exodus instructing Moses as to the building of the Ark, but is a match to the verse in Deuteronomy, where Moses instructs the Levites carrying the Ark: “Take this book of teaching and place it beside the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God and let it remain there as a witness against you” (Deut. 31:26).

According to Carl-Otto Nordstrom, the images in Octateuchs 747 (fig. 62) and 746 illustrate this verse.⁴⁸ In both miniatures, Moses is shown placing the book of the Law beside the Ark, which has two doors with one of them being left open so as to fulfill God’s command. Thus, the visual portrayal of the Ark does not follow its description in Exodus, but was rather influenced by the Torah shrines in synagogues, which have two rectangular doors. Nordstrom claims that it was Moses’ command to put the “book of teaching” by the side of the Ark that influenced the Christian artists to seek out the model of the synagogue’s Torah shrine for the shape of the Ark of Covenant, so that it can “remain there as a witness against you.” The following verse reinforces this idea, especially for the Christian artists, who wanted to emphasize the need for a new covenant: “For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck; behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death?” (Deut. 31:27). Revel-Neher agrees that the presentation of the Ark in the shape of a rectangle with a semicircular top in these Octateuch illustrations “seems to integrate the post-biblical Jewish indication about the placement of the Torah inside the Ark.” At the same time it indicates the use of a basic single shape that differs slightly, with or without cherubim and with or without a ciborium. Revel-Neher suggests that it might also follow a later Jewish interpretation that paralleled Rabbinic commentaries.⁴⁹

As Constantine’s approach to the Ark/Tabernacle and his cosmology did not originate in the sixth-century *Christian Topography*, let us reexamine the visual pictogram of the Ark in Jewish artifacts from as early as the second century and the hermeneutical ideas upon which they were based.

⁴⁸ Nordstrom 1958, 84, 85.

⁴⁹ Revel-Neher 1995, 408.

I consider the antecedents of this schema in connection with the literary sources that made it significant in Jewish art, starting with the coins that Bar Kokhba minted from 132 to 135 CE. In searching for the correlation between the schema and the Cosmos and Creation, its role in maintaining the “memory of the Temple,” its use as a polemical tool vis-à-vis the Christians and their attitudes toward the destroyed Temple, it is important to look at all three motifs in the *Christian Topography's* image of the Ark.

Jewish Antecedents of the Ark/Tabernacle/Creation Symbols

The search for the antecedents of the cult implements of the Tabernacle found in Byzantine Christian manuscripts leads us to representations of the Tabernacle and the First and the Second Temple in early works of Jewish art. Revel-Neher notes that in examining the symbolic groupings of the Tabernacle, its implements, and other motifs in various forms of Jewish artistic expression, we realize that they all point to the historic Temple of the past as well as to its perpetual memory in the contemporary synagogue and the eschatological hope that it will eventually be rebuilt:⁵⁰

There remain no grounds for denying the existence of a sophisticated form of Jewish artistic expression based on conceptual composition. There is no denying its deep spiritual meaning. It has to be placed in the context of literary sources, Rabbinic commentaries and liturgy, as well as in contemporary history and theological polemics.

In reviewing the symbols of the Tabernacle/Temple, Bianca Kühnel refers to some of the differences evident in the artifacts from before and after the destruction of the Temple and suggests that the various compositions reflect an overall attempt to accent the historical and conceptual link among the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, the Temple, and the synagogue.⁵¹ She contends that the development of these images from individual objects to more complex iconographical compositions gives visual expression to ideas found in literary sources concerning the ever-present hope of ultimately rebuilding the Temple.⁵² From the fourth century on, these images were combined with pagan and Christian ideas and motifs because, she says, they are representatives of the three groups—pagan,

⁵⁰ Eadem 2000, 53–63.

⁵¹ Kühnel, 2004, 49–66.

⁵² Ibid., 54.

Jewish, and Christian—who understood one another’s symbols and knew how to utilize them so as to enhance the expression of their own ideas.⁵³

Weiss notes that the images of the Tabernacle/Temple found in Jewish art were used to accent the glorious Jewish past in the Sanctuary and to refute the Christian claim that with the destruction of the Temple the Jews lost their special status.⁵⁴ He suggests that Jews used the motifs of the Tabernacle/Temple in midrashim and liturgy, as well as in their visual images, as an affirmation of their faith in the eventual restoration of the Temple to counter the thrust of Christian polemics.⁵⁵

The images related to the Tabernacle convey a strong and central message concerning its importance. The particular pictorial compositions that group the various images suggest that we have to focus on the Tabernacle’s deep spiritual significance. But to gain a deeper understanding of *why* these images were shaped or grouped in the way they were, *how* they acquired their symbolic meaning, and *what* the artists were really trying to express requires that we explore their iconographic interpretations. The methodology for doing so comes from knowing that there are common patterns of thought that may have inspired both the artists (or their patrons) and the authors of the various relevant texts referenced in the present study.

Maguire used this methodology in his study of the mosaic floors of fifth-century Byzantine churches and approached the subject by suggesting several ways in which textual sources can help the art historian understand the visual images of the past. One approach is to study the relationship between literature and art, whereby the work of art might have become an illustration of the text. A second method is to consider the thought process behind the creation of the work of art and discern similar modes of thought in relevant literary sources that might have inspired both the artists and the writers. Exploring the artistic motifs used to symbolize Creation in the floors of these Byzantine churches, Maguire finds a significant correlation between these motifs and ideas expressed in relevant literary sources that shed light on why these motifs were portrayed in a specific shape and in a particular artistic combination.⁵⁶ His methodology as well as his caveats can serve as a guide and, to some degree, can frame the

⁵³ Ibid., 64.

⁵⁴ Weiss 2007, 65–86.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁶ Maguire 1987, 1–2, explains the artistic motifs of the plant and animal world that appear in the mosaic floors of Byzantine churches, representing Creation.

research into the symbolic meaning of the images that portray the building of the Tabernacle, *ma'aseh ha'mishkan*, and its mysterious connection to God's most significant work of art, the act of Creation, *ma'aseh bere'shit*. However, we must give careful consideration to Maguire's reservations regarding the danger that the explanation of the symbols might become subjective interpretation and that a text that a scholar might decide was the source for a specific understanding might be selected arbitrarily to parallel a particular point of view.⁵⁷

I have examined the images of the Tabernacle and Creation that appeared in the wake of the destruction of the national religious center in Jerusalem in 70 CE using Maguire's methodology and keeping his warnings in mind. The void that this disastrous event left behind mandated the creation of a powerful symbol for the spiritual center of holiness and the Divine Presence. Bar Kokhba conceived such a symbol in the shape of a schema of the Temple, and had it struck on his coins (figs. 2, 63). Using coins to convey an idea, which was essentially a Roman medium, Bar Kokhba took symbols that recalled the nation's past and represented its eschatological hopes.⁵⁸ It is interesting that the design he developed did not include the menorah. Possibly, the highly visible presence of the seven-branched menorah on the Arch of Titus, which commemorated the Roman victory and was at the same time the symbol of Jewish defeat (fig. 64), dissuaded him from using it on the coins. It is also possible that as the menorah was associated with the priestly functions in the Temple it did not fit in with Bar Kokhba's plan to portray the Temple as a religious symbol to unite the entire nation—priests, Levites, and commoners.

More than sixty years after the destruction of the Second Temple, which brought an end to the religious and political independence of the Jews in their land, Bar Kokhba must have decided that it was important to mint a coin with symbols that highlighted the centrality of the Temple for the entire people.⁵⁹ Thus he inscribed an elegant façade with four pillars, an architrave, and cornices on its face (fig. 63).⁶⁰ Between the two central

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁸ Revel-Neher 2010, 190.

⁵⁹ Sperber 1964, 41, notes that although the Bar Kokhba revolt only lasted three years—132–135 CE—yet it produced many tetradrachma coins.

⁶⁰ These details are architectonic, the structure being very similar to the schematic frame of a pagan temple.

pillars, in the place where there was generally the image of a god,⁶¹ he inserted a square structure made up of dots that rested on two short legs topped by an arch. Two horizontal lines divided the square and between them were two prominent dots. At the base of the coin, beneath the pillars, were two parallel lines that suggested a low fence and the inscription read either “Jerusalem” or “Simon.”

The reverse side of the coin (fig. 2) shows a piece of fruit next to a vase-like structure holding assorted plants. The plants and the fruit represent the four species—from the left the *lulav*, bound together with the myrtle, the willow, and the *etrog*—the symbols of Sukkoth called *he'hag*. Sukkoth was one of the three feasts that required a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem but it carried historical and eschatological significance even after the Temple was destroyed.⁶² The inscription (depending on the year of the coin) read “First year of the redemption of the Israel,” “Second year of the redemption of Israel,” or “For the freedom of Jerusalem.” Twentieth-century scholars proposed a wide range of interpretations as to the meaning of these coins.⁶³

⁶¹ Meshorer 2001, 144, quotes Reifenberg saying that in Roman coins pagan gods appear within images of temples.

⁶² Revel-Neher 2010, 193

⁶³ The summary of several of the academic opinions are listed in alphabetical order of the scholars' names. Barag 1998, 66, claims that the central structure of the Temple façade represents the showbread table, suggesting that Bar Kokhba and his men preferred the showbread table over the menorah, and so chose that symbol. Branham 1992, 375–394, explains that the two lines in the base of the coin (which resemble a fence) represent the *soreg* mentioned in Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15, 11, 5) and in the Mishnah (M. *Mid* 2:3). “Inside the *soreg* at ten *tefachim* height and thirteen *prazot* that the Greek kings broke into and then fenced them in . . .” and in the Talmud (BT *Yoma* 16a), “The entrance to the *heikhal* at the time of the sprinkling of the blood. And we learned that all the doors that were there were twenty *amot* high and ten *amot* wide and we learned that inside was the *soreg*.” The *soreg*, she notes, was the architectonic symbol designed to set off the locus of sanctity of a specific structure, a formal prohibition against non-Jews entering the sacred precincts. Fine 2005, 150, reinforces this idea claiming that the image of the showbread table in the center of the coin was the proper Jewish replacement for the cult figure that pagans portrayed there. He adds that the “visually non-descript” image of the showbread table is the reason for its nonappearance in Jewish art after Bar Kokhba. Kindler 1971, 76, describes the structure on four pillars as the façade of the Temple and the square structure in the middle of the center pillars as the Holy Ark with the scrolls within it. Meshorer 2001, 144, contended that in contrast to the buildings that appear on other coins from the ancient world, the schematic structure of the tetradrachma coin is closer to a geometric drawing than to the drawing of a building. Bar Kokhba, he wrote, did not want to sketch a building similar in its details to a temple and found a way to draw it in a shape that would be universally understood to represent the Temple in Jerusalem. Mildenberg 1984, 33, summarizes the various explanations and establishes two categories: the Temple and the synagogue. The key, he says, to identifying the symbol on Bar Kokhba's tetradrachma

Revel-Neher related in detail to the images that appear on the Bar Kokhba coins.⁶⁴ She contends that the destruction of the Second Temple engendered the development of a treasure of Jewish iconographic symbols. The loss of the nation's geographical center led to a strengthening of the study of Torah and the observance of Jewish Law, the Halakhah. Both became virtual substitutes for the fallen Temple, and the memory of that Temple was to be preserved through art. According to Revel-Neher, the coins also represented defiance against Roman authority and were a public relations vehicle for the populace. Their message was a response to the *Judea Capta* coin, struck by the Romans as a symbol of their victory (fig. 65), wherein the vanquished Kingdom of Judea was represented by a weeping woman sitting under a palm tree with a Roman soldier standing over her. The collection of images selected for the Bar Kokhba coins became a symbolic language with profound meaning that served Jewish art for a long time.

Revel-Neher identifies the box in the coin's center as the Ark of the Covenant viewed from the side,⁶⁵ as can be seen in the model of the Ark that Moshe Levine produced based on the biblical description (fig. 66).⁶⁶ The square area showing the boxlike structure and the arch above it, she writes, symbolized the cherubim, whose wings spread over the *kapporet* forming the arch (fig. 63). The Ark and the *kapporet* represent the covenant and the Divine Presence. Bar Kokhba used this religious symbol during the Second Revolt because it carried within it the profound eschatological meaning of redemption and hope for the future. Revel-Neher points to the

coin is the structure in the coin's center between the two pillars. This structure of a box, seen from its side, could represent the Ark of the Covenant that was in the First Temple but not in the Second. Muehsam 1966, 1–18, surmises that the image is the view from the Mount of Olives, where the High Priest stood when he sacrificed the red heifer from the top of that mountain. Narkiss 1968, 11–20, suggests that the structure depicted on the coin is the Temple, but that it is rather a rendition of a Hellenistic temple as a symbol of the political independence that was lost. These depictions, he says, have both political and symbolic meaning, having been designed to remind the people of the centrality of Jerusalem and to inspire the hope and the faith that Jerusalem will once again be the capital city of an independent Jewish state with the Temple at its center. Romanoff 1971, 37–42, states that the structure represents the interior of the Temple as described by Josephus or the ideal Temple that Bar Kokhba wanted to erect and that the model is made of several dots between the pillars representing the Ark of the Covenant. Rosenau 1936, 157–161, believes that the square structure in the middle of the coin is the place for the cherubim.

⁶⁴ Revel-Neher 1984, 71–72; 2010, 189–195.

⁶⁵ Eadem 1984, 75–80.

⁶⁶ Levine 1969, 90.

similarities between the schematic structure seen in the center of the Bar Kokhba coin and the schema used in the *Christian Topography* to portray the pattern of the Tabernacle and Creation and views it as proof of a Jewish influence on Constantine's iconography.⁶⁷ This idea has been generally accepted by other scholars who believed that the *Christian Topography's* use of the Jewish visual schema was intentional. As Kessler notes:⁶⁸

While Judaism had prepared the Christian order through its laws and covenants, with Christ's incarnation, Judaism's carnal institutions had been replaced, including its material sanctuary 'made by men's hands,' its priesthood, and its blood sacrifices. By quoting the shape of the Tabernacle from an aniconic Jewish representation the Vatican illustrator acknowledged Christianity's debt to its predecessor faith.

To comprehend the meaning of the Jewish visual schema in the center of the Bar Kokhba coins (with the wings of the two cherubim spreading over the Ark creating an arch), we have to look at the emergence of the mystical traditions in the wake of the trauma that followed the destruction of the Temple. Rachel Elijor writes that around the time of the Mishnah and Talmud an anonymous, pseudepigraphic mystical literature was composed to compensate for the absence of the earthly Temple by moving the Temple's sacred worship to a heavenly Sanctuary.⁶⁹

The origins of Merkavah tradition lie in the two-winged cherubim shielding the cover of the Ark in the Sanctuary in the desert (Exod. 25:17–22), also described by David in his exhortation to Solomon concerning the building of the First Temple: "For the pattern of the chariot [Heb. *merkavah*]—the cherubim—those with outspread wings screening the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord" (1 Chron. 28:18).

Thus, we meet the same symbol of the "two-winged cherubim shielding the cover of the Ark" as an early Jewish attempt to understand the mystery of God's presence and as an expression of the desire to approach Him with the aid of the *merkavah*:⁷⁰

[...] the very word *merkavah* became a symbolic concept expressive of the Holy of Holies and the Temple both as a whole and in detail; it figured both in the divine prototype of the Temple (the supernal *heikhalot* and their angelic cult), and in the memory of its earthly archetype (the Temple and

⁶⁷ Revel-Neher 1990/1991, 78–95; 2010, 197–202.

⁶⁸ Kessler 1995, 369.

⁶⁹ Elijor 2005, 15, 232.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

its priests); its roots lay in the numinous foundations of an ancient ritual tradition that forged a bond between Heaven and Earth.

From the Mishnah we gather that the emergence of this Jewish mysticism aroused both excitement and fear,⁷¹ as expressed in the prohibition in the Mishnah (*Hag* 2:1): “The laws of forbidden sexual relations [Lev. 18, 20] may not be expounded by three persons, nor the account of Creation [Gen. 1:1–2:3] by two, nor the *merkavah* by one . . .,” that is, one should not engage in study of the *merkavah* alone or in private. Elsewhere in the Mishnah (*Meg* 4:10) some sages forbade reading the first chapter of Ezekiel, that is, the account of the *merkavah*, in public: “It is forbidden to recite the *merkavah* as the prophetic section in the synagogue [on the holiday of Shavuot] [but] R. Judah allows it.”⁷²

The fact that some sages as early as in the mishnaic period debated the Halakhah concerning the reading of Ezekiel’s chapter of the *merkavah* as the *haftarah* for the holiday of Pentecost, *Shavuot*, attests to ambivalent feelings toward the Merkavah tradition as early as in Rabbi Akiva’s time and maybe even earlier.⁷³ A debate among scholars as to how early the Merkavah and Heikhalot literatures can be dated led to ascribing both to second-century CE in the Land of Israel.⁷⁴

Rabbi Akiva, who is known to have been very close to Bar Kokhba and involved in his rebellion, was also occupied with the Merkavah and Heikhalot literatures. A Talmudic source reveals that Rabbi Akiva and three other sages “entered an orchard, a *pardes*” meaning Paradise, and had a mystical experience.⁷⁵ According to the story, the four were seeking to perpetuate the memory of the destroyed Temple and its worship by ‘descending’ to the *merkavah* and ‘ascending’ to the supernal *heikhalot*.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Halperin 1988, 3–4.

⁷² In the commentary to this mishnah, Tosafot *Yom Tov* (R. Yom Tov Lipman Heller, 16th–17th century, Gemany) quotes the Maimonides explanation for this prohibition because of the fear that upon reading this mystical text the masses will have religious doubts. Tosafot *Yom Tov* also refers to R. Ovadiah of Bartenura (15th century, Italy), who explains why R. Judah’s ruling was accepted by the Halakhah and the reading of the *merkavah* from Ezekiel’s prophecy became the reading of the *haftarah* for the first day of Shavuot.

⁷³ Rowland 2009, 23–26.

⁷⁴ Halperin 1988, 5, 31, 37.

⁷⁵ BT *Hag* 14b. Rashi in his interpretation of this Talmudic passage explained that the four Sages (Rabbi Akiva being one of them) ascended to Heaven through meditation based on God’s names.

⁷⁶ Elijor 2005, 33.

Rabbi Akiva is known for his determined struggle to include the Song of Songs in the canon of the Bible. The Mishnah records the following regarding his fight against those who resisted his efforts:⁷⁷

All Holy Scriptures defile the hands. [All books included in the biblical canon transmit defilement to those who touch them]. Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes defile the hands. Rabbi Judah says, "Song of Songs defiles the hands but there is a dispute regarding Ecclesiastes." Rabbi Jose says, "Ecclesiastes does not defile the hands, and there is a dispute about Song of Songs. [...] Rabbi Simeon ben Azzai said, "I have a tradition from the seventy-two elders (of the Sanhedrin) that on the day when Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah was appointed head of the Academy, it was decided that Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes defile the hands." Rabbi Akiva said, "God forbid! No one in Israel disputed about Song of Songs, saying that it does not defile the hands. For all of eternity in its entirety is not as worthy as the day on which Song of Songs was given to Israel, for all the Writings are Holy, but Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.

Two significant points can be understood from this Mishnah: the association of the Song of Songs with the sacred space of the Holy of Holies and Rabbi Akiva's devotion to the Song of Songs.⁷⁸

It seems then that the importance attributed to the Song of Songs and to Ezekiel's vision reflects a yearning to dwell upon God's mysteries. The same desire was a common feature in the New Testament story of the ascension of the apostle Paul to the Heavens (2 Cor. 12:2–4). Interestingly, this story appears several times in the *Christian Topography*:⁷⁹

[...] of the rapture of the apostle Paul even into the third heaven, that is, to a third of the distance of the height of heaven from the earth—namely, as far as the firmament; then his rapture into Paradise, where he was privileged to be the hearer of the unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. All which things are marvelous and transcend our nature or our state.

The ascent into Heaven is envisaged as a journey to seek God sitting on the divine Throne in His celestial Temple in the upper Heavens. Finding the same tale in the Merkavah/Heikhalot *pardes* story and in the New Testament Corinthian story led to many theories, which were debated in the scholarly community.⁸⁰ The following paragraph encapsulates this debate:⁸¹

⁷⁷ M *Yad* 3:5 "Defiling the Hands" see S. Friedman 1993, 117–132.

⁷⁸ Morray-Jones 2009, 378.

⁷⁹ McCrindle, 116–117.

⁸⁰ Halperin 1988, 6–7; Morray-Jones, 2009, 379; Scholem 1965, 14–19; Schafer 1992, 19–35; Goshen-Gottstein 1995, 69–133.

⁸¹ Morray-Jones 2009, 379.

Whoever the original author may have been he evidently used the term *pardes* as a technical term for the Holy of Holies in the highest Heaven, where God appears on the Merkavah. He evidently expected his readers to understand this usage, which was deeply rooted in the pre-Rabbinic and pre-Christian tradition of the visionary ascent.

Hence, there seems to be an obvious similarity between the visual symbol of the cherubim's wings forming a schematic arch above the Ark on the Bar Kokhba coins, the *merkavah's* two-winged cherubim shielding the cover of the Ark as a symbol of the divine Throne, and the *Christian Topography's* version of this image.

The various symbols on the Bar Kokhba coins were formulated at the time that the spiritual leaders of the mishnaic period, the Tanna'im, were updating the Halakhah and accommodating to the new post-Temple reality. Their primary concern was clearly to preserve "the memory of the Temple." Perhaps, as there was no other possibility for communication under the oppressive Roman rule, Bar Kokhba determined that he could promulgate his ideas in this very abbreviated but meaningful form, which was all that could be put on a coin, and be understood by the Jews of the period. Searching the appropriate textual sources should help determine *why* the symbolic image on the coin was cast as it was, *how* its symbolic meaning was projected,⁸² and *what* elements and objectives dictated the choices of the images that he chose.

In summary, it seems clear that some of the pictorial motifs used to describe the Ark of the Covenant and its cherubim in the *Christian Topography* and in the Octateuchs have their antecedents in Jewish art starting with the Bar Kokhba coins. The motifs used had a special Jewish meaning and were done in a form that "was not only a pictorial detail but a significant ensemble."⁸³ Thus the Byzantine iconography of the Octateuchs and the *Christian Topography* used the Jewish model of the Ark but added the biblical cherubim to the schematized depictions that were integrated into the outline of the rounded-top Jewish form.

The schema that depicts the façade of the Ark with the cherubim above its arched top underscores the Ark's cosmic significance. The image is very similar to the *Christian Topography's* schema of a rectangular lower part symbolizing the Earth in the Cosmos and the Holy in the Tabernacle and the arched upper section representing the Heavens and the Holy of Holies. The cherubim on top of the Ark allude to the holy creatures described in

⁸² Maguire 1987, 1–2.

⁸³ Revel-Neher 1995, 409–410; 2010, 197–202.

the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah, which likened the appearance of the Ark to that of the divine Throne. The image of the “two-winged cherubim shielding the cover of the Ark” seems to be, then, an attempt by the second-century Rabbis to understand the mystery of God’s presence after the destruction of the Temple, whereas for the Christians it symbolized the heavenly Temple, which replaced the destroyed Temple on Earth.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TEMPLE: HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY

The Temple in Early Jewish Thought

In Chapter 6 I looked at the Jewish antecedents of the Ark/Tabernacle/Creation symbols on the Bar Kokhba coins. These as well as various other symbols I discussed in earlier chapters point to the concern of the Rabbis for maintaining the centrality of the Temple and for preserving its memory, *zecher ha-mikdash*. However, we know that from as early as the Hasmonean Period (second century BCE) that the people of Israel had split into different sects. As Josephus wrote:¹

For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Saducees, and the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline are called Essenes.

By the first century CE, there were also the Zealots and the Sicarii, who differed in their thinking, especially in regard to issues concerning the Temple. On one hand, we know that prior to the Temple's destruction, great numbers of Jews came on pilgrimages to Jerusalem in reverence for the Temple and gave money for its maintenance, but, on the other hand, we know of many literary sources that criticized the institution of the Temple, its cult, its purity, and its leadership.² The intertestamental and Qumran literatures are full of accounts of conflicts with the Pharisee authorities in which the latter are accused of having defiled the Sanctuary.³ The Qumran Temple Scroll (second century BCE), for example, compares the degraded Temple in Jerusalem and the ideal sanctuary as described in the scroll, and affirms that the Dead Sea community living in Judea represents the intermediate stage prior to the coming of the Messiah.

When the Temple was destroyed the Rabbis (who were followers of the Pharisees) decided that its many practices and customs had to be replaced with new rituals suitable for the new reality, which also required new interpretations to the laws promulgated in the Torah as well as new

¹ Josephus, *Wars* 2, 8, 2.

² Levine 2002, 388.

³ Eilior 2005, 1–28; Baumgarten 1977, 54, n. 57.

institutions. The result of their efforts, known as the Oral Law, evolved in the early years of the Common Era, continued to develop, and was eventually codified in the Mishnah and later in the Talmud.⁴

Two of the earliest mishnaic tractates—*Tamid* and *Midot*—are unique in that they are devoted exclusively to a description of the Temple and its rituals. According to Meir Bar Ilan, these texts were a rebuttal to criticism that brought the purity of the Temple into question and were designed to emphasize its transcendent sanctity.⁵ Lee Levine accounts for the contradictions in the descriptions of the Temple between *Mishnah Midot* and other literary sources by suggesting that they were the result of different concepts regarding the meaning of sanctity.⁶ Moreover, he points to the religious extremism that emerged toward the end of the Second Temple Period, which imposed its own view of the priesthood and the purity of the Temple and intensified the schisms among the various sects.⁷ He contends that we must examine archaeological evidence and engage in a serious study of first-century Judean society if we are to understand the broader spectrum of beliefs and practices among the Jews of the time and eventually accept the fact that identifying the Pharisees with “normative Judaism” is incorrect.⁸

In designing his coins it is possible that Bar Kokhba used symbols that would counter the conflict and criticism that swirled around the memory of the Temple. The images cast on the coins—the façade with four pillars, the architrave, the structure of the Ark with the two dots in its center, and the two parallel lines at the bottom that suggest the fence of the courtyard, the *soreg*, might have all been selected to convey a specific message.⁹ It appears that these figural motifs were chosen specifically to portray the memory of the Temple as a focal point to unite the entire community. They allude to the Israelites gathering in the courtyard (symbolized by the *soreg*), to the priests and Levites representing the people by worshipping in the Holy (symbolized by the façade), and to the

⁴ According to rabbinic tradition at the Revelation in Sinai Moses was given the Written Law, that is, the Torah, as well as the oral interpretation of the laws of the Torah. In order for the laws of the Torah to be understood by the people and put it into practice, the Rabbis had to expand and explain their practical meaning orally and only later were these teachings written down and codified (see Chapter 1).

⁵ Bar Ilan 1989, 27–40.

⁶ Josephus, *Wars*, 5, 5, 1–7; *Antiquities*, 15, 11, 1–7; *M. Mid* 1:5.

⁷ Levine 1996, 14–15.

⁸ *Idem.*, 2002, 387.

⁹ Yadin 1957, 18.

High Priest entering into the Holy of Holies (symbolized by the Ark) to bring atonement and forgiveness to the entire people on Yom Kippur.

The importance of providing all of the people a sense of communal involvement in the Temple service, which would underscore its centrality to Jewish life (as perhaps seen on the Bar Kokhba coin) was apparently the idea behind the division of responsibility for worship in the Temple. Priests and Levites from around the country were divided into twenty-four groups called “watchers,” “*mishmarot*,” which were accompanied by associated contingents of representatives from among the commoners, who were known as “those who stand by,” “*ma’amadot*,” According to *Mishnah Ta’anit* 4:2, each *mishmar* was obligated to serve in the Temple twice a year for one week. When it was the turn of a specific *mishmar* to come to Jerusalem to fulfill its obligation, a designated group from the associated *ma’amad* would join the Levites and the priests as representatives of the entire people to observe the sacred service. The other members of the *ma’amad* would gather in their own local area, where they would fast, pray, and recite the story of Creation from the Book of Genesis. Reading the biblical verses of the account of Creation, *ma’aseh bere’shit*, reinforced the conceptual interdependence between God’s Temple and its worship and God’s created Cosmos and was a reminder that saying the prayers and performing the rituals in the Temple were important for the continuing existence of the universe.¹⁰ Sources such as the Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness¹¹ and *Mishnah Tamid*¹² are interpreted in the writings of Gerald Blidstein, Ezra Fleischer, and Joseph Tabory.

Blidstein notes that the activity of the part of the *ma’amad* that gathered for prayer locally while their representatives stood at the Temple’s altar when the daily public sacrifices were offered indicates the intention to involve the entire public in the Temple’s sacrificial service.¹³ Fleischer dwells on the concern of the ancient authorities regarding the distinctions “between the Temple proper and the outlying areas and between the priests and the rest of the people.”¹⁴ Tabory contends that at the time when the daily sacrifice was offered in the Temple the representatives of

¹⁰ Commentary of R. Ovadiah of Bartenura (1445–1505) to *M Taan* 4:2.

¹¹ Yadin 1957, 264–269, explains the status of ordinary Jews in the sacrificial service.

¹² *M Tam* 5:6 explains the functions of the priests and the Levites in the daily sacrifices and the role of the head of the *ma’amad*, who represented the entire people: “The head of the *ma’amad* would ceremoniously place the defiled ones on the eastern gate.”

¹³ Blidstein 1990, 256,

¹⁴ Fleischer 1990, 422.

the *ma'amad* gathered at Nicanor's Gate.¹⁵ From there they observed the priests entering the Temple precincts to offer the incense, they heard the priestly blessing, they observed the offering up of the specific parts of the sacrifices, and they heard the Levites sing during the wine libation.¹⁶

The Babylonian Talmud *Ta'anit* 27b also emphasized the idea that having the *ma'amad* recite the verses from Genesis was an attempt to ensure that the sacrifices offered would be acceptable to God. The Babylonian Rabbis decided to continue the recitation of the passages of the ritual of the sacrifices, *sefer ha'korbanot*, and the repetition of *ma'aseh bere'shit*, even after the Temple no longer stood, as a substitute for bringing sacrifices for forgiveness and repentance:¹⁷

The common people of the *mishmar* gathered in their villages and recited the *ma'aseh bere'shit*. How do we know this? Said R. Jacob b. Aha in the name of R. Asi, "Were it not for *ma'amadot*, Heaven and Earth would not stand, as it is said, (Gen. 15:8, 9). And he said: 'O Lord God, whereby shall I know that I will inherit it?' Said Abraham: 'Master of the Universe, perhaps the Jewish people will sin before You and You will do to them what You did to the generation of the Flood and to the generation of the Tower of Babel?' He responded to him, 'No.' Said he [Abraham] before Him: 'Master of the Universe, whereby shall I know that I will inherit it?' He responded to him, 'Take Me a heifer three years old and a she goat three years old...' [ibid. v. 9]. Said he [Abraham] 'Master of the Universe, that is fine while the Temple stands, but when the Temple no longer stands, what will be with them?' He responded to him, 'I have already established for them the order of the sacrifices, when they recite this service before Me, it will be before Me as if they offered the sacrifice before Me, and I will forgive them all their transgressions.'"

The idea of the *ma'amadot* is preserved in the daily service through the prayer "It Is Our Duty to Praise," *aleinu l'shabeach*. According to Joseph Heinemann this prayer is thought to have been composed in the Second

¹⁵ Nicanor's Gate was the eastern gate to the Temple. According to the M *Mid* 1:4, "There were seven gates in the Temple courtyard. In the east there was the gate of Nicanor." This gate was known because of the miracles told about its doors in M *Yoma* 3:10. The Talmud (BT *Yoma* 38a) elaborates on these miracles, saying "What miracles were performed by his doors? When Nicanor went to Alexandria in Egypt to bring them, on his return a huge wave threatened to engulf him. Thereupon they took one of the doors and cast it into the sea but still the sea continued to rage. When they prepared to cast the other one into the sea, Nicanor rose and clung to it, saying 'cast me in with it.' The sea immediately became calm. He was, however, deeply grieved about the other door. As they reached the harbor of Acre it came to the surface and appeared from under the sides of the boat."

¹⁶ Tabory 1999, 163.

¹⁷ BT *Taan* 27b.

Temple Period, and we know that it was recited at the conclusion of the liturgical reading from *ma'aseh bere'shit*.¹⁸ The prayer's central theme is the responsibility of Jews to accept the obligations of the Kingdom of God and to recognize Him as the Creator of all things, *yotser bere'shit*, and the Sustainer of Heaven and Earth.¹⁹ The *aleinu* prayer, which is actually a summation of the verses that tell the story of Creation has been preserved in the Jewish liturgical tradition.

Israel Ta-Shma noted that the prayer selections of the *ma'amadot*, which included different verses from *ma'aseh bere'shit* and the order of the sacrificial service, were integrated into certain prayers in France and Germany in the early Middle Ages.²⁰ From the twelfth century on these selections were included in the prayer book together with the *aleinu*.

The importance of the *mishmarot* and the *ma'amadot* as symbols of communal involvement in the sacrificial service, even after the fall of the Temple, was highlighted by lists found by archaeologists that authenticate the *mishmarot* and include the names of the priests. Avi-Yonah describes an inscription uncovered in Caesarea that mentions the *mishmarot*.²¹ The published results of his dig in the summer of 1962 describe Hebrew inscriptions on shards that were reconstructed and proved to be lists of the twenty-four *mishmarot*, which can be dated by numismatic evidence to the fourth century.²² According to Ephraim Urbach, an inscription that was uncovered in an ancient structure in Yemen included a list of eleven *mishmarot*, and he contends that this document offers proof that the custom of recording the names of the *mishmarot* was continued by priests who were exiled to distant lands.²³ It also further authenticates the findings from Caesarea and validates the material found in written fragments and in the words of various liturgical poems, *piyyutim*. Scholars

¹⁸ Scholem 1965, 27, believed that the prayer *aleinu l'shabe'ach* is related to the Merkah literature because it emphasizes the idea that God, Who created the world, is the Master of everything. The source of this prayer like all the Merkah literature from the period of the Tanna'im is closely related to the chapters of *ma'aseh bere'shit*; Heinemann 1977, 270–274. The prayer *aleinu l'shabeach* uses expressions such as “We bend our knees and prostrate ourselves . . .” in praise of the Creator of the universe, which alludes to rituals in the Temple.

¹⁹ BT *Taan* 27b: “Were it not for the *ma'amadot*, the Heaven and the Earth would not survive.”

²⁰ Ta-Shma 1993, 85–98.

²¹ Avi-Yonah 1964, 24–28.

²² A treasure of 2,700 bronze coins dated to the years 355/356 CE found in the ruins indicate that it was built in the third or early in the fourth century and destroyed in the middle of the fourth century.

²³ Urbach 1973, 304–327.

have concluded that the list of *mishmarot* (as found in 1 Chron. 24:9–31) indicates that these *piyyutim* were part of early liturgy that kept the memory of the Temple, its rituals, and the hope that it would eventually be restored alive.²⁴

In light of the foregoing it seems entirely possible that Bar Kokhba was mindful of ideas that combined the Jewish past, present, and future when he chose the images for his tetradrachma coins.²⁵ Moreover, he selected figural motifs that symbolized the non-priestly Temple elements (the *soreg* and the exterior pillars and architrave of the *heikhal*), which clearly alluded to the part the people played in the Temple's divine service. It is entirely possible that, notwithstanding the fact that the Temple no longer stood, he wanted to emphasize its contemporary centrality and the eschatological hope for the future.

Halakhic Developments after the Destruction of the Temple

As I noted above, literary texts compiled in the period following the minting of the Bar Kokhba coins include many passages (which might not have been written down originally but expressed orally) that relate to background material relevant to the meanings that various scholars ascribed to the images on the coins. The Mishnah, as well as the passages that remained “outside” the Mishnah, the Braitot, (supplements to the Mishnah), the Tosephta, and the prayers based on the Mishnah all refer to the “memory of the Temple” as a concept that involves political, religious, polemical, and messianic motifs. We know that Bar Kokhba enjoyed a close relationship with Rabbi Akiva, and it was most likely owing to that connection that he became so involved in the spiritual life of the period. That being the case, a study of these sources may elucidate the ideological ramifications of the Second Revolt and the conceptual significance of the symbols chosen for the coins.

From Rabbinic sources,²⁶ we know that Rabbi Akiva assumed the contested spiritual authority of the Second Revolt against the Romans

²⁴ Shinan 1996, 148–149; Fleischer 1969, 176, n. 1, made a list of the *piyyutim* that mention the *mishmarot*; the relation to the priestly *ma'amadot* is also found in Lieberman 1968, 148.

²⁵ Revel-Neher 2010, 194.

²⁶ PT *Taan* 4:5 (24a).

(132–135), which was under the military leadership of Bar Kokhba, also known as Simon Bar Kuseiba or Ben Kuziba.²⁷ Midrashic sources provide some insight regarding the events that led up to the Second Revolt.²⁸ Apparently, Hadrian (76–138) promised to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem and collected money from the Jews in the Land of Israel and the surrounding areas for its construction. When he misappropriated those funds and used them to build a pagan temple instead,²⁹ the Jews were enraged and were ready to support Bar Kokhba's revolt.³⁰

Yaakov Meshorer, relying on the Roman historian Cassius Dio (c. 155–229) regarding Hadrian's visit to the Land of Israel in 130 CE,³¹ referred to the establishment of the pagan city of Aelia Capitolina on the ruins of Jerusalem with a temple to Jupiter erected on the site of the Jewish Temple.³² Moreover, Hadrian imposed new decrees, including a prohibition against circumcision, which infuriated the Jews and fanned the flames of war.

Bar Kokhba determined to free Jerusalem from the defilement and to rebuild the Temple. That the name of Elazar the Priest and the symbols related to the Temple were inscribed on the coins clearly suggests that his principal thrust was to renew the divine service and to preserve the memory of its sanctity, according to the instructions of the Rabbis of the period.

The references to concepts in the Mishnah, seen in Bar Kokhba's letters, reveal his thoughts concerning the halakhic traditions of the time. He seems to have been scrupulous about tithing and observant of other biblical commandments.³³ From one of his letters, we know that even

²⁷ *LamR* 2:2; *LamRB* 2:4: These sources relate that when R. Akiva saw Bar Kuseiba, he quoted Num. 24:17: "There shall step forth a star out of Jacob . . ." in reference to him and proclaimed "*malka meshicha*" "the Messiah King"—Bar Kokhba [lit. "Son of the Star"].

²⁸ *GenR* 64:29; *Genesis Rabbah* 1965, 710.

²⁹ Sperber 1964, 37–41.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: Traditions similar to the aggadic ones are found in Hellenistic sources (n. 12) and in Jewish and Christian pseudepigraphical sources (n. 13). Cassius Dio (n. 14) also tells a similar story n. 15–17. Sperber claims that the fact that these traditions are found so profusely in sources so widespread and so different from one another, without a common theme, suggests that they are true historical facts.

³¹ Meshorer 2001, 135–137.

³² *Ibid.* 135, n. 3.

³³ Abramsky 1961, 197–208, 198; Yadin 1971, 124–139. During his 1960s excavations in Wadi Murabba'at and Nahal Hever, Yadin found letters that were written by Bar Kokhba. In one of his letters Bar Kokhba mentions tithing, using the word *m'taken*, which is a technical term found in Rabbinic literature. See *M Demai* 3:1: "*Ha'm'taken* [he who separates *terumah* and tithes] his grain is prepared to be used according to the law, as it says 'every single individual must separate *demai*.'" Openheimer 1984, 140–146, brings several examples: (a) the *mitzva* of *tsitsit* (fringes on the four corners of a garment;

under the stress of Roman rule and economic hardship he observed the commandment to acquire the four species for Sukkoth,³⁴ not only fulfilling this commandment himself but seeing to it that despite the hardships of the war his soldiers observed it as well.

In new perspectives on the Second Jewish revolt against the Romans, Peter Schaefer expresses a different idea concerning the relationship between Bar Kokhba and the Rabbis.³⁵ He notes that the documents reveal a Judaism that is not anachronistically archaic within a Rabbinic society in the process of consolidating itself; rather they allow us a glimpse of a Jewish society that was still much closer to the Maccabees, the Qumran community, and the Zealots than to the Rabbis.³⁶

Whether or not Bar Kokhba wanted to establish his independence from the Rabbis, who seem to have ignored him in their writings, it is quite obvious from his letters that he was familiar with halakhic terminology and attempted to perpetuate the memory of the Temple's religious ritual and to share it with his soldiers, an idea that is clearly suggested by the *lulav* and *etrog* on the reverse side of the coin opposite the symbols of the Temple. The way in which he depicted the four species on the back of the coins seems to parallel some of the halakhic opinion of the Rabbinic tradition (fig. 2).

Sperber demonstrates this reflection by referring to the discussion in *Mishnah Sukkah* 3:4, which delineates the halakhic precision regarding the four species.³⁷ This passage recounts a controversy between R. Yishmael, who says that there should be three myrtle branches, two willow branches, one palm branch, and one *etrog*, and R. Akiva, who says "as there is one palm branch and one *etrog*, so there should be one myrtle branch and one willow branch." The coin's depiction follows R. Akiva, namely one of each

Num 15:38, 39). Clusters of colored wool and next to them a group of *tsitsit* attest perhaps to the manufacture of blue threads for the for the fringes; (b) woven garments were identified in the Judean desert caves that were made of cloth that did not include a mix of wool and linen, *shatnez* (Deut. 22:12), despite the fact that weaving of wool and flax threads together was acceptable at that time; (c) utensils were found in the caves that were apparently part of the booty taken from the Roman soldiers with the heads of the gods rubbed off. The explanation given is that the faces were destroyed by Bar Kokhba's men to purify these utensils and to remove any hint of idolatry.

³⁴ M *Suk* 3:12: "At first the *lulav* was taken into the Temple on seven [days] and in the provinces on the first [day]. As the Temple no longer stood R. Yochanan b. Zakkai decreed that the *lulav* should be taken on all seven [days] as a memory of the Temple"; Yadin, 2002, 322–328 (P. Yadin 57: An Aramaic Letter from Shimo'on).

³⁵ Schafer 2003, 1–22.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁷ Sperber 1964, 38; Amit and Eshel 1990/1991, 33–35.

of the four species. Similarly, the *etrog* is placed to the left of the *lulav*, according to the halakhic requirements of “taking the *lulav*.”³⁸ The stem of the *etrog* pointing downward is also in accord with the Halakhah. The *lulav* is shown protruding from a woven basket, this being in the tradition of the *lulav* of the “people of Jerusalem, which is mentioned in *Mishnah Sukkah* 3:8: “It is told of the people of Jerusalem who would (before the destruction of the Temple) bind their *lulav* in golden *g’muniyot* [a small woven basket].” This description must have been part of an old oral tradition, as the *Mishnah* ascribes it to R. Meir, who was born after the Temple was destroyed, and so could not have witnessed it in person. It also gives visual expression to the concept articulated in R. Yochanan b. Zakkai’s decree regarding the blessing of the four species throughout all the days of the Sukkoth festival,³⁹ as was done in the Temple.⁴⁰

In mishnaic times the Rabbis fixed the version of the prayer for rain to be said on Sukkoth. The four species associated with the holiday are considered symbols of rain and water that guarantee that Creation will endure,⁴¹ as stated in the Talmud (BT *Taan* 2b):

Said R. Eliezer: “Seeing that these four species are intended only to make intercession for water (BT *Suk* 37b) therefore as these cannot [grow] without water so the world [too] cannot exist without water.

The ceremony of “waving the *lulav* and *etrog*” on Sukkoth was similar to the ceremonies of the “waving of the bread of the first fruits” (Lev. 23:20) and the “waving of the lambs of *atzeret* (a pseudonym for the holiday of Shavuoth).”⁴² The substantive difference among the various wave offerings is that the waving of the *lulav* and *etrog* continued after the Temple was destroyed. Moreover, in the midrashic and liturgical traditions, the *lulav* and *etrog* became symbols of man’s beseeching God to manifest His involvement in the Cosmos by causing the rain to fall. The wave offering thus became associated with prayers for rain and pleas that the violent

³⁸ The command of “taking the *lulav*” follows Lev. 23:40: “And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees [citron], branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.” The *lulav* is bound together with the *hadass* and *aravah* (this bundle is also referred to as the *lulav*).

³⁹ Yochanan ben Zakkai (c. 30–90 CE) was one of the Tanna’im, an important Jewish Sage in the Second Temple Period and a primary contributor to the core text of Rabbinic Judaism, the *Mishnah*.

⁴⁰ M *RH* 4:3; M *Suk* 3:12.

⁴¹ Patai 1939, 251–286; 1947, 24–104; Rubenstein 1995, 163–237.

⁴² Lerner 1969, 101–109, 101, n. 5.

winds and hurricanes that often come in the rainy season would cease (BT *Suk* 37b–38a):

R. Johanan explained, [One waves them] to and fro [in honor of] Him to Whom the four directions belong, and up and down [in acknowledgment of] Him to Whom are Heaven and Earth. In Palestine they taught us thus: “R. Hama b. Ukba stated in the name of R. Jose son of R. Hanina,” he waves them to and fro in order to restrain harmful winds; “up and down, in order to restrain harmful dews.” R. Jose b. Abin or, as some say, R. Jose b. Zebila, observed, “This implies that even the dispensable parts of a commandment prevent calamities; for the waving is obviously a dispensable part of the commandment, and yet it shuts out harmful winds and harmful dews.” In connection with this Raba remarked, and so with the *lulav*. R. Aha b. Jacob used to wave it to and fro, saying, “This [the performance of God’s commandments of which that of *lulav* is one] is an arrow in the eye of Satan.” This, however, is not a proper thing [for a man to do] since [Satan] might in consequence be provoked [to let temptation loose] against him.

This same midrashic tradition is expressed in other Talmudic sources as well.⁴³ The critical need for rain in the Land of Israel was addressed in many different ways. For example, in the *Midrash Bere’shit Rabbah* we read that “the strength of the rain in its season is comparable to the totality of Creation,”⁴⁴ and the same idea is expressed liturgically three times daily throughout the year in the prayer of the Eighteen Benedictions, the *shemoneh esrei* prayer or the *amidah* (*lit.* “standing,” for the manner in

⁴³ BT *Men* 62a: Also in the *Mechilta D’Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai* (13:20) “And they journeyed from Sukkot.” R. Akiva said, “What are Sukkot? The clouds of glory” (13:21): “And He went before them” to teach us that seven clouds of glory accompanied the Israelites . . . four for the four winds, one above them, one below them and one proceeding before them. In the Torah the act of waving is mentioned in regard to the waving of the two *omer* loaves of bread, but because of the rejoicing of the water libation ceremony, *beit ha’shoeva*, the ritual was also performed on Sukkot. In BT *Taan* 2b it says, “When is [the prayer of] the strength of the rain recited? R. Eliezer said, ‘from when the *lulav* is taken.’ R. Yehoshua said, ‘from when it is restored.’ R. Eliezer responded, ‘Since the four species do not come but to petition for water [rain in its season] and they cannot exist without water, so the world cannot exist without water.’”

⁴⁴ GenR 13:4: Said R. Hoshaya, “The strength of the rain is as difficult as the entirety of the Creation of the world.” Why is it so? (Job 5:9). “Who doeth great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number.” In what? “Who giveth rain upon the Earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields.” R. Aha brought a proof-text from Jer. 10:12: “He that hath made the Earth by His power, that hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the Heavens by His understanding. At the sound of His giving a multitude of waters in the Heaven . . . The sound is the rain, as it says (Ps. 42:8) ‘Deep called unto deep at the voice of Thy cataracts.’”

which it was recited).⁴⁵ The specific wording of the prayer is thought to come from an early version in the Palestinian Talmud (as early perhaps as in the days of Bar Kokhba).⁴⁶ It reads:⁴⁷

God of the fathers: “the great, mighty, and awesome God, the supreme God, Master of Heaven and Earth.⁴⁸ He is mighty. He brings low the haughty. He is strong and judges the powerful. He lives everlastingly. He restores the dead. He makes the wind to blow and the rains to fall. He sustains life, resuscitates the dead with the flash of an eyelid. He saves us.⁴⁹ He is holy . . . blessed art Thou, the holy God.⁵⁰”

Thus, the liturgical expressions found in the *shemoneh esrei* prayer seem to parallel the symbols appearing on both sides of the tetradrachma coins. The schema of God’s Temple on the face of the coin mirrors with “the great, mighty, and awesome God, the supreme God, Master of Heaven and Earth.” The Ark in the center of the coin represents the Holy of Holies and seems to parallel the words, “blessed art Thou, the holy God.”⁵¹ The four species on the back of the coin reflect the prayer’s request for rain: “He makes the wind to blow and the rains to fall.” The perpendicular image of the *lulav*, the symbol of rain, also suggests the *axis mundi*, which links

⁴⁵ M Ber 4:3; Said R. Gamliel, “every day a person should recite the eighteen benedictions . . .” R. Akiva said, “If the prayer is known to his mouth, he should recite the eighteen benedictions. If not, [he should recite] an abbreviated version [of it].”

⁴⁶ Heinemann 1977, 22–23. “In the period at Yavne, when the formal structure of the prayer was fixed, the Rabbis disagreed on the question as to whether an individual praying alone must recite the entire eighteen benedictions. The Mishnah and other tanna’itic sources determined specifically the number and the order of the prayer service for other occasions.

⁴⁷ Schechter 1898, 656–657. The early version of the *amidah* prayer as found in the Cairo Geniza and published by Schechter 1898.

⁴⁸ The prayer about the Patriarchs.

⁴⁹ The prayer about God’s Might.

⁵⁰ The prayer about God’s Sanctity.

⁵¹ Eliade 1961, explains that the concepts of holiness and Divine Revelation help to understand the approach of preservation of the “memory of the Temple” after its destruction. It is important to note that the terminology that Eliade used: “sacred space,” “profane space,” and “*axis mundi*” appears throughout this work; “sacred space” breaks into the homogeneity of “profane space” and creates the Holy ground. This process repeats the act of Creation in which the Creator molded the world by the sacred act of invading the space of the “null and void.” The Divine Revelation introduces an opening in Heaven and enables communication that brings the sacred element from Heaven to Earth. The biblical story of the burning bush in which God tells Moses, “. . . put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exod. 3:5) concretizes that process. Further, the description of Jacob’s ladder: “. . . and behold a ladder set up on the Earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven . . . and he was afraid, and said: ‘how full of awe is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate to Heaven’ (Gen. 28:12–17) expresses the idea of the *axis mundi*—the connection between Heaven and Earth.

the Heavens and the Earth, alluding to the rain being Heaven's way of sustaining the created earthly world.

It is also important to note that the *amidah* blessing of *avodah* is found in two different versions.⁵² It seems that there is a significant difference in regard to the Divine Presence, the *shekhinah*, and the Temple between the early version of the prayer, which, as noted, is identified with the Palestinian liturgy, and the later version, which came from Babylonia. Unlike the Babylonian Talmudists, the Palestinian scholars of the first two generations after the fall of the Temple believed that the Divine Presence had neither vanished nor gone into exile, so there was no need to restore it. Their concern was with more practical issues, such as planning the rebuilding of the Temple and the reinstatement of rituals that would serve to ensure a continuation of the divine service, and the Bar Kokhba coin may have paralleled this view.

The various motifs and the order in which they appear on the coins suggest the Temple's sanctity, a sanctity based on limits and boundaries, such as the area of the courtyard, represented by the *soreg*, the area of the Holy, the *heikhal*, the exterior façade of the Temple suggested by the four pillars, and the area of the Holy of Holies, indicated by the arched Ark, the *dvir*. Fine notes that the biblical word holy, *qodesh*, is transformed in the Mishnah into the noun *qedushah* and contends that the biblical concept

⁵² Erlich 1997, 5–23, contends that the early liturgy of the Temple service preserves the text that was used at the end of the Second Temple Period when the High Priest would bless the congregation eight times after the Torah reading on the Day of Atonement, saying: “Blessed art thou, O Lord, whom we serve with reverence.” The text of Ben Sira 36:12–14 preserves the early version of the blessing in the Land of Israel: “O Lord, have mercy on the people that is called by Thy name Israel, whom thou hast named thy first born. O be merciful unto Jerusalem, thy holy city, the place of thy rest. Fill Zion with Thine unspeakable oracles, and thy people with thy glory.” The same text has been preserved in early aggadot and in Talmudic sources written in the Land of Israel. A different liturgical tradition is found for this blessing in later texts such as the prayer book, *siddur*, of R. Sa’adia Gaon, genizah texts, and in *siddurim* that reflect the Babylonian tradition, the words “Return,” “In your return,” “Return your Presence”: “Accept, O Lord, our God, the prayers of Your people Israel as loving as they are offered. Restore the sacred service to the *dvir* of Your abode. The fire offerings and their prayers accept with love and favor, and may the service of Your people Israel always be favorable unto You. And may our eyes behold Your return to Zion in compassion, Blessed are You, Who restores His Presence to Zion” were added to the blessing. According to Erlich, the two early texts used words pertaining to the continuing presence of God in the Land of Israel, such as: “Dwell,” “Zion,” “Your city, Jerusalem,” and “Divine service,” whereas the later texts from the Babylonian tradition use phrases such as “Return,” “in Your return,” and “Who will restore” alluding to a later development found in the Rabbinic tradition according to which the *shekhinah* went into exile with the Jewish people after the destruction.

of holiness in the chapters that deal with the priesthood and the Rabbinic tradition emphasizes the spatial concept of specific areas and the shift from one area to another.⁵³ He quotes the mishnaic source in *Keilim* 1:6–10, which maps the stages of holiness from the Holy of Holies, to the *heikhal*, to the *ulam* and the various precincts and suggests that in order to create sanctity, it is necessary to place boundaries, to separate areas, and to move from one area to another.

One of the important boundaries mentioned in the mishnaic sources is a narrow space of one cubit, *ama*, that was thought to have been the separation between the Holy and the Holy of Holies and was known as the *ama traksin*.⁵⁴ The Rabbis of the Mishnah and the Tosephta in their descriptions of the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple were very concerned with the idea of sacred space. The *ama traksin* provided the boundary between the Holy, which was limited to the priests, and the Holy of Holies, where God spoke to Moses "from between the cherubim,"⁵⁵ and to which only the High Priest had access and then only on Yom Kippur.⁵⁶ The schema in the center of the tetradrachma coin, indicated by a series of dots (in lieu of a line), seems to allude to the *ama traksin*. Moreover, it suggests the concept of an incorporeal entity and reflects the notion of the memory of the Temple and especially the dramatic entry of the High Priest on Yom Kippur into the most sacred area to bring forgiveness for the transgressions of the Children of Israel. This annual event is recorded in great detail in the Baraita devoted to the construction of the Tabernacle, *Baraita De-Melekhet Ha-Mishkan*, and in the Tosephta of Yom Kippur, *Tosephta Yoma*.

The *Tosephta Yoma* describes the way the High Priest approached the curtain that divided the Holy from the Holy of Holies,⁵⁷ mentioning the ends of the poles that were permanently attached to the sides of the Ark behind the curtain:

⁵³ Fine 1993, 20; idem 1997, 12–13.

⁵⁴ The expression appears in the following sources: M *Mid* 4:7; PT *Yoma* 51 (26a,b); BT *Yoma* 51b, 52a; BT *BB* 3a; *BMM*, ch. 7.

⁵⁵ Num. 7:89. "... He heard the Voice speaking unto him from above the ark cover that was upon the Ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim."

⁵⁶ Narkiss 1982, 27, explains the "place of the *traksin*" in the manuscript of the Ibn Gaon group (Soria and Tudela c. 1300). We can find Ibn Gaon's Temple plan (c. 1306) in the Second Kennicott Bible (Bodl. Kenn., 2). Narkiss explained the "place of the *traksin*" as a cedar-covered partition between the Holy and the Holy of the Holies (see Addendum—Table 10).

⁵⁷ T *Yoma* (*Kippurim*) 2:12, 13.

He entered and walked in the *heikhal* until he stood between the golden altar and the menorah. The altar was forward from it. The showbread table was on the north from a third of the house inward, two-and-a-half *amot* [cubits] from the wall. It was on the south from a third of the house inward, two-and-a-half *amot* from the wall. The golden altar was in the middle opposite the two staves of the Ark, facing eastward. All of them were halfway into the house. He proceeded through the *heikhal* until he came to the two curtains that separated the Holy from the Holy of Holies. Between them was an *ama*. This is the place of the *dvir* that Solomon made. R. Yosi said, "There was only one curtain, as it says, . . . and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy" (Exod. 26:33). They said unto him, "What do we learn from "between the holy place and the most holy"? He said unto them, "between the upper holy and the lower holy." Another explanation is that when he reaches the north, he turns southward and walks to his left with the curtain until he reaches the Ark. When he reaches the Ark, he pushes the curtain with his hip and places the censer between the staves. He then gathers the incense on the coals. The house becomes filled with smoke. He retreats and comes to the entrance. He says a short prayer in the external house, without prolonging it in order not to confuse the people.

The *Baraita De-Melekhet Ha-Mishkan* has a similar description, which emphasizes the fact that the poles attached to the sides of the Ark of the Covenant protruded through the curtain and were visible in the area of the Holy. It is important to note that both sources refer to the description of the Ark's staves in 1 Kings 8:8: "And the staves were so long that the ends of the staves were seen from the holy place, even before the Sanctuary; but they could not be seen without . . .," that is, they protruded through the curtain of the Holy of Holies and were seen in the Holy or as described very graphically by the Rabbis (in the *Baraita de-Melekhet Ha-Mishkan*, Chapter 6), the poles "protruded through the veil and were visible like the two breasts of a woman." Thus the two central dots in the arched box in the center of the Bar Kokhba coin (fig. 63) could be explained through this rabbinical understanding of the two poles that were a bit longer than the depth of the Holy of Holies and protruded through the curtain.⁵⁸

The images stamped on the Bar Kokhba coins proliferated in Jewish art and spread throughout the Jewish world. It is difficult to know exactly how this model reached the various artists who used its symbolic motifs in synagogue mosaics, in funereal art, in small artifacts, and in manuscript decorations. Interestingly, some of the coins have a hole drilled through them (fig. 67). The Mishnah (M *Kel* 12:7) discusses these drilled coins as

⁵⁸ Kirschner 1992, 232, 233 (see Addendum—Table 11).

does the Palestinian Talmud [*Msh* 1:1 (4a)], which considers whether they can be used for the second tithe, *ma'aser sheni*,⁵⁹ noting: “the coin of the revolt such as Ben Kuziba is not redeemed.” Meshorer related to this reference and explained that some of the more beautiful coins, the dinars, were pierced and used as jewelry, and so could no longer be used as coins.⁶⁰ Another Talmudic reference uses the term “coins of Ben Kuziba, *ma'ot kozviot*.”⁶¹ In general, most of the pierced coins were found in Judea, but it is reasonable to assume that as pieces of jewelry they passed from hand to hand throughout the Jewish world, spreading awareness of the model and thereby influencing both Jewish and Christian iconography.

The wish to remember the glory of the past as well as to keep the memory of the divine authorship of the ancient form of worship alive resulted in the continued use of images such as the Temple façade, the *lulav*, and the *etrog*, which adorned the ancient synagogues. This attitude was expressed in the Talmud (BT *Meg* 29a): “Yet have I been to them as a ‘little sanctuary’ (Ezek. 11:16): R. Isaac said, ‘This refers to the synagogues and houses of learning in Babylon.’” In other words, the synagogues were the appropriate places for preserving the link to the Temple, *beit ha'mikdash*, since a synagogue was known as a “minor Temple,” “*mikdash me'at*.”

That being the case, to view the way the Jewish people dealt with the loss of the Temple in Jerusalem we have to look at the various symbolic verbal motifs that were adopted in the synagogue prayers, rituals, and decorations to keep the memory of the Temple, “*zecher ha-mikdash*,” alive.

⁵⁹ According to the commandment of the “first tithe,” *ma'aser rishon*, from Numbers 18:26, the Israelites were obligated to give one-tenth of their agricultural produce to the Levites. “The law of the “second tithe,” *ma'aser sheni*, is found in Deuteronomy 14:22–29: “Thou shalt surely tithe all the increase of thy seed, that which is brought forth in the field year by year . . . And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it, because the place is too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set His name there, when the Lord thy God shall bless thee; then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thy hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose.” Thus, *ma'aseh sheni* was money that had to be spent in Jerusalem.

⁶⁰ Meshorer 2001, 162.

⁶¹ BT *BQ* 97b “*Ein mechallin*: one cannot redeem fruit of *ma'aser sheni* using “*ma'ot kozviot* from Jerusalem.”

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SYNAGOGUE AS A MINOR TEMPLE

Transferring Temple Symbols to the Synagogue

To highlight a particularly vivid example regarding the transference of Temple symbols to the synagogue, called a minor temple, *mikdash me'at*, we return to Dura-Europos.¹ In the panel above the Torah niche is a mural that shows a rectangular structure topped by an arch that encloses a conch and is framed by two sets of pillars that hold a heavy architrave. The center of this visual representation of the Temple is marked by two twisted columns and two doors with decorated knobs, a structure that iconographically combines the image of the Ark of Covenant on the Bar Kokhba coins and the architectonic shape of the Temple/Tabernacle. On the left, a seven-branched menorah with very tall branches that reflect the biblical description of “knop” and “flower,” *kaftor* and *perakh*, mentioned in Exodus 25:31–40, towers over the Temple façade. The botanical description of the seven-branched menorah in the Bible as well as its size and form in this mural seem to suggest a cosmic Tree of Life, known from early Eastern art. Large images of a *lulav* and an *etrog* stand between the menorah and the image of the Temple. To the right of the Temple façade is a depiction of Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah, an episode known as the *aqedah*.² Abraham is shown from behind holding a knife in his right hand, standing next to the altar upon which a small child is bound. Below the altar is a bush with a ram beside it. On the upper right-hand side of the scene the hand of God is pointing toward the Temple.

Searching for the iconographical meaning of this composition, which holds such a prominent position in the synagogue, calls for a study of the literary texts of the period that relate to these motifs. The images in the mural seem to parallel ideas expressed in *Mishnah Ta'anit* regarding

¹ Goodenough 1953–1968; Kraeling 1956; St. Clair 1986; Weitzmann and Kessler 1990; Cohn 2013, 96–101.

² 2 Chron. 3:1 “Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where [the Lord] appeared unto David his father; for which provision had been made in the Place of David, in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.”

the connections between the Temple, the sins of the people, and the need for prayer to bring rain, as was expressed much earlier in King Solomon's dedication of the First Temple (1 Kings 8:35–36):

When the Heaven is shut up and there is no rain, when they do sin against Thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess Thy name, and turn from their sin, when Thou does afflict them; then hear Thou in Heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy servants, and of Thy people Israel, when Thou teachest them the good way wherein they should walk; and send rain upon Thy land which Thou hast given to Thy people for an inheritance.

Thus at times of insufficient rain, which was considered a punishment for sinful behavior, *Mishnah Ta'anit* 2:1 calls for fast days and special prayers. The ceremony was conducted as follows:

They carry the Ark out to the open area of the town, and they place burnt ashes on the Ark, and on the head of the *nasi* [head of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem], and on the head of the *av beit din* [head of the court], and everyone puts ashes on his head.

The Mishnah prescribes the six special blessings to be added to the *amidah* prayer on a public fast day, a *ta'anit*, observed when there was a serious drought in the land. The additional blessings are taken from the Rosh Hashanah liturgy and include blessings of remembrance, *zichronot*, and the benediction related to the sounding of rams' horns, *shofarot* (M *RH* 4:5–6).³ The first blessing added to the *amidah* prayer during the *ta'anit* service mentions the *aqedah*: “He who answered Abraham on Mount Moriah should answer us and hear the voices of our cry today. Blessed be He, Who redeems Israel” (M *Taan* 2:4). Interestingly, in the mural above the niche of the Ark in the Dura-Europos synagogue we see the hand of God above the scene of the *aqedah*, which may be an allusion to a similar idea, that is, a plea for rain supportable on the grounds of Abraham's merit in his willingness to sacrifice his son.

Reference to the binding of Isaac brings three important elements to the synagogue: the *place* where the Temple was built, the *prayer* that recalled the righteousness of the Patriarchs, and the rituals of *zichronot* and *shofarot* (both connected to the *aqedah*), which are part of the ceremony surrounding the prayer for rain.

³ *Zichronot* are verses of remembrance of God's mindfulness of Israel. *Shofarot* are verses about the shofar and its task to bring the listeners to repentance and awareness of God as the redeemer.

The symbols of the Ark/Temple, the *lulav* and *etrog* (which as I noted earlier are also associated with the prayer for rain), and the sacrifice of Isaac are motifs that express an idea found both in the Mishnah and on the Dura-Europos mural. The prominence of these images in the synagogue indicates that the Jewish community of Dura-Europos revered the memory of the Temple and that it figured centrally in their prayers. According to the Mishnah and other sources,⁴ the ram (seen in the mural standing directly below the hand of God) was created at sunset on the sixth day, for God knew even then that He would put Abraham to the test, so He made the ram and set it there to wait for the moment of the *aqedah*.⁵ The oversized, stylized menorah to the left of the Temple façade, adjacent to the *etrog* and *lulav*, suggests several additional ideas, including an association with Sukkot's water libation ceremony;⁶ the notion that this menorah was designed to represent the large Tree of Life that symbolizes Creation and the Garden of Eden and the possibility that its flames allude to the cosmological motif of the heavenly lights, as indicated by Josephus and Philo.

Thus the entire composition seems to suggest that the artists (or patrons) wanted their images to proclaim unequivocally that the destruction of the Temple did not change the special relationship between God and His people. These images in the synagogue reflect an attempt to graphically visualize thoughts and ideas that were known at the time and could be found in contemporaneous textual sources.

Worshippers in the Land of Israel as well as in the Diaspora turned toward the Temple in Jerusalem as the locus of the Divine Presence.⁷ The transfer of the functions of the sacred worship, albeit modified, to the synagogue was possible through the development of the prayer service, the study of Torah, and the Torah scrolls themselves.⁸ Fine offers the view that the synagogue did not become a substitute for the Temple, but that it received the spirit of sanctity from the presence of the Torah scrolls and the prayers that were recited.⁹ That thought finds support in a

⁴ M *Avot* 5:6; *Targum Yonatan* to Gen. 22:13; *PRE*, ch. 18, 31; *Yalkut Shimoni* "VaYeira," para. 101.

⁵ Gutmann 1983, 92, claims that the ram in this panel is standing by waiting and not caught in the thicket (as in the biblical account).

⁶ Patai 1967, 28; St. Clair 1985, 15.

⁷ Safrai 1988, 31–32, n. 4, cites the following sources: M *Ber* 4:5; PT *Ber* 4:5 (35a). He contends that this approach is already alluded to in the Bible: 1 Kings 8:44 and parallel passages 2 Chron. 6:34; Dan. 6:11.

⁸ Bokser 1985, 298–299.

⁹ Fine 1993, 94.

stone-carved lintel, shaped as the Ark of the Covenant on wheels, *imitatio templi*, found in the synagogue of Capernaum in the Galilee (fig. 68).

The desire to maintain the link to the Temple while praying in the synagogue was apparently also known to Christian scholars, as Constantine of Antioch refers to it in the *Christian Topography*:¹⁰

But the Jews, whose notions of the Deity were too anthropomorphic, worshipped God towards Jerusalem, where the temple stood. On this point we can gain light from the story of Daniel, who, when he had opened the window of his chamber which looked towards Jerusalem, worshipped with his face turned towards the temple. One who finds himself in a place lying to the east of Jerusalem turns as a matter of course to the west when he worships; but if he be in the west, he turns to the east, if in the north to the south, and if in the south to the north, so that in a manner the four [directions] are shown as facing each other when worshipping.

Constantine's remarks seem to be influenced by a Jewish source which discusses the direction of prayer on the basis of King Solomon's words at the dedication of the First Temple:¹¹

Those who stood outside the land would turn their faces towards the land of Israel and pray as it says (1 Kings 8:48) "and pray unto Thee toward their land"; those in the land of Israel would direct their faces toward Jerusalem [...] those who stood inside the Temple would direct their faces towards the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 8:35): "if they pray toward this place." Thus those who stood in the north direct their faces to the south, those who stood in the east directed their faces to the west from the west to the east thus all of Israel turned their prayers to one place.

Samuel Safrai points to several examples that suggest the close ties between the Temple and the synagogue rituals and liturgy.¹² The first is the priestly blessing. The priests in the Temple used to bless the people once a day. In the tannaitic tradition (M *Tam* 7:2), it is noted that at the conclusion of the offering of the daily sacrifice the priests would ascend the stairs of the outer court, the *ulam*, stretch forth their hands, and bless the people. On other occasions, such as on fast days and for the *ma'amadot* ceremonies, there were blessings four times a day.¹³ Prayers in the synagogue filled the void left by the cessation of the Temple's sacrificial ceremonies,

¹⁰ McCrindle, 151–152.

¹¹ *Sifre* Deuteronomy, sec. 29; *Midrash Tanna'im* Deuteronomy, ch. 3; BT *Ber* 30a PT *Ber* 4:5 (35a).

¹² Safrai 1988, 31–32.

¹³ M *Taan* 4:1, "Three times a year the priests bless the people four times a day—in the morning service, in the additional service, in the afternoon service, and in the closing of the gates service—on fast days, for the *ma'amadot*, and on the Day of Atonement."

a development that endowed the synagogue liturgy with the legitimacy of a divine service, which might account for the carved or painted incense shovels found in many synagogues.¹⁴ Mordecai Narkiss contended that the various kinds of censers depicted in Jewish art represent the priests and their special tasks in the Temple.¹⁵ The images of the incense shovels are reminiscent of such tasks as lighting the menorah, clearing the ashes and fats from the altar, and burning the incense (Lev. 16:12, 13). Together with rituals such as the “priestly blessing” and the recitation of the “order of service” of the High Priest on Yom Kippur, the *sefer avodah*, motifs reflecting these tasks were introduced into the synagogue as liturgical and visual symbols to evoke the “memory of the Temple.”

A second example was the blowing of the shofar, which was part of the worship in the Temple and also symbolized the transition to the synagogue.¹⁶ In the Mishnah we read that the priests sounded the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, even when it fell on the Sabbath, but after the Temple was destroyed R. Yochanan Ben Zakkai decreed that the shofar was not to be sounded on Sabbath (M *RH* 4:1). The blowing of the shofar was integrated into the liturgy of Rosh Hashanah along with its special significance in connection with the *aqedah*.¹⁷ It became incumbent on every Jew, men and women, priests, and laymen, to hear the sounds of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, and its image was included in Jewish art among the other symbols associated with the Temple.¹⁸

Daniel Goldschmidt notes that the waving of the *lulav* and *etrog* in the synagogue is also done in accordance with the practice in the Temple,¹⁹ where the priests recited verses from Psalms in the prayer of praise, the *hallel*, while circling the altar, as told in *Mishnah Sukkah* (Suk 4:5). All of the examples I discussed here highlight the importance of studying the relevant literary sources when searching for the iconographic meaning of artistic expressions. Literary texts are indispensable for any art historian who wants to understand the visual images of the past.²⁰ In the Jewish

¹⁴ Finkelstein 1969, 87, 88.

¹⁵ Narkiss 1935, 14–28.

¹⁶ Philo, *On the Special Laws* 2, 188, wrote that in the Temple the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah was part of the sacrificial service. He noted that after the holiday when they consecrated the New Month it was the custom to sound the shofar during the sacrifices; Alon 1957, 106–111; Safrai, 1970, 215–217.

¹⁷ *T Taan* 1:13: “And the *hazzan hakneset* [the officiant of the service] says to them, “Blow, O priests, blow,” and he says “He who answered Abraham on Mount Moriah, may He hear the voice of your petition today.” They blew the shofar and shouted and blew the shofar.”

¹⁸ Bockmuehl 1991, 212–213.

¹⁹ Goldschmidt 1980, 392; Cohn 2013, 48–49, 96–101.

²⁰ Maguire 1987, 1, 2.

experience, the Oral Law, the mystical writings, biblical and post-biblical prayers, and liturgical hymns all help to unravel the meaning of these ancient images. I discussed one example of a link with the Heikhalot literature in Chapter 1 in connection with the iconography of the Dura-Europos synagogue's image of *The Closed Temple* (fig. 7). Viewing other Temple-related panels in the second register of the Dura-Europos synagogue's western wall in tandem with a study of the literary texts that may be relevant can help us to understand how ideas concerning the Temple and Creation found their way into the synagogue.

*The Consecration of the Tabernacle and Its Significance
for Synagogue Liturgy*

The wall painting known today as *The Consecration of the Tabernacle* illustrates several biblical passages (fig. 8).²¹ At the center is an image of the Tabernacle surrounded by a courtyard whose front wall has three closed gates, each topped with a conch. The middle gate, slightly higher than the other two, has a curtain that seems to flutter to the left, and beyond the front wall we see the Tabernacle itself. Its open façade reveals the Ark of the Covenant (Exod. 25:10–20) shown as a rectangular box with two closed doors at its front, a semicircular top, and a curtain, *parochet*, that rather than concealing the Ark as it did in the Holy of Holies is drawn back so that the Ark is exposed.

The menorah below the Ark is shown with “its base and its shaft, its cups, its knobs, and its flowers” (Exod. 25:31–40). Its tripod base and seven branches are made up of ovals and discs, as described in the biblical text. Objects that resemble a pedestal are on either side of the menorah, but whether or not they are Tabernacle implements is uncertain.²² Further to the right (beyond the pedestal) is an altar on which an animal—presumably a ram—is being sacrificed, reflecting a passage in the Torah that discusses the anointing of Aaron and his sons (Exod. 29:22, 24): “For it is a ram of consecration. And thou shalt put the whole upon the hands of Aaron, and upon the hands of his sons; and shalt wave them for a wave-offering before the Lord.”

In the lower left-hand corner of the panel, in three-quarter view, we see a heifer being led to the sacrificial altar by a man with a long-handled axe

²¹ Exod., 25–27, 38; Num. 7:89–8:2.

²² Laderman 1997, 5–18.

over his shoulder (Num. 19:1–10). On the right-hand side are a ram and a bull in profile. Adjacent to the altar is a well-proportioned and relatively tall man and the Greek label names him as “Aaron,” but his ceremonial robes are different from the biblical description of the garments of the High Priest (Exod. 28:1–44). Carl Kraeling contends that the artist tried to portray all six of the High Priest’s garments in order to convey their full significance to the worshipper.²³ The image shows a high and rounded miter adorned with a string of pearls but without the plate of pure gold and the engraved signet, “Holy to the Lord.” (Exod. 28:36–38). The figure is not wearing the breastplate of judgment (Exod. 28:15–21) nor do we see the pomegranates or the golden bells on the bottom of his robe (Exod. 28:31–35). Apart from Aaron, five other figures are illustrated here, all bare-headed and wearing jackets, trousers, and shoes. Four of them are standing to the left and the right of the Tabernacle, each holding a shofar or a horn in his right hand (Num. 10:10), and the fifth is seen at the left next to a heifer prepared for sacrifice.

Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert Kessler contend that this panel, unlike most of the others in the Dura-Europos synagogue, does not portray a cohesive narrative, but is rather a composite of the Tabernacle implements and the various figures connected to its rites.²⁴ They point out that the painter in describing the wilderness Tabernacle used a solid Roman temple construction with pillars and a roof surrounded by a crenellated wall with three portals rather than a tentlike structure with boards and curtains. The curtain hanging from the middle gate is the only feature that remains from the portable Tabernacle described in Exodus 27:16: “And for the gate of the court shall be a screen of twenty cubits.” In summing up this analysis of the panel they conclude that it appears to be a backdrop for the different Tabernacle implements, that it does not display any spatial relationship among the various elements, and that it was apparently inspired by a model that illustrated a particular biblical passage but has no specific iconographical meaning (Num. 8).²⁵

However, viewing the four paintings related to the Temple in the second register of the synagogue’s western wall, it seems most unlikely that a depiction in such a strategic location would be simply a backdrop for the Tabernacle implements totally devoid of iconographical meaning. Rather,

²³ Kraeling 1956, 128.

²⁴ Weitzmann and Kessler 1990, 55–63.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 61–63.

I suggest that this painting should be seen as a contrast to the monumental fresco of the *Closed Heavenly Temple* on the other side of the niche (fig. 7). Whereas that illustration represents the celestial Temple, *heikhal*, where priestly rituals and Temple worship were elevated to the heavenly sphere, this painting symbolizes God's presence on Earth and the effort to preserve the memory of the earthly Tabernacle/Temple through prayer in the synagogue.

The Consecration of the Tabernacle recalls the dedication of the Tabernacle with Aaron and of his sons as the priests. Although a careful study of the fresco suggests that the subject is not a one-time historic episode, but rather a depiction of an annual event that left its mark on the liturgy of the synagogue, the consecration, *miluim*, did take place for the first time at the dedication of the Tabernacle. Prior to that event Aaron, the High Priest, had to undergo seven days of preparation before undertaking his duties in the Tabernacle on the eighth day as described in Leviticus 8:33: "And ye shall not go out from the door of the Tent of Meeting seven days, until the days of your consecration be fulfilled; for He shall consecrate you seven days."

According to *Mishnah Yoma* 1:1–4, the description of the High Priest's preparations for Yom Kippur is reminiscent of what was demanded of him at the *miluim*:

Seven days before Yom Kippur the High Priest leaves his home and moves to the *Palhaedrin* offices [the offices of the Temple Court] . . . For the entire seven days he sprinkles the blood, offers the incense, prepares the candles . . . The elders place him in the hands of elders of the court. They read to him the order of the service of the day . . . The morning of the day before Yom Kippur they bring him to East Gate, where cows, rams, and sheep pass before him in order that he be prepared for the service.

The similarity between these two rituals is understood from the verse at the end of the description of the *miluim* in Leviticus (8:34): "As hath been done this day, so the Lord hath commanded to do, to make atonement for you." Namely, what was done on the eighth day of the *miluim* should continue to merit the forgiveness of Yom Kippur.²⁶ This understanding, seen in the fresco, was carried over to the prayers and the liturgy of Yom Kippur and is relevant to our discussion of the divergent Jewish and the Christian understandings of the role of the High Priest in bringing expiation and forgiveness to the people.

²⁶ Knohl and Naeh 1983, 17–44 (see Addendum—Table 12).

Weitzmann and Kessler view the fresco as an archetype to be compared with the miniatures of the Ark in the *Christian Topography* and the Octateuch (figs. 27, 57–61), where the two High Priests or Moses and Aaron are shown standing next to the Ark flanked by sacrificial animals.²⁷ They regard this comparison as an indication of a common early model that inspired both the Dura-Europos fresco and the later Byzantine miniatures and that the model most likely was a visual expression of the consecration of the Levites in Numbers 8:5–26.²⁸ I suggest that the Dura-Europos fresco does depict the consecration ceremony of Aaron the High Priest and his sons as found in Leviticus 8:1–36 and 9:1–24 as well as in *Mishnah Yoma*, which in turn influenced the liturgy of Yom Kippur.

The liturgical poem “Then When There Was Nothing,” “*az b'ain kol*,” dated to the fifth century, which was found in the Cairo Genizah, is based on earlier poems that refer back to *Mishnah Yoma*. As other early *piyyutim* it is a lyrical rendition of the words of the Mishnah to convey the essence of the Temple rituals to the synagogue and the congregation.

Joseph Yahalom notes that there are two distinct parts of the *piyyut* concerning the *seder avodah*, the first describing Creation and the history of the people of Israel up to the moment of the consecration of Aaron and the second depicting the High Priest’s rituals for Yom Kippur.²⁹ The two parts, linked by the central idea of Leviticus 8 and 9 describe, respectively, the seven days of preparation, which are the days of the consecration in which Moses prepares Aaron for his task in the Sanctuary and the eighth day when Aaron begins the service. The connection is the verse “As hath been done this day, so the Lord hath commanded to do, to make atonement for you” (Lev. 8:34) noted earlier, which, according to Yahalom, is what turns it into a paradigm for the generations to come. This is seen, for example, in the *piyyut* called “Seven Days,” “*shivat yamim*,” one of the early *piyyutim* in the *seder avodah*.³⁰

Early sources that influenced the liturgy of the *seder avodah* include the apocryphal *Wisdom of Ben Sira* (second century BCE), the Mishnah, and eventually the Talmudic tradition. The Mishnah discusses the Temple rituals and sacrifices. *Mishnah Tamid* explains the ritual of the daily sacrifice and *Mishnah Yoma* discusses the order of the sacrificial service of Yom Kippur. From all these sources, we can conclude that the panel on

²⁷ Weitzmann and Kessler, 57.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁹ Yahalom 1996, 14, 15; Swartz 2011, 40–43.

³⁰ First published by Elbogen 1907, 56, 57, 76, 102; ed. and tr. by Swartz and Yahalom 2005, 3–4, 53–67, n. 5.

the west wall portrays all three motifs: the Tabernacle/Temple rituals of the daily sacrifice, *tamid*, the Yom Kippur service, and the annual consecration of the High Priest.

The following poetic verses from the *Wisdom of Ben Sira* describe the High Priest's exit from the Holy of Holies after praying for forgiveness for the people:

How was he honored in the midst of the people in his coming out of the Sanctuary! (50: 5)
 When he put on the robe of honor, and was clothed with perfection of glory,
 when he went up to the holy altar, he made the garment of holiness honorable. (50:11)
 He set a crown of gold upon the miter, wherein was engraved Holiness, an ornament of honor, a costly work, the desires of the eyes, goodly and beautiful. (45:12)
 Then shouted the sons of Aaron and sounded the silver trumpets and made a great noise to be heard, for a remembrance before the most High. (50:16)

Ben Sira's poetic account provides a description that seems quite relevant to the impressive image of Aaron as he exits the Holy of Holies, *Coming out of the Sanctuary*, in the Dura-Europos fresco. He is shown dressed in elaborate vestments standing beside the altar and his miter fits Ben Sira's description. Next to Aaron at the upper left and right of the painting we see four youths holding trumpets. Ben Sira's text relates to both the *seder avodah* and to the *tamid*.³¹ Safrai notes, for example, the detail of the Levites blowing the horns, which was also part of the daily morning service.³² Understandably, after the destruction of the Temple, the Yom Kippur morning, *shacharit*, and afternoon, *minchah*, services were substitutes for the *tamid* and the *seder avodah* became the additional prayer, *musaf*, and the closing prayer, *neilah*, services. Rabbinic literature decreed that the Hebrew word *avodah* used for the Temple sacrificial services should also be used for the post-Temple liturgy and prayer, based on Hosea 14:3: "Instead of bulls we will pay the offering of our lips."³³

As an introduction to the awesome ceremony of Yom Kippur, Ben Sira gave a lyrical account of the history of the world.³⁴ He described God's

³¹ Fearghail 1978, 301–316, n. 4; Newman 2012, 323–338.

³² Safrai 1994, 13–35.

³³ Elijor 2005, 13; Swartz and Yahalom 2005, 5–7.

³⁴ Ben Sira 42:18–50:36.

greatness and His wonders in Creation and told about great and renowned individuals, *anshe shem*: Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, Nathan, David, Solomon, Elijah, Hezekiah, and Ezekiel. He ended the list with Simon the High Priest, praising him for maintaining the Temple but mostly applauding the dramatic moment when he comes out of the Holy of Holies to bestow God's blessing upon the people.

In the *piyyutim* that are included in the *seder avodah*, such as those in the *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, the historical past serves as an introduction to the exaltation of the High Priest. The clear influence of this second-century BCE literary work on the early *piyyutim* suggests that the liturgical tradition of Yom Kippur goes back to ancient sources dating from well before the period in which some of the known *piyyutim* were written. Moreover, evidently they were all poetic expressions of ideas that subsequently appeared in the Mishnah and early midrashim.

This consideration refutes Levine's objection (which I noted in Chapter 1) to the comparison between art and liturgy.³⁵ Levine claims that as the dating of the liturgical *piyyutim* is later than the sixth century, there is no proof that *piyyutim* were recited in (some? most? all?) synagogues. However, as is clear from the synagogues' liturgical services for Yom Kippur there were *piyyutim* that were based on early sources, including the *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, the Mishnah, and the Tosephta. For instance, the anonymous early *piyyut* that begins the order of the Yom Kippur service "You First Established the World," "*ata konanta olam m'rosh*," gives poetic expression to all these early sources.³⁶ This *piyyut* follows the order of the *Wisdom of Ben Sira*. The poet, *paytan*, introduces a lengthy section describing Aaron, the holy one of God, whose spirituality brings forgiveness for sins with a description of God's greatness and His wonders in Creation. Like Ben Sira's work this *piyyut* describes Creation as part of the history of the people up to the selection of the tribe of Levi to serve as the eternal priests. It concludes with two lines:

You made all these for the glory of Aaron
The source of forgiveness for Israel designed.

The liturgical section begins immediately thereafter with the description of the High Priest, the descendant of Aaron, who performs the Yom Kippur service in his stead:

³⁵ Levine 2008, 238–241.

³⁶ An early *piyyut* that was apparently known to *paytanim* such as Yosi b. Yosi and others. It appears in Goldschmidt 1970, 18–19; Swartz and Yahalom 2005, 69–94.

In place of Aaron from his seed he comes
To serve before you on the Day of Atonement.

The *piyyut* “Then When There Was Nothing,” “*az b’ain kol*” describes the Levites blowing their trumpets and the open-gate motifs that we also see in the fresco of the Dura-Europos synagogue:³⁷

The rooster hastens to call.
The watchmen hurry to open the gates.
With trumpets two they hold fast and blow
To greet Him who grants songs at night.

It is interesting that as early as the second century BCE (*Wisdom of Ben Sira* 50:17–19) there was a strong emphasis on the trumpet blasts, and we can discern the influence of this early source on the later *piyyutim* as well as on the fresco:³⁸

Then trumpets blast
And blow a great sound
To remind the Most High.

Mishnah Yoma is another early source that quite obviously influenced the *piyyutim* of the *sefer avodah*, communicating ideas that also seem to be visualized in *The Consecration of the Tabernacle* painting, especially in connection with the two pedestals adjacent to the image of the Holy of Holies. *Mishnah Yoma* describes a rabbinic controversy regarding the Yom Kippur ritual, wherein the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the calf and then the blood of the ram when he emerged from the Holy of Holies. Yahalom explains that the description of the High Priest’s service

³⁷ Yahalom 1996, 142, 143, lines 726–729, idem 2005, 200 in English, explains these lines by comparing them to M *Tam* 3:7, which discusses the opening of the gates. According to his explanation: “The slaughterer would not slaughter until he heard the sound of the opening of the great gate. He explains the words *lifne tofet sho’if*: *sho’if* apparently is a synonym for the sun, following the verse in Eccl. 1:5: “The sun also ariseth and the sun goeth down, and hasteneth to his place where he ariseth” [“hasteneth” in the biblical text is *sho’if*]. He interprets the words “two horns” in line 728 by comparing them to M *Suk* 5:5, where it says “Every day there were twenty-one sounds of the horn in the Temple: three at the opening of the gates, and there were no fewer than two horns. To ‘He who sings at night’ refers to the name of God to whom the angels sing of His glory and in the early morning hours they greet him with the sounding of the horns. This element of the divine service is emphasized even in the service of the priest’s daily sacrifice. Then did the sons of Aaron the priest sound the horns and they heard a very loud noise, to remind them [that they stand] before the Majesty of God.”

³⁸ Ben Sira 50:16–19.

in the *piyyutim* was based on the text of the *Mishnah Yoma*.³⁹ However, the original mishnaic text sometimes reflects different opinions and it was the *paytan*'s responsibility to choose one from among them. It was known that the High Priest was required to sprinkle the blood on the curtain outside the Holy of Holies in the same order as on the inside: first the blood of the calf and then the blood of the ram. When he emerged from the Holy of Holies, he had the basin with the ram's blood still in his hand, and he had to exchange it for the basin with the calf's blood, which was on a pedestal. The Rabbis in the *Mishnah* disagree on the question, "was there one pedestal or two?"⁴⁰ From the *piyyut* "Seven Days," "*shiva yamim*," we know that that *paytan* thought that there were two:

He went out and placed it on the second pedestal in the court.
He removed the calf's blood and in its place put the ram's blood.

However, in the Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 56b we find Raba protesting when he heard the *hazzan-paytan* who led the service referring to two pedestals.⁴¹ Carl Kraeling, in his description of this image talks about "two short golden *thymiaeria* analogous in form to those in the painting of the Temple of Dagon, representing no doubt, the altar of incense" (fig. 15).⁴² Weitzmann comments on this point, noting that the incense altar shown there does not match the description in the biblical source, since there are two pedestals in the fresco, whereas the text speaks of only one, so clearly the pedestals in the fresco cannot be representations of the incense altar.⁴³ The suggestion that the artist added the second pedestal for balance is not reasonable, as the pedestal's shape does not match the description of the incense altar (Exod. 30:27).

Thus it seems likely that the pedestals were added to the fresco to depict as many of the details of the *seder avodah* described in the *Mishnah* and

³⁹ Yahalom 1996, 21; Swartz and Yahalom 2005, 15–16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 22–23; Swartz and Yahalom 2005, 16–17, *M Yoma* 5:4: He went out and placed the basin with the blood on the second pedestal that was in the Tabernacle. Rabbi Judah says that there was only one pedestal and that the High Priest took the ram's blood and put down the calf's blood on the same pedestal.

⁴¹ Swartz and Yahalom 2005, 64; Yahalom 1996, 22–23. Yahalom explains that according to BT *Yoma* when Raba heard his *hazzan* use this text, he protested and criticized the *paytan* for mixing up the two approaches (regarding one *kan* [pedestal] or two *kans*). The *paytan*, he notes, intended to follow the specific language of the *Mishnah*, but Raba's text was distorted by one of the copyists. From this, Yahalom concludes that there was no blind servitude to the text of the *Mishnah* and even the text of the early *piyyut* reflects the opinion of Raba.

⁴² Kraeling 1956, 126.

⁴³ Weitzmann and Kessler 1990, 58.

included in the Yom Kippur liturgy as possible. The iconographic detail of smoke ascending from the pedestals supports this notion. The Mishnah tells us that when the High Priest approached the Holy of Holies he had a gold incense shovel filled with coals in one hand and a jar of spices in the other.⁴⁴ This description from the Mishnah is also found in the *piyyut* “You Created a World Full of Mercy,” “*ata konanta olam b’rov chesed*,” which describes the High Priest approaching the Ark, placing the incense shovel between the wooden staves that were attached to the Ark, and then mixing the incense and the coals so as to fill the building with smoke.⁴⁵

The Ark disappeared at some point during the reign of King Josiah (640–609 BCE), so it was not in the Holy of Holies during Second Temple Period.⁴⁶ As there were no longer staves on which to place the incense that filled the Holy of Holies with smoke, “the golden stand in the Sanctuary” (M *Yoma* 5:2, 3)⁴⁷ served to hold the basins for both the blood and the censers, which might explain why we see smoke on the pedestals in the fresco. There are several additional elements in the *piyyut* “*az b’ain kol*,” drawn from the *Mishnah Yoma*, that might have provided a textual background for some of the motifs that are found in the Yom Kippur liturgy as well as some of the details seen in the fresco discussed here. The following verses are from Yahalom’s publication of the *piyyut* “*az b’ain kol*”; the numbers in parentheses are the line numbers as they appear in his book:

- The curtain behind Aaron and the figures with the horns—“They erect a partition/Between the people and him.”⁴⁸ (734)

⁴⁴ M *Yoma* 5:1.

⁴⁵ Goldschmidt 1970, 476 (*Paytan Yosi b. Yosi*), lines 137–148; Swartz and Yahalom 2005, 69–93.

⁴⁶ 2 Chron. 35:3: “And he said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, that were holy unto the Lord: ‘Put the Holy Ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; there shall no more be a burden upon your shoulders; now serve the Lord your God and His people.’”

⁴⁷ M *Yoma* 5:2, 3: When he reached the Ark he put the pan of burning coals between the two bars. He heaped up the incense upon the coals and the whole house became full of smoke. He came out by the way he entered and in the outer house . . . After the Ark had been taken away, there was a stone from the days of the earlier prophets, called the *shethiyah*, three fingers above the ground, on which he would place [the pan of burning coals]. He would take the blood from him who was stirring it, and enter [again] into the place where he had entered and stand [again] on the place on which he had stood, . . . Then he would go out and put it on the golden stand in the Sanctuary.

⁴⁸ Yahalom 1996, 143, 734; “Half of it was the *botz* sheet.” See M *Yoma* 3:4; Swartz and Yahalom 2005, 200, 734.

- The daily sacrifice on the altar to the left of the High Priest—"The daily lamb for the offering/He begins to prepare;⁴⁹ (738) "To offer him completely/On the altar." (739)
- The menorah—"He then enters and prepares/The candlestick in its order." (750)
- The position of Aaron the High Priest standing next to the altar—"He stands opposite his bullock/Between the court and the altar."⁵⁰ (758)

To summarize, it seems that *The Consecration of the Tabernacle* relates to more than just a single historical event. The image deals with the concepts of forgiveness and atonement as expressed in the ritual of the *miluim* when the Tabernacle was dedicated: "to make atonement for you" (Lev. 8:34), as well as in the High Priest's preparation before Yom Kippur, which was preserved through the *seder avodah* liturgy recited in the synagogue every year. Thus we have evidence of how rituals that commemorate the "memory of the Temple" were preserved in the synagogue, the *mikdash me'at*, from as early as the third century.

The Role of the Rabbis in the Synagogue

To fully understand the implications of the evolution of the priestly divine service into the rituals of the synagogue we might have a look at Peter Schaefer's article "Rabbis and Priests, or: How to Do Away with the Glorious Past of the Sons of Aaron."⁵¹ Schaefer reviews the description of the power and glory of Aaron the High Priest in the days of the Tabernacle as found in the *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, where he is described as royalty: "With a golden crown upon his turban."⁵² He writes about how the Rabbinic exegesis, preserved in two early tannaitic midrashim, the midrash on Leviticus, the *Sifra*, and the midrash on Numbers, the *Sifre*, replaced the priests with the Rabbis, who were charged with the continuation of the sacred worship and the role of leadership. He refers to the rabbinic exegesis of Numbers 7, which describes the offerings that the leaders of the twelve tribes, the *nesi'im*, brought to the dedication of the Tabernacle (Num. 7:10):

⁴⁹ Yahalom 1996, n. 738, *kevesh tamid*, according to the Mishnah there Yahalom 1996, n. 738, *kevesh tamid*, according to the Mishnah there; Swartz and Yahalom 2005, 200, 738–739.

⁵⁰ Yahalom 1996, 145, n. 758. The bullock is standing between the *ulam* and the altar, according to M *Yoma* 3:8: "He approached his bullock and his bullock was standing between the *ulam* and the altar, its head toward the south and its face toward the west."

⁵¹ Schaefer 2008, 155–172.

⁵² Ben Sira 45:12.

“And the princes brought the dedication-offering of the altar in the day that it was anointed, even the princes brought their offering before the altar.” The Rabbinic exegesis dwells on the fact that no priests are mentioned in the entire chapter, which concludes with the description of God speaking to Moses from between the two cherubim above the *kapporet* (Num. 7:89).

According to Schaefer, this description confirms that the Divine Presence, the *shekhinah*, communicated with Moses as he entered the Tabernacle immediately after receiving the offerings of the *nesi'im*. This, then, proves that the laws that God revealed to Moses in the Tent of Meeting, rather than the service provided by the priests in the Temple, were in fact the essence of God’s link to the people.⁵³ It was the spiritual leaders, the Rabbis, who interpreted the Torah in the Oral Law, who were vested with the authority to continue God’s worship after the destruction of the Temple.

Interestingly, the painting immediately to the left of the one we have been discussing (fig. 13) shows a large figure of Moses and the leaders of the tribes standing in front of their tents as streams of water flow from the *Well of Be'er*, but there are no priests. The painting, which I discussed in Chapter 1 as a possible link to the Jewish-Christian approach to water and baptism,⁵⁴ reflects the biblical episode described so poetically in Numbers:⁵⁵

Then Israel sang this song,
Spring up O well—sing ye unto it:
The well which the princes
Which the nobles of the people delved
With the scepter, and with their staves.

In the center of the fresco we see a cylindrical well with Moses standing to the left, holding a rod in his right hand, which he dips into the well. Twelve streams issue forth from the well toward the tents of the tribes, six on either side of the Tabernacle. The arms of all the leaders are raised in a gesture of prayer (*orant*). The image accents the special divine waters that God miraculously provided for the Israelites when they traveled and camped around the Tabernacle, where the *shekhinah* dwelled among them.

The midrashic interpretation of this poetic text from Numbers, found as early as in *Tosephta Sukkah*, seems to add some of the necessary literal details needed for understanding this *Well of Be'er* fresco:⁵⁶

⁵³ Schaefer 2008, 162.

⁵⁴ Weitzman and Kessler, 63.

⁵⁵ Num. 21:16–20.

⁵⁶ T *Suk* 3:11; Gutmann 1973, 98, n. 16.

The well that was with the Children of Israel in the wilderness, to what could it be compared? To a giant stone. In the place where the Children of Israel found themselves, it accompanied them, always finding itself in a high place near the door of the Tent of Meeting. The princes of the tribes of Israel used to come and march around it with their staffs and they would sing this song "Come up, O well, answer us." And the water would bubble up as a pillar above them and each one would dip his staff into it, each man for his tribe, each man for his family, as it is said, "The well which the princes dug, which the nobles of the people delved with the scepter, and with their staves." The well encircled the entire camp of the people of Israel and gave water in the desolate area and it became a great stream.

This fresco, then, is a beautiful portrayal of the phenomenon of the well that miraculously followed the Israelites in the desert as is also described in this Tosephta. The well and its twelve streams might also allude to the link between the Tabernacle and Creation as we read in *Mishnah Avot*, which enumerates ten things that were created at sunset on the sixth day.⁵⁷ Among these is the "mouth of the well," which is a reference to the *Well of Be'er*. According to Saul Lieberman this was also the well that accompanied Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁵⁸ It was the well that brought sustenance to Hagar, the source of sweet waters at Marah, and the well of Miriam traveling with the Israelites for forty years in the wilderness. We see corroboration of this notion in a work dated to the first century CE known as Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*.⁵⁹

And there he commanded him many things and showed him the Tree of Life, from which he cut off and took and threw into Marah and the water of Marah became sweet. And it followed them in the wilderness forty years and went up to the mountain with them and went down into the plains.

Philo saw this "Song of the Well" as an allegorical poem that was even more important than the "Song at the Red Sea."⁶⁰ He noted that the latter was the praise of God for destroying the evil of Egypt, whereas here the praise was for the discovery of true wisdom symbolized by the water of this miraculous well.

⁵⁷ M *Avot* 5:6: "Ten things were created on Friday of the Creation before the Shabbat, and these are they: the mouth of the Earth, the mouth of the well, the mouth of the ass, the rainbow, the manna, the *shamir*, letters, writing and the tablets."

⁵⁸ Lieberman, 1992, 4: 876–877, contends that it is obvious that the text is using an early Jewish aggadah, according to which the well is the well of Marah, which is the same as Miriam's well, which was created on the eve of the Sabbath, at sunset. He adds that "yet the well was illustrated in the Dura-Europos synagogue."

⁵⁹ Harrington 1985, vol. 2, 296–377, 319.

⁶⁰ Philo, *Life of Moses* I, 255–257.

In light of all these sources, it may be said that the *Well of Be'er* represents the conviction that miraculous phenomena were figured in the formation of the universe as an integral part of the primordial pattern of Creation.⁶¹ The ten things that *Mishnah Avot* declares were created at sunset on the sixth day, in what was essentially the last act of Creation, the well of Miriam among them, thus were part of the initial design of Creation, ready in place to fulfill all the needs of the world's subsequent history.

These frescoes clearly reflect the influence of various literary sources and suggest the Jewish yearning to grasp the mysteries of Creation and to understand its primordial pattern, which became the blueprint of the Tabernacle. The different artworks viewed above illustrate a wish to maintain open and direct contact with God the Creator even after the destruction of the Temple, to experience the sanctity of Yom Kippur through the liturgy of the *seder avodah*, and to gain expiation through prayer and repentance rather than through sacrifices.

It is clear that the conveyance of ideas and images related to the Temple and Creation started as early as in the second-century with the Bar Kokhba coins, continued in the third-century in the Dura-Europos synagogue, and is evident in the mosaic floors of fourth- to seventh-century synagogues. All of the above examples reflect the desire to maintain the centrality of the Temple and its rituals and to accept the Rabbinic Oral Law and liturgy as a meaningful substitute for animal sacrifice.

On the other hand, if we look at the mosaic decorations in the Samaritan synagogues, we realize that even though they too display Tabernacle/Temple imagery, their iconography is different, primarily because of their opposition to the Rabbinic Oral Law.⁶² The biblical text they illustrate is the same, but its interpretation is quite different.

⁶¹ Idem., *On Drunkenness*, n. 112–113; *On Dreams* 2, ns. 268–271.

⁶² The Samaritans, *shomronim*, also known as *cuti'im* were settled in Samaria after the exile of the ten tribes (2 Kings. 17:24): "And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Avva, and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the Children of Israel; and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof." The Samaritans consider themselves the true guardians, *shomrim*, of Moses' Torah without the Oral Law. They claim that they preserve the ancient Israelites' true religion as it was practiced before the Babylonian exile. They accept Mount Gerizim as their sacred place and turn toward it when they pray. On the top of Mount Gerizim they continue to sacrifice the paschal lamb and they spend the entire Passover holiday there.

The Temple Implements in Samaritan Synagogues

Scholars have identified a sixth-century structure in Beit Shean, built in the shape of a basilica with an apse facing northwest, toward Mount Grezim (and not toward Jerusalem), as a Samaritan synagogue (fig. 71). Its mosaic floor displays an architectural façade with two pillars, a gabled pediment, and an aedicule with a conch in its arched top. A hanging curtain decorated with a floral design covers the center of the Temple façade. Two menorahs, two shofars, and two incense shovels appear on either side of the architectural structure in the center. The composition seems to be a replica of Jewish synagogue mosaic floors except that the *lulav* and *etrog* symbolizing the four species are missing. The names that appear on a Greek inscription in this synagogue's mosaic floor are Marianos and his son Hanina, the same artisans whose names are found in the Jewish synagogue of Beit Alpha, where the *lulav* and *etrog* are included among the Temple implements on the mosaic floor. It seems quite clear that these two artisans created both floors using very similar motifs, but that they were instructed by their Samaritan patrons not to include images of the *lulav* and *etrog* in the Beit Shean floor.⁶³

The fact that the four species are not found in the decorative pattern of the Samaritan synagogue reaffirms the importance of the sources from the Oral Law in the iconography of the Jewish artistic symbols of the Tabernacle and Creation. Ruth Jacoby notes that the absence of the *lulav* and *etrog* reflects the unique Samaritan understanding of these symbols.⁶⁴ The Samaritans use palms, willow branches, and citrus fruit to decorate the roofs of their *sukkot*. Their celebration of the holiday is reminiscent of the way in which it was celebrated at the time of the Return to Zion, as described in the Book of Nehemiah, when the *sukkot* were built using branches of trees representing two of the four species.⁶⁵ The symbolic composition of the *lulav* and *etrog* grouped together with the Temple implements reflects the Rabbinic interpretation, which was rejected in the Samaritan tradition. Whereas the Jews chose their symbols on the basis of

⁶³ Pummer 1999, 130.

⁶⁴ Jacoby 2000, 225–230.

⁶⁵ Neh. 8:15: "And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying: 'Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and branches of wild olive, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written'."

ideas in a range of literary sources (found in both the Written and the Oral Law) the Samaritans held solely to the Pentateuch tradition.

Yizhak Magen, who excavated Samaritan synagogues in the early 1990s, stresses their great similarity to Jewish synagogues.⁶⁶ The fourth-century synagogue at El Khirbe near Sebastia, whose orientation is toward Mount Gerizim, has a central mosaic floor that is divided into three sections (fig. 69). On a rectangular mosaic carpet between two square ones we see the Temple vessels with the seven-branched menorah.⁶⁷ The menorah is done in white stone, set on a red background, and the branches are made of knobs and flowers. At the end of each branch is a candle with a wick that is turned toward the central branch. The central shaft is flanked by two objects that resemble tongs and two curved hornlike instruments.⁶⁸ Fine notes that the Samaritan menorahs were borrowed as a religious symbol from the Jews and that their description follows the biblical text very closely.⁶⁹ To the left of the menorah is a round table, in a shape well known from the Roman period, on which are scattered various objects, including plates, cups, and loaves of bread.

Next to the table is a Temple/Ark façade with four pillars and a gabled pediment with a conch in its center. A curtain whose edges are attached to one of the side columns is hanging under the pediment, above the doors of the Ark of the Covenant, and it appears that the mosaicist wanted the doors to be seen.⁷⁰ The Ark, shown as a templelike structure and the image of the menorah are both similar to their counterparts in Jewish synagogues. The difference here is that the curtain is pulled to the side and wrapped around the pillar, exposing the Ark and the round table.

Finding the same objects in both Jewish and Samaritan synagogues with only slight differences raises a question as to whether the Samaritans copied these symbols because they wanted to stress the same tradition or because they were determined to give these images a special meaning unique to their belief and understanding. It is important to point out that according to Samaritan beliefs, Joshua son of Nun brought the original desert Tabernacle to Mount Gerizim, which became the focus of the

⁶⁶ Magen 1992, 229–264; idem 1993b, 66–90; idem 1993a, 193–230.

⁶⁷ It was 1 meter high and 80 centimeters wide.

⁶⁸ According to Bayer 1993, 66, 67, these are shofars and not horns, whereas Meyers 1996, 3–20, contends that these instruments were horns and not shofars.

⁶⁹ Fine 2005, 157.

⁷⁰ The two inscriptions found in this panel relate to the first stage of the building. Since they are not well preserved, it is difficult to discern their meaning. From the little that remains we can say that they are memorial statements or dedications.

Samaritan faith. Eli the Priest⁷¹ caused a schism when he fled to Shilo and established an alternate Sanctuary. According to the Samaritan tradition, this caused God to hide His face and remove His presence from the newly established Sanctuary.⁷² The period since that time is called the disenchantment, *penutah*, which will end when the Restorer or He who returns, the *taheb*, comes, bringing a time of favor, *rehutah*, and establishes the true religion.⁷³ The Samaritans keep the memory of the Tabernacle alive and express their yearning for the “Good Days,” when the Tabernacle and its rituals will bring them blessing and forgiveness, as they recite in one of their prayers:⁷⁴

With bloody tearful cry for days of mercy and good will,
 Good days of blessing repentance and forgiveness,
 Days of the Oracle of *urim and thummim*⁷⁵ and the incense of *samim*
 (spices),
 Days of the lit up menorah and the pure showbread table,
 Days of the Holy of Holies and of consecrated priests.
 Ah for our perfect days, for our majestic days,
 For the exalted Tabernacle filled with God’s Divine Presence.

According to Magen, throughout the Roman period the Samaritans tended to assimilate into the surrounding pagan society, but they experienced a religious renaissance in the fourth century when Christianity became an official religion.⁷⁶ They sought to demonstrate that contrary to the way both Jews and Christians interpreted the Bible, their reading of the text was the true one. Their synagogues appeared on the scene as well-developed religious structures, as is demonstrated by their furnishings and their art.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Eli, a descendant of Itamar the priest, fought with the descendant priests of the house of Elazar.

⁷² Magen 1992, 261.

⁷³ Pummer 2011, 145–146; Gaster 1925, 90–91, claims that the Samaritans anticipated the coming of the prophet, as is mentioned in Deut. 18:18: “I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.” This prophet, so they believed, will be like the Messiah. Pummer 2011, 145–146, cites many Samaritan and non-Samaritan sources and concludes that “from the earliest times (first century CE) to present day artistic and textual expressions Samaritans have looked forward to the restoration of the Tabernacle, at the time when the Taheb will come.”

⁷⁴ Cowley 1909, 65.

⁷⁵ *Urim and thummim* (Exod. 28:30) were put inside the fold of the breastplate that the High Priest wore as part of his special garments. He used them to seek answers to questions he was asked in regard to a person’s innocence or guilt. Allegorically, it was understood as a tool for seeking revelation and truth.

⁷⁶ Magen 1992, 262.

⁷⁷ Pummer 1999, 142; idem 2010, 17.

On the mosaic floor of the synagogue at El Khirbe we can see images of the Ark, the showbread table, and the menorah, one next to the other, in the precise order described in Exodus 25 and 37 (fig. 69). There is also a censer and a pair of tongs next to the menorah, in accordance with the biblical text.⁷⁸ Thus, although the Samaritans created their mosaic floors in the same artistic style as found in Jewish synagogues, they imaged the objects differently.

Khirbet Samara, the second Samaritan synagogue excavated by Magen, is located south of Nablus and its orientation is also toward Mount Gerizim (fig. 70). It depicts an architectural structure of the Temple façade with four pillars decorated with Greek capitals. The pillars are in two different colors, evoking a sense of space and architectonic roundness. Above the pillars is a triangular pediment decorated with a frieze and a conch. A beam on top of the two center pillars holds a curtain, attached through a series of round loops, which is twisted around the pole of the Ark, allowing us to see the two wooden doors, each with a brass ring and a lock. Magen contends that this mosaic image of the Temple/Ark façade indicates the spot where the movable Torah shrine stood, where the Torah was read and where, according to the Samaritan tradition, the High Priest stood.⁷⁹ In both the El Khirbe and Khirbet Samara synagogues, we see the curtain in front of the Ark pushed aside and wrapped around one of the pillars so as to reveal all the details of the wooden door. This image might be a representation of either the Torah shrine of the synagogue or the Ark of the Tabernacle.⁸⁰

In the Samaritan tradition, the synagogue, rather than the Temple, replaced the wilderness Tabernacle, leaving the leadership of the synagogue in the hands of the High Priest, who served as the congregational officiant, the *hazzan*, who stands before the Ark and leads the prayers.⁸¹ David Amit suggests that the Samaritans' special way of displaying the Ark with its curtain moved to the side exposing its façade was in accord with their understanding of the obligation to see God's Ark three times a year,⁸² which he notes comes from the verse: "Three times in the year

⁷⁸ Exod. 25:38: "And the tongs thereof and the snuff dishes thereof shall be of pure gold."

⁷⁹ Magen 1993, 80.

⁸⁰ Purvis 2000, 4.27–4.38, in discussing two modern Tabernacle drawings cites the Samaritan's legend about the Tabernacle whose original design was given by God to Moses; Joshua set it up on Mount Gerizim but it then disappeared and was hidden away.

⁸¹ Z. Safrai 1977, 84–112, 97, marks many acts of the High Priests and the other priests in the Samaritan synagogue rituals that seem to be a direct continuation of the priests' role in the Tabernacle.

⁸² Amit 2000, 234.

shall all thy males appear before the Lord [*adon*] God, the God of Israel" (Exod. 34:23). However, in their version of the verse the word *adon* is read as *aron*, so that seeing "the Ark [*aron*] of God" is understood as seeing God Himself.⁸³

Constantine of Antioch was apparently familiar with the Samaritans ways and beliefs, as is clear from the following passage in the *Christian Topography*:⁸⁴

The Samaritans in like manner, being ignorant of the same things as the Jews, and not believing, and entertaining doubts besides, about the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul, are also like the Jews banished from the heavens.

The image of the Ark flanked by the High Priest and the sacrificial animals found in the *Christian Topography* and the Octateuchs seems to be more in keeping with the Samaritans' special emphasis on the Ark as well as with the biblical tradition of Aaron's priesthood and ritual sacrifice than with the Jewish tradition of the time. The Samaritans' adherence to the Tabernacle's sanctity and to the command to "build an altar unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. 27:5) became part of their tenth commandment maintaining their ongoing sacrificial tradition.⁸⁵ But as neither the Jews nor the Samaritans believe in the resurrection of Jesus, Constantine's illustration is directed toward both. The image seems to be based on ideas in the Epistle to the Hebrews 5:4–5, as quoted in the *Christian Topography*:⁸⁶

The Apostle also mentions this passage, saying in the Epistle to the Hebrews: Even as Aaron, so Christ also glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that spake unto him, Thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee; as he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek; thus extracting all that referred to the humanity of Christ.

The Byzantine miniatures (figs. 60, 61) depict the symbolic arched rectangular schema of the Tabernacle/Ark known through Jewish sources, but add the images of Aaron, Moses, animals for sacrifice, a four-column ciborium-like structure to accentuate the points of contention regarding the image of the Ark of the Covenant for the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Christians. In Jewish art the schematic arch above the Ark symbolizes

⁸³ Amit, 234, refers to Weiss 1981, 18–19, who claims that this is not the result of a scribal error since it is common to replace the letter *dalet* with the letter *resh*.

⁸⁴ McCrindle 257.

⁸⁵ Pummer 1999, 146, n. 223; idem 2011, 125–150.

⁸⁶ McCrindle 191.

the place in the Tabernacle where Moses heard the voice of God; hence the arch becomes a symbol and a sign of the Divine Presence. For the Samaritans, the Ark exposed through the open curtain is the *aron* that stands for the Lord, the *adon*, which they have to come and view three times a year. In Christian art the imagery of the Ark/Tabernacle/Temple has two additional cherubim on top of the arch; they have been pushed apart by the ciborium, which is understood as a metaphor for the Church, and the figures of Moses and Aaron standing to the left of the Ark next to a sacrificial animal represent the old covenant. Thus all these motifs together create a new Christian heavenly Temple that superseded the old earthly one.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Revel-Neher 1995, 407.

CHAPTER NINE

SCHEMATIC MODELS: FORMS OF VISUAL INTERPRETATION

Two Ways of Imaging the Tabernacle and the Holy of Holies

We find two models for visual interpretation of the arched Ark/Tabernacle/Cosmos in the *Christian Topography*. One of them, discussed earlier, is an upright rectangular box with a semicircular top that symbolizes the “short side” of the Cosmos as well as the Ark of the Covenant. The other model is entirely different, being a projection of a flat plane seen from above, an image that seems to parallel the terrestrial cartographic map of some of the Creation miniatures.¹ The interior space of the Tabernacle in this second model is divided into two parts by a gold line representing the curtain in front of the Ark, the *parochet*. In this image the part closest to the Tabernacle’s entrance, the Holy, holds the showbread table in the shape of a rectangle with three small balls on each of its corners, with the menorah next to it, lying flat on its side. There is another rectangular shape in the section behind the *parochet* that represents the Ark.

The exterior space of the Tabernacle seen en-face is framed by slender upright boards (Exod. 37:12) reinforced by three horizontal rods that create a fencelike appearance, and it has a gold molding around it. Constantine of Antioch described the upright boards around the Tabernacle’s structure (twice as long as they are wide) in a paraphrase of Exodus 26:15–35 and 36:20–34.² He noted that these boards surrounded the Tabernacle area as the ocean surrounds the Earth.³ Moreover, he said, the entrance to the Tabernacle on the East suggests the Garden of Eden, which is to be found beyond the ocean in the East.⁴ He explained that “Paradise is Earth which is encompassed by the ocean,” so that it is impossible to reach it.⁵

¹ Mouriki-Charlambous 1970, 118–128. Vatican 699, fol. 46v (fig. 39); Laurentiana 28, fol. 107r (fig. 40); Sinai 1186, fol. 77v; Vatican 699, fol. 40v; Sinai 1186, fols. 66v, 69r (figs. 26, 19).

² McCrindle 1897, 147.

³ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴ Fiensy 1985, 105, comments that the Garden of Eden is also mentioned in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (8:12) as the place where expiation was brought by Jesus when he ascended to Heaven and entered the Garden of Eden, where original sin was brought upon mankind by Adam.

⁵ McCrindle, 46, 47.

In support of this contention he quoted Deuteronomy 30:13: "Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou should say: who shall go over the sea for us."

Drawing a parallel between Paradise and the Tabernacle's entrance was another way that the *Christian Topography* highlighted the links between Paradise, which symbolized Creation, and the Tabernacle:⁶

Why did Moses ordain that the entrance to the Tabernacle should be in the east, and that the inner Tabernacle, that is, the Holy of Holies, should be in the west? Such an enquirer will be answered very concisely, that since he was commanded by God to make the Tabernacle in the image of the whole universe in the pattern shown to him on the Mount, he so made it, and at the same time has recorded that God, when He had created man, introduced him into the world in the east, and so commanded him, when in the course of time he had increased and multiplied, to extend himself and to fill the Earth towards the west. For this reason the door of the Tabernacle was placed in the east.

It is interesting to note that the imaging of the Tabernacle and its implements is different in each of the three extant copies of the *Christian Topography*. In the Laurentiana 28 and Sinai 1186 miniatures we see several articles that are not found in Vatican 699.⁷ All three have the showbread table and the menorah drawn in the area of the Holy, but Aaron's staff, the jar of manna, the tablets of the covenant (Num. 21:6–9), and the "serpent of brass" (which is not included among the Tabernacle implements in the Bible) are found only in Laurentiana 28 and Sinai 1186. In both of these miniatures these assorted objects are placed to the right of the menorah and below the showbread table, even though according to the Pentateuch and the Epistle to the Hebrews they should be in the Holy of Holies.

Revel-Neher comments that whereas there is no reference to these objects in the text of the *Christian Topography* or in its Vatican 699 miniature (fig. 39) they do appear in the Laurentiana 28 (fig. 40) and Sinai 1186, so they must have been copied from a Jewish model. Her conclusion is based on the fact that throughout the *Christian Topography* there are allusions to iconographical, philosophical, and cosmological ideas that point to Jewish influence. The motifs of Aaron's rod, the jar of the manna, the tablets of the law, and the bronze snake were dealt with in both Jewish midrashic and pictorial sources, some of which might have reached the *Christian Topography's* illustrator. He might, she says, have seen a model on one of his trips to Palestine or to Sinai (places he mentions in

⁶ Ibid., 151.

⁷ Vatican 699, fol. 46v (fig. 39); Laurentiana 28, fol. 107r (fig. 40); Sinai 1186, fol. 77v.

his writings) and subsequently used the sketches at that time. He then re-used the details he had copied, but “failed to interpret them in his textual development, perhaps because they were not needed for his theory.”⁸ Such an early illuminated manuscript, definitely “a missing link,” has not yet been found, but there is an early literary source that reflects thoughts and ideas about the Bible that seem to parallel these motifs.

The *Biblical Antiquities*, also known as *Pseudo-Philo*, is an imaginative retelling of parts of the Old Testament story that dates from the first century. Such a source could well provide interesting background for ideas and trends of thought that were gathered in later midrashic compilations. The dating of this aggadic and midrashic material coincides with the period of the initial shaping of the New Testament and might have had an influence on early Christian views of the Old Testament. The text of *Pseudo-Philo* reveals some ideas that might shed light on the special motifs discussed here and their link to the Garden of Eden.⁹

Thought to have been written in Hebrew and then translated into Greek and later into Latin, the book is also known as *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*. It is important to note that this work, forgotten for many years, was found again in the eleventh century and subsequently copied over and over again. Its rediscovery and the period during which it enjoyed great popularity coincide with the dates for the Laurentiana 28 and Sinai 1186 copies.¹⁰ In *Biblical Antiquities*, the Tabernacle and the Garden of Eden are mentioned together, for example, in the description of the Revelation on Mount Sinai, where we read the following (*Pseudo-Philo* 11:15):

And there He commanded him [Moses] many things and showed him the Tree of Life, from which he cut off and took and threw into Marah. [...] And He commanded him about the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Lord and about the sacrifice of burnt offerings and incense and about setting up the table and the candelabra and about the laver and its basin . . . And He showed him their likeness in order that he might make them according to the pattern that he had seen. And He said to him “Make me a Sanctuary and the tent of my glory will be among you.”

The text goes on to note (*Pseudo-Philo* 13:8) that God revealed to Moses the place of Creation and the serpent,¹¹ and told him about Adam in the

⁸ Revel-Neher 1990/1991, 91, 93, 95.

⁹ *Pseudo-Philo*, 297–377; Hayward 2010, 58–59.

¹⁰ Zaron 1973, 161, 168; Hayward 2010, 61.

¹¹ In *Pseudo-Philo* 13:8 Harrington interprets (322, n.h.) that: “We are reading *colubrum*, “serpent” . . . instead of *colorem*, “color” found in all MSS.”

Garden of Eden. He instructed Adam to walk in His ways, but Adam was tempted by his wife, who was deceived by the serpent. The book goes on to relate how God revealed to Moses the paths to the Garden of Eden that were lost because of Adam's sin, and continues to tell how Moses was shown many things at the same time (*Pseudo-Philo* 19:10, 11):

And He showed him the place from which the clouds draw up water to water the whole earth, and the place from which the river takes its water . . . and the place in the firmament from which only the Holy Land drinks. And He showed him the place from which the manna rained upon the people, even unto the paths of Paradise. And He showed him the measurements of the Sanctuary and the number of sacrifices and the signs by which they are to interpret the heavens. And He said, "These are what are prohibited for the human race because they have sinned against me. And now your staff with which these signs were performed will be a witness between Me and My people. And when they sin, I will be angry with them but I will recall your staff and spare them in accord with My mercy and your staff [will be before Me as a reminder all the days, and it will be like the bow [rainbow] with which I established my covenant with Noah."

As He revealed all these wondrous things, God focused on Moses' staff, which was a symbol of the covenant between Him and the Jewish people. Alexander Zaron contends that mentioning the "Paths of Paradise" in the same context in which Moses saw the "pattern of the Tabernacle" clearly suggests that the design of the Tabernacle was part of the wondrous mysteries of the Garden of Eden and the act of Creation.¹²

It seems, then, that the ideas related to the Tabernacle and Creation in *Biblical Antiquities* provide an interesting backdrop for the iconography of the additional items in the Laurentiana 28 and Sinai 1186 miniatures. The tablets of the covenant seem to parallel "the statutes and His judgments" that God revealed to Moses on the mountain (*Pseudo-Philo* 11:15). The image of the jar of manna seems to parallel God showing Moses the place from which the manna fell in the desert. It appears that the rod suggests the staff with which Moses made all the signs and brought forth the many miracles, and it might refer as well to the blossoming of Aaron's staff. Lastly the image of the serpent, the *colubrum* in the miniature alludes to the "Paths of Paradise," where Moses saw the serpent from the Garden of Eden as well as the "pattern" for making the Tabernacle as quoted above.

¹² Zaron, 161, 168. Hayward 2010, 61 stresses that "the link between Moses' rod and the rainbow is established when God shows secrets to Moses before he dies: the promised land, the place where clouds go up to water the earth, the origin of the waters of the river, the land of Egypt, the place whence Israel gets its water. Once again, the stress on water should be noted. God then shows him the ways of Paradise, the measurements of the sanctuary, the number of offerings, and the signs by which they start to observe the heavens."

There is no way to determine whether or not Constantine had access to *Biblical Antiquities*, but there is a reference in the *Christian Topography* to *Second Baruch* (better known as the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*), a book dated to the first or second decade of the second century. In mentioning the Garden of Eden being in the Heavens beyond the ocean where no man can reach, Constantine quoted Baruch, referring to “the scribe of Jeremiah the Prophet” noting:¹³

In the same passage he teaches us two truths—that beyond the ocean there is land or a place, and that it is impossible to cross the ocean, just as we, while in this mortal state, cannot possibly go up into heaven. Even Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah the prophet, when giving counsels of prudence in his epistle, being a man well taught in the institutions of Moses, speaks in the same strain with Moses, and says: “Who hath gone up into heaven and taken it and brought it down from the clouds, who hath passed over the sea?”

This *Christian Topography*'s reference to Baruch seems to be based on the midrashic connection among the Temple, Creation, and Paradise (2 Bar. 4:3):¹⁴

It is that which will be revealed with Me that was already prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise. And I showed it to Adam before he sinned. But when he transgressed the commandment, it was taken away from him—as also Paradise . . . And again I showed it also to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed him the likeness of the Tabernacle and all its vessels. Behold, now it is preserved with me—as also Paradise.

As *Biblical Antiquities* and *Second Baruch* are both part of the apocryphal literature, it is clear that Constantine was familiar with the genre, which Christian scholars knew to be an important source of the early midrashim that found their way into both Jewish and Christian literature. Revel-Neher notes another midrash that also dwells on very early notions that consider the rod of Moses and Aaron to be part of the Creation story. According to this midrash, the rod came from the Tree of Knowledge, was given to Adam when he was driven out of the Garden of Eden, and was passed on from generation to generation until it was brought to Joseph in Egypt. Moses found it in Egypt and used it when he brought forth the “signs and wonders” before Pharaoh. Aaron brought it to the Tabernacle and there it blossomed and pointed to Levi as the tribe chosen to serve

¹³ McCrindle, 47.

¹⁴ Klijn cite (622 note b) the midrashic reference about the Temple being one of the seven things created before the Creation of the world (BT *Pes* 54a); Levenson 1988, 130.

the Lord. Over time the staff gained an eschatological significance as well, and it is destined to reappear when the Messiah comes, unlike the Ark of Covenant, which, according to Jeremiah, will never be seen again.¹⁵

Marcel Poorthuis, analyzing the midrashim about Moses' rod in comparison with early Christian stories finds that there are many similarities between them. For example, in a Christian Syriac text from the thirteenth-century *Book of the Bee*, which was strongly influenced by earlier Syriac texts, he finds the same Jewish midrashic motifs concerning the rod of Moses that was referred to earlier. One midrashic tradition considers Moses' rod to be among the special objects created by God at sunset on the sixth day, thus linking the rod, Paradise, and Creation.¹⁶ Poorthuis also underscores the rod's messianic motif, pointing to its transfer from Adam to Moses, who gave it to Aaron. It was eventually handed over to David and will be given to the Messiah so he can rule in the future. Poorthuis sees the rod as a link connecting Moses in time to his biblical ancestors and in space to the Garden of Eden.¹⁷

Another Christian interpretation that relates to the Tree of life, the Garden of Eden, and the Tabernacle is found in Ephrem the Syrian's *Hymns on Paradise*, where the Tabernacle is considered to be a symbol of Paradise. Ephrem parallels the original Garden of Eden (before Adam's fall) with a house built by God, where the Tree of Life is thought to be the Holy of Holies and the Tree of Knowledge the veil that separates the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Tabernacle.¹⁸

In light of all that has been discussed concerning the Garden of Eden and the midrashic connotations of the rod and the serpent, it is reasonable to conclude that the appearance of the four Tabernacle-related objects in the two copies of the *Christian Topography* is neither erroneous nor coincidental.¹⁹ It is likely that the copyists of the eleventh-century manuscripts added them to the basic model in Vatican 699 to highlight the relationship between the Garden of Eden as part of the account of Creation (figs. 19, 26) and the making of the Tabernacle (figs. 39, 40). Such an accentuation was in accord with the idea that the seven-branched menorah was compared to the seven days of the week and to the celestial luminaries,

¹⁵ Revel-Neher 1990/1991, 93, n. 34, indicates that this midrashic tradition exists in the following texts: *Yalkut Shimoni*, Exod. 168 and Num. 763; BT *Pes* 54a; *PRE* 40.

¹⁶ Poorthuis 1998, 247.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 233–246.

¹⁸ McVey 1983, 91–121, 112.

¹⁹ Revel-Neher 1990/1991, 93.

and that the showbread table and its twelve loaves were representative of the twelve months of the year, where the three loaves at each corner of the table were the three months of each season.²⁰

These and other examples demonstrate in word and image the close association between God's two mystical endeavors, the Cosmos and the Tabernacle, an association first conceived by Philo and then discussed further by many Jewish and Christian thinkers. The theory about a Jewish model that might have been copied by the Christian artists is very much in line with these ideas. For example, the sixth-century mosaic floor of Beit Alpha provides proof of a Jewish model that was based on an early midrashic association concerning the rod of Moses and Aaron (fig. 48). As I noted earlier (see Chapter 4), the Beit Alpha mosaic floor depicts Aaron's rod with other Tabernacle implements as well as with the zodiac and the four seasons representing the Cosmos. Jewish manuscripts from the eleventh, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries feature the rod with other Tabernacle/Temple implements and earlier yet we find it in tenth-century illuminated Bible frontispieces.²¹

The Karaite Perception of the Temple and Its Implements

The search for Jewish art starting from the second half of the sixth century has not been fruitful, and we have not yet found any remnants from any period between the seventh century and the beginning of the tenth. The start of this period is known for the anti-Jewish legislation imposed by the Byzantine emperors, including Justinian's draconian ban on the building of synagogues (545 CE). From the seventh century on, Arab hoards swept across the Land of Israel, the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, and parts of Europe. Islam became the dominant culture in both East and West and influenced later Jewish art, of which examples dating to the tenth century have been found in Egypt, such as the Pentateuch known as the First Leningrad Bible.²²

The ancient iconographic traditions of Tabernacle motifs were adapted to manuscript painting using the decorative style of Arabic carpet pages, as we can find in illuminated Qu'rans. This manuscript, whose first two folios

²⁰ McCrindle, 43.

²¹ Revel-Neher 1990/1991, 91.

²² Leningrad, State Public Library. Although the name has been changed to the St. Petersburg Bible, I continue to use the original and more common name.

(figs. 72, 73) were illuminated by Shlomo ben Buya in 929 CE, was made either in the Land of Israel or in Egypt and was found in the Genizah of Fostat (Old Cairo).²³ Scholars have noted that the depictions on these two pages are similar to those of the Temple and its implements on the various synagogue mosaic floors²⁴ and include images of the Temple façade, the Ark of the Covenant, the cherubim, the menorah, the censer, Aaron's staff, and the laver used for washing the High Priest's hands and feet, the *kior*, all of which together represent the Divine Presence, the *shekhinah*. These depictions, which were carried forward from late antiquity to the Byzantine and Islamic periods, seem to be iconographical expressions of the covenant between God and the Jewish people.²⁵

Narkiss noted that the two-page frontispiece of the First Leningrad Bible (figs. 72, 73) depicts two different schemata of the Sanctuary, a schematic structure of the desert Tabernacle and one of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.²⁶ In the verso of the frontispiece (fig. 72), we see the menorah with seven round branches in the center of the Tabernacle, shown with an incense shovel and several other implements to its right (Exod. 25:31–37). Above the menorah is the showbread table (Exod. 25:23–30), the area designated for the Holy of Holies, and the Ark of the Covenant marked by the two staves by which it was carried (Exod. 25:10–16). The missing upper edge of the folio might have had the image of the two cherubim. The entire folio is surrounded by pillars attached to canvas sheets and is thought to be a bird's-eye view of the Tabernacle courtyard (Exod. 26:1–30, 27:9–19). The jar of manna (Exod. 16:33) and the laver for washing the priest's hands and feet (Exod. 30:18–21, 38:8) appear in frontal perspective.²⁷ The pillar on the left represents either the pedestal laver or the pillar of "cloud and fire" that accompanied the Israelites in the desert. On the bottom of the page we can see four massive columns configured to form the five entryways into the Tabernacle.

The recto of the frontispiece (fig. 73) depicts the Temple and its implements within a large gabled-roof architectonic structure. At the base of the structure are three arched gates that represent the entrance to Solomon's Temple. The central arch seems to form a base for the menorah, whose seven rectilinear branches rest upon it. Above the menorah is an

²³ The Bible was part of the collection of the Karaite Abraham Firkovitz (d. 1874), who lived on the island of Crete. The collection is now held in the Imperial Library in St. Petersburg.

²⁴ Revel-Neher 1984, 132–138; Narkiss, 1992, 69; Sed-Rajna 1997, 140–141.

²⁵ Revel-Neher 1986/1987, 135–146.

²⁶ Narkiss 1990, 33, 47–48.

²⁷ Sed-Rajna 1997, 140–141.

ornamental band that suggests the curtain separating the Holy from the Holy of Holies. The image of the Ark appears beyond the curtain flanked by two palm leaves. Since the Bible describes the Ark in the Tabernacle as having two cherubim on its top, it seems probable that these leaves allude to a stylized image of the cherubim: “And make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end; of one piece with the Ark cover made he the cherubim at the two ends thereof” (Exod. 25:19). To the right of the menorah, above the jar of the manna, is a gold square that symbolizes the incense altar (Exod. 30:1–10), which is next to a free-standing column. To the left of the menorah is a second column flanked by two rods, one flowering and one bare, representing the staff of Aaron both bare and blossoming: “And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses went into the Tent of Meeting; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and put forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and bore ripe almonds” (Num. 17:23). The two free-standing columns might allude to the copper pillars of Yachin and Boaz, mentioned in the description of Solomon’s Temple: “And he set up the pillars at the porch of the Temple; and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Yachin; and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz” (1 Kings 7:21).²⁸

The three gates at the base of the *recto folio* recall the depictions of the *Consecration of the Tabernacle* in the frescoes of the Dura-Europos synagogue (fig. 8),²⁹ where the gates mark the tripartite structure of the Tabernacle. The same division into the courtyard, the Holy, and the Holy of Holies typifies the frontispieces of the First Leningrad Bible, a work that, as I noted above, was very strongly influenced by Islamic art. The fact that this manuscript was part of the collection of Abraham Firko-vitz, a Karaite himself,³⁰ who went to Cairo to seek Karaite documents, suggests that it was written and illustrated by Karaites living within an Islamic cultural environment.³¹ The Temple images on its carpet pages were designed to reflect a specific Karaite message.³² The Karaites were the first to call the Bible “God’s Temple,” “*Mikdashiyah*,” a term chosen to express metaphorically the parallel between the three parts of the Bible

²⁸ Narkiss 1990, 47.

²⁹ Kessler 1990–1991, 53–77, esp. 56.

³⁰ Gil 2004, 265–266, notes that it was Benjamin al-Nihawandi who was the first to use the term “*bene miqrah*” (people of the Bible). Karaite (Aram. “qara”, “reader”), the name taken by members of a Jewish sect who based their tradition on a strict reading of the Bible while rejecting the Rabbinic Oral Law. Founded in the eighth century in Babylonia by Anan Ben David.

³¹ Kogman-Appel 2001, 51–53; Lasker 2012, 355–361.

³² Levy 1993, 68–85.

and the three sections of the Tabernacle.³³ Thus, the Pentateuch is compared to the Tabernacle's Holy of Holies, Prophets, *Nevi'im*, is paired with the Holy, and the Hagiographa, *Ktuvim*, is twinned with the outer court of the Tabernacle.

According to Bernard Revel,³⁴ the Karaites, who considered themselves to be the descendants and disciples of the Sadducees, might have been influenced by Philo's allegorical interpretation of the Bible.³⁵ According to Philo, who was the first to parallel the Tabernacle's pattern with the blueprint used by God in creating the world:³⁶

While he [Moses] was still staying on the mount, he was being instructed in all the mysteries of his priestly duties: and first in those which stood first in order, namely the building and furnishing of the sanctuary. Now, if they had already occupied the land into which they were removing, they would necessarily have had to erect a magnificent temple on the most open and conspicuous site, with costly stones for its material and build great walls around it, with plenty of houses for the attendants, and call the place the holy city. But as they were still wandering in the desert and had as yet no settled habitation, it suited them to have a portable sanctuary, so that during their journeys and encampment they might bring their sacrifices to it and perform all their other religious duties, not lacking anything which dwellers in cities should have. It was determined, therefore, to fashion a tabernacle, a work of the highest sanctity, the construction of which was set forth to Moses on the mount by divine pronouncements. He saw with the soul's eye the immaterial forms of the material objects about to be made, and these forms had to be reproduced in copies perceived by the senses, taken from the original draught, so to speak and from patterns conceived in the mind.

³³ Wieder 1957, 165–175, 167; idem 2005, 377–387; Narkiss 1990, 33.

³⁴ Revel 1971, 51–88, cites many examples of Karaite Halakhah that are very similar to Philo's understanding.

³⁵ Ben Shammai 1987, 69–84, esp. 76, claims that the similarity between Philonic and Karaite Halakhah needs further research. Nemoy 1974, 701, 702, establishes that the Karaites view Zadok the High Priest (whose very name implies righteousness) as being the archetype of righteousness and the founder of their community. The writings of Benjamin al-Nahawandi refer to concepts such as the *logos*, whose source is in the thinking of Philo and in Philonic traditions in Christianity. Lasker 2002, 294, n. 38, surveys the Karaites use of the Dead Sea scrolls in modern scholarship and quotes Szyszman (*Le Karaïsme*, Lausanne 1980, 34–48), who considers the writings of Philo of Alexandria as additional proof of the antiquity of Karaite ideas. In his 2008 book, Lasker, 248 n. 2, notes that Karaites “see themselves as the descendants of a Second Temple group whom they call “Zaddiiqum,” which includes the Dead Sea community and Philo of Alexandria.” Astren 2001, 123, also makes reference to Philo to demonstrate the wide range of similar points among halakhic systems of the Samaritans, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Karaites, and Philo of Alexandria.

³⁶ Philo, *Life of Moses*, 2, 71–73: “[...] its pattern Moses learned on the mountain from God. Moses saw in his mind's eye the non-corporeal ideas of physical things and according to them he was to make tangible copies, such as a master plan...”

Philo then discussed two types of sanctuaries, one to meet the needs of the Israelites wandering in the desert and the other for the time when they would become city dwellers. The frontispiece of the First Leningrad Bible seems to portray such a tradition by showing the two kinds of sanctuaries—on the verso the temporary portable Tabernacle in the wilderness and on the recto the permanent Temple in the Holy City.³⁷

There are elements in the Tabernacle imaged on the verso (fig. 72) that reinforce this distinction, for example, the decorated rectangles and poles enclosing the courtyard seen from above, which seem to represent the curtain of the Tabernacle courtyard as specified in the biblical text,³⁸ which Philo explained as follows:³⁹

The Tabernacle, then, was constructed to resemble a sacred temple in the way described. Its precincts contained an area a hundred cubits long by fifty broad, with pillars at equal intervals of five cubits from each other, so that the total number was sixty with forty arranged on the long sides and twenty on the broad sides, in both cases half to each side.

The impressive rectangular structure on the bottom of this picture seems to portray the entryways to the Tabernacle precinct with four massive pillars topped by five decorated discs, which might convey another element that is reminiscent of Philo's elaboration:⁴⁰

At the beginning of the entrance to the court was built another very fine and large propylaeum with four pillars, on which was stretched a piece of multi-colored woven work, made in the same way as those within the Tabernacle and of similar materials.

The large free-standing column on the left of the menorah on the verso folio might allude to the pillar of "cloud or fire" that accompanied the Children of Israel on their journeys in the desert (Exod. 13:21): "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they might go by day and by night." The same type of a classic free-standing column represents

³⁷ Ibid., n. 72. Philo noted that the concept of a "holy city" means here the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the place where the Temple to the Most High God stood. In other places where the expression appears the intention was Jerusalem.

³⁸ Exod. 26:36–37; 27:16; 35:15, 17; 36:37; 38:18; 39:34, 38; 39:40; 40:5, 8, 33; Num. 3:25, 26; 4:5, 25, 26.

³⁹ Philo, *Life of Moses*, 2, 89.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 93.

the pillar of cloud and of fire (one black and one red) in the Dura-Europos fresco of the Exodus from Egypt (fig. 11).

According to Philo the seven-branched menorah is a symbol of the Heavens and its planets, “the seven cups and the candles symbolize the planets.”⁴¹ This cosmic connection with the menorah is enhanced on the verso folio as its round branches coming out of a short, thick stem are reminiscent of the burning bush: “The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed” (Exod. 3:2).⁴² The association between the menorah perceived as a “tree of light” and the burning bush described in the Bible and in the picture as a “tree of light” comes to mind again when we look at the meaning of the Hebrew word for the burning bush, *ha’sneh*, in its Arabic translation.⁴³

The Hebrew word *ha’sneh* in Exodus 3:2 was translated into Arabic as *alsenah* meaning “a thorny bush,” whereas the same word in the poetic verse in Deuteronomy 33:16, “And the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush [Heb. *shochen sneh*]” was rendered as *sachnan elsamah*, which means the angel of God who lives in the Heavens.⁴⁴ Thus, according to the Arabic translation,⁴⁵ the word *sneh* means a thorny bush as well as the Heavens,⁴⁶ a double meaning that fits the form of the image of the menorah on the verso. Its bushlike appearance with branches coming out of a short base and the seven flaming candles symbolize both the burning bush and Philo’s heavenly planets and thus gives the image of the menorah a narrative and a cosmological dimension.

⁴¹ Ibid., 2, 103.

⁴² Goodenough 1953–1968, IV, 74; Yarden 1971, 5.

⁴³ Malter 1921, 141–144, claims that R. Sa’adia Gaon, who lived in ninth-century Babylon, began the translation of the Bible into Arabic while he was still in Egypt. This translation became the most popular version among the Arabic-speaking population (for both Jews and non-Jews). R. Abraham ibn Ezra, who lived in twelfth-century Spain, used this translation extensively in his commentary. Waxman 1942, 815–825, comments that from what scholars who lived after Sa’adia Gaon wrote and from copies of his comments in their writings one can deduce that he translated and commented the entire Bible in Arabic. Little of his translation is extant but from the writings of Ibn Ezra and others who quote him we can learn about his other works.

⁴⁴ Kapah 1984, 64, explains that the bush is made up of two parts, one is thorny and the other heavenly as it described in Deuteronomy.

⁴⁵ According to Narkiss 1990, 31, 32, there is a close connection between Hebrew illuminated Bibles from the Middle East and Arabic culture. Carpet pages that have geometric designs appear in all the books of the Qu’ran from this period, and they may have had an influence on the making of Hebrew Bibles.

⁴⁶ Kapah, 1984, 188.

It is interesting to find a bush that also resembles a menorah in Vatican 699 (fig. 101). In this picture we see an image of Moses in two different scenes that are shown together in the same picture. In the scene to the left, Moses standing with his flock and the hand of God with beams of light is directed toward him. In the scene to the right, he is ascending the mountain to receive a scroll from the hand of God extended from the Heavens. Surprisingly, the image of the burning bush in the picture is not next to Moses the shepherd but rather is adjacent to the figure of Moses receiving the Torah. The burning bush in the picture is painted in gold and is shaped like the base of a menorah topped with shooting flames.

Perhaps the placing of the bush on Mount Sinai directly under the hand of God reflects the two divine revelations, highlighting the connections among the burning bush, the giving of the Torah, and the receiving of the instructions for building the Tabernacle, where God will continue to reveal Himself to Moses. These links are hinted at in the biblical text: In the description of the encounter at the burning bush the Bible says: “And God called to him from the bush” (Exod. 3:4); for the Revelation at Mount Sinai it says: “And God called to him from the mountain” (Exod. 19:3); and for Moses hearing the voice of God in the Tabernacle we read: “And God called to Moses and God spoke with him from the Tent of Meeting” (Lev. 1:1).

Obviously we cannot assume that the artist of the First Leningrad Bible had occasion to see and be influenced by the *Christian Topography* manuscript. On the other hand, the similarity between the menorah that looks like a bush and the bush that looks like a menorah suggests that there might have been an early Jewish pictorial model that was known to both. Such an hypothesis is strengthened by other visual and midrashic motifs in the *Christian Topography*. For example, the shoes in the image of Moses at the burning bush are unlike most of the Byzantine representations, in which they are sandals (fig. 101). The model used in this figure seems to resemble the one in the third-century Dura-Europos synagogue's panel, as both show the shoes as boots. Moreover, the conflation of the two scenes—God's revelations at the burning bush and the giving of the Torah—in Vatican 699 could have come from early Jewish midrashic sources in which Mount Horeb (Exod. 33:6) and Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:11) are two names for the same mountain, which was the site of both events (BT *Shab* 89b): “For R. Abbahu said: its name was Mount Sinai, and why was it called Mount Horeb? Because desolation, *hurbah*, to idolaters descended thereon.”

To further explore the iconography of some of the other details on these two folios, we have to examine the various elements in light of Philo's words concerning the two Sanctuaries and the Karaite ideology. The three large arched and ornate gates on the bottom of the recto page (fig. 73) seem to symbolize the eastern gate of the Temple Mount area, a gate that is described by Philo as the "magnificent Temple on the most open and conspicuous site." The gates on the east might allude to the Mount of Olives, where the pilgrims stood facing the Temple's eastern gates hoping to experience the Divine Presence. In the Karaite context, the gates might be considered a link between the Holy of Holies on the west side of the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives, which faces it from the east.⁴⁷ The association between the east being the site of the Divine Presence, the Garden of Eden, and the Holy of Holies was underscored as early as in the second-century BCE Book of Jubilees.⁴⁸ A book whose Hebrew source was found in Qumran telling the story of Genesis from a specific priestly context, Jubilees interjected concepts sacred to the priestly cult and to the reality of the Written Law.⁴⁹ According to the Book of Jubilees 8:19:⁵⁰

And he knew that the Garden of Eden was the Holy of Holies and the dwelling of the Lord. And Mount Sinai (was) in the midst of the desert and Mount Zion (was) in the midst of the navel of the Earth. The three of these were created as holy places, one facing the other.

This passage clearly refers to the idea that the Temple Mount and Jerusalem were conceived to be the *omphalos* of the world and of all of Creation.⁵¹ Elior notes that the rich association seen here between the Garden of Eden and the Holy of Holies was preserved in post-biblical literature from before the destruction of the Second Temple in the priestly circles connected to the world of the sons of Zadok.⁵² These two sacred places where God dwelled indicated a relationship between the cherubim of the

⁴⁷ Levy 1993, 68–82 discusses these images as an expression of the Karaites' strong connection to the Temple and its messianic significance.

⁴⁸ Erder 1987, 54–68; Elior 2005, 210, n. 20, contends that the scholarly world is divided with respect to possible ties between Karaite literature and the Judean Desert Scrolls.

⁴⁹ Elior 2010, 114–118.

⁵⁰ Jubilees: Wintermute 1985, 35–142.

⁵¹ Gafni 1987, 5–22, esp. 11.

⁵² Elior 2010, 105–141, notes that "sons of Zadok" is what the authors of the scrolls called themselves, that is, the priests, keepers of the covenant.

Garden of Eden, the cherubim on the Ark cover in the Holy of Holies, and the cherubim on the Chariot/Throne in Ezekiel.⁵³

Karaite liturgical passages found in the Cairo Genizah disclose a yearning to return to the Temple and witness its sacred service.⁵⁴ The Karaites were all commanded to “read from a scroll morning and evening the passage of the daily sacrifice,” as it appears in Numbers 28:1–8. Anan b. David, who lived in the eighth century in Babylon and is thought by many scholars to have been the founder of the Ananim movement that later became the Karaite sect, instructed the priests to recite the daily song, *shir shel yom*, from Psalms; to sound the horns at the end of the prayer service; to sing a Song of Degrees, *shir ha'ma'alot*; and to prostrate themselves. Reference to the names of Zion and Jerusalem in each prayer and remembering of the destruction of the Temple became a basic tenet of Karaite theology.⁵⁵

Rabbinic Judaism also emphasized the yearning for Jerusalem and the Temple. However, unlike the Karaites, who embraced the physical structure of the Temple and its biblical source, the Rabbis regarded the Torah and its interpretation by the Oral Law as the continuation of sacred worship. The Karaite Daniel Alkomasi, who lived in the ninth century CE and was known as one of the architects of the Karaite ideology, preached separation from Rabbinic Judaism (which he considered a reflection of a Diaspora mentality). Alkomasi believed that a return to the Holy Land and acceptance of an ascetic and mournful lifestyle would hasten the rebuilding of the Temple. It was during his time that the Karaites established the “Mourners of Zion,” and with the verse, “On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have stationed permanent watchmen” (Isa. 62:6), called upon the Karaites in exile to send five representatives from each community to mourn the destruction of the Temple and pray for its restoration. When Alkomasi used the expression “hills of Jerusalem,”⁵⁶ he meant the Mount of Olives, and for him the “walls” of Jerusalem were the eastern walls of the Temple Mount seen from the Mount of Olives.⁵⁷

⁵³ Ibid., 108–109.

⁵⁴ Mann, 1971, 324–351.

⁵⁵ Levi 1993, 68–72.

⁵⁶ Mann 1972, 6, n. 12.

⁵⁷ Braslavi 1964, 69 ff.

This strong emphasis on the gates of the Temple is also found in other Karaite writings, such as those of Sahal b. Masliah, who appealed to his brothers in exile in his introduction to the *Book of Precepts*:⁵⁸

You, my brothers, have to come and live in God's land and to stand on the gates and to ascend to the Mount of Olives, opposite the eastern gate and to observe the impurities and to wail over its desecration; perhaps He will return from His wrath.

The Karaites, who rejected the Talmud, leaned heavily on the words of the prophet Ezekiel, such as we read in Ezekiel 11:1 and 44:1: "Then a spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the East gate of the Lord's house, which looked eastward," meaning the eastern gate: "the gate of the outside Temple that faced eastward,"⁵⁹ which obviously refers to the Mount of Olives. Many of the extant Karaite writings note that after 500 years of not being able to go up to Jerusalem, God opened the Gates of Mercy for His people and brought them to His Holy City to allow them to read, pray, and study before the sacred precincts.⁶⁰ The Karaites took on the name "Mourners of Zion,"⁶¹ and established themselves on the Mount of Olives with great devotion.

The arched gates on the recto (fig. 73) seem reminiscent of a tenth-century prayer found in the Genizah called "The Gates of Prayer"⁶² that includes praises of the gates around the Temple Mount,⁶³ which the pilgrims who came to Jerusalem were expected to chant as they circled the city of Zion. Fleischer claims that the prayer was apparently supposed to

⁵⁸ Klein 2, 1944, 118.

⁵⁹ Perhaps, on the basis of "East gate" in Neh. 3:29.

⁶⁰ Klein 2, 115–119.

⁶¹ Gil 2004, 81–96; Fleischer 1998, 326, 327, cites the text according to the manuscript that was found in a Karaite collection in St. Petersburg: "I confess before God Who gave me life and inspired me therein and gave me strength, and made me worthy to ascend [to Jerusalem] and to see Your Temple whose rebuilding we, Your whole house of Israel, await to see and hope to gather there and to crowd together in the shadow of its walls and to roll in its dust. I, Your servant, the son of your maid-servant, You made me worthy that I waited and I saw that which I had hoped for, and I was worthy to stand in the holy Temple; even though it be destroyed, it is perfect in Your Sanctity and lauded in Your Divine Presence. . . . [And they all should ascend to this place which is the choice [place] of the world, the treasure of places, the yearning of souls, holy above all holiness, and Your Presence should dwell therein, and Your vision should appear to the prophets, as You promised. And may You speedily return, and not delay] and may we be all a treasure in Your Temple and in Your *heikhal* and may the sanctifying priests stand to serve, and the Levites at their posts in their service, and the sacrifices in their *mishmarot* . . ."

⁶² *Ibid.*, 298–327.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 323, 324, according to the text of the Oxford manuscript 2701/9, 67a ff.

be recited by everyone who viewed the holy place, even those who did not actually circle the gates. He adds that despite the fact that the custom of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages was common to both the Karaites and the Rabbis, it is difficult to determine which of the two groups wrote these early prayers.⁶⁴

The images of the Tabernacle found on the frontispiece of the First Leningrad Bible discussed here highlight the Karaites' adherence to the Written Law as opposed to the Rabbinic Oral tradition. Comparing these images to the depictions of the Tabernacle/Temple on the synagogue mosaic floors we realize that whereas the synagogue symbols are presented without any architectural frame and with more than one representation of the menorah and the other symbols, the Karaite illuminated manuscript portrays the Tabernacle/Temple implements strictly in accordance with the biblical descriptions and has a physical frame around them.

The appearance of the entrance gates, the single large menorah, the curtain, and the Ark is faithful to the biblical description. The Karaites apparently used these folios to demonstrate the importance of the Torah and the apocryphal literature that expanded on it.⁶⁵ Like the Samaritans before them, the Karaites do not accept the Rabbinic interpretation of the biblical description of the four species. The First Leningrad Bible does not include the *lulav* and *etrog* among the symbols used as a remembrance of the Temple, but Aaron's blossoming staff, which they considered a messianic motif unconnected to the Oral Law, was apparently used as a substitute for the four species.⁶⁶

Another important Karaite innovation was the placement of the two Tabernacle/Temple miniatures as the frontispiece to the entire Pentateuch, thus declaring the link between the act of Creation, *ma'aseh bere'shit*, and the making of the Tabernacle, *ma'aseh ha'mishkan*. As I noted earlier, the Karaites were influenced by Philo's allegorical method of interpretation and placing the illustration of the Tabernacle's structure and implements at the beginning of the Book of Genesis was in accord with his ideas regarding the pattern of the Tabernacle being the blueprint of Creation. Some 300 years later similar frontispieces appeared in works from the Jewish community in Spain. Their execution is slightly different but their placement duplicates the symbolism in the First Leningrad Bible.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 325.

⁶⁵ Narkiss 1990, 18–39.

⁶⁶ Revel-Neher 1986–1987, 141.

⁶⁷ Roth 1953, 24–44, see 25.

To conclude the discussion of this Karaite illuminated manuscript it should be remembered that those of Philo's Jewish philosophical ideas that influenced the *Christian Topography* apparently had an impact on the Karaites as well. It is also important to note that apart from the visual examples cited by Revel-Neher as alluding to an early Jewish model, on the verso of the First Leningrad Bible frontispiece (fig. 72) we find a motif that Sed-Rajna compares to a fourth-century "cartographic" drawing of the plan of the Tabernacle, where its courtyard colonnade is shown from above as if from a bird's-eye perspective.⁶⁸ This motif, which we find in the *Christian Topography* and on the Vatican Jewish gold-glass plate (fig. 74) as well as in other Byzantine Christian manuscripts leads into the discussion in Chapter 10.

⁶⁸ Sed-Rajna 1997, 140.

CHAPTER TEN

PERSPECTIVE IMAGING OF THE TABERNACLE

In exploring the link between the Tabernacle and Creation we must look closely at the various ways in which artisans have imaged them. The “cartographic” drawing of the Tabernacle, for example, reflects a special approach toward the Sanctuary/Tent of Meeting, the place where God dwelled on Earth. All four artistic renditions I discuss in this chapter project a unique perception of the Tabernacle through the way it was imaged. Studying each of the four examples leads to an interesting conclusion regarding the perspective imaging of the Sanctuary, its courtyard, and its implements. In what follows I examine the concept of the Tabernacle as reflected in a “gold-glass base,” in the *Christian Topography*, in the Codex Amiatinus, and in Pantokrator 61, the marginal Psalter from Mount Athos.

Perspective Imaging on the Gold-Glass Base

Circular disks made up of two layers of glass with an incised gold leaf between them, known as “gold-glass bases,” were found in the mortar that sealed the loculi (rectangular burial niches) in the catacombs in Rome.¹ These gold-glass bases are somewhat of an enigma, thought to have been part a bowl or cuplike vessel belonging to the deceased.² Among the 500 or so discs uncovered there, most of which were associated with pagans and Christians, fourteen were identified as Jewish. Some of the latter display the schema of the architectonic structure of an Ark/Temple along with other motifs associated with Tabernacle/Temple worship arranged in two registers.³

The fourth-century example known as the Museo Sacro’s Vatican plate yielded new understanding of the motifs of these gold-glass bases (fig. 74). Discovered in 1882 in the catacombs (underground cemeteries) of SS. Peter and Marcellinus in Rome, it has been dated to the third quarter

¹ Sed-Rajna 1997, 76–81.

² Whitehouse 1996, 4–12; Rutgers 1995, 81–85; Dalton 1901, 204.

³ Schuler 1966, 48–61; Barag 1970, 99–103.

of the fourth century. A drawing made shortly after it was found reveals its Jewish origins and highlights its unique set of symbols. Unlike other Jewish gold-glass bases whose artistic motifs display only the implements within the Tabernacle/Temple, this disc shows the exterior architectonic structures of the three sites of the Jewish “House of God”: the wilderness Tabernacle and Solomon’s and Herod’s Temples.

In an article written in 1985, St. Clair summarized the different interpretations accorded this particular disc and offered a comprehensive explanation that integrates its various elements.⁴ The gabled tetrastyle structure of the Temple with steps leading up to it in the center of the gold-glass base is understood to be the Hellenistic-style Second Temple built by King Herod. Next to it are two free-standing pillars, one on each side of the Temple structure, that symbolize the First Temple and its description in the Book of Kings, which are known as Yachin and Boaz (1 Kings 7:21). A colonnade of pillars and curtains represents the Pentateuchal Tabernacle’s outer court. Two small semicircular booths with conical roofs and a palm tree are seen behind the outer courtyard (in all likelihood they were originally inscribed on both sides of the damaged base) represent booths for the Feast of Tabernacles, *sukkoth*. In front of the architectonic structure of the Tabernacle/Temple we see two gold amphorae, a menorah, a *lulav*, and an *etrog*.⁵

St. Clair suggests that all of the implements around the central gabled tetrastyle structure commemorate the Feast of Tabernacles, Sukkoth, the last of the three annual pilgrim festivals, particularly the libation ceremonies’ special significance in bringing rain,⁶ as described in the Mishnah.⁷ Moreover, the Greek words *oikoc iph[nh]c* [House of Peace] that appear on the side of the image of the Temple are obviously to be seen in the context of Sukkoth. There is no equivalent of the phrase “House of Peace” in the Bible, in the Talmudic literature, or in Hebrew liturgy. On the other hand, the Tabernacle/Temple is referred to as “the Tabernacle of Peace,” “*sukkath shalom*,” as we find in the homiletic development of Psalms 76:3 “In Shalem will be His *sukkah* and dwelling place in Zion,” which ties peace, *shalom*, together with Shalem (Jerusalem) and Tabernacle,

⁴ St. Clair, 1985, 6–15.

⁵ Revel-Neher 1984, 102–108.

⁶ M *RH* 1, 2: “At new year all creatures pass before Him [God] like children of *maron*, as it says, ‘He that fashioneth the heart of them all, that considereth all their doings’ (Ps. 33:15); and on Tabernacles judgment is passed in respect of rain.”

⁷ M *Suk* 5, 1–3.

sukkah: This phrase is developed liturgically in the last blessing of the evening version of the *shema* prayer, “and spread over us Your Tabernacle of peace.”⁸ In the Palestinian Talmud, R. Abun (first half of the fourth century) noted that the Temple in Jerusalem should always be the focus and direction of prayer,⁹ a point stressed with many variations in the *piyyutim* for Sukkoth.¹⁰ The Hebrew term *sukkath shalom*, then, is equivalent to the House of Peace, referring to the Temple, the Tabernacle,¹¹ and to the *sukkah*, wherein a Jew is commanded to dwell during Sukkoth.

Sukkoth was first observed in the wilderness, as mentioned in Leviticus 23:43. Solomon’s Temple was consecrated on Sukkoth (1 Kings 8:65), and the holiday gained special significance in the Second Temple Period through the introduction of new ceremonies.¹² These additions were primarily rituals relating to rain and water,¹³ such as the waving of the *lulav* while circling the altar during the *hallel* prayer¹⁴ and the libation ceremony on *simchat beth ha’shoeva* when all would rejoice at the place of the Water-Drawing as described in the Mishnah,¹⁵ which says: “He who has not seen the *simchat beth ha’shoeva* has never seen joy in his life.”¹⁶

The images on this gold-glass base are depicted from different perspectives: a bird’s-eye view of the pillars and curtains of the Tabernacle courtyard and an en-face view of the other motifs. In his book *Perspective*, Avigdor Posek explains this technique as an attempt to present both a perceptual and a mythical reality at one and the same time.¹⁷ The various objects on the gold-glass base, fashioned as they are with familiar mnemonic symbols, function as what Mary Carruthers terms ‘cues’ or ‘*memoria rerum*’ (for remembering).¹⁸ The Pentateuchal Tabernacle seen from above represents the initial heavenly inspired “pattern” given to Moses on Mount Sinai, whereas the symbols of the two Temples, the *sukkoth*, and the other features are shown frontally in a realistic rendering, which emphasizes their continued existence and use on earth.

⁸ Laderman and Furstenberg 2009, 451.

⁹ PT *Ber* 4.5 (36a).

¹⁰ Rubenstein 1993, 185–209.

¹¹ The use of *oikos*, house, is common in Christian exegesis of the Festival of Tabernacles. See Danielou 1957, 269 ff.

¹² Neh. 8:14–17; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8, 4, 1; 11, 5, 5; 13, 8, 2; 13, 13, 5; 15, 3, 3.

¹³ Rubenstein 1995, 117–131.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 152–161 (*Hallel* prayer, praise and thanksgiving recitation of Pss. 113–118 on Jewish holidays).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 131–145.

¹⁶ M Suk 5.1.

¹⁷ Posek 1982, 13, 15, 49.

¹⁸ Carruthers 1990, 16–20.

The motifs on this gold-glass base substantiate the special significance of the image of the Temple, “the House of God,” as a Jewish polemical reply to the Christian claim that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was a fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy and the end of the old covenant. The Jewish answer used the schematic Temple edifice to declare that despite the Temple’s destruction its memory is preserved through the continued celebration of the Jewish holidays and observance of the Halakhah. The image of the Temple served as a constant reminder of God’s promise of redemption, resurrection, and the rebuilding of the House of God,¹⁹ projecting the conviction that even when its physical center was destroyed, Judaism did not lose its legitimacy nor abandon its hope to rebuild the *sukkath shalom—oikos eirenes*.²⁰

The sixth-century *Christian Topography* as well as illustrations of the Tabernacle and its courtyard in later Byzantine manuscripts continued to use the same conceptual perspective to express the Christian interpretation of the Old and New Testament descriptions of the House of God. The miniatures in these manuscripts convey some of the same ideas that engendered the polemic responses evident on the fourth-century Museo Sacro’s Vatican plate.

Perspective Imaging in the Christian Topography and the Octateuchs

The *Christian Topography*’s illustration of the Tabernacle within its courtyard seen in Vatican 699 and Sinai 1186 depicts a flat panel in the center of a larger area framed by a rectangular colonnade.²¹ The tentlike structure in the middle of the page decorated with checkerboard fabric is stretched taut by four ropes, alluding to the Tent of Meeting tied to the ground by pegs and covered by various cloth coverings (linen, dyed rams’ skins, and seal-skins). This representation of the Tabernacle and its coverings reflects the transient nature of the desert Sanctuary. The orientation of the courtyard is marked by large Latin letters, one for each of the four sides. In the Vatican 699 miniature (fig. 75) an opening on the right side of the colonnade identified by an accompanying inscription indicates the entrance. In Sinai 1186 the entrance on the east side of the courtyard is

¹⁹ Kessler 2000, 4.

²⁰ Laderman and Furstenberg, 433–456.

²¹ Mouriki-Charlambous 1970, 129–133. Vatican 699, fol. 49r (fig. 75) and Sinai 1186, fol. 82v.

marked by a diamond-shaped curtain pattern in gold and red squares. The two miniatures are adjacent to the following text in the fifth book of the *Christian Topography*:²²

The court of the Tabernacle had a length of one hundred cubits with twenty pillars, and a breadth of fifty cubits with twelve pillars. But for the breadth of the Tabernacle on the east He ordered that there should be three pillars on this side, and three on that side, and that the veils like vestures of fine linen, alone measuring fifteen cubits, should be stretched over the three pillars. . . . And the whole structure of the Tabernacle was at once awe-inspiring and of highest excellence. I must therefore to the best of my ability delineate these also representing them in the form of what are called pavilions.

Constantine described the upright pillars that stood around the Tabernacle with their attached curtains both verbally and pictorially.²³ He delineated the entire Tabernacle precinct as if from above in order to elicit a sense that the earthly Tabernacle in the wilderness was in effect a mirror image of a divine heavenly Tabernacle—a temporary earthly Sanctuary that was a reflection of an eternal divine pattern that existed in Heaven from the time of Creation. He was thoroughly familiar with both the Old and New Testament sources that support such ideas, especially the reference in the Epistle to the Hebrews 8:5:²⁴

The work they do as priests is only a copy and a shadow of what is in heaven. It is the same as it was with Moses, when he was about to build the Tabernacle. God told him, “Be sure to make everything according to the pattern you were shown on the mountain.”

As I noted earlier, in both his text and his images, Constantine alluded over and over again to a primordial ‘copy’ or a blueprint that God revealed to Moses as the ‘pattern’ for the Tabernacle. When comparing the depiction of the Tabernacle surrounded by the colonnade as seen in Vatican 699 and Sinai 1186 to the cartographic map of the inhabited Earth surrounded by the ocean seen in Sinai 1186 (fig. 26), we realize that they are all depicted in a rectangular shape, they are all viewed from above, and their focal point is in the East. The cartographic map of the Cosmos marks the Garden of Eden in the East, whereas the Tabernacle’s entrance is marked by the curtain in the East. The bird’s-eye perspective in all of these drawings seems to reflect Isaiah 40:22, quoted in the *Christian Topography* in

²² McCrindle, 154.

²³ *Ibid.*, 147, 149.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

three different places:²⁵ “It is He that sitteth above the circle of the Earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the Heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.”

The unusual perspective suggests a link between the earthly transient Tabernacle, which was rebuilt every time the Israelites stopped during their travels, and the heavenly divine pattern given to Moses for its construction, designed as “a copy and a shadow of what is in Heaven” (Heb. 8:5).

The miniatures in Octateuch 746 (fig. 76) and Octateuch 747 (fig. 77) present a parallel schematic model. Both illustrations display a flattened colonnade surrounding the altar for the burnt offering, mentioned in the Bible prior to the description of the Tabernacle’s courtyard (Exod. 27:1–9). The colonnade is seen from above exactly as in Vatican 699 and Sinai n86, whereas the altar in the center of the picture is shown in a frontal three-dimensional view.

The image of the anointing of Aaron and his sons for the Sanctuary service (Exod. 29:4–10) in Octateuch 746 (fig. 78) depicts the same type of tentlike Tabernacle and its courtyard but in a diminutive size. Aaron and his sons are portrayed as large figures standing in the center of the Tabernacle’s precincts and are shown in an en-face perspective against the flattened colonnade. The conceptual perspective in these pictures²⁶ seems to underscore the Christian typological and theological concepts in Chapters 9 and 10 of the Epistle to the Hebrews regarding Jesus’ supersession of Aaron’s priesthood, as “from the very beginning of Creation” Jesus was destined to replace Aaron as the High Priest and abolish the practice of animal sacrifice. The images showing the sacrificial altar with fire burning fiercely all around it (figs. 76, 77) as representations of the sacrificial service and the figures of Aaron and his sons being consecrated for those rituals, both in frontal perspective, reflect the Old Testament’s ways of worship, whereas the courtyard colonnade seen from above suggests the New Testament’s heavenly Temple.

Perspective Imaging in Codex Grandior and Codex Amiatinus

In the sixth-century Codex Grandior, illustrated by Cassiodorus (d. 593), we can see the schema known from the fourth-century Vatican Jewish

²⁵ Ibid., 32, 130, 298.

²⁶ Posek, 19.

gold-glass base.²⁷ The manuscript opens with an illustration of the Tabernacle, considered the crowning glory of the entire codex. Cassiodorus noted in his writings that the picture that describes the Tabernacle and the order of the tribes surrounding it was not placed next to the account in Exodus 25 and 26 or next to the description of the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert in Numbers 2 and 3, but rather was selected to be the frontispiece for the codex.²⁸ The picture was designed to symbolize God's dwelling among men and to highlight the significance of the Tabernacle as an essential and doctrinal subject for the entire Bible.²⁹

Codex Grandior was copied several times after it was brought from Italy to the Jarrow/Wearmouth Monastery in northern England in 678. The most complete copy is Codex Amiatinus, now in the Laurentiana Library in Florence.³⁰ Similar to Codex Grandior, the frontispiece of Codex Amiatinus has two folios that show the Tabernacle and its implements as they are described in Exodus (fig. 79).³¹ The illustration portrays the Tabernacle and its courtyard enclosed by rows of pillars and curtains on all four sides. The curtains are connected to the pillars by hooks on a bar, thus delimiting the entire structure. Next to the enclosure, outside the courtyard, are inscriptions of the twelve tribes, three on each side of the rectangle with their respective number of men as noted in the Bible.³² The four directions—East, South, North, and West—are inscribed in Latin on the inside of the courtyard, thus marking the entrance to the Tabernacle in the East.

Interestingly, the part of the miniature that depicts the eastern and the southern sides of the courtyard places the viewer outside the colonnade, able to see the curtains but not the pillars that are within. The western- and northern-side images set the viewer within the courtyard, able to see the pillars as well as the curtain behind them. Both views are executed in a perspective in which the colonnade and the frame of the Tabernacle lie flat and open on the page and the implements are shown frontally. The laver in the courtyard is upright in the shape of a two-handled jar, identified by a title above it written in Latin. The sacrificial altar also shown frontally has a fire flaming at its top. The entrance to the Holy, labeled

²⁷ Kühnel, 1987, 156–160; Sed-Rajna 1998, 47–48.

²⁸ Kühnel 1986/1987, 164, n. 104.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 164–166.

³⁰ Florence Bibl. Laur. Cod. Amiatinus I fol. Iiv–IIIr (henceforth Codex Amiatinus).

³¹ Revel-Neher 1982, 6–17.

³² Num. 2:3–8, 10–15, 18–23, 25–30.

"*Introitus*" (entrance), is depicted as a gate with a curtain and a cross above it. Within the area of the Holy are the menorah, the showbread table, and the incense altar. The Ark of the Covenant is shown standing by itself in the Holy of Holies.

Revel-Neher sees Codex Amiatinus' double page as a unique interpretation of the Tabernacle and its implements.³³ She notes that its image of the Tabernacle is similar to the one developed in Moshe Levine's model (fig. 80),³⁴ and she suggests that the Codex Amiatinus' artist tried to be as faithful as possible to the exact wording of the biblical text. He wanted, she says, to explain and simplify the biblical description of the structure of the Tabernacle and its implements by producing a comprehensive view of the entire area from inside and out. Thus he chose to image the implements with their exact spatial relationships and in their appropriate places. His only glaring deviation from the biblical text is the cross in the center of the miniature inside the gate of the Holy, which symbolizes the same Christian message expressed in some of the other examples described above. It declares Jesus' crucifixion as the termination of the earthly Divine Presence among the Children of Israel in their man-made Tabernacle and the beginning of Jesus' reign as the High Priest in the Tabernacle made by God in the Heavens. The miniature thus links the Old and the New Testament and moves the temporary earthly Sanctuary to its new eternal, heavenly abode.

Based on Revel-Neher's observation of the double perspective of the Tabernacle shown both from the interior (where the columns are in front of the curtain) and the exterior (where the curtain covers the columns) and a third perspective that views the sacred vessels frontally, Carruthers sees this arrangement as a way for the mind's eye to move about the picture. She suggests that the diagram's special heavenly aspect calls for a view that does not regard the Codex Amiatinus *pictura* as a static plan but as an invitation to walk about the building "in his or her mind, thus looking from different angles as s/he moves through the 'places' of a mental schema."³⁵

Carruthers contends that for Christians, the depiction of the Tabernacle in Codex Amiatinus is an allusion to Jesus, who is identified with the "true"

³³ Revel-Neher 1982, 6–8.

³⁴ This connection becomes obvious when the comparison is made with Levine's 1969 model, wherein he attempted to re-create a scale model of the Tabernacle and its furnishings.

³⁵ Carruthers 1998, 237.

Tabernacle, “the exemplary pattern shown to Moses upon the mountain.” This unique meditational *pictura* combining the earthly and the heavenly patterns presents an exegetical tradition that stresses such details as the Greek names of the four compass points, marked on the diagram: *Artcos*, *Dysis*, *Anatol*, and *Mesembria*. The initial letters of the four points, which spell out the name Adam, suggest that the Tabernacle “embraces the four corners of the world and with it all of Adam’s progeny.”³⁶

*Perspective Imaging in Pantokrator 61—the Marginal
Psalter from Mount Athos*

Another miniature that shows the colonnade of the Tabernacle’s courtyard in a special imaging perspective is found in a ninth-century marginal Psalter from Mount Athos known as Pantokrator 61 (fig. 81), which illustrates Psalm 115:2, 3: “Let the nations not say, ‘Where, now, is their God?’ when our God is in Heaven and all that He wills He accomplishes.”

The subject of the illustration concerns the Byzantine debate in the eighth and ninth centuries between the Iconophiles (who venerated religious images) and the Iconoclasts (who destroyed them) as a result of the interpretation of the Second Commandment’s prohibition regarding the making of graven images. The Iconoclasts used the verse, “Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the Earth beneath, or that is in the water under the Earth” (Exod. 20:3), as proof that no image of any kind was to be used in religious worship. The Iconophiles, on the other hand, claimed that when Moses went up to Mount Sinai he was instructed by God to make the Tabernacle and its vessels such as the Ark and the cherubim as part of His worship.

The illustration depicting the Tabernacle and its courtyard in Pantokrator 61 appears to the right of Psalm 115.³⁷ A flat colonnade of pillars and curtains around the structure is drawn as though seen from above and an entrance at the bottom covered with a curtain leads into the area of the Holy. Above the entrance we see its implements, the menorah, the showbread table, and the laver positioned in front of a cloth-covered configuration representing the Holy of Holies. The Ark with its cover, *kapporet*, and

³⁶ Ibid., 236.

³⁷ Dufrenne 1966, 83–95; Ferber 1976, 33–37; Brubaker 2001, 37–54.

the four-winged cherubim are painted en-face inside the Holy of Holies. Three frontal figures are standing below the Tabernacle, on the bottom margin of the page. One of them is the Iconoclast John the Grammarian, who points with his raised hands toward an idol on a pedestal to the left and to the text of Psalm 115:4–8, which reads:

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they with their throat. They that make them shall be like unto them; yea, every one that trusteth in them.

The figure next to John is King David, believed to be the author of the psalms, who is pointing toward Bezalel, the man chosen by God to build the Tabernacle. This arrangement clearly suggests that King David is rejecting the view of the Iconoclast by celebrating Bezalel's divinely inspired work. The artist's special perspective imaging in this miniature seems to be a pointed reference to the Iconophile/Iconoclast controversy. The colonnade around the earthly Tabernacle is shown in a bird's-eye view so as to create a mirrored effect of the eternal heavenly Tabernacle, whereas the implements are shown in an ordinary frontal perspective, emphasizing their actual presence and their practical use in fulfilling God's instructions, which stand in contrast to idol worship.

Comparing the Four Conceptual Reflections

The common motif in all four reflections reviewed here is that the colonnade and the Tabernacle are seen from above, as if from Heaven, but each of the miniatures focuses on a different additional aspect. The unique viewpoint in Codex Amiatinus is its fusion of the earthly and heavenly perspective so as to transform the earthly Tabernacle into the heavenly, eternal one through the image of the cross at the entrance to the Holy. The Octateuchs' specific feature is its focus on animal sacrifice through depictions of the fire on the altar and the consecration of the sons of Aaron. The altar and Aaron are shown frontally in the center of the courtyard viewed in a bird's-eye perspective so as to emphasize their earthly status and the Christian belief that Jesus will both do away with animal sacrifice and become the High Priest in the heavenly Temple. The particular feature in Pantokrator 61 is that the Tabernacle is placed next to the verses from Psalm 115, which ridicule man-made idols.

Brubaker comments that the ninth-century's frequent use of the Tabernacle imagery in manuscripts such as the Pantokrator 61, Vatican 699, and the Octateuchs is closely connected to the controversy around Byzantine iconoclasm.³⁸ She contends that the Iconoclasts relied on their understanding of the Second Commandment in justifying their opposition to all religious images, ignoring the fact that it was God Who commanded the building of the Tabernacle and the cherubim of hammered gold on the *kapporet*. The miniaturist of Pantokrator 61 apparently chose to depict Bezalel in order to highlight the fact that it was God who selected and instructed him to build the Tabernacle according to the heavenly pattern shown to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Pantokrator 61 illustration points out very clearly that the cherubim were not created to be worshipped as idols, but rather were placed above the Ark so as to create an empty space between their wings where, as it says in Numbers 7:89, Moses heard the voice of God.

Thus, in examining the depiction of the Tabernacle, its courtyard, and its implements in Codex Amiatinus, Pantokrator 61, the Octateuchs, and the *Christian Topography* we realize that in addition to their iconoclastic message they all also allude to a special Christian attitude toward the Tent of Meeting. Their presentations of the exact order of the Tabernacle's implements, its sacred boundaries, and the courtyard and fence all stress the importance of the Tabernacle, which was designed according to a divine pattern, as God's dwelling place among men.

These ideas call for a look at the Tabernacle and its vessels as seen in the frontispieces of Jewish Sephardi manuscripts—their similarities and their differences to what has been discussed thus far.

³⁸ Brubaker 2006, 3–24.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE ART OF MEMORY: THE SANCTUARY, ITS SACRIFICES, AND ITS COSMIC IMPORT

The Tabernacle and Its Vessels on the Frontispieces of Sephardi Bibles

Bibles with images of the Tabernacle/Temple on their frontispieces account for a large group of Sephardi illuminated manuscripts dated to two distinct periods.¹ The Parma Bible, produced around 1277, was the first of these manuscripts to include such images on its opening pages,² and the Perpignan Bible, illuminated in Catalonia around 1299, depicts very similar models.³ Both of these manuscripts are quite different from the Byzantine Christian Bibles and the First Leningrad Bible I discussed earlier. Whereas the Tabernacle/Temple implements in those manuscripts were arranged in accordance with the Tabernacle/Temple architectural structure and their order within it, their placement in the Sephardi frontispieces appears to have been arbitrary. In both the Parma and the Perpignan Bibles all of the implements are shown adjacent to relevant texts, so as to instruct the viewer concerning the identity and purpose of each of the vessels.

In a way all of the implements, scattered haphazardly, seem to fit the term *Memoria rerum*,⁴ noted earlier, as 'things' that help one remember the Temple, its sacrifices, and its rituals. The random display of the Sanctuary implements on the frontispieces points to such cues and links in various associational chains.

Beginning with the Parma Bible, we see, on the right-hand side of folio 7v, the seven-branched menorah surrounded by tongs, incense shovels, and the stepping-stones that the priests used when they had to clean the menorah (fig. 82). At the top left-hand side, framed in a simple border, is the Ark of the Covenant, the two tablets, the *kapporet*, and the two cherubim, and below the Ark are the showbread table and the censers

¹ Revel-Neher 1998, 61–95; Gutmann 1976, 125–145, n. 6.

² Parma Bible, Bibl. Palat. 2668.

³ Perpignan Bible Paris, Hebrew 7 BN.

⁴ Carruthers 1998, 29, 31.

for the frankincense. Folio 8r shows the golden altar as a square structure with hornlike projections at its corners; to its left is the altar for burnt offerings with a brass grate at the bottom and a ramp running down from the left-hand projection (fig. 83). Below that we see the laver on its pedestal and a shofar. A jug of manna, two rods of Aaron, one dried and one budding, and two trumpets or horns are pictured on the right-hand side of the page under the golden altar.

In the Perpignan Bible, folios 12v and 13r, the implements are placed in partitioned spaces (figs. 84, 85). In one of the spaces on folio 12v we see the golden menorah, tongs, censers, and stepping-stones; the jug of manna and Aaron's rods are in another space; the tablets of the covenant (with the opening words for each of the commandments) are in a third; and the showbread table and the frankincense are in a fourth. On folio 13r we see the golden incense altar, two silver trumpets, and the shofar in one section; the utensils for the sacrifices and the incense shovel in a second section; and in a third the altar for the burnt offerings, the laver and "the base thereof" (Exod. 30:28).

In a review of scholarly opinion concerning the appearance of the Temple implements on the opening pages of so many manuscripts from the end of the thirteenth century, Kogman-Appel suggests that the distribution of the implements is an abstract projection that parallels the ornamental carpet pages found in other Sephardi manuscripts of the period.⁵ As I noted earlier, in Sephardi Bibles images that correspond to the literal descriptions of the Sanctuary implements in Exodus 25–30 appear on frontispieces rather than as illustrations for the relevant texts. Nordstrom, among others,⁶ has shown that the images also include details that reflect interpretations by the mishnaic sages, such as *Mishnah Menahot* and *Mishnah Tamid*, and commentaries such as Maimonides' Hebrew codification of Jewish law, the *Mishne Torah*,⁷ a fourteen-volume summation of the Oral Law arranged by subject. The eighth book, *Sefer Avodah*, is devoted to the Temple and its sacred service. Examples of influences from the Mishnah and Rabbinic commentary can be seen in the image of the stepping-stones,⁸ which are on either side of the menorah in the

⁵ Kogman-Appel 2001, 76–84.

⁶ Nordstrom 1968; Narkiss, Cohen-Mushlin, and Tcherikover 1982, 102.

⁷ *Mishne Torah*—henceforth MT.

⁸ M *Tam* 3:9; Maimonides refers to this mishnah in the MT *Hilkhot Beit HaBechirah* (*The Structure of the Temple*) 3:1: "A stone stood before the menorah. It had three stairs upon it that the priest ascended in order to purify the menorah. He would leave his utensils upon it."

Perpignan Bible, and the censers for the frankincense, which appear as part of the showbread table.⁹

Kogman-Appel notes that among the classic commentators of the Middle Ages, Rashi in the eleventh century and Maimonides in the twelfth dealt at length with the physical structure of the Temple implements, whereas Abraham ibn Ezra in the twelfth century and Nachmanides in the thirteenth were more focused on their literal and spiritual meaning and less concerned with the physical aspects of the Temple.¹⁰ Unlike the depiction in Christian manuscripts and in the First Leningrad Bible, there is no visual suggestion of a physical frame in the Parma and Perpignan Bibles. Rather, the freely scattered vessels in the latter are enclosed by an abstract textual calligraphic frame written in Spanish script.¹¹ The Perpignan Bible folio 12v is framed by Numbers 8:4, which is an instruction for Aaron regarding the menorah:

And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof was beaten work according to the pattern which the Lord had showed Moses, so he made the candlestick.

The textual frame on folio 13r, which is not taken from the Bible, reads as follows:

All these existed when the *heikhal* [Temple] stood on its place and its foundation. Happy was he who saw the grandeur of its glorious beauty and all its strength and power. Happy is he who awaits and will see it. May it be God's will that He will rebuild it soon in our day. May our eyes see and our hearts rejoice. Amen. Amen. Selah.

The original source of this quotation is not known, but part of it is found in the *seder avodah* for Yom Kippur in a *piyyut* composed by Shlomo ibn Gabirol (c. 1020–c. 1060), which he introduced with these words:¹² “All this took place when the Sanctuary was firmly established and the

⁹ *M Men* 11:5: “The table was ten [handbreadths] in length and five [handbreadths] in breadth. The [loaves of] the showbread were [each] ten [handbreadths] long and five [handbreadths] wide; [each loaf] was placed lengthways across the width of the table. [...] Abba Saul says: “They used to put there two dishes of frankincense appertaining to the showbread. Maimonides, *MT Hilkhoh Ma'ase Korbanot* (sacrifices) 19:14, also relates to two dishes of frankincense pertaining to the showbread that were offered inside and out.

¹⁰ Kogman-Appel 2001, 77.

¹¹ Most Sephardi scribes used a reed pen that created what are called square letters. These characters, which were formed using vertical and horizontal strokes of the same width, required that the scribe turn the reed in its width when he changed direction. The Ashkenazi script written with the more flexible quill has thinner vertical lines.

¹² Goldschmidt 1970, 485.

Sacred Temple, *mikdash ha'qodesh*, [stood] on its foundation. The High Priest ministered; his generation watched and rejoiced." The following are selected verses from the *piyyut*, which describes the Temple and its sacred service:

While the Ark was housed in the Holy of Holies,
 While its staves were inserted in the rings of the Ark,
 [...]
 While the sprinkling of the blood was on the untainted altar,
 While the cherubim spread their wings from above,
 [...]
 While the priests offered their incense,
 While the stone tablets were in the Ark,
 [...]
 While the sweet smell of the daily sacrifice,
 While the Most High dwelled in our midst,
 [...]

Clearly, the text framing this page and the Temple images within it reflect the yearning voiced in the *piyyut*—to maintain the memory of the Temple through the study of its sacred implements and through the recitation of the *sefer avodah*, but it seems to convey a more profound message as well. The frontispieces of the thirteenth-century Parma and Perpignan Bibles and those of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Sephardi Bibles relate to the ongoing Rabbinic effort to reaffirm faith in God's presence even after the destruction of the Temple. It appears that the artists who created these frontispieces gave expression to what Elijor refers to as the Rabbinic shaping of "the Jews' collective memory, their perception of historical reality, their historiography and consciousness after the destruction of the Second Temple."¹³

The new iconography of the Tabernacle/Temple and its implements in these Bibles of the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth is rooted in the spiritual world of Maimonides, his writings about the Tabernacle/Temple as well as his illustrations of the various Temple implements.¹⁴ In his commentary on the first mishnah of the *Ethics of the Fathers*,¹⁵ "On three things does the world stand, on Torah, on *avodah*, and on acts of charity," Maimonides interpreted the word *avodah* as the "sacrifices considered sacred work." From his commentary on

¹³ Elijor 2005, 6.

¹⁴ Kogman-Appel 2001, 161–162.

¹⁵ Maimonides, Commentary to *M Avot* 1:2.

this mishnah we understand that he regarded the precepts of the sacrifices as falling into the category of “the commandments between man and God.” The sacrifices, *avodah*, he wrote, is essential to the preservation of the world, as it represents precepts that have to be obeyed strictly as God’s commands even without a full understanding of their purpose and meaning.¹⁶ In his commentary he put the word *avodah* at the end of the sentence: “On three things does the world stand, on Torah, on acts of charity, and on *avodah*,” noting that whereas the Torah represents wisdom and acts of charity represent ethics and morality, the *sacrifices* are in a category that is equal to these other two in the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven, thus bringing about repair of the world, *tikun olam*. In other words, following God’s commands regarding the *avodah* brings about perfect order in God’s created reality.

There are several other places in the Mishnah where Maimonides’ commentary focuses on the importance of the sacrifices to the existence of the world (this in contrast to his opinion in the *Guide for the Perplexed*).¹⁷ In his commentary to *Mishnah Yoma* 5:1 he noted that the High Priest’s *avodah* for Yom Kippur was performed on the same spot upon which the world was founded. The mishnah states that the High Priest upon entering the Holy of Holies placed the incense shovel upon the Ark. However, during the Second Temple Period, when the Ark was no longer in the Temple, he placed it on a stone that was in the Holy of Holies, which was the foundation stone, the *even shtiya*, believed to be the cornerstone of the world.¹⁸

The reference to the *even shtiya*—the *omphalos* or “navel of the earth”—found originally in the words of the Ezekiel 38:12 is also in the *Mishnah Yoma* 5:2, the Palestinian Talmud *Yoma* 5:3 (27a), and the Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 54b. The Rabbinic commentary in the Talmudic period as well as later midrashim notes specifically that the *even shtiya* was in the Holy of Holies and was the center of the world from where the entire Creation was wrought, thus connecting the Creation, as referred to by Maimonides, with the Temple.¹⁹

¹⁶ Commandments that have no rational explanation are called *mitzvot shimiyot*.

¹⁷ Blidstein 1994, 72–74, notes that in the *Guide for the Perplexed* Maimonides’ attitude toward animal sacrifices was different and there he emphasized that the sacrifices were restricted to only the Temple in Jerusalem and only by the priests. God did not think it necessary to abolish sacrificial service altogether. But prayer and supplication can be offered everywhere and by every person (see *Guide for the Perplexed*, III, ch. 32).

¹⁸ *M Yoma* 5:2; Maimonides, Commentary to *M Yoma* 5:1.

¹⁹ Klawans 2006, 111–144, 124.

Shlomo Buber's *Midrash Tanhuma Qedoshim* expresses it precisely:²⁰

Just as the navel is in the center of a person, so the Land of Israel is the navel of the Earth, as it is said, "those who live at the navel of the Earth" [Ezek. 38:12] . . . The Land of Israel sits in the center of the world, Jerusalem in the center of the Land of Israel, the Temple in the center of Jerusalem, the Holy in the center of the Temple, the Ark in the center of the Holy of Holies, and the foundation stone—from which the world was formed—sits in front of the Holy of Holies.

R. Eliezer (BT *Yoma* 54b) explained this idea using Job 38:38, which refers to the welding of the dust of the Earth into the foundation stone: "He has inclined Heaven to Earth and it has been poured out as the dust of the Earth. I have welded it as a square block of stone," meaning that God in Creation formed a stone, that became the foundation of the world. As I note in Chapter 3 as well as in the Addendum (in Table 6: *Midrash Tadshé*) this same verse was also used in the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Christian Topography* to describe the process of Creation.

Another of Maimonides' commentaries in connection with the ties between Creation and the sacrificial service is found in *Mishnah Ta'anit* which relates to the *mishmarot* and *ma'amadot* discussed in Chapters 4 and 7. He explained that the Israelites belonging to a particular *mishmar* and *ma'amad* had to come to the Temple and witness the sacrificial offering of their priestly group. Those who could not come to Jerusalem had to gather in the center of their own town and meet their obligation by setting their minds and thoughts on the sacrifices and praying and reading the passages in Genesis of the account of Creation. Maimonides, in explaining the reason for chanting passages from the account of Creation, repeated the idea he voiced in his commentaries on *Mishnah Avot* and *Mishnah Yoma*: "Were it not for the sacrifices, Heaven and Earth would not survive."²¹

Another reference to the connection between Creation and the Tabernacle/Temple is found in Maimonides' *Mishne Torah* in the last paragraph of the book *sefer avodah*, where he discusses the sacrifice for the sin of sacrilege, the *me'ilah*. He referred there to "all sacrifices" and declared that "the sages said, the world stands, namely Creation is sustained, because of the sacrifices."²²

²⁰ Buber S., ed., *Midrash Tanhuma* sec. *Qedoshim* 10.

²¹ Maimonides, Commentary to M *Taan* 4:2.

²² Idem, MT *Hilkhot Me'ilah* 8:8.

In each of these commentaries, Maimonides emphasized the associations between the Temple and Creation, highlighting the link between the *avodah* of Yom Kippur and the foundation of the world and between the sacrifices and the reading of the chapters from Genesis by the *mishmarot*.

Further, in the last section of the fourteenth book of *Mishne Torah*, which deals with the laws relating to the Messiah King at the End of Days, *hilkhot melakhim*, Maimonides stated that in the Age of Redemption, “all the laws will be reinstated as they once were, including animal sacrifices.”²³ Since the sacrifices have an educational cosmic value, one gains merit, he wrote, when bringing a sacrifice as it helps him to learn how to “subjugate his evil inclination and magnify his generosity” toward the Creator, and when “he consecrates something, he should consecrate the best of his produce.”²⁴

All of the above strongly suggest that Maimonides’s commentaries greatly influenced the way artists portrayed the Temple implements and were, at least in part, responsible for the way they adorned the opening pages of Sephardi Bibles.²⁵ It was apparently his emphasis on *avodah* and on the Temple and its implements that led to intensive study of those subjects and to the portrayal of the Temple’s vessels as didactic images on all of these frontispieces.²⁶

With it all, when examining the way the Ark is depicted in the various Bibles, we should bear in mind that the artists and/or patrons of these pages must have studied the opinions of other commentators besides Maimonides. For example, in the Parma, Perpignan, Kings,²⁷ and Foa²⁸ manuscripts, the Ark is shown with the two cherubim, but the cherubim were not included in any of the other Sephardi Bibles.

Kogman-Appel notes that in his discussion of the Ark in the *seder avodah* Maimonides never mentioned the cherubim, whereas Nachmanides

²³ Idem, MT *Hilkhot Melachim* 11:1.

²⁴ Idem, MT *Hilkhot Issurei Mizbe'ach* 7:11.

²⁵ Kogman-Appel 2001, 77.

²⁶ Maimonides, MT *Hilkhot Beth HaBechirah* 2:2, refers to the tradition regarding the place of the Binding of Isaac on the Temple Mount, where David built the altar on the threshing floor of Araunah, which was the place where Abraham built the altar to bind his son Isaac and also where Noah built when he came out of the ark, and the altar that Cain and Abel sacrificed on, and the place where Adam offered a sacrifice when he was created by God. And the sages say Adam was created in the place where he found forgiveness.

²⁷ London, British Library MS. Kings 1(68) produced in Salsona, Catalonia, in 1384.

²⁸ Paris, S. Sulpice, Compagnie des Pretres, MS.

expounds on them at great length.²⁹ Thus, it stands to reason that the execution of the visual images in the Parma, Perpignan, Kings, and Foa Bibles was based on Nachmanides' interpretation, whereas the artists of other Sephardi Bibles relied on Maimonides. In examining these differences it is interesting to consider Carruthers' observation concerning the Ark of the Covenant.³⁰ The Ark, she notes, was a chest that contained the books of the law. In Deuteronomy 31:26, we read, "Take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee," which, she contends, served as a metaphor "for the method of exegesis developed during the Middle Ages, whereby one builds layers of interpretation according to allegorical, oral, and mystical senses upon the foundation of the literal."

Nachmanides' description of the Ark is a vivid illustration of this method of exegesis:³¹

Moreover one can also ask why did Scriptures repeat the phrase "from between the two cherubim which are upon the Ark of the Testimony" (Exod. 25:22) when it is known already from the preceding verses that the cherubim are upon the Ark of Testimony? And what need is there to explain this again, seeing that He had commanded that the cherubim "shall spread out their wings on high" (Exod. 25:20), but had not said why they should be made altogether and what function they should serve in the Tabernacle and why they should be in that form; therefore He now said and "thou shalt put the *kapporet* with the cherubim, for they are all one, above upon the Ark because in the Ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee, so that there be for Me a Throne of Glory, for there will I meet with thee and I will cause My Glory to dwell upon them, and I will speak with thee from above the *kapporet* from between the two cherubim because it is upon the Ark of the Testimony. It is thus identical to the divine Chariot which the prophet Ezekiel saw, of which he said this: "The living creatures that I saw under the God of Israel by the River Chevar; and I knew that they were cherubim" (Ezek. 10:20). This is why He is called "He Who sitteth upon the cherubim" (1 Sam. 4:4) for they spread out their wings on high in order to teach us that they are the Chariot which carries the Glory, just as it is said, "and gold for the pattern of the Chariot even the cherubim that spread out their wings and covered the Ark of the Eternal" (1 Chron. 28:18), as I have mentioned.

Nachmanides understood the Ark to be the Chariot/Throne of God, Who sits on the cherubim, *yoshev kruvim*. The origins of the Merkavah tradi-

²⁹ Kogman-Appel 2001, 138.

³⁰ Carruthers 1990, 43.

³¹ Chavel, tr., 1971, 449, 450.

tion lie in the winged cherubim that shield the *kapporet*,³² as described in 1 Chronicles 28:18. The next verse (28:19) goes on to specify that the pattern, *tavnit*, of the Chariot was ordained by God: “All this [do I give thee] in writing, as the Lord hath made me wise by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.” Nachmanides attributed the Chariot to the vision of Ezekiel and described the Ark as God’s Throne. Thus the cherubim became the emblematic concept of the Holy of Holies and its cultic representations, and the Temple, after its destruction, assumed a divine dimension, as the *merkavah*, combining various elements from the Holy of Holies and the Temple precincts into an eternal, visionary cosmic entity transcending the limits of time and space.³³

Hence, using Carruthers’ theory, we can regard the Ark with the cherubim on top and the other Temple implements imaged on the pages of the Parma, Perpignan, Kings, and Foa Bibles as “mnemonic images that facilitated meditation by presenting rich materials in a highly abbreviated form which could be expanded and recombined for a variety of compositions.”³⁴ In this case they and especially the Ark with the cherubim allude to the mysteries of the *merkavah*, which continued to fascinate some of the Rabbis of the time and influenced their interpretations.

In many of the later Catalonian Bibles we see a new element, an image of a small mound or hill topped with a stylized tree. Its meaning becomes clear when we look at the Kings Bible manuscript, which has a label in Hebrew next to the image identifying the hill as the Mount of Olives (fig. 86). Kogman-Appel writes that the image of the Mount of Olives in this manuscript is different from that in the other frontispieces.³⁵ Narkiss and Cohen-Mushlin note that as this manuscript has a dated colophon it is a paradigm for other Catalonian works that combine images of the altar, the laver, and the showbread table with a tree on top of a hill.³⁶ We also find the same image but without the other Temple vessels in a manuscript written in Saragossa in 1404,³⁷ where it appears as a full-page illustration (fig. 87).³⁸ The frame on this Saragossa folio is a verse from Zechariah prophesying the coming of the Messiah (Zech. 14:4):

³² Elijor 2005, 29–34.

³³ *Ibid.*, 30, 31.

³⁴ Carruthers 2009, 99.

³⁵ Kogman-Appel 2001, 136.

³⁶ Narkiss and Cohen-Mushlin 1982, 110–113.

³⁷ Paris Bible B.N. Heb. 31 written by Haim Bar Shaul Migdali, folio 4.

³⁸ Revel-Neher 1998, 79, 80; Kogman-Appel 2001, 137.

And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be cleft in the midst thereof toward the east and towards the west, so that there shall be a great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north and half of it toward the south.

The verse in this context points to the eschatological character of the image of the Mount Olives in later Sephardi Bibles and associates their frontispieces with many passages in the Midrash,³⁹ where the Mount of Olives to the east of the city becomes the important sacred place. The words of Ezekiel allude to the dwelling place of the *shekhinah* on the Mount of Olives (Ezek. 11:23): “And the glory of the God of Israel rose above them and the glory of God rose from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain opposite the city.” The following passage from *Pesikta d’Rav Kahane* demonstrates this by pointing to the Mount of Olives as the place that housed the Divine Presence, the *shekhinah*, after the destruction of the Temple caused her to move from her place between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies:⁴⁰

[In] ten stages the *shekhinah* journeyed up and away [from the Temple in Jerusalem]: One, from the one cherub over the Ark to the other cherub over the Ark; two, from the cherub to the Temple’s threshold; three, from the Temple’s threshold back to the two cherubim; four, from the two cherubim to the east gate; five, from the east gate to the Temple’s court; six, from the Temple’s court to the altar; seven, from the altar to the roof; eight, from the roof to the wall [surrounding the Temple]; nine from the wall to the city [of Jerusalem]; and ten, from the city to the Mount of Olives.

In the Middle Ages we find Jewish tradition pointing to the place of the *shekhinah* on the Mount of Olives,⁴¹ which is believed to be the place where the Messiah will stand and where the righteous will walk through underground tunnels⁴² to come and see the Temple from its eastern gates.⁴³ The illustrations of the Tabernacle/Temple on the frontispieces

³⁹ For example, in *Yalkut Shimoni*, Ezek. 11:23, para. 450.

⁴⁰ *Pesikta d’Rav Kahane*, para. 1311.

⁴¹ Reiner 1988, 179–192.

⁴² *Yalkut Shimoni*, Isa. 49:9, para. 469: “The Holy One blessed be He makes for them underground tunnels and they walk through them until they come under the Mount of Olives that is in Jerusalem.”

⁴³ *M Mid. 2:4*: “All the walls that were there are high, except for the eastern wall, so that the priest who burns the calf [red heifer] stands on the top of the Mount of Olives (lit. *mishcha*) and sees into the doors of the *heikhal* at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.”

of the various Bibles include not only the Temple's vessels but also motifs that allude to its hidden celestial significance: the rod of Aaron that blossomed miraculously by the hand of God; the cherubim on top of the Ark, symbolizing the heavenly *merkavah*; and the image of the olive tree on the top of the hill, referring to the eschatological coming of the Messiah. All three reflect a yearning to experience the mystery of God and renew His Providence as it was in the time of the Temple.

It was the wish to hold onto the memory of the Temple and to experience the Divine Presence that led to the creation of all of these mnemonic images. As the Temple symbolizes the Cosmos, keeping its memory and the memory of its implements and its rituals alive fostered the notion of sustaining the Cosmos.⁴⁴ For instance, seeing the image of the seven-branched menorah facilitated meditation on the heavenly luminaries and the seven planets. Seeing the showbread table with its twelve loaves helped to recall the terrestrial universe, and the months of the year. As I noted above, the cosmic approach toward the Temple and its vessels is found as early as in the writings of Philo and Josephus, whose symbolism is clearly apparent in the texts and the illustrations of the *Christian Topography* and the *Octateuchs*.

*The Cosmological Aspect of the Golden Menorah and
the Showbread Table*

Two extant copies of the *Christian Topography*, Sinai 1186 (fig. 88) and Laurentiana 28 (fig. 89), include a miniature that shows the showbread table next to the menorah. In both illustrations we see a rectangular-shaped panel with two inscriptions that identify them as a table and a candelabrum. The showbread table has a gold area in its center framed by two wavy borders.⁴⁵ Within the central area are twelve small roundels, three in each of the four corners, representing the twelve loaves. The candelabrum, which stands on a three-legged base, has a tall shaft decorated with lily-shaped leaves and knops and three pairs of round branches topped by a horizontal bar that extends from the upper part of the central shaft. Six birds sit in place of the six candles at the top of the bar. The birds, which are turned away from the center, have fire coming from their beaks—flames are blown to the right from the three birds sitting on that side

⁴⁴ Klawans 2006, 112.

⁴⁵ Mouriki-Charlambous 1970, 101–111.

of the shaft and toward the left from the other three. The inscription at the base of the candelabrum identifies it as the seven-branched menorah and the writing adjacent to the main shaft and under the bottom branch of the menorah names its various parts.

The presentation of the showbread (symbol of the Earth) together with the menorah (symbol of the celestial luminaries) speaks to the miniature's cosmological aspect, as explained by Josephus and by Philo; the latter wrote the following about the menorah:⁴⁶

The candlestick he placed at the south figuring thereby the movements of the luminaries above; for the sun and the moon and the others run their courses in the south far away from the north. And therefore six branches, three on each side, issue from the central candlestick, bringing up the number to seven, and on all these are set seven lamps and candle bearers, symbols of what the men of science call planets. For the sun, like the candlestick, has the fourth place in the middle of the six and gives light to the three above and the three below it so tuning to harmony an instrument of music truly divine.

And about the showbread table he wrote:⁴⁷

The table is set at the north and has bread and salt on it, as the north winds are those which most provide us with food and food comes from heaven and earth, the one sending rain, the other bringing the seeds to their fullness when watered by the showers. In a line with the table are set the symbols of heaven and earth, as our account has shown, heaven being signified by the candlestick, earth and its parts, from which rise the vapours by what appropriately called the vapour-keeper or altar of incense.

Constantine specified that the length of the table as described in Exodus 25:23 as twice its width is an indication that the world is structured in the shape of a rectangle. The miniature in Sinai 1186 (fig. 88) and Laurentiana 28 (fig. 89), both including the showbread table and the menorah, seem to reflect the ideas expressed in the following text:⁴⁸

The candlestick which had seven lamps and stood in the south of the Tabernacle was a type of the luminaries, for according to the wise Solomon, the luminaries rising in the east and running to the south shine upon the north of the earth and again they are seven after the number of days in a week, seeing that all time, beginning with weeks, completes both months and years. He ordered them, however, to be lighted on one side, since the table

⁴⁶ *Life of Moses* 2, 102, 103; Josephus, *Antiquities* 3,6,7; Philo, "Who Is the Heir," 220.

⁴⁷ Philo, *Life of Moses* 2, 104, 105; "The Special Laws, Book I," sec. 172.

⁴⁸ McCrindle 1897, 152.

was placed towards the north in order that their light from the south might shine on the north: for Solomon speaks thus with reference to the luminaries: "The sun ariseth and goeth towards the south and moveth round to the north; the wind whirleth about continually and returneth again according to its circuits" (Eccl. 1:6).

These words of Solomon are included in the passage as are the words to Moses in Exodus 25:40: "And see that thou make them after their pattern, which is being shown thee in the mount."⁴⁹ This verse, which appears following the description of the three main Tabernacle's implements—the Ark, the showbread table, and the menorah—provided the springboard for Constantine's cosmological theory about the Tabernacle being a representation of Creation through each one of these vessels.

The description of the candles as birds blowing flames of fire in both directions is also in accord with the words of King Solomon in Ecclesiastes, a commentary that Constantine considered allegorical. The menorah represents the sun and the other heavenly bodies that light up the world. The aspect of birds in the illustration is reminiscent of the wind that turns from the south to the north sending the sun's heat in both directions: "Southward blowing turning northward, ever turning blows the wind; in its round the wind returns" (Eccl. 1:6).

Along with the description of the menorah, Constantine explored the cosmological significance of the showbread table:⁵⁰

The table itself is a type of the earth and the loaves signify its fruits, and being twelve they are symbolic of the twelve months of the annual cycle. The four corners of the table signify the four tropics of the year, one occurring every three months; the waved border with which it is wreathed all round signifies the entire sea, or the ocean, as it is called by the pagans and the crown which is around it indicates the earth that lies beyond the ocean where Paradise is.

In yet another text he noted:⁵¹

The table is wreathed all around with a waved molding symbolic of the sea which is called the ocean and all round this again was a border of a palm's breadth emblematic of the earth beyond the ocean, where lies Paradise away in the east, and where also the extremities of the first heaven, which is like a vaulted chamber, are everywhere supported on the extremities of the earth.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 145, 150.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

The interesting new emphasis in the miniatures is the border of waved molding symbolizing the sea and the additional twisted and woven one around it that represents the Earth beyond the ocean, the place wherein lies the Garden of Eden.

The menorah and the showbread table are also portrayed in the Octateuch miniatures. In Octateuch 746 (fig. 90) there is an image of the showbread table that is similar to the schema in Laurentiana 28 (fig. 89), but with a much simpler frame. Different colors divide it into three parts: the center section is rectangular in shape; the inner frame was painted using several different colors and decorated with a meandering line; and the outer frame is embellished with a zigzag decoration.

In Octateuch 746 (fig. 91) the menorah, standing between two rectangles (the Tabernacle's curtains), is decorated with cups, knobs, and flowers, and the candles on the horizontal bar are black lilies rather than birds, one flower in the center and three on either side.⁵² In the image of the showbread table (fig. 90) instead of the twelve roundels representing the loaves of bread there are four small circles, one in the center of each side. Hahn sees these circles as being reminiscent of the four medallions in the cartographic map of the universe in Vatican 699 and Sinai 1186 (fig. 26), and suggests that they are comparable to the personification of the four winds found in the outer band that represents the ocean in the *Christian Topography's* maps of the world.⁵³

It is obvious that in showing the loaves on the showbread table Constantine did not follow the biblical text (Exod. 25:30; Lev. 24:5-7), which says: "And thou shalt set them in two rows, six in a row, upon the purified table before the Lord," but chose rather to highlight the table's cosmological meaning. Mouriki-Charalambous notes that this cosmological interpretation appears in the catena composed by Theodore of Mopsuestia for Exodus 25:30: "And thou shalt set upon the table showbread before Me always."⁵⁴ She also points out that in another catena Cyril of Alexandria

⁵² Folio 106v shows the menorah by itself in a shape that stresses the plasticity of the central shaft and its six branches decorated with discs and elongated beads in accord with the biblical description of the knobs and the flowers. The candles above the branches are within rounded flaming dishes on top of a horizontal bar.

⁵³ Hahn 1979, 38, notes that the comparison in the *Christian Topography* among the showbread table, the earthly world, the twelve loaves of bread, and the twelve months of the year is based on an idea found in the commentary of Theodore of Mopsuesita, which appears in the Octateuch's catena, where he assigns cosmic significance to the annual cycle.

⁵⁴ Mouriki-Charalambous 1970, 106.

noted that the Jewish showbread being a symbol of the heavenly bread is placed on church altars.⁵⁵ She suggests that those cosmological theories of Philo and Josephus that were integrated into the *catenae* find visual expression in many of the illustrations in the *Christian Topography* and the *Octateuchs*.

It seems clear that in selecting the menorah and the showbread table and displaying them next to one another the miniaturist intended to illustrate more than just the text of Exodus 25. The emphasis in these images is on the cosmological connection between the Tabernacle/Temple and the created universe as we see in the *Christian Topography's* schematic model of the Tabernacle I discussed in Chapter 6 (figs. 39, 40). The schematic rectangular model that Constantine used for the created universe (fig. 26) is the same as the one that he used for the Tabernacle. Both are illustrated using a birds-eye perspective and seen in a highly abbreviated form as if viewed from the Heavens.

The Encampment in the Desert as a Reflection of the Divine Pattern

Like the twelve loaves of bread on the showbread table, the encampment of the twelve tribes of Israel is described in the *Christian Topography* as arranged in a particular order that implies cosmic significance:⁵⁶

In like manner also he arranged the twelve tribes in a circle around the Tabernacle, three on the east, three on the south, three on the west and three on the north, beginning from the east, going up to south, descending again to the west and then lastly running through the north in accordance with the motion of the stars and the position of the earth.

The miniature in Vatican 699 (fig. 92), which follows a verbal description of the desert encampment, shows the Tabernacle and figures clustered around it. The square area in the center is surrounded by twelve smaller panels, three on each side. Each panel, which has soldiers bearing swords and spears, is identified by the inscribed name of a tribe. The miniature textual narrative is based on a biblical paraphrase of Numbers 1:52–53, which is expressed visually in this miniature. Constantine wrote that the encampment in the desert was arranged according to the order prescribed by God,⁵⁷ with the priests and the Levites around the Tabernacle

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁵⁶ McCrindle, 324.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

surrounded by the twelve tribes, and concluded that the order of camping and marching was maintained throughout the lifetime of Moses and Aaron.

The focal point of the encampment is the image of the Tabernacle in the center of the miniature shaped as a rectangular panel and decorated with blue and red squares framed in gold. Its shape and design are reminiscent of the tentlike Tabernacle depicted in Sinai 1186 and in Vatican 699 (fig. 75). Next to the Tabernacle, identified by an inscription, we see the haloed images of Moses and Aaron, with seven additional figures on the other three sides of the Tabernacle, captioned as Levites.

The same miniature is also found in Sinai 1186 (fig. 93). Comparing the two illustrations we see that the two tribes on the right-hand side of the illustration that were not marked in Vatican 699 are identified here as Judah and Zebulun. Moses and Aaron are shown in the same place but without haloes. The symbolic image of the Tabernacle in the center of the camp is drawn to reflect the same image previously used for the Ark of the Covenant (fig. 27). Thus we have two different models representing the Tabernacle: one a flattened schema of the Tent of Meeting viewed from above and the other a vertical model matching the image of the Ark that is viewed en-face. As they are imaged in the center, both structures represent the focal point of the encampment.

In both of these miniatures Moses and Aaron are shown standing together on the east side of the Tabernacle. Clearly they are considered the key figures in connection with the sanctity of the desert Sanctuary. Moses, chosen by God to ascend Mount Sinai and to be given the Law and the blueprint of the Tabernacle, and Aaron, chosen to be the first High Priest, are the only ones permitted to enter the Holy of Holies. Their positions next to one another, with or without haloes, on the east side of the Sanctuary are significant as they mark the entrance to the Tabernacle. Moses and Aaron are seen together with the priests and the Levites on the other three sides of the Tabernacle forming a priestly fence to guard the Tabernacle's sanctity and ward off strangers, as decreed in Numbers 3:38.

Constantine wrote that the Israelites were commanded to keep a very specific order of encampment and of travel so as to maintain the sanctity of the Tabernacle. He used the illustration of the encampment in the wilderness to convey his notion of the divine pattern for the Tabernacle and for the created world being based on a division into two parts. The earthly domain represented here by the twelve tribes that form the outer frame of the "Holy precinct" and the heavenly most sacred domain denoted by the image of the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. Moreover, he

wrote that the specific order of marching and encampment that the Israelites were commanded to keep enabled them to understand God's divine pattern. In a way, he noted, the Israelites experienced a renewed revelation every time they stopped and had to allocate space for the Tabernacle precincts within their encampment.

We find an image paralleling the theophany at Sinai and the continuing presence of God among the Israelites in Octateuch 747 (fig. 94). On the left-hand side of the miniature is an image of a mountain with beams of light shining from an inverted arch that represents the Heavens, alluding to the connection between the Revelation on Mount Sinai and the journey of the twelve tribes in the wilderness. The same cloud that covered Mount Sinai at the time of the Revelation sat atop the Tabernacle and guided the Israelites on their journey (Num. 9:15–23).

Two other Octateuch illustrations of the Israelites in the wilderness are similar to the *Christian Topography's* encampment miniatures, with a large panel in the center and twelve smaller panels around it (fig. 95). The difference between them is that the Octateuchs miniatures do not dwell on the encampment, but rather focus on the journeying of the Israelites from one stopping place to another. The order in which they traveled with the Ark carried by the Levites is shown in the central section, each tribe in its designated area. The illustration, which reflects Numbers 2:1–34, shows the Ark being carried on the shoulders of four men with two others helping them (fig. 94). In the compartments around them are thirty-two men in uniform. Four are blowing horns that extend beyond the frame of the illustration. Moses and Aaron are to the right of the Ark, which is shown as a rectangle with an arch on top.

All these examples from the extant copies of the *Christian Topography* and the Octateuchs bear added allegorical and typological meaning attributed to the Old Testament descriptions of the Tabernacle, its implements, and the order of the wanderings in the wilderness as summarized in Constantine's text:⁵⁸

The table all round, the twelve loaves of showbread, three at each corner, signifying by the corners the four tropics, each distant from each three months, and by the circle the twelve months, and by the loaves the fruits of the earth, thus mystically representing the months by a circle crowning the earth above. In like manner also he [Moses] arranged the twelve tribes in a circle around the Tabernacle, three on the east, three on the south, three

⁵⁸ Ibid., 324.

on the west, and three on the north, beginning from the east, going up to south, descending again to the west and then lastly running through the north in accordance with the motion of the stars and the position of the earth. . . . By the daily loaves which were each day laid down new upon the table, he indicated the days, and by the seven lamps the week, and by the number of the loaves the twelve months, and by the four corners the tropics, and by the circle the year, concerning which things the divine Apostle speaks in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 8:4–5): “Now if he [Jesus] were on earth he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned by God when he is about to make the Tabernacle: For, see, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern which was shown thee in the Mount.

Thus, according to this Christian understanding, the pattern of Creation as reflected by the Tabernacle and its vessels was destined to be improved and perfected by Jesus Second Coming and His shaking the powers of Heaven and Earth:⁵⁹

Divine scripture intimates this also, when it says: “For the Creation was made subject to vanity not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope that the Creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:20), meaning by this, that at the final consummation, the angels shall be delivered from this bondage, and from the ministrations which they render on account of men, for men, having then become immortal and immutable, will no longer be in need of such ministrations, as the Lord also in the Gospels speaks thus concerning the consummation: “For the powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Matt. 24:19).

The Vatican 699 miniature of the *Parousia* (fig. 4) is a clear illustration of this Christian idea and its Christian and Jewish sources.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 325.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CHRISTIAN SUPERSESSION OF JEWISH IDEAS

New Testament Cosmology: The Tabernacle and the Kingdom of Heaven

The Vatican 699 miniature of the *Parousia* (Jesus' Second Coming) (fig. 4), regarded by Kessler as "the future onto which all Christians gaze,"¹ is the most prominent example of Christian supersession of Jewish ideas concerning the Tabernacle and Creation. He notes that the portrayal is based on the schematic design of the Ark of the Covenant found on the Bar Kokhba coins and reflects the *Christian Topography's* theological interpretations, which are based primarily on sources from Exodus and the Epistle to the Hebrews.²

As I have noted elsewhere, the miniature depicts two separate realms: the earthly domain, which includes people and angels and parallels the area of the Holy in the Tabernacle, where only the priests could enter, and the heavenly realm that parallels the Tabernacle's Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest could enter and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

The most outstanding motif in this illustration is the image of Jesus sitting on his heavenly throne, seen through an oval opening in the arched upper section of the miniature. The decorative cloth-type fleur-de-lis design surrounding this aperture resembles the Tabernacle's *parochet*,³ which marked the Holy of Holies and prevented anyone from entering or even from seeing what was behind it. According to the Gospels (Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38), the *parochet* was miraculously torn in two at the hour of Jesus' death, and this ripped oval opening suggests the thrust of the *Parousia* as a desecration of the sanctity of the Tabernacle, a sentiment that is reinforced by the following text in the *Christian Topography*:⁴

¹ Kessler 1995, 371.

² *Ibid.*, 370.

³ *Ibid.*, 368.

⁴ McCrindle, 148.

When the veil of the Temple was rent in twain at the Passion of the Lord three things were indicated by this circumstance. First it proved the audacity of the Jews against the Lord, the divine Temple, as it were mourning and rending its garments; next, it showed the approaching dissolution and abolition of the Judaic ritual, by the taking away of the first Tabernacle; and it showed thirdly that the inner Tabernacle, which was invisible and inaccessible to all, and even to the priests, had become visible and accessible to men.

Depicting the most hidden and invisible part of the earthly Temple, the Holy of Holies, as a fully exposed and visible space with Jesus sitting on his throne openly within it expresses the very essence of the Christian concept of supersession. By using the same pictorial diagram to illustrate the Tabernacle, the created Cosmos, and the *Parousia*, Constantine of Antioch highlighted the idea that the *Parousia* is an integral part of the divine plan of Creation:⁵

It is therefore proved against these, both from what is written and from the figure of the world prepared from its foundation, that the upper place was not made without occasion—but that there is a second heavenly state prepared from the foundation of the world.

The theological ideas conveyed in this miniature can be discerned through two central motifs.⁶ First, the depiction of Jesus sitting inside the upper arch of the schematic pattern of the world against the background of the *parochet* suggests the transformation of the earthly Tabernacle into a heavenly Sanctuary and the transfer of the priestly order from the seed of Aaron to Jesus, who became the High Priest “after the order of Melchizedek.” Second, it rejects the idea of separation that characterizes both the account of Creation and the sense of holiness in the Tabernacle by showing Jesus’ ascension from his earthly grave through the Holy of Holies into the heavenly domain of God, thus changing the order of Creation and eliminating the boundary that separates the earthly and the heavenly realms. The earthly Tabernacle, which was man-made and, according to Christian theology inferior, was thus transformed by Jesus’ ascension into an eternal heavenly Tabernacle. Henceforth, expiation and pardon were to be in the hands of Jesus, who was the sacrifice and also became the High Priest. Those who believed in Jesus would be able to see Him through the opening of the torn *parochet* in his new dwelling place

⁵ Ibid., 260.

⁶ Kessler 1995, 365.

in Heaven and receive his forgiveness.⁷ Thus, the *parochet* identified with Jesus and his sacrifice was open for all who believed that they were purified by his blood, as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews 10:19, 20:

We have, then, my friends, complete freedom to go into the Most Holy Place by means of the death of Jesus. He opened for us a new way, a living way, through the curtain—that is through His own body.

Looking again at the arched rectangular schema representing the Kingdom of Heaven in Figure 4 and the Ark of the Covenant in Figure 27, we realize that the major difference between them is in their representations of the Divine Presence. In the images of the Ark, God's presence is concealed and suggested solely through the two tetramorphic creatures identified with the holy creatures of Ezekiel's divine Chariot. In the *Parousia* miniature we see Jesus sitting on the "Throne of the Divine," which is not concealed, but is open to view as the Divine Presence in Heaven (Heb. 8:1, 2).

Constantine, relying on the Epistle to the Hebrews and other sources, regarded the Heavens as the place of the true heavenly Temple created by God.⁸ He conceived of this heavenly Sanctuary as having been made according to the true divine pattern,⁹ and used the emblematic diagram of a rectangle topped by a dome (fig. 1) as the most appropriate image to describe the eschatological cosmic-divine image of Jesus' Second Coming and His ascension into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The dome so often seen in church architecture seems to have a similar connotation. Eusebius, the fourth-century author of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (whom Constantine cited along with Josephus as an historical authority),¹⁰ said in his speech concerning the church at Tyre that a church's dome structure has a particular symbolism: it represents a cosmic House of God that rises up to the Heavens above thus allowing for hidden meaning to be revealed.¹¹ Others in the early period of the Christian Church also related to the loftiness of the churches with domes and to their being regarded as replicas of the Heavens and the Earth and as a link between the earthly and the divine realms, as voiced, for instance, in

⁷ Kessler 1990/91, 53–78, esp. 71.

⁸ McCrindle 148.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 269–271.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹¹ Smith 1971, 92, n. 141; Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, X, IV, 2–72.

the inaugural anthem of the fourth-century Church of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) in Edessa.¹²

The anthem, in Syriac, conveys the figurative use of the Tabernacle and Creation as an iconographic source for an understanding of the Church of Hagia Sophia's special significance. The poem is evidence of how the Syrian Christian Church related to architectonic motifs and gave them cosmological meaning. The anthem, which has no name, has twenty-two strophes, corresponding to the letters of the Syriac alphabet.¹³ The following passage is a selection of lines of the hymn as translated by Kathleen McVey:¹⁴

1. Oh, Being Itself who dwells in the Holy Temple, whose glory naturally [emanates] from it, Grant me the grace of the Holy Spirit to speak about the Temple that is in Urha.¹⁵
2. Bezalel constructed the Tabernacle for us with the model he learned from Moses,
And Amidonius and Asaph and Addai built a glorious temple for You in Urha.¹⁶
3. Clearly portrayed in it are the mysteries of both Your Essence and Your Dispensation. He who looks closely will be filled at length with wonder.
4. For it truly is a wonder that its smallness is like the wide world,
Not in size but in type; like the sea, waters surround it.
5. Behold! Its ceiling is stretched out like the sky and without columns [it is] arched and simple,
And it is also decorated with golden mosaic, as the firmament [is] with shining stars.
6. And its lofty dome—behold, it resembles the highest Heaven,
And like a helmet it is firmly placed on its lower [part].
7. The splendor of its broad arches—they portray the four ends of the Earth,
They resemble also by the variety of their colors the glorious rainbow.
[...]
11. It is surrounded by magnificent courts with two porticoes composed of columns
Which portray the tribes of Israelites who surrounded the [temporal] Tabernacle.

¹² This church was first built early in the fourth century; it was remodeled, expanded, and named in about 345/346 CE and destroyed at the beginning of the sixth century in a flood that struck the city; it was later rebuilt with the help of Justinian.

¹³ Palmer 1988, 117–167, 130.

¹⁴ McVey 1983, 91–121.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 97. Urha: The Syriac uses the Semitic name of the city rather than the Greek name, Edessa.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 98. Amidonius was the thirty-eighth Bishop of Edessa and Asaph and Addai are thought to be the two architects of the church.

The hymn continues on to describe the church giving interpretive meaning to each of its parts (which parallel those of the Tabernacle) and to endow them with Christian theological meaning:

20. Exalted are the mysteries of this Temple in which Heaven and Earth
Symbolize the most exalted Trinity and our Saviour's Dispensation.

McVey begins her analysis of this type of hymn, *sogitha*, by pointing to the choice of the Syriac word for Holy Temple, *haykla*, contending that opening the poem with this particular word reflects an allusion to the Heikhalot literature of early Jewish mysticism. Throughout the hymn there are symbolic references to the Tabernacle, to Bezalel, to the Cosmos, and to the Heavens and the Earth, There is no doubt that this hymn relies on the same Tabernacle and Cosmos imagery found in the *Christian Topography*. Its biblical exegesis, sense of cosmology, and typological understanding, as well as Jewish artistic and textual sources are the same as those on which Constantine based his work, as noted by McVey:¹⁷

This cosmology was maintained in the early Christian period by the Antiochene school of exegesis. In Alexandria in the mid-sixth century, cosmology became an explicit subject of debate between representatives of the Antiochene and Alexandrian Christian traditions. Cosmas Indicopleustes [Constantine of Antioch], a Nestorian, representing the biblical cosmology and the Antiochene theological system contended against John Philoponus, a Monophysite, who defended the Ptolemaic cosmology and, implicitly, the Alexandrian tradition. Even Cosmas' views had been affected by a variety of Greek and other influences. Unlike the created order described in Genesis, his cosmos is suspended over nothingness rather than over water. Cosmas still thinks of the earth as surrounded by water, but now it is the land mass surrounded by the ocean on a disc, all of it suspended over the void.

The Antiochene exegesis provides some of the background for the ideas expressed in the Edessa hymn. The school represented by Theodore of Mopsuestia viewed the Tabernacle and the veil dividing it into an inner and an outer area as a basic cosmological concept: the Tabernacle was built according to the pattern of Creation and so represented the invisible Creator, Who sustains the entire Cosmos of the earthly and heavenly realms.¹⁸ These ideas were enriched by the Alexandrian school of exegesis.

¹⁷ Ibid., 99.

¹⁸ Ibid., 113–115. McVey brings as examples the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Diodore of Tarsus, Narsai's *Homilies on Creation*, Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*, Aphrahat, Ephrem the Syrian, and Jacob of Sarug. All of them wrote commentaries on Exodus and referred to the cosmological meaning of the Tabernacle and its parallelism with Creation as described in Genesis.

It was Philo who originally suggested the allegoric interpretation of the Tabernacle and the Creation, writing about the heavenly Tabernacle,¹⁹ and Origen and Gregory of Nissanus developed its Christological and ecclesiological aspects.²⁰ In a collection of fifth- and early sixth-century hymns, “*Homilies on Creation*,” the Syrian Narsai (d. 512 CE) continued the Antiochene exegesis, describing the Cosmos as an enormous building identical in form to the Tabernacle. He also emphasized the idea that the unseen God is revealed through Creation.²¹

Jacob of Sarug (451–521), who was called “the Flute of the Holy Spirit” because of his homiletic writings, composed the Syriac hymns, *Homilies in Hexaemeron*, in which he described the Cosmos as a building of two stories in which the firmament divides the lower and the upper waters and serves as the roof for the earthly world, as if it were a tent covering the Cosmos.²² He wrote that Moses, who had the Tabernacle built according to the Revelation on Mount Sinai, saw in his vision the heavenly archetype of the Christian Church, which is the true heir of the Tabernacle.²³ His *Hexaemeron* reflects the ideas of the Antioch school in interpreting the Tabernacle as a cosmic house representative of the entire Creation as well as the notions of the Alexandrian school in viewing the divine pattern of the Tabernacle as a model for the Christian Church.²⁴

All of the ideas above suggest that the Christian interpretation of a domed church being a microcosm of the entire Cosmos is the same as the notion posited in the *Christian Topography* and seen in the miniature of Vatican 699. The spherical presentation of the Kingdom of Heaven over the earthly domain using the visual schema of the Tabernacle/Ark of the Covenant points to the same exegetical approach, which regards the Tabernacle as being linked to Creation. It appears that this cosmological interpretation was accepted and engendered additional artistic works throughout the sixth century.

One such work is the mosaic map discovered in Madaba (fig. 103), dated to 560–565 CE, which images the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem using the same visual pattern as found in the *Christian Topography*. That church, erected by Emperor Constantine in the fourth century, is

¹⁹ Philo, *Ques. Ex.* vol. 2, 82.

²⁰ McVey 1983, 114, n. 181.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 115, ns. 185, 186, 187, 188.

²² *Ibid.*, 115, n. 189.

²³ *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

depicted in the Madaba map as a *Templum mundi*, a rectangular building topped with a large spherical arch. The choice of such a model to portray the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, standing not far from the site of the destroyed Temple, might suggest a Christian perception that viewed it as a replacement for the Jewish Sanctuary and considered Emperor Constantine to be the personification of Moses and King Solomon, the builders of the Tabernacle/Temple.²⁵

The Church as the Successor to the Tabernacle/Temple

The Madaba mosaic was discovered in a church in the northern part of the city of that name in Jordan.²⁶ The rectangular map, which measures some 20 × 7 meters and has Jerusalem at its center, is an historical-geographical documentation of the Holy Land with an emphasis on the holy places, cities, sites, lakes, and seas mentioned in the Bible, and has become an important graphical source for studying the Land of Israel. The city of Jerusalem, depicted as an ellipse in the center of the map, is ten times larger than the other cities represented. Eusebius' fourth-century *Onomasticon* seems to have been the source for the map, but the centrality and the size of Jerusalem clearly suggest that the artist regarded the city as the center of the Holy Land and, by extension, of the entire world.²⁷

The map, designed as a bird's-eye view, highlights the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the center of Jerusalem, marking it as the hub of the universe. To emphasize the importance of the church, the image was presented in a way that seems to be a reversal of the classical perspective of viewing such architecture, and allows one to view all of the various parts of the structure. In the church façade we see the entrance stairs and the front atrium. The stairs lead to the three golden gates of the basilica, called the "martyrium." The courtyard between the basilica and the rotunda (the rear atrium), with the Golgotha stone in one corner, is seen, in a somewhat reduced form, from the west of the basilica, and the golden rotunda known as the place of the grave and the Resurrection (the *Anastasis*) rises behind the atrium.

The Church is shown in the center of the *Cardo maximus*, the street that extended the length of ancient Jerusalem from north to south, and it

²⁵ Nibley, 1959/1960, 97–123, 229–240.

²⁶ Avi-Yonah 1996, 15–66; Donner 1992; Demsky 1998, 285–296; Tsafirir 1999, 281–352; Piccirillo 1998, 15–24.

²⁷ Avi-Yonah 1996, 28.

appears on the mosaic map as if it is spread wide open. Clearly the mosaicist wanted to emphasize the *Cardo maximus* and to present it in all its glory, with two colonnades and the red roofs of the church buildings on either side. This depiction is a contrast to the secondary *Cardo* (in the east), which shows only one row of pillars in a naive perspective so as to allow one to see other buildings between the two streets.²⁸

It is generally agreed that the city plan shown on the map refers to the Roman city Aelia Capitolina with some additional details from the Byzantine period.²⁹ However, according to Nahman Avigad,³⁰ the *Cardo* should not be regarded as depicting a Roman street, but rather as a Byzantine construction of Emperor Justinian, who wanted to demonstrate a connection between the New Church, called the “Neah,” and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.³¹ Whether the *Cardo* image represents its very early Christian or its Byzantine form, it is clear that the artisan sought to perpetuate the Christian tradition and to represent the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as a successor to the Tabernacle and the Temple.

The projection of the *Cardo*'s colonnade on both sides of the street and the artisan's perspective is reminiscent of the description of the pillars in courtyard of the Tabernacle as seen on the gold-glass base in the Museo Sacro Vatican Library (fig. 74), on the double page in Codex Amiatinus (fig. 79), on the decoration for Psalm 115 in Pantokrator 61 (fig. 81), and in the relevant illustrations in the *Christian Topography*, all of which I have discussed above. The use of the same representation of pillars lying flat on the page to represent the colonnade on either side of the Holy Sepulcher suggests that the artisan wanted to use the model of the Tabernacle to depict the sacred area around the church.

Spreading and opening all the architectonic details of the *Cardo maximus* seems then to be in accord with the visual schema of the Tabernacle as shown in Vatican 699 (fig. 75). The depiction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher seems to parallel the *Christian Topography*'s model of the “short side” of the world in Vatican 699 (fig. 1) and Sinai 1186 (fig. 20). This particular diagram is also found in the illustration of the Ark of the Covenant

²⁸ Zafrir 1996, 68.

²⁹ Avigad 1980, 211–229.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 225.

³¹ The church was built in Jerusalem by order of Emperor Constantine in the period 326–335 CE, but the city of Jerusalem reached the height of its growth during the reign Emperor Justinian (527–565).

in Vatican 699 (fig. 27), Laurentiana 28, and especially in the schema of the *Parousia* in Vatican 699 (fig. 4).

The idea behind the emphasis on these similarities is the fact that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was built to adorn and glorify the new Christian city and to equate its stature with the centrality of the Temple in Jerusalem before it was destroyed. Baldwin Smith notes that even though little is known about the appearance and construction of the Constantinian rotunda of the Holy Sepulcher (burned by the Persians in 614), it is presumed that it originally had a dome.³² Its portrayal on the Madaba map leads us to believe that it must have been built as an arched rectangular structure with a dome on top to resemble the model of the Temple of God on Earth. According to Kühnel, in order to enhance the figurative value of the New Jerusalem, Christian tradition moved the Temple's sacred Jewish symbols from Mount Moriah to Golgotha or from the Temple to the Holy Sepulcher.³³ The way the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is depicted on the map suggests this thinking and reflects the particular effort devoted to making this important church a substitute for the desert Tabernacle and the Temple in Jerusalem. Moreover, it is also a testimony to Jesus' great victory over death and his resurrection and ascension to the heavenly Holy of Holies, as depicted in the *Parousia* miniature in the *Christian Topography*.

Another example of the use of a model of the Tabernacle is the mosaic floor of Cappele Theotokos on Mount Nebo in Jordan (fig. 104), dated to the beginning of the seventh century, which shows part of the area of the church and the baptistery dedicated to Moses. In front of the altar next to the apse, there is an image that represents the Temple in Jerusalem. It shows an arch-topped rectangular building with a pattern similar to the Temple façade with an arch and a flaming altar. On either side of the structure are the remains of a deer and a bull (those images were virtually destroyed by the Iconoclasts). Michele Piccirillo quotes Psalm 51:21, which is alluded to in the mosaic:³⁴ "Then You will want sacrifices offered in righteousness, burnt and whole offerings; then bulls will be offered on Your altar." The iconographic meaning of the mosaic image in Cappele Theotokos might indicate that the Christian Church replaced the Temple and became the true place for divine worship. The architecture

³² Smith 1971, 16.

³³ Kühnel 1986/1987, 147–168.

³⁴ Piccirillo 1993, 151.

of the structure in the mosaic is similar to the shape of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher on the Madaba map. Perhaps both artisans used the same model to show that the Jewish Tabernacle/Temple had been superseded and that the Divine Presence now dwells in the Christian Church.

The supersession of the cosmological schema of the Jewish Tabernacle/Temple by the Christian Church can also be seen in the reliquary art that was common in the sixth century. The art of *loca sancta* was developed to accommodate the many pilgrims who visited sacred sites in the Holy Land and wanted to take keepsakes back with them.³⁵ The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was one of the most significant of these sacred sites and pilgrims returned to their homes bringing various holy relics back with them, such as oil (from the menorah that burned above the grave) and water that was preserved in ampullae (small flat metal bottles) made in Jerusalem.³⁶

Many of these ampullae, which were made in the sixth century and preserved in the cathedral of Monza or the Abbey of Bobbio,³⁷ were decorated with scenes of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.³⁸ The Church of the Holy Sepulcher usually appears with the scene of the holy women on one side of the gravesite and the angel who tells them that Jesus has risen on the other. The image of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher's *Anastasis* rotunda on the ampulla alludes to the site of Jesus' death and rebirth at Golgotha. The reliquaries from the Treasure of the Sancta Sanctorum that became part of the Vatican's Museo Sacro collection are described as being in: "a small red box filled with bits of earth, wood and cloth . . . These contents are 'blessings' from the Holy Land, some of which still have legible labels, e.g., 'Mount of Olives' or 'from Zion.'"³⁹

On the inner side of the box's cover are five scenes portraying different events in the life of Jesus. Above them is the dome of the rotunda, a sacred structure that seems to represent the confluence of the earthly motif of the Holy Sepulcher with the heavenly motif of divine intervention that brought about the Resurrection and the ascension of Jesus into Heaven. Thus the earthly women (who were privileged to see Jesus after his

³⁵ Weitzmann, 1974, 31–56.

³⁶ Wilkinson, 1976, 75–101.

³⁷ The Monza Cathedral located north of Milan and the nearby Bobbio Abbey house a large collection of early medieval pilgrimage ampullae.

³⁸ Kühnel 1987, 95.

³⁹ Vikan 1982, 18.

Resurrection) are imaged with the heavenly angel and the earthly tomb is shown with the heavenly dome above it.⁴⁰

Such iconographic connections between the earthly and the heavenly realms are also found in the pictures of the Ark of the Covenant in Vatican 699 (fig. 27). As I discussed in Chapter 6, these miniatures show two people standing next to the Ark. The two figures are thought to be Aaron and Moses, human beings who were close to the Divine Presence: Aaron, the High Priest, who could enter the Holy of Holies to absolve the people of their sins and reaffirm the connection with God, and Moses, the leader who spoke both to the people and to God. The Ark itself also symbolizes two realms—the visible earthly and the hidden heavenly states.

In light of all these examples that portray the unique visual schema that represents the Cosmos, the Tabernacle, the Ark, the *Parousia*, the Holy Sepulcher, and the Church, we might say that in developing his cosmological theory, Constantine chose this special pattern to express the idea of a link between the making of the Tabernacle and the account of Creation—a link between the earthly and the heavenly realms and between the present state of existence and the future state of eschatology. We might consider that his emphasis on the way Creation, the Tabernacle, and the future heavenly Sanctuary for Jesus' Second Coming were connected sheds light on the times in which the *Christian Topography* was originally written and later copied.

Creation, the Tabernacle, and Christian Eschatology

I noted earlier that the *Christian Topography* has been dated to the first half of the sixth century, a period that was believed to be the beginning of the seventh millennium from the Creation of the world.⁴¹ Christian chronology (apparently influenced by its Jewish counterpart) considers the number of years of the world's existence to be equal to the number of years from the Creation of the universe—*annus mundi*—henceforth “AM.”⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid., 19–20

⁴¹ Landes, 1988, 137, 138–211.

⁴² Landes 2011, 3: “The *millennium* is not about a date but about the period of the messianic era (1000 years long), whereas the year 2000 (or 1000, or 6000) is an *apocalyptic* date at which a millennium might begin. Indeed, so great and dramatic a transformation will take place on this day, that millennialists believe the world will then enter a wondrous period (conventionally 1000 years—*mille anni*, *millennium*).”

This cosmological theory was based on the Epistle of Barnabas 15:3–9,⁴³ written around 120 CE, which quotes two major biblical sources: Genesis, which says that God completed the work of Creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, and Psalm 90:4, which declares that each of God's days is equal to a thousand years: "For in Your sight a thousand years are like yesterday that has passed." From these two sources it was concluded that the world that was created in six days was to come to an end at the end of God's six days (each day equaling a thousand years), that is, at the end of the year 6000. At that time, which corresponds to God's day of rest in Genesis, the seventh millennium will begin and the world will witness the *Parousia*. Thus the words of the Epistle of Barnabas (which were accepted as part of the canon of the Alexandrian Church) introduced the chronological interpretation of the millennial week (hereafter the week of Creation) in the early Christian Church.⁴⁴ The practical development of Barnabas' idea began in the third century when Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–c. 235)⁴⁵ and Julius Africanus (c. 160–c. 240)⁴⁶ calculated the start of Creation and the year of Jesus' birth. According to their figures, the first year of the Christian era, the year of the incarnation became the initial reference point of the Christian calendar. Marking this year "1" against the counting of years from the beginning of the world, they determined that it fell in the year 5500 from Creation (AM I) Thus the end of God's six days, the year 6000, was to be 500 years later, that is, around 500 CE. By this reasoning, the *Christian Topography* was written at the beginning of the seventh millennium.⁴⁷

How widespread was the theory at the time? Richard Landes notes that the fact that the target date of the end of the millennium was changed numerous times suggests that this idea engendered great trepidation.⁴⁸

⁴³ See Addendum—Table 13.

⁴⁴ Landes 1988, 142–143.

⁴⁵ Hippolytus of Rome was the most important third-century theologian in the Church of Rome.

⁴⁶ Julius Africanus, the Christian historian who composed a *History of the World* until the year 220 in five volumes.

⁴⁷ Landes 1988, 137–211. According to McCrindle's Introduction, X, the date of the writing of the *Christian Topography*, is fairly certain. In Book 2, Constantine tells us that it is 25 years since he was in Axum, and he was there when Elesbaas was preparing his expedition against the Homerites. That expedition probably took place in 525 AD, or possibly 522 AD. Also at the beginning of Book 6, he refers to two eclipses, giving the dates as Mechir 12 and Mesori 24: these would seem to be the eclipses of 6 Feb. 547 and 17 Aug. 547. The logical inference is that the work was written around 550 AD.

⁴⁸ Landes 1988 11–86, 161–164.

It met with serious opposition from the official Church, which might explain why no written documents concerning “the calculation of the millennium” have been preserved. Constantine’s ideas were considered heretical in the eyes of the Church as well, which accounts for him not identifying himself by name in any of the books of the *Christian Topography*. As he referred to many biblical verses that point out that in the beginning God created the pattern that included both the Heavens and the Earth and that the world was created in six days and God rested on the seventh day, he connected his cosmology to the theory of the millennial week.

Perhaps it was the threat of the seventh millennium that led Constantine to develop his special theology. It may be that the fears and uncertainty that were widespread at the time made an appropriate backdrop for the *Christian Topography’s* cosmology and eschatology. Both the text and the illustrations in this work present the pattern of the Tabernacle in a way that reflects the structure of the universe. Both relate it to a preconceived plan for the Tabernacle and project the *Parousia* at the end of time.

The *Christian Topography’s* words and images all testify to the existence of a cosmic divine pattern that includes both the earthly historical state of Creation and the Tabernacle, represented by the same blueprint, and the eschatological state, embodied in the *Parousia* and the heavenly Sanctuary. The shape of Constantine’s Tabernacle/Cosmos schema seems to parallel the millennial theory. The first six millennia are equal to the present earthly world, denoted by the rectangular shape in the cosmographic schema. The seventh day of Creation, the seventh millennium, parallels the heavenly world, represented by the dome. It is possible that Constantine attempted to counter the fears of destruction and to engender a spirit of faith and hope in the future of the world by emphasizing his belief in God’s cosmic plan, which from the beginning bound the six millennia and the seventh up in one scheme.

In this context it is important to note that the image of the *Parousia* at the end of Book V of the *Christian Topography’s* Vatican 699 is known to be one of the early illustrations of the subject (fig. 4).⁴⁹ Its special frame suggests the crowning glory of earthly existence. Jesus appearing in the

⁴⁹ Kessler 1995, 365, states that this miniature is generally regarded to be a description of the Last Judgment, but according to him the image does not show a trial because the wicked are not seen in it. Therefore, he concludes that the subject of the miniature is the *Parousia* and the Kingdom of Heaven.

dome of the schema represents the eternal life that is a continuation of life on Earth. The illustrated figures in the rectangular part of the miniature seem to contemplate the future by looking upward from their earthly existence. By contrast, the outside observer looking at the image sees Jesus and the *Parousia* as the continuation of the initial six days of earthly Creation followed immediately by the heavenly rest of the Sabbath.

Examining the apocalyptic expectations and the pattern of Western chronography—the millennium—we realize that anticipation of the advent of the fateful year 6000 created panic and fear and caused a recalculation of the *annus mundi*. The AM I according to which the year 500 CE was to be the date (in reference to 5500 from the beginning of the world) was changed and, by the new calculation, AM II, the date of Jesus' birth (year "1") was changed so that the year 6000 was determined to be 800 CE. As this date drew near, the fear that it engendered led to a reevaluation as to the schedule for the determination of AM III, whereby the recalculation of Jesus' birth resulted in delaying the year 6000 to the year 1000 CE.

Interestingly, the dates of the original text and its later copies match the three chronological traditions of the Sabbatical millennium.⁵⁰ The original sixth-century manuscript parallels the period of AM I; the ninth-century Vatican 699 corresponds the date of AM II, according to which the seventh millennium was thought to begin in the era of 800 CE; and the three eleventh-century copies anticipate the date of AM III when the seventh millennium was thought to begin in the era of 1000 CE.

It would appear that these matching time frames were not coincidental, but reflected contemporaneous determination to copy the treatise and spread the message of the *Christian Topography's* cosmography, which was based on the biblical narrative of the Old and the New Testaments. The cosmology that Constantine expanded to confront the eschatological, apocalyptic, and millennial theories of his time was relevant to the other periods when the extant copies were produced. In all three eras his optimistic hypothesis, expressed in both text and image, was relevant and needed. Use of the round-top schema to represent both the Tabernacle/Creation duality and the future *Parousia* offered hope of a new Creation rather than the dread of the End of Days, thus countering the fears of the Sabbatical millennium.

⁵⁰ Landes 1988, 149; 1995, 289–293.

EPILOGUE

As I wrote in my Introduction, the primary focus in this book is an exploration of Jewish and Byzantine Christian works of art that elucidate the essence of the ancient notion that the divine pattern shown to Moses on Mount Sinai was actually God's blueprint of Creation. In the various chapters I looked at the relationship between images of Creation and the Tabernacle, probed the meaning of their iconography, and traced the literary sources that seem to parallel the various illustrations.

The pictorial and textual examples that I presented throughout the work clearly point to a dialogue between words and images, especially in the Byzantine world, as noted by Brubaker (2007, 58):

Images show and words describe. In the Byzantine world, the two appear together in virtually every medium, but most obviously in illuminated manuscripts. Here art and text produce parallel streams of communication that create a dialogue between what words can describe and what pictures can show. This dialogue deepens the meaning of both: the words give resonance to the images and the images nuance the words.

Clearly the images that appear in Constantine of Antioch's *Christian Topography* and the other Byzantine manuscripts that I discussed in these pages were created to reflect the ideas verbalized in the associated text and perhaps in other sources as well. I decided to search for an early source that related to both the mysteries of Creation and the Tabernacle and offered evidence of Jewish and Christian reciprocal influences.

In Chapter 1 I looked at the earliest accessible example of a visual and textual exchange of ideas, which is to be found in the wall art in the Dura-Europos synagogue, the baptistery, and the literary sources that might have inspired their imagery. I discussed the various paintings, which relate to the Tabernacle/Creation duality and other subjects and episodes from the Bible, and explored ways of interpreting them exegetically and in doing so to understand their polemical discourse. In both of these houses of worship we see visual portrayals that parallel early literary sources such as the Christian *Odes of Solomon*, the hymns of Ephrem the Syrian, and the writings of Josephus, Philo, and the Heikhalot and Merkavah literatures, as well as other works that suggest the transmission of visual imagery from one religion to the other. The words of the texts seem to resonate in the images and the images might be vivid reflections of the words.

Chapter 2 was devoted to the conceptual basis for the link between the Tabernacle and Creation inherent in the textual sources that are discussed in the book, the basic resource being the relevant verses in the Bible. Careful study of the biblical text reveals many interesting similarities between the account of Creation in Genesis and the story of the building of the Tabernacle in Exodus. There have been many allegorical interpretations of the particular words and phrases used in these two books of the Old Testament to describe them. Philo, Josephus, and authors of aggadic midrashim all understood the Tabernacle, its vessels, and the rituals of its service as cosmic entities or as figurative allusions linking the upper and lower worlds and Creation with the Tabernacle.

Chapter 3 looked at Constantine of Antioch's *Christian Topography's* "System of the World," for which he drew a diagram of a rectangle topped by a hemispheric roof, which was his principal schematic model of the Cosmos. The treatise's text and illustrations offer an exegetical method by which Constantine created an entire system of cosmology based on verses from the Bible. The *Christian Topography's* homiletic approach relies on verses from Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, and Job as prooftexts to provide a tangible understanding of the pattern of the world. The same verses are also found in several liturgical passages in the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions*, which seems to be an indication of a possible connection between the two works.

The visual imagery in Constantine's treatise is based on a concept that regards the order by which God created the universe as the pattern, *tavnit*, that was given to Moses on Mount Sinai when He told him to build the Tabernacle. The act of separation is an important element in this Godly order: it mandates separations between light and darkness, between the sea and the dry land, and especially between the Heavens and the Earth, the last being equated to the separation between the Holy and the Holy of Holies. Just as the firmament is the boundary in the act of Creation, the curtain, *parochet*, between the Holy and the Holy of Holies is the boundary line in the structure of the Tabernacle.

Chapter 3 also dealt with a different approach to illustrating Creation, as found in the eleventh- and twelfth-century collection of the eight books of the Bible known as the Byzantine Octateuchs. Whereas the *Christian Topography* treats the account of Creation conceptually, the Octateuchs' miniatures present it in a narrative form that provides pictorial expression of the biblical text verse by verse. The principal difference is the *Christian Topography's* stress on the allegorical exegesis of a selected corpus of verses chosen to verify the treatise's cosmological and theological

theory of Creation, whereas the Octateuchs' images relate to the Bible story itself.

In Chapter 4 I moved on to Jewish art and searched out visual expressions of the account of Creation. Interestingly, here we also find a midrashic, allegorical treatment of the subject rather than a narrative format. The mosaic floors of six synagogues in the Land of Israel approach the subject symbolically. Their design clearly suggests a strong link between Creation (denoted by the zodiac, the four seasons, the sun, and the moon) and the memory of the Temple in Jerusalem. The allegorical approach that emphasizes the adoration and praise of God's Creation and the plea for the continuation of the cosmic order reflects early Jewish liturgical hymns of thanksgiving.

The mosaic floor of the Sepphoris synagogue includes additional images that relate directly to the Temple's sacrificial service. These panels portray the two daily burnt offerings along with related motifs. It is clear from their inscriptions and their placement above the zodiac that they emphasize the notion that the Temple and its rites transcend the cycle of Nature. Similar analogies are found in early and later midrashim as well as in ancient Jewish poetry, which all dwell on the emblematic connection between the Tabernacle and Creation. Moreover, various eighth- to twelfth-century midrashim relate to versions of ideas found in writings of Philo and Josephus that were preserved only in Christian sources. Works such as those of Rabbi Moshe HaDarshan and others cast a mystic light on an entire corpus of midrashim about which we know very little. All of these writings underscore the symbolic significance of the Tabernacle and Creation parallelism making use of ideas that, to our surprise, we also find in the *Christian Topography*. As we know of no direct link between Philo and the midrashic tradition of the Talmudic sages, one scholarly theory suggests that authors of these later midrashim might have had access to an early source known to both Jewish and Christian authors, for example, a pseudepigraphic work such as the second-century BCE Book of Jubilees.

Chapter 5 discussed the narrative approach to the illustration cycle of the Creation story, known as the *Hexaemeron*. The only Jewish example of this kind of portrayal of the biblical account is found in the fourteenth-century Sarajevo Haggadah. Similar to the eleventh-century Octateuchs, the Sarajevo Haggadah visualizes the days of Creation following the biblical text verse by verse. Analyzing the eight images on the Haggadah's frontispiece, we find that they are clearly based on the interpretations of the text by Nachmanides and R. Bahye and the mid-thirteenth-century

Sephardi approach to Creation cosmology. Artistically, we find here motifs similar to the ones that were used in the *Octateuchs* and the *Christian Topography*. The images of days “Monday” through “Friday” in the Haggadah are framed by the same schematic diagram of the arched rectangle representing the Tabernacle and Creation in Jewish and Christian works discussed throughout the book.

After focusing on the Christian and Jewish attitudes toward Creation, in Chapter 6 I explored the visual and conceptual description of the Tabernacle and its sacred and mystical import. The making of the Tabernacle according to the *tavnit* shown to Moses on Mount Sinai is believed to be the climax of human partnership in the divine act of Creation. The visual symbol that was used to represent this association is the same schematic diagram that was chosen to portray the Tabernacle, Creation, and the Ark of the Covenant.

In imagery of the Ark, the phrase “the two cherubim stretching out their wings and overshadowing the Mercy Seat” is the source for the diagram of an arch drawn above the rectangular Ark, which suggests the space formed by the wings of the cherubim. The Ark cover, the *kapporet*, is thought to be synonymous with the Mercy Seat as well as with the divine Chariot of Ezekiel’s vision, the *merkavah*. These mystical entities engage the esoteric nature of the Divine Presence described in the accounts of Creation and the making of the Tabernacle.

Studying the images of the Ark of Covenant in the *Christian Topography* and the *Octateuchs* helps us to understand this unique holy object, which represents the two states of existence: “the first state” (earthly) and the “second state” (heavenly). The Ark’s cosmological connotation provides an emblematic division of the universe in which the rectangular section of the illustration represents the earthly created Cosmos and the top arched section parallels the heavenly domain, where one achieves eternal life.

The figurative shape of the Ark/Tabernacle imagery is known from the Bar Kokhba tetradrachmas, Jewish late antique coins that were designed and minted at the same time that the spiritual leaders of the mishnaic period were updating the Halakhah and accommodating to the new post-Temple reality. It was apparently in accord with their efforts to perpetuate the memory of the Temple that a symbolic schema was created that would give visual expression to literary sources and polemical ideas concerning its sanctity.

In Chapter 7 I looked at the background of the visual pictogram on the Bar Kokhba coin, its particular way of displaying the Tabernacle/Temple image on the obverse of the coin and the *lulav* and *etrog* on the reverse

side. It is possible that in light of the known conflicts and criticism regarding the sanctity of the Temple prior to its destruction, Bar Kokhba chose symbols that would show the Temple in a very positive light. The images may have been selected to establish the memory of the Temple as part of an effort to unite the people in their struggle to regain independence and rebuild their Sanctuary.

To extend the research concerning the importance of maintaining the “memory of the Temple,” I turned to the halakhic sources in the Mishnah, the Tosephta, and the Braitot and to early liturgical prayers. Clearly the concept of “remembering the Temple” was associated with political, religious, and polemical issues, as well as with eschatological and messianic motifs. Bar Kokhba had a close relationship with Rabbi Akiva and thus might have been engaged in the spiritual life of the period. In studying the different motifs on his coins I focused particularly on the schema of the arched-top rectangle in the center of the coin, shown as a series of dots (in lieu of a solid line). I suggested that this image might refer to the one-cubit space that separated the Holy from the Holy of Holies, the *ama traksin*. This ambiguous and undefined area mentioned in the Mishnah symbolizes the High Priest’s entryway into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur.

With the destruction of the Temple and the end of the sacrificial rituals, the Rabbis developed prayers and liturgy for an alternative divine service. Chapter 8 surveyed the decoration of ancient synagogues, which have motifs influenced by literary sources that relate to Creation and the Temple. Called “minor Temples,” the synagogues, have mosaic floors that depict images of the menorah, the shofar, the incense shovels, the *lulav*, and the *etrog*, all of which are reminiscent of the Temple’s priestly service.

To fully appreciate the reality of the continuing dialogue between words and images that typifies our discussion, I also showed in Chapter 8 how the attitude toward Rabbinic sources determined the choice of the images that were used for the decoration of Samaritan synagogues. The Samaritans, whose synagogues were similar to those of the Jews, used the Temple, its vessels, and its furnishings for their ornamentation, but as they do not accept the Rabbinic Oral Law, they omitted images of the four species.

In continuing the search for Jewish and Christian perceptions of the *tavnit*, in Chapter 9 I discussed another schematic model in the *Christian Topography*, which projects the Tabernacle as a flat plane seen from above. That model creates a parallel between the cartographic image of Creation pointing to the entrance to the Tabernacle in the East and the

Garden of Eden, considered a symbol of Creation, which is also in the East. It is clear that this was a very old association, known from the apocryphal literature, which was an important source of the early midrashim that found their way into both Jewish and Christian literature.

The area closest to the entrance in the second schematic model holds the showbread table with a menorah next to it lying flat on its side; the Holy of Holies has within it the Ark of the Covenant and four additional items that highlight the connection between the Tabernacle and the Garden of Eden, the two sacred sites identified with God's dwelling place. Interestingly, some of these same objects are also seen in Karaite and Jewish Bible frontispieces, as well as in the earlier Jewish mosaic floors.

Karaite illuminated manuscripts depict the Tabernacle and Temple implements strictly in accordance with the biblical descriptions. In an important innovation the Karaites set the images of the Tabernacle/Temple and their vessels as frontispieces to the Pentateuch. Arranged that way they appear before the story of Creation rather than as illustrations for the Book of Exodus, a choice that clearly points to a link between the account of Creation, *ma'aseh bere'shit*, and the making of the Tabernacle, *ma'aseh ha'mishkan*.

Chapter 10 looked at four different approaches to perspective imaging of the Tabernacle. The first was a Jewish gold-glass base, the Museo Sacro's Vatican plate, which includes images of the Tabernacle courtyard shown from above as if from the Heavens together with depictions of the First (Solomon's) and the Second (Herod's) Temple, as well as *sukkoth* and Temple implements, all of which are shown en-face, in effect a realistic image that represents their continued earthly existence.

In the second example, taken from the *Christian Topography* and the Octateuchs, the outline of the entire precinct is seen from above in order to create a sense that the Tabernacle in the wilderness was in effect a mirror image of a heavenly Tabernacle, which existed from the time of Creation.

The third example was in the Codex Amiatinus, dated to the early eighth century, which shows a double-page diagram of the Tabernacle seen from three perspectives: interior, exterior, and a bird's-eye view. In a way this unique model is a meditational *pictura* that creates a fusion of the earthly and heavenly realms, transforming the Tabernacle into the heavenly, eternal Temple by fixing a cross on the entrance to the Holy.

The fourth example was in Pantokrator 61, the marginal Psalter from Mount Athos. Here the Tabernacle's courtyard is shown in a bird's-eye view so as to create a mirrored effect of the eternal heavenly Sanctuary,

whereas the implements are imaged in an ordinary frontal perspective, emphasizing their actual presence and their role in fulfilling God's instructions to Bezalel.

In Chapter 11 I discussed the cosmic significance of the Tabernacle/Temple's sacred vessels in an impressive group of Sephardi Bibles from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Their miniatures of the Tabernacle appear as frontispieces for the entire Bible, which again seems to connect the "blueprint" of *ma'aseh bere'shit* with the *tavnit of ma'aseh ha'mishkan*. In these illustrations the Tabernacle/Temple implements, which in life were seen only by the priests who conducted the rituals and performed the sacrifices, appear scattered in full view.

Interestingly, the same significance ascribed to the holy vessels of the Tabernacle/Temple in Jewish art is found in Christianity. The *Christian Topography* and the Octateuchs attribute great cosmological import to the golden menorah and the showbread table. Both text and image reflect the allegorical writings of Josephus and Philo and substantiate the cosmological meaning of these two very important implements. Chapter 11 also discussed the cosmological and spiritual significance of the Israelites' encampment in the desert. The specific arrangement of the camp suggests a division into two parts, the earthly domain represented by the twelve tribes that formed the outer frame of the "Holy precinct" and the heavenly most sacred domain characterized by images of the Tabernacle and the Ark. The order they maintained not only helped the Israelites understand God's divine pattern, but also caused them to experience a renewed revelation every time they halted and had to allocate space for the Holy and the Holy of Holies within their encampment.

Chapter 12 began with a discussion of the illustration of the *Parousia* in the ninth-century copy of the *Christian Topography*, Vatican 699, and I suggested that this image reveals the essence of the divine plan of Creation. The illustration is based on the schematic design of the Ark of the Covenant that was first used on the Bar Kokhba coins. However, it also reflects the *Christian Topography's* theological interpretation of the *Parousia*, stressing the Kingdom of Heaven in the vaulted upper part that represents the Holy of Holies, where Jesus ripped the *parochet*, thus desecrating the sanctity of the Sanctuary. By depicting the most hidden and invisible part of the Holy of Holies as a fully exposed and visible space, where Jesus is sitting on his throne, proclaiming the veil to be his flesh (Heb. 10:19, 20), the image expresses the core concept of Christian supersession of Judaism. It changes the archlike area "between the two cherubim" on top of the schematic image of the Ark, where only Moses "heard the

Voice speaking unto him from above the Ark cover," to an exposed space, seen by all, where Jesus represents the new order of the Cosmos and of Creation. Thus, the domelike structure embodying the Heavens and the Holy of Holies became a symbol of the Christian Church superseding the Jewish Temple.

This illustration of the *Parousia* crystallizes the profound difference between the Christian and the Jewish theological understandings of the Temple/Creation duality. The Jewish artistic motifs focused on matching the memory of the Tabernacle/Temple/Ark of the Covenant with the symbols of Creation so as to guarantee the continued existence of the earthly created universe along with the hope for the rebuilding of the Temple on earth. The Byzantine Christian art, by contrast, used the schematic model of the Creation/Tabernacle to illustrate the shift of importance from the earthly to the heavenly domain. The focus of holiness was moved away from the earthly world, considered the lower place, to the heavenly realm of the *Parousia*, which will bring about a new order of Creation.

In order to inquire into the reasons why such cosmological ideas were expressed in the sixth century, when the *Christian Topography* was originally written, and why it was copied in the ninth and eleventh centuries, I looked at Christian chronology and millennial fears regarding the End of Days.

In conclusion, this book, *Images of Cosmology in Jewish and Byzantine Art: God's Blueprint of Creation*, centers on the artistic and literary understanding of the schematic diagram, the *tavnit*, found originally on the Bar Kokhba coins and then in the miniatures of the *Christian Topography* and other works of art. The book is primarily a study of the relationship between text and image and between Jewish biblical commentary and Byzantine Christian iconography. I followed the literary sources for the link between the Tabernacle and Creation in classical Jewish and Christian sources and looked at relevant artistic imagery in Jewish works of art and compared it to Byzantine Christian artistic interpretations.

My primary motive in this work was a determination to demonstrate through the Tabernacle/Creation duality how ideas and motifs are linked together in a long chain that binds the Jewish and Christian traditions in time, from the first to the fourteenth century, and in space, from Syria and Israel to southern France and to Spain. By comparing literary sources and visual schemata I was able to reveal and demonstrate a nexus in the chain of thought and artistic motifs conveyed from one religion to the other and back again from late antiquity through the end of the Middle Ages.

ADDENDUM

Table 1

The Creation Narrative	The Revelation at Mount Sinai	The Construction of the Tabernacle
<p>“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exod. 20:10).</p>	<p>“And Moses went up into the mount, and the cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud” (Exod. 24:15,16).</p>	<p>“Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle” (Exod. 40:34,35).</p>

Table 2

Creation	The Construction of the Tabernacle
<p>“The LORD by <i>wisdom</i> founded the earth; by <i>understanding</i> He established the heavens. By His <i>knowledge</i> the depths were broken up, and the skies drop down the dew” (Proverbs 3:19,20).</p>	<p>“And Moses said unto the children of Israel: ‘See, the LORD hath called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And He hath filled him with the spirit of God, in <i>wisdom</i>, in <i>understanding</i>, and in <i>knowledge</i>, and in all manner of workmanship” (Exod. 35:30,31).</p>

Table 3

The Tabernacle as a Work of Man	The Tabernacle as a Divinely Inspired Vision
<p>“And they shall make an ark of acacia-wood.” “And thou shalt make staves.” “And thou shalt make an ark-cover.” “And thou shalt make two cherubim.” “And thou shalt make a table of acacia-wood”. “And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold.” (Exod. 25:10,13,17,18,23,31)</p>	<p>“And let them make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the Tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it” (Exod. 25:8, 9). “And see that thou make them after their pattern, which is being shown thee in the mount” (Exod. 25:40).</p>

Table 3 (*cont.*)

The Tabernacle as a Work of Man	The Tabernacle as a Divinely Inspired Vision
“And Bezalel made the ark of acacia-wood,” “And he made staves of acacia-wood.” “And he made an ark-cover of pure gold.” “And he made the table of acacia-wood.” (Exod. 37:1,4,6,10)	“And thou shalt rear up the Tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which hath been shown thee in the mount” (Exod. 26:30). “Hollow with planks shalt thou make it; as it hath been shown thee in the mount, so shalt they make it” (Exod. 27:8).

Table 4

The Book of Genesis	The Book of Exodus
“And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good . . .” (Gen. 1:31).	“And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it. And Moses blessed them” (Exod. 39:43).
“And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made” (Gen. 2:1. 2).	“Thus was finished all the work of the Tabernacle of the tent of meeting” (Exod.39:32). “So Moses finished the work” (Exod. 40:33).
“And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which God in creating had made” (Gen. 2:3).	“And Moses blessed them” (Exod. 39:43).

Table 5

<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> VII, 34, 1,2 ¹	<i>Christian Topography</i> : McCrindle, p. 130
[...] who caused the earth to settle and stretched out heaven ² and precisely arranged the disposition of each of the creatures.	This is the first heaven, shaped like a vaulted chamber, which was created on the first day along with the earth, and of it Isaiah speaks thus: “ <i>He that</i>

¹ Fiensy 1985, 61.

² *Ibid.*, n. 3, Ps. 104:2.

Table 5 (cont.)

<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> VII, 34, 1,2	<i>Christian Topography</i> : McCrindle, p. 130
By your resolution, O Master, the world has beamed (with joy) and heaven as a vault ³ has been fixed and adorned with the stars for consolation in darkness.	<i>hath established the heaven as a vaulted chamber</i> ⁴ But the heaven, which is bound to the first at the middle, is that which was created on the second day, to which Isaiah refers when he says: “ <i>And having stretched it out as a tent to dwell in.</i> ” ⁵ David also says concerning it: “ <i>Stretching out the heaven as a curtain,</i> ” ⁶ and indicating it still more clearly he says: “ <i>Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters.</i> ” ⁷ Now when Scripture speaks of the extremities of heaven and earth, this cannot be understood as applicable to a sphere. Isaiah again says: “ <i>Thus saith the Lord, he that made the heaven and pitched it.</i> ” ⁸
<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> VII, 35, 5 ⁹ Heaven knows the one who vaulted it upon nothing as a stony cube ¹⁰ and who united earth and water with themselves...	[...] Nay more, the extremities of the heaven are bound together with the extremities of the earth, and on both sides, and concerning this it is written in Job: “ <i>And he inclined heaven to earth, and the earth is poured out as dust, and I have fastened it as a square block to a stone.</i> ” ¹¹ Meaning that there is nothing underneath on which it is fixed. And David says: “ <i>He hath founded the earth upon its own stability,</i> ” ¹² as if he said that it has been founded upon itself and not upon anything. But with regard to the heaven being fastened to the earth he declares in Job: “ <i>He hath inclined heaven</i>

³ Ibid., n. 6, Isa. 40:22.⁴ McCrindle, 130.⁵ Ibid., n. 4, Isa. 40:22.⁶ Ibid., n. 5, Ps. 104:2.⁷ Ibid., n. 4, Ps. 104:3.⁸ Isa. 42:5.⁹ Fiensy 1985, 69; Goodenough 1969, 307.¹⁰ Goodenough (1969), 307, n. 12, Job 38: 38.¹¹ McCrindle, 130 n. 8, Job 38: 38.¹² Ibid., 299, n. 1, Ps. 104:5.

Table 5 (cont.)

<i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> VII, 34, 1,2	<i>Christian Topography</i> : McCrindle, p. 130
	<p>to earth; dust is poured out as earth, but I have cemented it as if with stone a square block,"¹³ intimating that the heaven is inclined to the earth and at its lower part fastened to it like a cube, that is, at the four corners. The Tabernacle as a whole, is therefore a pattern of the whole world.</p>
<p><i>Apostolic Constitutions</i> VIII, 12, 9,¹³¹⁴</p> <p>For you are the one who set up heaven like an arch¹⁵ and stretch it out like a curtain¹⁶ and established the earth upon nothing,¹⁷ by Thy will.</p> <p>(You are the one) who set up the abyss and surrounded it with a great cavity when the sea was heaped up with salty water. But you circumscribed it with the gates of the lightest sand.¹⁸</p> <p>(You are the one) who by the winds sometimes arches it as high as mountains, while at other times you spread it out like a plain.</p>	<p>McCrindle, pp. 298–299: [...] And again about its figure Isaiah says: “<i>He that hath established the heaven as a vaulted chamber and stretched it out as a tent to dwell in.</i>”¹⁹ The expression as a <i>vaulted chamber</i> has reference to the first heaven, which he speaks of as a house where people live and make their abode. And again David says: “<i>Stretching out the heaven as a curtain,</i>”²⁰ speaking here of the firmament—and speaking of it as a curtain, that is, as the coverings which made the roof over the Tabernacle are properly called leather curtains. He no doubt says: “<i>Who layeth the beams of his upper chambers in the waters.</i>”²¹ Here more clearly speaking concerning the firmament itself as if it were a covering. But that there is nothing under the earth is thus declared in Job: “<i>He hangeth the earth upon nothing,</i>”²² meaning that there is nothing underneath it. In like manner again in Job: “<i>Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened?</i>”²³</p>

¹³ Ibid., n. 3, Job 38:38.

¹⁴ Fiensy 1985, 101; Goodenough 1969, 321.

¹⁵ Ibid., Fiensy, n. 16; Goodenough, n. 1, Isa. 40:22.

¹⁶ Ibid., Fiensy, n. 17; Goodenough, n. 84, Ps. 104:2.

¹⁷ Ibid., Fiensy, n. 18; Goodenough, n. 85, Job 26:7.

¹⁸ Ibid., Goodenough, n. 87, Job 38:38.

¹⁹ McCrindle, 298 n. 6, Isa. 40:22.

²⁰ Ibid., n. 7, Ps. 104:2.

²¹ Ibid., n. 8, Ps. 104:3.

²² Ibid., n. 9, Job 26:7.

²³ Ibid., n. 10, Job 38:6.

Table 6

1. *Christian Topography*

Then again David elsewhere says: *Who stretcheth out the heaven like a curtain, who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters* (Ps. 104:2–3), here manifestly speaking of the firmament which has the waters on its surface, as serving us for a covering. For the coverings overhead of a tent are properly called screens whether they be made of canvas or of hair [...]²⁴

Here Moses, after he had been privileged to witness the terrible scenes on the mount, is commanded by God to make the Tabernacle according to the pattern which he had seen in the mount, this being a pattern of the whole world. *For see, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern which was shown thee in the mount.* (Exod. 25:40) Since therefore it had been shown him how God made the heaven and the earth, and how on the second day he made the firmament in the middle between them, and thus made the one place into two places, so he, in like manner in accordance with the pattern which he had seen, made the Tabernacle and placed the veil in the middle, and by this division made the one Tabernacle into two, an inner and an outer.²⁵

This candlestick which had seven lamps and stood in the south of the Tabernacle was a type of the luminaries, for, according to the wise Solomon, the luminaries rising in the east and running to the south, shine upon the north of the earth [...]. He ordered them, however, to be lighted on one side, since the table was placed towards

1. *BaMidbar [Numbers] Rabbah*

Another explanation—The words *eth ha'mishkan* (The Tabernacle) denotes that its importance was equal to that of the whole world, which is called 'tent', even as the Tabernacle is called 'tent.' How can this statement be supported? It is written, "In the beginning God created the heaven, etc. (Gen. 1:1), and it is written, "...Who stretches out the heaven like a curtain" (Ps. 104:2), while of the Tabernacle it is written, "And you shall make curtains of goat's hair for a tent over the Tabernacle" (Exod. 26:7). It is written in connection with the second day, "Let there be a firmament...let it divide." (Gen.1:6), and of the Tabernacle it is written, "The veil shall divide unto you" (Exod. 26:33). Of the third day we read, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together" (Gen. 1:9), and of the Tabernacle it is written, "And you shall also make a laver of brass, and the base thereof of brass, whereat to wash" (Exod. 30:18). Of the fourth day, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven" (Gen. 1:14), and of the Tabernacle, "And you shall make a candlestick of pure gold" (Exod. 25:31). Of the fifth, "Let fowl fly above the earth" (Gen. 1:20), and of the Tabernacle, "The cherubim shall spread out their wings" (Exod. 25:20). On the sixth day man was created, and in connection with the Tabernacle it says, "And bring near unto you Aaron your brother" (Exod. 28:1). Of the seventh day we have it written, "And the heaven and the

²⁴ McCrindle, 284.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 149–150.

Table 6 (*cont.*)

the north, in order that their light might from the south shine on the north; for Solomon speaks thus with reference to the luminaries: *The sun ariseth and goeth towards the south and moveth round to the north; the wind whirleth about continually and returneth again according to its circuits.* (Eccl. 1:6)²⁶

[...] at the end of the forty days he gave him a new form and a new soul, and revealed to him all that he had done in the making of the world in six days, and showing him in other six days by means of visions the making of the world, performing in his presence the work of each day, namely, on the first day the first heaven, and the earth a most spacious house, and within it water, air, fire[...] Then on the second day he constructed out of the water the firmament, which in the middle of the height of heaven binds all firmly together, dividing the waters above from the waters below, as it is placed in the middle between them.²⁷

2. Christian Topography

He then afterwards directed him to construct the Tabernacle according to the pattern which he had seen in the mountain—being a pattern, so to say, of the whole world. He therefore made the Tabernacle, designing that as far as possible it should be a copy of the figure of the world, thus he gave it a length of thirty cubits and a breadth of ten. Then, by interposing inside a veil in the middle of the Tabernacle, he divided it into two compartments, of which the first was called the Holy Place, and the second behind the veil the Holy of Holies. Now the outer was a pattern of this visible world which,

earth were finished" (Gen. 2:1), and of the Tabernacle, "Thus was finished all the work of the Tabernacle" (Exod. 39:32). In connection with the creation of the world it is written, "And God blessed [it]" (Gen. 2:3), and in the Tabernacle, "And Moses blessed them" (Exod. 39:43). On the seventh day God finished [it] (Gen. 2:2), and in the Tabernacle, "and it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end." On the seventh day "He hallowed it" (Gen. 2:3), and in connection with the Tabernacle "he sanctified it."²⁸

2. Midrash Tadshe

The Sanctuary was constructed on the model of the Creation of the world. The two cherubim of the Ark of the Testimony correspond to two holy names of God, Elohim (Gen. 2:4). The heavens, the earth and the sea are the houses of mankind. Corresponding to the upper heavens are the eleven curtains of the Tent of Meeting (Exod. 26:7), parallel to the firmament were made the ten curtains of the Sanctuary (Exod. 26:1). Corresponding to the earth was made the pure table [of the showbread]. The earthly produce are matched by the two rows of bread, six rows

²⁶ Ibid., 152.

²⁷ Ibid., 96–97.

²⁸ NumR 12:13.

Table 6 (*cont.*)

according to the divine Apostle, extends from the earth to the firmament, and in which at its northern side was a table, on which were twelve loaves, the table thus presenting a symbol of the earth which supplies all manner of fruits, twelve namely, one as it were for each month of the year. The table was all round wreathed with a waved moulding symbolic of the sea which is called the ocean, and all round this again was a border of a palm's breadth emblematic of the earth beyond the ocean, where lies Paradise away in the east, and where also the extremities of the first heaven, which is like a vaulted chamber, are everywhere supported on the extremities of the earth. Then at the south side he placed the candlestick which shines upon the earth from the south to the north. In this candlestick, symbolic of the week of seven days, he set seven lamps, and these lamps are symbolic of all the luminaries. And the second Tabernacle which is behind the veil and called the Holy of Holies, as well as the Ark of Testimony, and the Mercy-seat, and above it the Cherubim of glory shadowing the Mercy-seat, are, according to the Apostle, a type of the things in heaven from the firmament to the upper heaven, just as the space from the veil to the wall of the inner Tabernacle constitutes the inner place.²⁹ [...] The Deity accordingly having founded the earth, which is oblong, upon its own stability, bound together the extremities of the heaven with the extremities of the earth, making the nether extremities of the heaven rest upon the four extremities of the earth,

(Lev. 24:6) corresponding to the summer months [and six rows corresponding to the] winter months. Corresponding to the sea was the basin constructed and parallel to the lights was the menorah made. Solomon set up the pillars Yachin and Boaz (1 Kings 7:21); Yachin parallels the moon, as it says "as the moon was established [*yicon*] forever" (Ps. 89:38). The moon establishes for Israel the [cyclical] nature of the holidays, the years and the months, as it says "He made the moon to mark the holidays" (Ps. 104:19). And it says, "then he made the molten [Heb. *mutzak*] sea" (1 Kings 7:23), the sea being parallel to the world, as it says, "Whereupon the earth melts [Heb. *mutzak*] into a mass [Heb. *batzeket*] ..." (Job 38:38) and it says, "Strong as a molten [Heb. *mutzak*] mirror" (Job 37:18). "He made the molten [Heb. *mutzak*] sea of ten cubits from brim to brim" (1 Kings 7:23) correspond to the ten *sefirot* of *blima* upon which the world stands. "completely round" (*ibid.*) that the firmament is round. "The height thereof was five cubits" (*ibid.*) corresponds to the length of the world, that it would take five hundred years to walk from one end to the other, and also the distance between the earth and the firmament. "And a line of thirty cubits" (*ibid.*) corresponds to the thirty days in each month and the ten commandments, the ten statements [with which the world was created] and the ten *sefirot* of *blima*. That "did compass it round about" (*ibid.*) corresponds to [the fact that] the world survives because of the merit of those who

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 110–111.

Table 6 (*cont.*)

while on high he formed it into a most lofty vault overspanning the length of the earth. Along the breadth again of the earth he built a wall from the nethermost extremities of the heaven upwards to the summit, and having enclosed the place, made a house, as one might call it, of enormous size, like an oblong vaulted vapour-bath. For, saith the Prophet Isaiah (Isa. 40: 22): *He who established heaven as a vault.* With regard, moreover, to the gluing together of the heaven and the earth, we find this written in Job³⁰: *He has inclined heaven to earth, and it has been poured out as the dust of the earth. I have welded it as a square block of stone* (Job 38:38). Do not the expressions about inclining it to the earth and welding it thereto clearly show that the heaven standing as a vault has its extremities bound together with the extremities of the earth? The fact of its inclination to the earth, and its being welded with it, makes it totally inconceivable that it is a sphere.³¹

3. *Christian Topography*

Severianus, namely, the Bishop of Gabala, who can be taken as a witness to confirm all that is written in my work.³²

“For on the third day the fruits were produced, and in order again that it might not be supposed that they were produced by the influence of the sun, it was not until their creation was finished, that He made the sun and the moon and the stars.³⁴

study [the Torah] and who observe the ten commandments, and the ten statements [of the Creation of the world] and its ten *sefirot*. Another interpretation is “And a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about” (ibid.) refers to the green line that encompasses the entire world, as it says “He shall measure it with a line of chaos” (Isa. 34:11). “There were gourds below the brim . . .” (1 Kings 7:24) refers to the three hundred sixty five windows in the east through which [each day] the sun rises and sets in one of them in the west. “The gourds were in two rows” (ibid.) these are the sun and the moon that encircle and control the world.³³

3. *Bere'shit [Genesis] Rabbati*

“Let the earth bring forth grass . . .” (Gen. 1:11). Said R. Pinchas b. Yair, “Why on the third day did God decree that the grass, vegetation and fruit trees should grow from the earth and on the fourth day He created the lights? [He did so] in order to make known His strength and power that He is able to make things grow from the ground without the lights, because now with the lights the Holy One, blessed be He,

³⁰ Job 38:38.

³¹ McCrindle, 30.

³² Ibid., 334.

³³ Epstein 1957, 2:144–145.

Table 6 (*cont.*)

	causes to grow in the world all manner of trees and vegetation. ³⁶
4. <i>Christian Topography</i>	4. <i>Midrash Tadshé</i>
[...] Then he produces from the earth seeds and plants and green herbs and trees, teaching them that he uses each of his creatures to effect his purposes, since they were created by him. Then, when on the third day he had produced plants and seeds, thereafter on the next—that is, on the fourth day, inasmuch as such productions had need of temperature and arrangement, he makes out of the light, which he had before produced, the great luminaries and the stars. ³⁵	It is written “And God said “Let the earth bring forth grass . . .” (Gen. 1:11) Said R. Pinchas b. Yair, “Why on the third day did God decree that the grass, vegetation and fruit trees should grow from the earth and on the fourth day He created the lights? [He did so] in order to make known the power of the Holy One, blessed be He, that He is omnipotent [thus able] and without the lights able to make the earth produce. [Now that there are the light of the sun and the moon because of them the Holy One makes the earth produce all manner of trees and vegetation.] ³⁷
5. <i>Christian Topography</i>	5. <i>BaMidbar [Numbers] Rabbah</i>
After the sacred historian had related the birth of Sêth and of his son Enoch (Gen. 4:25–26) he took up again the account of Adam and says: <i>This is the book of the generation of mankind. In the day that God created Adam, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them. And he blessed them and called his name Adam in the day when he created them. And Adam lived 230 years and begat a son in his likeness and after his image, and called his name Sêth</i> (Gen. 5:1–3). In this place likewise he called his name Sêth, as	And in the end he gave birth to Seth who was the ancestor of all generations, as it says “And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and he called his name Seth” (Gen. 5:3) because from him the world was continued [<i>hu’shtat</i> —from Sheth—Heb. for Seth] because Abel and Cain died. ³⁸

³⁴ Ibid., 339.

³⁵ Ibid., 103.

³⁶ Midrash Bere’shit Rabbati 12:10, p. 53.

³⁷ Epstein 1957 1:144.

³⁸ NumR 14:12.

Table 6 (*cont.*)

being the foundation of the human race, and as bearing his own characteristics and the proper dignities.³⁹ [...] And again he records what was spoken by Balaam: *A star shall arise out of Jacob, there shall be raised up a man out of Israel—and he shall smite the princes of Moab—and destroy all the sons of Sêth* (Num. 24:17). By the sons of Sêth he means the whole world. And this is not applicable to anyone except the Lord Christ, for *Sêth* is by interpretation *a foundation*. Since therefore Cain and his seed perished utterly in the deluge, while Abel the younger died childless, Sêth was posterior to these, from whom both Noah and all the world are descended, and who is thus a foundation as it were of mankind. Moreover for this reason Adam, inspired by the deity, addressed him by the name of *Sêth*, that is, *foundation*; and therefore he said: *And he will subdue all the sons of Seth*, that is, the whole world.³⁹

6. *Christian Topography*

[...] God therefore prepared him to work wonders, and in the name of God to change the elements, and to show to all the Egyptians and to the Israelites, and through them to the whole of mankind, that he was faithful to God in all that he said and did [...] When he had changed accordingly the constitution of the waters into blood and killed the fish, and changed the blood back into water living and productive, and had divided the Red Sea and made it stand as a wall on this side and that side in the presence of the Israelites and the Egyptians, he was fully believed by them when he

6. *Midrash Tadshê*

As [He did] in His Creation of the world, the Holy One, blessed be He, performed miracles for Israel in the wilderness when they came out of Egypt. Wherefore? In His Creation of the world it is written “in the beginning God created the heaven,” and in the wilderness is written “and the Lord’s cloud was upon them by day” (Num. 10:34). In His Creation is written “And the Lord said, ‘Let the waters be gathered,’ and in the wilderness is written “and the Lord drove back the sea” (Exod. 14:21). In His Creation is written “Let the earth sprout vegetation,” and in the

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 182–183.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 95–96.

Table 6 (cont.)

afterwards said *God said let there be a firmament in the middle of the water, and it shall divide in the middle water from water, and it was so* (Gen. 1:6). In like manner again, when he had made darkness for three days successively among the Egyptians, while the Israelites had light, he was again fully believed when he said:—*And there was darkness over the abyss, and God said let there be light, and God divided the light from the darkness* (Gen. 1:2–4); and he assumed that the first and second and third day had passed without the sun, moon and stars running their course, saying:—*God divided the light from the darkness* (Gen. 1:20). Then again he brought frogs out of the river and fleas out of the earth, and therefore he was trusted when saying: “*God said let the waters bring forth living creatures and it was so*”; and again he said: “*Let the earth bring forth this and that, and it was so*” (Gen. 24). Last of all, when he had slain all the first-born he was entitled to belief when saying last of all: “*God made man*[. . .]”⁴¹

7. Christian Topography

Moses, then, the Divine Cosmographer, says: *In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth* (Gen. 1:1). We assume, therefore, that heaven and earth comprise the universe as containing all things within themselves. And that this is so he himself again proclaims: *For in six days God made the heaven and the earth and all that in them is* (Exod. 20:11); and again in like manner he says: *And the heaven and the earth were finished and all the host of them* (Gen. 2:1).⁴²

wilderness is written “Let the earth rain down bread for you” (Exod. 16:4), and is written “and there the staff of Aaron sprouted . . .” (Num. 17:23) . . . In His Creation is written “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures and birds that fly over the earth,” and in the wilderness is written “and in the evening quail appeared and covered the camp” (Exod. 16:13). In His Creation is written “and God created man in His image,” and in the wilderness is written “and Moses was not aware that the skin of his face was radiant” (Exod. 34:29). In His Creation is written “and He rested on the seventh day,” and in the wilderness is written “Eat it today for today is a Sabbath” (Exod. 16:25).⁴³

7. Bere'shit [Genesis] Rabbati

“The heaven and the earth were finished”: Said R. Joshun b. Levi, “the heaven and earth were inclusive. In the heaven were included the sun, the moon, (miracles) [in the stars] and the *mazalot*. In the earth were included the trees, the vegetation and the Garden of Eden.”⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid., 26–27.

⁴³ Epstein 1957 4:147.

⁴⁴ Midrash Bere'shit Rabbati 2:1, p. 45.

Table 7

Ramban, *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1: *Genesis*, tr., R. Charles B. Chavel (1971) (Gen. 1:8, p. 36)

Thus the names “heaven” and “earth” mentioned in the first verse point to the names by which they would be called in the future, as it would be impossible to make them known in any other manner. It is, however, more correct in accordance with the meaning of the verses that we say that the heavens mentioned in the first verse are the upper heavens, which are not part of the lower spheres but are above the *Merkavah* (the divine chariot), just as it is stated, “And over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of a firmament like the color of the transparent ice, stretched forth over their heads above” (Ezek. 1:22). It is on account of these higher heavens that the Holy One, blessed be He, is called He Who rideth upon the heavens (Deut. 33:26). Scripture, however, did not relate anything concerning their creation, just as it did not mention the creation of the angels, the *Chayoth* of the *Merkavah* and all Separate Intelligences which are incorporeal. Concerning the heavens, it mentioned only in a general way that they were created, meaning that they came forth from nothing. On the second day He said that there should be a firmament in the midst of the waters, meaning that from the waters already mentioned there should come forth an extended substance separating them [into two distinct waters]. These spherical bodies He also called “heavens” by the name of the first upper heavens. This is why they are called in this chapter “the firmament of the heaven” [rather than “heavens”]—“And G-d set them in the firmament of the heaven” (Gen. 1:17) in order to explain that they are not the heavens mentioned by that name in the first verse but merely the firmaments called “heavens.”

Table 8

Ramban, *Commentary on the Torah*, *Exodus* 436, Exod. 25:2

Now he who looks carefully at the verses mentioned at the Giving of the Torah and understands what we have written about them will perceive the secret of the Tabernacle and the Sanctuary [built later by King Solomon]. He will also be able to understand it from what Solomon in his wisdom said in his prayer in the Sanctuary: “O Eternal, the G-d of Israel” (1 Kings 8:23) just as is said at Mount Sinai: “And they saw the G-d of Israel” (1 Kings 24:10). Solomon, however, added the Name “the Eternal” because of a matter which we have alluded to above, “for the G-d of Israel sitteth upon the cherubim” (2 Kings 19:15), just as is said, “*And the glory of the G-d of Israel was over them above. This is the living creature that I saw, under the G-d of Israel by the river Chebar and I knew that they were cherubim*” (Ezek. 10:19–20) and David said: “and gold for the pattern of the *Merkavah* even the cherubim that spread out their wings and covered the Ark of the Covenant of the Eternal” (1 Chron. 28:18). Solomon also always mentions that the Sanctuary is to be for the name of the Eternal.

Table 9

Torah Commentary by Rabbi Bahya ben Asher (Exod. 25:18)

The Kabbalah understands the “two cherubim” in the Tabernacle and in the Sanctuary as expressions of the sublime voice and the fire of Mount Sinai as it is said (Deut. 4:36), “From the heavens He let you hear His voice . . . [and] let you see His great fire.” [...] And now understand how pleasant and good it is for the tablets of the testimony to be below them in the Ark, because they heard the Torah which says (Deut. 5:19), “These words the Lord spoke unto all your assembly in the mountain out of the midst of the fire . . .” And that which was repeated again (Exod. 25:21), “and in the Ark shall you put the testimony that I will give you,” which is a warning that there is no Ark without the Tablets of the Covenant [...] Also when it is said (Exod. 23:21), “. . . for My name is in him,” the explanation is that Ezekiel saw the *Chayot Hakodesh* (holy creatures) opposite them, as he says (Ezek. 10:20): “They were the *chaya*—creature that I had seen below the God of Israel. . . so now I knew that they were cherubim.” Since he saw that the cherubim were the *Chayot Hakodesh* he knew that above them are other cherubim whose pattern he knew but he could not see. . And the cherubim he saw in the Sanctuary and in the Temple were in the pattern that he knew, and that formed also the upper Throne of Glory, about which the prophet said (Is. 64:10) “Our Holy Temple, our pride, where our fathers praised you. . .” And you already knew that the voice that Moses heard from between the cherubim . . ., that there the Holy One, blessed be He, contracted His divine Presence, even though it says (Jer. 23:24), “for I fill both the heaven and earth declares the Lord.”

[...] And in Numbers Rabbah (12:7) our rabbis taught that the *kapporet* that is on the Ark corresponds to the seraphim on the Throne, as it says (Is. 6:2) “Above Him stood the seraphim” and they are the advisors of the Divine Presence (*Shekhinah*). “Two cherubim” as against the heaven and the earth where God’s throne dwells.

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Table 10

The Encyclopedia Talmudit (II, Jerusalem 1979, 33 # *AMA TRAKSIN*) 3a defines the expression as a wall the thickness of an *ama* that separates between the *heikhal* and the Holy of Holies in the first Temple. King Solomon built a separation of *GAZIT* stone in place of the *parochet* that served the same function in the Pentateuchal Tabernacle, between the area of the Holy and the area of the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 6:16). “And he built twenty cubits on the hinder part of the house with boards of cedar from the floor unto the joists;

Table 10 (*cont.*)

he even built them for himself within, for a Sanctuary, even for the most holy place.” According to the encyclopedia this wall, that was an *AMA* thick, was called in the language of the rabbis “*Ama Traksin.*” Jastrow 1950, p. 55⁸ explains the Greek term *traksin* as “confusion or lack of clarity.” Namely, it is not clear where was the space that the *AMA* separated—was it at the expense of the *heikhal* or at the expense of the Holy of Holies? Lieberman (*eser milin* [ten words], *Eshkolot*, III [1959], p. 89) explains the concept *ama traksin* by quoting R. Yona Buzriya who lived in the middle of the fourth century and saw the concept *ama traksin* as the “*ama* which was in doubt” (PT *Yoma* 5:1 (26b), M *Kil* 8:4). The doubt or lack of certainty is the result of the description of the measurement of the Temple in M *Mid* 4:7 “From east to west one hundred *ama*, the wall in the ULAM is five, the *ulam* is eleven, the wall of the *heikhal* is six. Inside is forty *ama*, the *ama traksin* and twenty *ama* the Holy of Holies.”

According to this description, the length of the *heikhal* was forty *AMA*, while the length of the Holy of Holies was twenty *AMA*. Between them was supposed to be the *ama traksin*. This *AMA* was apparently independent of both the *heikhal* and the Holy of Holies. It is unclear if this *AMA* was at the expense of the *heikhal*—the area called “Holy”—or at the expense of the Holy of Holies. This is the doubt and the uncertainty. Kirschner (1992, 247) explains that the word *traksin* is of Greek origin. It is understood in Rabbinic tradition in PT *Kil* 8:4 (39b), BT *Yoma* 51b, BT *BB* 3a, not as a space but as a solid partition to be differentiated from the two curtains that separated the Sanctuary from the Holy of Holies in the Second Temple. In these two sections, in contrast to what is said in the BMM in the second Temple there was no *ama traksin*.

Table 11

Kirschner 1992, 232, 233

“How did Bezalel make the ark? He made three boxes, two of gold and one of wood. He placed the one of wood inside one of gold and placed [the other] one of gold inside the one of wood. He overlaid its upper edges with gold, as it is said, “Overlay it with pure gold; [overlay it inside and out]” (Exod. 25:11). Now Scripture does not [need to] say “overlay it’ [the second time] (Exod. 25:11; why then does Scripture say “overlay it” [the second time]? It teaches that he overlaid [the ark’s] upper edges with gold. The cover of gold was placed on top of [the ark], as it is said, “Place the cover on top of the ark” (Exod. 25:21). Four rings of gold were attached to it, two on the north and two on the south. Into these were inserted the poles, which were never moved from there, as it is said, “the poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; [they shall not be removed from it]” (Exod. 25:15). Although Solomon made a pattern of all the vessels, he did not make a pattern of the ark, as it is said, “When all the elders of Israel had come, [the priests lifted the ark and carried up the ark of the Lord]”

Table 11 (*cont.*)

 Kirschner 1992, 232, 233

(1 Kings 8:3–4). You must deduce: the ark was placed inside the house and divided the house ten cubits by ten cubits. Two cherubim of gold stood with their feet on the ground. From the wall to [each] cherub [the distance] was five cubits; from [each] cherub to the ark [the distance] was five cubits. How do you derive [this from Scripture]? When they brought in the ark, the poles of the Holy of Holies were not closed, as it is said, “The poles projected [so that the ends of the poles were visible in the Sanctuary in front of the shrine, but they could not be seen outside]” (1 Kings 8:8; 2 Chron. 5:9). Now it is not possible [for Scripture] to say, “But the ends of the poles could not be seen” (1 Kings 8:8; 2 Chron. 5:9), since it is also said, [The ends of the poles] were visible” (1 Kings 8:8; 2 Chron. 5:9; nor is it possible [for Scripture] to say, “[The ends of the poles] were visible,” since it is also said, “But [the ends of the poles] could not be seen.” How can this be [resolved]? [The poles] protruded through the veil and were visible like the two breasts of a woman. How is it derived [from Scripture] that [the poles extended inside? As it is said, “[The poles] could not be seen outside.” (1 Kings 8:8; 2 Chron. 5:9) Thus you learn that they extended inside. And how is it derived [from Scripture] that the poles extended outside? As it is said, “[The poles] projected [so that] the ends of the poles [were visible] in the Sanctuary (1 Kings 8:8; 2 Chron. 5:9). Thus you learn that they extended inside. And how is it derived [from Scriptures] that [the poles] extended outside? As it is said, “[The poles] projected [so that] the end of the poles [were visible] in the Sanctuary” 1 Kings 8:8; 2 Chron. 5:9).

Table 12

Miluim and Yom Kippurim

Israel Knohl and Shlomo Naeh present the connection between the *miluim* and the annual Day of Atonement ritual. According to them, the importance of Leviticus chapter 16 is concerned with the entrance of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies to perform the annual forgiveness ritual. The chapter connects the entry of the High Priest into the Holy with the death of Nadav and Avihu on the day of the consecration of the Sanctuary, which is the eighth day of the *miluim*. According to the biblical text it appears that the intention is to warn the High Priest to be scrupulous in all the necessary details so that he not die, as his two sons had died. But according to R. Yishmael in the Braita, the mention of the death of Aaron’s sons includes also the details of the *miluim* section generally, regarding its Halakhic details. The first entrance of Aaron into the Holy, on the day of the consecration of the Sanctuary required seven days of the *miluim*: “And the Lord spoke unto Moses, after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the Lord and died . . . Speak unto Aaron, thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil . . . Herewith shall Aaron come into the holy place . . .” (Lev. 16:1,3).

Table 12 (*cont.*)

Miluim and Yom Kippurim

Which means “Herewith”—in this order should he come into the Holy, also the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. Not only the seven days alone did R. Yishmael learn from the *miluim*, but also the priest who serves all seven days, while he prepares himself for the seven days, similar to the preparation of the priests during the days of *miluim*. In the chapter about the *miluim* in Exod. 29:29,30 the Bible says “And the holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him to be anointed in them, and to be consecrated in them. Seven days shall the son that is priest in his stead put them on, even he who cometh into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place.” From this instruction it is clear that the garments of Aaron themselves will stand for the generations in order to consecrate the priests who come after him. Every priest who will stand in Aaron’s stead will need to undergo the seven days of *miluim*—to minister in his place and for that reason he will wear these garments. Wearing these specific garments during the seven days is the training for his task in addition to his being anointed with oil. “The High Priest from his brothers is described as he who has been anointed with the consecrating oil and wears the garments.” Thus, the essential element in the ritual of the transfer of the priesthood from Aaron to his son Elazar is Aaron’s removal of the sacred garments and the putting on the garments by Elazar his son (Num. 20:25–28). The Midrash on Lev. 8:34 explains the verse as instruction to observe the days of *miluim* in the future—as it was done on the day that God commanded to do for the generations. In addition, for the words themselves: “to bring forgiveness for you,” that the ritual of the *miluim* in the future is the act of forgiveness and it is connected to the Day of Atonement. In the Midrash the special nature of the sacred day is described by the words “the *seir* [goat] of the Day of Atonement,” which is the essence of forgiveness. The Tannaitic Midrash to the chapter of the *miluim* in the Bible, called “*mechilta of miluim*,” uses the verse in Lev. 8:34 and is based on M *Yoma* (1:1) on the chapter of the High Priest for the seven days. From here the *miluim* teaches also about the separation of the High Priest for seven days before he enters the Holy and also the essence and the end of this chapter. The seven days of *miluim* that preceded the consecration of the priest for the service and its requirements. From all these sources, it appears that the Rabbinic literature extends the view that sees the ritual of the Day of Atonement and the seven days before it as an integral part of the *miluim* and the preparation of the High Priest.

Table 13

Epistle of Barnabas (15:3–9), tr. by J. B. Lightfoot.

Of the Sabbath He speaketh in the beginning of the creation; *And God made the works of His hands in six days, and He ended on the seventh day, and rested on it, and He hallowed it.* Give heed, children, what this meaneth; *He ended in six days.* He meaneth this, that in six thousand years the Lord shall bring all things to an end; for the day with Him signifyeth a thousand years; and this He himself beareth me witness, saying; *Behold, the day of the Lord shall be as a thousand years.*

Therefore, children, in six days, that is in six thousand years, everything shall come to an end. *And He rested on the seventh day.* This He meaneth; when His Son shall come, and shall abolish the time of the Lawless One, and shall judge the ungodly, and shall change the sun and the moon and the stars, then shall he truly rest on the seventh day. Yea and furthermore He saith; *Thou shalt hallow it with pure hands and with a pure heart.* If therefore a man is able now to hallow the day which God hallowed, though he be pure in heart, we have gone utterly astray. But if after all then and not till then shall we truly rest and hallow it, when we shall ourselves be able to do so after being justified and receiving the promise, when iniquity is no more and all things have been made new by the Lord, we shall be able to hallow it then, because we ourselves shall have been hallowed first. Finally He saith to them; *Your new moons and your Sabbaths I cannot away with.* Ye see what is His meaning; it is not your present Sabbaths that are acceptable [unto Me], but the Sabbath which I have made, in the which, when I have set all things at rest, I will make the beginning of the eighth day which is the beginning of another world. Wherefore also we keep the eighth day for rejoicing, in the which also Jesus rose from the dead, and having been manifested ascended into the heavens.

GLOSSARY

Aedicule – Small shrine where columns support a pediment.

Aggadah – The generic name for the entire body of Rabbinic tradition that falls outside the parameters of the Halakhah, the legal teachings of the Rabbis. The term *aggadah* (pl. *aggadot*) embraces an interpretation of the nonlegal or narrative material, including parables, maxims, and anecdotes, in the Talmud and other Rabbinic literature that serves to illustrate the meaning of the law, custom, or biblical passage being discussed.

Amidah (Heb. standing) – One of the two most important Jewish prayers, dating from the period of the Mishnah (second century CE). Recited three times a day, it originally included eighteen benedictions but another was added later and there are now nineteen; on the Sabbath and most holidays the prayer includes only seven benedictions.

Amora (pl. *Amoraim*) – Jewish scholars in Palestine and especially Babylonia in the third to sixth centuries, who were responsible for the Talmud after the compilation of the Mishnah.

Amphora – A large oval-shaped vase with a neck and two handles.

Ampulla – A container for holy relics (souvenirs), generally a small metal flask filled with oil or water from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Annus mundi (Lat. the year of the world) – Christian chronologers tried to estimate the exact year that the world was created in an attempt to calculate when the Messiah would come.

Aravah (Heb. willow) – One of *arba'at minim* (see below).

Arba'at Minim – The four species – *aravah*, *etrog*, *hadas*, and *lulav* – used on Sukkot.

Avodah (Heb. work) – The Rabbinic tradition adopted this term to refer to the sacred work of the priests in the Temple (the sacrificial rites) and later to refer to prayer as “the service of God.”

Baraita (pl. *baraitot*; Aram. external) – Designates a principle in the Oral Law authored by the Tanna'im (early Mishnaic sages) but left “outside” of the six orders of the Mishnah.

Catena (Lat. chain) – A compilation of quotations from theologians on particular verses of the Bible, which appear in the margins of the Octateuchs and are cross-referenced to the corresponding biblical passages.

Cathar Heresy – The dualist heresy that was revived in Byzantium by Bogomil, a priest (the name is most probably a pseudonym), who organized a religious rebellion in Bulgaria in the tenth century. His teachings were inspired by

apocryphal tales derived from Gnosticism and Judaic apocalyptic texts, whose traditions had lingered in Byzantium, and were marked by a profound hostility toward the beliefs and practices of the Byzantine priesthood, liturgy, churches, and the Church Fathers.

Conch – A shell pattern, often decorating the top of a niche.

Ciborium – A canopy with a domed or pyramidal roof resting on four or six columns.

Creatio ex nihilo (Lat. creation out of nothing) – A philosophic position in the great debate in the Middle Ages in opposition to the Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity of the universe.

Ekphrasis (Gr. description) – A formal description, often delivered orally, of works of art.

Etrog – A citrus fruit, the “fruit of a goodly tree” (Lev. 13:40), one of *arba’at minim*. (see above).

Fresco – A wall painting created by the application of watercolors to wet plaster.

Genizah (Heb. depository) – A storage place for sacred texts that are no longer fit for use.

Gevuroth – The second benediction of the *amidah*, which expresses God’s power in phrases such as “heals the sick,” “sustains the living with kindness,” “frees the captives,” “supports the fallen,” and “revives the dead.”

Haggadah (Heb. telling or recitation) – The text read during the Seder, the traditional name for the festive ritual banquet held on the first night of Passover (and in the Diaspora, on the second night as well).

Halakhah (*halakhic*) – The legalist sections of Rabbinic literature.

Hayot Ha’qodesh – The holy creatures in Ezekiel’s vision, associated with the cherubim from the Temple (Ezek. 10).

Heikhal (*pl. heikhalot*) – The biblical name for the Temple in Jerusalem, The plural form *heikhalot* refers to the seven heavenly sanctuaries in the priestly mystical writings. Heikhalot literature is the mystical writings that deal with the heavenly and angelic world.

Kapporet – The biblical word for the cover of the Ark of the Covenant on which the cherubim stood and over which they spread their wings.

Karaites (Readers of the Hebrew Scripture) – Members of a Jewish sect, originating in the eighth century, that rejected the Oral Law, recognizing only the Bible as the supreme authority in law and theology.

Iconoclastic Controversy – Movement in the Eastern Empire that denied the holiness of religious images and prohibited their use in Byzantine in the eighth and ninth centuries.

Iconoclast (Gr. image-destroyer) – A supporter of Iconoclasm.

Iconophile (Gr. image-lover) – An opponent of Iconoclasm, who venerated icons and defended their devotional use.

Iconography – The study of images, an academic method concerned with the traditions by which subjects are represented in art, as opposed to the history of form or style.

Lulav (Heb. sprout) – A shoot of a young palm branch, one of the *arba'at minim* (see above).

Ma'ariv – The daily evening prayer service.

Ma'aseh Bere'shit – The Work of Creation, relating to the divine mysteries of Creation and the laws of nature.

Ma'aseh Merkavah – The Work of the Chariot, relating to the mystical speculations concerning the divine Chariot (Ezek. 1, 10) and to the esoteric tradition pertaining to the mysteries of the divine world.

Mehayyeh Ha'metim (Heb. He who revives the dead) – Belief in the resurrection of the dead, an explicit dogma of classic Judaism, which appears five times in the *Gevurot* prayer.

Menorah – The seven-branched oil lamp used in the Tabernacle and the Temple.

Merkavah – The divine Chariot appearing in Ezekiel's vision; the name given to the chariot of the cherubim in the Temple as described in I Chronicles 28:18: "and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubim," a concept associated with the mystical tradition of the priesthood concerning heavenly patterns of holy time and holy place.

Midrash (pl. *midrashim*) – A homiletic method of biblical exegesis (from the root *d-r-sh* – to inquire) that seeks a broader meaning of the text with the aid of various exegetical tools, going beyond the basic literal explanation (*pshat*) of the text.

Minhah – The daily afternoon prayer service.

Mishnah (Heb. learning, repetition) – The collection of statements, discussions, and biblical interpretations of the Tanna'im (see below). It consists of six sections called "orders" compiled at the beginning of the third century by R. Judah called "the Prince."

Mishne Torah – A Hebrew compendium of Jewish law by Moses b. Maimon (Maimonides; 1135–1204).

Moreh Nevukhim – *Guide for the Perplexed*, a philosophical and theological treatise by Moses b. Maimon (Maimonides; 1135–1204), completed in 1190.

Musaf (Heb. addition) – An additional prayer recited during Sabbath and holiday services, generally immediately after the morning prayer.

Octateuchs (Gr. eight) – A collection of eight biblical books of the Septuagint, the five books of Moses, the Pentateuch, generally known to both Hellenized Jews

and Greek-speaking Christians as the Law (Torah); Joshua and Judges, the two books that continue the narrative of Deuteronomy; and the Book of Ruth, which is set in the period of the Judges.

Ofan (Heb. wheel; the wheels who “raise themselves toward the seraphim” together with the holy creatures) – A type of *piyyut* recited before the *Sh'ma* (Hear, O Israel; the Lord is our God, the Lord is one).

Pardes (Heb. orchard) – A word associated with Paradise, as the Septuagint translated “Garden of Eden” from Hebrew into Greek as *paradesios*, which is used to designate a heavenly mystical enclave.

Parousia (Gr. The Second Coming of Christ after the Last Judgment) – For Christians, “the Day” that Jesus will arrive and declare His personal Presence and Satan will be destroyed.

Piyyut (pl. *piyyutim*) – A liturgical hymn; a poetic embellishment recited by the prayer leader and the congregation in addition to the statutory prayer service.

Pyxis (Gr. box) – The generic term for a small box and the conventional designation for a cylindrical box made of ivory.

Qedushah – The trisagion *kadosh, kadosh, kadosh* (holy, holy, holy) inspired by Isaiah 6:3 and thus associated with angel worship. It is a central part of the prayer service derived from Temple ritual.

Sanhedrin – The assembly of seventy-one ordained scholars who made up both the supreme court and the legislature.

Shaharit – The daily morning prayer service.

Seder Avodah – From Rabbinic literature the Hebrew word *avodah* used for the Temple sacrificial services is also used for the post-Temple liturgy (especially in the *musaf* service on Yom Kippur).

Shekhinah – Refers to the divine Presence on Earth, generally in a particular place, and often used to refer to God so as not to say His name.

Shemoneh Esrei (Heb. eighteen) – The eighteen benedictions recited three times daily, except on the Sabbath and festivals; see *amidah*).

Sh'ma (Heb. “Hear, O Israel”, Deut. 6:4) – Judaism’s profession of faith, proclaiming the absolute unity of God. One of the two most important prayers in the Jewish liturgy, it is recited daily in the morning and evening service every day.

Shofar – An ancient ritual sounding instrument made of hollowed-out ram’s horn.

Talmud – The main corpus of Jewish law, it is a compendium on the Mishnah by generations of scholars and jurists in many academies over a period of several centuries and includes both the Halakhah and *aggadot*. Two parallel Talmudic traditions developed – one in the Land of Israel (the Jerusalem Talmud) and the other in Babylonia (the Babylonian Talmud). Over the centuries the Babylonian Talmud became the dominant one.

Tanna'im (tannaitic) – Jewish scholars active in the Land of Israel during the first and second centuries CE, whose teachings are found primarily in the Mishnah.

Targum – Aramaic translation of the Bible.

Tefillin – Phylacteries, that is, small cases containing passages from Scripture that male Jews wear on the forehead and arm when they recite the morning prayers, in accordance with Deuteronomy 6:8.

Tosephta (Aram. addition, supplement) –The collection of teachings and traditions of the Tanna'im, closely related to the Mishnah. Like the Mishnah it is divided into six orders or divisions.

Yom Kippur – Day of Atonement.

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INDEX

- Aaron 28, 76, 86, 128–135, 168–174,
176–177, 185–186, 188, 190–195, 203, 210,
214, 218–219, 227, 232–233
- Abarvanel, Don Isaac 92, 105
- Abba Saul 219n9
- R. Abbahu 199
- R. Abun 207
- R. Acha 82n35
- Aelia Capitolina (Roman city founded on
ruins of Jerusalem) 153, 242
- R. Aha 156n44
- R. Aha b. Jacob 156
- R. Akiva 143–144, 152–153, 154, 156n43
- Alan of Lille 95m06
- aleinu l'shabeach* ("It Is Our Duty to
Praise") prayer 150–151
- Alexandria ix, 39, 43, 50, 65n79, 87n64,
89, 91, 150, 196, 230, 239–240, 246,
282–283, 290, 293, 296, 298
- Alkomasi, Daniel 201
- allegorical interpretation 5, 20, 21, 33, 38,
49–50, 65, 67–68, 70–71, 89, 179, 183n75,
224, 229, 233, 250–251, 255
controversy regarding 68
of Philo and Josephus 39–45, 196, 203,
240
in Spain in mid-13th century 104
- AM (*annus mundi*) 245–247, 248
- ama traksin* 159, 253, 269–270
- Codex Amiatinus 211–213, 214, 215, 242,
254, *fig. 79*
- amidah* 55, 59, 60n61, 156–158, 164,
275–276, 278
- Amit, David 154n37, 184, 185n83, 281, 293
- Amoraim 26, 85n53, 275
- ampullae 244
- Anan b. David 201
- Ananim movement 201
- animal sacrifice 14, 134–135, 180, 210, 214,
221n17, 223
- annus mundi* (AM) 245–247, 248
- Antioch 5–6, 15, 18, 22, 43, 47, 49, 55–57,
61, 79, 86n55, 89, 123, 239–240, 283, 291
- anti-rationalist and rationalist philosophy
104–105
- The Antiquities of the Jews* (Josephus)
20n43, 41, 62, 88, 140n63, 148n6, 207n12,
228n46, 288
- apocalypse. *See* eschatology
- Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. *See* also
specific works
reciprocal influence between Jewish
and Christian art and literature 4
relationship to other early literature
and oral tradition 87, 88, 95
Sarajevo Haggadah and 92n88, 95
Tabernacle, significance attached to 1
- Apostolic Constitutions* 54–61, 84, 126–127,
187n4, 222, 250, 258–260, 284, 288–289,
297
- aqedah* (sacrifice of Isaac) 73, 75, 76, 77,
163–165, 167, 223n26, *fig. 3, fig. 50*
- Arabs. *See* Islam
- Arch of Titus, menorah on 139, *fig. 64*
- Aristotle 65n79
- Ark of the Covenant 121–146, 252. *See*
also cherubim
arched top of 121–124
Bar Kochba coins 3, 139–142, 145, 235,
252–253, 255, *fig. 2, fig. 63*
Basilevsky pyxis and 131–134, *figs.*
96–100
biblical description of 141–142,
270–271, *fig. 66*
Christian depictions of 121–137
Christian Topography, Ark/Tabernacle/
Creation in 3, 8, 49, 54, 57, 61,
121–129, 133–137, 142, 144–146, 171, 245,
fig. 27
ciborium images and 130, 131, 135, 136,
185–186, *figs. 60–61*
disappearance, in 7th century BCE 176
doors 136, *fig. 62*
in Dura-Europos baptistry 16
in Dura-Europos synagogue 14, 24–25,
29–31, *fig. 3, fig. 15*
human figures accompanying 127–135,
171
Jewish depictions of 137–146
kapporet (Ark cover) 42, 112, 129, 130,
141, 178, 200, 213, 215, 217, 224–225,
252, 269
in mystical literature, as God's
presence 142–146
in Octateuchs 124, 128–129, 130–131,
135, 136, 145, 171, 185, *figs. 57–62*

- Philo on 42
 in Sarajevo Haggadah 102, 103, 111,
 112–113, 120
 scepters 128, 129–130
 in Sephardi Bibles 223–225
 in synagogue mosaics 73, 74, 76, 77,
 78, 87n59
 two ways of imaging 187–193
ata konanta olam b'rov chesed (“You
 Created a World Full of Mercy”) 176
ata konanta olam m'rosh (“You First
 Established the World”) 173–174
 Avi-Yonah, Michael 151
 Avigad, Nahman 242
avinu malkenu (“Our Father Our King,”
 Yom Kippur hymn) 26
avodah 11, 158, 172, 220–221, 223
az b'ain kol (“Then When There Was
 Nothing”) 171, 174, 176–177
- R. Bahye b. Asher 101–102, 251
 early Jewish sources influencing 120,
 250–251
 Nachmanides influencing 101
 Spanish mid-13th-century approach to
 Creation and 103, 107–109
 on *tavnit* or pattern of Creation and
 Tabernacle stories 103, 111–112,
 113n54, 114n57, 115–116, 118
 text of Torah Commentary 269
 baptism
 Dura-Europos baptistry 13–18, 14,
 20–21, 249, *figs. 9–10*
 Old Testament symbols of 20
 ritual immersion and 15–16, 18
- Bar Kochba coins
 Ark/Tabernacle on 3, 139–142, 145, 235,
 252–253, 255, *fig. 2, fig. 63*
 drilled or pierced 160–161, *fig. 67*
 Temple ideology and 148–149, 152–155,
 158–161, 160, *fig. 67*
- Bar Kochba letters 153–154
 Bar Kochba Revolt (Second Jewish Revolt,
 132–135) 152–154
 Bar Ilan, Meir 148
 Barag, Dan 140n63
Baraita De-Melekhet Ha-Mishkan 159, 160
 Barnabas, Epistle of 18n39, 246, 273
 2 Baruch (*Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*)
 134, 191
 Basilewsky pyxis 131–134, *figs. 96–100*
 Beckwith, Roger 55
 Beit Alpha synagogue mosaics 76–77, 84,
 181, 193, *figs. 47–50*
- Beit Shean Samaritan synagogue 181,
fig. 71
 Ben Shammai, Haggai 196n35
 Ben Sira 158n52, 171–174, 177
 Bernabo, Massimo 6, 128
 Bezalel (biblical builder of Tabernacle)
 35–36, 103, 122, 214, 215, 238, 239,
 270–271
 Bible and Torah 10, 33–45, 250. *See also*
 allegorical interpretation; New
 Testament
Apostolic Constitutions and 54–55,
 56–57
 Arabic, translation into 198n43
 Christian interpretation of Old
 Testament 10, 71, 135, 208
Christian Topography for the Whole
Universe and 52–54
 comparison of Creation, Mount Sinai,
 and Tabernacle passages 257–258
 fundamental link between Tabernacle
 and Creation in 33–38
 as fundamental source of Christian and
 Jewish writers and illustrators 10
 Josephus, commentaries of 10, 41–45
Mikdashiyah (God's Temple) as Karaite
 term for 195–196
 models and biblical description of
 Ark and Tabernacle 141–142, 212,
 270–271, *fig. 66, fig. 80*
 parallels between earthly and heavenly
 Temples in 36–37
 Philo of Alexandria, commentaries
 of 10, 39–41, 43–45
 Septuagint 4, 6, 7, 56, 61–62, 90, 91,
 123, 128–129
 Song of Songs as part of canon of 144
 Spanish mid-13th-century interpretation
 of 104–105
Biblical Antiquities (Pseudo-Philo)
 129–130, 134, 179, 189–191
 Bibliotheque Nationale. *See* Paris,
 Bibliotheque Nationale
 bird's-eye views of Ark/Tabernacle/
 Cosmos 71, 187–194, 204, 207, 209, 214,
 241, 254. *See also* perspective imaging of
 Tabernacle
birkat shir prayer 85
 Blidstein, Gerald 149, 221n17
 blueprint. *See tavnit*
 Boaz and Yachin, pillars of 195, 206, 263
 Bobbio, Abbey of, Milan 244
 Bogomils 95
bohu and *tohu* 106–108

- Book of Enoch 10, 28, 95, 173, 265
 Book of Josippon 94
 Book of Jubilees 87, 92, 93, 95, 200, 251
Book of Precepts 202
Book of the Bee 192
Book of the Hexaemeron (Severianus of Gabala) 123
Book of Zohar 107n34, 108n38
 Bousset, Wilhelm 55
 Branham, Joan R. 140n63
 British Library. *See* London, British Library
 Broderick, Herbert 11, 100, 102, 103, 115, 120
 Brubaker, Leslie 3n10, 6, 7–8, 213, 215, 249, 257, 283
 Buber, Martin 35
 Buber, Shlomo 222
 Burtill, R. Moses 107n34
 Byzantine Christian works. *See* Christian works
- Caesarea synagogue, *mishmarot* inscription in 151
 Cairo Genizah 59, 84n44, 158n52, 171, 194, 201, 202
 Capernaum synagogue, Galilee, Israel 166, *fig.* 68
 Cappelletti Theotokos mosaic floor, Mount Nebo, Jordan 243–244, *fig.* 104
Cardo maximus 241–242
 carpet pages 193, 195, 198n45, 218
 Carruthers, Mary 10–11, 126–127, 207, 212–213, 225
 Cassiodorus 65n79, 210–211
 Cassius Dio 153
 Cassuto, Umberto 34, 36
 catenae 6, 10n32, 62, 129, 230–231
 Cathars 95
 Champion, Michael 9–10
 chariot literature. *See* Merkavah (Ezekiel's chariot) literature
 Charlesworth, James H. 15n22, 87n64
 Chavel, Charles 11n44, 11n47, 224n31, 268, 292, 294
 Chazon, Esther 60–61
 cherubim (on cover of Ark)
 in *Christian Topography* 3, 8, 124–127, 129
 in First Leningrad Bible 194, 195
 Garden of Eden and 43, 200
 merkavah and 5, 37n16, 111–112, 120, 127, 142–145, 200, 224–225, 252
 in mystical literature, as God's presence 142–146
 in Octateuchs 124, 127, *figs.* 57–59
 Philo on 42–43
 Sarajevo Haggadah and 103, 111–113, 120
 in Sephardi Bibles 223–225
 seraphim in Isaiah and 60, 126–127
 Childs, Brevard 38
 Chloudov Psalter 20n44
 Christian supersession of Jewish ideas 235–248, 255–256. *See also* Jewish-Christian relationships
 Church as successor to Tabernacle/Temple 241–245, *figs.* 103–104
 eschatology, Creation, and the Tabernacle 245–248
 exposure rather than concealment of Divine Presence 235–236, 255–256, *fig.* 4
 kingdom of heaven, Tabernacle, and Cosmos 235–241
 Old Testament, Christian interpretation of 10, 71, 135, 208
Christian Topography for the Whole Universe ix, x, 1–3, 5–11, 20n44, 45, 47–54, 64–67, 68n93, 69–71, 94–97, 166, 185, 187–188, 191–192, 199, 204–205, 208–209, 215, 222, 227, 230–231, 233, 235, 239–240, 242–243, 246–256, 261–262, 264–267, 283, 291, 294, 298
Apostolic Constitutions and 54–55, 56–57, 58, 61, 126–127, 250, 258–260
 “Ark of Propitiation” 57, 58, 124–125, 127, 232, 243, 245, *fig.* 27
 Ark/Tabernacle/Creation in 3, 8, 49, 54, 57, 61, 121–129, 133–137, 142, 144–146, 171, 245, 247, *fig.* 27
 Bar Kochba coin and 142
 Bible and 52–54
 on boards surrounding Tabernacle 187
 cartographic illustrations 2, 11, 52, 66, 69, 71, 187, 204–205, 209, 230, 253, *fig.* 26
 cherubim in 3, 8, 124–127, 129
 Constantine of Antioch as author and illustrator of 5–6, 10, 47–50
 Cosmas Indicopleustes as author of 2–3, 9–10, 11, 47, 124, 239, 292, 298
 dating of 246n47
 drawings and illustrations in 2–3, 48, 50–54
 encampment in desert, as reflection of divine pattern 231–234, *figs.* 92–93
 eschatology, Creation, and the Tabernacle 245–248

- firmament separating upper and lower worlds 51–52, 57, 65–66, *fig. 20*, *figs. 23–24*
- First Leningrad Bible and 199, 204
- flat earth theory in 1–2, 66
- foundation stone of Creation in 222
- Hexaemeron* literature and 66–69, 70, 123
- imaging of Tabernacle in 71, 134, 187–189, 187n1, 192, 231, 242–243, 253–254, *figs. 39–40*
- Jesus as Pantokrator in 51, *fig. 22*
- Jewish influences on illustrator 188–193, 204
- “long side” of universe 49, 50–51, 53, 66, 197, *fig. 19*, *figs. 21–22*
- menorah and showbread table 3, 227–230, 231, *figs. 88–89*
- Midrash BaMidbar Rabba* and 261–262, 265–267
- Midrash Bere’shit Rabbati* and 264–265, 267
- Midrash Tadshe* and 262–264, 265
- mosaic floors and 69–70, 78
- R. Moshe HaDarshan and 94–96, 120
- ocean and luminaries joined with earth 51–52, 57, *fig. 25*
- Octateuchs and 64–67, 124
- Paradise and Tabernacle entrance, parallel between 187–188
- perspective, conceptual use of 208–210, 215, *fig. 75*
- rapture of Paul in 144
- reception of Torah combined with Moses and burning bush 133, 199, *figs. 101–102*
- rectangular universe in 3, 52, 71, 231, *fig. 1*, *fig. 26*
- Samaritan tradition and 185
- Sarajevo Haggadah and 11
- schema of Creation in 50–54
- scholarly literature review 5–10
- Second Parousia 9, 58–59, 234, 235–237, 240–241, 243, 245, 247–248, 255–256, *fig. 4*
- “short side” of universe 49, 53, 58, 187, 242, *fig. 1*
- stripe motif influencing 20n44
- surviving manuscripts of 48
- synagogue, as minor temple, in 166–167
- tavnit* shown to Moses as blueprint for Creation and Tabernacle in 3–4, 54
- tentlike Tabernacle viewed from above 208, 232, 242, *fig. 75*
- unique cosmology of 47–50, 66–67, 70–71
- Christian works 47–72. See also *Christian Topography for the Whole Universe*; Octateuchs; *Apostolic Constitutions* 54–61, 84, 126–127, 187n4, 250, 258–260
- Ark of the Covenant in 121–137. See also Ark of the Covenant
- dome in church architecture, significance of 237–238, 240
- Dura-Europos baptistry 13–18, 14, 20–21, 249, *figs. 9–10*
- early sources common to Jews and Christians 87, 120, 251
- Hexaemeron* literature 66–69, 70, 123, 240
- iconoclastic controversy and 7–8, 213, 215, 243
- interpretation of Old and New Testaments in 10, 71, 135, 208
- mosaic floor cosmologies 69–70
- Pamplona Bibles 113–114
- Pugio Fidei* (*The Dagger of Faith*, Martini) 92, 96
- reliquary art/pilgrim artifacts 244–245
- Church Fathers ix, 13, 39, 44, 49, 62n67, 87n63, 87n64, 89, 95n105, 276
- ciborium images 130, 131, 135, 136, 185–186, *figs. 60–61*
- Clement of Alexandria 39, 50
- Codex Amiatinus 211–213, 214, 215, 242, 254, *fig. 79*
- Codex Grandior 210–211
- Cohen-Mushlin, Aliza 225
- Cohen, Naomi 39, 88n66
- cone of the earth 51, 57, 66, 68n93, 69
- Constantine I (Roman emperor) 240–241
- Constantine of Antioch, as author of *Christian Topography* 5–6, 10, 47–50. See also *Christian Topography for the Whole Universe*
- Cosmas Indicopleustes (Kosmas Indikopleustes), as author of *Christian Topography* 2–3, 9–10, 47. See also *Christian Topography for the Whole Universe*
- cosmic order 79, 81–82, 251
- cosmic significance 1–2, 16, 84, 93, 125, 145, 230n53, 231, 265
- cosmological approach 5, 9, 64n76
- cosmological images in Jewish and Byzantine art. See *tavnit* shown to Moses as blueprint for Creation and Tabernacle

- cosmological significance 11, 16, 57, 123, 229
- cosmological theory 1, 49, 52, 65, 70, 229, 245–246
- cows returning Ark to Jewish camp, song sung by 29–31
- The Craft of Thought* (Carruthers, 2009) 10–11
- creatio ex nihilo* versus eternal existence of universe 105–108
- Creation. *See tavnit* shown to Moses as blueprint for Creation and Tabernacle
- Cyril of Alexandria 230–231
- Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumran community
- Bar Kochba letters and 154
 - merkavah*, concept of 24n72
 - parallels with other early literature 88
 - praise of Creation in 82
 - reciprocal influence between Jewish and Christian art and literature 5, 60–61
 - Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness 149
 - on Temple 147, 149
 - Temple Scroll 147
- desert encampment, as reflection of divine pattern 231–234, *figs.* 92–95
- Dilke, Oswald A. W. 65n79
- Diodorus of Tarsus 123, 239n18
- Divine Presence, 21, 28, 34, 111, 120, 129, 135, 139, 141, 158, 165, 178, 183, 186, 194, 200, 202, 212, 226–227, 237, 244–245, 252, 269, 278
- dome (domelike shape) 3, 16–17, 58, 63, 65, 71, 73, 80, 86, 243–245, 247–248, 276, 291, 296
- dome in Christian church architecture, significance of 237–238, 240
- R. Dosa 82n35
- Dothan, Moshe 74
- drilled or pierced coins 160–161, *fig.* 67
- Dumetios, Church of, Nikopolis 69, 70
- Dura-Europos baptistry 13–18, 20–21, 249, *figs.* 9–10
- Dura-Europos synagogue 13–32, 249
- The Ark of the Covenant in Beit Dagon* 24, 29–31, 175, *fig.* 15
 - Christian baptistry in Dura-Europos and 13–18, 20–21, *figs.* 9–10
 - Christian images of Tabernacle influenced by 9
 - Christian polemic, murals countering 14–25, 18–24
- The Closed Temple* 24–28, 168, 170, *fig.* 7
 - The Consecration of the Tabernacle* 24, 168–177, 195, *fig.* 8
 - The Crossing of the Red Sea* 19, *fig.* 12
 - earthly and heavenly Tabernacle/Temple in 24–32
 - Exodus from Egypt* 19, 198, *fig.* 11
 - First Leningrad Bible and 195, 198, *fig.* 8, *fig.* 11
 - liturgical parchment fragment found in 23
 - minor temple, synagogue as 24–25, 163–165, 168–177, *figs.* 7–8
 - mishnaic and midrashic literature influencing 19–24
 - Moses at Burning Bush and receiving Torah 199
 - niche for Holy Ark 3, 16, *fig.* 3
 - Octateuch illustrations and 6–7, 9
 - The Well of Be'er* 20–22, 24, 178–180, *fig.* 13
- Earth and Ocean* (Maguire, 1987) 68–69, 70
- earthly 6m15, 24, 27–28, 33n1, 37, 49, 51, 57, 65–66, 69, 80, 107, 112–113, 121, 131, 135, 142, 158, 170, 186, 209–210, 212–214, 230n53, 232, 235–237, 239–240, 244–245, 247–248, 252, 254–256, 262, 284, 289
- Eden. *See* Garden of Eden/Paradise
- Egeria (pilgrim) 133
- ekphrastic poetry 22–23, 86n55, 276
- El Khirbe Samaritan synagogue 182, 184, *fig.* 69
- R. Elazar b. Arach 83
- R. Eliezer 82n35, 156n43, 222
- R. Eliezer b. Horkhanus 43n54
- Elior, Rachel 28n95, 142, 200, 220
- encampment in desert, as reflection of divine pattern 231–234, *figs.* 92–95
- end of days. *See* eschatology
- Enoch, Book of 95
- Enoch, Hebrew Apocalypse of* (3 Enoch) 28–29
- ephod* 128
- Ephorus (historian) 66
- Ephrem the Syrian 21n50, 22, 31, 68, 192, 239n18, 249, 291
- Epiphanius of Salamis 68
- Epistle of Barnabas 18n39, 246, 273
- Epistle to the Hebrews 10, 54, 89, 122, 131, 132, 135, 185, 188, 209, 210, 234, 235, 237
- Erlich, A. 158n52

- eschatological aspects 8, 58–59, 102n19, 111, 137, 139–141, 152, 192, 226, 237, 247
- eschatology
annus mundi (AM), concept of
 245–247, 248
 in *Apostolic Constitutions* 59–60
 Christian eschatology, Creation, and the
 Tabernacle 245–248
 Epistle of Barnabas and 246, 273
 Maimonides on end of days 223
 Second Parousia in *Christian
 Topography* 9, 58–60, 234, 235–237,
 240–241, 243, 245–248, 255–256, 278,
 288, *fig. 4*
- Essenes 147
- eternal existence of universe versus *creatio
 ex nihilo* 105–108
- Ethics of the Fathers* 11, 220
- etrog* 73, 74, 76, 77, 140, 154–155, 161, 163,
 165, 167, 181, 203, 206, 252, 253, *fig. 2*
- Eusebius 237, 241, 285
- even shtiya* (foundation stone) 221–222
- Exodus* (*Shemot*) *Rabbah* 90
- Ezekiel's chariot. *See* Merkavah (Ezekiel's
 chariot) literature
- Fiensy, David 55, 59, 187n4
- Fine, Steven 24n71, 158–159, 165–166
- Firkovitz, Abraham 194n23, 195
- firmament 2–3, 16–17, 49–51, 53, 56–58,
 63–65, 67–68, 70, 110–111, 113–116, 118,
 122n3, 123–124, 144, 190, 238, 240, 250,
 260–263, 267, 268
- First Leningrad Bible 193–200, 203–204,
 217, 219, *figs. 72–73*
- flat earth theory 1–2, 66
- Flavius Josephus. *See* Josephus
- Fleischer, Ezra 149, 202–203
- flood story 81–82
- Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana
 Cod. Amiatinus I (Codex Amiatinus)
 211–213, 214, 215, 242, 254, *fig. 79*
 Plut. IX 28 (*Christian Topography*) 48,
 124, 187n1, 188, 189, 227, 228, 243, *fig.
 40, fig. 89*
- Foa Bible 223, 224, 225
- four compass points, in Codex Amiatinus
 213
- four elements 42, 108
- four rivers flowing from Paradise 52, 134
- four seasons 71, 73, 80, 81, 193, 251
- four species of Sukkoth 140, 154–156, 181,
 203, 206–207
- frontispieces in illuminated bibles 71,
 102, 193–195, 197, 203–204, 211, 215, 217–
 218, 220, 223, 225–226, 251, 254–255
- Furstenberg, Yair 208n20
- Garden of Eden/Paradise
 Ark/Tabernacle and 133–134, 143, 144
Christian Topography and 43, 50, 52,
fig. 26
 at Dura-Europos 16, 17, 22
 Karaite perception of Temple and 200
 kingdom of heaven, Tabernacle, and
 Cosmos 235–241
 Octateuchs and 66, 67, 69
 perspective imaging and 209
 Sephardi frontispieces and 229–230
 as symbol of Creation 187–192, 254
 synagogue, as minor temple, and 165
 in synagogue mosaics 78
- Gaster, Moses 183n73
- “Gates of Heaven” motif 25–27
- “The Gates of Prayer” 202–203
- Genesis* (*Bere'shit*) *Rabbati* 90, 92, 96
- genizah texts 59, 84n44, 158n52, 171, 194,
 201, 202
- Gerasa/Jerash, Church of SS. Cosmos and
 Damian (Jordan) 69–70, 78, *figs. 36–38*
- gevuroth* 59–60, 276
- gold-glass base depicting Tabernacle (4th
 century) 204, 205–208, 242, 254, *fig. 74*
- Goldschmidt, Daniel 26n83, 167
- Golinkin, David 85n53
- Good Shepherd and His Flock* (mural, Dura-
 Europos Baptistry) 17–18, *fig. 10*
- Goodenough, Erwin 55
- Codex Grandior 210–211
- Gregory of Nazianzus 68n93
- Gregory of Nyssa 68–69, 133n95, 239n18,
 240
- Gudea of Lagash 37n20
- Guide for the Perplexed* (Maimonides)
 106n31, 221
- Hadrian (Roman emperor) 153
- Hagia Sophia, Edessa, inaugural anthem
 of 238–240
- Hahn, Cynthia 9, 230n53
- HaKallir, Eliezer 95
- Halperin, David J. 84n44
- R. Hama b. Ukba 156
- Hammat Tiberias synagogue mosaics
 73–74, 79, 81–82, *figs. 41–42*
- Hanina (mosaic artist) 181

- Hashoshani, R. Shemiaya 93
ha'sneh 198
 heavenly 1, 5–6, 14, 24, 26–28, 35–37, 49–50, 58, 60, 64–66, 85n51, 86, 106, 111–113, 121–122, 131–132, 135, 142, 146, 155, 170, 186, 198, 207, 209–210, 212–215, 227, 229, 231–232, 234–237, 239–240, 243–245, 247–248, 252, 254–256, 276–278, 281, 284, 287, 289
Hebrew Apocalypse of Enoch (3 Enoch) 28–29
 Hebrews, Epistle to the 10, 54, 89, 122, 131, 132, 135, 185, 188, 209, 210, 234, 235, 237
 Heikhalot (heavenly palaces) literature
 Dura-Europos synagogue murals and 27, 28, 30
merkavah, concept of 24n72
 mysticism and 144–145
Pirkei Heikhalot 101
 reciprocal influence between Jewish and Christian art and literature 5
 Tabernacle, significance attached to 1
 transfer of service to destroyed Temple via 24
 verbal imaging of Ark of the Covenant in 120
yotser ha'meorot prayer 85
Heikhalot Rabati 30
 Heinemann, Joseph 55, 85n51
 Helios, in Jewish synagogue mosaics 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80
 Heller, R. Yom Tov Lipman 143n72
Hexaemeron literature (six days of Creation) 66–69, 70, 99, 123, 240, 251
 High Priest
 Aaron as 86, 132, 135, 170, 171, 177
 blessing of congregation on Day of Atonement 158n52
 consecration and preparation for Yom Kippur 15, 86, 170, 171, 172, 177, 271–272
 garments of 40–42, 76, 128, 169, 172, 183n75
 in Holy of Holies 121, 125, 149, 159, 172, 175–176, 221
 Jesus as 16, 122, 125, 135
 ritual immersions of 15
 in Samaritan tradition 184
 Hillel II 79
 Hippolytus of Rome 246
Historia Ecclesiastica (Eusebius) 237
 R. Hiya b. Abba 73n3
 R. Hiyya Rabba 27
 Holy Creatures (*Hayot Ha'qodesh*) 29–30, 110, 127, 145, 237, 269, 276, 278
 Holy of Holies 3–4, 27, 49–50, 58, 67, 112, 120–122, 125, 129, 131, 135, 142, 144–145, 149, 157–160, 166, 168, 172–176, 183, 187–188, 192, 194–196, 200–201, 212–214, 220–222, 225–226, 232, 235–236, 243, 245, 250, 253–256, 262–263, 269–271, 285
 Holy Sepulcher, Church of, Jerusalem 240–245
Homilies in Hexaemeron (Jacob of Sarug) 240
Homilies on Creation (Narsai) 239n18, 240
 Horvat Susiya synagogue mosaics 78–79
 R. Hoshaya 156n44
 hot springs near Hammat Tiberias synagogue 81
 R. Hunna 82n35
 Hurowitz, Victor 37n20
 Husaifa synagogue mosaics 77
Hymns on Paradise (Ephrem the Syrian) 192
 Ibn Ezra, R. Abraham 97, 104, 198n43, 219
 Ibn Falaquera, Shem Tov 105–106
 Ibn Gabirol, Shlomo 219–220
 Ibn Zarza, Samuel 105–106
 iconoclastic controversy 7–8, 213
 image-text relationship and analysis 102n15, 138–139, 249
 incense shovels 73, 75, 76, 77, 167, 176, 181, 194, 217, 218, 221, 253, *fig. 82, fig. 85*
 Isaac, sacrifice of (*aqedah*) 73, 75, 76, 77, 163–165, 167, 223n26, *fig. 3, fig. 50*
 R. Ishmael 28
 Islam
 Arab Neo-Platonism 91
 rise and influence of 193
 Spain, mid-13th-century evolution from Islamic to Christian domination in 104–110
 translation of Bible into Arabic 198n43
 Istanbul, Serail Library, Cod. 8 (Octateuch) 62, 63n73, 63n75, 64n77, 66, 67, 124, 130, 135, *fig. 32, fig. 59, fig. 61, figs. 34–35*
 Jacob of Sarug 239n18, 240
 Jerash/Gerasha, Church of SS. Cosmos and Damian (Jordan) 69–70, 78, *figs. 36–38*
 Jerome 39
 Jerusalem ix, x, xi, 11, 14, 24, 25, 27, 41, 75, 77, 103, 112, 139–141, 147, 149, 153, 155, 158, 161, 163–166, 181, 194, 197, 200–202, 206,

- 207–208, 221–222, 226, 240–244, 251, 269, 276, 278
- Jesus 14, 16–18, 20–21, 51, 58–61, 89, 122, 125, 131–132, 135, 185, 187n4, 208, 210, 212, 214, 234–237, 243–248, 255–256, 273, 278, 295
- Jewish-Christian relationships. *See also* Christian supersession of Jewish ideas; Dura-Europos synagogue
Christian Topography, Jewish influences
 on illustrator of 188–193, 204
 early sources common to Jews and Christians 87, 120, 251
 Jewish responses to Christian polemics 14–25, 208
 liturgical influences 5, 23, 55–56, 84
 Philo and Josephus, Christian use of 43–45, 57, *figs.* 16–18
 reciprocal influence between Jewish and Christian art and literature 4–5, 9, 11
 Sarajevo Haggadah, Christian influences on 100–101, 120
 in Sepphoris 74–75
 Spain, mid-13th-century evolution from Islamic to Christian domination in 104–110
 synagogue mosaics from Israel and 74–75, 80–81
- Jewish sects 147
- Jewish Wars* (Josephus) 148n6
- Jewish works 73–97. *See also specific works*
 Ark/Tabernacle/Creation in 137–146.
See also Ark of the Covenant
 Bible as fundamental source for 10
 Vatican Jewish gold-glass base depicting Tabernacle (4th century) 204, 205–208, 242, 254, *fig.* 74
- R. Johanan 156
- R. Johanan b. Zakkai 83
- Johannes Philoponus 64n76, 65n79, 239
- R. Johanthan 82n35
- John Chrysostom 56, 62n67
- John the Grammarian 214
- R. Jonah of Gerona 104
- R. Jose b. Abin 156
- R. Jose b. Hanina 156
- R. Jose b. Zebila 156
- Josephus (Flavius Josephus)
The Antiquities of the Jews 19n43, 41, 62, 88, 140n63, 148n6
 background and significance 41n42
 biblical commentaries of 10, 41–45
 Christian use of 4, 43–45, 62, *figs.* 17–18
 as early source for Tabernacle/Creation parallels 1, 120, 227, 250, 251
 on Jewish sects 147
Jewish Wars 148n6
 on menorah and showbread table 228, 231
 midrashic tradition and 88, 90, 251
 Octateuchs and 62
 R. Joshua 82n35
 R. Joshua b. Levi 119n25
 Josippon, Book of 94
 Jubilees, Book of 87, 92, 93, 95, 200, 251
 R. Judah the Prince 35–36n9, 74, 82n35, 143n72
Judea Capta coin 141, *fig.* 65
 Judgment Day. *See* eschatology
 Julian the Apostate 79n24
 Julius Africanus 246
 Justinian I (Byzantine emperor) 193, 242
- Kabbalah 24n72, 36n10, 107n34, 119, 269
kapporet (Ark cover) 42, 112, 129, 130, 141, 178, 200, 213, 215, 217, 224–225, 252, 269
 Karaites 193–204, 254
 First Leningrad Bible 193–200, 203–204, 217, 219, *figs.* 72–73
 ideology of 201–203
Mikdashiyah (God's Temple) as term for Bible 195–196
 Philo's influence on 196–198, 200, 203–204
- Kasher, Menachem 43
- Kessler, Herbert 8–9, 25n78, 51n14, 60n59, 169, 171, 235, 247n49
- Khirbet Samara Samaritan synagogue 184, *fig.* 70
- Kings Bible 223, 224, 225, *fig.* 86
- Kippurim* 159n57, 271–272, 288
- Kirschner, R. 270–271
- Kister, Menachem 55
- Kitzinger, Ernst 69
- Klawans, Jonathan 39, 41, 87n61, 94n96, 135n47, 221n19, 227n44, 288
- Knohl, Israel 271
- Kogman-Appel, Katrin x, 19n41, 99n1, 100, 195n31, 218, 219, 220n14, 223, 224n29, 225, 288, 289
- Kohler, Kaufmann 55, 59, 127
- Kosmas Indikopleustes (Cosmas Indicopleustes), as author of *Christian Topography* 2–3, 9–10, 47. *See also Christian Topography for the Whole Universe*

- Kraeling, Carl 15n12, 17n27, 169, 175
 Kühnel, Bianca 137–138, 243
 Kulp, Joshua 85n53
- Laderman, Shulamit 56n43, 95n101, 99n1,
 168n22, 207n8, 208n20, 288, 289
 Landes, Richard 246
 Lassus, Jean 9
 Last Judgment. *See* eschatology
 Laurentian Library, Florence. *See* Florence,
 Bibl. Laurenziana
 Leibowitz, Nechama ix, 37, 290
 Levenson, Jon 36, 37, 191n14, 290
 R. Levi ben Solomon of Lunel 107n34
 Levine, Lee 23n70, 148, 173
 Levine, Moshe 141, 212, *fig.* 66, *fig.* 80
 Lieberman, Saul 179n58
Life of Moses (Philo of Alexandria) 40–41,
 197n36, 228
 liturgy
Apostolic Constitutions 54–61, 84
 Dura-Europos synagogue, liturgical
 parchment fragment found in 23
 Dura-Europos synagogue, mural of
The Consecration of the Tabernacle,
 and 24, 168–177, 195, *fig.* 8
pyyutim 85–86, 87, 151–152, 171–177,
 219–220
 reciprocal influence between Jewish
 and Christian art and literature 5,
 23, 55–56, 84
 synagogue mosaics and 83–86
 Temple service 158n52
- London, British Library
 MS Add. 27210 100n13
 MS. Kings 1(68) (Kings Bible) 223, 224,
 225, *fig.* 86
 MS Or. 2884 100n13
 “long side” of universe in *Christian
 Topography* 49, 50–51, 53, 66, 197,
fig. 19, *figs.* 21–22
- Lowden, John 7, 62n67, 128–129
lulav 73, 74, 76, 77, 140, 154–157, 161, 163,
 165, 167, 181, 203, 206, 207, 252, 253, *fig.* 2
- ma'amadot* (“those who stand by”) 26,
 73n4, 149–151, 152n24, 166, 222, 296, 297
ma'aseh bere'shit 27n89, 84, 111–112, 120,
 139, 149, 150–151, 203, 254–255, 277
ma'aseh ha'mishkan 120, 139, 203,
 254–255
ma'aseh merkavah 83–84, 111–112, 277
 Maccabees 154, 294
 Mack, Hananel 88n66, 93, 95, 96n108,
 284, 293, 297, 299
- Madaba mosaic map 240–243, 244, *fig.*
 103
 Magen, Yizhak 182, 183, 184
 Maguire, Henry 66n82, 68–69, 70, 78n16,
 86, 102n15, 138–139, 145n82, 167n20
 Maimonides (R. Moses ben Maimon;
 Rambam)
 on Byzantine midrashim 97
 on end of days 223
Guide for the Perplexed 106n31, 221
 on *merkavah* 143n72
Mishne Torah 119n76, 218, 222–223
 Sarajevo Haggadah and 101, 104,
 106n31, 119n76
 Sephardi frontispieces influenced
 by 218–224
- Malter, Henry 198n43
 manna, jar or jug of 188, 190, 194, 195,
 218, *fig.* 84
 manuscripts. *See also* Sarajevo Haggadah
 Amiens, Ms. Latin 108 (Pamplona
 Bible) 114n55
 Codex Grandior (no longer
 extant) 210–211
 Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana, Cod.
 Amiatinus I (Codex Amiatini-
 nus) 211–213, 214, 215, 242, 254,
fig. 79
 Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana, Plut. IX
 28 (*Christian Topography*) 48, 124,
 187n1, 188, 189, 227, 228, 243, *fig.* 40,
fig. 89
 genizah texts 59, 84n44, 158n52, 171,
 194, 201, 202
 Harburg, Ms. 1, 2, lat. 4, 15 (Pamplona
 Bible) 114n55
 Istanbul, Serail Library, Cod. 8
 (Octateuch) 62, 63n73, 63n75,
 64n77, 66, 67, 124, 130, 135, *fig.* 32,
figs. 34–35, *fig.* 59, *fig.* 61
 London, British Library, MS Add.
 27210 100n13
 London, British Library MS. Kings 1
 (Kings Bible) 223, 224, 225, *fig.* 86
 London, British Library, MS Or.
 2884 100n13
 Moscow, Hist. Mus. MS. D.129
 (Chloudov Psalter) 20n44
 Mount Athos, marginal psalter
 Pantokrator 61 213–215, 242,
 254–255, *fig.* 81
 New York, Pierpont Morgan Library,
 M 638 (Morgan Picture Bible) 117
 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, cod.
 Gr. 510 (Gregory Homilies) 48n7

- Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, cod.
Gr. 923 (*Sacra Parallela*) 44–45,
figs. 16–18
- Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, Hebr. 7
(Perpignan Bible) 217, 218–220, 223,
224, 225, *figs. 84–85*
- Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, Hebr. 31
(Saragossa Bible) 225–226, *fig. 87*
- Paris, S. Sulpice, Compagnie des Pretres,
MS (Foa Bible) 223, 224, 225
- Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Ms. 2668
(Parma Bible) 217–218, 219, 220,
223–224, 225, *figs. 82–83*
- Sinai, Gr. 1186 (*Christian Topography*)
48, 51–52, 53, 66, 67, 69, 71, 128, 188,
189, 208–209, 227, 228, 232, 242,
figs. 19–20, figs. 23–26, fig. 89, fig. 93
- Smyrna, Evangelical School, Cod. A.1
(Octateuch) 62
- St. Petersburg, Imperial Library,
Firk. Hebr. II B 17 (First Leningrad
Bible) 193–200, 203–204, 217, 219,
figs. 72–73
- stripe motif in 20n44
- Vat. Gr. 699 (*Christian Topography*)
7–8, 9, 48, 51, 52, 53, 57–58, 66, 67, 71,
124–125, 128, 187n1, 188, 192, 199, 208,
209, 215, 231–232, 234, 235, 240,
242–243, 245, 247, 248, *fig. 4, figs.*
21–22, fig. 27, fig. 39, fig. 75, fig. 92
- Vat. Gr. 746 (Octateuch) 62, 63, 124,
130, 131, 135, 136, 210, 230, *figs. 30–31,*
fig. 58, fig. 60, fig. 76, figs. 90–91
- Vat. Gr. 747 (Octateuch) 62, 63n75, 64,
65, 66, 124, 129, 136, 210, 233,
figs. 28–29, fig. 57, fig. 62, figs. 77–78,
figs. 94–95
- Marianos (mosaic artist) 181
- Martini, Raymond 92, 96
- McCrinkle, J.W. 1n2, 2n6, 2n8, 10n36,
47, 49n10, 51n16, 52n20, 53n23, 56n44,
57n47, 58n50, 59n53, 60n60, 65n78,
67n86, 70n101, 121n1, 123n6, 123n8,
123n12, 124n14, 127n23, 134n46, 144n79,
166n10, 185n84, 185n86, 187n2, 187n5,
191n13, 193n20, 209n22, 228n48, 231n56,
235n4, 236n8, 246n47, 258, 259n4,
259n11, 260, 261n24, 264n31, 291
- McVey, Kathleen 238–239
- Mechilta D'Rabbi Shimon Bar*
Yochai 156n43
- Meeks, Wayne 56
- R. Meir 82n35, 155
- memory
celebration and observance preserving
memory of destroyed Temple 207,
208, 227
- Sephardi frontispieces, Temple
implements as *Memoria rerum* on
217, 220–221, 225, 227
- Tabernacle/Temple as mnemonic
structure 10–11, 227
- menorah 227–231
on Arch of Titus 139, *fig. 64*
burning bush and 198–199
calendrical significance of 192
in *Christian Topography* 3, 227–230,
figs. 88–89
in Dura-Europos synagogue murals 21,
163, 168, *fig. 3*
in First Leningrad Bible 194–195, 203
Josephus on 42
Octateuchs 230–231, *fig. 91*
Parma Bible 217, *fig. 82*
Perpignan Bible 218, 219, *fig. 84*
Philo on 198
in Samaritan synagogues 181, 182,
183–184
seven planets and 42, 198, 227
in synagogue mosaics 73, 74, 75, 76,
77, 78, 87n59, *fig. 44*
- Mercy Seat 42, 124–125, 128, 130, 131, 252,
263
- Merkavah (Ezekiel's chariot) literature
aleinu l'shabeach prayer and 151n18
cherubim and 5, 37n16, 111–112, 120,
127, 142–145, 200, 224–225, 252
concept of 24–25n72
Dura-Europos synagogue murals
and 27, 28
Mishnaic response to 143
Nachmanides on 110, 111, 224–225
origins of 142–145
synagogue mosaics and 81
Tabernacle, significance attached to 1
tavnit, Tabernacle, and Creation related
to 5, 225
transfer of service to destroyed Temple
via 24
verbal imaging of Ark of the Covenant
in 120
- Meshorer, Yaakov 140–141n63, 153, 161
The Messianic Temple illustration, Sarajevo
Haggadah 102–104, 111, *fig. 54*
- microcosm, Temple/Tabernacle as 36,
40, 240, 291

- Middle Platonism and Philo of Alexandria 39, 91
- Midrash Aggadah* 92
- Midrash BaMidbar Rabba* 261–262, 265–267
- Midrash Bere'shit Rabbah* 156
- Midrash Bere'shit (Genesis) Rabbati* 92, 96, 264–265, 267
- Midrash Rabbah* 82n35
- Midrash Tadshe* 43, 87, 92–94, 222, 262–264, 265
- Midrash Tanhuma* 90
- Midrash Tanhuma Qedoshim* 222
- Midrash Vayechulu* 119n76
- midrashic literature 88–97
- on Bar Kochba revolt 153
 - on Bezalel 35–36
 - Christian art and 13n2
 - defined 1n1
 - Dura-Europos synagogue murals influenced by 19–24
 - early sources, loss of 87
 - Josephus and 88, 90, 251
 - R. Moshe HaDarshan and 91–96, 251
 - Philo of Alexandria and 39, 43, 88–91, 251
 - on rod of Moses and Aaron 192
 - Spanish mid-13th-century approach to 104–105
 - synagogue mosaics and 82
 - Tabernacle, significance attached to 1
- mikdash me'at*. See synagogue, as minor temple
- miluim* (consecration) 170, 177, 271–272
- Mirsky, Aaron 85n51
- mishkhan* 34
- mishmarot* (watchers) 73, 149–152, 202n61, 222–223, 281, 285, 297
- Mishnah
- in Bar Kochba letters 153
 - defined 15n14
 - on drilled coins 161
 - Dura-Europos synagogue murals influenced by 19–24, 26, 27, 31
 - on *even shtiya* (foundation stone) 221–222
 - “Gates of Heaven” motif in 26
 - heavenly Temple, concept of 27
 - Merkavah literature and 143
 - origins of 147–148
 - on ritual immersion 15
 - Sepphoris synagogue and 74
 - on the *soreg* 140n63
 - synagogue, as minor temple 165
- Mishnah Avot* 179–180, 222
- Mishnah Menahot* 218
- Mishnah Midot* 148, 150n15, 221
- Mishnah Sukkah* 154–155, 167
- Mishnah Ta'anit* 26, 149, 163–164, 222
- Mishnah Tamid* 148, 149, 171, 218
- Mishnah Yoma* 15–16, 150n15, 170, 171, 174–175, 176, 222
- Mishne Torah* (Maimonides) 119n76, 218, 222–223
- mnemonic devices. See memory
- Monza, Cathedral of, Milan 244
- Moreh ha'Moreh* (“Guide for the Teacher,” ibn Falaquera) 105
- Morgan Picture Bible 117
- mosaic floor cosmologies. See also synagogue mosaics, fourth-sixth century, Israel
- Cappelle Theotokos, Mount Nebo, Jordan 243–244, *fig. 104*
 - early Christian churches 69–70, 78, *figs. 36–38*
 - Madaba mosaic map 240–243, 244, *fig. 103*
- Moscow, Hist. Mus. MS. D.129 (Chloudov Psalter) 20n44
- Moses 1–4, 8, 10n34, 11, 19, 20–21, 29, 33–34, 35n8, 36, 39–41, 48, 54, 103, 111, 121n2, 122, 128–136, 148, 157, 159, 171, 173, 178, 180n62, 184n80, 185–186, 188–193, 196, 199, 207, 209–210, 213, 215, 219, 229, 232–234, 238, 240–241, 243, 245, 249–250, 252, 255, 257–258, 261–262, 267, 269, 271, 277, 285, 292
- R. Moses ben Maimon. See Maimonides
- R. Moses ben Nachman. See Nachmanides
- R. Moshe HaDarshan (Rabbi Moses the Preacher) 91–96, 101, 120, 251, 289–291
- Mount Athos, marginal psalter
- Pantokrator 61 213–215, 242, 254–255, *fig. 81*
- Mount Horeb/Mount Sinai 199
- Mount Moriah 75, 163–164, 167, 243
- Mount of Olives 141n63, 200, 201–202, 225–227, 244, *fig. 86*
- Mount Sinai 1–3, 28, 32–35, 40, 48n8, 54, 132–135, 189, 191, 199–200, 207, 213, 215, 232–233, 240, 249–250, 252, 257, 268–269
- Mouriki-Charalambous, Doula 6, 230–231
- Mourners of Zion 201

- Muehsam, Alice 141n63
 Müller, Heinrich 99
- Na'aran synagogue mosaics 77–78,
figs. 51–52
- Nabonidus, Sippar cylinder of 37n20
- Nachmanides (R. Moses ben Nachman;
 Ramban) 101, 251
 Ark, description of 120, 224–225
 early Jewish sources influencing 120
 physical aspects of Temple, literal and
 spiritual meaning of 219
 Sephardi Bibles and 223–225
 Spanish mid-13th-century approach to
 Creation and 105–109, 251–252
 on *tavnit* or pattern of Creation and
 Tabernacle stories 110–118, 225
 text of *Commentary on the Torah* 268
- Naeh, Shlomo 271
- Nafcha, R. Yitzchak 29–31
- al-Nahawandi, Benjamin 196n35
- Narkiss, Bezalel 100, 141n63, 159n56, 194,
 198n48
- Narkiss, Mordecai 167
- Narsai (Syrian exegete) 239n18, 240
- Neah (New Church), Constantinople 242
ne'ilah prayer 26
- Nemoy, Leon 196n35
- Neo-Platonism, Arab 91
nesi'im 177–178
- Nestorian cosmology 6, 8, 47n2, 123, 239
- Netzer, Ehud 75n10, 78n18, 287
- New Testament
 Epistle to the Hebrews 10, 54, 89, 122,
 131, 132, 135, 185, 188, 209, 210, 234,
 235, 237
 mysticism in 144
 Old Testament, Christian understanding
 of 10, 71, 135, 208
 Tabernacle, significance attached to 1
- New York, Pierpont Morgan Library,
 M 638 (Morgan Picture Bible) 117
- Nicanor's Gate, Jerusalem 150
- Nordstrom, Carl-Otto 136, 218
- Numbers Rabbah* 90, 92, 93–94
- Octateuchs 61–72, 250–251
 Ark/Tabernacle/Creation in 124,
 128–129, 130–131, 135, 136, 145, 171, 185,
figs. 57–62
 cherubim in 124, 127, *figs. 57–59*
Christian Topography and 64–67, 124
 Creation in 61–67, 70, 109n41,
figs. 28–35
 defined 4
 Dura-Europos synagogue and
 illustrations in 6–7, 9
 encampment in desert, as reflection of
 divine pattern 233–234, *figs. 94–95*
 link between Tabernacle and Creation
 in 4
 manuscripts 62
 menorah and showbread table in
 230–231, *figs. 90–91*
 perspective, conceptual use of 208,
 210, 214, 215, *figs. 76–77*
 Sarajevo Haggadah and 11, 109n41, 117,
fig. 56
 scholarly literature review 6–7, 9, 10
Odes of Solomon 16–17, 21–22, 31, 249,
 283
- Old Testament. *See* Bible and Torah
omphalos (navel of the earth) 200, 221
On the Special Laws (Philo of Alexandria)
 167n16, 228
- Onkeles 19n42
- Onomasticon* (Eusebius) 241
- Oppenheimer, Aaron 154n33
- Oral Law 141n15, 18, 148, 168, 178, 180–182,
 201, 203, 218, 253
- Origen 20, 49, 62n67, 68, 240
- R. Ovadiah of Bartenura 143n72, 149n10
- Pamplona Bibles 113–114
- Pantokrator 61 213–215, 242, 254–255,
fig. 81
- Paradise 16, 52, 67, 69, 134, 143, 144,
 187–188, 190–192, 229, 263, 278, 286. *See*
also Garden of Eden/Paradise
- parallelism between the Temple and the
 Universe 37, 42, 67, 71, 88, 90, 93, 103,
 121, 239n18, 251
- Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale
 cod. Gr. 510 (Gregory Homilies) 48n7
 cod. Gr. 923 (*Sacra Parallela*) 44–45,
figs. 16–18
 Hebr. 7 (Perpignan Bible) 217, 218–220,
 223, 224, 225, *figs. 84–85*
 Hebr. 31 (Saragossa Bible) 225–226,
fig. 87
- Paris, S. Sulpice, Compagnie des Pretres,
 MS (Foa Bible) 223, 224, 225
- Parma Bible 217–218, 219, 220, 223–224,
 225, *figs. 82–83*
- parochet* (curtain concealing Holy of
 Holies) 49, 67, 168, 182, 187, 195,
 235–237, 250, 255, 269
- Parousia*. *See* eschatology

- Patricius (Mar Abas) 123
 patristic literature. See also *specific patristic writers*
 Philo of Alexandria and 89
 Tabernacle, significance attached to 1
- pattern 1–2, 4–5, 10, 13–14, 17, 33, 36–37, 48, 50, 52–54, 57, 65, 67, 71, 78, 80, 83, 90–91, 99, 110, 112, 118–119, 121n2, 122n3, 122n4, 124, 138, 142, 180, 181, 188–190, 196, 203, 207, 209, 210, 213, 215, 219, 224–225, 229, 231–234, 236–237, 239–240, 243, 245, 247–250, 255, 257, 260–262, 268–270, 276–277, 287, 289
- Perek Shirah* 83–84, 86, 87
- Perpignan Bible 217, 218–220, 223, 224, 225, *figs.* 84–85
- Perspective* (Posek, 1982) 207
- perspective imaging of Tabernacle 205–215, 254–255
 bird's-eye views 71, 187–194, 204, 207, 209, 214, 241, 254
 in *Christian Topography* 208–210, 215, *fig.* 75
 in Codex Amiatinus 211–213, 214, 215, 242, 254, *fig.* 79
 in Codex Grandior 210–211
 different conceptual purposes of 214–215
 in Octateuchs 208, 210, 214, 215, *figs.* 76–78
 in Pantokrator 61 213–215, 242, 254–255, *fig.* 81
 in Vatican Jewish gold-glass base depicting Tabernacle (4th century) 204, 205–208, 242, 254, *fig.* 74
- Peshat* 92n85
- Pesikta d'Rav Kahane* 226
- Pesikta Rabbati* 90
- Pharisees 147
- Philo of Alexandria
 background and significance 39n28
 biblical commentaries of 10, 39–41, 43–45, 240
 on burning bush 133
 Christian reliance on 4, 43–45, 57, 62, 89, *figs.* 16–17
 as early source for Tabernacle/Creation/Cosmos parallels 1, 120, 193, 196, 200, 227, 250, 251
 Karaites influenced by 196–198, 200, 203–204
Life of Moses 40–41, 197n36, 228
 on menorah and showbread table 228, 231
 midrashic tradition and 39, 43, 88–91, 251
 Plato and 39, 88–89, 91
 on shofars 167n16
On the Special Laws 167n16, 228
- Philoponus (Johannes Philoponus) 64n76, 65n79, 239
- R. Phineas 27–28, 36n14
- R. Phineas ben Yair 92, 93
- Photius of Constantinople 47
- Piccirillo, Michele 243
- pierced or drilled coins 160–161, *fig.* 67
- Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, M 638 (Morgan Picture Bible) 117
- pilgrim artifacts/reliquary art 244–245
- Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* 43
- Pirkei Heikhalot* 101, 111–112
- piyyutim*, liturgical 85–86, 87, 151–152, 171–177, 219–220
- Plato
 Ibn Falaquera and 105
 Philo of Alexandria and 39, 88–89, 91
- Poorthuis, Marcel 192
- Posek, Avigdor 207
- Procopius of Gaza 4n11
- Pseudepigrapha. See Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha
- Pseudo-Chrysostom of Constantinople 50
- Pseudo-Philo, *Biblical Antiquities* 129–130, 134, 179, 189–191
- Ptolemy (astronomer and geographer) 2, 65n79, 239
- Pugio Fidei* (*The Dagger of Faith*, Martini) 92, 96
- Purvis, James D. 184n80
- qedushah* prayer 29n96
- Qumran. See Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumran community
- Raba 156, 175
- Rabbis and Rabbinic sources. See also *specific Rabbis and sources*
 Bar Kochba and 152–154
 halakhic developments following destruction of Temple 152–161
 origins of 147–148
 reciprocal influence between Jewish and Christian art and literature 5
 Spanish mid-13th-century approach to Creation cosmology 104–110
 synagogue, role of Rabbis in 177–180
 on *tavnit* or pattern in Creation and Tabernacle stories 110–120

- rain, prayers for 155–158, 164
- Rambam. *See* Maimonides
- Ramban. *See* Nachmanides
- Rashi 19n42, 92, 96, 116n64, 143n75, 219
- rationalist and anti-rationalist philosophy 104–105
- Rav 26
- Rava 19n25
- Rayat Yehezkel* 24–25n72
- rectangular universe in *Christian Topography* 3, 52, 71, 231, *fig. 1*, *fig. 26*
- reliquary art/pilgrim artifacts 244–245
- Resh Lakish 29
- Revel, Bernard 196
- Revel-Neher, Elisabeth 8, 103, 125, 128, 129, 136, 137, 141–142, 188, 191, 204, 212
- ritual immersion/baptism 15–16, 18
- Roberts, M. J. 86n55
- rods of Moses and Aaron 191–192, 193, 195, 203, 218, *fig. 48*
- Romanoff, Paul 141n63
- Rosenu, Helen 141n63
- Rossi, Azariah de' 88
- Roth, Cecil 99
- round earth theory 1–2, 65n79
- ruah elohim* 36
- Runia, David T. 10n32, 57n46
- R. Sa'adia Gaon 158n52, 198n43
- Sacra Parallela* 44–45, 285, 298, *figs. 16–17*
- Sadducees 147, 196
- Safrai, Samuel 165n7, 184n81
- Sahal b. Masliah 202
- St. Clair, Archer 132–133, 206
- SS. Cosmos and Damian, Church of, Gerasa/Jerash (Jordan) 69–70, 78, *figs. 36–38*
- St. Petersburg, Imperial Library, Firk. Hebr. II B 17 (First Leningrad Bible) 193–200, 203–204, 217, 219, *figs. 72–73*
- Samaritan Woman at the Well* (mural, Dura-Europos Baptistery) 20–21, *fig. 14*
- Samaritans
origins and history 180n62
Temple implements in synagogues of 181–186, *figs. 69–71*
- Samsuiluna (king of Babylon), bilingual “B” inscription of 37n20
- R. Samuel b. Nahmani 35n8
- Sanctuary 1, 9, 24, 33n1, 35, 37, 54, 76, 122, 131–132, 135, 138, 142, 147, 160–161, 171–172, 176, 183, 189–190, 194, 196, 205, 208–210, 212, 217–219, 221–234, 236–237, 241, 245, 247, 253–255, 257, 262, 268–271, 284, 291–293, 298
- Sanhedrin 74n5, 80
- Saragossa Bible 225–226, *fig. 87*
- Sarajevo Haggadah 11, 99–120, 251–252
Byzantine works, parallels to 11, *figs. 5–6*
Christian influences on 100–101, 120
Creation/Tabernacle, visual model of 11, 99–102, *figs. 5–6*
Jewish scholarship and 101–102
The Messianic Temple 102–104, 111, *fig. 54*
Octateuchs and 11, 109n41
Rabbinic commentaries on *tavnit* or pattern in Creation and Tabernacle stories 110–120
Sabbath in 118–120
scholarly literature review 99–100
Spanish approach to Creation cosmology in mid-13th century 104–110
Spanish origins of 11n38
structural frame of Creation cycle illustrations 102–104, *figs. 54–55*
Synagogue 102–104, 118, *fig. 55*
- Sarna, Nahum M. 33n1
- scepters and Ark of the Covenant 128, 129–130
- Schaefer, Peter 154, 177–178
- Schirmann, Jefim 55, 56
- Schlosser, Julius von 99
- Scholem, Gershom G. 30n102, 88n65, 151n18
- Schternberg, Aaron G. 79n24
- Schubert, Ursula 13n2
- Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness 149
- Second Baruch (*Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*) 134, 191
- Second Jewish Revolt (Bar Kochba Revolt, 132–135) 152–154
- Sed-Rajna, Gabrielle 204
- seder avodah* 167, 171–175, 177, 180, 219, 220, 223
- Sefer Avodah* 218, 222
- Sefer Ha'Bahir* (“The Book of Brightness”) 101
- Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Creation) 36n10, 101
- Sephardi approach to Creation cosmology in mid-13th century 104–110
- Sephardi frontispieces 217–227, 255
cherubim and Ark 223–225

- Foa Bible 223, 224, 225
 hill with stylized tree 225–227, *fig. 86*
 Kings Bible 223, 224, 225, *fig. 86*
 Maimonides' influence on 218–224
Memoria rerum, Temple implements
 as 217, 220–221, 225, 227
 Nachmanides and 223–225
 Parma Bible 217–218, 219, 220,
 223–224, 225, *figs. 82–83*
 Perpignan Bible 217, 218–220, 223, 224,
 225, *figs. 84–85*
 reed pen used for 219n11
 scholarly literature review 218–219
 Sephardi origins of Sarajevo Haggadah
 1138
 Sepphoris synagogue mosaics 74–76,
 86–87, 261, *figs. 43–46, fig. 53*
 Septuagint 4, 6, 7, 56, 61–62, 90, 91, 123,
 128–129
 Serail 8 (Istanbul, Serail Library, Cod. 8;
 Octateuch) 62, 63n73, 63n75, 64n77,
 66, 67, 124, 130, 135, *fig. 32, figs. 34–35,*
fig. 59, fig. 61
 seraphim in Isaiah 60, 126–127
 Severianus of Gabala 123–124
shekhinah 28, 30, 34–35, 112n49, 158, 178,
 194, 226, 269, 278
shema prayer 27, 85, 207
shemoneh esrei prayer 156–157
 R. Shimon b. Gamliel 82n35
shivat yamim ("Seven Days") 171, 175
 Shlomo ben Buya 194
shofarot 164
shofars 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 132, 164n3, 167,
 169, 181, 182n68, 218, 253, *fig. 85*
 "short side" of universe in *Christian*
Topography 49, 53, 58, 187, 242, *fig. 1*
 showbread table 3, 42, 76, 140n63, 160,
 183–184, 187–188, 193–194, 212–213,
 217–219, 225, 227–231, 233, 254–255, 262,
 282
 on Bar Kochba coins 140n63
 bird's-eye view of 187
 calendrical significance of 42, 193, 227
 in *Christian Topography* 3, 227–230,
figs. 88–89
 in First Leningrad Bible 194
 in Octateuchs 230–231, *fig. 90*
 in Parma Bible 217, *fig. 82*
 in Perpignan Bible 218, 219, *fig. 84*
 in Samaritan synagogues 182, 183
 on synagogue mosaics 76
 Sicarii 147
Sifra 177
Sifre 177
 R. Simon b. Halaftha 27
 Simon, Marcel 55
 Sinai, Gr. 1186 (*Christian Topography*) 48,
 51–52, 53, 66, 67, 69, 71, 128, 188, 189,
 208–209, 227, 228, 232, 242, *figs. 19–20,*
figs. 23–26, fig. 89, fig. 93
 Sippar cylinder of Nabonidus 37n20
 Smith, Mark 34
 Smyrna, Evangelical School, Cod. A.1
 (Octateuch) 62
sod ha'ibur, decision to relinquish 79–80
sogitha 239
 R. Solomon b. Adret 101
 R. Solomon of Montpellier 104
 Song of Songs, canonicity of 144
 Song of the Trees 83–84
 song sung by cows returning Ark to Jewish
 camp 29–31
soreg 140n63, 152, 158
 Spain. *See also* Sephardi frontispieces
 approach to Creation cosmology in
 mid-13th century 104–110
 Sarajevo Haggadah's origins in 1138
 Sperber, Daniel 153n30
 St. *See entries alphabetized at Saint*
Stein, Menachem 43
 Steinzaltz, Adin 85n51
 stepping-stones 217, 218, *fig. 82, fig. 84*
 stripe motif in manuscripts 20n44
 Sukenik, Elazar L. 19n42, 20n44
 Sukkoth (Feast of Tabernacles) 140,
 154–156, 181, 203, 206–207
 synagogue, as minor temple 163–186,
 253
 Dura-Europos synagogue murals
 and 24–25, 163–165, 168–177,
 178–160, *figs. 7–8, fig. 13*
 liturgy of synagogue and Dura-Europos
 mural of *The Consecration of the*
Tabernacle 24, 168–177, 195, *fig. 8*
 Rabbis, role of, and *Well of Be'er* mural
 from Dura-Europos
 synagogue 177–180, *fig. 13*
 Samaritan synagogues 181–186,
figs. 69–71
 transfer of Temple symbols to
 synagogue 163–168
 synagogue, Caesarea, *mishmarot*
 inscription in 151
 synagogue, Dura-Europos. *See*
 Dura-Europos synagogue
Synagogue illustration, Sarajevo
 Haggadah 102–104, 118, *fig. 55*

- synagogue mosaics, fourth-sixth century,
 Israel 71–87, 251
 Beit Alpha 76–77, 84, 181, 193,
figs. 47–50
 Beit Shean Samaritan synagogue 181,
fig. 71
 El Khirbe Samaritan synagogue 182,
 184, *fig. 69*
 Hammat Tiberias 73–74, 79, 81–82,
figs. 41–42
 Helios in 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80
 Horvat Susiya 78–79
 Husaifa 77
 image-text relationship and analysis
 138–139
 interpretation of 81–87
 Jewish-Christian relationships
 and 74–75, 80–81
 Khirbet Samara Samaritan synagogue
 184, *fig. 70*
 liturgical poetry and 83–86
 Na'aran 77–78, *figs. 51–52*
 Samaritan synagogues 181–186,
figs. 69–71
 Sepphoris 74–76, 86–87, 261,
figs. 43–46, fig. 53
 zodiac in 71, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79–82,
 86–87, 193, 251
Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (Second
 Baruch) 134, 191
 Syriac text 56, 192, 238–240
 Syrian Church 15, 55, 123
- Ta-Shma, Israel ix–x, 94n100, 96n107,
 151, 296
 Tabernacle. See *tavnit* shown to Moses
 as blueprint for Creation and
 Tabernacle
 Tabory, Joseph 149–150
 Taft, Robert 55
 Talmud
 on R. Akiva 143
 on Bezalel 35–36
 on drilled coins 161
 Dura-Europos synagogue murals and
 26, 27–28, 29–31
 on *even shtiya* (foundation stone)
 221–222
 “Gates of Heaven” motif in 26
 heavenly Temple, concept of 27–28
 Karaite rejection of 202
 origins of 147–148
Perek Shirah 83–84
 on Sabbath 119–120
 on the *soreg* 140n63
 on the Temple 150
tamid (daily sacrifice) 171–172
tavnit shown to Moses as blueprint for
 Creation and Tabernacle 1–12, 249–273
 Ark of the Covenant 121–146, 252.
 See also Ark of the Covenant
 Bible as fundamental source of
 Christian and Jewish writers and
 illustrators 10, 33–45, 250. See also
 Bible and Torah
 in *Christian Topography* 47–54, 250.
 See also *Christian Topography for the
 Whole Universe*
 in Christian works 47–72. See also
 Christian works
 definition of *tavnit* 33n1
 Dura-Europos murals and 13–32, 249.
 See also Dura-Europos baptistry;
 Dura-Europos synagogue
 encampment in desert, as reflection of
 divine pattern 231–234, *figs. 92–95*
 Ezekiel’s chariot and 5
 image-text relationship and analysis
 102n15, 138–139, 249
 Karaites and 193–204, 254. See also
 Karaites
 in midrashic literature 88–97. See also
 midrashic literature
 mnemonic structure, Tabernacle/
 Temple as 10–11, 227
 in Octateuchs 61–72, 250–251. See also
 Octateuchs
 perspective imaging and 205–215,
 254–255. See also perspective imaging
 of Tabernacle
 reciprocal influence between Jewish
 and Christian art and literature
 4–5, 9, 11. See also Christian
 supersession of Jewish ideas;
 Jewish-Christian relationships
 in Sarajevo Haggadah 11, 99–120,
 251–252. See also Sarajevo
 Haggadah
 scholarly literature review 5–10
 Sephardi frontispieces and Temple
 implements 217–227, 255. See also
 Sephardi frontispieces
 synagogue, as minor temple 163–186,
 253. See also synagogue, as minor
 temple
 in synagogue mosaics 71–87, 251. See
 also synagogue mosaics, fourth-sixth
 century, Israel

- Temple 147–161, 252–253. *See also*
 Temple
 widespread cosmological and
 theological literature concerning
 1–4
- Temple 147–161, 252–253. *See also*
 synagogue, as minor temple
 Bar Kochba coins and Bar Kochba
 revolt 139–142, 148–149, 152–154,
 158–161, 160, *fig.* 63
 biblical parallels between earthly and
 heavenly Temples 36–37
 Church as successor to 241–245
 concept of heavenly Temple 27–28
 Dura-Europos synagogue murals,
 earthly and heavenly Tabernacle/
 Temple in 24–32, *fig.* 41, *fig.* 48
 in early Jewish thought 147–162
 halakhic developments following
 destruction of 152–161
 Heikhalot and Merkavah literature,
 transfer of service to destroyed
 Temple via 24, 142–145
 liturgy for Temple service 158n52
 memory of destroyed Temple,
 celebration and observance
 preserving 207, 208, 227
 Merkavah literature's origins in
 mystical response to destruction
 of 142–143
The Messianic Temple in Sarajevo
 Haggadah 102–104, 111, *fig.* 54
 as microcosm 36, 40
mishmarot and *ma'amadot* 73,
 149–152
 mnemonic structure, Tabernacle/
 Temple as 10–11, 227
 Philo and Josephus on 39–45
 synagogue, as Minor Temple 24–25
 Temple Scroll 147
 Tent of Meeting 15, 130–131, 170, 178–179,
 199, 205, 208, 215, 232, 257–258, 262
 Testimony of the Patriarchs 95
 text-image relationship and analysis
 102n15, 138–139, 249
 Theodore of Mopsuestia 47n2, 49–50,
 62n67, 230, 239
 Theodoret of Cyrrhus 39, 62n67
 Tiglath-Pilester I (king of Assyria), annals
 of 37n20
 Titus, menorah on Arch of 139, *fig.* 64
tohu and *bohu* 106–108
 Torah. *See* Bible and Torah
 Tosafists 105
- Tosafot *Yom Tov* 143n72. *See* Heller.
 Tosephta, Dura-Europos synagogue murals
 influenced by 31
Tosephta Sukkah 178
Tosephta Yoma 159–160
 Transmission (of ideas, texts, visual images)
 4–5, 13, 18, 23–24, 31, 60, 249, 287
 Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge 43,
 133–134, 163, 165, 179, 189, 191–192
 “tree of light,” menorah and burning bush
 as 198
- Urbach, Ephraim 151
urim and thummim 183
- Van der Horst, Pieter 61
 Vatican Library
 Gr. 699 (*Christian Topography*) 7–8,
 9, 48, 51, 52, 53, 57–58, 66, 67, 71,
 124–125, 128, 187n1, 188, 192, 199,
 208, 209, 215, 231–232, 234, 235, 240,
 242–243, 245, 247, 248, *fig.* 4,
figs. 21–22, *fig.* 27, *fig.* 39, *fig.* 75,
fig. 92
 Gr. 746 (Octateuch) 62, 63, 124, 130,
 131, 135, 136, 210, 230, *figs.* 30–31,
fig. 58, *fig.* 60, *fig.* 76, *figs.* 90–91
 Gr. 747 (Octateuch) 62, 63n75, 64, 65,
 66, 124, 129, 136, 210, 233, *figs.* 28–29,
fig. 57, *fig.* 62, *figs.* 77–78, *figs.* 94–95
- Vatican, Museo Sacro
 Jewish gold-glass base depicting
 Tabernacle (4th century) 204,
 205–208, 242, 254, *fig.* 74
- water motifs, Dura-Europos Baptistry 18
 Waxman, Meyer 198n43
 Weinfeld, Moshe 38
 Weiss, Zeev 73, 75, 83n41, 117n68, 138
 Weitzmann, Kurt 6–7, 18n38, 100, 128,
 169, 171
 Wellesz, Egon 55
 Werblowsky, Zvi 88n65
 Wharton, Annabelle J. 24n71
 wilderness, Israelite encampment in, as
 reflection of divine pattern 231–234,
figs. 92–95
 Wilken, Robert 56
 Winston, David 43
Wisdom of Ben Sira 158n52, 171–174, 177
 Wolska-Conus, Wanda. 1n2, 2n6, 3n9,
 5, 47n1, 48n6, 48n8, 49–50, 59, 64n76,
 128, 298
 Woodward, David 2n7

- Yachin and Boaz, pillars of 195, 206, 263
 Yadin, Yigael 153n33
 Yahalom, Joseph 171, 174n37, 176
 Yeven Ze'ev 78n18, 287, 299
 R. Yehoshua 156n43
 R. Yirmiah 73n3
 R. Yishmael 154, 271
 R. Yochanan 26, 29, 81n32, 85n53
 R. Yochanan b. Zakkai 154n34, 155
 Yom Kippur 26, 129, 149, 159, 167, 170–174,
 176, 180, 219, 221, 223, 253, 271–272
 Yordei Merkavah 30, 85, 112
 R. Yosi 160
yotser ha'meorot prayer 84–85
 Zealots 147, 154
zichronot 164
 zodiac
 Creation denoted by 251
 High Priest's garments and 41
 showbread table as mnemonic device
 for 227
 synagogue mosaics, fourth-sixth
 century, Israel 71, 73–82, 86–87, 193,
 251, 286–287, 290, 295, 298
Zohar, Book of 107n34, 108n38

ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1. *Christian Topography*, a drawing of the universe as a rectangle topped by a hemispheric roof that depicts the “short side” of the Cosmos. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 38v. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 2. Silver Bar Kochba coin (obverse and reverse) 134–135 CE. Photos © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.



Fig. 3. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, the niche for the Holy Ark in the center of the western wall of the synagogue, 245–256. Images of the Temple, Menorah, Binding of Isaac. Photo after Catalogue from Damascus-Syria, 1990.



Fig. 4. *Christian Topography*, Second Parousia. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 89r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

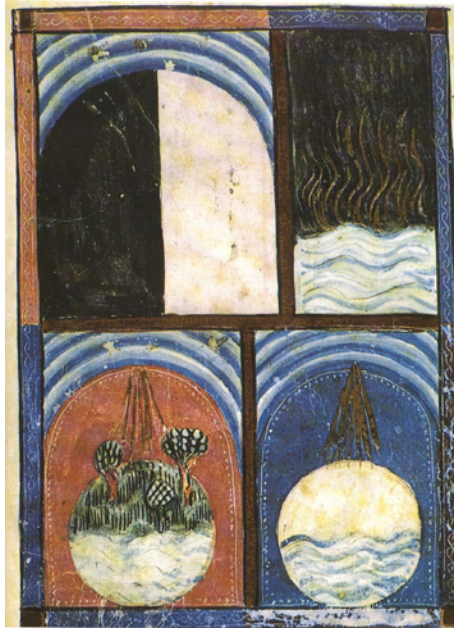


Fig. 5. Sarajevo Haggadah, Creation from primordial through Days 1–3. Passover Haggadah, fol. iv. Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Fig. 6. Sarajevo Haggadah, Creation of Days 4–6 and the Sabbath. Passover Haggadah, fol. 2r. Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

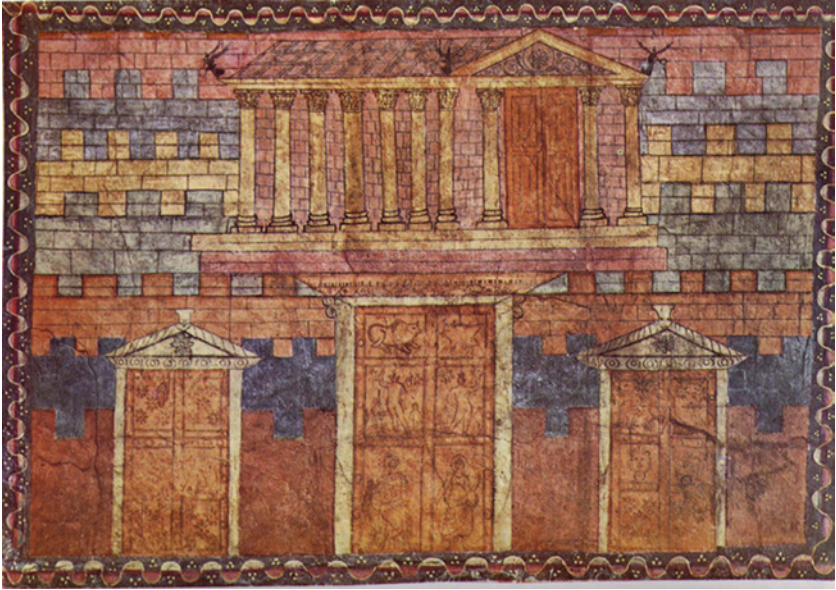


Fig. 7. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall, second register. Closed Heavenly Temple. Photo after Catalogue from Damascus-Syria.



Fig. 8. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall, second register. Consecration of the Tabernacle. Photo after Catalogue from Damascus-Syria.



Fig. 9. Dura-Europos, Christian prayer hall. The baptismal font, facing west.
Photo after Catalogue from Damascus-Syria.



Fig. 10. Dura-Europos, Christian prayer hall, above the baptismal font. Mural of the *Good Shepherd and His Flock*. Photo after Catalogue from Damascus-Syria.

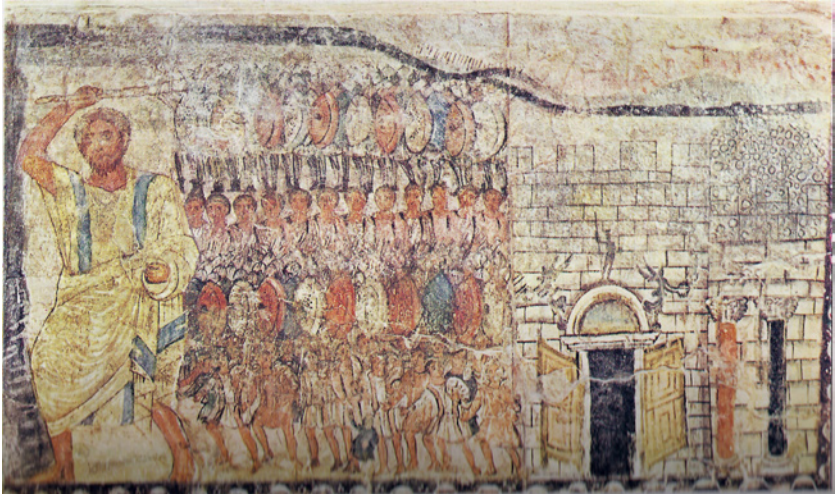


Fig. 11. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall, top register. The Exodus from Egypt. Photo after Catalogue from Damascus-Syria.



Fig. 12. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall, top register. The crossing of the Red Sea. Photo after Catalogue from Damascus-Syria.



Fig. 13. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall, second register. *The Miraculous Well of the Be'er*. Photo after Catalogue from Damascus-Syria.



Fig. 14. Dura-Europos, Christian prayer hall. Fresco of the Samaritan woman leaning over the well. Photo after Catalogue from Damascus-Syria, 1990.



Fig. 15. Dura-Europos, Synagogue, West Wall. *The Ark of the Covenant in Bet Dagan*. Photo after Catalogue from Damascus-Syria, 1990.



Fig. 16. *Sacra Parallela*, the image of Philo of Alexandria. Paris, B. N. gr. 923, *Sacra Parallela*, fol. 310v. Permission by Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 17. *Sacra Parallela*, John of Damascus, Cyril of Alexandria, Philo and Josephus. Paris, B. N. gr. 923, *Sacra Parallela*, fol. 208r. Permission by Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 18. *Sacra Parallela*, bust of Josephus Flavius. Paris, B. N. gr. 923, *Sacra Parallela*, fol. 226v. Permission by Bibliothèque nationale de France.

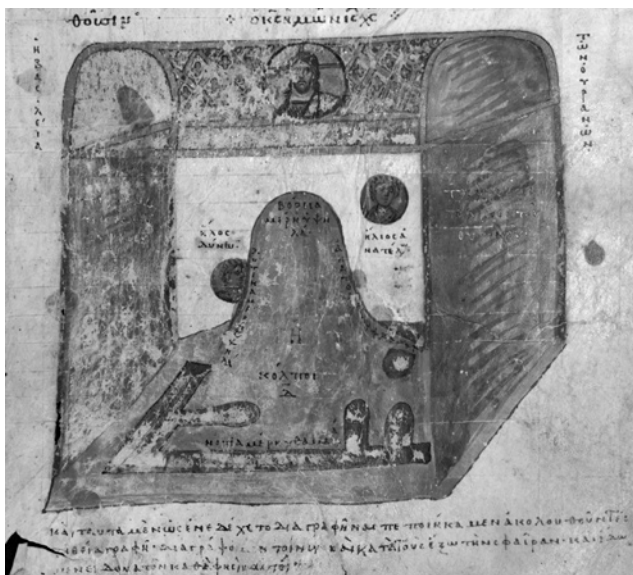


Fig. 19. *Christian Topography*, the “long side” of the universe, shown as a box. On its base a plan of the Earth, with its oceans and mountains, and the course of the sun. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 69r. Photos © Monastere de Sainte-Catherine, Sinai.

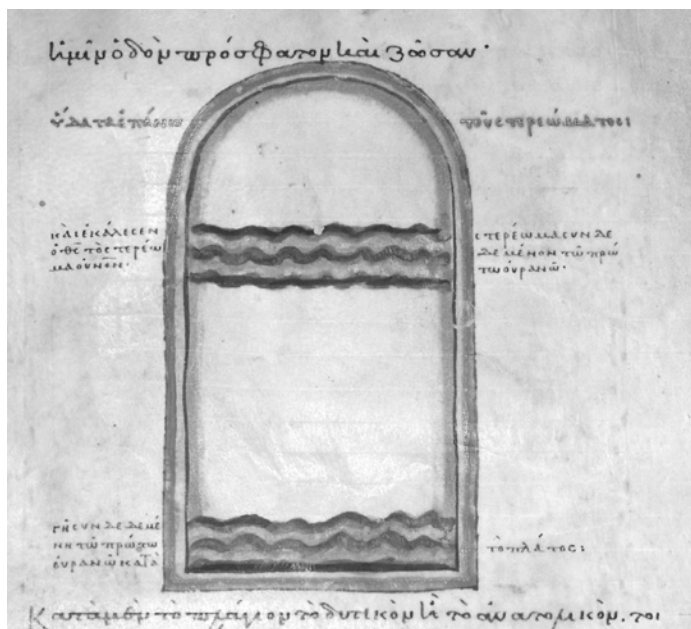


Fig. 20. *Christian Topography*, the arched rectangular pattern separated by a horizontal line; the firmament; water above and below the line. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 65v. Photos © Monastere de Sainte-Catherine, Sinai.



Fig. 23. *Christian Topography*, the Earth and the Heavens with the firmament. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 65r. Photos © Monastere de Sainte-Catherine, Sinai.



Fig. 24. *Christian Topography*, Heavens imaged as an immense blue arch over the mountain that represents the Earth; a bar represents the firmament. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 68v. Photos © Monastere de Sainte-Catherine, Sinai.



Fig. 25. *Christian Topography*, the ocean and the luminaries are joined with the Earth, shaped as a trapezoid, and surrounded by water. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 67r. Photos © Monastere de Sainte-Catherine, Sinai.



Fig. 26. *Christian Topography*, Earth as a rectangle, framed by water, the four winds blowing horns; inlets and streams on the dry land; Garden of Eden beyond the ocean. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 66v. Photos © Monastere de Sainte-Catherine, Sinai.



Fig. 27. *Christian Topography's* Constantine of Antioch's imaging of the "delineation of the Ark of Propitiation." Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 48r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 28. Octateuch 747, the image of primordial Creation. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 14v. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 29. Octateuch 747, First day of Creation; two zones, one dark and the other light, with the hand of God separating light from darkness. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 15r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 30. Octateuch 746, Second day, Creation of the firmament and the separation of the waters. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 22r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 31. Octateuch 746, Third day of Creation, separation of the seas and the dry land; Creation of the plants. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 23r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 32. Octateuch Serail 8, Fourth day, Creation of the heavenly bodies. Serail, cod. Gr. 8, Octateuch, fol. 31r. Permission by Topkapı Palace Museum Directorate.



Fig. 33. Octateuch 747, Fourth day, the Earth as a flat round surface with the two luminaries at the upper edge of the rectangle. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 16v. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 34. Octateuch Serail 8, Fifth day, Creation of the birds and marine creatures. Istanbul, Bibl. of Serail, cod. Gr. 8, Octateuch, fol. 32r. Permission by Topkapı Palace Museum Directorate.



Fig. 37. Jerash, Jordan, Church of SS Cosmos and Damianus. Mosaic floor. Photo—M. Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, 1993, Fig. 37, by permission of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.



Fig. 38. Jerash, Jordan, Church of SS Cosmos and Damianus. Mosaic floor, detail. Photo—M. Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, 1993, Fig. 38, by permission of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.

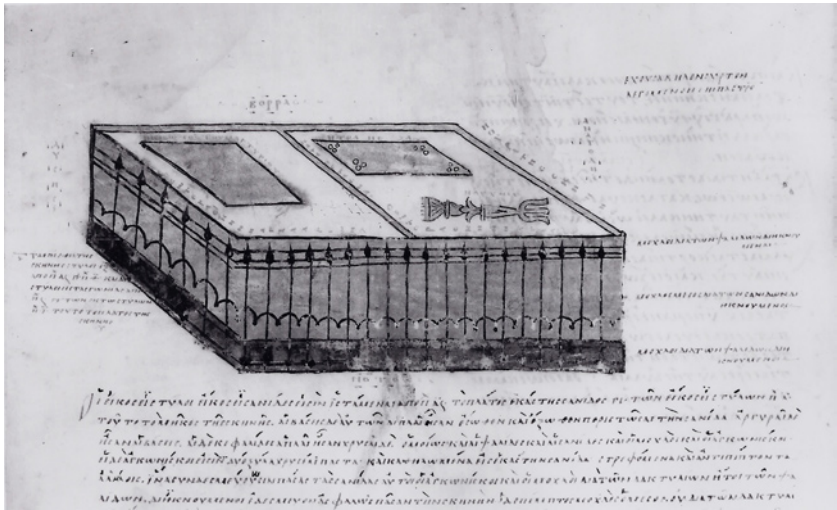


Fig. 39. *Christian Topography*, the outward form of the Tabernacle divided (by the veil) into the inner and the outer sanctuaries. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 46v. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

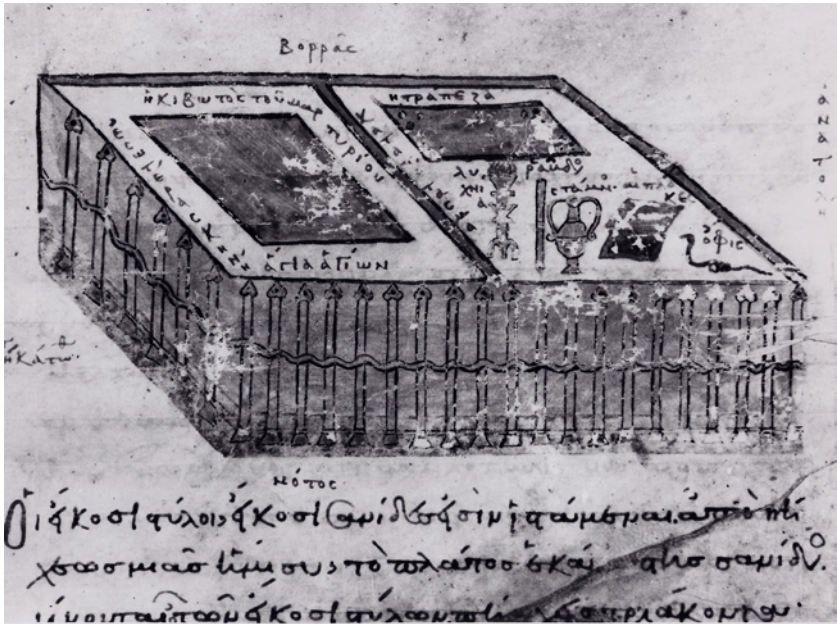


Fig. 40. *Christian Topography*, the outward form of the Tabernacle divided (by the veil) into the inner and the outer sanctuaries; additional symbols in one of the areas. Florence, the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. IX 28, fol. 107r. On concession of the Ministry for Goods and Cultural Activities.

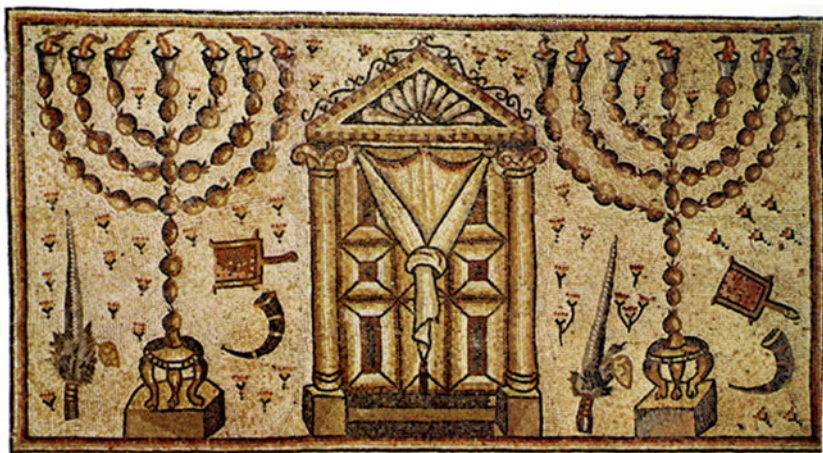


Fig. 41. Hammat Tiberias, Severos synagogue, fourth century. Top panel of mosaic floor, the Temple and its vessels. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 42. Hammat Tiberias, Severos synagogue, fourth century. Overview of the mosaic floor. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 43. Sepphoris synagogue, fifth century. Overview drawing of the mosaic floor divided into seven registers, each with two or three separate panels. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 44. Sepphoris synagogue, fifth century. Mosaic floor, menorah and other Jewish Symbols. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 45. Sepphoris synagogue, fifth century. Mosaic floor, the zodiac. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 46. Sepphoris synagogue, fifth century. Mosaic floor, the sacrifices of the bull and lamb. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 47. Beit Alpha synagogue, sixth century. Overview of the three bands of the mosaic floor. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 48. Beit Alpha synagogue, sixth century. Mosaic floor, uppermost panel, the Temple and its vessels. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 49. Beit Alpha synagogue, sixth century. Mosaic floor, the zodiac. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 50. Beit Alpha synagogue, sixth century. Mosaic floor, the Binding of Isaac.



Fig. 51. Na'aran synagogue, near Jericho, sixth century. Mosaic floor, overview. Drawing of the central nave divided into three bands. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 52. Na'aran synagogue, near Jericho, sixth century. mosaic's floor, a disfigured image of a personification of a season in one of mosaic's four corners. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 53. Sepphoris synagogue, fifth century. Mosaic floor, the zodiac sign of Sagittarius. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.

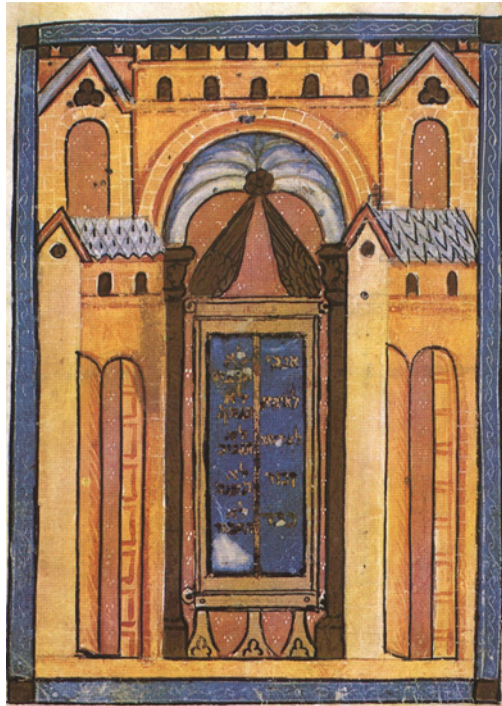


Fig. 54. Sarajevo Haggadah, "messianic Temple." Passover Haggadah, fol. 32r. Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Fig. 55. Sarajevo Haggadah, Jews leaving the synagogue. Passover Haggadah, fol. 34r. Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Fig. 56. Octateuch 746, the Enlivenment of Man (Adam) on the sixth day of Creation. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Cod. Gr. 746, Octateuch, Gr. Fol. 30r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 57. Octateuch 747, the Ark of the Covenant with the cherubim; Moses and Aaron touching the *kapporet*. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 106r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 58. Octateuch 746, the Ark of the Covenant with the Cherubim; Moses and Aaron touching the *kapporet*. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 231r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 59. Octateuch Serail 8, the Ark of the Covenant with the cherubim; Moses and Aaron touching the *kapporet*. Istanbul, Bibl. Serail, cod. Gr. 8, Octateuch, fol. 234v. Permission by Topkapı Palace Museum Directorate.



Fig. 60. Octateuch 746, Moses and Aaron before the Tabernacle, the cherubim and the ciborium on top. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 325v. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 61. Octateuch Serail 8, Moses and Aaron before the Tabernacle, the cherubim and the ciborium on top. Istanbul, Bibl. of Serail, cod. Gr. 8, Octateuch, fol. 333r. Permission by Topkapı Palace Museum Directorate.



Fig. 62. Octateuch 747, Moses writes the law; scroll with Moses' law deposited in the Ark. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 210r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 63. Bar Kochba coin, symbolic schema of the Temple. At the base of the coin, two parallel lines that suggest a low fence, the *soreg*.



Fig. 64. Arch of Titus, Rome, 81 CE. The seven-branched menorah on the Arch of Titus, which commemorated the Roman victory and was at the same time the symbol of the Jewish defeat.



Fig. 65. The *Judea Capta* series of coins, struck by the Romans as a symbol of victory, 71 CE. Silver denarius. *Obverse*: effigy of Vespasian; *Reverse*: Judea: Captive seated under a palm tree, with a soldier to the left of the tree. Source: Sed-Rajna G., *Ancient Jewish Art*, NJ 1985,36.



Fig. 66. Moshe Levine's model of the Ark of Covenant with the cherubim and the staves, according to the Bible. Photo: after Levine M., *The Tabernacle: Its Structure and Utensils*, London 1969, p. 91.



Fig. 67. A Bar Kochba coin pierced and converted into a piece of jewelry in 135 CE when the rebellion failed and the coin lost its value.



Fig. 68. Capernaum synagogue, considered one of the so-called early Galilean synagogues. A stone-carved lintel, shaped as the Ark of the Covenant on wheels.
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Fig. 69. El Khirbe, near Sabastia, Samaritan synagogue, fourth century. Detail of a panel depicting the Tabernacle and its utensils. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 70. Khirbet Samara, south of Nablus, Samaritan synagogue. Mosaic image of the Temple/Ark façade. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.



Fig. 71. Beit Shean, Synagogue, sixth century. Symbols of the Temple. Copyright holder—Israel Antiquities Authority.

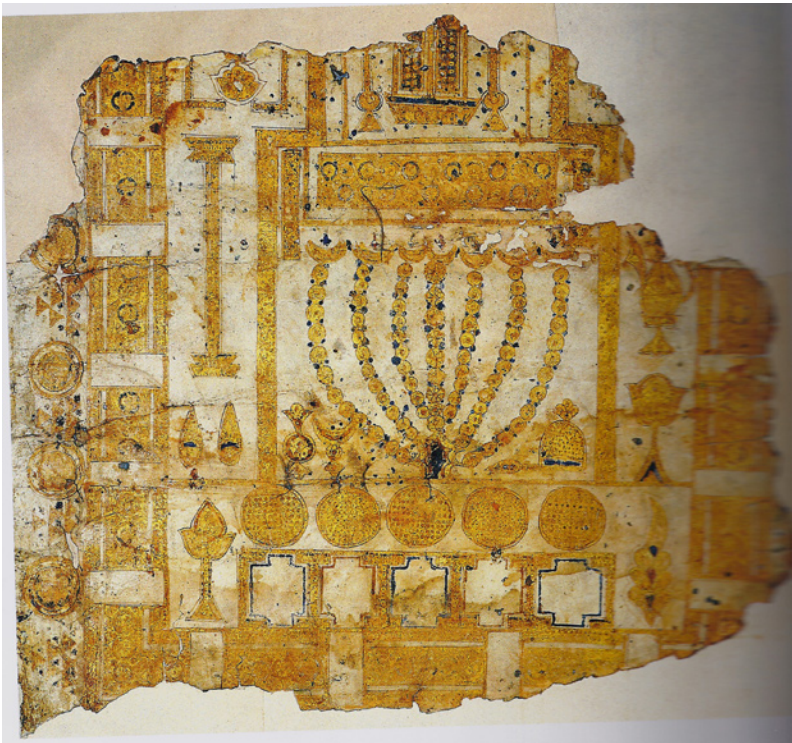


Fig. 72. First Leningrad Bible, Plan of the Tabernacle. State Public Library, illuminated by Shlomo ben Buya in 929 CE, Firk. Hebr. II B 17, fol. 4v. (after Günzburg, *Ornamentation*, plate II).



Fig. 73. First Leningrad Bible, Plan of Solomon's Temple. State Public Library, illuminated by Shlomo ben Buya in 929 CE, Firk. Hebr. II B 17, fol. 5r (after Günzburg, *Ornamentation*, plate II).



Fig. 74. Jewish gold-glass fragment, fourth century. A drawing made shortly after it was discovered. The fragment depicts the Tabernacle, the First and Second Temples images. Photo after De Rossi, *Archives de l'orient latin*, II, plate facing p. 439.

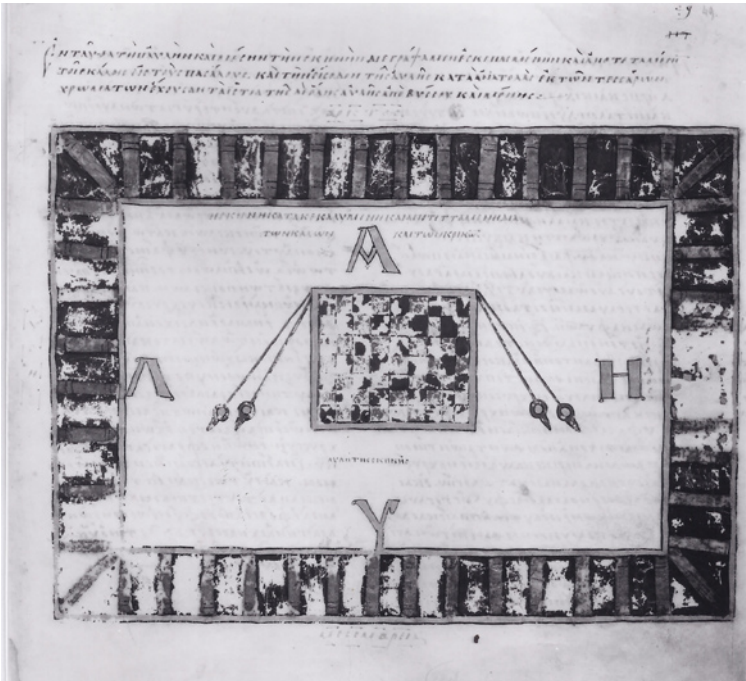


Fig. 75. *Christian Topography*, a tentlike structure framed by a rectangular colonnade viewed from above. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 49r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 76. *Octateuch* 746, The Brazen Grate in the Tabernacle with fire burning underneath. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, *Octateuch*, fol. 236v. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

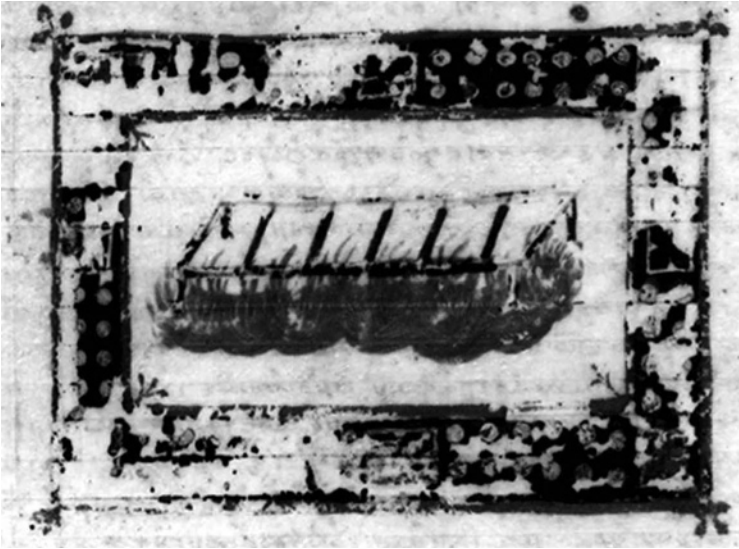


Fig. 77. Octateuch 747, The Brazen Grate in the Tabernacle with fire burning underneath. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 108r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 78. Octateuch 746. Moses ordaining Aaron and his sons. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 242v. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

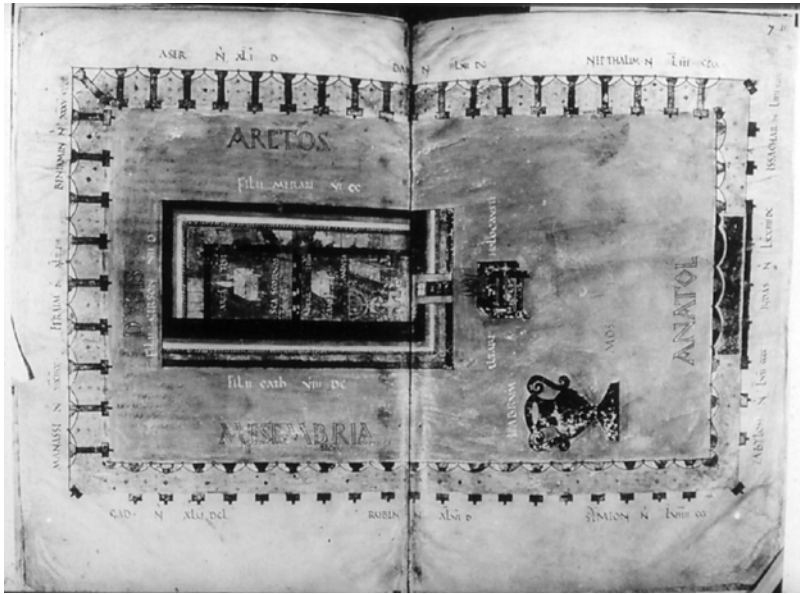


Fig. 79. Codex Amiatinus, the Tabernacle and its courtyard enclosed by rows of pillars and curtains on all four sides. Florence, the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Cod. Amiatinus I, Iiv-IIIr. On concession of the Ministry for Goods and Cultural Activities.

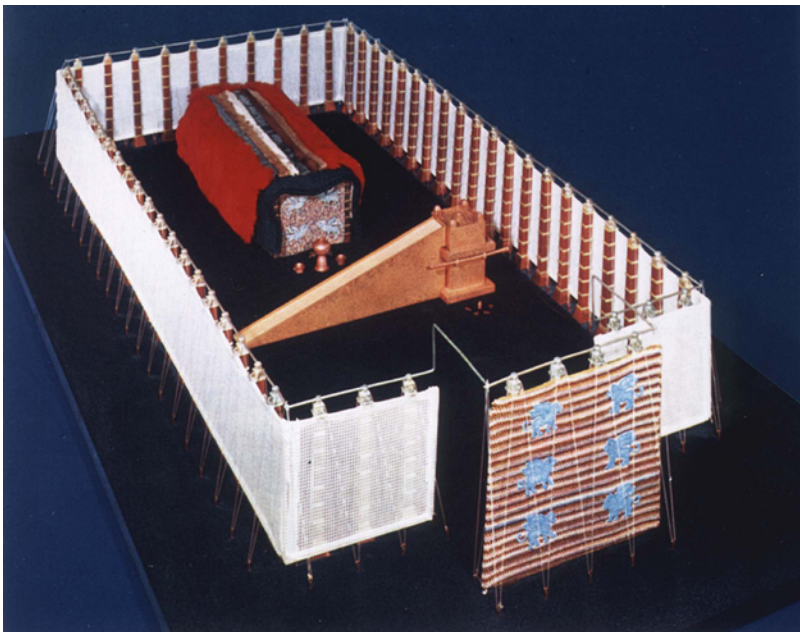


Fig. 80. Moshe Levine's model of the Tabernacle and its courtyard according to the Bible. Photo: after Levine M., *The Tabernacle: Its Structure and Utensils*, London 1969, p. 81.

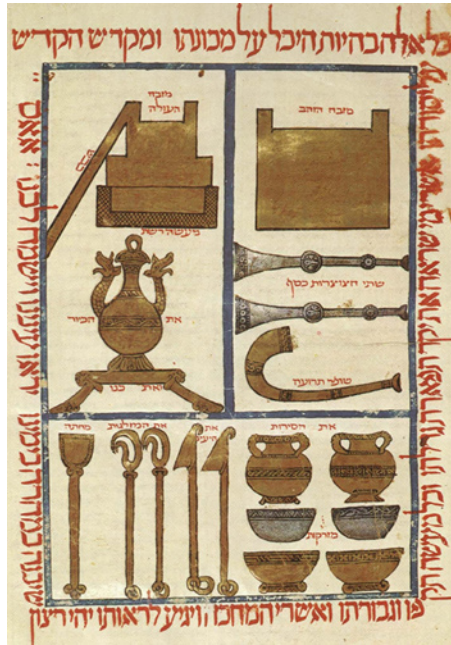


Fig. 85. Perpignan Bible frontispiece, the golden incense altar, two silver trumpets, the shofar; the utensils for the sacrifices, the incense shovel; the altar for the burnt offerings, and the laver. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Hebr. 7, Bible, fol. 13r. Permission by Bibliothèque nationale de France.

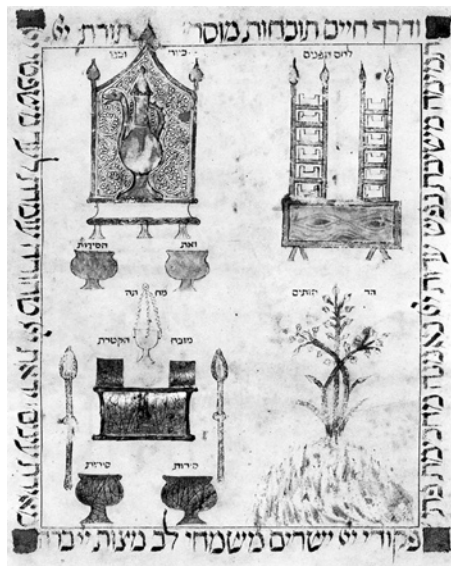


Fig. 86. King's Bible, an image of a small mound or hill topped with a tree and label in Hebrew next to it identifying the hill as the Mount of Olives. © British Library Board, London, King's I, Bible, 3v.



Fig. 87. Saragosa Bible, a full-page illustration of an olive tree framed by a verse from Zechariah prophesying the coming of the Messiah (Zech. 14:4). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale. Heb. 31, Bible, 4v. Permission by Bibliothèque nationale de France.

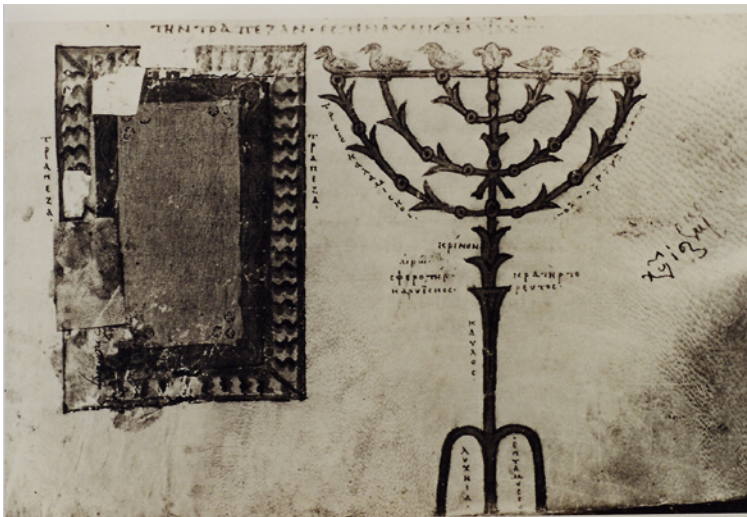


Fig. 88. *Christian Topography*, the showbread table next to the menorah with inscriptions that identify them as a table and a candelabrum. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 81r. Photos © Monastere de Sainte-Catherine, Sinai.

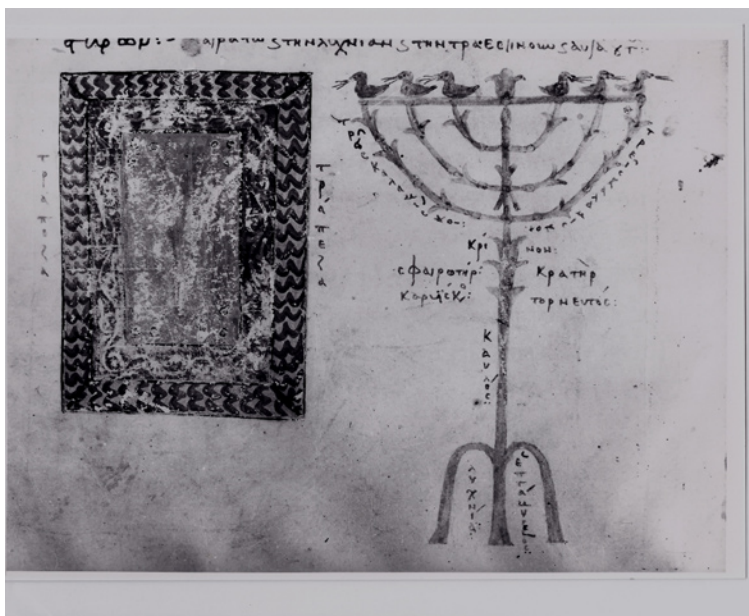


Fig. 89. *Christian Topography*, the showbread table next to the menorah with inscriptions that identify them as a table and a candelabrum. Florence, the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. IX 28, fol. 114v. On concession of the Ministry for Goods and Cultural Activities.



Fig. 90. Octateuch 746, the showbread table's outer frame has four small circles, one in the center of each side representing the loaves of bread. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 232r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

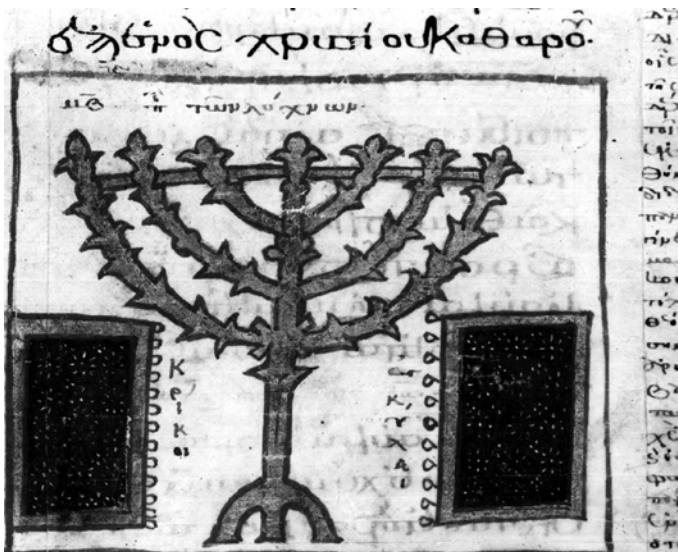


Fig. 91. Octateuch 746, a menorah, standing between two rectangles (the Tabernacle curtains), decorated with cups, knobs, and flowers. The candles on the horizontal bar are black lilies. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 746, Octateuch, fol. 233r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

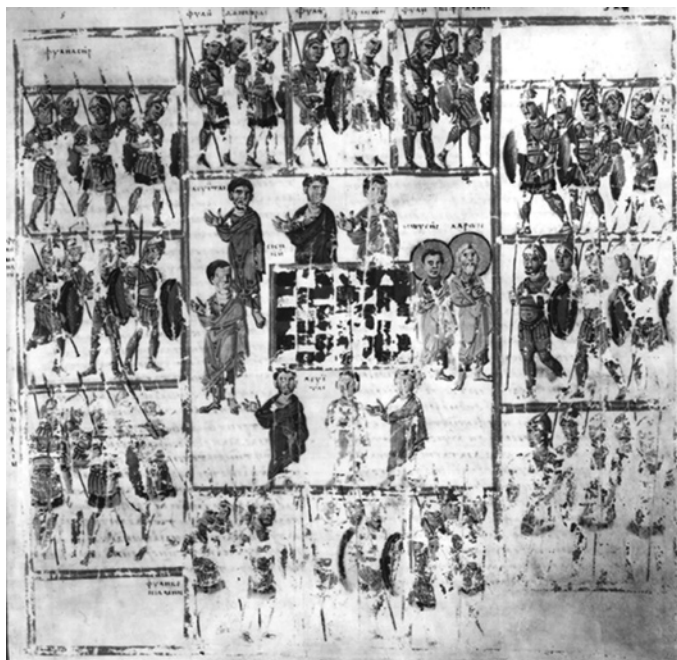


Fig. 92. *Christian Topography*, the desert encampment, the priests and the Levites around the Tabernacle surrounded by the twelve tribes. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 52r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 93. *Christian Topography*, encampment in the desert; Moses and Aaron are seen together with the priests and the Levites around the Ark/Tabernacle. Sin. Gr. 1186, fol. 86v. Photos © Monastere de Sainte-Catherine, Sinai.



Fig. 94. Octateuch 747, Mount Sinai with beams of light shining from its top as the Israelites depart to start their journey in the desert. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 747, Octateuch, fol. 160v. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 95. Octateuch 747, the tribes march and carry the Ark during their journey in the desert. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr.747, Octateuch, fol. 162r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 96. Basilewky pyxis, seen from front and back. St. Petersburg, Hermitage Museum.



Fig. 97. Basilewky pyxis, Aaron and sacrifice offerers. A drawing after the Basilewky pyxis, St. Petersburg Hermitage Museum.



Fig. 98. Basilewky pyxis, The Temple altar. A drawing after the Basilewky pyxis, St. Petersburg Hermitage Museum.



Fig. 99. Basilewky pyxis, under the lock of the pyxis, a stream of water coming out of the base of the mountain and flowing toward a tree with two branches. A drawing after the Basilewky pyxis, St. Petersburg Hermitage Museum.



Fig. 100. Basilewky pyxis, Moses receiving the Torah. A drawing after the Basilewky pyxis, St. Petersburg Hermitage Museum.



Fig. 101. *Christian Topography*, Moses at the burning bush and Moses receiving the Torah. Rome, Bibl. Vat. Gr. 699, fol. 61r. By permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 102. *Christian Topography*, Moses at the burning bush and Moses receiving the Torah. Florence, the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. IX 28, fol. 137r. Florence, the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.



Fig. 103. Jordan, mosaic floor in the Greek Orthodox Church, Madaba map. Images of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem using the same visual pattern as found in the *Christian Topography*. Photo – M. Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, 1993, Fig. 103, by permission of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.



Fig. 104. Mount Nebo, mosaic floor of Cappella Theotokos on Mount Nebo in Jordan, seventh century. Images of an arch-topped rectangular structure with a flaming altar and the remains of a deer and a bull on the sides of the structure. Photo – M. Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, 1993, Fig. 104, by permission of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.