

① The Origin and Significance of Jewish ^{Lund} pictorial art in Talmudic time. Göteborg

The origin of the commonly accepted opinion that Judaism is always and wherever hostile to images goes back to the Bible, Ex. 20, 4-5. There we read: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is above, in the earth

beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: (5) Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." It is true this command did not hinder King Solomon to put statues of lions on the steps of his throne or to have the twelve oxen cast for the bronze sea, because this did not mean

to worship them, but to use them as symbols of God's power and glory. The Bible itself does not forbid the use of images in art, but only the making of graven images for worship. The Talmudic sages were not called upon to begin with a prohibition of images, but to explain the commandment in a way that would not lead to a complete ban on art. The Talmudic sages were not called upon to begin with a prohibition of images, but to explain the commandment in a way that would not lead to a complete ban on art.

bowing ^{down} to them or
serving them. But this
command did prevent
Bileg Salomo from erecting
a statue of the Lord in
the Holy of Holies of the
Temple. There stood the
Ark of the Covenant
with the two Cherubim
on the lid. The Lord
himself was imagined
invisible sitting enthroned on
the two Cherubim.

But all these conceptions
were ~~reinstated~~ ^{reinstated}
when the "Israelites"
were led into the Baby-
lonian exile, 587 B.C.
Now they lived among
a population of heathens,
and in their temples
there either stood the
statues of their idols
or their images were
painted on the walls.
That did not fail
to impress all those
among the Jewish population
who were fascinated by the possibility of assi-
milation. [In the other

Most likely

re/dance

who were fascinated by the possibility of assi-
milation. [In the other

aroused

hand this attitude A2
the passionate resistance
of the conservative circles. For
them there existed only
one possibility, to prevent
their people from being
incorporated in their
surroundings, and
that was by underlining
and carefully fulfilling
all those laws and
prescriptions that were
peculiar to Jews and
different from their
neighbors. ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{most} ~~important~~ ^{of}
the most important of
mands it was the ban on images
derivable from the
quoted passage in the
book of Exodus.
But also after the return
of the Israelites to their
homeland they remained
faithful to the once adopted
course. ^{At the end of} ~~the~~ ^{even}
served to solve political
problems. It happened
that the Roman emperor
Caligula uttered the wish
to have his statue put
up in the Holy of Holies

and after
id. 10.101

mentioned in the text

now

it was not
intended to

know

proof

now

the ban on images

sex ob aut 50

and this time ^{slowly} in
the opposite direction with
regard to the images.

regard to the
In 70 A. D. Jerusalem
was conquered by the
Romans and the Temple
was destroyed. ~~That~~ That
meant that the Lord had
lost his abode. You con-
sider that the

lost this connection
sequence of that the
Synagogue-until then
the meeting place of the
community for prayer
and -ing of the Torah (and
worship - sacrificial ser-
vices) - now gained
a new designation. Every
place to be

every synagogue, became to be understood as a possible domicile for the homeless ^{poor} folk - the synagogues in Israel as well

as the synagogues abroad in the Diaspora.
Such a new understanding of the synagogue

1 - The Shebina -

and for the

is proved by quite A3
a lot of rabbinical
sayings. For instance
in f. Bereshit V, 8d:
"R. Yirmiya said in
the name of R. Abbahu:
Seek ye the Lord while
he may be found (Isaiah,
55, 6), where may he
be found? In the
synagogues and rabbi-
nical academies."

Or in Megilla 29a you
read: Where stays the
Shekhina in Babylonia?
Abbaya answered: in the
synagogue of Chizai
and in the synagogue
of Nehardea. But don't
think both here and
there, no, sometimes
here and sometimes
there."

All that means that
the synagogue had
become a substitute for
the lost Temple of Jeru-
salem. Now it was no
longer a meeting place
of the community, a
Rabbinical academy,
now it was the

המדרש
הרבני

abode of the Lord,
a "sacred place". And
this expression we really
find for the first time
in the 3rd cent. as a
designation for the
synagogue of Stobi in
Macedonia. In the
inscription in the syn-
agogue it is called "ἁγίος
τόπος", the greek expression
for "sacred place". In
the 4th cent. the synagogue
of Tiberias in Palestine,
is called "ahel gadisha",
what means the same
in aramaic, "holy
place"; in the 5th cent. the
synagogue of Jersa
is called "ahel gadisha"
and in the 6th cent. for
instance the synagogue of
Nauran. #

The synagogue of Hammam
Lif in North-Africa
of the 6th century is
likewise called
"sacred synagoga".

It is this new under-
standing of the syn-
agogue which offers also
an explanation for the
fact, that from the 2nd
cent. A.D. to the 3rd and
sometimes even longer
we find quite a lot of
sayings of Talmudic

sages against images in the A4
rabbinical writings.

The reason for this
apparently was, that
many a head of a sy-
nagogue,
self belonging to the
hellenistic assimilated
jewish circles, wished
to demonstrate the new use-
ing of the synagogue
by adequate images. This
of course aroused the
opposition of several
sages.

Thus we read in the
Mishna de R. Yisrael
to the verse of the bible
Ex. 20, 23: you shall not
make (with me gods of silver):
you must not say:
because the Torah has
allowed to make
cherubim in the Temple,
I shall make them in
the synagogues. That
means that in the 2nd
cent. the time of the
Mishna de R. Yisrael,
one either put statues
of cherubim into the

benjamin

mark

A synagogue or one
painted them on the
walls, which is more
probable.

presence

over

all walls

The struggle for and
against images which
had started in the 2nd
cent. with regard to the
Christian continued
in the 3rd cent. This
we read in Athanasius
III/1: "When R. Nubian
b. Simai died, they
covered the images by
mats (by rugs). They said:
As he did not want to
look at them as long
as he lived, he need not
be compelled to look
at them when he is
dead." Apparently this
story refers to a necropolis,
adorned by paintings
and the conservative
sage had protested against
them in his lifetime.

But apparently the
general trend would
not be stopped any
longer. Because we have
from the Enidole of the
3rd cent. the following
saying about the

A 5
famous Palestinian
falestidic sage Johanan
bar Nappacha, who died
279, is handed down
to us (Abhoda Zaré III,
3): "In the days of R.
Johanan bar N. they
began to cover the
walls with images and
he did not hinder them."
That means R. Johanan
did not put up with
a situation he could not
alter any more.

And really from the same
time, from the middle
of the 3rd cent. the
most evident proof
for the correctness of
this saying was found
in the thirties of this
century on the Euphrates
in Syria. It is the
famous Synagogue
of Dura Europos, which
was dug out by a French
American expedition in
the autumn of 1932. #
And here in the West
just behind the city-
Wall there was the

Ruinenhügel von D.E.

This is the mound
Tell of Dura Europos
after the excavation

Excavations in Synagogue

This is the interior of the synagogue.

entrance

entrance

of isolated scenes

entrance to the synagogue

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synagogue, the walls of which are partly preserved to a height of 7 m. # But the exciting thing about the synagogue, which made it so famous, is the fact, that all the four walls of the synagogue, as far as they are preserved, are completely covered by paintings from the Old Testament. We find there representations from Genesis, from Exodus, from the books of Kings, from the prophet Isaiah and from the book of Esther. In the collapsed ceiling there was a dedication inscription, which could be put together. From this inscription, written twice - in Greek as well as in Aramaic - we learn, that the synagogue as well as the paintings date from the year 245 A. D. Besides the inscription tells us,

...melodious throat

West-wall

that everything was A6
made thus as it is by
order of the head of the
synagogue, the arch-
synagogues. That means
of course that also the
paintings in the syna-
gogue were not tolerated
but ordered by the community.
Dura Europos, a little
town situated in the
remotest east of the
Roman Empire right
on the Persian frontier,
this town was of course
not the birthplace of
such a rich collection
of old testamental pain-
tings. It is understood
that their models were
brought here from one
of the metropolises in
the east of the Roman empire,
most likely from
Antiochia on the Orontes.

And this is the west
wall, the main wall,
with the niche of the Torah

shrine, which is always directed
towards Jerusalem, therefore

boot-arches

this time towards the west.
The marvellous state of
preservation of the
paintings can be ex-
plained by the fact
that this synagogue
was utilized only for
11 years, because in
the year 256 Dura Europos
was conquered by the
Persians and completely
destroyed. Before the
attack of the Persian
army the Roman
defending general
had ordered all houses
on the city wall to be
filled with sand, bricks
and rubble in order to
strengthen in this way
the city wall. Thus the
synagogue paintings
were buried for nearly
2000 years, until they were
found by the French-
American Expedition.

Painting of the Synagogue
had ^{been} started at the
panel above of the Torii shrine
and only if the syn-
agogue is comprehended

to return it as a gift
to the synagogue at
the Dura-Europos

Tora - Shrine

as a substitute A7
for the destroyed
Temple, as a sacred
place, as a $\alpha\gamma\iota\omicron\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\omicron\varsigma$,
we can understand
the meaning of the
paintings above the
niche of the temple shrine correctly.

On this coin we see several
different objects.

In the middle ^{there} is the
the picture of the facade of the

destroyed temple of Jerusalem.

Bar Kochba - Mure

This is a coin of Bar
Kochba, the leader of
the upheaval against
Rome 132-135 A.D., and

on the obverse there is
a picture of the ~~front~~ facade
of the temple.

At that time the appearance
of the temple was still well
remembered. We see,
the two pictures are
very similar.

Tree - Schrein

To the left there is a
picture of the 7-branched
candle sticks, which had
been in the temple as
well. The candle sticks
from the temple is

Titus - Bogen

Isaacs - Opfer D.E.

represented on the triumphal arch of the emperor Titus in Rome.

To the right of the facade of the temple there is a representation of the sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moria. This is the oldest figurative representation in the synagogue; apparently because of the ban on images the painter avoided to reproduce the human face. Therefore we see Abraham as well as Isaac on the sacrificial altar from behind. In the foreground we see the ram tied to the tree. Above the altar there is the hand of the Lord and Abraham is looking up to it. Now the question arises: what does the representation of the sacrifice of Isaac mean just beside the facade of the temple and above the niche of the Torah shrine? According to rabbinical tradition it was ^{on} Mount

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Maria, the mountain A 8
of the ~~sacrifice~~ of Isaac,
that bring Salomon later
on built the temple.
And the substitute of the
destroyed temple became the
synagogue ^{then}. Of course
every member of
the Jewish community
of Dura Europos-looking
at the Tora Shrine-niche
and the paintings above-
could grasp the signifi-
cance of his synagogue
based on an age-long
tradition.

But the synagogue of D.E.
was not the only synagogue
where pictures like
the sacrifice of Isaac
or the sacred of the
temple were used in
order to establish a
direct connexion between
temple and synagogue.
We find the same
subjects as in D.E. &
represented in the
Synagogue of Beth Alpha
not on the wall above,

modest to
power at 4m
Beth Alpha - Rebasstr.

⚡ This is a reconstruction
We see the niche of the
Torii shrine and the mosaic
on the floor.
The Alpha
Mosaic for Boden

but on the floor in
front of the niche
of the Torii Shrine. ⚡

The synagogue was
built at the beginning
of the 6th cent. and obviously
during the 3 centuries
the ~~whole~~ programme
had been enlarged.
Now the whole mosaic
on the floor serves
the purpose to announce
the message of Pura Eir.
The whole floor is divided
into three compartments.

Mosaic: Abraham's offer

In the first compartment
right behind the entrance
the sacrifice of Isaac
is represented in a
very popular manner,
but not by one but
by two scenes. On the
left we see the two
servants with the donkey
with the old man waiting the
return of Abraham.
On the right we see
Abraham lifting up
Isaac on the sacrificial
altar where the fire
is already burning.
Behind Abraham

Lin

Q. 11. 11. 10. 10. 10

The name is tied A 9
to the tree and above
the tree the hand of
the Lord with the
inscription in Hebrew
"lay not thine hand upon the lad."
Most likely these two
scenes were taken from
an illuminated
manuscript.

Mosaics: Tierkreis

In the next compartment
we see the zodiac, an
effigy of the year, and
in the middle the sun
in a coach drawn by four
bulls - driving through the
cycle of the year. In the
four corners there are
~~an~~ images of the four
seasons. The whole com-
position is meant
to represent ascent,
ascent through the
spheres, up to the throne
of the Lord, a distance,
a pious Jew is supposed
to cover by walking
from the entrance
of the synagogue
up to the Torah Shrine.

Mosaics: Sacra

In the last, the third

The Torii Shrine
in remembrance

because the Torii has allowed
to make cherubim in the
Temple, I shall make them
in the synagogue (Hebrew
de R. Yisrael: You must not say)

Gold glass Torii cherubim +
Vogel

This is a gold glass
from Rome with a
Torii shrine and two birds.

Mosaic: Sacred

compartment there
is a picture of a
Torii Shrine.

~~Or is it perhaps a~~
picture of the Arch of the
Covenant with the
two cherubim on the
roof. I think the
two birds on the roof
can only be expounded
in this way. #

By the two sides of
the Torii Shrine the
candlestick is now
represented twice, besides
several liturgical
utensils, and in the
foreground the lion
of Juda, a messianic
symbol, represented
twice as well. At the
two sides we see the
curtain drawn away.
— The ideological confor-
mity of this compo-
sition with the cor-
responding pictures
in the synagogue
of D. E. seems to be
convincing. In

both instances the imaged are meant to assert that this is a sacred place, the abode of the Lord. And in both instances equal images are used for an equal declaration.

Although Prof. Meyer Shapiro did not ^{yet} interpret the mosaic on the floor of Beth Alpha in this sense, he came anyhow to the conclusion, that "this pavement announces the art of the Christian world Ages with its systematic programmes of monumental theology."

~~Now let's go back to the synagogue of D. E. All four walls of the synagogue are divided horizontally into three registers with narrative compositions of the Old Testament and of rabbinical myth.~~

... it is not that ...
... the ...
... the ...
... the ...
... the ...

... the ...
... the ...
... the ...

... the ...

...

As the separate scenes
of a biblical pictorial
narrative often follow
the biblical text verse
after verse it was assumed
that the models were
illustrated manuscripts.
Of course one cannot
tell what kind of manu-
scripts these had been

but it can be stated,
that the pictorial models
frequently showed, over
and above the given
canonical bible text,
an intimate acquaintance
of ~~with~~ the rabbinical
interpretation of ~~any~~
every given verse. Maybe
the painters of the syn-
agogue worked with the
help of paraphrasing
bible translations
as models.
On the other hand,
the Dutch European
paintings abound
in allegorical hel-
listic allusions to
the surrounding
pagan world; these
were used to provide

manuscript

bible

D.E. Torii-Nische, Gesamt-
position

A 11

Now let's go back to
the synagogue of D.E.
first to the quasimuros above
the Torii shrine. Bet-
ween 245 - 256 - the
eleven years during
which the synagogue
of D.E. stood as it
was found upon
excavation - the
ideologically important
panel above the Torii
shrine was painted
over twice. Before the last
layer the panel was overpainted red.

Rotes Bild
At once after the excavation
the excavators were still
able to distinguish between
the three layers and had
drawings made.

1. Schicht

This is the original
panel as it presented
itself in the first layer
above the Torii shrine.
The tree of life, sym-
bolizing the Torii,
grows out of the
Torii shrine.

2. Schicht

This is the second layer,
the tree of life taken
over from the first
layer, but in the branches
a king is sitting on his
throne, two guardians
in front of him, and a lion.

3. Schicht, unten

This is the third and
last layer. Here

and, even

Gen. 49, 10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shilo come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

need not
of the ben
men's sin

one sees the drawings made at the time according to the instructions of the excavators, who were then still able to distinguish between the three layers. Bottom left: Jacob's blessing over the twelve tribes, according Gen. 49

The David - Orpheus figure shown above connects his blessing with the blessing given to Judah in Gen. 49, 10

Next to him the Lion of Judah.

Bottom right: Jacob's blessing over the two sons of Joseph (according Gen. 48) Ephraim and Manasse.

This corresponds to a rabbinic concept current by the middle of the 2nd cent. A.D., of a Messiah, the son of David

and a Messiah, the son of Joseph. The latter has the role of a suffering Messiah, the former is a victorious triumphant Messiah.

The scene in the top panel features most likely the Messiah of the End of Days, surrounded by the ministering angels.
#

3. Schild, Ober

This interpretation might explain why the community of Dura E. had started three attempts before being satisfied by the reredos.

Einflicks in Synagoge

The four walls of the synagogue are divided horizontally into three registers with narrative compositions of the Old Testament and rabbinical, midrashic and mystical traditions. Besides the linguistic frame of late antiquity had supplied its contribution.

As the separate scenes of a biblical pic-

period and

but warren

forial narrative often follow the biblical text verse after verse it was assumed that the models for the paintings had been illustrated manuscripts.

Of course one cannot say what kind of manuscripts these had been, but at any rate the pictorial models frequently show, over and above the canonical bible text, an intimate acquaintance of the refinical interpretation of the respective verse. Maybe the painters of the synagogue took illustrated paraphrasing bible translations as models.

On the other hand the Dura Europe paintings abound in allegorical hellenistic allusions to the understanding of the surrounding pagan world; these gave

the biblical narrative¹³
a degree of relatedness
to their contemporary
world.

Moses Kindheits - Zyklus

Of the decorations
of the western wall
I'll show you one
other sample besides
the paintings above
the niche of the torii
shrine: The story of
the infancy of Moses.

Moses - Kindheit
1. Detail

From right to left:
Pharaoh sits in a gesture
of speech before a wide
open city gate, which
symbolizes Egypt; a
scribe and a court
official stand beside
him. In front of him,
in a gesture of speech,
the two Israelite mid-
wives. Below, the basket
with Moses is thrown
into the Nile. To the
left, Pharaoh's daughter,
standing naked in
the Nile, the basket of
Moses in front of her.

2. Detail

read this

Moses is held in her left arm. Her right arm is pointing to two women, one of whom is handing the infant Moses to the other. The colours of their clothing are identical with those of the two midwives in front of Pharaoh. That corresponds to rabbinic tradition where it is said that the two midwives were nobody else but mother and sister of Moses. Also the bathing of Pharaoh's daughter in the Nile is a well known midrashic motive.

The three women standing on the shore behind the princess are the attendant maids mentioned in the Bible, but what are they holding in their hands? The first a jug, the second a basket and the third is holding a shell in front of her bosom. These objects identify them as myrrh.

Stein relief von Petani:

This stone-relief comes from a mytheion, showing three nymphs with their respective utensils and one holding the sun-god mythras as a baby.

Baal beb, Nymphe

According to A 14 the usage of late antiquity ^{mythology} nymphs were attending the birth and childhood of divine, of extraordinary children. # This mosaic of the fourth century is from Baal beb in Syria. Above

right we see Olympia, the mother of Alexander the great with a servant, and below Alexander the great as a child standing in a basin in front of a nymph who is bathing him. We read the inscriptions Alexandros and $\nu\nu\mu\phi\gamma$. In P.E. the three maidens should demonstrate the extraordinary and singular personality of Moses.

Moses - Kindheit

the liberator of the Egyptian bondage and the law-bringer from Sinai.

The mingling of rabbinic tradition and of concepts current in late antiquity is typical of the Dürer Europas paintings.

Ezekiel. 7. 1. Bild

Ezekiel 7, 1. Bild

king of new

is carried

On the North wall
I want to show you
the cycle of the resur-
rection of the dead in
the Valley of Dura,
according to Ez. 37,
1-10. By the hand of the
Lord the prophet, clad in
parthian-style clothing,
is carried to the valley which was
full of bones.

A split mountain and
a house collapsing
downhill symbolize
the eschatological
earthquake. By this
earthquake the limbs
of the corpses are
drawn together.

But it is expressly said,
that there is not yet
breath in the corpses. Then
the prophet points to the
corpses ^{which are} lying on the ground
a second time, and

a large antipne soul
divining with the wings
of butterflies is stan-
ding behind the corpses,
touching their heads.
Then the prophet, now
clad in hellenistic
clothing, bestows three
individual souls

Ezekiel, 2. Bild

bestowing breath.

to his side, destined
for the three corpses
on the floor. The concept
of the three stages of
resurrection is most
probably an allusion
to the analogous concept
of late antiquity, where
man is seen as a living
being consisting of body (σωμα)
and
it (πνευμα) and
il (ψυχη)

same concept is
ind in the 1st letter
the Thessalonians 5:23
by St. Paul. But the
cycle in the synagogue
proves the concept existed
quite some time before
on contemporary rabbinic
thought as well.

The figurative paintings
in the synagogue of
D.E. were certainly not
an exception. As was
suggested by the models
already. Finds after
World War II tended
to confirm the hypo-
thesis that the

(the models)

and I pray for your whole
spirit and soul and
body be preserved
flawless into the
coming of our Lord
Jesus Christ.

TH

2200001

Sardes Synagogue

excavated

of the 3rd cent.

saying:

Synagogues of late antiquity frequently featured figurative art.

For instance in the

Synagogue of Sardes in Minor Asia -

a dedication - it -

scription was found (the name is destroyed together with my wife Reping and my children have given the marble incrustation and the zoprepia as a present for the almighty god.

That means that in the synagogue of Sardes there had been figurative representations.

To this day nothing is known of Jewish pictorial art in the Western half of the Roman Empire, though Rome's biggest catacomb in the Vigna Randanini has a sarcophagus lid with a Greek inscription

behore v
20110-00

deban est pd

Jo "Eudoxius A 16
the painter of figures"
(Zoo graphos).

A 4th cent. catacomb
in Rome's Via Labina,
discovered as late
as 1955, turned up
some surprises:
besides Christian
scenes and scenes
of the Hercules myth,
it contained a great
number of scenes from
the Old Testament, 13
of which were hitherto
unknown in Rome.

Some of these scenes
cannot be satisfactorily
explained with the help
of the canonical bible
text alone - the back-
ground of traditional
rabbinic literature
is a prerequisite.

The question now
arises: did Jewish
pictorial art provide
models or not.

I want to show you
just one sample:

Via Sah'ur, Abraham +
3 Engel

The 3 angels visiting
Abraham in Mamre.

In the foreground Abraham
sits in a posture of speech
under a tree. In front
of the stone where he
sits, a small calf is
standing. Opposite
Abraham on a level
of terrace three young
men in a gesture of
speech are looking at
Abraham.

According to the text
of the bible, Gen. ch. 18
Abraham was sitting
in the entrance of his
tent. But when he
saw the three young
men visiting him,
he ran towards them
and bowed to the
earth. Then he
hurried to prepare
a meal for his
visitors.

This is a mosaic
in the nave of Sta.
Maria Merg. in Rome,

S. M. M. Abraham +
3 Engel

(Middle 5th cent.) The representation
corresponds to the
text of the bible.

Via Labium,
Abraham + 3 Engel

But the fresco in A 17
the Via Labium shows
Abraham sitting and
his visitors standing
in front of him while
they are talking together.
The rabbinic literature
provides an explanation
for all that, which we
can find already in
the ~~very~~ old Targum
Neophyti. There we
read that the three
angels visited Abraham
on the 3rd day after
his circumcision.

Because of his pains
the angels urged
Abraham to remain
sitting while they will
stand because of deep
respect to the circum-
cision of Abraham.

As the circumcision
has no meaning
in the christian religion
it is very probable that
here a Jewish model
was used.

In the catacomb there are several other
paintings with a
similar background;

The best known is of course the story of Pinhas running his spear through Zeuri and Corbi.

The middle of the 6th cent. A. D. witnessed a heightening of Jewish national consciousness; thus, for instance, in synagogal literature the Greek language was ousted in favour of Hebrew; and pictures were rigorously shunned. Nothing new was created, existing art was destroyed. It was practically the end of Jewish figurative art in all those areas in which Jewish pictorial art had flourished in late antiquity.

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