Jewish and Christian Art in the Middle Ages

The Dynamics of a Relationship

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In reading the bulk of art historical literature concerning the relationship between Jewish and Christian art during the Middle Ages one gets the impression of a one-way street, in which Jewish art is the giver and Christian the taker[1]. Even in cases where the resemblances between earlier representations of scenes like Christ's Entry into Jerusalem and later depictions of the Messiah approaching Jerusalem on an ass are mentioned[2], the art historical implications of a possible impact of Christian on Jewish art are minimalized or even denied by the preeminence given to the primary written sources (Zechariah 9:9, Micah 5:1, Isaiah 43:1) and by the typically Jewish context of the Haggadah, where the scene usually appears. This exemplifies one of the most characteristic mechanisms of argumentation in research dealing with Jewish-Christian artistic relations during the Middle Ages, a mechanism in which written and visual sources are too often confounded. An equation seems to have developed and taken hold of an important part of the art historical research, an equation between Jewish scripture (in its accessible Greek garb) and Jewish art: according to this concept, scenes depicting Old Testament stories are necessarily based on earlier Jewish prototypes, regardless of their immediate context, which is, in most cases, Christian, and regardless of the period of their making.

1) For example: K. WEITZMANN, The Illustration of the Septuagint, in: IDEM, Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination, 1971, pp. 45–75; IDEM, The Question of the Influence of Jewish Pictorial Sources on Old Testament Illustration, ibid., pp. 76–95; J. GUTMANN, ed., No Graven Images. Studies in Art and the Hebrew Bibles, 1971 (with studies by various authors); U. SCHUBERT, Spätantikes Judentum und frühchristliche Kunst, 1974; IDEM., The Continuation of Ancient Jewish Art in the Middle Ages, in: The Visual Dimension. Aspects of Jewish Art. Publ. in Memory of Isaiah Shachar (1935–1977), ed. by C. MOORE, 1993, pp. 25–46; K. SCHUBERT, Jewish Pictorial Traditions in Early Christian Art, in: H. SCHRECKENBERG, K. SCHUBERT, Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity, 1992, pp. 141–260; K. KOGMAN-APPEL, Die Modelle des Exoduszyklus der Goldenen Haggada (London, British Library, Add. 27210), in: C. THOMA, G. STEMBERGER, J. MAIER, eds., Judentum – Ausblicke und Einsichten, Festgabe für Kurt Schubert zum 70. Geburtstag, 1993, pp. 269–299.

2) As, for example, Hamburg Mahzor, Hamburg, State and University Library, Hebr. 37, fol. 35ᵛ. See: J. GUTMANN, When the Kingdom Comes. Messianic Themes in Medieval Jewish Art, in: Art Journal 27 (1967/68), p. 174, fig. 12.

Up to the discovery of the Dura Europos synagogue paintings in the 1930's[3], this was just a supposition, very much embarrassed by the Second Commandment. Since the discovery of that rich synagogue fresco cycle, dated before the middle of the third century, important schools of art history and especially the one which grew up around the late Kurt Weitzmann concentrated their efforts on questing after lost Jewish prototypes, antedating Dura Europos, to explain the formation of medieval Christian Bible manuscript illumination. Moreover, this school excels in »reconstructing« Jewish archetypes of early Christian and medieval book illumination, while constructing sophisticated genealogies and recension schemes. Generations of art historians have been educated to consider late medieval manuscripts as mere echoes of some (non-extant) Late Antique, Jewish prototype.

The scope of this paper is to show where the limits of the Jewish influence upon Christian art may lie, to introduce a more balanced perspective into this relationship, to describe it as an interchange, with a lively dynamic of its own, dependent, naturally, on time and space and sensitive to developing historical conditions. It goes through two phases of argumentation: first, I shall discuss one famous case raised by Weitzmann and repeated time and again by his disciples, pointing out some obvious weaknesses in the long chains of examples. Afterwards, I will argue in favor of a dialogue of constantly shifting directions between Jewish and Christian art, with the aid of a group of motifs amply represented in both camps from late antiquity on.

In a classical paper entitled »The Illustration of the Septuagint«, first published in German in 1952/3 and in English in 1971, Kurt Weitzmann pointed out similarities between the depiction of Pharaoh's order to the midwives Shiphrah and Puah to kill the male children of the Jews in the Dura synagogue fresco (Fig. 1) and in an eleventh century Octateuch manuscript in the Vatican Library cod. 747, fol. 72 (Fig. 2)[4]. The »striking« similarity is not even detailed by Weitzmann, while the dissimilarity in the position of the two officials is noted as follows: »in the miniature, however, the court officials, who in the fresco stand on either side of Pharaoh, have been moved to the left side«[5]. The only similarities one can observe are the grouping of the two midwives at Pharaoh's right and the speaking gestures of the three persons. While the first similarity could be accidental, the second is certainly based on the textual source (Ex. 1:15) which implies some talk, translated visually into speech gestures. However, it is in this particular aspect, which is among the few that support some closeness between the two representations under discussion, that the dichotomy between them is greater than the similarity: in Dura the representation has a more conversational character, Pharaoh and the midwives being placed on almost the

3) K. WEITZMANN, H. L. KESSLER, The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art, 1990.
4) Die Illustration der Septuaginta, in: Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst 3/4 (1952/53), pp. 96–120 (= IDEM, Studies, pp. 72–73).
5) WEITZMANN, Studies (supra, n. 1), p. 73.

same level, the two dignified women well separated one from the other and expressing an opinion of their own. Pharaoh's higher administrative position is stressed not only by his chair, suppedaneum, and the white canopy over his head, but also and mainly by his pronounced frontality and the two officials flanking him.

In the much later Byzantine miniature, the inner relationships between the various elements of the scene are completely changed: the building representing Egypt serves as background to the whole scene, the hierarchical differences between the actors are clearly emphasized through striking discrepancies in their statures and postures. The Pharaoh is a much bigger figure than all the others, although he is seated. Not only are the midwives smaller and almost fused into one person, but they are represented in humble posture, bending toward Pharaoh. The scene thus truly becomes the depiction of an alarming command, miles away from the demonstrative conversation at Dura. The differences between the two representations are certainly not only of a stylistic nature (stylistic differences are easily explained by the distance in time), but they have their roots in a different iconographical conception, therefore in a different iconographical source. To this we have to add another basic difference between the two representations, not ignored but also not taken into consideration by Weitzmann: the order to the midwives appears in Dura as part of a larger panel composition which depicts the whole story of the Finding of Moses. In the Vatican Octateuch, Pharaoh's Order is not only a framed, separate scene, but it is the only scene to stand for the whole cycle of the Finding of Moses[6]. This difference places the two representations on two different levels of narrative and deepens the discrepancy between their respective sources of inspiration.

Following in Weitzmann's footsteps, the chain of examples has been substantially enlarged by medieval Christian examples and finally closed off with fourteenth century Jewish representations, all considered to be derived from the third century Dura fresco, or from a still older prototype.

Closest to Dura is the representation of the still puzzling seventh century Ashburnham Pentateuch in Paris[7], especially because of the dignified appearance of the midwives. However, the huge finger of Pharaoh pointing at them, and the slight but effective backwards movement of the two women, as caused by fear and surprise, contradict the conversational atmosphere characteristic of the Dura representation. Also, the massive and complex architectural setting of the Ashburnham scene allows the officials to be situated in space according to a hierarchy different from that of Dura and from that of the Vatican Octateuch, pointing therefore to a third, different source.

6) In the other known Octateuch manuscripts, the Birth of Moses was illustrated instead. See: WEITZMANN, Studies (supra, n. 1), p. 73; J. LOWDEN, The Octateuchs; A Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illustration, 1992.
7) Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 2334. O. v. GEBHARDT, The Miniatures of the Ashburnham Pentateuch, 1883; B. NARKISS, Towards a Further Study of the Ashburnham Pentateuch, in: Cahiers archéologiques 19 (1969), pp. 45–59; WEITZMANN/KESSLER (supra, n. 3), fig. 40.

The Aelfric Paraphrase from the beginning of the eleventh century[8] shares a neutral background with the Dura fresco, and the submissive appearance of the midwives with the contemporary Octateuch. The women bow towards the kingly figure of Pharaoh, who is accompanied by only one official.

All the examples discussed so far display the figure of Pharaoh at the right side of the composition, which implies a development of the narrative from right to left. At Dura, this direction is stressed by the fact that all the other episodes of the Finding of Moses story develop further to the left of Pharaoh's conversation with the midwives. Parallel to this chain of examples, there exists another one which consistently places Pharaoh at the left. In a twelfth century English miniature in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (Fig. 3)[9], the left to right direction is continued through further episodes of the story, as in Dura in the opposite direction. In a recently published article, Ursula Schubert stresses the similarity of the two cycles pertaining to the infancy of Moses, at Dura and in the English Psalter, noting only that they appear in »a slightly altered form«[10]. Not only is the choice of scenes different (episodes of the childhood of Moses which constitute one quarter of the sequence in the Pierpont Morgan miniature are totally absent from the Dura panel), but even those few scenes in common (as the Finding of Moses and handing him to his sister Miriam and the nurse Jocheved) are differently distributed and framed, and differently conceived in every iconographical detail. In addition to all these, the Morgan episodes take the opposite direction, from left to right, as fits a Latin manuscript[11].

Two fourteenth century Catalonian Haggadot, adduced as part of the filiation starting with Dura Europos or even earlier[12], seem to me to rely iconographically only on the twelfth century Pierpont Morgan English Psalter leaf. The illustration on fol. 8ᵛ of the so-

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8) London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B. IV, fol. 73ᵛ. C. R. DODWELL, P. CLEMOES, eds., The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch, 1974; O. Pächt, The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in Twelfth-Century England, 1962, p. 5; reproduced in color in: SCHUBERT, Continuation (supra, n. 1), color pl. 1.

9) New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Ms. 724, fol. 1ʳ. K. WEITZMANN, The Question of the Influence of Jewish Pictorial Sources, in: IDEM, Studies, fig. 68 (first published in German in: Mullus. Festschrift Theodor Klauser (JAC, Ergbd. 1), 1964; A. HEIMANN, The Last Copy of the Utrecht Psalter, in: The Year 1200. A Symposium, 1975, pp. 318ss.; F. AVRIL, D. STIRNEMANN, Manuscrits enluminés d'origine insulaire du VII–XVᵉ siècle, 1987, pp. 45s.

10) The Continuation of Ancient Art, in: The Visual Dimension (supra, n. 1), p. 29.

11) The illustration in the Psalter in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. lat. 8846, fol. 2, (H. OMONT, Psautier illustré [XIIIᵉ siècle]. Reproduction des 107 miniatures du manuscrit latin 8846 de la Bibliothèque Nationale, 1907, pl. III) obviously belongs to a later date and a different tradition, considering both iconography and style, not only of this detail, but of the whole opening cycle. The Paris illustration is usually associated with the Morgan leaf and even supposed to originate in the same workshop (SCHUBERT, Continuation [supra, n. 1], p. 28). See also: KOGMAN-APPEL (supra, n. 1), p. 276; Heimann (supra, n. 9), p. 317s.; AVRIL/STIRNEMANN (supra, n. 9), p. 45.

12) SCHUBERT, Continuation (supra, n. 1), pp. 29s., fig. 23; KOGMAN-APPEL (supra, n. 1), pp. 276s.

called Golden Haggadah in the British Library (Fig. 4)[13] shows Pharaoh seated on an imposing throne with suppedaneum under a high, architectural canopy which seems to substitute for the high back of Pharaoh's throne in the Pierpont Morgan leaf. In both manuscripts Pharaoh's body is similarly turned toward the right, to address the two slender figures of the midwives approaching from that side. In the Golden Haggadah, a barefoot figure to the right, casting a male child into the river, parallels the group of Moses's mother taking him to the river in the English manuscript. The somewhat later, so-called Sister Haggadah in Barcelona displays on fol. 1ᵛ basically the same iconography as the Golden Haggadah[14]. Some additions occur since the division of the page into two scenes (and not four as in the Golden Haggadah) allows more space: two officials witness the scene from behind Pharaoh's seat and a tree separates the midwives from the casting of the child into the river. Similar to the Golden Haggadah and to the Morgan leaf is the architectural appearance of Pharaoh's throne and the mutual relationship between Pharaoh and the midwives.

We were able to detect iconographical connections in this last chain of examples including two fourteenth century Spanish Haggadot and two, most probably, English Psalters from the twelfth century. Whether some direct, specific link existed between them, or whether they are only reflections of iconographical topoi characteristic of Western European late medieval art, is a dilemma which will have to be solved on the basis of a much broader and intensive comparison between the two groups. For the time being and for our purposes it would be fair to conclude that this last group of examples represents an iconographical branch of its own in the long history of visual depictions illustrating Pharaoh's order to the midwives.

This review of extant depictions of Pharaoh's order to the midwives, a scene with a typical but not too wide distribution in the Jewish and Christian art of the Late Antique and medieval periods, shows that the theory trying to order all these representations in a single sequence and make it dependent on a single, Jewish archetype, ante-dating Dura Europos, is, at the best, exaggerated. During the discussion I have already hinted at a different way of considering these representations and at the necessity to operate on much smaller segments than is usually done in this branch of medieval art history. The next chain of examples will strengthen this conclusion, while offering substantial material for a new approach to the controversial issue of Jewish-Christian relationships as reflected in the respective works of art.

The representations pertaining to our next chain of examples belong to different media and times, and sometimes they even present us with different choices of motifs. However,

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13) London, British Library, Add. 27210, fol. 8ᵛ, in: B. Narkiss, Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles. A Catalogue Raisonné, vol. 1: The Spanish and Portuguese Manuscripts, 1982, pt. 2, pl. XX–IX, fig. 136.
14) Barcelona, Or. 2884, mid 14th century. Ibid., fig. 175.

they all share something very basic: they are all equally far away from narrative and, even when closely dependent on a specific text, they are imbued with a message clearly hinting at Messianic times. Additionally, they were all, although at various degrees and times, born out of a dialogue with Christian art. The nature of this dialogue, its changing faces at different times, is our concern in the second part of this article.

I would define the subject matter that we are going to discuss as a composite representation of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness and the Temple of Solomon. The very fact of their mingling already tells us that the intention underlying such representations was not historical and narrative but symbolical, with clear reference to Messianic, eschatological times. While the content is common and obvious, the social, religious and political framework obviously changes, as does its visual translation. Included in this large group of Tabernacle/Temple representations are iconographical themes variously labelled as: Temple façade, Consecration of the Tabernacle, Temple implements, Future Temple, Heavenly Temple, etc. In the course of detailed studies aiming to detect the precise biblical sources of a given representation, or to identify the implements depicted, or to delineate the historical scene behind each composition, the specificity of various groups of visual representations was overlooked and they all became one single, uninterrupted chain, courageously bridging between East and West, Late Antiquity and late Middle Ages and over hundreds of years of interruption in extant Jewish monuments.

The gabled façade flanked by *menoroth*, *shofar*, *lulav*, and *ethrog* strikes us by the consistency of its appearance in Galilean synagogues as floor mosaic decoration. We find it, with slight changes, from the fourth century synagogue in Hammath Tiberias (Fig. 5)[15], through the fifth century synagogues in Beth Shean[16] and Sepphoris[17], to the sixth century synagogue in Beth Alpha (Fig. 6)[18]. The synagogues of Horvath Susyia and Na'aran in the south document the large distribution of this motif in the early Byzantine era[19]. However, the motif is still older, originating in the Bar-Kokhba period, when it appears, in an

15) M. DOTHAN, The Synagogue at Hammath-Tiberias, in: L. I. LEVINE (ed.), Ancient Synagogues Revealed, 1981, pp. 63–69.
16) A. COHEN-MUSHLIN, Synagogue floor mosaic with temple façade and implements, in: K. WEITZMANN, ed., Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century. Catalogue of the Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1976, Nr. 371; M. J. CHIAT, Synagogues and Churches in Byzantine Beit She'an, in: Journal of Jewish Art 7 (1980), pp. 7–10; L. Roussin, The Beit Leontis Mosaic: An Eschatological Interpretation, ibid. 8 (1981), pp. 6–19.
17) Z. WEISS, E. NETZER, Promise and Redemption. A Synagogue Mosaic from Sepphoris, 1996.
18) E. L. SUKENIK, The Ancient Synagogue of Beth Alpha. An Account of the Excavations Conducted on Behalf of the Hebrew University Jerusalem, 1975.
19) S. GUTMAN, Z. YEIVIN, E. NETZER, Excavations at the Synagogue of Horvath Susyia, in: Qadmoniot 5,2 (1972), pp. 47–52 (Hebrew); G. FOERSTER, Allegorical and Symbolic Motifs with Christian Significance from Mosaic Pavements of Sixth-Century Palestinian Synagogues, in: Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land. New Discoveries. Essays in Honour of Virgilio C. Corbo, OFM, 1990, pp. 545–552, fig. 1.

incipient form, on coins[20]. The wandering of the motif from a public and official to an individual and funerary context, as in Beth Shearim[21], or in gold glasses (as those in the Israel Museum)[22], is only symptomatic of the broad spectrum of its message, as well as of its popularity. The composite subject of Temple, or Ark, or synagogue façade, accompanied by implements characteristic of the historical Temple, as well as of the historical Tabernacle and the synagogue, is the quintessence of Messianic hopes of redemption[23]. The location of the motif in the synagogue building marks a certain shift in its symbolism, towards messianic hopes with a national dimension. The panel containing this composition on synagogue pavements is always placed pointing toward the Torah niche in the wall facing Jerusalem.

With such a broad and consistent distribution, and such a high relevance to the history and beliefs of the Jews after the fall of the Second Temple, there can be no doubt that the motif of the Temple façade combined with Temple implements is a genuine Jewish motif originating and mainly developing in Eretz Israel. Thus, when we find it in a sixth century church in Khirbat al-Mukhayyat, the ancient town of Nebo in Moab[24], in a location parallel to that it occupies in the synagogue, namely facing the apse, the question of primacy is easily answered. But, beyond this, a careful examination of the changes introduced by the Christian artist testifies to his thorough understanding of the motif and its symbolism; moreover, the changes document a controversial statement formulated in a common language. Flanking the gabled façade are not *menoroth* but candlesticks (= sanctuary implements) and peacocks. Together with the cocks taking the place of acroteria, they identify the building as a Christian sanctuary, thus opposing it to the Temple represented in the synagogue mosaics[25].

The typically local character of the Palestinian floor mosaics decorated with Tabernacle/Temple implements is further enhanced by the inner development they display. If we look again at the close sequence of Galilean mosaics, we will immediately remark the totally different character of the latest among them, the Beth Alpha mosaic (Fig. 6). While employing well known motifs, Beth Alpha demonstrates a somewhat different spirit than

20) Y. MESHORER, Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period, 1967; L. MILDENBERG, The Coinage of the Bar Kokhba Period, 1984.

21) B. MAZAR, Beth She'arim, Report on the Excavations during 1936–40, vol. 1, 1957, pp. 121s., pls. 32–34; N. AVIGAD, Excavations at Beth She'arim, 1955. Preliminary Report, in: Israel Exploration Journal 7 (1957), pp. 73–92, esp. 90s., Tab. 23A.

22) From the Beginning. Archaeology and Art in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 1993, figs. 24s.

23) B. Kühnel, From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem. Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium, 1987, esp. pp. 107–111.

24) M. PICCIRILLO, The Mosaics of Jordan, 1993, pp. 174s., figs. 228, 230; H. MAGUIRE, Earth and Ocean. The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art, 1987, p. 72.

25) G. KÜHNEL, Gemeinsame Kunstsprache und rivalisierende Ikonographie: Jüdische und Christliche Kunst in Galiläa vom 4.–7. Jahrhundert, in: Oriens Christianus 79 (1995), pp. 197–223.

the earlier Jewish mosaics, the difference being caused this time by the desire to oppose the powerful presence of the Christians and the wealth of their art by a declaration written in a common language.

The synagogue in Beth Alpha is a basilica with clear axiality, the Torah niche being an apse almost as broad as the nave, placed facing the main entrance, with two rows of columns defining the nave between them. The basilica had three entrances, a narthex, and an atrium. In a word, a typical longitudinal church plan, like many in the Holy Land. The framed rectangular floor mosaic of the nave contains a tripartite symmetrical composition perfectly conforming to the architectural structuralization of the building: the central, larger panel is occupied by a square composition identical with that of Hammath Tiberias (Fig. 5) and containing the Zodiac circle around Sol in a frontal quadriga, and the four Seasons in the corners. At the opposite side of the Temple façade, facing the entrance, a scene not found in the fourth century mosaic of Hammath is added in Beth Alpha: the Sacrifice of Isaac in a quite detailed rendering, very different from the emblematic depictions of the Zodiac and the Temple. This suggests that the decorators of the Beth Alpha synagogue were eager to emphasize the historical aspect of Abraham's Sacrifice, in an attempt to prove the rightfullness and the primacy of their claim to Mount Moriah, the Temple, and the Covenant. The proof was not as necessary in fourth century Galilee as it became in the sixth. The fifth century, recently uncovered mosaic in the Sepphoris synagogue represents a transitional phase in the structuralization process of this theme, in which the Sacrifice of Isaac is introduced together with several other cult scenes and implements, thus enriching the original scheme visible in Hammath Tiberias. The Jewish-Christian confrontation in Galilee reached a new phase in the sixth century, corresponding to the Christianization process at its peak. The mosaic floor in Beth Alpha reveals a Jewish community as confident and self aware as before, but more receptive to the Christian language, who had in the meantime perfected a whole typological system, a Jewish art meeting Christian art on the same level, and facing the Christian community with a re-assertion of its own historical right to the Temple Mount and to Jerusalem. The mosaic in Beth Alpha, born out of a polemical spirit, makes it clear that the Messiah is still to come, the so-called »Old« Covenant still in vigour.

The association between Akedah and Temple is found already in the third century Dura Europos synagogue (Fig. 7). The novelty in Beth Alpha consists not in the choice of scenes, but in their hierarchical arrangement and architectural structuralization. The background which generated the representations in Dura and in Beth Alpha might have been similar. Herbert Kessler argues in favor of an interpretation of the Dura synagogue decoration program as a response to Christianity, as a re-assertion of the Jewish claim to the still un-abrogated status of the Chosen People[26], a claim which parallels the urgency of that expressed by the Beth Alpha mosaic when compared with the earlier Palestinian floor mosaics.

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26) H. L. KESSLER, Program and Structure, in: WEITZMANN/KESSLER (supra, n. 3), pp. 153–183.

However, the visual expressions of the same system of associations and messages are different. In Dura, a Temple façade above the Torah-niche is flanked principally by a *menorah* on the left and an altar on the right. Other, smaller, objects and figures complete this composition: *lulav* and *ethrog* on the left, Abraham and the Ram on the right. The Akedah appears as one of the attributes of Mount Moriah and has not the same monumental and cosmic impact as in the Beth Alpha mosaic, certainly not the same compositional weight. The two other frescoes which depict the Tabernacle and the Temple in the Dura Europos synagogue also document a visual tradition alien to the Palestinian floor mosaics of the early Byzantine period. On the second zone of the western wall (second panel from left) the Consecration of the Tabernacle is depicted (Fig. 8), according to Exodus, various chapters, and Numbers 7:89–8:2. The desert tent is replaced by a Roman temple and the enclosure by a crenellated wall with three portals. The intention was most probably to suggest the future Temple, but in a way very different from that of the Palestinian artists during the fourth and sixth centuries. On the same zone and wall, on the first panel right of center, the Walls and the Temple of Jerusalem (Fig. 9) according to 2 Samuel 5:9 and 1 Kings 6 are depicted. The solid walls, the Roman temple and the tripartite portal are very much like those meant to visualize the Tabernacle in the previously discussed fresco. The similarity in the architectural rendering of the two different subjects further documents the symbolical identification of the Tabernacle with the Temple in Jewish art and thought.

In the research, the Palestinian mosaics and other works similarly depicting the joint image of the Tabernacle and Temple are invariably related to the Dura Europos frescoes. From our discussion it is clear that the two groups belong to two distinct visual traditions: that of Dura can be labelled as a Late Antique tradition, very much dominated by Roman architecture (as were also the Bar Kokhba coins), while the Palestinian group of mosaics can be considered a local, original development, taking into account the typical Temple/Tabernacle panels in their singular iconographical association with the Zodiac. The wide distribution of this iconography in Palestine, not only on synagogue floor mosaics but also in funerary art, is a further proof of its genuine local character.

The chain of Jewish Temple/Tabernacle representations has been stretched, in scholarly writing, up to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, north to the Alps and west to the Pyrenees. Following this concept, two Egyptian Bible fragments dated in the year 929 are considered as the bridge between early Byzantine floor mosaics and late medieval manuscripts (Fig. 10). The fragments belong to a Bible manuscript found in the Karaite synagogue in Fustat (ancient Cairo) and taken by Abraham Firkovitz to Crimea in the nineteenth century. Thence the manuscript reached the Imperial (today Public) Library of St. Petersburg[27]. Both fragments show composite representations of the Tabernacle/Temple. Architectural elements play an important role, apparent, for example, in the triple portal,

27) St. Petersburg, Public Library, Ms. II. 17. Facs. ed. with introduction by B. NARKISS, 1990.

very explicit in one fragment, stylized in the other. The composition is centered around an axis formed by the superposition of portal, *menorah*, and Ark of the Covenant. Architectural elements and axial composition are also characteristic of the Palestinian floor mosaics and objects, although they differ in details. The geographical closeness could have offered a solid ground for the continuity of the same visual tradition in Jewish art from the sixth to the tenth century. In any case, the St. Petersburg miniatures are closer to the Palestinian synagogue mosaics of the fourth-sixth centuries than to the ninth century Byzantine miniature of the Mount Athos Psalter, Pantocrator 61[28] or to any Octateuch representation of the eleventh or twelfth centuries[29].

As much as I acknowledge the similarities between the Egyptian Bible fragments and the Palestinian floor mosaics, in spite of their chronological distance, I see no reason at all to stretch the linkage up to fourteenth-fifteenth century Spain.

A fairly large group of Jewish Bibles are known, which were copied and illustrated from the end of the thirteenth century and up to the fifteenth in Spain and Roussillon. Many of them are opened by a full page or a double full page miniature depicting various implements of the Tabernacle and the Temple. More than once, this constitutes the only full page miniature in the whole manuscript. These Spanish Bible manuscripts are well known, and they have been published, analyzed, and discussed many times[30]. Most efforts have been invested in identifying the objects depicted and establishing the correlation with the relevant texts; in comparing the manuscripts to each other and defining the shape of the objects and their source; and also in discussing the connections with earlier Jewish art. Most scholars agree that the Spanish miniatures with Temple/Tabernacle implements go back, via the St. Petersburg fragments and the Palestinian mosaics, to Dura Europos, thus building a continuous chain of Jewish representations of a typically Jewish topic. Even Thèrese Metzger, who opposed this view, does not substantially contradict the inner Jewish development of the theme, only shortening it considerably by linking the Spanish miniatures with the eleventh and twelfth centuries Commentaries to the Bible by Rashi and Maimonides, which were accompanied by schemes of the Temple and Tabernacle[31]. Although almost no

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28) S. Dufrenne, Psautiers grecs, vol. 1, p. 34 and pl. 26, fol. 165; Idem, Une illustration ›historique‹ inconnue du Psautier du Mont Athos, Pantocrator No. 61, in: Cahiers archéologiques 15 (1965), pp. 83ff.

29) Lowden (supra, n. 6), figs. 120–132.

30) The following is only a selection of the rich literature devoted to the Spanish Bibles: C. Roth, Jewish Antecedents of Christian Art, in: JWCI 16 (1953), pp. 24ss., esp. 37–41; J. Gutmann, When the Kingdom Comes. Messianic Themes in Medieval Jewish Art, in: Art Journal 27 (1967/68), pp. 168–175; C.-O. Nordström, Some Miniatures in Hebrew Bibles, in: Synthronon, Art et Archéologie à la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age, 1968, pp. 89–105; T. Metzger, Les objets du culte, le sanctuaire du désert et le Temple de Jérusalem, dans les bibles hébraiques médiévales enluminées, en Orient et en Espagne, in: Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 52 (1969/70), pp. 397–436, esp. 399; 53 (1970/71), pp. 167–209; Narkiss, vol. 1 (supra, n. 13).

31) Metzger (supra, n. 30), p. 414.

one fails to mention the opening page of the Northumbrian Codex Amiatinus (Fig. 12) in this context, the Christian miniature is incorporated in the chain, its Jewish origin taken for granted[32].

If we look, for example, at the double page depiction of the Temple/Tabernacle implements in one of the earliest dated manuscripts of the Sephardic group, the Perpignan Bible in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, from 1299 (Fig. 11)[33], we observe the striking differences between this representation and that of the Palestinian mosaics, or gold glasses, or of the Dura frescoes: the various implements, of different dimensions and mostly presented in side-view (in other manuscripts the Ark is sometimes seen from above), are arranged on a neutral background, inside a neutral rectangular frame, in no apparent order. It seems as if the artist was solely concerned to fill the space harmoniously and to visualize the objects as clearly as possible, with no overlapping. Strikingly, there is no symmetry, and no consistent hierarchy, although the *menorah* is given preeminence in most manuscripts, and sometimes even isolated on its own full page. In the Perpignan representation, the *menorah* and the Ark dominate the first page (fol. 12ᵛ), but this is not always the case. If we add to all these observations the inscriptions which carefully identify the objects, we get the impression of a plan, visualizing the position of the Temple and the Tabernacle implements inside the respective buildings.

However, when comparing these illustrations with an ostensible plan of the Temple, fragmentarily preserved in one of the manuscripts of the group, the so-called Second Kennicott Bible in the Bodleian Library in Oxford[34], we understand how far they are from being plans. The plan drawn by Joshua Ibn Gaon of Soria in 1306 on fols. 1ᵛ–2ʳ of the Second Kennicott Bible is first of all preoccupied with the location of the different objects in the building of the Temple. The implements are not distributed at random, but according to their functions and associations with different parts of the Temple. This also characterizes the different schemes accompanying Rashi's or Maimonides' Commentaries to the Bible, Talmud and Mishnah, on which the Second Kennicott Bible is obviously based. The accurate location in a building is the obvious aim of any plan, and this is exactly what is missing in the other Sephardic Bibles represented here by the Perpignan manuscript. The accurate rendering of each and every separate object is, of course, indebted to plans of the Temple and Tabernacle, available in Commentaries by Rashi, Maimonides and probably others. But the whole composition, which brings together objects belonging to the Tabernacle and to the Temple, and completely disregards their relative positions in the respec-

32) Florence, Laurentian Library, Cod. Amiatinus 1, fols. 2ᵛ–3ʳ. See also P. BLOCH, Nachwirkungen des Alten Bundes in der christlichen Kunst, in: Monumenta Judaica. 2000 Jahre Geschichte und Kultur der Juden am Rhein, 1963, pp. 735–781, esp. 756.
33) Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, hébr. 7, fols. 12ᵛ–13ʳ. J. GUTMANN, Hebrew Manuscript Painting, 1978, pls. 6,7.
34) Oxford, Bodl. Kenn. 2 (Second Kennicott Bible), fols. 1ᵛ–2ʳ. NARKISS (supra, n. 13), vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 24ff, figs. 9s.

tive buildings, is totally different from a functional plan meant to visualize a specific text. The fact that these compositions are disconnected from their textual source, singled out, and placed at the opening of a Bible is a further suggestion of their symbolical (as against functional) role.

The Perpignan representation is framed by an inscription clarifying its meaning: »May it be Your will that [the Temple] be speedily rebuilt in our days, so that our eyes may behold it and our heart rejoice«. The inscription confirms what we have already understood in analyzing the visual rendering of the objects in their neutral frames and in their location at the beginning of the manuscript: these are not just documentations of a sacred historical building and its cult objects, but projections into the future, expressions of hope for religious and national revival. It seems as if through the display of the utensils the future restoration of their abode is ensured. This Messianic interpretation is supported and completed by another aspect presented by several Spanish Bibles of the group, and supported by several other sources[35]: The so-called King's Bible in the British Library has the title *Miqdashiah* inscribed on the dedicatory frontispiece on fol. 2^v, while on fols. 3^r–4^r the Temple/Tabernacle implements are depicted, with the *menorah* taking a full page of its own, fol. 3^r [36]. *Miqdashiah* means God's Temple and refers to the whole book as being a stand-in for the Temple, a witness of continuity, a guarantee for the future.

In meaning and intention, the depictions of the Temple/Tabernacle implements in late medieval Spain are no different from those on early Byzantine Palestinian floor mosaics. Both were made for synagogues, to keep alive the hope for national and religious restoration bound to the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. However, the visual expressions are different, although both groups made use of the Temple implements to visualize the same message. The differences in dealing with the same category of motifs not only document different styles, but also different iconographies and completely different sources. The Palestinian mosaics are well embedded in the local, early Byzantine tradition, according to which the dispersion of objects on a plain ground, centered around an axis formed by the most significant implements, was normative in Jewish as well as in Christian milieus. The Leningrad fragments continued this tradition into the Middle Ages. The Dura frescoes invested the same ideas with different forms, closer to the Roman tradition. The accentuation of architectural frame or setting was important in all these earlier representations. Architectural frame, together with symmetry and hierarchy, place them in a totally different camp to that of the Spanish Bibles. The Spanish manuscripts arising from a completely different background, belong iconographically and stylistically to a medieval Western tradition, which I shall attempt to reconstruct briefly.

35) N. WIEDER, ›Sanctuary‹ as a Metaphor for Scripture, in: Journal of Jewish Studies 8 (1957), pp. 165–175.
36) London, British Library, King's 1, written and illuminated in Solsona in 1384. NARKISS (supra, n. 13), vol. 1, pt. 1, pls. CXIII-CXVI.
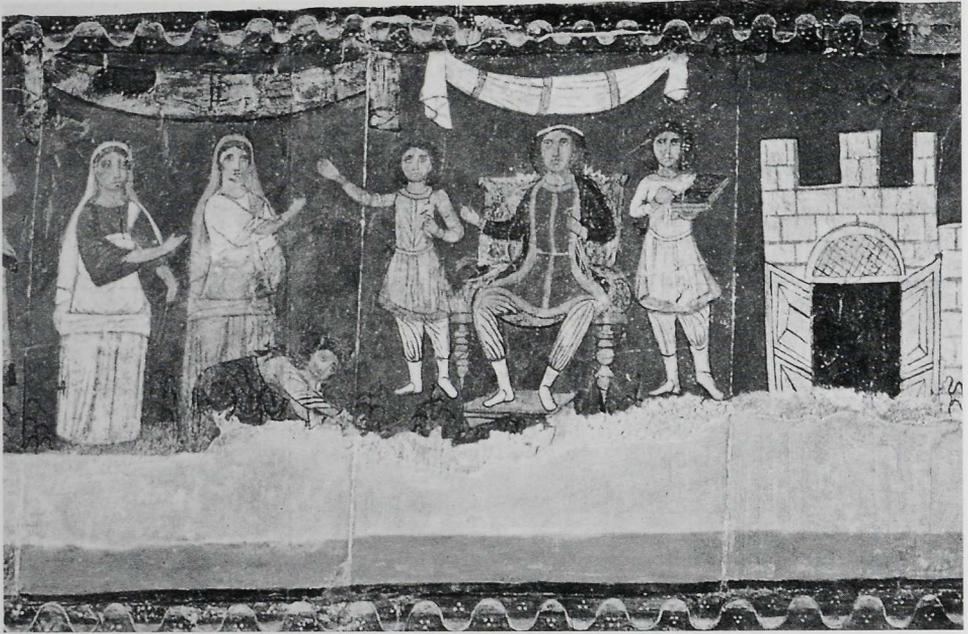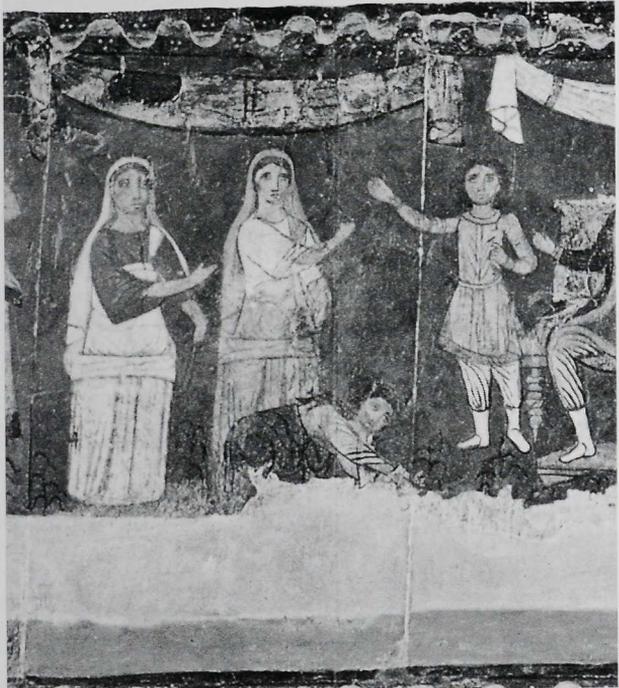
Fig. 1. Dura Europos
Synagogue, Finding of Moses

Fig. 2. Vatican Library cod. 747,
fol. 72ʳ, Pharao with the Midwives
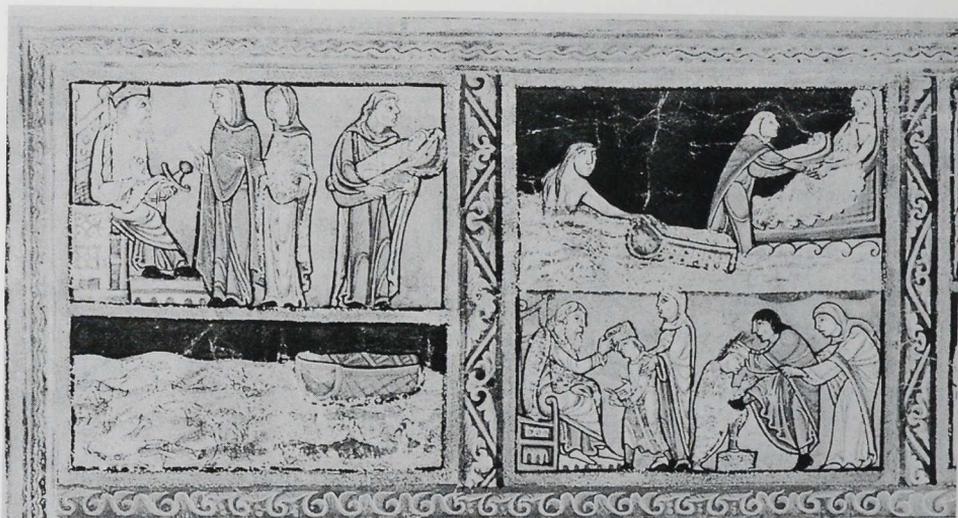
Fig. 3.   New York,
Pierpont Morgan Library,
Ms. 724, fol. 1ʳ, Child-
hood of Moses

Fig. 4.   London, British
Library, Add. 27210
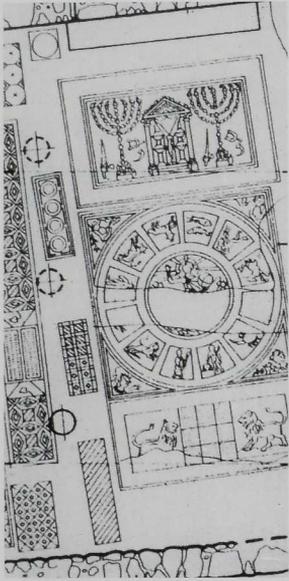(Golden Haggadah),
fol. 8ᵛ
Pharao with the Midwives

Fig. 5.
Hammath Tiberias
Synagogue Floor
Mosaic, Plan
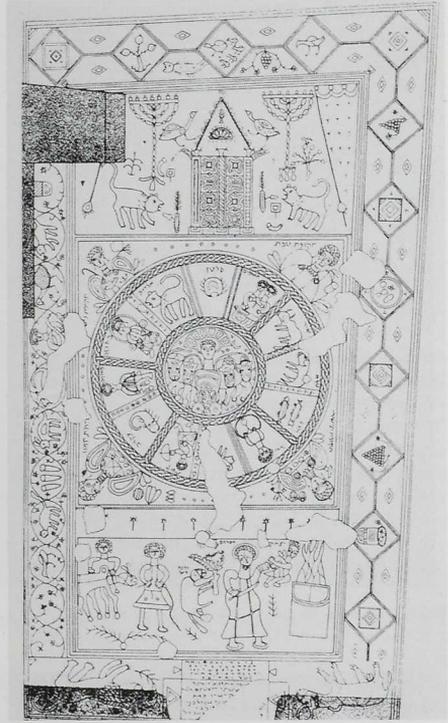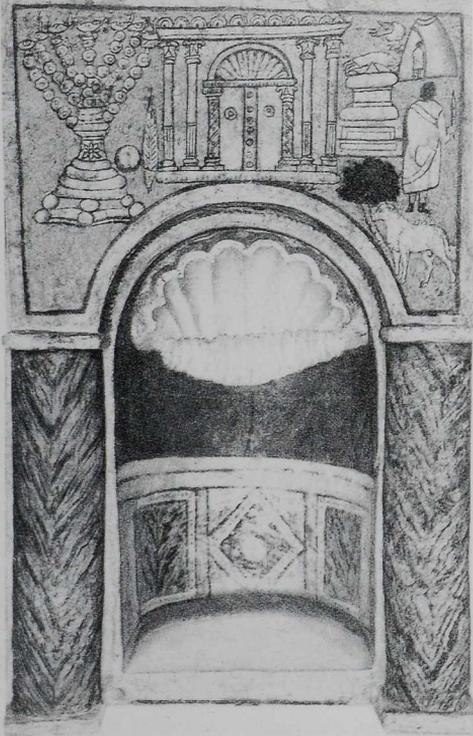

Fig. 6.   Beth Alpha Synagogue Floor Mosaic, Plan

Fig. 7.   Dura Europos Synagogue, Torah Arch

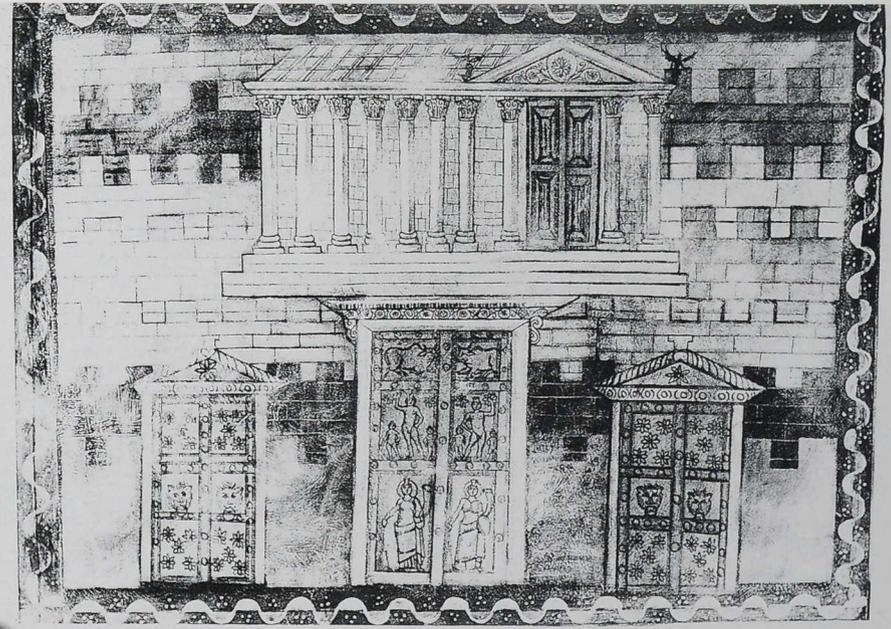Fig. 8.   Dura Europos Synagogue, Consecration of the Tabernacle

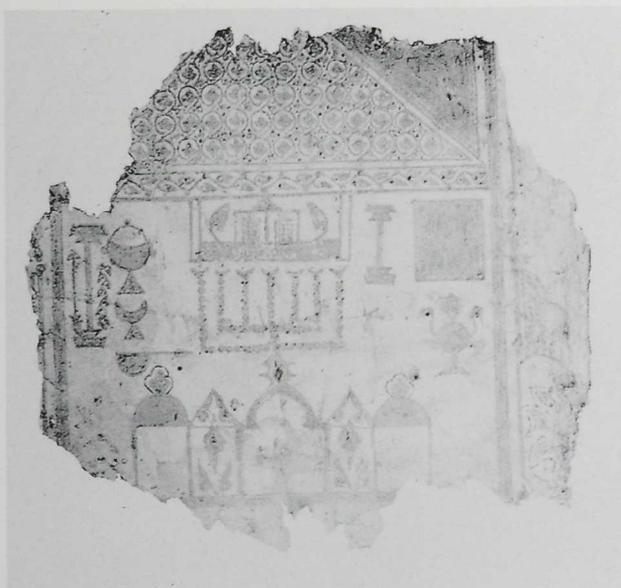Fig. 9.   Dura Europos Synagogue, Walls and Temple of Jerusalem

Fig. 10. St. Petersburg, Public Library, Fragment of a Hebrew Bible Manuscript from Fustat (Cairo)
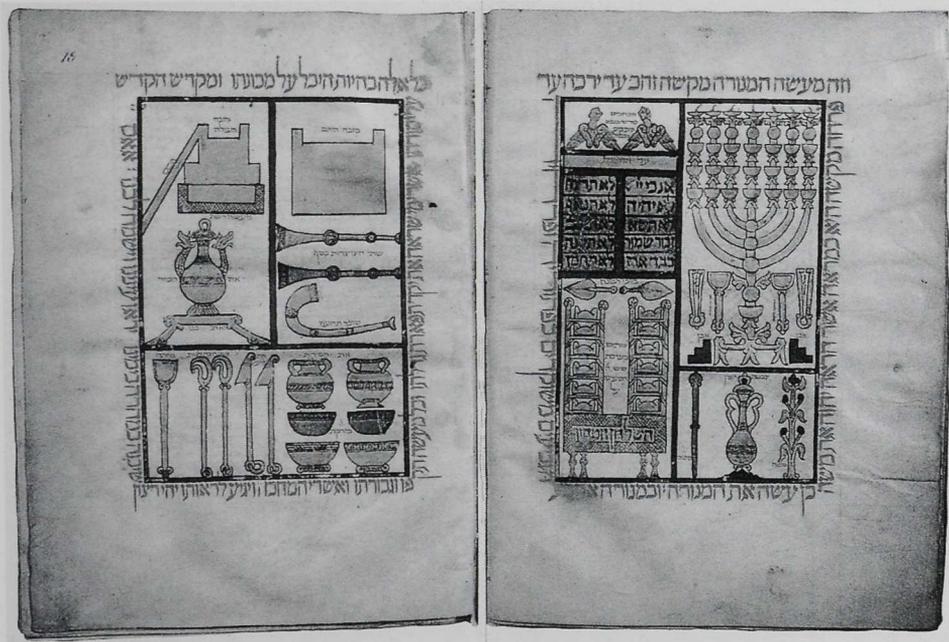

Fig. 11. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, hébr. 7, Perpignan Bible, fol. 12ᵛ
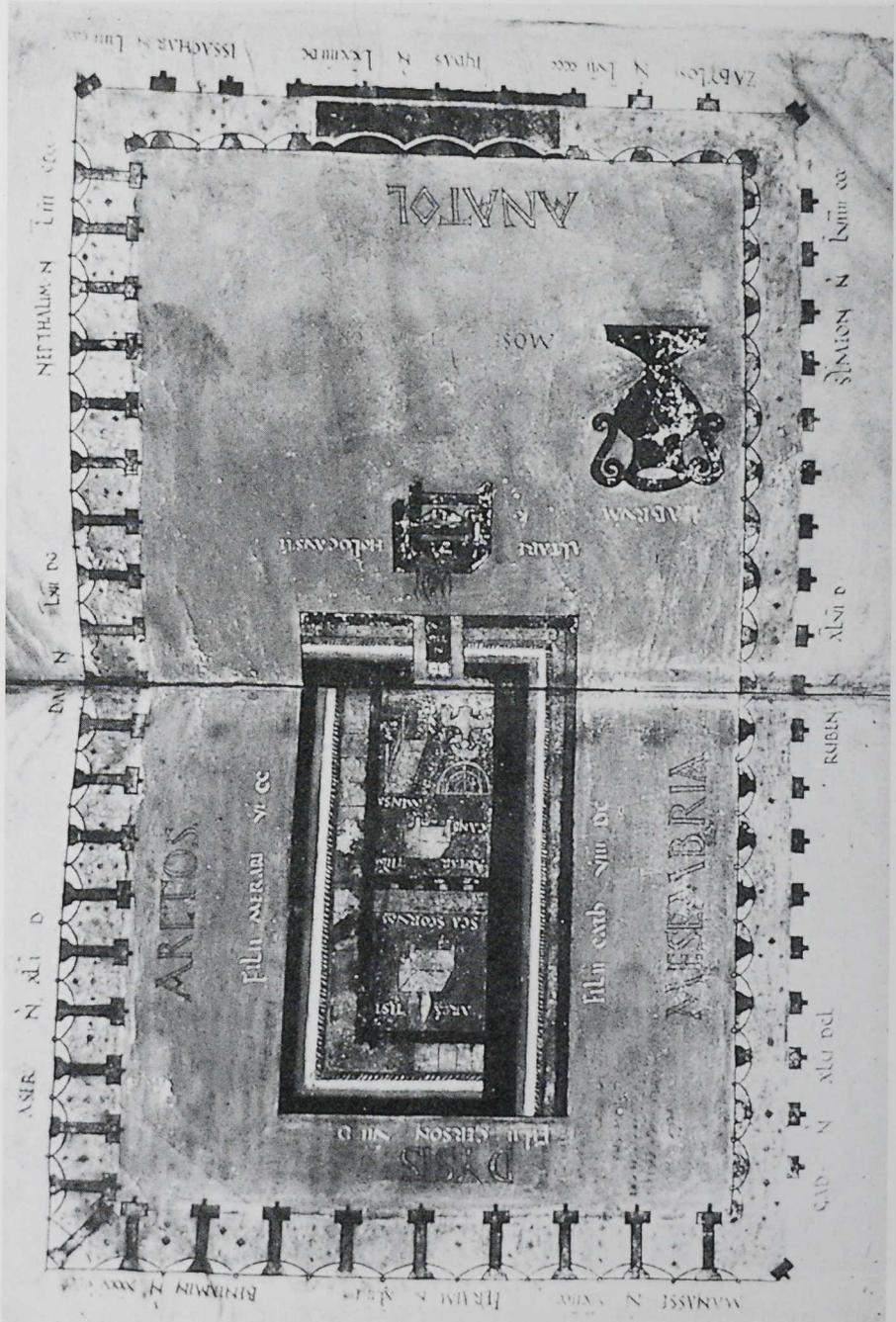
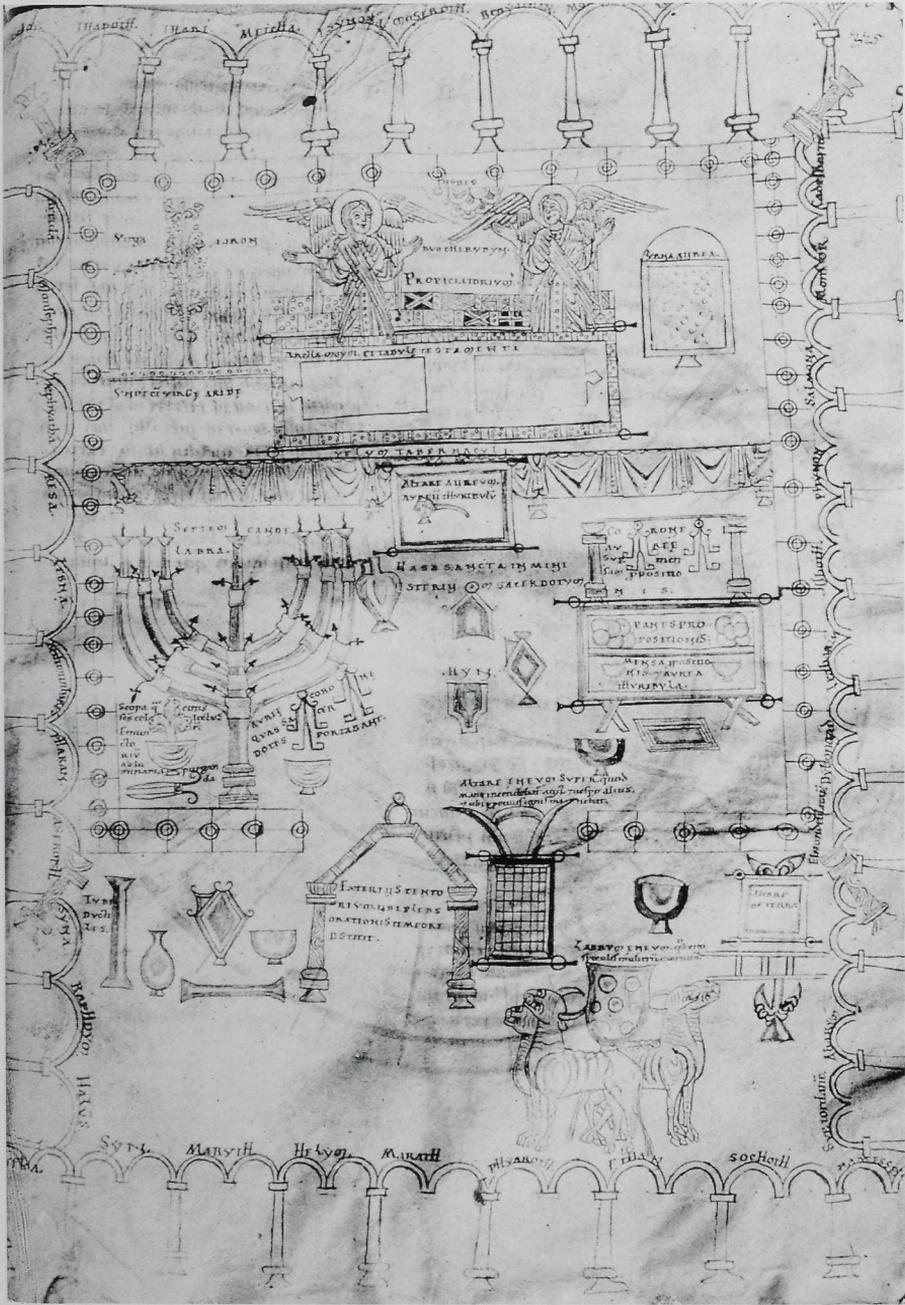Fig. 12. Florence, Laurentian Library, Cod.Amiatinus 1, fol.s 2ᵛ–3ʳ

Fig. 13.   Vienna, National Library, Cod. 10 (after Bloch, Nachwirkungen, 756, fig. 78)

Fig. 14.   León, Real Colegiata San Isidoro, Bible from 960, fol. 50^r, Consecration of the Tabernacle

Christian medieval art has a long and consistent tradition of representing the Tabernacle of the Wilderness on a rectangular plan, in which the enclosure columns and curtains lie flat on the ground and the implements fill the inner space in side-view and in an order dictated by the text and by the Christian needs of church-like symmetry. The Codex Amiatinus is the earliest extant example (Fig. 12)[37]; two other South German manuscripts are known from the twelfth century (Fig. 13)[38], besides the copies of Herrad of Landsberg's *Hortus Deliciarum*[39]. The Ark of the Covenant is always placed in the Sanctuary at the upper end of the rectangle, on the same axis as the Golden Altar and the entrance to the Tabernacle, thus suggesting a strong resemblance with the axial disposition of apse, altar and portal in church architecture. We remember that the small Carolingian church of St. Germigny-des-Près still shows an apse mosaic depicting the Ark of the Covenant[40]. Relevant in these examples for a comparison with our Spanish Bibles is the combination of a rectangular frame, flat and decorative although not neutral, and side-viewed objects depicted in uncorrelated dimensions and with no spatial continuity. Most significant in the process of comparing is the fact that the Latin Bibles also place this depiction at the opening of the manuscript.

The question whether these Christian representations are based on earlier Jewish manuscripts will have to remain open until some direct proof is found. In the meantime this is only a theory based on suppositions, part of which have already been shown to be inconsistent[41]. Some scholars argue the alleged existence of a Jewish prototype by trying to show continuity between late medieval Spanish Bibles and late Antique and early Byzantine Jewish representations, a continuity based on a similarity which is far from evident. On the contrary, the Temple/Tabernacle representations in the Hebrew Bibles of Spain display much greater closeness to medieval Spanish book illumination, not only stylistically, but also iconographically.

John Williams convincingly delineated in a paper first published in 1965 a consistent Castilian tradition of Bible illumination, whose earliest extant exemplar is the Bible of León, written in 960[42]. The León Bible contains, as the only full page miniature in the

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37) B. FISCHER, Codex Amiatinus und Cassiodor, in: Biblische Zeitschrift 6 (1962), pp. 57–79; É. REVEL-NEHER, La double page du Codex Amiatinus et ses rapports avec les plans du Tabernacle dans l'art juif et dans l'art byzantin, in: Journal of Jewish Art 9 (1982), pp. 6–17.
38) Innsbruck, University Library, Cod. 88, and Vienna, National Library, Cod.10, BLOCH, Nachwirkungen, 756, figs. 76, 78.
39) R. GREEN et al., eds., Hortus Deliciarum. Commentary and Reconstruction, 2 vol., 1979, fol. 46ᵛ pl. 29.
40) P. BLOCH, Das Apsismosaik von Germigny-des-Près. Karl der Große und der Alte Bund, in: Karl der Große, Lebenswerk und Nachleben, vol. 3, 1965, pp. 234–287.
41) For the Octateuch recension LOWDEN, The Octateuchs [supra, n. 6], esp. pp. 79–104. See also: J. GUTMANN, Jewish Art and Jewish Studies, in: S. J. D. Cohen and E. L. Greenstein, The State of Jewish Studies, 1990, pp. 193–211.
42) León, Real Colegiata de San Isidoro Cod.2. J. Williams, A Castilian Tradition of Bible Illustration. The Romanesque Bible from San Millan, in: JWCI 28 (1965), pp. 66–85 (= GUTMANN, ed., No graven Images [supra, n. 16], pp. 385–415).

otherwise richly illuminated manuscript, a depiction of the Consecration of the Tabernacle as frontispiece to Leviticus, on fol. 50ʳ (Fig. 14)[43]. In this manuscript the tent has become a solid brick construction, with an arch opening to show the diverse cult objects, prominent among them the Ark of the Covenant and the mensa-altar. The cult implements and the figures are spread on the neutral background of the page in no determined order and disregarding symmetry. They do not overlap or create any continuity in space, they just present a harmonious color scheme in which figure, object and frame receive the same linear, flat treatment.

The next extant manuscript to document the Castilian tradition is also in the Real Colegiata San Isidoro in León and is dated two hundred years later, in 1162[44]. Fol. 50ʳ shows a very similar representation of the Consecration of the Tabernacle: the architectural frame as well as the asymmetry are preserved. The next manuscript affiliated to the group was written at the beginning of the thirteenth century, between 1200 and 1220, in San Millan de la Cogolla and is now kept in the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid[45]. The full page frontispiece to Leviticus shows the same composition as the two earlier Bibles, but in a different style, softer, less linear. The distribution of the cult objects on the flat background still does not obey any strict location laws, although more attention is paid to symmetry; there is at least a clear tendency to create an axis made up of the entrance to the Sanctuary, the altar and the Ark. There is also more symmetry in the arrangement of the figures, all inside the tent, and of the cloud above the tent. The solid architecture has shrunk between the earliest and the latest manuscripts of the group, in the San Millan Bible coming closest to a tent.

These three Spanish Bibles covering a long period from the tenth to the early thirteenth century offer, it seems to me, the closest parallel to the Jewish Sephardi Bibles from the late thirteenth to the fifteenth century. Of course, there are differences, the greatest of all being the total lack of architectural frame in the Hebrew Bibles. Further, in the Hebrew Bibles the Tabernacle implements do not constitute the frontispiece page to Leviticus, but rather to the whole book (which may explain the combination with the Temple implements). Another difference is the disappearance of Aaron and the Israelites, and of all other historical or narrative elements, in the Hebrew Bibles.

To sum up: We find the tradition of a combined Temple/Tabernacle representation at the opening of a Bible manuscript existing already in the seventh century Codex Amiatinus, a tradition which can be traced back to the sixth century Codex Grandior of Cassiodorus. The Carolingian Apocalypse of Valenciennes also opens with a plan of the Tabernacle, although not filled with vessels but with inscriptions[46]. The Jewish artists of

43) J. WILLIAMS, Early Spanish Manuscript Illumination, 1977, color pl. 10.
44) Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, León, Cod. 3. WILLIAMS, A Castilian Tradition, 68, fig. 10a.
45) Cod. 2, fol. 58ᵛ. Ibid., p. 66s., fig. 9a.
46) »In capite velatus, in fine manifestus« – The Tabernacle of Valenciennes, in: Jerusalem in European Culture, 1997, pp. 91–98.

thirteenth to fifteenth century Spain combined this tradition with elements of iconography and style from the Latin tradition of their immediate background and landscape, namely medieval Spain, to create a representation to fulfil their own ideas. Their variations on the Christian visual sources are significant. It seems to me, for example, that their cancelling of the architectural frame was a deliberate act, meant to stress the fact that no Temple was standing at the time the illuminations were made, an act polemically directed against the Christian belief that the New Temple and Tabernacle are built in Heaven for Eternity (Hebrews 11:8 and Revelation 21:3). For the Diaspora Jews all that existed was the cult conducted in synagogues and represented by the objects drawn in careful detail, cult and objects whose function primarily was to keep alive the hope for the reconstruction of the future Temple in Jerusalem.

This last series of examples strengthens the conclusions drawn from our first case study (Pharaoh's Order to the Midwives) and shows us that the Jewish-Christian artistic dialogue developed in much smaller segments than usually believed in research, that visual forms and expressions bear a statement of their own, which is not only sensitive to basic ideas and beliefs, but also to specific, local, social and religious conditions. It seems to me that the break observed in both our case studies between early and late medieval Jewish representations is, among others, strongly dependent on the tremendous changes undergone by the various communities during the first crusades. Moreover, I should consider the whole revival of Jewish art during the high Middle Ages as strongly dependent upon the Crusades. It seems that the massive use of images was characteristic of Jewish societies physically or ideologically threatened and engaged in controversial dialogue with their Christian environment: this was the case of Dura Europos in the third century, of Galilee between the fourth and sixth centuries, and certainly of Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities at the end of the Middle Ages.[47]

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47) While this article was in print, two relevant studies of Sephardic Haggadah manuscripts by K. KOG-MANN-APPEL were published, in which the author adopts a differentiated approach towards the sources of medieval Jewish art: Der Exoduszyklus der Sarajevo-Haggada: Bemerkungen zur Arbeitsweise spätmittel-alterlicher jüdischer Illuminatoren und ihrem Umgang mit Vorlagen, in: Gesta 35 (1996), pp. 111–127; The Sephardic Picture Cycles and the Rabbinic Tradition: Continuity and Innovation in Jewish Iconography, in: Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte 60 (1997), pp. 451–481.